

Revival and relevance: The walled kitchen garden in 21st century public history

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As a thesis for the degree of
Masters by Research in History
In November 2020

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I would like to acknowledge my gratitude for the support and financial assistance provided to me by Cornwall Heritage Trust, Cornwall Gardens Trust and the National Trust. I would like to thank my colleagues at the National Trust for their willingness to impart their knowledge and experience, and particularly to John Lanyon for his continued personal and professional support and for granting me the time and space to carry out this work. I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to my supervisors, Dr Garry Tregidga and Dr Nicola Whyte, for their invaluable support, insights and guidance.

Abstract

Trelissick walled kitchen garden currently lies dormant at the heart of a thriving National Trust property on the outskirts of Truro in Cornwall. Created in the 18th century, this highly productive space fed and adorned the estate throughout its ever-evolving lifespan and numerous proprietors. The mid-20th century saw its decline and enforced state of redundancy, mirroring the fate met by many similar sites across the nation. The site now stands on the brink of regeneration. This thesis locates the public historic walled garden within the wider historiography and seeks to present a framework in which the National Trust can present the walled kitchen garden to a 21st century audience, one that respects its historic origins yet responds to the needs and wants of its visitors, all the while retaining relevance. Despite the development of wider historical discourse surrounding concepts of public history, history from below and new museology, the discipline of garden history has mostly fixated its gaze upon conventional elitist narratives which gravitate towards the 18th century British landscape movement. This thesis explores the limitations of such an approach, as well as the means by which garden history can reassess its dependence upon hegemonic discourse, thereby becoming more responsive and future oriented, embracing notions of co-curatorship and dialogue that are at the heart of alternative methodological perspectives such as new museology, public history and history from below. Thus, Trelissick's walled garden has the potential to embody the manifestation of garden history – often regarded as a purely scholarly discipline – in historic gardens themselves.

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Introduction:

The last decade of the 20th century witnessed the emergence of a renewed interest in walled kitchen gardens within the British heritage industry. Likely reasons for a revival of historic productive gardens are varied, ranging from an increased interest in heritage sites, the romanticised portrayal of abandoned gardens such as the Lost Gardens of Heligan in the media, a re-energised drive towards sustainability and a reduction of food miles, an increased interest in household sufficiency and a surge in the uptake of allotments. The restoration of nationally recognised kitchen gardens, such as Heligan in Cornwall and West Dean in Sussex, signalled the beginnings of this resurgence in the late 1990s. In terms of the health of garden heritage, this must surely be regarded as a positive development. However, I assert that there is significant scope for further work to ensure the continuous re-energising of historic walled kitchen gardens, a process which must focus upon an exploration of notions of identity, purpose and relevance if these sites are to survive and thrive in the 21st century.

As this thesis will surmise, walled kitchen gardens in the public arena are widely perceived in both popular and academic terms as antiquated features of the past, defined and limited by their original functions. Notions of purpose and meaning remain intrinsically bound with the site's initial reason for existing, namely, to feed an estate, despite that function now being largely obsolete. As such, kitchen gardens may be rich with historic meaning, but are at substantial risk of cultural redundancy. Alternative identities for many walled kitchen gardens are limited, particularly within Cornwall where productive gardens rarely stray into new territory.

Instead, they are more likely to remain recreations of previous incarnations, a tendency exemplified by the development of Heligan, undoubtedly the county's most famous historic garden. This inclination towards such a rigid identity only serves to heighten the vulnerability of public walled gardens - for each site that opens its doors to the visiting public, there are several languishing behind closed gates or, worse still, at risk of being entirely erased, physically and culturally, from the historic landscape. It follows to assess the current state of historic walled kitchen gardens and to explore their value within the wider heritage arena, as well as within the more specific confines of garden history. The following issue must be addressed - why should garden heritage bodies conserve such sites? If they have lost their original reason for existing, how can one justify expending significant (and often limited) resources in restoring and maintaining these highly labour-intensive gardens? Clearly, if they are to be reinvigorated, the need for new meanings and values must be acknowledged and explored, for surely Heligan cannot provide the only template for the historic walled garden in the 21st century.

This study will call for a new perspective on the place of historic walled kitchen gardens within the heritage industry. Whilst great strides have been taken in the wider realms of garden history in recent years, gaps exist in scholarship pertaining to methodological approaches to gardens, and particularly productive walled gardens, on a national, regional and local level. The application of methodologies rooted in public history, 'history from below', new museology, reception theories and micro-historical approaches has the potential to amplify the relevance of historic garden sites, contributing towards a contemporary understanding of their identity and purpose for the 21st century. Such frameworks have certainly informed other

disciplines within the heritage arena, re-energising developing historical narratives and discussions. Language associated with garden history and its representation in the public domain is also worthy of consideration, as it is often tightly bound to notions of physical and cultural loss and nostalgia. There is much value in questioning the benefits and limitations of heritage discourse and the role that it plays in keeping walled kitchen gardens so firmly entrenched in (and thus confined by) their origins.

I contend that garden history studies have relied heavily upon conventional 'top down' approaches and that by comparison the potential of 'history from below' has rarely been explored. The time is ripe to examine the extent and means by which heritage organisations such as the National Trust address such issues within historic gardens, and to explore the successes and limitations of current models. Garden history is a relatively young discipline, yet it appears to be fixated upon a traditional and singular mindset, to the exclusion of any other. There is clearly a need to examine alternative discourse and to seek different approaches which do not rely upon the dominant ideological narratives that prevail in garden history, ones that veer towards typologising and are often hegemonic and teleological in nature. This study follows the paths set out by garden and landscape historians Hunt, Harwood and Williamson, with the aim of questioning and challenging the future direction of the discipline, with focus on the walled kitchen garden, and its potential to inspire and embody a new approach.

In order to broaden and develop garden history narratives it is essential to consider the extent to which garden history is represented on the ground and in the historic designed landscape itself, as well as how the discipline communicates

with those with whom it seeks to engage. The reframing of museological approaches from the end of the last century demonstrates the transforming and dynamic potential of the heritage arena as a progressive and future-oriented project. Such changes were initially fuelled by economic pressures. However, it is widely recognised that falling visitor numbers are a consequence not only of funding cuts, but also of perceptions of irrelevance.¹ Currently, historic gardens as heritage visitor attractions are not suffering the same fate; visitor numbers are generally healthy and many such sites are struggling more to contain their numbers than to increase them.² However, I would argue that two factors are at risk; firstly, the scholarly progression of the discipline of garden history, and secondly, the sense of relevance and purpose that historic sites possess, and thereby the potential for heritage organisations to share such values in a meaningful way with their audiences. The latter is surely a significant means of proactively fortifying the position of public historic gardens into the future, thus avoiding a crisis point whereby a reactive and radical rethinking is needed, as has occurred in the museum sector. Garden history must be dynamic, outward looking and forward thinking. It must value and respond to the needs of a public with whom it needs to engage to ensure that heritage gardens survive and thrive. John Dixon Hunt asserts that there is much value in the application of reception theories within garden history, thus firmly locating³ the discipline in the present day.³ This is undoubtedly an area of work that has the potential to set garden history on an alternative course, one in which contemporary phenomenology is valued alongside

¹ Hudson (1998) p50

² Trelissick is a case in point – visitor numbers are steadily increasing, details of which will follow in further chapters.

³ Hunt (2004)

a study of origins. The result is an approach that values the needs of the present and possible future as much as it does the past. However, it is disheartening to find scarce evidence of such debates in recent years within academia or within public historic gardens themselves, the absence of which reflects the current stagnation of garden history.

This study examines the extent to which garden historians and heritage organisations address such issues on a national and regional scale and explores the successes and limitations of current models in Cornwall. It considers public historic walled gardens in the county, with a focus upon The Lost Gardens of Heligan and Trengwainton, currently the only extant productive gardens within the county open to visitors that function according to their original intention. It follows to question how successful such sites are in sharing meanings, if indeed that is even their intention. It is worth considering the aspirations of other walled gardens in Cornwall, some dormant, such as Enys, and others for whom investment and transformation are a palpable possibility, such as Trebah, Trewithen, Penrose and Trelissick.

Trelissick is a National Trust property situated on the outskirts of Truro in Cornwall and serves as a worthy case study, for it is home to a productive garden that is on the cusp of reinvention. The walled kitchen garden, an area of approximately 2 acres, lies at the very centre of the estate and is part of the earliest development of the property, dating back to the 1750's. During the 19th century, a period regarded as its zenith, it was a fully productive area, providing the entire estate with a diverse range of fresh vegetables, fruit, cut flowers and herbs. Trelissick possessed what many regarded as one of the finest kitchen gardens in the

county and enjoyed its reputation as “the fruit garden of Cornwall”.⁴ A small but efficient complex of glasshouses ensured the year-round cultivation of fruit and vegetables, and the garden walls were covered with trained fruit trees. The walled garden was mentioned in horticultural publications *The Garden* and *The Gardeners Chronicle* as a highly regarded example of a successfully run productive garden. It ceased to be used as a productive garden in the 1960s, and the glasshouses were pulled down in the 1980s. Today the area remains closed to the public. However, this has not diminished the importance of the site which, despite lying dormant behind closed doors, continues to invoke a great deal of curiosity and interest among visitors, staff and volunteers. Plans are in progress to re-awaken the productive garden; however, the National Trust has an opportunity not only to reinstate a highly important physical historic element, but to reassess their own response to the issues outlined above, that is, to imbue a historic garden with new cultural meaning, purpose and relevance.

I have volunteered and worked as a gardener for the National Trust since 2009 and I currently work at Trelissick as Assistant Head Gardener. As such, this thesis makes use of autoethnography as a methodological approach. Such subjectivity must not be shied away from; I am acutely aware that I am both witness to and participant in the current heritage narratives created and advanced by the National Trust.⁵ My shared professional experiences with colleagues imbue my research with a perspective that recognises the importance of locating an interface between

⁴ Davey (1988) p25

⁵ “Autoethnography is one of the approaches that acknowledges subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher’s influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don’t exist.” Ellis, Adams & Bochner (2011) p274

personal experience and methodological approaches that are rooted in the scholarly. As an employee, I benefit from a deep understanding of the standpoint of a heritage organisation on the cusp of reinventing and re-presenting an historic walled kitchen garden. It is a part of the garden that has never been open to the public and is quite literally new territory for the Trelissick management team, of which I am a member. Here lies an incredible opportunity for the National Trust to steer garden history narratives in a bold new direction for the organisation, allowing them to be told in the gardens themselves. It remains to be seen the extent to which Trelissick will embrace such an opportunity, or if the pull of a more conventional approach will prevail. Interviews with National Trust curators, gardeners and advisors (the details of which will follow) suggest that there is much more work to be done to guide heritage discourse towards new paths within the organisation, certainly on a local level. However, I would argue that the National Trust possesses enough self-awareness to know that it must listen to its audiences, without whom it cannot survive. It will be interesting to chart how far-sighted the organisation can be over the coming years, and if it will be as responsive to the people upon whom it depends for its existence as museums have had to be in recent years.

This thesis has employed the use of several primary sources such as historic maps, plans and photographs of historic walled gardens in Cornwall to contribute towards a richer understanding of the changes that such sites have endured, as well as the many historic elements that have persisted. Gardening journals such as *The Garden* and *Gardeners Chronicle* provide fascinating insights into the everyday working details of the 19th century head gardeners. William Sangwin, head gardener of Trelissick in the late 19th century, was a prolific contributor to such journals.

Unfortunately, Trelissick has suffered from the same fate as many other gardens, in that very few horticultural records and archives exist, so primarily I have looked to those articles that made it to print for details about Trelissick's walled garden and specific details on the purpose it served. However, tithe maps and early photographs provide a fascinating glimpse into the many changes that Trelissick has endured, all with the reassuringly solid walled garden at the heart of an evolving estate.

Due to the formulaic nature of walled kitchen gardens, records and books about similar sites have significant value. The proliferation of 19th century weekly journals and gardening manuals provide significant details about the design of the typical walled kitchen garden. Such material is often transferable to almost any other similar site with regards to layout of crops according to their differing needs in terms of shelter, heat and light levels. However, further exploration of walled kitchen gardens in Cornwall reveal the varying functions that each site served, reflecting the distinctive horticultural character of the county from a garden historical perspective, a topic that will be developed in this thesis.

This study aspires to be as forward-looking as it implores garden history to be, and I have carried out interviews with 8 experts in their field who manage Cornish historic gardens today. Participants include curators, gardeners, advisors and the acting Head of Gardens for the National Trust, as well as gardeners from non-National Trust gardens such as Enys and the Lost Gardens of Heligan. The interviews were not rigidly structured and the ease with which most interviewees spoke was enlightening, revealing their perceptions and emotions for the places for which they care, as well as an acute awareness of the many challenges they face. Visits to gardens in possession of historic walled gardens have been highly

informative, particularly the very few that are open to the public. The extent to which these places have a 'voice' is clearly dependent upon the managerial and curatorial decisions made by their guardians, an issue to be explored in chapter 4.

Desk based research has focused not only upon garden historical studies of walled gardens and the wider exterior sites within which they sit, but also upon narratives and scholarship on the presentation of both tangible and intangible heritage within museums and historic buildings, and the work that has been carried out since the 1970s on meanings and relevance within historic houses, gardens and museums. The application of methodological approaches centred around public history, new museology, micro-history, local history and history from below imbues garden historical discourse with a significant range of potentialities.

What emerges is the need to understand garden historical narratives from a renewed perspective, one that acknowledges the unique nature of gardens as heritage sites, but that steps away from the current inclination towards hegemonic, teleological, top down discourse. I assert that only when garden historians do so can valuable historic elements such as walled gardens begin to truly thrive within a renewed framework that embraces identity, purpose and relevance. The result is a dynamic narrative that must be as unique as each walled garden, as well as the physical and cultural landscape in which it sits. The potential for walled kitchen gardens to act as a tool by which such aims can be achieved is immense.

Chapter 1

21st century garden history – a critical evaluation

There are several beautifully illustrated, popular publications concerned with the historical and physical development of walled kitchen gardens in Britain, as well as with the horticultural techniques adopted in such spaces. *The Walled Garden* (2007) by Leslie Geddes-Brown draws upon a global historical context from antiquity to situate the five contemporary gardens illustrated in the book. In *A History of Kitchen Gardening* (2005), Susan Campbell relates the history of a walled kitchen garden at Pylewell Park in Hampshire, a garden which typifies many such sites throughout the country, from the mid-19th century to early 20th century. Campbell's focus is upon the physical structure of the walled garden space, with much emphasis upon the walls, paths and typical layout. Campbell is also the author of one of a series of essays in C. Anne Wilson's edited collection for the National Trust, *The Country House Kitchen Garden 1600 – 1950* (2010). Wilson's collection forms a study of various aspects of kitchen gardening, including the procedures for the sourcing and ordering of seed, soil cultivation, the development and workings of glasshouses, and the growing of fruit in south-west England. These books outline the highly specific and formulaic arrangement of walled kitchen gardens - most sites followed the same principles of design by the end of the 19th century, those deemed to be the most fruitful. This is chiefly where the focus lies in the works of Campbell (2005), Geddes-Brown (2007) and Wilson (2010) - emphasis is placed firmly upon the physical structures of such sites and the crops grown therein, with little mention made of the workforce who laboured within the walls and of their specific skill set.

There is a clear lack of attention paid to the human element, and of the everyday activities that allowed such gardens to thrive.

In *A Paradise out of a Common Field* (1990), Morgan and Richards locate the walled kitchen garden within the context of the Victorian country house garden, with prominence given to the ever-evolving role of the head gardener within the social strata of domestic staff. The 19th century head gardener bridged the gap between the landscape designer and the skilled labourer, and, in doing so, assumed responsibility "for everything from designing elaborate formal parterres to planting collections of orchids and conifers".⁶ The authors chart the transition of 19th century grounds from the designed landscape of the previous century into a highly formalised garden, the result of the picturesque movement in which plants had to jostle for space with an unprecedented influx of new flora entering the British Isles. The Victorian country estate garden had become "a showcase for plants rather than for landscape",⁷ as the subsequent demand for a higher skill set from the head gardener (and his staff) than ever before resulted in the acceleration of professional status and influence. Morgan and Richards examine the expansive role of the head gardener and his place within the country estate in detail, with much attention given to the quality and quantity of produce that would fill the dining tables of estates across the country. However, like Campbell (2005) and Geddes-Brown (2007), much less attention is given to the day-to-day activities that yielded such impressive results, that is, the actual mechanics of the 19th century kitchen garden and the people who worked within those walls.

⁶ Morgan & Richards (1990) p8

⁷ Ibid. p10

The Victorian Kitchen Garden (1987) by Jennifer Davies was one of the first books to be produced in the later years of the 20th century to focus primarily upon 19th century walled gardens. It was written as an accompaniment to the BBC television series of same name, broadcast in 1987, an early foray into the realms of public history on British television. The series follows the restoration of a derelict walled kitchen garden, overseen by ex-head gardener Harry Dodson. Dodson was born in 1920 and therefore does not qualify as a Victorian gardener *per se*; however, he is very clearly defined by his knowledge of established horticultural techniques originating in the 19th century. Davies embraces the notion that it is not only the physicality of walled kitchen gardens that is at risk of being lost for perpetuity but also the knowledge, skills and expertise that were once cultivated in such spaces. Davies defines the Victorian kitchen garden to the modern on-looker: "it is a Victorian legacy frequently kept behind locked doors, neglected, weed-choked and forgotten, a victim of twentieth-century economics and cheap imports"⁸. A rich seam of nostalgia runs through the book, with evidence of the past described whimsically as "fragments of summer days", while "ghosts" of plants long gone evoke a deep sense of loss.⁹ Despite Dodson's status as a 20th century gardener, the subject matter is so firmly entrenched within 19th century discourse (an era portrayed as the halcyon of kitchen gardening) that he is represented as an agent for Victorian horticulture. Davies is as concerned with the people who worked in these gardens and their experiences as the plants and skills cultivated there, defiantly stepping away from more conventional 'top down' portrayals of country estates. Dodson is the protagonist; he is the bearer of traditions at risk of being lost for perpetuity, and it is

⁸ Davies (1988) p10

⁹ Ibid.

his skills and knowledge that Davies is most concerned with communicating. She writes of a need to listen to "an echo back from the walls of the bounty and excellence kitchen gardens once provided",¹⁰ employing language that resonates thematically with notions of loss, fragility and nostalgia. *The Victorian Kitchen Garden* offers an impassioned plea to revive antiquated skills and knowledge; however, the result is essentially an experiment in recreating an aspect of past horticulture. While Davies succeeds in highlighting the vulnerability of such spaces as heritage sites and the risk of losing associated specialist knowledge, the author displays an unwillingness to step out of the 19th century, as this study offers scant solutions for modern usage or a renewed sense of purpose for the historic walled kitchen garden. Instead, modernisation and change are perceived as threats, fixing the walled garden firmly in the past and refuting any possibility of contemporary development and reinvention.

Details of the day-to-day life and localised experiences of the Victorian gardener can be gleaned from Arthur Hooper's *Life in the Gardeners' Bothy* (2000) and from *The Diary of a Victorian Gardener: William Cresswell and Audley End* (2006), published by English Heritage. Accounts such as these are extremely valuable as a means of consciously stepping away from traditional 'top down' historical narratives. In his essay 'History From Below' (1991), Jim Sharpe explores this alternative historical perspective, one in which a broader cultural, social and economic arena is explored, and dominance of one master narrative ("top person's history") is questioned.¹¹ History from below, argues Sharpe, aims to "explore the

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Burke (1991) p25

historical experiences of those men and women whose existence is so often ignored, taken for granted or mentioned in passing in mainstream history”.¹² The challenge also lies in “trying to understand people in the past, as far as the modern historian is able, in the light of their own experience and their own reactions to that experience”.¹³ This is a concept rarely given attention within garden history discourse but is one that would unquestionably provide much value.

Within studies of walled kitchen gardens, much focus has been placed upon the physicality of the place, of the structure of walls and paths and upon the crops grown, but with relatively little insight into those who tended these plants and who disseminated the knowledge and skills, ultimately making these gardens some of the most productive and horticulturally efficient sites of the 19th century. Toby Musgrave’s *The Head Gardeners* (2009) is one of the first studies to explore the day to day running of a 19th century estate. Musgrave focuses much of his attention upon the highly atypical working relationship at Chatsworth in Derbyshire between head gardener Joseph Paxton and landowner the Duke of Devonshire. There is clearly much scope for an exploration of a ‘history from below’ perspective within garden history scholarship, and it could be argued that walled kitchen gardens, as labour-intensive sites dependent upon a vast workforce, provide a valuable arena in which to further investigate this concept.

The value of the localised - often manifested as the everyday - is championed by Raphael Samuel. In his article ‘Local History and Oral History’ (1976), Samuel expressed concern about the marginalisation of these two historical disciplines in the

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid. p26

realms of academic scholarship, despite their emphasis on connecting with the past through the lives of ordinary people. Local history can, he argues, reveal the minutiae of the everyday; these are the details that combine to create a more identifiable past. He recognises the limitations of local history too; for example, employment details may reveal nothing more than headcounts, a fact that is certainly true of many historic garden records. Samuel also points to potential tensions between people and place, all dependent upon the availability of historical material and, crucially, the knowledge of how to read such material to find the social reality within. For example, maps and documents are valuable sources of evidence for landscape and garden historians, but they only reveal structural developments and changes, and do not so easily inform the historian of past inhabitants and their lived experiences.¹⁴ Samuel examines the value of oral history, recognising its potential to uncover details that may otherwise be absent from the documentary record. He does not promote the use of oral history as a stand-alone historical methodology; instead, he proposes interaction between oral history and written records, making use of it “not only to fill in gaps, but also to redefine what local history can be about”.¹⁵

In *Theatres of Memory* (2012), Samuel turns his attention to the concept of history from below, embracing the notion of history as “an activity rather than a profession”.¹⁶ He is concerned with the everyday uses of history, culture and popular memory, arguing for the recognition of history as a dynamic, living process that encompasses diverse cultural forms, including but not confined to television,

¹⁴ Samuel (1976) p195

¹⁵ Ibid. p201

¹⁶ Samuel (2012) p17

photography, folk songs, museum exhibitions, cinema and even high street commerce. This understanding of history decries the singular master narrative of traditional historical methodology (the vessel through which “knowledge filters down”¹⁷) and instead champions unofficial versions of history, that is, “the work, in any given instance, of a thousand different hands”.¹⁸ The concept of democratised history is undoubtedly a socially and culturally inclusive form of knowledge and has the potential to enrich studies of walled gardens and gardening more widely, allowing for plurality in our understanding of historic gardens.

Iris Kleinecke-Bates explores the idea of tension between the scholarly and the personal in her article ‘Heritage, History & Gardening: *The Victorian Kitchen Garden* and the Representation of the Victorian Age as Cultural Homeland’ (2009), in which she focuses upon the BBC television programme *The Victorian Kitchen Garden* (1987), forerunner to the book of the same name. She examines the ways in which cultural forms (in this instance, television) seek to engage the cultural consumer (the viewer) with history. She too looks to Raphael Samuel whose

“view of history as an organic, social form of knowledge, which renders modern representations and re-animations of the past the branches of an unofficial, popular history, seems especially relevant in relation to *The Victorian Kitchen Garden*’s construction of the past as ‘living memory’”.¹⁹

In the case of *The Victorian Kitchen Garden*, presented by horticultural academic Peter Thoday, Kleinecke-Bates notes that the result is

¹⁷ Ibid. p4

¹⁸ Ibid. p8

¹⁹ Kleinecke-Bates (2009) p74

“a take on history that is personal rather than academic, based on memory not scholarship, yet it is delivered by an expert who draws not only on personal experience of the past but makes sense of that experience through specialist knowledge of the field”.²⁰

The author argues that the use of the personal to access the past, through oral history for example, has great value: “the representation of history as memory, of knowledge as experience, is one of the ways we make sense of the past”.²¹

However, Kleinecke-Bates also points to the limitations of such an approach; if history must be made personal to be meaningful, how does the public historian make the connection between the viewer and history once that era has passed out of living memory? *The Victorian Kitchen Garden* attempts to bridge the gap with the use of “remembered traditions and practices”,²² using the concept of inherited horticultural knowledge as a means of threading together the past and present. How successful it is in doing this is also under discussion; Kleinecke-Bates refers to a disconnect between academic knowledge and personal memory which, she argues, ultimately renders neither truly authentic. However, it is crucial to question the true importance of authenticity as opposed to subjective memory and experience. It can be argued that there is clearly an interface between the two elements, that is, a space in which much value can be derived, for this is where the past, present and future can converge, resulting in new ways of thinking about history that encompass a plethora of possibilities.

The complexities of public history and historical authority are explored by Michael H. Frisch in *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral*

²⁰ Ibid. p71

²¹ Ibid. p72

²² Ibid. p72

and Public History (1990). Frisch proposes the notion of a shared historical authority that stems from the collaborative nature of oral history, as opposed to a more traditional, singular, imposed viewpoint. He asserts that “a strong case can be made for the proposition that more may be learned from studying the process than from a focus on the position to which it has brought us”.²³ Oral history as a historical methodology is not merely concerned with the end piece but the entire, often complex, process of practical application, which can take various forms, “whether in conducting and transcribing interviews, organizing a collection, preparing an exhibit or documentary, or drafting historical script or text that seeks explicitly to engage a general audience”.²⁴ The result is an open-ended, dialogical and participatory experience in which a traditional hierarchical authority is made redundant. Such an approach can offer garden history discourse a valuable new perspective for, by their very nature, gardens refuse such neat timeframes and narratives.

David Glassburg, in his article ‘Public History and the Study of Memory’ (1996), reinforces these themes by exploring shifts in theoretical approach. He embraces the complexities surrounding the subject. Acknowledging the distinction between public history and traditional scholarship on public memory he argues that “what distinguishes the new scholarship on memory from the old is not subject matter but approach”.²⁵ Rather than relying on one version of the past as the dominant ‘official’ narrative he advocates an approach that allows for the interplay between “different versions of history in public” and on the channels of

²³ Frisch (1990) p xv

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Glassburg (1996) p9

communication and dissemination employed.²⁶ What emerges is a much broader and richer arena of knowledge in which history becomes more personal, connected and thus meaningful. Passive 'text-book' acceptance no longer occurs; as people become the producers of history, they use their own experiences to shape their understanding of history and to make sense of it. Like Frisch, Glassburg is as concerned with the process as the destination:

"the task of the public historian may be more to create spaces for dialogue about history and for the collection of memories, and to ensure that various voices are heard in those spaces, than to provide a finished interpretation of events translating the latest professional scholarship for a popular audience".²⁷

Glassburg considers how audiences respond to history:

"popular history does not impose a single view of the past on the masses, but rather communicates a multiplicity of submerged alternative versions accessible to audiences competent to decipher them according to their social background".²⁸

He argues that the concept of traditional history (that is, one that embraces the concept of a single master narrative) has isolated the past from both the present and the future, resulting in a disjunction between yesterday, today and tomorrow, whilst the tendency to isolate single events rather than contextualising them within a sequence of events prohibits a full understanding.

Finding the interplay between popular and academic histories is a pertinent issue. Hilda Kean, in *People and Their Pasts* (2009), co-edited with Paul Aston, is

²⁶ Ibid. p9

²⁷ Ibid. p14

²⁸ Ibid. p15

similarly concerned with the transmission of historical knowledge, exhorting the value of public history in challenging the didactic assumption of conventional history as a body of knowledge to be actively given to a passive audience. Kean calls for a renewed emphasis upon the idea of shared meaning, seeking to rid history of the “rigid demarcation between ‘historians’ and ‘their publics’” and is concerned with the concept of shared meaning and the potentially active role of people who are interested in the past.²⁹ Kean echoes Raphael Samuel; she too is eager to dismiss this enduring idea of propriety of history, instead reinforcing the notion that history is a collaborative and participatory process. Like Kean, Jerome de Groot (2012) regards history as experience, and explores further the evolving role of phenomenology, re-enactment, media and historical novels; in essence, “the dialogue between ‘official’ and academic, professional history and ‘amateur’, ‘public’, ‘popular’ history”.³⁰

The concept of memory and authenticity has been tentatively broached within garden history. In her article ‘Landscapes of European Memory: Biodiversity and Collective Remembrance’ (2010), Jennifer A. Jordan considers the garden as a tool for understanding cultural and social history. She seeks to examine the role of food producing gardens as sites for collective memory, “in particular the role of agents of memory, the phenomenon of prosthetic memory, the varying conceptions of authenticity, and the importance of studying forgetting alongside remembering”.³¹ Jordan’s focus is on the place of food, plants and gardens in our collective memories and how these factors can be regarded as a valuable means of deciphering the

²⁹ Ashton & Kean (2009) p1

³⁰ De Groot (2012) p1

³¹ Jordan (2010) p5

past, as well as being heavily involved in notions of identity on local, regional and national levels. The messages these sites convey might be of past inhabitants, or of the plants themselves, or of stories and current issues, such as biodiversity.

Gardens - in particular, walled kitchen gardens - lend themselves ably to the concept of history from below and of the everyday, embracing the fundamentals of what people consumed and how they cultivated their food. Clearly inspired by Samuel, Jordan emphasises the importance of the local and the regional.

Jordan considers the role of prosthetic memory as a form of collective cultural memory, as opposed to personal memory. The transient nature of a garden dictates that it must constantly be "actively constructed".³² In almost direct contrast to buildings and physical structures, replanting, rejuvenation and a state of almost constant flux is vital. Jordan suggests that gardens are more prone to prosthetic memory than personal memory; in such spaces the garden visitor *feels* the memory, as opposed to experiencing it first-hand. Their understanding of history in this respect is a sensory one, argues Jordan. Key emotions are "pleasure, curiosity and, in some cases, nostalgia".³³ There is undoubtedly much value in Jordan's assertion that the kitchen garden lends itself to an imagined and more sensory understanding. However, I would argue that it is crucial to recognise that the identity of the walled kitchen garden occupies a middle ground between the garden within which it sits and the house with which its original purpose was entwined. Therefore, a full understanding of such a site must surely account for the historic context in which it

³² Ibid. p11

³³ Ibid. p11

lies, as well as a collective cultural memory.³⁴ Jordan also considers notions of legitimacy and questions the degree to which a historic garden can ever truly be considered authentic. Walled kitchen gardens must now meet a new set of criteria; there is an implied insistence upon both productivity and aestheticism in order to appeal to the heritage visitor. Jordan points to the gaps in knowledge that often exists on walled kitchen gardens; these were primarily sites of productivity and functionality and, as such, were not often afforded the same recognition as ornamental gardens and landscapes, resulting in a lack of recordkeeping and contemporary documentation. Jordan notes how historical authenticity is rarely claimed by restorers of walled kitchen gardens, highlighting the complexities of gardens as transient sites by their very nature, in which productivity and aesthetics almost always take precedence over historical accuracy.

In *Lost Mansions* (2015), James Raven edits a collection of essays that explore the issues surrounding the physical and cultural destruction of the archetypal manor house, and questions how heritage organisations such as the National Trust and English Heritage present such places, as well as the language that they use in so doing. The focus is very much on house rather than the outdoors, but much of this discourse is readily transferable to historic gardens and landscapes, particularly the acknowledgement of such places as transient sites, palimpsest and ephemeral in nature. Raven identifies the triggers of change (namely war, political and cultural changes in the late 19th century and early 20th century) that hastened the shift of the country mansion from powerhouse to family home.³⁵ According to

³⁴ "Landscape-as-heritage lends itself to nostalgic myth-making" warns Lowenthal (1991) p217 - the historian must beware a lack of realism.

³⁵ Raven (2015) p6

Raven, a contemporary understanding of such sites is crucial, particularly the notion of 'heritage' and its changed meaning since 1970s, the point at which

“the term underwent its transference from diverse ideas of the inherited to a more generally accepted label for a particular type of historical presentation, encompassing environment, landscape and material culture”.³⁶

The culture of loss is explored too, not only in terms of the physical but also community, social and moral values. What this collection of essays reveals is the highly valuable notion of identifying an afterlife within the arena of heritage, one that encompasses multiple issues, both tangible and intangible, that are as relevant to historic gardens and landscapes today as they are to built structures.

Given the richness of literature on gardens in recent years there remains a marked gap in scholarship addressing the subject of historic gardens, their afterlives and their value and status in the 21st century. Harwood *et al* come tantalisingly close to facing head on the issue of the current state of garden history and its potential futures in their article *Whither Garden History?* (2007). The paper focuses upon three topics in particular – the concept of garden history and historiography, the need for new perspectives and the forms that they might take, and the place of integrated disciplinary theories within garden historical discourse. The authors are clear that this paper is intended to be a starting point for future debate; however, they also reach several conclusions about future potentialities surrounding garden history. They too assert that garden history must be understood outside of the conventional diachronic framework that prioritises chronology and typology, and that

³⁶ Ibid. p11

the 18th century paradigm of the British landscape garden that has long dominated scholarly debate only serves to stifle the development of the discipline:

“We remain far too inclined to compartmentalize chronologically and nationally, and, with regard to landscaping practices in England, there exists a pronounced and curious inclination to consider anything other than the dominant eighteenth-century paradigm astylistic”.³⁷

The authors also explore ideas of intention and reception, and the need for a greater understanding of how gardens were perceived by those who made and presented them and by those who visited them. They recognise the limitations of the conventional teleological approach to garden history, how it “is studied as a set of distinct styles and phases, each one neatly replacing the other, and set in a rather unproblematic linear sequence”.³⁸ The authors assert that the discipline could have much to gain from a more phenomenological approach. They make a case for creating a methodological framework in which the history of gardens (as opposed to other related disciplines such as art or architectural history) sits at the forefront, whilst recognising too that tentative steps have been made to create the space for new and supplementary (as opposed to alternative) approaches. The essay is essentially a call for new perspectives, ones that involve seeking out untrodden paths within garden historical contexts to “extend the scope and authority of the subject”.³⁹

On the subject of Cornish historic gardens and designed landscapes, two significant books must be examined - Timothy Mowl’s *Historic Gardens of Cornwall*

³⁷ Harwood (2007) p94

³⁸ Ibid. p97

³⁹ Ibid. p108

(2005) and Douglas Ellory Pett's *The Parks and Gardens of Cornwall* (1998). Mowl's work is part of a series of county-by-county studies, referred to by Williamson in the paper discussed above. However, the author is clearly challenged by Cornwall - it does not fit comfortably into his model of conventional historiography, one which embraces Repton, Brown, the large-scale gardens and estates to be found east of the Tamar river and the importance of hard landscaping.⁴⁰ Mowl is an architect and it is this discipline that informs his knowledge of gardens and landscapes; this is the language in which he communicates, and the one he adopts to 'read' a garden. Architecture is his lexicon, but Cornwall defies all that he has come across before; he admits to needing to look at the county with different eyes to truly understand and appreciate it.⁴¹ Perhaps an additional 'language' is required. Mowl confesses to agonising over the structure of the book's chapters - the chronicling of Cornwall's historic gardens has not been a straightforward, linear process, the implication being that it has been a simpler task with the counties he has documented before and those that would follow. Mowl identifies planting as a defining factor of the county's 19th century gardens. He recognises that Cornwall could offer what other regions could not, namely a mild climate in which to fully experiment. It was the horticulturalists' playground, an arena which almost demanded of its garden community that they push horticultural frontiers, be they the garden makers, owners, staff or designers. In short, it simply had no need to rely upon hard landscaping. The vast coastline invited links with overseas, providing a natural frontier through which

⁴⁰ "I have to admit in retrospect, the county has been an unpredictable purveyor of dazzling 'firsts' and unexpected episodes" Mowl (2005) p11

⁴¹ "What I enjoy and value are the vistas, the compositions, and the surprises that a 'hard' garden or landscape offers [...] If that seems to be asking a lot then it is no more than one expects from a house, and to me, gardens are a gentle extension of architecture" Ibid. p9

new plant material could arrive via local packet ships. For a county that took a protracted view of garden fashions, it was trailblazing in other ways, particularly the extent to which Cornish garden owners and designers utilised plants over landscape as design elements. Such a perspective exemplifies the benefits brought about by the employment of additional (as opposed to alternative) disciplines or 'languages'; I would argue that alongside Mowl's architectural vernacular, horticultural lexicography could contribute to a deeper appreciation of the historic Cornish garden. No singular voice need dominate; there should instead be an amalgam, that is, a cross-disciplinary conversation that contributes towards a comprehensive understanding of the region's designed exterior.

Pett (1998), on the other hand, has produced an encyclopaedic directory of Cornish gardens and landscapes, offering a brief outline of each in what is essentially a celebration of the local. Pett wrote only of Cornish gardens, so he does not struggle as Mowl does to define and understand the Cornish designed landscape, nor does he attempt to contextualise it within a broader range of typologies. He is not concerned with a national master narrative, so his frame of reference is a very different one. While Mowl's discussions are fundamentally centred around what is absent in the county, Pett celebrates what has been present. However, to understand what makes a county such as Cornwall so distinct from other regions, one must have an awareness of the national narrative in order to contextualise the local. It may at times seem contradictory, resulting in tension - if we are to focus more on the local and on microhistorical narratives, as implored by Williamson,⁴² how are we to understand their distinctiveness without

⁴² Williamson (2004)

contextualising? Perhaps here lies the key to stepping away from conventional typologising.

Scholarship addressing issues of conservation, the role of heritage organisations and questions around the future preservation of historical gardens are discussed in *Rooted in History: Studies in Garden Conservation* (2001), a series of essays by National Trust gardeners, curators and historians. Mike Calnan, head of gardens for the National Trust, considers the many complexities surrounding garden conservation. By its very nature, the conservation of a garden invokes an entirely different set of criteria than, for example, the preservation of solid artefacts or buildings. The transient and dynamic nature of a garden dictates the need to first identify the significant features of a place, long before the issue of long-term protection can even be addressed.⁴³ There is, nonetheless, an absence of academic scholarship examining how the conserved walled garden can then be interpreted and presented within a public history setting.

Given the importance of locality and region in landscape and garden history, studies of the walled gardens of Cornwall, and the situating of these sites within social and cultural contexts are even more lacking, as is a regional focus. Kim Auston carried out a preliminary study of similar sites in Devon in his article 'Another Brick in the Wall? Restoration or Decay: The State of Walled Gardens in Devon Today' (2008). This highly localised study considers the perceived challenges of maintaining walled kitchen gardens in the 21st century, which has only served to heighten their cultural and physical vulnerability. Auston questions how many sites

⁴³ Parry (2001) p7

still retain a horticultural function, and which have entirely lost their original purpose and have become, essentially, walled housing developments. Of course, there are those that are entirely lost, demolished and built over, all trace now gone. Auston raises an interesting issue concerning identity; can a walled kitchen garden still be defined as such simply because its walls are still in place, despite the current use (or lack of use) of the space within the walls? By its own admission, this study is a preliminary one to survey the existence, survival and condition of walled kitchen gardens in Devon. It is a highly localised study with limited scope but is an important first step in a process which will ultimately result in a deeper understanding of not only the physical state of historic walled kitchen gardens in the 21st century, but the cultural issues that they face and the reasons for their present condition. Landscape historian Tom Williamson extols the value of regional and local focus in garden and landscape historical discourse in his article *Designed Landscapes – The Regional Dimension* (2004), exploring the potential that such an approach has to “throw important light on the social and economic, and perhaps cultural, history of the local and regional societies”.⁴⁴ He acknowledges that conventional garden historical focus, which rarely goes beyond the national, is limiting. Williamson not only refers to geographical regions but to environmental ones too, citing the importance of understanding topographical, geological and cultural regionality.⁴⁵

Another noticeable gap in garden history scholarship concerns the issue of purpose and meaning within historic gardens, many of which are currently in a state of redundancy and face an uncertain future. I assert that in order to open up

⁴⁴ Williamson (2004) p17

⁴⁵ “We need to think about natural regions, soil types, farming regions, urban networks and patterns of cultural contact in order to elucidate the regional history of landscape design” Ibid. p24

research and debate and thereby carve out new identities for historic gardens, guardians of such sites must look to work currently being undertaken within new museology. Doing so has the potential to provide a framework for locating and communicating meaning within heritage landscapes. *The New Museology* (2006), a collection of essays edited by Peter Vergo, raises several issues concerning the changing nature of the role of the museum. Vergo defines museology as a study of not only the spaces defined as museums but also their audiences, and of the complex relationship between the two. His interest lies in *purpose*: “what is wrong with the ‘old’ museology is that it is too much about museum *methods*, and too little about the purposes of museums”.⁴⁶ Vergo calls for a more honest discourse on reasons for selection and omission of what is exhibited in museums, an acknowledgement of the true relationship between museum and visitor, with a focus upon notions of activity and passivity, and upon the utmost significance of the role of the museum’s audience, as opposed to the displayed object.

In her essay in the above, ‘Objects of Knowledge: A Historical Perspective on Museums’, Ludmilla Jordanova explores the risks associated with typologising within a traditional museum environment, and the issues that such an approach raises. She is concerned with the simplistic yet essentially limiting processes of categorisation of objects within a museum and identifies three levels; firstly, the nature of the institution (museums of, for example, maritime, natural history, childhood etc.); secondly, the physical layout of the institution (by periods, names or by the functions of collections "that seem 'natural' because they have been deeply

⁴⁶ Vergo (2006) p3

conventionalised"⁴⁷); and lastly by the classification of individual objects "pertaining to authorship, authenticity, antiquity, value, originality, significance."⁴⁸ Jordanova considers too the apparent "drive to make the past come alive", a concept which, she claims, many museums have become almost obsessed with capturing.⁴⁹ The communication of knowledge and information has become side-lined by the need to simulate experience, promote participation and to make the past tangible. Jordanova rails against such a simplistic approach; like Vergo, she insists that visiting a museum involves a more complex set of experiences in which visitors are not "passive recipients of an ideological position, conveyed through all the physical aspects of the museum".⁵⁰ The author is concerned solely with the conventionally recognised museum, and I would argue that there is much scope for extending these ideas out to a wider heritage framework, including that of historic gardens. A search for the past is easily applied to walled kitchen gardens, being such formulaic sites in both their physical layout and in the details of their highly specific but now mostly redundant function.⁵¹

Of course, new museological concerns are not confined to museums; Deirdre Stam, in her article 'The Informed Muse' (1993), points to the issues within museums which involve "changes in economic conditions, patterns of support, visitor profiles, competition from other institutions and organizations, public expectation, communication modes, reputation and political roles",⁵² all of which can be applied to the challenges faced by heritage organisations and the presentation of historic

⁴⁷ Ibid. p24

⁴⁸ Ibid. p24

⁴⁹ Ibid. p26

⁵⁰ Ibid. p33

⁵¹ The Lost Gardens of Heligan are exemplary of this point and will be explored in chapter 4.

⁵² Stam (1993) p268

spaces such as houses and gardens. Vergo (2006) too embraces this notion of universality which applies to a wide range of social and cultural historical representations: “whether we like it or not, every acquisition (and indeed disposal), every juxtaposition or arrangement of an object or work of art [...] means placing a certain construction upon history”.⁵³

Garden historian John Dixon Hunt explores the idea of the life beyond design and creation. In *The Afterlife of Gardens* (2004) Hunt argues the case for a reception study of gardens. Contemporary discourse on gardens is very much focussed upon the conception, inception and initial reception of a garden or landscape. Hunt argues that there is little concern for how today’s visitor experiences or receives the garden, and of the evolutionary factors that must be considered, such as changes in attitudes towards the site and in the usage, function and physicality of the places themselves. Hunt calls for a clear distinction between the initial understanding and reception of a space, and, crucially, an acknowledgement of how such ideologies evolve over time. Design, he argues, has taken precedence over experience; “we are readily drawn to a study of origins, especially if those stories concern famous designers or patrons”.⁵⁴ A recognition and exploration of the afterlife of a site is another step away from 'top down' historiography – it is concerned with *new* meanings, imposed by the everyman and the everyday, rather than by one dominant person, era or ideology. The acknowledgement of progression, of the changing nature of a garden, relates not only to physicality, but to the meanings of the place too. This ideology resonates particularly with walled kitchen gardens, whose origins

⁵³ Vergo (2006) pp2-3

⁵⁴ Hunt (2004) p11

were so closely tied to their primary intention of producing food to feed an estate. In this sense, the walled kitchen garden demands a consideration of the afterlife, having now entirely lost its *raison d'être*. After all, when it comes to lost or ruinous gardens, “we can never recover the original experience”, a factor that deems experience second-hand.⁵⁵ Like his fellow public historians Kean and Samuel, Hunt places renewed emphasis upon phenomenology and the sensory embodied experience of being in the garden or landscape at that moment. There is undoubtedly much to gain from the application of Hunt's reception theory to the contemporary study of walled kitchen gardens, where it would be dangerous to rely too heavily upon original meanings which are now almost entirely defunct. Hunt acknowledges one of the biggest challenges of garden conservation, that is, the impossibility of re-creating that original experience. Such an approach does have its limitations though; Hunt questions where interpretative authority lies; a meaningful understanding of such a site relies upon the ability to 'read' a garden or landscape, therefore, the need for prior knowledge or understanding of a site must surely be considered. To what degree does the garden visitor possess such knowledge, and where does the responsibility of imbuing such knowledge lie?

Clearly one of the most pressing challenges facing the heritage industry is the need to find relevance and new purpose in historic buildings, landscapes and gardens. This is by no means an easy feat; in *An Afterlife of Gardens*, Hunt declares gardens to be “the more fragile of art forms”, made ever more challenging by a dynamism that renders their meanings as ephemeral as their physical state.⁵⁶ It

⁵⁵ Ibid. p22

⁵⁶ Ibid. p12

could be argued that the extent to which the identity of historic ornamental gardens has changed is limited; in simplistic terms, they remain (or have the potential to remain) the places of pleasure and leisure that they were originally intended. Many historic houses, however, have lost their initial purpose as, for example, a residence or a seat of power, and it could be argued that it is the role of organisations such as the National Trust to instil new meanings into these sites. Walled kitchen gardens are linked intrinsically to the house, and so too is their sense of purpose. In this respect, the 21st century historic walled kitchen garden stands apart from the rest of the designed landscape, often with a weaker sense of purpose than the wider garden in which it sits.

As outlined above, much has been written on landscaped and ornamental gardens, but relatively little academic work has been undertaken on productive gardens. These sites had a distinct function and purpose, yet they were still gardened in ways that fitted in with contemporary horticultural trends, ethos and movements, so they must surely be considered within wider social and cultural contexts in the same way as ornamental gardens. Traditionally, historical research on gardens has encompassed aesthetics, designs and fashions, as well as the 'big names' behind the gardens, such as Capability Brown, Repton and Joseph Paxton. This is the public face of horticulture, a 'top down' historiography away from which garden history scholarship is only just beginning to shift. It could be argued there is a tension between the scholarly and the popular in garden history. I would certainly contend that there is a lack of public history in gardens, and a lack of garden within public history, with no apparent interface between these two elements.

Several studies recognise the notions of loss and fragility that seem so intrinsic to walled kitchen gardens today, but rarely do they explore the crucial element of *why* they are so vulnerable, and the importance that concepts of purpose, relevance and function occupy in such discussions. As outlined above, in many ways walled kitchen gardens stand apart from the ornamental gardens in which they sit; however, it is not only walls that separate them from a wider gardening context. They occupy a distinct physical location as well as a highly specific meaning; in this respect, it could be argued that they are more closely linked to the house than the gardens. The heritage industry is finding different ways of presenting houses but has yet to extend such new approaches to the presentation of gardens and even less so to that of walled kitchen gardens. At present, productive gardens appear to be suffering a crisis of identity. Perhaps this is due in part to the transience of gardens; it is much simpler to pinpoint a built structure or object to a specific historical era and to tell the stories anchored to that timeframe, but this is no easy feat for a site that can only exist through continual adaptation and change. There is a clear necessity to rethink the meaning of historic houses, a need that is on the most part beginning to be addressed. However, there is little evidence of this happening in garden history scholarship, and I would claim even less so on the ground. Heligan offers a thorough representation, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4 – but is this really the only option? What of the need to assess each heritage site on its merits, and to understand exactly what is that is worth conserving? The Heligan model is by no means universal – it would make little sense at another site and certainly not at Trelissick, hence the need to look at each

site as a unique heritage asset,⁵⁷ not merely as another generic representative of a historic walled kitchen garden. This thesis will address the need for garden history discourse to embrace notions of history from below, microhistory, reception and afterlife, all of which combine to create a rich historiographical seam from which the heritage industry can benefit. It will look to new museology, considering the benefits and limitations of the application of this relatively modern ideology to garden history and to the study of walled kitchen gardens.

⁵⁷ The word 'asset' is used in terms of heritage throughout this thesis according to Historic England's definition, that is, "a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest."
https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/hpr-definitions/#cat_H [accessed 13/01/2020]

Chapter 2

Garden historiography - history of, on and in the ground

To truly understand the current state of garden history in the 21st century, it is crucial to explore the general health of garden conservation in the UK. The care and guardianship of historic gardens brings with it a complex set of challenges, distinct from those faced by conservators of buildings and artefacts. It is fixed in part in the ephemeral nature of living things, the intricacies of which will be explored in greater depth in this chapter. However, the extent to which conservation organisations recognise this distinctiveness is questionable, for while an acknowledgement of such concerns exists, what is lacking is any clear framework which accommodates conservation issues specific to gardens. As discussed earlier, the discipline of garden history has the potential to make great strides by transcending the academic arena and finding its way back into historic gardens themselves. Therefore, it follows to explore how garden conservation and current garden historical discourse can promote this transition.

“In pursuit of a transient ideal”: garden conservation in the 21st century

Understanding definitions of the conservation of heritage assets is a useful starting point. John Sales, former Head of Gardens for the National Trust cites Holland and Rawles who define the task of conservation as being chiefly concerned with “negotiating the transition from past to future in such a way as to secure the transfer of maximum significance”.⁵⁸ Sales discusses the need for almost constant evaluation: “[conservation] has to do with assessing the full value and meaning of

⁵⁸ Sales (2000) p72

what exists, and arranging for the more important of these qualities and features to be retained for the future”.⁵⁹ Historic England defines conservation of the historic environment as

“the process of managing change to a significant place in its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage values, while recognising opportunities to reveal or reinforce those values for present and future generations.”⁶⁰

Interestingly, Historic England differentiates between that concept and constructive conservation, a term which prioritises active participation with an explicit emphasis upon future use and redevelopment, describing it thus:

“a positive and collaborative approach to conservation that focuses on actively managing change. The aim is to recognise and reinforce the historic significance of places, while accommodating the changes necessary to ensure their continued use and enjoyment.”⁶¹

There is much value in recent definitions - the acknowledgement of the conservationist’s role in transitioning a heritage asset from the past to present day and into the future is undeniably enriching and challenges common assumptions that conservationists are only concerned with preserving the past. Indeed, the addition of ‘constructive conservation’ to heritage language demonstrates an openness to physical adaptation, encompassing “the use of historic places to support regeneration, place-making and community development”.⁶² This vision stems from a recognition of the need to explore the commercial possibilities of heritage sites which can often take the form of physical development and change of

⁵⁹ Ibid. p72

⁶⁰ *Conservation Principles* (2008) p7

⁶¹ *Constructive Conservation in Practice* (2008) p3

⁶² Ibid. p1

usage. As Sales asserts, successful and sustainable conservation is concerned with finding the convergence of the past, the present and the future, and that can often involve stepping away from conventional approaches. However, there is a notable absence of any definition of garden conservation by official conservation and heritage bodies such as Historic England, Heritage Lottery Fund or the National Trust. Hence, it might be assumed that the care of historic gardens and landscapes would sit neatly within the frameworks outlined above. However, further exploration of the complexities surrounding garden conservation demonstrates that this is not the case.

Discussion on garden conservation as opposed to that of buildings and artefacts has gained traction in recent years. Lambert and Lovie (2006) provide a comprehensive overview of the advancements made in the discipline during the second half of the 20th century, particularly from the 1960s onwards.⁶³ Before this point, it would be hard to evidence more than a scant regard for historic gardens, and if they were considered, it was merely as an adjunct to a wider heritage movement which centred around buildings and, in particular, houses. It is generally recognised that garden and landscape conservation has been more delayed than other disciplines.⁶⁴ Prior to the later years of the 20th century the historic garden tended to be perceived as an appendage to the house (and its associated interior collection) to which it was adjoined, as opposed to being recognised as a heritage asset in its own right, with its own conservation criteria and a recognised

⁶³ Lambert and Lovie (2006) pp83-84; the authors cite the founding of the Garden History Society (1965), the publication of Christopher Hussey's *English Gardens and Landscapes 1700-1750* (1967) and the first garden restoration to be carried out by the National Trust at Westbury Court in 1967

⁶⁴ Notably Goodchild (1984), Lambert and Lovie (2006), Sales (2000), Bourke (1983)

understanding of its very particular needs. Recent broader conservation guidelines such as Historic England's *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidelines for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* (2008) have been extremely useful but, as Lambert and Lovie (2006) illustrate, there are several elements that render the care of gardens complex and problematic. While buildings and objects may only require involvement when a degree of degradation has occurred, gardens and landscapes constantly change and thus demand intervention in the form of almost continual removal and reinsertion of plant material. In conservation terms, those plants are the 'fabric', along with built features such as summerhouses, paths, bridges and so on. These elements will require a wide range of care in the form of 'restoration', 'reconstruction' and 'repair' but it is crucial to recognise that such terms take on different meanings when applied to gardens. It is often assumed that such interventions are predominantly positive; however, if carried out on a major scale restoration can be a negative intervention as it risks the eradication of that which had been deemed worthy of conservation.⁶⁵ Clearly there is still a palpable need for clarity and for further guidelines on the specifics and lexicographical distinctiveness of garden and landscape conservation, as opposed to other heritage assets.

The ephemerality and constant mutability of historic gardens and landscapes is the most substantial challenge facing the subject matter. It is imperative to recognise the transient and protean nature of the garden; such sites do not lend themselves to a condition of stasis, as a building or artefact can. As Head of Gardens for the National Trust, Mike Calnan asserts that the conservation of constructed artefacts is relatively easy, as they can more naturally congregate

⁶⁵ Sales (2000)

towards a new home in museums and archives - “but caring for something composed of living things that change from day to day, is a very different matter [.....] How, then, can we preserve something which by its very nature is transient?”.⁶⁶ This issue has been recognised by many garden historians and conservationists, namely Sales (2000), Lambert and Lovie (2014) and Jacques (1995), as a central concern within garden conservation, yet again and again the same issue arises, calling to question how close garden historians have come to addressing this matter, or even to fully understanding what is at stake.

The major component of gardens of all ages is living material; change is therefore inevitable, but so too are decay and death. It is this factor that sets gardens and landscapes apart from all other forms of conservation; while degrees of decay are expected in buildings and artefacts, degradation can be delayed by careful management and conservation techniques. However, the conservation of living materials cannot be arrested in the same way, for lifespans are limited and senescence is a certainty. In fact, gardens *depend* upon replacement, a concept that in any other discipline might be viewed as the antithesis of true conservation. This in turn calls for an entirely unique understanding of conservation issues, for gardens and landscapes demand varying degrees of conscious intervention if they are to negotiate the transition from past to future. Such a lack of permanence is absolute, and acceptance and understanding of this factor is crucial if historic garden conservation is to be successful. Ephemerality can be perceived as a double-edged sword, for while much aesthetic pleasure is derived from the ever-changing nature of a garden, that change must be managed and coerced with

⁶⁶ Parry (2001) p4

substantial skill and understanding, rendering any level of intervention a complex and considered process.⁶⁷

One of the consequences of constant change is a tendency towards deviation from original, intended designs and planting schemes. While a departure from origin may not always be inevitable, it is certainly facilitated, as plants must be removed and replaced as their lifespans dictate. Traditional conservation notions of repair and restoration, which would in other circumstances be called upon, are more complex when it comes to plants as, according to Sales (2000) “in gardens it [conservation] is more likely to involve processes of development, production and decay, systems of upkeep and renewal, and skills vital to the place”.⁶⁸ While these elements come into play in all areas of historic conservation (albeit to differing degrees), this emphasis upon conservation as a series of *processes* offers much value to an understanding of the distinctions between garden conservation and that of artefacts and buildings for, crucially, at the crux of the issue is not only the element of change but also the pace and the management of that change.⁶⁹ Modification in a garden or landscape can manifest on a short-term immediate level, such as a plant display in a flowerbed that must be refreshed annually, or it may be long-term, as the accumulation of physical layers over a matter of decades or centuries, resulting in a palimpsestic overview that embodies designed elements as well as incidental and accidental changes, for a historic garden is essentially the impact of man and nature resulting in “multi-period creations”.⁷⁰ Design is not the

⁶⁷ Sales (2000) p83

⁶⁸ Ibid. p73

⁶⁹ Jacques (1995) p28

⁷⁰ Ibid. p21

only concept susceptible to change; garden usage is also prone to drifting from original purpose. Clearly, another necessary negotiation has emerged, that between origins and afterlife, a topic to be revisited later in this chapter.

As mentioned previously, one of the reasons for the delayed appreciation of garden conservation as a subject been a lack of recognition of these factors and thus of the complexities involved in successful conservation of gardens and landscapes. Jacques (1995) points to the need for an interdisciplinary viewpoint, calling for a plethora of perspectives to be acknowledged, such as that of the horticulturalist, the curator, the financial manager and the nature conservationist.⁷¹ This too is advocated by Sales (2000), who calls for a greater understanding of the intangible aspects of historic gardens and landscapes alongside the care of physical elements, for cultural heritage has as much value as the physical.⁷² Lambert and Lovie (2006) recognise the crucial role that comprehensive training and knowledge play in successful garden conservation and they highlight the lack of training opportunities, the availability of which that could encourage the garden conservationist to adopt a more holistic understanding of the subject matter at hand.⁷³

To better understand the position of garden history and conservation in the 21st century, it is vital to consider how knowledge of the subject is being disseminated at a scholarly level. A quick search for universities in the UK offering undergraduate and postgraduate courses in garden history does not present an

⁷¹ Jacques (1995) p22

⁷² Sales (2000) p73

⁷³ Lambert & Lovie (2006) p103

encouraging response, with a dwindling number of courses on offer at the time of writing.⁷⁴ One lone postgraduate qualification in Garden and Landscape History is offered by the Institute of Historical Studies. Post-graduate qualification in Conservation of the Historic Environment is available at Birmingham City University; it is predominantly concerned with built structures, but within that context gardens and landscapes are studied too. The Department for Continuing Education at Oxford University offers an accredited course in English Landscape Gardens (1650 to the present day), described as “the ideal introduction to English garden history”.⁷⁵ After an introduction to the discipline, however, the would-be garden history scholar faces severely limited options. The history of designed exteriors can be encompassed into other disciplines, such as studies of landscape, agriculture, landscape architecture, heritage, social history and culture, but as a stand-alone academic discipline, it is increasingly difficult to assert a strong position for the subject.

Perceptions that garden history is firmly entrenched within academia persist. I would assert that a culture of exclusivism and scholarliness prevails, one which firmly roots garden history in the academic arena, and as far away from a physical garden as possible. There exists an assumption that any physical manifestation of garden history in a public garden would be illegible and confusing; a National Trust garden advisor expressed concern about the chasm of understanding between a historic garden site and the study of garden history, asking

“do you want a really purist, academic, correct restoration of a historic garden

⁷⁴ Lambert and Lovie (2006) lament the decline of training during the late 20th and early 21st centuries. They cite just 3 graduate and postgraduate courses in UK universities in 2006 - in 2019 these are all defunct.

⁷⁵ <https://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/courses/english-landscape-gardens-1650-to-the-present-day-online> [accessed 21/12/2019]

that people like myself and Richard Wheeler [National Trust garden historian] feel is all very fascinating, but for your average visitor it washes over their heads?”⁷⁶

Presumably, the answer to this question is a negative, and as a result several assumptions emerge - that garden history has no place in a historic garden; that garden visitors cannot (or will not) ‘read’ a historic garden as such; and that to be authentic, garden history cannot manifest as anything other than absolute and purist. Such perceptions are not confined to the aforementioned garden advisor, and a study of historic gardens, and particularly walled kitchen gardens, later in this thesis will consider the extent to which historic gardens in Cornwall reflect the embodiment of garden history.

Dominic Cole, Chair of the Gardens Trust and before it the Garden History Society, described the taxonomical limitations thus:

“I think it [garden history] is a good term in some ways, probably because I’m used to it. But because I’m not a historian, as soon as someone says ‘motor car history’ or something like that, I immediately turn off. So I can imagine other people are doing the same with garden history. Put the two words together and it’s actually a slightly disastrous name.”⁷⁷

Cole clearly believes that the term runs the risk of deterring potential supporters. He goes on to explain his concerns, citing miscomprehension of what the subject entails: “There’s this idea that we are still a nation of gardeners and that we don’t need garden history. I’m not surprised that it’s still a specialist subject”.⁷⁸ Cole assumes a clear distinction between the study of gardens and the act of gardening and in referring to the two elements as separate entities he confirms the chasm that

⁷⁶ Pers. comms. 2018

⁷⁷ Richardson (2015) p7

⁷⁸ Ibid. p7

lays between them.⁷⁹ Cole's implication is that garden history alienates the amateur, and that an interest in history can only occur authentically within an academic arena. He does not recognise himself as a historian, despite his position as chair of the Garden History Society, and it must be assumed that he classes himself as an amateur as opposed to a professional.

It has become evident that a culture of disparity has emerged in garden history and conservation, manifesting as polarity in various forms - between the concept of garden history and the physical manifestation of historic gardens; between the act of gardening and the study of gardening; and between the origins and the afterlife of gardens. The reception of gardens and the means of reading historic gardens and landscapes is a subject that will be considered in greater depth later in this chapter. However, if garden history depends upon the ability of the garden conservationist to 'read' a garden, historic gardens must surely be legible also to those who visit and experience such places. I would assert that the relationship between the two is as crucial for the long-term survival of historic gardens as the need for garden conservation skills and knowledge. There is much value in understanding garden conservation as a natural companion to garden history. Indeed, there is an interesting correlation between the two disciplines; garden history does not depend upon garden conservation, for it has a place outside of the physical environment, in the academic arena. Conservation, however, is dependent upon knowledge of garden history. There is certainly a case to be argued for a strong affiliation between the two, towards a fuller understanding of both

⁷⁹ In this context it is interesting to note how at odds Cole is with John Dixon Hunt's call for cohesion between the two elements, towards a movement of 'gardenism' (Hunt (2004) p12

subjects which would in turn facilitate the extrication of garden history from the academic realm in which it is widely assumed to be so firmly embedded.

There is still much work to be carried out to fulfil the aims and requirements of historic garden conservation. As Sales (2000) and Jacques (1995) explicitly point out, knowledge and skills are fundamental, not only on a practical level but on a holistic one too. What is needed is an appreciation of the garden in its palimpsestic form, understanding the garden not only as the sum of its parts, but as the sum of its history too. The recognition that humankind is one of the biggest risks to the conservation of gardens and landscapes must not be overlooked, for without the means to 'read' and understand a historic landscape, decay may be hastened, and further degradation may occur, putting at risk not only the physical features of the site, but also cultural values, meanings and potentialities. Clearly, the conservation of historic gardens and landscapes is a highly complex subject; as Sales asserts, "we are dealing not merely with an object but a process that has to be consistently and sensitively guided if the garden is to survive".⁸⁰

"A narrative of great men and great gardens" - the dominance of the 18th century historiographical paradigm.

As forward-looking and dynamic as conservation policy must be, it is nonetheless imperative to recognise the marriage between past and present; thus, a thorough understanding of 21st century garden conservation policy requires an awareness of current garden historiography. As Harwood *et al* assert in their essay

⁸⁰ Parry (2001) p35

'Whither Garden History?' (2007), there is much evidence that garden historiography has, in its relatively short lifespan, become firmly entrenched within a master narrative focused upon the English 18th century landscape garden. Harwood (2007) and Bending (1994) attribute the origins of such discourse to the publication of Horace Walpole's *Essay on Modern Gardening* in 1771, in which the author presented a chronological outline of the development of the English garden. The narrative that runs through the essay is one of 'natural' progression and improvement, culminating in what is argued to be the absolute peak of garden design, occurring in the first half of the 18th century; that is, the creation of the English landscape garden. The discourse is distinctly Whiggish according to Bending (1994), who asserts that as well as the garden and designed landscape transitioning towards a more naturalistic state, such sites were also progressing in terms of how they were to be read and understood; a new language was employed, one which moved away from the emblematic towards the expressive.⁸¹ The 18th century designed landscape was allegedly set free from the formal confines associated with the 17th century; gone were walls, parterres, fountains and symmetry and in came flowing lines, naturalistic groupings of trees and undulating landscapes; "the living landscape was chastened or polished, not transformed" declared Walpole.⁸²

Garden historians such as Harwood, Hunt and Williamson (2007) and Bending (1994) have all asserted that this Walpolean narrative has culminated in the creation of a 18th century paradigm within garden history, one that is characterised

⁸¹ Ibid. p210

⁸² Walpole (1904) p59

by a teleological perspective and a preoccupation with form over function, to which I would add the presence of an overarching concern with binary assumptions - formal versus informal; British versus French/Dutch; national versus regional. Williamson (2004) and Lambert and Lovie (2006) trace such perspectives to art-historical discourse, diachronic and evolutionary in nature, with a strong emphasis upon big names and notable stylistic movements, each one leading 'naturally' to the next. Harwood (2007) shares this assertion, citing

“a desire to identify a set of major designers and grant them privileged control over the course of landscaping developments while paying far less attention both to patrons and to local gardening staffs assigned the task of implementing designs”.⁸³

The reasons for this dominant narrative are varied. A distinct lack of primary sources plays its part, as the daily lives of the working classes would not have been documented to the extent of those much further up the social hierarchy, due in part to low levels of literacy, as well as a lack of time, or incentive to do this. Large estates and their owners are much more generous in giving up a wealth of information. Maps, plans, letters, reminiscences, mentions by other estate owners, evidence from designers and architects - all combine to provide a rich seam of knowledge and understanding. However, the gentle yet undeniable surge of interest in an alternative discourse that is not fixated upon the works of Brown, Repton and Kent suggests that perhaps it is not a lack of primary source that is the issue, but rather, how the 21st century garden historian reads and interprets such material.

⁸³ Harwood *et al* (2007) p92

Not only is this dominant paradigm limiting, it is exclusive too, focussing upon a small, elite group of designed landscapes that are regarded as exemplary, to the detriment of a plethora of gardens and landscapes that do not sit as comfortably within this historiographical template. Sites such as Stowe, Stourhead and Petworth are perceived as the physical representations of such a model and are thus lauded, while smaller sites and lesser known gardeners, architects and designers, as well as the domestic and vernacular, become devalued. The role of women in the creation and development of gardens and designed landscapes is also overlooked. However, there is evidence that garden historians are starting to consciously step away from the prevailing discourse and its fixation upon the chief male protagonists, namely Brown, Repton and Kent. For example, Smith & Weston (2017) turn as far as possible from this patriarchal and elitist narrative by fixing their attention upon the mid-20th century garden of a working-class woman, Hilda Smith. In doing so they seek to offer an alternative narrative to “the preoccupation of garden historians with the gardens of the wealthy and with landscape gardening”.⁸⁴ As they argue, an entire social, cultural and economic stratum is being ignored, one that played a significant role in the creation and upkeep of British gardens, that is, the working-class gardener. The role played by horticultural staff of country estates, those caring for public spaces and parks and the suburban gardener in the development of gardens of all sizes must no longer be overshadowed by a top down, elitist paradigm. It is imperative to understand not only *what* was happening on (and in) the ground but also *how* it happened, for allowing micro-historical narratives to be shared and celebrated would surely be enriching and informative, resulting in a

⁸⁴ Smith & Weston (2017) p213

much more democratic garden historical narrative.

Diminishing the role played by the local, the vernacular, the working classes and by women in horticulture in turn leads to a devaluing of the sites that they created, maintained and developed. I would argue that such reliance upon the national for meaning results in a conscious oversight of the importance of local and regional variations. If the localised does not sit comfortably within the dominant national narrative, it can easily be dismissed as uncommon or atypical.⁸⁵ Cornwall is a case in point - in many ways the county's gardens do not fit easily into the 18th century narrative. Cornwall has not been populated by vast landscaped estates; Brown had no presence here and while Repton's designs certainly crossed the Tamar, they were limited in number, with little evidence of trailblazing. Cornwall owes more of its horticultural qualities to the gardenesque movement of the 19th century than to the 18th century peak in landscape design. Soft landscaping, in which plants were the principal ingredient, has long provided the structure for the most inspiring of gardens. Such local sites may be no more or less important horticulturally and historically than other gardens and landscapes across the country, but the difference is that they do not easily fit into conventional historiographies and because of this, they are often overlooked. When historiography that fixates on landowning elites and their gardens dominates garden-historical discourse, regions such as Cornwall can easily become disregarded.

Clearly, the celebration of the 18th century landscape in garden history has been mirrored in garden conservation, resulting somewhat in the marginalisation

⁸⁵ Harwood et al (2007) p94; Williamson (2004)

and devaluation of alternative historiographical narratives. However, the beginnings of a turning tide are visible. There has been a call to arms amongst garden historians for more studies of historic garden sites that sit outside the conventional dominant paradigm,⁸⁶ as well as for new perspectives on garden-historiographical methodological frameworks that consciously step away from big names and big landscapes. and for insights that reflect an acknowledgement of alternative themes and narratives worthy of further study and investigation. Studies in the vein of Smith and Weston's (2017) article on Hilda Smith and her allotment are slowly gaining traction, but they are still very much in the minority. Over a decade after Harwood *et al's* (2007) public commentary on the future of the discipline, little has changed, and the 18th century landscape garden and the hegemonic discourse to which it subscribes still holds an omnipotent sway on garden history. For here lies the inherent power of garden history; in defining dominant ideologies, it affirms what has value and is deserving of protection and therefore what has not. That is not to suggest that the 18th century landscape is the only design movement given consideration. It is interesting to note that there is recognised value in what came before. For example, celebrated Tudor gardens are certainly not a rarity - Sudeley Castle, Kenilworth and Hampton Court Palace are all lauded as some of the finest gardens in the country. It is post-18th century where garden conservation seems to falter, supporting the assumption that the 18th century designed landscape is 'peak garden'.

⁸⁶ Smith & Weston (2017) draw attention to "the preoccupation of garden historians with the gardens of the wealthy and with landscape gardening. While recognising this has produced much valuable work, it has tended to exclude a wide range of other equally interesting and insightful aspects of horticultural history" (p.213)

It would follow that the histories of 19th century gardens can at times struggle to assert themselves. Many gardens and landscapes created and developed in the 19th century have highly significant social and cultural importance, as did the entire movement of gardening and horticulture.⁸⁷ The first half of the century saw the return of the formal garden; parterres, fountains and intricate planting designs such as those created at Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire and Wrest Park in Bedfordshire embodied the re-emergence of a symbolism of mankind's control over nature, this time in an era that witnessed unprecedented levels of scientific, technical and industrial innovation and experimentation. However, gardening was no longer considered the preserve of a wealthy elite minority. It had become a fashionable pursuit among those of a lower social standing, including industrialists, middle class households and the labouring working classes. What is more, horticultural knowledge was disseminated in ways which had previously been inconceivable - for the first time, it was attainable to the everyman through journals and the emergence of the suburban garden. The rise of horticultural journalism enabled the dissemination of knowledge amongst all social strata - the middle-class suburban gardener now had access to the cultural advice given by head gardeners of large estates, allowing a democratisation of the flow of information. In the 19th century Gardenesque landscape, the plant became the star, as soft landscaping was celebrated over hard landscaping.

⁸⁷ Nationally several great country seats were created in the 19th century – in Buckinghamshire Waddesdon Manor and Hughenden; Osborne House on the Isle of Wight; Wrest Park in Bedfordshire and Audley End in Essex and Biddulph Grange in Staffs. Closer to the south west, Tynesfield (Somerset) and Knightshayes (Devon) – all embodied the highly formalised Victorian style of gardening, with room too for more exotic species.

It is also vital to recognise the outward-looking nature of 19th century horticulture, the components of which were no longer controlled, designed elements following the principles of Englishmen such as Brown; instead, plants had become the protagonist, and what is more, plants that were distinctly un-English. Plant material during the 19th century was being hunted and sought out across the globe, gaining significant value in both cultural and economic terms. Commercial horticultural boomed – nurseries such as Veitch in Exeter and Treseders of Truro took full advantage of the unprecedented amount of plant material coming into the country, and the accompanying appetite for new additions to gardens of all sizes. This was the era of the exotic, the outside, and was diametrically opposed in nature to the introspective, self-congratulatory 18th century English landscape movement. However, with modern hindsight the vulnerability of soft landscaping becomes apparent, as does the transience of such garden-historical elements, for the preservation of physical forms that embody hard landscaping is less problematic in many ways. Contoured landscapes, temples and lakes can persist and endure, whereas without a significant amount of care and cultivation, an herbaceous border or a bed of trained fruit can be gone without a trace within a season or two.⁸⁸

The dependence upon plants and soft landscaping has resulted in 19th century gardens being the most ephemeral of sites, as they are in many ways more complex to sustain as *historic* gardens. It is not only the physicality of these gardens that is at risk, but their cultural and social value too. Because they have never

⁸⁸ Enys serves as a notable example – built structures such as summerhouses and lakes are extant but herbaceous borders, planted avenues and the productive garden are all either long gone or have been entirely recreated, though not necessarily with historic accuracy (pers. comms. 2017).

enjoyed the status of the 18th century landscape, their vulnerability is heightened - in not being recognised as culturally valuable, they have not been revered and given the same level of respect and protection. The discipline's lexicon has become so attuned to the 18th century paradigm that, like Mowl, many garden historians and conservationists struggle to translate what sits outside the dominant discourse.

The future of garden historiography - the potential of a new approach

What emerges is a clear need to invigorate garden history, and to identify the historical approaches which garden historians and conservationists can utilise obtain multiple perspectives on the discipline. Recent debates in heritage studies have the potential to shed new light on garden historiographical discourse in the 21st century, offering alternative and encouraging perspectives. New museology is surely one such approach, for museums have undergone a tremendous transition throughout the late 20th and early 21st centuries, via processes of questioning and redefining their purpose, and by responding to societal changes. This change has been prompted by several factors, namely the growth in number of museums, a transition in audiences and what they want from museums, and the fact that museums must now be more business-minded to survive in such a commercial environment.⁸⁹ Already, the potential for interconnectivity between museums and gardens is evident, for it is widely recognised that these changes have also occurred in the garden heritage sector.

One significant and defining consequence of new museology is the digression of focus away from collections and artefacts towards the visitor

⁸⁹ Hudson (1998) p45

experience - the role of museum has changed from legislator to interpreter,⁹⁰ and with the focus has moved from collection (or object) to visitor (or user, customer, one who is experiencing the exhibit). Crucially, such activity takes place in an environment in which inclusivity and accessibility take on more significance than exclusivity and elitism. At the heart of the progression that has occurred within museums is an acknowledgement of a plurality and equality of pasts, as opposed to the dominance of a singular historiographical narrative; the museum has deviated from its role as active *transmitter* of knowledge (to the visitor as passive *receiver*) towards a renewed role as agent of democratic dialogue, embracing a spirit of co-curatorship. As discussed previously, elitism is certainly a criticism that has been levelled at garden history,⁹¹ and the dominance of a single master narrative within the discipline still persists. It follows to question how transferable new museology is to garden history, and what garden history can learn from the progress that has occurred in the museum arena in recent years. In physical terms the idea of a collection (that is, the conscious assembling of artefacts with associated meanings) is already evident in many public historic gardens. In a garden setting, the collection manifests as an accumulation of trees and plants, of structures (bridges, garden buildings etc.) and of topographical features (inclines, lawns, bodies of water, terraces etc.). These elements have the potential to be regarded as the 'collection', the vast majority of which have been added, manipulated or created by human hand, and brought together in one site. In basic terms therefore, a garden can be perceived as a collection, a living exhibit. However, creating and organising such a collection becomes a much more complex process, for curating plant material brings

⁹⁰ Ross (2004) p84

⁹¹ Richardson (2015) p7

with it a whole host of issues. A collection of plants is fixed in many ways, dependent upon environmental needs, meaning that the potentially temporal nature of museum exhibitions cannot transfer to a garden setting in a straightforward manner - it is wholly dependent upon a very specific set of criteria distinct from those demanded from an object or artefact. Motability and transferability are also issues, for most garden specimens need to be static, physically rooted in one place. Gardens need time, for spatial permanence (or at the very least long-term perspectives) is crucial, although change is not precluded, for mutability is inevitable within a garden. However, the pace of change is significantly slower, and must be so for the framework of garden to survive and thrive.

New museological concepts of dialogue and co-curatorship, alongside a renewed focus upon the consumer (as opposed to the transmitter) of cultural heritage, are clearly transcendent, suggesting the potential to broaden their scope outside the realm of the museum. The number of museums in the UK in the 21st century is certainly healthy,⁹² with a wide-ranging subject matter in their care. By its very nature, new museology is a broad-minded concept and it would follow, therefore, that its applicability to a diverse spectrum of museological specialisms enables an easy transference to other branches of knowledge that share a commitment to the guardianship of cultural and heritage assets. Certainly, there is evidence of other institutions embracing museological frameworks. The National Trust may not identify itself publicly as a museum *per se*, but it is the largest accredited museum authority in England, and is defined by the Museum Association

⁹² Museums Association (2019) reports approximately 2500 museums to be in existence currently <https://www.museumsassociation.org/about/frequently-asked-questions> [accessed 23/08/2019]

as one of eight types of museums.⁹³ Museum accreditation is considered a high priority for the majority of National Trust properties which house collections of artefacts, and the organisation asserts that such sites are well placed to exhibit such objects, “displaying the vast majority of its collections in the places for which they were originally acquired”.⁹⁴ However, it could be argued that the rate at which artefacts are transferred from property to property (on temporary or permanent loan, for example) might render the issue of contextual authenticity questionable, suggesting a cultural homogenisation of historic places and their contents. One such example is Trerice, a 16th century manor in North Cornwall, which houses a rich assemblage of furniture and artefacts; however, there are just two indigenous pieces of furniture to be found there, a dining table and a fireback. The remainder of the collection was brought to Trerice in the middle of the 20th century when the house was opened to the public, although this is not made explicit to visitors, who on the most part assume the entire collection to be historically rooted in the house.⁹⁵

On the other hand, the issue of contextual authenticity in historic gardens and landscapes is much more straightforward, for meaning and narrative are

⁹³ The list is comprised of national, local authority, university, independent, historic properties and heritage sites, regimental museums and armouries, National Trust properties and unoccupied royal palaces. <https://www.museumsassociation.org/about/frequently-asked-questions> [accessed 23/08/2019]

⁹⁴ *National Trust Collections Management Instruction* (2019) “Displaying objects in their original context is a key expression of each property’s unique Spirit of Place and a measure of historical, social and artistic significance recognised by statutory bodies and supported by the Treasury’s Acceptance in Lieu Scheme.” p5

⁹⁵ Autoethnography comes into play here - I worked at Trerice from 2012-2016. Visitors often vocalised their assumption that the collection had a connection with previous occupants of the house. In fact, the contents were assembled and curated by Michael Trinick, National Trust land agent, in the 1960s.

created not only by the components of the garden but also by a sense of place and by cultural value, and never more so than in the case of the gardens of notable plantsmen or women, such as Lawrence Johnston's garden at Hidcote, or the garden of Margery Fish at East Lambrook, where the significance of the place and its elements is utterly entwined with the creator of the garden. Such collections of plants would immediately lose value if transplanted to another location, for their significance is in their setting and their place of origin, that is, their social, cultural, historical and physical context. The easy replication of a plant species via a plethora of propagation methods means that a plant can be more easily devalued culturally than a man-made artefact or structure, of which there may only exist a finite number. A single plant at Hidcote, as opposed to that same plant species in a domestic back garden, loses much of its cultural meaning once removed from that setting. In general terms, plants do not possess the uniqueness or distinctiveness that many artefacts worthy of display do - in physiological terms, there is no difference between a Monkey Puzzle tree grown on the Pencarrow estate in Cornwall and any other Monkey Puzzle tree in the UK. However, a very specific meaning and cultural value lies with that Monkey Puzzle tree in Pencarrow, as it was the first garden in the UK to grow this notable plant. The original avenue of plantings at Pencarrow is infused with significance because of the historical narrative that sits alongside it, even though some of the plants have been replaced over the years due to natural senescence. Here, context is all, as the plant and its location are intrinsically linked, each imbuing the other with a sense of historical significance.

However, as new museology asserts, there must be more to a 21st century museum than the exhibiting of collections, be they plants or artefacts. At the heart of

new museology is the idea that the site itself must take on a new sense of purpose, functioning as a socially inclusive, accessible and newly co-curated space. It is a place in which dialogue is encouraged and dynamic relationships are forged between the institution and the community with which it interacts; it is the activities and processes that occur within the space that are important. Here lie several potential benefits for garden history. As has already been suggested, historic gardens can lend themselves to this notion more comfortably than many conventional museums; the power of place and authentic contextual meaning is intrinsic to our understanding of historic gardens and landscapes, for gardens are recognisable as places of human activity. They depend upon such activity for their very existence, from design and creation through to development, survival and reception - put simply, people lie at their heart. By its nature a historic garden is an assemblage of factors which include (but are not limited to) physical components, sense of place, and human activity and intervention. Combined, these factors can facilitate a new approach for garden history, creating an alternative narrative in which garden historians step away from their position as didactic educators, instead working towards a new role as facilitators of a historic garden experience that listens to its visitors and involves them in a mutually beneficial relationship, participatory in nature and centred around co-curatorship.

The issue of contextual authenticity allows historic garden sites to become arenas in which cultural and social meanings can exist beyond the individual components, that is, beyond the realm of the “collection”. Thus, the garden becomes a social space, where a plurality of meanings and interpretations can exist alongside one another. I would assert that gardens already lend themselves to a multitude of

functions; they can exist as places of well-being, restfulness, learning, or as a place of sensory or intellectual stimulation. Such a diverse sense of purpose can facilitate the discipline's rejection of a rigid and singular idea of what a historic garden has been (and therefore must continue to be), towards an open-minded vision of what garden history has the potential to provide to a diverse audience. Perhaps historic gardens and landscapes may find it easier to fulfil that seemingly elusive (yet constantly strived for) goal of being all things to all people, more so than a museum can.⁹⁶ However, to do so, historic gardens must first come to terms with defining and assessing exactly what those purposes and functions are; there is clearly more work to be done to realise garden history's contribution to current heritage debates.

The degree to which new museology is successful in 21st century museums varies considerably across the discipline;⁹⁷ it is a relatively young and emerging area of interest. However, therein lies its power, for new museology recognises that fluidity is essential if museums are to continue to thrive, and if they are to serve a purpose and be relevant to their visitors' (and potential visitors') lives. This recognition of the protean nature of heritage discourse and the inevitability of change can benefit garden history tremendously, for garden historians and conservationists must not only listen to their audiences, they must also find a way to respond accordingly and to be ready to shift their identities and the status quo. In this respect the role of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) is commendable in the museum arena in its role as a regulatory body which visibly and actively promotes a culture of change, of mutability and a readiness to be shaped by

⁹⁶ Kotler and Kotler (2000) discuss this concept at length.

⁹⁷ McCall and Gray (2014) provide discussion on the extent to which new museology is successful, with an interesting focus upon "effective implementation" p31

community and public needs.⁹⁸ At the time of writing, ICOM have announced a public consultation to reshape the definition of the museum, in response to the recognition that

“the points of intersection between museums and communities are continuously shifting [...] The current definition, which has only seen minor adjustments over the past few decades, does not reflect and express adequately the complexities of the 21st century and the current responsibilities and commitments of museums, nor their challenges and visions for the future”.⁹⁹

Continual processes of self-evaluation with the community to whom these institutions serve lie at the core of new museology. I would assert that heritage bodies that are responsible for the care of historic gardens and landscapes, such as the National Trust, English Heritage, Historic England and the Gardens Trust, have much to learn from ICOM and must embrace such a philosophy, working together towards a universally accepted framework that recognises the uniqueness of historic garden conservation - for nothing is as inevitable as change, especially in a garden.

The physical rootedness of a garden may be perceived as a limiting factor - how can there be room for flexibility and fluidity within a historic garden when its components are not easily changeable? Unlike a museum exhibition, a garden cannot be altered easily and certainly not on a whim, as such the process is

⁹⁸ “Museums are democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people. Museums are not for profit. They are participatory and transparent, and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance understandings of the world, aiming to contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary wellbeing.”

<https://icom.museum/en/activities/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/> [accessed 13/08/2019]

⁹⁹ Ibid.

nowhere near as simplistic as physically moving or bringing together a group of artefacts, as one can do within a museum exhibition. A garden must of course be grown; it demands time, as well as a site-specific range of conditions that cannot easily be controlled, such as aspect, space, temperature, light levels, moisture levels etc. However, if a garden is understood as an exterior structure, much like a museum structure, and the spaces within it as a site for a new way of *understanding* (as opposed to simply *presenting*) historic gardens, then the possibilities begin to present themselves. Acknowledging such an opportunity would represent a deliberate distancing from the constraints of 'old museology', whereby the object reigns supreme, towards the new museology, where the space and the *function* of that space take precedence over the object that resides there. The historic garden can act as a site for finding new meanings, emotional connections and understandings for audiences. Perhaps a garden itself cannot easily adapt physically, but through changing the activities and dialogues that occur within these sites a new perspective begins to emerge. In such a model, the visitor becomes an active agent and the historic garden becomes a dynamic space in which to share discourse. A walled garden is a prime example of the potential of a historic garden space to advance its agenda through new museological values - it is the meanings and activities within that space, rather than the physical elements, that have the potential to take on significance, and thus become the agents for the sharing of knowledge, skills and experiences.

Public history has emerged during the later years of the 20th century as an alternative historiographical approach, a step away from conventional and hegemonic notions of transmission and reception of historical knowledge. Such

concepts have traditionally been embedded in scholarship. However, public history is more concerned with the conveyance of shared meanings that results from a more balanced relationship between the scholar and the amateur by bringing together many voices, much like new museology. It seeks to invoke a spirit of collaboration, and places value on the everyday, the ordinary and the local; its natural environment is as likely to be in libraries, archives, interviews, local record offices and family trees as it is within an academic domain. In fact, public history takes a conscious step away from the academic arena and its assumed dominant role of creator and disseminator, towards a more democratic understanding of knowledge. At its heart lies the recognition of the need for the convergence of scholarly and amateur to provide authentic historiographical discourse; according to Kean (2010) “rather than being counterposed, the personal and the public are elided and divisions between being a “historian” and “a member of the public” are broken down”.¹⁰⁰ The implication put forward by public historians such as Kean, Samuel, de Groot and Frisch is that conventional historiography has devalued the non-professional and of those outside of the academic arena, and that a new dialogue must be developed, not through minimising or marginalising academic knowledge, but rather, through seeking the point of intersection between the two elements, driven by a culture of collaboration and participation.

Public historians embrace the potential of numerous historiographical processes and materials as means of creating histories and of sharing knowledge and meanings, such as studies of the local, of oral history, of history from below, and the place of memory. It follows to explore the extent to which garden historians have

¹⁰⁰ Kean (2010) p33

acknowledged such an approach, and how the discipline might be enriched by doing so. As this thesis has already recognised, garden history has done little to move beyond the realms of the academic and scholarly, nor to reject existing dominant hierarchical discourse, and it is not my intention to reiterate such limitations.

However, there is value in questioning how garden historians have made use of the past, the potentialities that exist in doing so, and the usefulness to the discipline of the broad array of materials, processes and resources that public historians have brought to the fore.

A perspective of history from below is largely absent from garden history discourse, although there have been a few rare forays, notably into the everyday lives of Victorian gardeners such as Hooper's *Life in the Gardeners' Bothy* (2000) and English Heritage's publication of *Diary of a Victorian Gardener: William Cresswell and Audley End* (2006). Sharpe (1991) argues that isolated and localised studies of individuals do not provide a meaningful view and the implication is that this is only possible through the accumulation of similar studies that create a body of work.¹⁰¹ However, garden and landscape historians such as Hunt (2000) and Lambert and Lovie (2006) have asserted the value of the localised and regional, and a shift from the dominance of national discourse at the expense of a localised one. As has already been discussed, garden history is firmly entrenched within a master narrative that is dominated by a top down discourse in which the everyday, the ordinary and the working classes are largely absent. Therefore, the addition of the local to the bigger picture is a positive aspect, as supplementary (as opposed to alternative) discourse must be welcomed.

¹⁰¹ Burke (1991) p35

One of the potential benefits of adopting a public historiographical perspective is a richer understanding of gardens of all scales, be they designed landscapes adjoined to grand estates or a suburban back garden or allotment, as well as the experiences of those who owned, lived and worked in such sites. The existence of these gardens depended upon the work of a previously undocumented group of workers, for there has been little attention paid to gardeners as a labour force in historical discourse. Even the largest and wealthiest gardens could not have made the leap from the pages of Repton's Red Book to physical manifestation without the toil of hundreds of ordinary people, whose everyday existence was dominated by the horticultural care of such places. Gardens lend themselves comfortably to the concept of history from below, and I would assert that within that arena, walled kitchen gardens sit even more easily, for while they were places of beauty, they were essentially sites of productivity and function, concealed behind high walls in which continual human activity was crucial. As a means of gaining a greater understanding of what was happening on the ground,¹⁰² public history and history from below can offer a great deal of insight. Levels of human intervention in a garden are vast, from design to construction to maintenance - as has been highlighted, an understanding of post-design in the life of a garden has been neglected.¹⁰³ The fact that such perspectives can imbue the discipline with a wide range of narratives to share with audiences and a new perspective and broadened experience with which to engage them must not be overlooked. Here lies an opportunity to expand the audience and to augment emotional, social and cultural

¹⁰² As advocated by Harwood *et al* (2007) p94

¹⁰³ Hunt (2004) provides an excellent study of the potential benefits of applying reception theories to garden history.

connectivity through the potency of “an engagement with and an expression of landscape as an enduring record of the lives and works of past and present generations who have dwelt within it”.¹⁰⁴

However, one of the limitations of history from below is the issue of direct testimony. Sharpe (1991) discusses the consequences of a perceived lack of evidence, particularly the further back one goes in history.¹⁰⁵ He points to the absence of direct evidence from the workers themselves, a factor that resonates within garden history. As mentioned previously, a handful of diaries exist but regular personal documentation was not part of a gardener’s daily existence, and the result is a distinct lack of direct testimonial documentation. The cultural value of such documents has been recognised in retrospect rather than contemporaneously, therefore a great deal has not survived. Ironically it may have been a perception of documents such as estate maps, planting plans and financial accounts as mundane and therefore insignificant that has caused them to have been lost - the everyday was *too* everyday. This shift in understanding and subsequent valuing of certain historiographies over others is a recent one, and so the public historian must always be mindful of this - past historiographies must not be devalued, for in understanding the reasons for their tradition of dominance, the historian is in a better position to negotiate between the two discourses.

As reflected by the comments of a National Trust gardens advisor and of Dominic Cole, garden history struggles to assert itself outside of academia and is

¹⁰⁴ Robertson (2016) p2

¹⁰⁵ Burke (1991) p28 – he does, however, suggest alternatives frameworks that can enrich the ‘history from below’ approach.

still very much perceived solely as a scholarly endeavour. As Ashton and Kean (2009) contend, public history is not only concerned with where the newly democratised information is disseminated and shared, but also with who is creating and writing it, and this is certainly true for garden history, for not only is it on the most part confined to the academy, but it is *created* by those within the academy too. A consideration of who is producing garden history discourse, as well as disseminating it, does not reveal an encouraging picture. The authors of the majority of articles in the Gardens Trust Journal (formerly the Garden History Journal) offer scant material by anyone outside of academia, and the content is predominantly top down. It remains firmly rooted in grand narratives, estate gardens and landscapes, with very little content on the personal, the everyday and the ordinary. There is clearly scope for a study of garden history *on the ground*, particularly within the heritage sector. However, I would argue that on a localised level, there is evidence of a step away from the dominant discourse of top down history. Within the fold of the Gardens Trust lie individual county gardens trusts, who carry out research on a range of local garden topics. A cursory glance at Devon Garden Trusts journals over the last few years is much more encouraging, with topics such as gardeners' bothies, local women in horticulture, and 19th century allotment gardeners making an appearance (alongside subject matter of a more conventional ilk), with articles written by amateurs and academics alike.¹⁰⁶ It would seem that on a localised level,

¹⁰⁶Articles written and published in the Devon Gardens Trust Journal in the last 12 years include *The 'Industrious Poor': 19th Century Devon Allotment Gardeners* (2008); *Home From Home? Bothy Living in 19th Century Gardens* (2009); *Educating Schoolchildren at RHS Rosemoor* (2013) and *Pontey's: An Introduction to a Plymouth Nursery* (2013).

garden history is beginning to make strides towards a more democratic and shared historical discourse.

I assert that public history has the potential to be a tool for the democratisation of garden history. The growth in interest in local history, in family history, and the accessibility of archives (due in part to their burgeoning digitisation) is allowing history to become an “activity rather than a profession”.¹⁰⁷ Garden history is primed and ready for such an approach, for not only would that involve taking defiant steps away from the dominance of 18th century discourse, but it also has the potential to find the interplay between the professional and the non-professional, which is clearly lacking at present. Here there is scope, for in recent years a plethora of popular non-fiction books on garden history has found an interested audience. Such works include Toby Musgrave’s *The Head Gardeners* (2009), Jane Brown’s *The Pursuit of Paradise* (1999), Anna Pavord’s *The Tulip* (2000) and Andrea Wulf’s *The Brother Gardeners* (2008). All have proven popular and, crucially, accessible - these titles and more can easily be found on the shelves of many high street bookshops. They are clearly aimed at a wider, popular audience rather than an academic one, and it would be interesting to explore the extent to which they are perceived to possess the same historiographical value as academic work. Whilst this demands a more in-depth study than this thesis can allow, I would argue that the fact that many of these authors have academic roots would imply that they are received favourably by the general book-consuming public and by professional scholars alike. The result is an encouraging vision for the future of garden historical discourse, where garden histories provide an exciting opportunity for a convergence

¹⁰⁷ Samuel (2012) p17

between popular and professional. However, this does then raise the issue of authorship of historical discourse - for while the audience may have diversified, perhaps the creators have not.

It is evident that garden history has much to learn from a public history approach - the discipline must strive to locate and affirm the value of in the amateur, the non-professional and the popular, without dislodging the status and importance of the professional, the academic and the scholarly perspective. Public history has demonstrated that it is possible to navigate a successful relationship between the two; it may appear daunting and would call for much work to be done in dismantling dominant hegemonic discourses and the associated hierarchies that have long existed in garden history. Not only is there potential but I would argue that there exists the appetite too; Harwood *et al* (2007) exhort an interdisciplinary approach, whereby non-garden historians can play a role in creating and conveying meanings and narratives. Of course, no singular historiographical approach can cover all. Instead a confluence is the ideal, whereby no singular discourse is overlooked or shunned at the expense of another; no binary choices are necessary here. By offering alternative approaches and experiences that can sit alongside one another, the result is a deeper understanding of historical experience. The potential of historic gardens and landscapes to become an arena in which to not only share public history but also to act as a conduit for its creation is immense and will be studied in more detail in the following chapters.

Chapter 3

Identity and purpose of walled kitchen gardens in Cornwall

In order to forge new identities and meanings for historic walled kitchen gardens, it is first necessary to acknowledge the physical and cultural origins of such sites, as well as the ensuing changes that they endured throughout their life spans. What is more, by exploring the reasons for their ultimate demise in the 20th century (which involve notions of loss, vulnerability and destruction), it becomes evident that the identification of an afterlife for these gardens will enrich our understanding of their cultural importance.

Any study of British walled kitchen gardens must surely start from a terminological standpoint. Such a site can be described as a garden dedicated to the production of fruit and vegetables, being substantial in size, typically between one and five acres, although some could be up to twenty acres.¹⁰⁸ It is enclosed, partially or entirely, by constructed walls, although Campbell points to a rare few that are enclosed by hedges.¹⁰⁹ It is the constructed walls that define it physically and culturally, acting as a material indicator of the site's separation from its surroundings. Those walls were initially used as a barrier against theft (human and animal) but were later utilised specifically as support for growing fruit, providing shelter, creating a conducive microclimate and retaining heat. By the 17th century, walls had become an intrinsic part of the fabric of the productive garden.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Campbell (2006) p5

¹⁰⁹ Campbell (1985) p74

¹¹⁰ "It appears how naturally and insensibly the idea of a kitchen-garden slid into that which has for so many ages been peculiarly termed a garden, and by our ancestors in this country, distinguished by the name of a pleasure-garden. A square piece of ground was originally parted off in early ages for the use of the family - to exclude cattle and ascertain the property it was separated from the fields by

Having acknowledged the importance of walls in segregating the productive garden from its surroundings, it would follow to question the cultural and physical interplay between the walled kitchen garden and its wider ornamental garden setting. Walled gardens are characterised as prescriptive and purpose-laden spaces which traditionally have been deliberately and physically separated from their highly stylised ornamental surroundings, not least by the construction of walls; as such, it would appear easy to downplay any relationship between the two elements. However, the very purpose of the kitchen garden is so clearly conjoined to the estate in which it sat and to the people fed therein, that it could be deemed impossible to deny such a connection. Its core purpose was to feed not only the owners and their family but often all who worked on the estate. At the heart of the kitchen garden's terminology lies its connection to horticulture, food and nourishment; crucially it is tied to garden and to house, in particular the kitchen. The term 'walled kitchen garden', the given moniker for this very specific type of productive garden, epitomises the unique position that such sites held, being neither exclusively house nor garden, but a space in between that was inextricably tied to both elements in equal measure. Therefore, to gain the fullest understanding of the cultural and physical evolution of the walled kitchen garden it is essential to contextualise the site within its wider setting.

Much work has been done to outline the historical development of such sites in Britain, particularly by Susan Campbell (2010). Campbell traces the roots of the walled kitchen garden back to the medieval era, when constructed walls were solely

a hedge. As pride and desire of privacy increased, the inclosure was dignified by walls; and in climes where fruits were not lavished by the ripening glow of nature and soil, fruit trees were assisted and sheltered by the like expedient" Walpole (1904) p18

a means of security and privacy and a deterrent against theft, and the purpose of the space within the walls was predominantly functional rather than ornamental. Every plant had to earn its place, through its medicinal, food or cosmetic use. The Elizabethan era saw the birth of the ornamental garden; this was the era in which the garden became identified as a place of pleasure as well as fruitfulness, and the productive garden was encompassed within this notion. Attention was given to the layout, allowing ease of labour as well as ensuring that the space remained attractive to the eye. The growing of food was still paramount, and consequently, kitchen gardens were purposefully located near the most important components of the estate – offices, outbuildings and, crucially, the kitchen. This not only enabled the easy movement of food to its ultimate destination, but also cemented the high status of the productive garden through its connection to the house and its residents.

The development of walled kitchen gardens in Cornwall

As discussed earlier, a clear need is emerging to advance a holistic approach to garden history, one which can be achieved by taking on board new museology and public history approaches, together with the perspectives of history from below. The importance of taking a regional approach to the study of garden and landscape history is a subject ripe for further investigation. Relatively little work has been undertaken on the evolution of the productive garden in Cornwall, certainly in comparison to those elsewhere in the country.¹¹¹ An approach that seeks to knit together these methodological approaches would result in better understanding the

¹¹¹ A preliminary exploration of walled gardens in Devon has been created by Kim Auston (2008), and Oxfordshire Gardens Trust (2014) have published a survey of walled gardens in the county.

communities in which such gardens and landscapes were created, as well as the designers, the landowners and the people who worked on the ground.¹¹² Further discussion on the importance of a regional approach follows in this chapter.

Scarce evidence exists of walled kitchen gardens in Cornwall before the 17th century, although their absence should not be presumed. According to Pett the productive garden became ubiquitous in 17th century Cornwall:

“Every house - even the lowliest tenancy - possessed a walled ‘garden’ attached to the house. These were most commonly ‘herb gardens’, later termed ‘kitchen gardens’, where pot herbs, salads and green vegetables were grown; ‘roots’, in one case, being clearly distinguished as grown in ‘plots’. Some of these gardens were planted with fruit trees - apples, pears or cherries, or perhaps a whole orchard of forty or more trees.”¹¹³

A 1696 plan of Lanhydrock estate, seat of the Robartes family, in *Lanhydrock Atlas* clearly shows ‘the kitchin garden’ and the ‘Peare Gardens’. Elsewhere in the Atlas, smaller sites can be found that are referred to simply as ‘house and gardens’ on the map keys. These are undoubtedly productive spaces, often marked as enclosed and rectilinear gardens, such as those at Nancegollan, Lesingey and Boscean, amongst others. It may well be the case that only those significant in size, such as that at Lanhydrock, would have been recognised specifically as a kitchen garden, whereas elsewhere it may have been assumed that productive spaces were encompassed within the garden, and presumably close to the manor house. Orchards certainly feature widely, indicating the productive nature of such spaces. 1748 provided the first mention of the walled kitchen garden at Enys which, along with Godolphin, is

¹¹² Williamson (2013) p24

¹¹³ Pett (1998) p18

recognised as one of the oldest gardens in Cornwall. Other early references to such sites in Cornwall include Sandhill House at Gunnislake where, in 1790, Revd John Russell enlarged the estate and added the walled kitchen garden along with stables.¹¹⁴

The 18th century saw one of the most significant changes to the walled kitchen garden. The emergence and subsequent rise of the designed landscape garden from the early years of this century heralded one of the most momentous movements in English garden design, championed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. At the heart of its ethos was a desire to create a naturalised view of an idyllic rural landscape; from the windows of great country houses, owners would gaze out onto uninterrupted views of sweeping lawns, copses of trees, lakes and follies. On many large estates the productive garden, increasingly deemed unsightly with its high boundary walls, was relocated from the proximity of the house to the fringes of the estate. Gradually it became regarded as a separate entity from the landscaped garden into which it had once been absorbed. In the ornamental garden the notion of pleasure dominated over that of purpose. At Enys, near Penryn, the walled garden was redeveloped at the beginning of the 19th century. It was not entirely swept aside, but was halved in size, devoted entirely to the production of food (whereas it had originally been a mix of ornamental and productive) and extended to the outer reaches of the gardens.¹¹⁵ At Tregothnan the walled garden is at some distance from the house, indicating a relocation, in this case one most likely driven by Humphry Repton in his Red Book of 1809, in which he detailed proposals for the reworking of the estate. Prominent 18th century horticulturalists Thomas Mawe and John Abercrombie

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p20

¹¹⁵ Sue Pring's garden record of Enys for Cornwall Gardens Trust (1991)

promoted the segregation of kitchen garden and ornamental garden in *The Universal Gardener* (1778):

“if it is designed principally as a Kitchen and fruit-garden, distinct from the other parts, and there is room for choice of situation, it should generally be placed detached entirely from the pleasure-ground; also as much out of view of the habitation as possible [...] so as its walls and other fences may not obstruct any desirable prospect either of the pleasure-garden, park, fields, or the adjacent country”.¹¹⁶

It would be easy to regard such a relocation as a dismissive sweep of the landscape architect's hand, a downgrading in significance of the visual appeal of such productive sites. However, the physical marginalisation of walled kitchen gardens clearly did not diminish their importance. When Capability Brown and Humphrey Repton relocated them to the periphery of the estate throughout the late 18th and early 19th centuries, they enabled these spaces to flourish. This clear division of the functional from the ornamental afforded each element the space to fully thrive, neither hindered by the other. Certainly, the kitchen garden gained a sense of freedom; the concentration of effort within the enclosed site to the task in hand resulted in the walled garden becoming a place of learning, expertise and technical advancement throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Phibbs also highlights the relocation of the kitchen garden as a positive move, and points to Brown's vision for the re-sited productive garden at Longleat in Wiltshire as the highpoint of any tour of the grounds given to visitors: “it remained in the firm embrace of the ornamental network, and one should expect nothing else if one of the greatest

¹¹⁶ Mawe & Abercrombie (1778) p529

pleasures of the country estate was the contemplation of its abundance".¹¹⁷ In many instances the walled garden was no longer solely productive - it now had to bridge both function and aesthetic.

Upon closer consideration, it becomes evident that a relatively low number of Cornish kitchen gardens were uprooted and relocated. The walled kitchen garden at Trelissick remained in its original location near the house, as did many others, such as those at Heligan, Tremough, Trewithen, Carclew and Pencarrow, none of which were moved away from the proximity of the main residence. There may be several reasons for this. One would have to question whether a sense of geographical delay played its part, resulting in Cornwall being less adherent to horticultural fashions than those elsewhere in the country. The role of the landowner in pushing horticultural fashions and movements and engaging the services of the most eminent landscapers is undeniable. Humphry Repton may have made his presence felt in the county, but his professional commissions were limited. While his celebrated Red Books, in which he detailed his proposed designs, were produced for Tregothnan, Trewarthenick, Catchfrench, Antony, Pentillie and Endsleigh, further investigation is necessary to ascertain the degree to which advised work was carried out. However, it would be overly simplistic to assume that Cornwall lay outside the garden fashion radar. Many Cornish families had personal and professional links to London.¹¹⁸ Therefore, several other factors must be considered. Williamson points to landscape as emblematic of longevity and dynastic endurance, the retention of

¹¹⁷ Phibbs (2010) pp28-29

¹¹⁸ John Samuel Enys, Sir William Lemon of Carclew and Thomas Daniell of Trelissick all employed London architects to remodel their houses and gardens in the late 18th and early 19th centuries (Henry Harrison at Enys, Thomas Edwards at Carclew and PF Robinson at Trelissick).

antiquated garden features symbolising continuity between past and present, as well as a mark of distinction between long established landed gentry and the rising ranks of 'new money' who, it is assumed, would be more likely to embark upon redesigning a garden as a means to make their mark on newly acquired land.¹¹⁹

Williamson makes the point too that choice must also be considered – a landowner simply may not want to make drastic changes to their exterior estate - if their existing garden suits their lifestyle then why change?¹²⁰

On a practical level, it must also be recognised that the expense involved in relocating and rebuilding walls, bothies, pits and other associated buildings would have been substantial; what is more, red brick, the material of choice for productive gardens due to its heat retaining qualities, was neither cheap nor readily available in Cornwall during the early 19th century, as opposed to ubiquitous granite which could often be quarried on the estate itself. A small number of brickworks were established in Cornwall, many of which were created on an extremely localised level, for the sole purpose of producing material for houses and estate buildings such as stables, garden walls and related structures. Ferguson and Thurlow point to the availability of local stone for construction purposes, negating the need for large scale brick production.¹²¹ This would no doubt have been a contributing factor for the relatively low profile of brick within the county. However, brick (and the associated brickworks required to create them) had status. Ferguson and Thurlow catalogue various Cornish estates which embraced this material, to the extent that small brickworks were created and later taken out of use, once they had fulfilled their purpose;

¹¹⁹ Williamson (2004) p24

¹²⁰ Ibid. p22

¹²¹ Ferguson & Thurlow (2005) p2

Antony, Trewithen, Tehidy, Trelowarren, Trewardale and Heligan, amongst others, all contain brick produced on site. At present, there is no evidence of any specific brickworks at Trelissick, and in the absence of such, one would have to assume that the estate's bricks were transported on site from elsewhere in the south west, presumably by river. However, there were known brickworks nearby at Ruan Lanihorne (Trelonk), Calenick and Devoran, indicating that on a localised level, clay was suitable for brick production.¹²²

For those Cornish estates for whom a renowned landscape designer's fees would have been out of the question, other garden designers and landscape architects were employed. At Enys, John King proposed substantial designs and alterations in 1748 for Samuel Enys. However, it is unclear the extent to which his proposed work was carried out, as mention is made only of planned, rather than completed, work.¹²³ In the early years of the 19th century the Elizabethan house was destroyed by fire, whereupon London architect Henry Harrison was commissioned to design plans for the house and gardens. The tithe map of 1839 shows re-landscaped gardens, including a substantially reduced walled garden, a new flower garden and developed parkland. Harrison clearly cultivated his professional reputation in the county as he worked extensively in Cornwall during the 1830's, at neighbouring Carclew, and elsewhere in the county at Pendarves, Prideaux House, Trewarthenick, Heligan and Port Eliot.¹²⁴ At Heligan, Thomas Gray was employed in

¹²² Trelonk bricks have been found in several places on the Trelissick estate, such as the gardener's residence known as Toffy's Cottage. However, local brick such as this one tends to be pale in colour which does not match the red brick used in the construction of the stables and walled garden. Neither does dating match – Trelonk bricks have been found on sites that were built in the late 19th century, some 200 years later than the construction of the walled garden, stables and associated buildings.

¹²³ Pring (1991)

¹²⁴ Pett (1998) pp113-145

the late 18th century, laying plans for tree-lined avenues, and creating the fabric within which the Tremayne's swelling plant collection would sit. Tim Smit outlines how Heligan embraced the landscape fashion: "the garden was expanded into the landscape so that the two intermingled, and alterations were made to the house to take account of the wonderful view down to the valley".¹²⁵

Cornish horticulture undoubtedly came into its own during the first half of the 19th century. The emergence of John Claudius Loudon's gardenesque movement saw the spotlight shift from the wider landscape to the specimen plant. The gardenesque lauded the plant, and particularly the exotic, and called for a clear demarcation between the landscape as natural form and the garden as a work that is undeniably by the hand of man. This aesthetic ideal of highly stylised spaces reflected the Victorian preoccupation with man's control over nature and heralded a marked shift of the garden as natural to the garden as art form, a work that is unmistakably the work of man as opposed to nature, circling back to the formal style embraced by 18th century landscape design. Loudon's gardenesque style perfectly encapsulates the Victorian ethos of control over nature, resulting in highly 'gardened' spaces, such as parterres, geometric design and intricate planting patterns, unambiguously recognisable as human endeavour. As such, the garden was perceived as a battleground for the fight between man and nature, for 19th century horticulture was "a science whose special object is a constant struggle with wild and undisciplined nature".¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Smit (2003) p111

¹²⁶ Delamer (1855) p173

In openly seeking out the newest and rarest horticultural treasures from all around the globe, the landowner was publicly declaring himself to be at the forefront of this growing trend. The fashion for the new was not limited to the ornamental; the race to grow the finest culinary exotics, such as pineapples, pomegranates and melons, had begun and the kitchen garden proved itself the platform for horticultural advancement, innovation and technical excellence through the production of fruit, vegetables and cut flowers. It was now home to glasshouses, heating systems, forcing houses, hot houses, pits and cold frames, all cogs in the horticultural machine. Cornwall was no exception in this regard; the county's gardeners proved themselves to be competitive, experimental and forward thinking, challenging the assumption that Cornwall was marginalised or behind trends. Cornish gardens became a literal breeding ground for horticultural advances, fuelled by both landowner and gardener. Musgrave looks to the very particular affiliation between the two that was developing in many estates across Britain during this era, exemplified by the close working relationship between the Duke of Devonshire and his head gardener Joseph Paxton at Chatsworth.¹²⁷ Cornwall may have lacked such nationally renowned figures but across the county the profile of the head gardener was on the ascendency, notable amongst them William Booth of Carclew, Henry Mills of Enys, Thomas Corbett of Pencarrow and William Sangwin of Trelissick. All were prominent contributors to national gardening journals such as *The Gardener's Chronicle* and *The Garden*, detailing their trials and tribulations during the growing and harvesting seasons, and, in so doing, shining a spotlight upon their own gardens, as well as their profession.¹²⁸ These national journals played a hugely

¹²⁷ Musgrave (2009) *The Head Gardeners*

¹²⁸ Thus, providing the 21st century historian with a 'people's history'.

important role as a forum for sharing horticultural practise and theory, embodying the collaborative and forward-looking nature of 19th horticulture. Indeed, horticultural innovation was alive and kicking in the county throughout the 19th century. At Heligan John Tremayne was hybridising rhododendron seedlings, and the same was happening at Tremough, Carclew and Penjerrick.¹²⁹ Thomas Corbett, nursery foreman and later head gardener at Pencarrow for Sir Molesworth, became known nationally for his open gutter heating system (hygrothermanic apparatus) for glasshouses, which he patented in 1841. The president of the Plymouth Horticultural Society went as far as to declare that the system “will do more for the advancement of horticulture, than anything which has been produced for the last century”.¹³⁰

The Walled Kitchen Garden at Trelissick

The site of Trelissick’s productive garden is just under 2 acres in total and is situated approximately 50 metres north of the mansion. The walls are red brick, although the western wall is constructed of stone with red brick cladding inside and are topped with slate coping. The walled garden is of indeterminate age, although it is assumed to be have been constructed in the mid18th century, when the owner, John Lawrance, employed the services of local builder Edmund Davy to carry out extensive work, thought to have been the remodelling of an existing house.¹³¹

Earliest mention of the walled garden appears in 1802 in the *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, which gave details of the estate which was now for sale, including a “large

¹²⁹ Smit (2003) p123

¹³⁰ *The Floricultural Cabinet and Florists’ Magazine* (1839) p20

¹³¹ Cookson & Tickner (2017) It is unclear what the land was used for becoming the walled kitchen garden. It is assumed that it was woodland estate, like much of the grounds. The formal garden was minimal, and merged into woodland with carriage rides throughout, the paths of which mostly survive to this day. The earliest map to show the walled garden is the 1813 estate map (see appendix).

walled Garden, well clothed with choice Fruit Trees, a very good Orchard behind the House and a handsome Lawn in front".¹³² In 1813 ownership passed to Ralph Allen Daniell, one of the wealthiest men in Cornwall who made his fortune from tin and copper mining. He expanded the estate extensively and was said to have been able to ride from Trelissick to Truro without setting a foot off his own land, a distance of approximately 5.5 miles.¹³³ In 1825 London architect Peter Frederick Robinson was employed by Ralph Allen Daniel's son Thomas to remodel the house, grounds and stables.¹³⁴ The walled garden is shown clearly on the estate map of 1821, indicating its importance as part of a developing estate. At this point the division wall running from east to west has been added and the main body of the walled garden is in quarters, as was common. The walled garden is at this point still joined to the stable block, as it is in a post 1823 survey. It appears that Robinson's principle contribution to the grounds was in changing the approach to the house so that it included the south front of the house and ended at the entrance to the house on the west front. This meant slicing through what was once the south west corner of the walled garden, which resulted in the irregular shape that the walled garden still takes today, as well as the creation of two small triangular gardens, the Fig Garden and the Parsley Garden, now on the outer confines of the site in which they were once a part.

The 1840 tithe map shows further compartmentalising within the walled garden. This segmentation is not clear in the subsequent map produced in the mid to late 1840's. By now the south west corner has been altered and reduced, as a

¹³² *Royal Cornwall Gazette* (1802)

¹³³ Lovey *et al* (2012) p16

¹³⁴ Cookson & Tickner (2017) p131

result of the re-routing of the driveway. On the estate map of 1867 the outer walls of the walled garden are shown but there is a lack of detail within the space. The 1st edition OS 1878 shows a walled garden that is no longer quartered, but one that utilised a more segmented layout. By now glasshouses are evident, as are built structures against the dividing wall, which were functional spaces such as boiler room, bothy and seed stores.

In 1897 F Hamilton Davey wrote an article on Trelissick in the *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, cementing Trelissick's horticultural status:

"Most horticulturalists know Trelissick as the fruit garden of Cornwall. Here, if anywhere, peaches and nectarines, plums and pears, and other kinds of fruit are brought to the acme of perfection. Beautiful for situation, every possible advantage has been taken of the exceptional facilities offered by the place for fruit culture. Several times have the trees with their wealth of luscious produce been photographed for the leading horticultural papers, particularly the extensive arbours of pear and apple trees, which span several of the walks."¹³⁵

In the 2nd edition OS map of 1906, the glasshouses have been extended and more are evident in the northern part of the walled garden. The paths are unchanged. A photograph taken during what is presumed to be the late 19th century¹³⁶ shows a glimpse of a large fruit cage and glasshouses.

In 1913 Carew Davies Gilbert died and the estate was leased by his executors to Leonard Cunliffe, who would, in 1928, go on to purchase the estate. The sales particulars

¹³⁵ Davey (1988) p25

¹³⁶ In *The Garden*, August 29th 1891, Sangwin wrote "On this place our fruit bush quarter is permanently covered with 1-inch wire netting, which has been up now four years." (p207)

that accompanied an unsuccessful bid to sell the property in 1920 provide a glimpse into the walled garden, described as

“highly productive and well stocked with Fruit Trees, etc.; Capital Brick and Slated Range, comprising: Seed Room, Potting Shed and Stockholes, Detached Tool Shed, Stone and Slated range of Four Open Sheds, Potato Store, Mason’s Shed and Yard, Stores and Woodman’s Shed. The Glasshouses include Peach House, Two Vineries, Fig House, Span Greenhouse, Lean-to ditto, Melon and Cucumber Pits, Seven-light forcing pit and an Eleven light Frame in Triangle Garden next back road”.

From this it can be assumed not only that the cultivation of food (and particularly fruit) was integral to the site, but that the productive garden was still very much fulfilling its role as provider of food for a thriving estate.

Change and decline

Into the 20th century, it becomes clear that the nation’s walled gardens, and the estates to which they belonged, could no longer be sustained in the same manner. Much work has been carried out to understand the catalysts for decline. David Cannadine asserts that country estates simply could not adapt and cites a failure to evolve to meet the changing demographic and cultural, social and financial aspects of early 20th century life in Britain.¹³⁷ The Great War undoubtedly had a profound and far-reaching impact upon the country estate, but other elements were at play too. Cannadine points repeatedly to the war, but also acknowledges that in reality it was certainly not the only factor to have had a cataclysmic effect on the country estate (and with it, the walled kitchen garden); one must look as well to the

¹³⁷ Cannadine (1990)

series of events and a long-brewing sense of change that had been rumbling away since the 1870's.¹³⁸ No doubt, the decade's agricultural depression was a major factor - for the many landowners who had come by this point to rely upon agricultural tenancies for much of their income, this would prove to have catastrophic consequences. The depression was due in part to competition of imported agricultural produce. Land had once been the mainstay of the upper classes according to Cannadine and Girouard,¹³⁹ but this theory was about to be sorely tested, as cheap corn began to arrive on British shores from America. The impact of this was not necessarily the death knell for the landowner. However, when combined with rising labour costs and the growing availability of food from overseas, the result was a seismic cultural shift and a highly active period in which the ownership of country houses and land changed hands at pace.

Cultural changes were afoot on a national level, and social perceptions of the stately home swung quite wildly throughout the second half of the 19th century. Mandler notes that, in the mid-19th century, the nation's stately homes were firmly embedded into the fabric of British heritage and culture, particularly the older, ancestral homes of the nobility, as opposed to those of *nouveau riche* industrialists.¹⁴⁰ This appreciation was reflected in the public interest in visiting such houses, in the era Mandler coined as "the first great age of country-house visiting",¹⁴¹ when stately homes flung open their doors and allowed the public to wander through their hallways and grounds. However, by the end of the century

¹³⁸ Ibid.; Robinson (1988)

¹³⁹ Cannadine (1990) pp16-17; Girouard (1980) p300

¹⁴⁰ Mandler (1997) p4

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

public appetite had changed, as the appeal of commercial culture eclipsed the desire for tradition, exacerbated greatly by a political climate that was becoming increasingly uneasy, culminating in a social tension that Robinson termed “the Liberal attack on the House of Lords and the landed interest”,¹⁴² an assumed reference in part to the introduction of death duties in the 1890s. Cannadine points to the birth and establishment of mass politics from last quarter of the 19th century, whereby all classes were finding a political voice: “the balance of political power was changed dramatically and irrevocably - away from the patricians and towards the people”.¹⁴³ This had been brought about in part by the enforced democracy of life in the trenches, where the landed gentry fought alongside the working classes towards a common goal, and where too the social standing of that gentry lost all social, economic and cultural meaning. Parliamentary reform took great strides towards social change, culminating in universal suffrage in 1918 with the 4th Reform Act. The cultural shift toward democratic principles was mirrored too by the acquisition of land and country estates into the hands of a growing tide of prosperous industrialists, bankers and businessmen.

The extent to which Cornwall was affected by such issues is open to question. While the nationwide picture certainly contextualises the Cornish situation, it is evident that in many ways the county’s economy did not conform to the national narrative. The importance of tin mining, land and dairy farming, combined with the more diminutive scale of many Cornish estates resulted in a much stronger economic picture than that occurring east of the Tamar in the later years of the 19th

¹⁴² Robinson (1988) p194

¹⁴³ Cannadine (1990) p37

century. Many landowners may have made their money through mining, but it was through land that they would retain their wealth; the fortunes of the former fluctuated much more wildly than those of the latter by the end of the 19th century. Historically, land had equated to financial stability and continued to do so in the relatively unstable years of the turn of the century, according to Cannadine (1990).¹⁴⁴ This appears to have worked in Cornwall's favour - for many landowners dairy farming provided a more stable and profitable form of farming than the growing of wheat and barley elsewhere in the country.¹⁴⁵ When national rents fell by 17% in the 1870s and 1880s, rents in Cornwall increased by 5%. Deacon also suggests that enthusiasm for the Great War was far more diluted amongst the Cornish than it was elsewhere in the country, particularly amongst the working classes - if they aspired to go abroad, it was more likely to be for the mines of South Africa than the trenches of the French battlefields.¹⁴⁶

However, it is crucial to consider the presence of just a handful of aristocracy in the county. Aside from the families of Trefusis, Boscawen and Eliot, it would be implausible to paint a county-wide picture of landed aristocracy. In fact, there is much evidence of a tradition of readiness to sell and buy great houses and land in the county. This picture of dynamic ownership is commonplace across the county; one must only look to Carclew, Pencarrow, Killiow and Tremough to see the evidence, and neither was it unique to the late 19th century. Killiow saw at least five different families come and go from the 16th century onwards; in the same era Carclew passed from the Daunger family to the Lemons and then to the

¹⁴⁴ Cannadine (1990) p11

¹⁴⁵ Deacon (2007) p169

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. p192

Tremaynes.¹⁴⁷ It could be suggested that this is a particularly Cornish characteristic; in a county of oscillating fortunes, change seems to have been intrinsic to social, cultural and economic factors. What is more, land owned in Cornwall was not necessarily the landowner's primary seat. Second or even third homes were common - Trerice in north Cornwall was just one minor seat of the Arundells and later the Aclands, while Trelissick was a secondary residence to the Gilbert family and later the Copelands.¹⁴⁸ As Robinson points out of the era, "land ownership is a dynamic and constantly changing phenomenon and this makes it difficult to impose an overall picture, or to generalize about estate ownership";¹⁴⁹ this is certainly true of Cornwall.

It follows to question whether Trelissick sat more comfortably within the national narrative or the regional one in the late 19th century. Certainly, Trelissick has never been culturally tied to any one family ownership - it passed from owner to owner as the fortunes of each ebbed and waned; in fact, the National Trust is notable for the longest ownership of Trelissick, having acquired the property in 1955. Elsewhere, longevity of proprietorship might become imbued with a strong sense of duty, but this does not appear to be a characteristic of Trelissick's owners. The deep sense of responsibility and obligation that often-accompanied ancestral longevity is absent there, as it is elsewhere in Cornwall. Trelissick was in effect a gentleman's residence and at times a holiday residence - it had a definite role to play as a seat of power but often it was not the principal character. When the Davies Gilberts were in

¹⁴⁷ Pett (1998)

¹⁴⁸ The Gilbert's main residence was in Eastbourne, West Sussex and the Copelands resided at Kibbleston Hall, Oulston, Staffs.

¹⁴⁹ Robinson (1988) p188

residence in the late 19th century, Trelissick played second fiddle to the main family home in Eastbourne, which was where the family's loyalty and, crucially, fortunes lay. Trelissick has always had a malleable identity, reflected in the many physical changes that the house in particular has undergone. It has been gentleman's residence, status symbol, holiday home; whatever each successive owner has needed it to be, it has responded to and fulfilled that role. Dynamism has always been in its nature and still is today; under National Trust ownership no weight of influence is given to any singular owner, era or designer, for Trelissick is recognised as a palimpsest, a collective sum of its parts and of its past owners. As already noted, for many Cornish estates notions of change and dynamism are intrinsic, fuelled by the county's changing fortunes, and it could be argued that Trelissick is emblematic of this. It follows that the fate of great Cornish gardens and the wider estate in which they sat was entirely dependent upon that of the family and their seat of power, the house. However, there has so far been no study of the processes by which the Cornish walled kitchen garden underwent the transition from being a fully working site to a place whose purpose and identity were gradually but irretrievably lost. Clearly, there are almost as many variations to this narrative as there are walled kitchen gardens, and the destiny of each would have been entwined with the fortunes of the house and family to which it was attached.

Trelissick showed no obvious signs of decline at the end of the 19th century; the Gilbert family owned Trelissick from 1844 until 1928, and when John Davies Gilbert (1811-1854) inherited estate in Eastbourne in Surrey, he used the associated income to make substantial improvements to his Cornish residence.¹⁵⁰ Trelissick

¹⁵⁰ Cookson and Tickner (2017) p13

resolutely resisted the perceived national tendency towards irreversible decline during the early years of the 20th century. Photographs from the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century reveal a house and gardens in working order; an aerial photograph from the late 1920s shows a walled kitchen garden that appears to have recently undergone a substantial renovation. The glasshouses are in good order, apparently recently painted, and the beds appear prepared and ready for planting. Images from a decade later and then the 1950s follow this trend; this kitchen garden is in full productive use, reflecting an estate that sits outside of a conventional model of old aristocratic families with vast estates that they could no longer afford to maintain.

Trelissick's walled kitchen garden endured and continued to be used for the purposes it was originally intended. The Copeland family inherited Trelissick in the 1930s, and Ronald and Ida Copeland were known to have a special affinity for the place, developing much of the garden as it is presented today. Ronald continued to garden there, continuing the tradition of fruit cultivation during the 1950's and 1960's. However, it should be noted that by 1955, the Copelands were at the point of handing over ownership of the estate to the National Trust.¹⁵¹ Clearly, it was no longer financially viable to cultivate and staff such an area, and it no longer needed to fulfil its original purpose of being a primary source of food for the estate. By this point it is more appropriate to suggest that it was large scale hobby gardening, rather than anything as functional as it was once was. Certainly, by this point the garden team was a fraction of what it had once been, with just 3 full-time members

¹⁵¹ The Copeland family continued to remain in residence at Trelissick as donor family until 2013.

of staff.¹⁵² Upon reflection, decline was gentle, but it did occur. Perhaps surprisingly, it can most clearly be traced to early National Trust ownership and, in particular, the stewardship of gardens advisor Graham Stuart Thomas. Interestingly, the factor leading to the end was the very one that had been the death knell for so many other walled gardens, albeit delayed by fifty years - the issue of labour.

National Trust garden advisor reports from the 1960s reflect a shift in priorities within the garden. In the kitchen garden Stuart Thomas advised the garden team to “continue to apply weedkillers to get the whole area completely clean”.¹⁵³ During the 1960s the area was still in productive use, as the erection of a new fruit cage is at one point recommended, but the wave of change had now begun in earnest; in 1961 Stuart Thomas stated “I realise that the gardeners have a big area to cope with but I do think that the ornamental ground should have priority over everything else”,¹⁵⁴ and he suggested the addition of lawn, trees and shrubs to the walled kitchen garden in order to minimise the workload within the area.¹⁵⁵ During that decade, the walled garden warranted little mention from gardens advisors or managers, with just a few questions arising over the condition of existing structures (“What ought we to do about the repairs to the propagating house? This is the old cucumber house – isn’t it?”¹⁵⁶); one can sense financial concerns creeping in.

By the middle of the 1970s, John Sales had taken the reins of National Trust gardens advisor. Both he and land agent Michael Trinick agreed that

¹⁵² Pers. comm. J Lanyon (2019)

¹⁵³ Thomas (1959) Garden advisor report p2

¹⁵⁴ Thomas (1960) Garden advisor report p1

¹⁵⁵ Thomas (1962) Garden advisor report: “I should consider what is the most labour-saving method of keeping the kitchen garden unwanted areas under control, i.e. fallowing, sowing with grass and keeping rough mown, or planting with rhubarb or Xmas trees” (p1)

¹⁵⁶ Trinick (1965) Garden advisor report pp1-2

“it is unfortunate that the public goes all round the walled garden and it must be tantalising for them not to be able to enter it. While I appreciate all the difficulties attendant upon opening it to the public i.e. Mr Copeland’s garden and the little plants in pots which would be stolen etc., it might be possible to fence off an area to contain these so that the remainder could be planted up as an orchard or something of the sort for picnics”.¹⁵⁷

Clearly, there is recognition of a public appetite to see the once-productive space, but no mention is made of restoring the original use of the space, and even the recommendation to open the site ‘as is’ was never executed. Throughout the late 1970’s and 1980’s there was scarce mention of the walled kitchen garden, except as the site of a proposed new shop (this work was carried out in the mid-1980s, whereupon the glasshouses were removed), and it was not until the late 1990s that dialogue once again returns to the idea of restoration:

“We looked again at the walled garden and the possibility of restoring a kitchen garden, eventually opening to the public. This would undoubtedly bring in more visitors and income, but should not be done without the assurance of sufficient labour. The fringes could house the Hydrangea collection to add interest and reduce work.”¹⁵⁸

By 1998 John Sales had become the National Trust’s Head of Gardens, yet Trelissick and its walled garden were still very much on his radar:

“While there is always scope for renewal and improvement in the park and garden at present open to visitors, there is no doubt that restoring the kitchen garden would be the single most significant step in restoring the place as a whole. As well as being right for conservation, it would “widen the appeal and deepen the interest” in terms of gardens and gardening. It would depend

¹⁵⁷ Thomas (1975) Garden advisor report p1

¹⁵⁸ Sales (1997)

crucially on the appointment of one additional full-time gardener, the capital expense being always possible over a period".¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ Sales (1998)

Chapter 4

Walled kitchen gardens in Cornwall in the 21st century

To fully understand the decline of walled kitchen gardens, it is vital to acknowledge not only physical and material loss but cultural loss too - that is, the disappearance of purpose and function that such sites have suffered since the first half of the 20th century. This issue must be explored if walled kitchen gardens are to endure and thrive beyond their historical intentions and origin. John Dixon Hunt acknowledges garden history's preoccupation with inception,¹⁶⁰ and he argues the case for a reinvigorated study of historic gardens, one that is rooted in reception theories, acknowledges the value of the afterlife of such sites and demands a renewed focus upon contemporary experience alongside historic design. Within the garden heritage arena, there is often acknowledgement of how a historic garden or landscape has changed in physical terms. Timelines are increasingly commonplace at National Trust properties and can provide an understanding of how material elements have developed and changed over time. Often these are written with the endpoint already known, thus creating a teleological narrative arch that conveys a site's rise and demise. However, human interaction on a social and cultural level with designed gardens and landscapes has evolved too; contemporary everyday experiences no longer conform to a timeline model that is predominantly concerned with the past. To acknowledge that is to begin to understand our relationships with

¹⁶⁰ "We are readily drawn to a study of origins, especially if those stories concern famous designers or patrons" (2004) p11

such places today and into the future, and to be able to build upon emotional, social and cultural connections.

This idea of change of usage and experience is of great value, particularly in an increasingly commercial and competitive age when garden heritage is as reliant upon paying visitors for their survival as museums, galleries and other cultural and heritage assets. I would assert that such an approach is essential in the study of historic walled kitchen gardens; such sites have clearly surpassed original intentions and functions, to the point where many have ceased to exist as such. Others survive but without a clear identity or purpose, often regarded merely as a relic of the past without a purpose for today. As a result, such sites are becoming increasingly vulnerable and their long-term survival is far from assured - owners and guardians of historic walled kitchen gardens often simply do not know what to do with them. However, a renewed understanding of how visitors can forge new relationships and experiences within such sites can imbue them with reinvigorated meanings in the 21st century. Rather than merely mapping a chronology of deterioration and disuse which renders such sites redundant, garden historians now have an opportunity to rewrite the historical narrative of walled kitchen gardens.

Upon closer inspection of kitchen gardens in Cornwall, it becomes apparent just how valuable a consideration of the afterlife of these sites and structures can be, and the subsequent potentialities for these gardens which are open to the public. Such an approach repositions the user of historic gardens from passive receiver to active participant in the process of experience, and invokes notions of purpose, function and, crucially, relevance. Thus, historical narratives move away from prioritising their elitist origins, enabling the development of new meanings around

the function and purpose of walled kitchen gardens. In giving these sites a renewed significance, the visitor becomes an active participant and creator of their own histories. At present, Trengwainton and Heligan are home to the only fully functioning historic walled gardens open to the public in Cornwall, but there still exists a plethora of walled gardens behind closed doors, many of which have uncertain futures. What follows is a brief exploration of how loss, survival and the many states in between manifest in walled kitchen gardens, in order to understand, in broad terms, the risks that such sites face today. I would argue that irrelevance is clearly the most significant of those risks - why should these sites matter now that they are no longer essential and the mouths that they were once required to feed have long since gone? I argue that it is this loss of relevance that has pushed many not only into decline but also into a state of paralysis - there is often a sense that they are too important as historical elements to destroy, but not quite useful enough to justify the necessary investment of money and resources that would bring them back into usage. Clearly what is required is the means to unlock public imagination, thus granting them relevance and purpose into which it would be worth investing. A closer study of the walled gardens at Trengwainton and Heligan will focus upon their perceived identity beyond their role as a producer of food, how they present themselves to the public and the extent to which they engage with their visitors.

Manifestations of loss

Cornwall plays host to a vast number of walled gardens in varying states of decline and rescue, encompassing the 'lost' to the 'reinvented', and every stage in between. To understand their current state of existence, it is necessary to first understand how survival and extinction manifest in a walled kitchen garden, in terms

of both the material and the cultural, that is, the tangible and the intangible. In this sense, the 'material' is used to define the physical existence of structures (walls, buildings, pits etc), while the 'cultural' refers to the processes that are characteristic of the horticultural production of food. Drawing upon Barbara Wood's discussion on loss and its many forms in *Lost Mansions*,¹⁶¹ I suggest the following 3 broad categorisations as a starting point for further analysis of the condition of walled gardens in the county and the ways in which loss (material and cultural) manifest:

1. Entirely decayed

Such sites are in a state of physical and cultural decay, where all trace of former use gone. Perhaps fragments of walls or bothies are extant, but the original site and its purpose has been lost for good. It is no longer identifiable as a kitchen garden.

Examples include Werrington and Tehidy.

2. Physically extant but culturally decayed

i) neglected

Such sites are culturally extraneous to their surroundings, yet still physically extant. Examples include Enys and Nanswhidden, where walls, buildings, fixtures and/or fittings still exist, yet they are not in use, and land is uncultivated. Such condition may be due to indecision, lack of resources (financial, time or labour) or to a lack of intention, interest or of understanding. In such circumstances, there is little doubt about the past use of the site, and it is still identifiable as a kitchen garden, but maintenance is minimal at best. Cultural processes are entirely absent. At Enys

¹⁶¹ Raven (2015) pp81-96

remnants of a former life are still extant, such as the Head Gardener's office, produce stores, bases of frames, pits and glasshouses. Walls are intact, with some plant labels still evident. However, no horticultural activity takes place within these walls.

ii) sanitised

The walls are still in place, but a conscious deconstruction of the contents has taken place at some point in the site's lifespan. A sanitisation of the space has occurred, whereby the previous life of the site has been eradicated. Such sites have become empty, static spaces; they exist in a seemingly indeterminate state and have long since lost their original usage but are now without any purpose whatsoever, characterised by their state of paralysis. Trelassick clearly falls into this category. Here, the kitchen garden was used in recent years by the donor family for small scale food production and, since their departure in 2013, the entire site has been turned over to grass; it is quite literally a blank canvas awaiting usage in some form. The only evidence of former use is the walls (still extant) which bear the scars of various glasshouses, as well as nails, wires and vine eyes, and 3 lead labels detailing the fruit once grown against the walls. The walls have evidence of flues and buildings still in place (possibly bothy/potting shed etc). Killiow is another such example, which possesses a 'crinkle crinkle', or serpentine wall, the only known one in Cornwall.

iii) reinvented

Such sites are still recognisable as walled gardens but have since been infused with a new and distinct purpose. Several examples exist in Cornwall; the kitchen garden at Tregothnan is now used for the cultivation of tea, while Trewithen's productive

walled garden was a commercial nursery until 2017.¹⁶² At Carclew the walled garden is now occupied by housing and an ornamental garden. Lanhydrock's walled garden is the site of the National Trust's commercial nursery. Some are now predominantly gardened as ornamental spaces, such as Pencarrow. They have lost the cultural sense of their past identity, but crucially they are often acknowledged and identified as walled kitchen gardens, even if only in a nominal sense.

3. *Physically and culturally extant*

Heligan is the prime candidate for this in Cornwall, a site whose purpose today is very clearly tied to its original one. Trengwainton is the only other functioning historic kitchen garden open to the public in the county and is managed by the National Trust. Materially and culturally thriving, such sites are used in accordance with their original intention, although this may be to varying degrees of success. The walled garden at Penrose is cultivated at a very minimal level, but it is nonetheless being used as originally intended, that is, to produce food. Tresillian too is fully cultivated, although it is under private ownership and is not open to the public, thus falling outside the remit of this thesis.

In pursuit of relevance

As Hunt has implored, it is imperative that garden historians now look beyond a narrative of origins if they are to play an active role in creating a meaningful understanding of historic gardens and landscapes for the 21st century garden-

¹⁶² In 2018 substantial investment commenced in the garden, with plans to completely renovate the kitchen garden, although it will be a predominantly ornamental space (pers. comm. Gary Long, Head Gardener, 2018)

visiting public.¹⁶³ Central to this notion is the need to find not only a refreshed purpose for such places, but a renewed sense of relevance too, for it is these two factors that have the potential to drive a compelling and meaningful engagement between people and place within a historic garden setting. Much work has been carried out around relevance in the museological arena, an environment which has sought to find new meanings and a reinvigorated understanding of what it is that audiences want and need from their museum experiences.¹⁶⁴ It appears that no such substantive discourse has been carried out on these issues within the historic garden environment, yet I would argue it is needed at this point in the 21st century more than ever. The discipline of garden history is vast, yet walled kitchen gardens, and their corresponding need to find new purpose and a renewed relevance, can provide a useful framework for wider garden historiography in which to organise such ideas and test assumptions.

Nielson (2015) has discussed the role of relevance within the museological environment and I would argue that much of this discourse is transferable and useful to garden history. In basic terms, relevance can be defined as “the degree to which something is related or useful to what is happening or being talked about”.¹⁶⁵ However, Nielson recognises the complexities that come with attempting to define it within a museological setting where it can take on multiple and subjective meanings: “relevance can be defined as both a cognitive process that takes place in the mind of an individual, or equally as a social, participatory engagement between people,

¹⁶³ Hunt (2004)

¹⁶⁴ Nielson (2015), Silverman (1995), Koster (1999) and Crooke (2006) to name but a few.

¹⁶⁵ Cambridge Dictionary 2019

museums and communities”.¹⁶⁶ Clearly notions of relativity, applicability and engagement are intrinsic to a fuller understanding of the concept within a heritage setting, and certainly within a garden history environment ripe for change.

So why the need for change in garden historiography? I would argue that there is a clear disconnect between stewardship and use of public historic gardens at present, certainly within the National Trust. One of the organisation’s curators recognises that there exists a chasm between how the organisation presents designed exteriors and how it presents interiors; she alludes to the notion that historic gardens and landscapes can “speak for themselves” while the presentation of historic interiors demands tools to make them more legible.¹⁶⁷ As this curator demonstrates, such observations are tied to the assumed purpose and desired outcome of a visit, that is, visitors of interiors want to learn, and visitors of exteriors do not. There is clearly potential for further exploration of the factors that drive visits to historic exteriors and interiors, beyond the scope of this study. However, what is evident is a disparity between the levels of interpretation given to historic interiors and exteriors, of which Trelissick is a prime example. In the house, volunteer stewards are present in every room, their role being to facilitate dialogue with visitors, answer their questions and help them learn more about Trelissick. Besides the human element, there have been exhibitions and interpretative displays to further expand visitors’ knowledge and understanding of the place. Guided tours

¹⁶⁶ Nielson (2015) p364

¹⁶⁷ Regarding the presence of a chasm between presenting house and gardens: “Yes – I believe there is. Often when we talk of gardens we say that they ‘speak for themselves’ – but that argument never seems to stick for houses and collections. As a result, I think gardens have largely been able to avoid having lots of interpretation added. I think this also relates to visitor motivations. Largely gardens will be for people looking to walk, relax, take in the scenery. For houses, the motivations can be different, and I suspect, more will wish to have a ‘learning’ outcome. (Pers comms. 14/11/2018)

also take place several times a week, taking visitors behind the scenes so that they can gain a fuller understanding of the place. Crucially the content of these experiences has gravitated around the house, its collection and its residents, with scarce mention of the gardens or wider parkland. In the gardens, however, the mode of sharing information is much more pedagogic in nature. What little information there is on offer comes in the form of plant names and seasonal interest - it is predominantly horticultural and therefore more didactic in nature, with extremely limited scope - for the visitor who is not interested in learning a new plant name, there is little else on offer. Implicit in the garden is the assumption that the visitor is a passive agent as opposed to an active one.

This leads to the question of how relevance would manifest in a historic garden setting, and how its success might be measured. I would suggest that a change in approach for stewards of historic gardens and landscapes must encompass the following:

- a) the need to be flexible and responsive, and to recognise and react to the protean and dynamic nature of the historic garden's audiences; this is how users will find what is relevant to their lives, and what has the potential to provide new experiences;¹⁶⁸
- b) the ability to listen to its users, to find new ways of creating dialogue (as opposed to monologue) and to understand what they want from their experiences in historic gardens (that is, an experience that does not depend upon pre-existing gardening knowledge to have value);

¹⁶⁸ Woodham (2014) <http://dissertationreviews.org/archives/7968> [accessed 13/09/2019]

- c) a means of responding to the above - not in a passive, unquestioning way but as a tool for engaging with users and pursuing dialogues, and not being afraid to confront assumptions and conventions when necessary. There is no reason to keep within traditional comfort zones; new museology has demonstrated the value of challenging audiences and institutions to carve out new and powerful relationships;
- d) the need to step away from a didactic model of education, as transmitter of knowledge to the passive receiver, towards a framework in which perspectives are shared. However, stewards of historic gardens must also find balance between the dual roles of bearer and sharer of expertise.

A modest revival - walled kitchen gardens in Cornwall today

Trengwainton

The walled kitchen garden lies at the heart of the garden owned and managed by the National Trust, on the outskirts of Penzance in west Cornwall. At present, it is notable as the only fully functioning kitchen garden managed by the National Trust in the county.¹⁶⁹ The walled garden has existed in that position since 1815 and is approximately 2 acres in size. It consists of an intricate network of brick walls, forming 'rooms', a highly atypical layout for a kitchen garden. The benefit of

¹⁶⁹ The productive garden on the Penrose Estate (National Trust) is open to the public but within the parameters of this study it cannot be defined as fully functioning. It is presently cared for by volunteers and is cultivated only on a very minimal level. A long-term plan for the entire estate is at very early stages and will incorporate the future of the walled garden (pers. comms. Wright, 2019). It appears that the National Trust is doing little to draw attention to the walled garden at present, as it barely warrants a mention on their web page: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/penrose> [accessed 15/02/2019].

this is the substantial amount of wall space that could be utilised for fruit cultivation, and to create shelter too. The kitchen gardens were created in 1814-15 for Sir Rose Price, the owner of Trengwainton from 1813-1834, who invested into the renovations of the existing farmhouse and grounds. The walled garden is sited less than half a mile away from the house; such proximity suggests that a relocation at any point in its lifespan is unlikely, and no evidence has ever been found to suggest the existence of productive area elsewhere prior to 1815. In fact, the presence of a Cornish hedge around the southern perimeter of the site would suggest that the kitchen garden may have been developed on the site of an existing productive area, of whose early walls were made use.¹⁷⁰ The design of the site is quite unique in its layout. Price created a brick walled garden set out to the dimensions of Noah's Ark, 300 cubits long by 50 cubits wide¹⁷¹, which was compartmentalised into 10 garden 'rooms', separated by brick walls (figure 4.1). It is worth noting that the cost for such a substantial amount of red brick would have been considerable; a previous guidebook states that the bricks for the walled garden were produced on site using clay brought in from Somerset by boat (National Trust, 1999). However, such costs would have been fully justified, as the amount of wall space available for fruit production was multiplied. The microclimates created within these walls allowed for the cultivation of tender crops, extending the growing season of what could be raised in the open air, as opposed to under cover.

¹⁷⁰ This is a commonly held assumption among property staff, including past and present head gardeners (namely Ian Wright and Catarina Saunders).

¹⁷¹ Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000657> [accessed 15/02/2019]

Another unique feature of the site is the addition of west facing raised and sloped beds. It appears that the beds were an afterthought, as there is no evidence of their construction being tied into the main walls. However, the bricks and the bond suggest that they are contemporaneous with the main walls, so presumably they were added shortly after the addition of the outer walls.¹⁷² The reason for the raised beds is unknown, although it should be noted that the free draining qualities of the slopes would ameliorate growing conditions in a region of Cornwall that is prone to high rainfall, so it is assumed that they would have allowed the early cultivation of vegetable and flowers.¹⁷³ Originally all ten sections were used for food production, although from 1925 Col Sir Edward Bolitho (owner of Trengwainton from 1925 until 1961 when the estate and house were donated to the National Trust) began to plant up the five most southern compartments with rare and tender exotics, as Trengwainton became increasingly involved in the hybridisation of incoming rhododendrons and other exotic rarities from overseas. The upper five rooms remained productive gardens, and this layout remains to this day.

Today the first room is a community garden, intended for “local schools, colleges and community groups to grow their own produce and learn gardening techniques with the help of the garden team”.¹⁷⁴ However, the space is currently out of use, due to a lack of interest and take-up from such groups.¹⁷⁵ A membrane has been laid over the main beds to suppress weeds and the raised wooden beds are

¹⁷² This is a commonly held assumption with property staff; visual observations certainly confirm this view.

¹⁷³ Pers. comm. Head Gardener Catarina Saunders (2018)

¹⁷⁴ <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/trengwainton-garden/features/trengwaintons-unique-walled-gardens> [accessed 15/02/2019]

¹⁷⁵ Pers. comm. Head Gardener Catarina Saunders (2018)

untended. A ramped bed in this section has been grassed over. This entire section is deemed unsightly by garden management and is closed to the public.

The second room is comprised of a large main bed which has been grassed over, rendering it out of use. In recent years it had been used for pumpkin cultivation but too much shade from a neighbouring ornamental magnolia rendered cultivation problematic, so it has been laid to lawn with no plans to cultivate it at present. There is also a ramped bed which is being cultivated in part, and borders around edge which are partially planted with herbs. The central compartment is dissected by a path with a dipping pond in the middle. Half of the garden is cultivated, and there is a sloped bed here too which has planted with crops. The central section is more ornamental in nature, with a rockery and fernery around the pond; the construction and planting style are believed to be part of the original design.¹⁷⁶ The Gardeners' cottages are situated here. They were designed as three separate cottages and later converted to one. This building is now a second-hand bookshop and meeting room for property staff. The next compartment is mostly cultivated. The main bed and surrounding borders are cultivated; however, the sloping bed is out of use and is grassed over. The last compartment has been recently reworked. A new pumpkin bed has been dug over here to replace the unusable one in room 2 (yet to be planted at the time of the visit). The planting around the walls is designed to be more experimental in nature, with olives, avocado, chickpeas and a loquat

The walls are all extant and in good condition, a hugely beneficial factor, enabling a good understanding of how this site once functioned. The shapes, size

¹⁷⁶ Pers. comm. Saunders (2018)

and layout of beds, internal walls and paths all appear to be in their original place; clearly the historic framework has been adhered to over the course of the walled garden's lifespan. In the service yard that adjoins the walled garden is a Messenger glasshouse (date unknown but likely to be late 19th century), which was renovated in 2008 and is currently in use. Foundations of other glasshouses and pits are evident.

While the physical infrastructure of the kitchen garden is still intact, and its principle function is to produce food, it is not as easy to identify a clear identity for the garden. Much of the garden is at a point of enforced arrest, with beds covered over with tarpaulin or turf, and one fifth of the garden effectively out of production and closed off from public view. There are various reasons for this, and not all are within the control of the National Trust staff at Trenkwainton. Saunders (2018) cites lack of staff as the main reason for the absence of full productivity. Walled kitchen gardens are notoriously labour intensive and at its peak in the 19th century such a site would have required a team of over ten gardeners.¹⁷⁷ Under current National Trust budgets, such high staff numbers are simply not sustainable, and today Trenkwainton's kitchen garden is gardened by one part-time member of staff, as well as a small group of volunteers. The rest of the garden team are also on hand to work in the kitchen garden, as resources allow. However, similar National Trust walled gardens outside the county function (and thrive) with a similar workforce, leading one to assume that insufficient staff numbers are just one part of the issue.

¹⁷⁷ An undated photograph in the Trenkwainton archive (likely to be the beginning of the 20th century) shows a group of 14 garden labourers.

Saunders believes that the biggest challenge after labour is the need to identify a clear sense of purpose for the place. The house is still residence to the Bolitho family and hence is not open to the public, resulting in a palpable disconnect between house and garden, and with it, an absence of tangible function for the productive garden. Commercially it is a complex matter for the National Trust cafe to make use of kitchen garden produce, as strict supply guidelines must be adhered to by every catering outlet managed by the National Trust. Even cut flowers are not a viable option as, with a lack of house, there are no obvious areas to adorn. The horticultural team are currently cultivating a small number of cut flowers, although this is mainly due to the ease of growing herbaceous perennials rather than annual flowers and/or vegetables, which are much more labour intensive due to the need for annual sowing and transplanting. They are used to decorate outbuildings and the cafe, on a minimal scale. Saunders regards the site as a historic one,¹⁷⁸ and as such, she feels that its sense of purpose must tie into its history, and at the very least to its Spirit of Place. Previous head gardener Ian Wright had suggested it as an experimental garden;¹⁷⁹ Trengwainton famously embraced a pioneering spirit from the early 20th century, when the garden enjoyed a fruitful period of rhododendron and camellia hybridisation, evidence of which is visible today in the outer gardens. However, there seems a reluctance to identify the kitchen garden under such terms, with an underlying doubt from current management as to whether this is the right path to pursue today. A tentative nod to the theme is visible in one of the compartments where a few olive trees grow alongside a loquat, a chickpea plant and

¹⁷⁸ Saunders, pers. comm. (2018)

¹⁷⁹ Wright, pers. comms (2019)

an avocado. However, the produce here seems at total odds with the remainder of the site, which cultivates more conventional crops.

I would go further and suggest that the entire kitchen garden lacks any sense of overarching identity. It is remarkable and truly unique in its design, and the fact that the historic framework has endured is of great significance, from a conservation perspective and a historical one. However, historical and cultural signposting is entirely lacking in the garden; the only way that a visitor to the garden would glean anything about the uniqueness of the site would be from the guidebook (designed to be read post-visit), as there is not a single piece of interpretation or information in the garden. Such hesitance to determine and clarify the character of the site manifests on the ground as paralysis. The garden appears to have ground to a halt, with minimal cultivation and, alarmingly, no evidence to suggest any future change. This is a factor that greatly troubles Saunders, who is rightly disconcerted by “the utter lack of a long-term plan”.¹⁸⁰ If the garden possesses any confidence about its identity, it is not at all evident. Signage is frustratingly absent; aside from a handful of crop labels and some polite notices advising visitors to keep out, or to not climb on the ramped borders, there is scarce communication between the garden and its visitors. This site is very clearly and lamentably an underutilised heritage asset.

Approaches suggested by new museology, such as the positioning of the visitor at the heart of the experience, simply do not exist in the kitchen garden at Trengwainton. Not only is dialogue missing, so too is monologue; in fact, from a visitor’s perspective the garden appears to have lost its voice. Opportunities to

¹⁸⁰ Pers. comm. 2018

converse with its audience are missed, even on the most minimal of levels; Trengwainton does not speak of its past, its present or its future, and in so doing it puts at risk its heritage value, as something that merits cultural and physical conservation. Perhaps Trengwainton exemplifies the expectation for gardens to speak for themselves, unaided by interpretation, as previously suggested by the National Trust curator. Even to the untrained eye, it is obvious that this is a site of considerable age, and that it is used for the cultivation of food, but there lies the limit of any obvious narrative. I would argue that this is failure; for historic gardens to consciously step away from the opportunity to be made legible and thus enable emotional, social and cultural connections between the place and those who visit it is a shocking oversight. The lack of narrative and of any sense of story (past or present) in the kitchen garden at Trengwainton goes beyond a simplistic absence of signage. The garden struggles to assert any sense of identity and, with it, any sense of relevance to the lives of its visitors today. It certainly ticks the box of being a pleasant space to pass some time but that is all. In many ways, it is emblematic of the uneasy and at times awkward juxtaposition between garden history and historic gardens, subscribing to the theory that garden historical discourse has no place in a historic garden. The opportunities, however, are far-reaching, for sites such as Trengwainton's kitchen garden have the potential to act as an arena for powerful dialogue between the National Trust and the visitor. The overarching narrative at present, however, is of a story untold.

One such opportunity for dialogue centres around a concern of head gardener Catarina Saunders. In conversation in 2018, she expressed unease about visitor anticipation of the site - according to visitor feedback they appear to have high

expectations for what Saunders and her staff consider to be unrealistic presentation standards; everything is expected to be neat, tidy, weed-free, aesthetically pleasing and fully cultivated. However, as any gardener who has had to maintain and cultivate such a site knows, kitchen gardens are working sites and, as such, do not always look as attractive as, say, an ornamental garden. The battle to keep weeds suppressed cannot always be won, and the labour-intensive nature of such sites means that they must be gardened continually, for productiveness is prioritised over aesthetic. So how can the garden team manage such expectations and promote an understanding of this issue? Here resides an opportunity to offer a more honest and therefore authentic representation of a working productive garden, and, crucially, to start conversations with visitors about the perceptions, issues and challenges of cultivating a 19th century kitchen garden in the 21st century; an understanding of the gritty, dirty reality of gardening, and the hard work that such places demand, is in itself an honest and authentic story that can be shared with the garden's visitors. Conversations and dialogue must function at the most fundamental of levels, for surely at times it is acceptable (and commendable) to declare the need for a momentary curatorial pause in such a site while a way forward is ascertained. In fact, such an approach could go a step further and actively involve the public in the future uses of the site.

There is clearly huge potential for the walled kitchen garden, and it faces several challenges, but the fact that it has endured is of great significance. I would presume that this is in part due to the presence and influence of the donor family, the Bolithos, and their involvement in the running of the gardens. It is of great worth to consider what is being successfully conserved in the kitchen garden at present -

certainly the original function is very much at the heart of the garden, for it is a productive space, and its physical elements such as paths, beds, borders and walls, buildings and glasshouse are extant. It has maintained its contextual authenticity, and thus provides a legitimate environment in which to share activities that bridge the past, the present and the future. However, that which is lacking or has been marginalised is also of significance - the cultural and social values that were once so intrinsic to the place are absent today. Trengwainton kitchen garden is devoid of any discourse that embodies these past practices, and the use of stories as a means of connecting present users of the site (visitors) with past users (staff, family and their guests) is at present unexplored. Even if a conscious decision to marginalise historical narratives had been made, there is no alternative, no contemporary sense of purpose. What is evident here above all else is a lost opportunity to make social connections, and to fully acknowledge the afterlife of the place, thereby providing relevance and connectivity to 21st century users of the site.

The Lost Gardens of Heligan

The productive gardens at the Lost Gardens of Heligan stand as one of the most well-known walled kitchen gardens in the country, and most certainly within Cornwall. The story of the discovery and consequent restoration of a ruinous garden by Tim Smit and John Nelson, commenced in the 1990s, is well documented.¹⁸¹ The productive gardens are comprised of the kitchen garden, where fruit and vegetables

¹⁸¹ Smit (2003); The Lost Gardens of Heligan have also been the subject matter of several television programmes such as BBC *Gardeners World* (1991 and 2015), BBC *Springwatch* and *Autumnwatch* (2006, 2007 and 2008), BBC *Heligan: Secrets of a Lost Garden* (2010) and two Channel 4 series in 1997 and 1999.

are grown, a melon yard which houses several glasshouses, frames and pits for the early cultivation of exotics, and the flower garden which also contains a vinery and citrus and peach houses. The productive gardens were constructed in the late 18th and early 19th century.¹⁸² The outer walls constructed in the 1780's, using bricks imported from the Low Countries and the glasshouses were constructed from the 1840s onwards.¹⁸³ The estate belonged to the Tremayne family, and had been under their ownership since the late 16th century.¹⁸⁴ The gardens were well tended until the outbreak of the First World War, whereupon the majority of the workforce left to fight. From this point on the gardens began their decline. Out of 22 garden staff, just 8 remained by 1916.¹⁸⁵ Food production remained a high priority, as necessary during the war years as it was before, due to Heligan's temporary status as a convalescent home for wounded officers. The decline of the productive gardens was a slow but steady one; Smit recounts remembrances from past staff who describe the ebb and flow of productivity in the 20th century.¹⁸⁶ While some of the glasshouses (such as the melon house) did not survive the First World War, others, such as the vinery and the peach house continued to yield fruit in the interwar years and beyond. The 1970s saw the last elements of the garden become engulfed into the ruinous state that has become the defining narrative of the Heligan story.

Heligan offers a striking contrast to Trengwainton in that the entire garden is imbued with a robust narrative that is firmly rooted in the history of the place. Smit clearly had an agenda in mind right from the outset, one that gravitates around a

¹⁸² <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000538> [accessed 20/02/2019]

¹⁸³ Smit 2003 p166

¹⁸⁴ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000538> [accessed 20/02/2019]

¹⁸⁵ Smit 2003 p152

¹⁸⁶ Smit (2003) p154

purposeful narrative focused upon World War One, death and renewal, while Trengwainton reflects a more organic and protracted agenda, albeit one that is currently at a curatorial pause. At Heligan, while the historical discourse permeates the entire garden, ornamental and productive, I would argue that it is the productive gardens that are most emblematic of the story. The chosen narrative is inescapable, and its presence is felt long before one even steps into the garden itself. Even the name of the place speaks volumes, for it immediately invokes the notion that the place is waiting to be found, inviting the visitor into an ongoing participatory process of 'finding' that which has been 'lost'. A look at the website reveals a place steeped in its own history, and subsequent restoration, setting the tone for the visit to come. Smit's words eloquently capture the ethos of Heligan:

"There are many good reasons one could have for wanting to restore a garden; each one has a story to tell and special pleasures to enjoy. However, John and I decided that day that preserving Heligan for posterity by putting it in aspic was not what we wanted. We had flesh and blood in mind. We wanted to hold a mirror up to the past and tell the story of these people, in a way we hoped they would have understood and approved of. Just as importantly, we wanted to celebrate the lives of all the men and women who had once worked in great gardens like these. [.....] More than anything, the desire to capture the essential spirit of place became the *raison d'être* of the restoration. I felt instantly that there was a story to tell here that would move people."¹⁸⁷

More than any other part of Heligan, the productive garden is representative of this narrative; it has become a potent symbol of loss and of a way of life now gone. Enshrined within its walls are the old bothies, sheds, back houses, glasshouses,

¹⁸⁷ Smit (2003) p46

boilers, pits and frames, the tools, and even the ‘thunder box’; these are the elements that, alongside the gardeners themselves, were once so key to a working, functioning site. It follows to examine how Heligan achieves this within the productive gardens – I would argue that in many ways it is easier to constrain this area to a fixed period through the management of annual planting and historic built structures, such as bothies, glasshouses and boiler rooms. Such elements are easier to control in a temporal sense – in the ornamental garden the permanence of the planting means the garden is constantly evolving, albeit at a slow pace, while a garden bed in the productive garden can be easily emptied at the end of a season and then replanted in exactly the same way, recreating and re-telling the same story year in year out.¹⁸⁸

The overarching narrative and its means of interpretation within the productive gardens stem from a history from below. Heligan’s identity has been constructed to inextricably entwine with the men who worked here, and with their day-to-day, as opposed to the landowners, the Tremayne family. In fact, there is remarkably little information on the Tremaynes and this appears to have been a conscious decision from the start, as the website declares: “We were fired by a magnificent obsession [...] to tell, for the first time, not tales of lords and ladies but of those “ordinary” people who had made these gardens great, before departing for the Great War.”¹⁸⁹ The site has been remade to convey rich symbolism - the buildings bear the names of a now defunct purpose; the gardeners’ bothy is one of the most evocative buildings, with the head gardeners office within its walls, fire lit,

¹⁸⁸ What is more, the garden team are limited to the crops that they grow – they will only cultivate heritage varieties which were available pre-1918 (Kingsett, pers. comm., 12/02/2019)

¹⁸⁹ <https://www.heligan.com/the-story/introduction> [accessed 20/02/2019]

flowers adorning the windowsill, papers and spectacles on the desk, presumably to present the illusion that the gardener has just stepped away the room. Fragments of a past working life have been purposefully crafted into every corner of the productive garden; the tool shed houses a collection of antiquated gardening equipment, and the wall of the 'thunder box' still bears the signatures of those who once worked there. Heligan's curation insists that its visitors view and understand the site as a snapshot in time and it demands that they are transplanted to the early 20th century, as opposed to bringing the garden into the 21st century. The result of such an agenda is at odds with the name of the garden, for this is clearly no longer a lost garden - it has been very much 'found', and the idea that the visitor can be an active agent in finding some lost element is in fact inaccurate. Instead, the visitor remains a passive onlooker who has minimal involvement or participation in the heritage of the site. Heligan's narrative is firmly embedded within one very exact place and moment in time, that is, a Cornish country estate on the brink of the Great War, and on the verge of immeasurable change. The Great War permeates the place, a powerful and extremely emotive symbol of loss and of a turning point from which this country (and Heligan) would not recover. The garden acts as a horticultural time capsule, preserving a representation of the past to invoke an emotional engagement with the users of the site today. Much discourse focuses upon the gardeners who were enlisted and their fate. They are often represented as ghosts, often alluding to the haunting presence of the past in a site today, neatly circling back to the 1980s BBC series *The Kitchen Garden* which was infused with romantic and nostalgic discourse.

Where do meanings lie here? They are clearly located deep in the past, at a very specific and almost momentary point in history. It follows to question how the present-day visitor experiences the place. To what extent can a typical member of the public authentically relate to the highly specific narratives that are told here? The story here centres around a young, working class, male gardener in the early years of the 20th century, on the verge of leaving behind an idyllic, bucolic life to go to war. Another discourse is ingrained in the narrative here, that of “finding” a lost garden as Smit and his colleagues did in 1990. In reality, neither of these events are within the realm of experience or understanding of the average member of the public, so how does Heligan elicit an emotional engagement? It is useful at this point to draw upon Jordan’s (2010) work on collective memory in historic gardens and her discussion on the creation of collective remembrances. Jordan cites the work of Landsberg on prosthetic memory, a process that “emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past”¹⁹⁰ and results in a profound emotional connection through the adoption of memories that cannot possibly be one’s own. This is the process through which Heligan elicits the engagement of its visitors; the Great War is no longer within their living memory, nor are the details of the working lives of the young men whose stories are told here. However, Heligan engages with the visitor on a deeper level - they may not remember the Great War and its consequences, but they know that their parents, grandparents or great-grandparents might, and the Great War has national significance. These associated emotions are internalised and then personalised through imagined memories. Such recollection is

¹⁹⁰ Jordan (2010) p11

of course false, yet the sense of nostalgia is so overwhelming that one *feels* a sense of remembrance through the creation of second-hand memory.

Historical authenticity is very much implied. However, the concept of authenticity is a complex one. On the one hand, the site's legitimacy is beyond doubt - it is still wholly recognisable as and defined by what it has always been, a productive garden. The purpose of this place is to produce food and cut flowers, just as it was at the turn of the last century. However, complexities arise regarding the processes that occurred historically in terms of innovation, of striving to push horticulture forward and of the activities within this space which championed the new and improved, for such a rigid and temporally fixed narrative simply does not allow for such dynamism. The implication is that Heligan is presenting the site as 'peak productive garden', that the cusp of the 20th century was the pinnacle of productive gardens. There is truth in this, yet this narrative runs the risk of doing exactly what Smit was determined it should not, that is, presenting a garden set "in aspic".¹⁹¹ Substantial challenges come from working within such an inflexible framework. The gardening ethos is to share best *past* practice,¹⁹² so the garden team can only grow what their predecessors would have cultivated. As garden supervisor Katie Kingsett admits, it is not easy to innovate and experiment when the team can only grow a limited range of heritage varieties, although rediscovery of lost heritage cultivars does occur.¹⁹³ The garden, however, cannot move on, even though that is all that plants (and many gardeners) want to do, for growth is at the heart of horticulture.

¹⁹¹ Smit (2003) p46

¹⁹² Kingsett, pers. comm. 12/02/2019

¹⁹³ Ibid.

Heligan in 1900 was essentially ameliorative in nature, with one purpose - to work towards the cultivation of the very finest produce with which to feed the estate. Today, however, it appears Heligan must live its best day forever, over and over again.

There are several limitations of such a fixed and explicit narrative. Whereas proponents of new museology, such as Woodham (2014), implore museums to seek flexible and diverse approaches to the experiences they offer, Heligan offers just one, and an unyielding one at that. Such a strong singular narrative has suited the place so far, and Heligan has certainly made a success of it in the 25 years that it has been open to the public,¹⁹⁴ but where does its future lie? It is so entrenched within its discourse that it would be almost unthinkable to move on from it. The visitor experience has centred around putting the visitor back in the past (exemplified by the presentation of the head gardener's room) as opposed to bringing the gardens into the 21st century. A binary choice has been made (the past as opposed to the present) but I would argue that Heligan has the opportunity to embrace both timeframes and to step away from a process that attempts to ossify the garden. In using a historical narrative to frame the garden experience the garden can become a more relevant space to those who engage with the site today. Heligan's purpose today has changed. It still must feed - it supplies the restaurant which proudly boasts of its fresh produce - but if it is to remain relevant and engaging to its present and future visitors it must now seek to engage and inspire.

¹⁹⁴ Visitor numbers in 2018 totalled 354,969 (<https://www.visitbritain.org/annual-survey-visits-visitor-attractions-latest-results> [accessed 15/02/2020])

The Lost Gardens of Heligan seeks to connect people with a past that it is just beyond their view, linked by memory, even if it is not their own.

Chapter 5

Trelissick Walled Kitchen Garden

What has emerged thus far is a need to explore innovative ways of presenting a walled kitchen garden within an historic public setting, and in so doing, suffusing it with a renewed sense of purpose, relevance and identity. Inevitably questions arise regarding how such a site might look and feel, and how it would be experienced by its users. The presentation and use of any historic site stimulate debate on notions of identity in heritage discourse, and future use of Trelissick's walled garden serves as a fine example of such a discussion. The site is at a point of transition, due not only to its present physical state of inactivity, but also to its recent change of ownership. It is moving from a hidden private space to a potentially prominent position within Cornwall's public history. This in turn leads to issues about where the identity of the walled kitchen garden should lie – in its historical roots or in a redefined contemporary purpose. Is there a tension between these two aspects, and, if so, how can this be resolved? Furthermore, how can such changes be managed successfully, reconnecting a new community of stakeholders with the space while also acknowledging the historical significance of the walled kitchen garden as a heritage asset? I assert that Trelissick's walled garden has significant potential to serve as the cultural and social interface between past and present. This chapter will seek to explore ways of presenting the garden through a reinvigorated sense of purpose in material and cultural terms. It has the potential too of crafting emotional, intellectual and social connections amongst those who visit and use the site. One of the emerging arguments in this thesis has been that curators and guardians of historic gardens have much to learn from historiographical approaches

such as new museology, public history and history from below; applying some of these elements to Trelissick's walled garden results in a starting point for further debate and discourse on the subject.

Rather than re-applying a fixed, previously held identity to the walled kitchen garden at Trelissick, I argue that it is surely preferable to construct new meaning to the site, albeit one that firmly acknowledges the historic framework within which it sits. Heritage has no need to obsess about re-inventing the past or letting visitors experience that past (or rather, a 21st century version of that past) in a temporally fixed site that adheres strictly to its designed origin, The Lost Gardens of Heligan being a prime example. Instead, heritage guardians must explicitly define a new purpose for such sites and in so doing, reinforce their relevance, dissipate at least a fraction of their vulnerability and allow them to flourish. Firmly placing the notions of purpose and relevance back into the heart of Trelissick's walled garden will give it a level of protection that can ensure its survival – and when it is no longer relevant, that purpose can be adjusted accordingly to fulfil future needs. The walled kitchen garden has the potential to become a site in which many different types of knowledge can be disseminated, including historical, social and cultural discourse. In doing so, the afterlife of the site is reaffirmed, creating an ideology that considers how the site is to be used and experienced going forward. I assert that if the walled kitchen garden is to have relevance and purpose in the future and be mindful of its reception, it must be prepared to take a conscious step away from its designed intention.

What follows is an examination of how such a site has the potential to operate and how it can enrich and augment the emotional and intellectual lives of a range of stakeholders, and a consideration of the opportunities and benefits that such an approach can offer other walled kitchen gardens, public gardens and historic outdoor spaces. However, the resulting model considers Trellissick's very unique needs, highlighting the importance of approaching each historic garden afresh. This study recognises the need to contextualise such sites so that they once more sit comfortably within the landscape of which they were once a component, accounting for changes in that contextual setting as well as the need for a renewed sense of purpose, if such sites are to be anything other than a pastiche of what they once were.

Trellissick today

Trellissick estate is situated approximately three miles south of Truro in Cornwall, overlooking the River Fal and the Carrick Roads. It is made up of 255 hectares of woodland, parkland and gardens, at the centre of which sits Trellissick House.¹⁹⁵ Several estate buildings including stables, a home farm and the walled kitchen garden, with its associated outbuildings, sit adjacent to the house. Since 1955 the gardens, woodland and parkland have been owned and managed by the National Trust, while the house has come under National Trust management much more recently, when the present generation of the Copeland family vacated the house in 2013. The property in its entirety is comprised of house, parkland and garden. It also encompasses (and is supported financially by) commercial elements,

¹⁹⁵ Cookson & Tickner (2017) p1

namely food and beverage, retail, a second-hand bookshop and an art gallery, as well as National Trust membership sales. At present, Trelissick welcomes over 200,000¹⁹⁶ visitors a year to the house and gardens (access to which is ticketed), with approximately the same number again visiting the parkland (access to which is free of charge).

Present situation

The walled garden is at present an empty space (see fig 5.1) and has been so since 2013 when the Copeland family made the decision to no longer live at Trelissick. Until that point, the donor family had used a section of the site for their own small productive garden, rendering the remainder of the site unusable as part of the visitor route, even if there had been an appetite within the National Trust to do so. Despite its current state of inertia, it is in a relatively healthy condition; according to a recent preliminary survey,¹⁹⁷ the walls are in good order with minimal repairs needed. What is more, there is evidence of the original paths and the footprint of the glasshouses under the surface of the ground, confirmed by recent preliminary investigations by the garden team at Trelissick.¹⁹⁸ Physically and culturally, this site has been inactive in the recent past, yet it has survived and, apart from one small section to the west of the site which has been taken up by a shop, the walled garden has never been repurposed, a fact that is quite remarkable. It has survived a period during the second half of the 20th century when many similar sites were reinvented –

¹⁹⁶ Visitor numbers in the financial year 2018-2019 totalled 215,696 (pers. comms., 2019, National Trust)

¹⁹⁷ Carried out by Cookson and Tickner in 2017 as part of the Conservation Management Plan process.

¹⁹⁸ Pers comms. 2018

at nearby Lanhydrock, the walled garden became the site of a commercial nursery, whereas Killerton's walled garden suffered the ignoble fate of becoming a visitor car park. Indecision appears to have given it a level of protection, or at least a reprieve.

Despite the walled garden's position at the very heart of the garden, its presence is either undetected or overlooked by the majority of today's visitors. Its concealment from the public eye is the result of a conscious effort over the past few years to detract attention away from the site, after the decision was made to take it out of production. On the most part, this deflection has been successful; the northern wall lies in the staff car park, the eastern and southern walls act as a backdrop to the main borders and thus are hidden by richly layered planting displays, while the western wall is the edge of a public car park, also screened by a series of climbing plants. A glimpse of the site can be seen from the northern-most part of the garden, known as Carcaddon. However, it appears that many visitors simply do not notice it, as their eye is drawn to the surrounding planting. As such, the walled garden is not on the present garden visitor's offered route, or their radar.

It is important to clarify at this point the stage at which the National Trust is with the development of the walled kitchen garden at Trelissick. The property management team have recognised that there is much scope to restore the site back to at least partial productivity but at the time of writing, no concrete plans, timescales or costs have been drawn up, nor any work on how the site would operate in relation to the rest of Trelissick, or how it would feel and be experienced by its users. However, as assistant head gardener at Trelissick, I have been involved in high level discussions about desired outcomes from the site, details of

which are included in the following chapter, and in the appendix attached to this thesis.

National Trust master planning:

In 2013 the Copeland family made the decision to leave Trelissick, and in doing so, triggered another major event in the lifespan of Trelissick, a change not so much of ownership (as the National Trust has owned the house and its land since 1955), but of residency. With the house now vacant it was up to the National Trust to find a way of presenting the house to the public and of incorporating it into the visitor offer, thus reuniting it with the gardens and parkland to which it had once been fused. With the house also came the walled garden; once the donor family had no use for it, guardianship was automatically transferred back to the Trust. Accepting and embracing such a sudden and significant change has not been a simple process – as one member of the senior management team admits, change was thrust upon the Trust, an organisation that favours consensual and considered adjustments rather than sudden, erratic change.¹⁹⁹ However, the management team at Trelissick realised that they were being presented with an opportunity to make much needed improvements to the property. Visitor facilities such as car parks, toilets, restaurants and retail facilities were stretched to the limit by this point. Visitor numbers have almost doubled in the last decade, yet the facilities have barely changed in that time to encompass these growing numbers.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Pers. comms. 2018

²⁰⁰ Visitor numbers – 2012: 125,249; 2013: 127,507; 2014: 157,237; 2015: 167, 434; 2016: 176,164; 2017: 201,825; 2018: 216,642. Source – National Trust. Recent patterns suggest further growth.

Part of this process has been the creation of a comprehensive conservation management plan in 2018, which for the first time, incorporates house, garden and parkland. It includes too the walled kitchen garden, recognising it as “a significant opportunity for interpretation and to enhance the visitor experience”.²⁰¹ Its recognised value has led to a further piece of work to be carried out by landscape architects Cookson and Tickner on the walled garden, highlighting the potential opportunities that the site can offer. At the time of writing, this piece of work has not yet been completed, however, it is being carried out in conjunction with the author and will be referred to in this chapter.

This is the point at which Trelissick’s walled kitchen garden currently sits – on the verge of great change on a physical and material level yet without a plan that embodies the cultural, physical and historical values of the site, past and present, or a clear vision for sharing such meanings with its users. What follows is a reflection of what the walled garden could be, taking into account the significance that it once held, and the potential that it carries going forward.

Recommendations:

The following question must be asked: why restore the walled kitchen garden? Trelissick has clearly continued to grow and progress as a visitor attraction – the public visit in their thousands, with numbers set to increase in the near future if recent figures are a guide. With house and parkland open too, the visitor’s experience of Trelissick is already a full one. What exactly can the walled garden offer to the visitor that they cannot experience from the rest of the property? I would

²⁰¹ Cookson & Tickner (2018) p155

argue that there would be little point in restoring the walled garden simply because it once existed, for without an explicit function it will inevitably suffer the same fate that befell it in the 20th century, that is, redundancy. The physical site may still be present, but cultural meaning has been entirely lost, and the walled garden currently plays no part in Trelissick's identity. The Copeland family no longer reside at the house, and there is no estate, with associated mouths to feed. To bring it back into use simply because the National Trust can would be to deny the garden a renewed sense of meaning. I would argue it is essential to regard Trelissick in a holistic sense, rather than as a series of components, and to understand not only the walled garden's relationship with its surroundings, but also what value it can add to those surroundings. It is vital to understand the character of Trelissick, in order to understand the extent to which, if any, the walled garden can enhance that character and work with the place as it is today, rather than recreating a historical element that would sit at juxtaposition with its current surroundings.

Identity

To avoid the creation of a generic National Trust template of 'historic house/garden/parkland', each property under the guardianship of the National Trust must recognise and develop its own unique spirit of place, a document that captures both the tangible and intangible elements that make the site so special:

"Spirit of Place is a short statement that expresses what is unique, distinctive and cherished about a particular place; and which guides all activities to improve the quality of everything that we do at that place."²⁰²

²⁰² Staniforth *et al* (2013) p1

This can take into account any characteristics that particularly dominate, be it the influence of an era, a family, an architectural style, a plant collection, landscape fashion or design. For reference, the full Spirit of Place for Trelissick is included in the appendix for this thesis. Essentially, Trelissick is recognised by the National Trust as a place where change is a constant:

“A history of dynamic ownership has led to successive generations of industrialists and traders making Trelissick their own [...] Without a dominant influence or story, the past feels anonymous and this gives a freedom that invites continued progress and change in the present”.²⁰³

Trelissick has long demonstrated a readiness to adapt to whatever has been required of it, be it family home, status symbol or visitor attraction. Dynamism and flexibility are so intrinsically woven into the fabric of Trelissick that it is crucial that the place does not stand still going into the future, for that would result in an inauthentic representation of Trelissick. However, change must be carefully considered and well thought through, and, I would argue, it must find the equilibrium between Trelissick’s past and its future. It is essential that the historic framework of Trelissick is maintained and that, within that structure, a spirit of change and measured experimentation can be adopted. The house and garden have changed immeasurably throughout its lifespan. The garden as it is presented today is clearly rooted in the 20th century, when many of the plantings of rhododendrons were established.²⁰⁴ 18th and 19th century elements have largely disappeared – the Lily ponds, the walled garden and the more formal planting of Victorian fashion have left barely a trace. Going forward, the garden must continue that spirit, where the

²⁰³ *Spirit of Trelissick* (2015) – included in appendices

²⁰⁴ Cookson and Tickner (2017) p137

planting can be experimental and forward looking, not restricted by an era or a plant group. However, it is a garden that knows its limits – this is a woodland garden, characterised by trees, shrubs, groundcover, with key plantings of Rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias, hydrangeas and so forth. Within those loose confines the garden team can play, yet with a constant awareness of the essential character of Trelissick.

Another key consideration is the importance of community that the Spirit of Place places upon Trelissick, referring to the property as “a popular and valuable social backdrop close to the hearts of many in the local community and as a result many have developed a strong sense of ownership and love of place”.²⁰⁵ The document is very explicit in the significance of community, not only acknowledging a social connection but also the sense of proprietorship that comes with such a close relationship. Such a notion can inform how the National Trust manages elements such as the walled garden, and how its community can to a certain extent fulfil the now vacant role of occupant. To what extent is it appropriate and of value to regard community as owners of Trelissick, even if only on an emotional level?

Physicality:

It is essential to reflect upon how such a walled garden would look structurally. To be forward looking it must have capacity to change; just as Trelissick has continually readjusted itself, having been whatever it has needed to be to successive owners, so too must a future model, yet within recognised parameters, as much as the surrounding garden does. In the walled garden, this means retaining

²⁰⁵ *Spirit of Trelissick* (2015)

the historic framework - in this case, walls and paths - and reintroducing previous structures such as arbours and glasshouses. Within the spaces in between, a sense of experimentalism can be embraced. Again, the walled garden needs to be constantly self-aware and self-regulatory, in much the same way as the ornamental garden. This space has always been a site for the production of food, so it must continue to adhere to that core identity, even if it allows itself to deviate slightly by fulfilling a modern purpose. Trengwainton in many ways serves as an example of a walled garden that is unsure of its identity, and I would argue that Trelassick has much to learn from such a site. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, Trengwainton is a garden seemingly without a purpose, and, in order to avoid such a confused visitor offer, Trelassick's walled kitchen garden must be absolutely aware of its very reason for existing, and must clearly and explicitly communicate such meaning to its visitors and users.

Purpose and function:

The fulfilment of purpose is clearly the very reason the walled garden was created and must be the motivation for its reintroduction to Trelassick. Essentially, the need to feed created the existence of such places, while the advent of alternative food sources in the 20th century drove their near extinction. While there is no longer a household at Trelassick for whom to provide food, there are approximately 217,000 others to feed, for Trelassick now has a new set of occupants. Garden visitors tend to demand a tea-room, at the very least, and at Trelassick those expectations are certainly met. If Trelassick's financial contribution from its restaurant is an indication of the need to feed then there is surely a strong

case for the redevelopment of the walled garden for that reason alone.²⁰⁶ Heligan has proven itself to be a successful model in this sense, as the productive gardens effectively supply the restaurant, and other National Trust walled gardens, such as Arlington, Attingham and Sissinghurst have also done so, although at present National Trust kitchens are limited by tight regulations concerning approved suppliers and set menus.²⁰⁷ In the heritage sector there must be commercial gains as well as cultural ones, for financial sustainability is critical to ensure that such spaces can survive and thrive into the future. However, I would argue that in focussing solely upon the site as a commercial space whose principal role is to raise income, Trelissick and the National Trust would be missing a significant opportunity.

The cultural value that such sites contributed historically in furthering knowledge and in sharing and developing horticultural skills can and should be continued going forward and has the capacity to be developed in multiple ways, reaching a diverse audience. Users should include (but not be limited to) professional and amateur horticulturalists, school and college groups, garden clubs and societies, and the casual visitor who wants to know how to train their apple tree in their back garden – for transferability of large-scale fruit cultivation to the domestic setting is essential too. A space for learning, both indoors and outdoors, must be

²⁰⁶ 2018-2019 Food and beverage financial contribution (gross) = £1.4million (source – National Trust Trelissick)

²⁰⁷ The National Trust Cookbook has been developed to “deliver commercial benefits and enable consistent training of our catering staff to a defined standard. By adopting a consistent approach across all of our catering outlets, through the Cookbook we’ll also be able to unlock further opportunities to achieve benefits” (National Trust intranet, accessed 11/05/2018). It sets rigid parameters about suppliers and what menus can be served.

incorporated into the plan for the walled garden, to facilitate a range of learning experiences.

Towards a new garden historiography

Vergo argues that “what is wrong with the old museology is that it is too much about museum methods, and too little about purposes of museums”.²⁰⁸ The notion of purpose is intrinsic to new museology as an identified and universally understood meaning that drives the fundamental reason for the institution’s existence. Vergo acknowledges how crucial it is to not only recognise the purpose of the site (in this case the walled kitchen garden), but also to embed that rationale into the place’s narrative and discourse too, and the need to be explicit about its role and about its goals. I assert that the application of a new historiographical approach that embraces new museology, public history and history from below can enrich notions of relevance and purpose within the contemporary reinvention of the walled garden at Trelissick.

The walled garden at Trelissick can become an agent for the facilitation of intellectual and emotional connections in terms of the past and the present, providing discourse and experience that is relevant and pertinent to its users’ lives, the result of which will be a democratised space for dialogue and activity that will enhance the lives of all who use it. This can occur through several ways, such as a considered programme of events, interpretation, narratives and planned workshops; through being embedded into the culture of the site, and the everyday experience;

²⁰⁸ Vergo (2006) p3

and through educational experiences and the sharing of skills and knowledge. By creating carefully considered and layered programming, the National Trust can connect their audiences emotionally and intellectually with this place and with what happens within it. A part of this process will involve identifying a diverse range of themes, as well as adapting distinct means of communicating with a range of user groups. It is vital to identify physical spaces within the walled garden that can be used as platforms for this, as such areas can allow flexible usage for groups of people to learn new skills and to discover how and why the National Trust continues to care for and cultivate the site.

The information below is drawn from a preliminary paper prepared by the author for the National Trust in 2018, the original of which is included in the appendix to this thesis. It is not an exhaustive piece of work, but is instead a starting point for discussion, as there is still significant work to be carried out on identifying relevant themes. It does, however, give a flavour of how the walled garden, a site of tremendous human activity, could seek to inspire its users.

Narratives:

Interpretation and the sharing of narratives within this site can take diverse forms and must take account of various learning styles, resulting in written, pictorial, digital, verbal, aural, oral and active forms. In particular, digital technology and the notion of the “distributed museum”²⁰⁹ raises questions of how such places (and the experiences within) can transcend traditional physical confines. Such experience can surpass existing conventions and has the potential to extend the place and the

²⁰⁹ Bautista and Balsamo (2011) [accessed 03/03/2019]

time span of the visit; the visitor experience can start before the visit and it can continue after physically leaving the site. The National Trust has taken tentative steps towards multi-sensory technological experiences, such as a virtual reality exhibition at Avebury in 2018²¹⁰ and, in 2017, Mat Collishaw's *Thresholds*, an interactive digital reconstruction at Lacock Abbey, focusing on the early photography of Fox Talbot.²¹¹

The first step, however, is to identify potential narratives for Trelassick's walled garden. Several are emerging even at this early stage, although further analysis and consultation will be necessary before further work is developed. The following gives an idea of possible narrative frameworks:

Trelassick as 'the fruit garden of Cornwall': this refers to an article by Cornish botanist Frederick Davey (1897) in which he acknowledges Trelassick's reputation as one of the most highly regarded places in the county for the cultivation of fruit. Such a prestigious title offers plenty of scope, for it fully supports the walled garden being celebrated as a place of fruit cultivation in the 21st century, as well as acknowledging its status within the county. An adoption of this identity would also result in the site becoming a regional centre of specialism. Such an approach is rare for walled gardens; Heligan cultivates a wide range of food crops, just as it did until the beginning of the 20th century, while Trengwainton's approach appears to be to grow that which is easiest. To identify Trelassick's walled garden as a fruit garden would

²¹⁰ <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/avebury/features/experience-a-virtual-reality-avebury>, [accessed 19/03/2019]

²¹¹ <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lacock-abbey-fox-talbot-museum-and-village/features/mat-collishaw-thresholds> [accessed 19/03/2019].

be to acknowledge the importance of historical authenticity, while also recognising the marketability of a carved niche.

People: Narratives can include those who worked there previously and those who work the same ground today. In particular, the late 19th century head gardener William Sangwin has a strong presence in the story of the walled garden, as several articles written by him in national horticultural journals attest. Other members of previous garden teams emerge as more research is carried out by the National Trust, and it would be worthwhile to explore their stories and their role in cultivating this space, what they grew and the skills they developed to do so to such exacting standards. It is important to formulate links between those of the past and those who lead activity in the walled garden today, be they paid professionals, volunteers or visitors. There is a strong opportunity here to explore narratives that centre on history from below, that is, the stories of those who once worked here, distinct from the big names who resided in the house. Here lies the means to step away from a top down narrative that is so typical of garden history discourse, with a renewed and timely focus upon the everyday lives of those who worked here and do so today.

Place: Trelissick's walled garden provides an opportunity to discuss the origins of the site and its central role in the working estate, and the ways in which it acted as an interface between house and garden. It fulfilled a separate role to the ornamental gardens, a factor that can be at the heart of discourse on the place. How did the form and function of the walled garden change throughout its lifespan? Past uses and the historic dependency upon what was produced are intrinsic to understanding its origins, but there is always a need to thread the past into *today*. Honest and authentic dialogue about the garden today is required, which could include

discussion about the work that goes on 'behind the scenes', creating a genuine understanding of the effort involved in cultivating the garden today.

Community: historically and contemporaneously, community has been integral to Trelissick, a point that is now embedded in the Spirit of Place for Trelissick. The notion of community encompasses people, place and produce, and provides an opportunity to celebrate all three elements.

Learning:

Trelissick's walled garden has the potential to offer a distinct learning experience, one that readily steps away from conventional didactic forms of teaching and learning, that is, the transmitter/receiver model, to more diverse forms, acknowledging distinct recognised learning styles.²¹² It can also support and augment other forms of learning and institutions, such as schools, colleges, garden groups and societies.

Walled kitchen gardens have long been places of intense human activity and, if such a site is to retain cultural authenticity, Trelissick must continue to embrace this mind set. The garden team within the site must be a diverse one, comprised of paid staff and volunteers, and the skillset they possess, and share, must transcend the horticultural cultivation of the site. The team must welcome human interaction, initiating and promoting dialogue with visitors, sharing stories as well as knowledge and skills. This can happen formally and informally, in a planned and programmed manner, or it can occur spontaneously, through a culture of dialogue and interaction

²¹² The Arts Council of England recognises the following six types of learner: kinaesthetic; interpersonal; intrapersonal; visual and spatial; naturalist; mathematical/logical <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/defining-learning/learning-styles> [accessed 03/03/2019]

which will be ingrained into everything that occurs in the walled garden. The place will welcome personal questions and dialogue, resulting in a space where the National Trust team are led by what their users want to know from them. On a more formal basis, the garden team will plan regular sessions on seasonal tasks, such as pruning and grafting demonstrations, and will also share skills and knowledge on specialisms, such as flowers for cutting, apple pruning and cultivation, soft fruit, propagation and so forth. The team must also show its visitors how to translate the scope of their work to a domestic scale too, to keep the cultural and horticultural values of the place relevant to its users. Horticultural and communication skills must be exemplary, and the team will share their expertise with fellow professional horticulturalists, students, schools, colleges and gardening groups. Here lies the potential to elevate gardens and gardening from the nostalgic stories of a bygone age, as exemplified by Heligan's presentation and use of a productive garden, to a living, functioning and relevant centre of activity.

Curatorship:

Shared authority and co-curatorship lie at the very heart of new museology and public history and are factors that many museums have had to integrate into their management practices. The ensuing democratisation of such places has been reflected in chosen narratives, but also in the collective power to make curatorial decisions and to have a voice in what occurs within these spaces and how. As mentioned previously, community plays a highly significant role in Trelissick's Spirit of Place, and I assert that the notion of shared curatorship can provide an incredibly powerful opportunity to make emotional and intellectual connections between the walled garden and its users.

Several museums have made strides to incorporate shared curatorship and citizen participation into their ways of working. One such example is the *Ecomusée du fier monde* ('Ecomuseum of a proud community') in Montreal which is, as its name suggests, a museum of community. Giroux cites the organisation as an example of how museums can prioritise working with local neighbourhoods and residents on projects and exhibitions that are highly pertinent to their communities, working together in a collaborative manner with great success.²¹³ Interestingly, Giroux points to the most fundamental level of community participation, that is, of persuading local residents to simply make the conscious decision to visit, a factor that should never be taken for granted.²¹⁴ The Ecomuseum faced the challenge of drawing in people who would not have perceived museums as being places 'for them', but through collaborative practises the organisation succeeded in forming social connections with those very people. I would argue that Trelissick's walled kitchen garden has the capacity to achieve the same goal, to reach out to those who believe that the National Trust is not 'for them' and to deconstruct common perceptions about garden history, garden visiting, the act of gardening and for whom such topics carry relevance. Here lies a considerable opportunity for the National Trust, simply by encouraging people to turn up, for that is the very first step in the process of participation, simply to say "yes, this is for me".

One of the most interesting factors about the Ecomuseum is its approach to the more intangible elements of its collection, which has parallels to the historic garden. Like the Ecomuseum, Trelissick's walled garden does not possess artefacts

²¹³ Giroux (2016) pp109-124

²¹⁴ Ibid. p114

as a conventional museum might; plants are the nearest constituents the site has to 'objects', as discussed earlier in this thesis. Therefore, exhibitions and discourse might struggle if it were to be limited to collections in the most orthodox sense. However, the Ecomuseum challenges this perception of collection, and instead seeks to curate

“tangible or intangible heritage elements that illustrate the cultural history of a community [which] may be deemed to be representative or exceptional or they may be factors that contribute to community identity. They may take the form of buildings, infrastructures, specific locations, or of personalities or events of significance to the history of the community”.²¹⁵

Within Trellissick's walled kitchen garden, the engagement of such an ideology would encompass the cultural heritage values that the site possesses, such as skills, knowledge, stories, human relationships and activity that have traditionally taken place within the walls of the kitchen garden, as well, of course, as the site itself. It will call for a distinct discursive framework that centres on these “heritage elements” rather than traditional artefacts, and rather than talking in terms of ‘possession’, discourse can centre on “heritage responsibility”, a duty of care that it will share with its stakeholders and users.²¹⁶

On a more localised level is the Citizen Curators Pilot²¹⁷ which is currently being managed by the Royal Cornwall Museum working in collaboration with the Cornwall Museums Partnership and Arts Council England. The scheme is a more formalised curatorial skills training programme for volunteers within the museums and heritage sector. This type of programme has the potential to be explored in the

²¹⁵ Ibid. p116

²¹⁶ Giroux (2016) p120

²¹⁷ <https://www.royalcornwallmuseum.org.uk/citizen-curators-pilot> [accessed 05/03/2019]

walled garden, which could provide an ideal space for curatorial experimentalism and both formal and informal training. It could take the form of school groups putting together a display or exhibition, or a community led project. Such a scheme could be in collaboration with fellow organisations (such as the Arts Council) or it could be a National Trust initiative, providing a framework that can be cascaded to other sites, as appropriate. It is important to state that such a movement would not seek to displace professional curatorship and guardianship of historic gardens. Rather, it strives to promote collaborative participation between the professional and the non-professional.

Both approaches, both formal and informal, would demand a degree of experimentation before a sound framework can be shared with other properties and outdoor spaces. However, the importance of identifying and celebrating the uniqueness of such gardens must be considered, and the form that such co-curatorship takes must be appropriate to the place. Community is central to Trelissick's 21st century identity; it is embedded into its spirit of place, thus embracing a collective ownership of the place and the cultural processes that occur within it with the people of the locality is essential.

Fostering a culture of consultative, participatory and collaborative practises would create a mutually advantageous relationship whereby each can learn and benefit from the other. Such projects could centre on personal experiences (for example, communal stories and memories about Trelissick's walled garden, about growing and eating local food) or it can be about reimagined pasts and futures, such as dialogue about the possible future uses for the site, or re-enactments of the past. They could incorporate artefacts, heritage fruit, tools and techniques, alongside

modern and pioneering horticultural technologies, such as disease-resistant cultivars and new techniques of fruit cultivation, comparing different approaches and instigating timely debate about self-sustainability, food miles, organic practices and seasonality.

Opportunities:

Clearly, if the walled garden were to be re-opened to the public, integrating it back into the garden physically and culturally would be a significant consideration. It has never been a part of the visitor experience at Trelissick and as such the relationship between it and the wider garden would have to be renegotiated to ensure that it does not feel like a separate entity. While Trelissick can be understood as a site of distinct components, it is essential that the site feels as one, and that the visitor's experience of the estate is a holistic one. In particular, the walled garden's relationship with the gardens and with the house has the potential to act as an interface between house and garden. I would argue that there is still much work to be carried out on unifying the estate – for almost sixty years, the public face of Trelissick has been its exterior, that is, its gardens, parkland and woodland. Like the walled garden, the house too has been screened off from public view, according to the wishes of resident generations of the Copeland family, and understanding how to knit the place back together is a crucial first step. The National Trust must be constantly mindful of what is cherished at Trelissick, that is, a spirit of dynamism, a sense of freedom and the importance of community.

What is demonstrated in the above is the value of a strong identity that is woven through everything that occurs in the walled garden, one that gives a

respectful nod to the past, but that acknowledges the importance of being of use for today's users, if it is to survive and thrive going forward. There need not be tension between these two aspects, as the present can (and indeed must) be informed by the past, creating a strong framework within which narratives, activity and dialogue can occur which are true to the identity of the walled garden, while acknowledging its intended origins. However, it must also be a framework that assigns notions of fluidity and evolution too, reflecting the past yet thinking ahead.

Garden history will have its place here – the site itself is approximately 350 years old, and so much of what can happen within these walls today is rooted in the place's past. The development and sharing of skills and knowledge, the growing of food to feed the estate's occupants (however fleeting their 'occupancy' may be) and the telling of stories – all can contribute to a site that knows its identity and its role, what it needs to deliver and how. Here is a place where garden history and the act of gardening meet, demonstrating that there need not be tension between these two elements, that the result can be a step towards that seemingly elusive goal of 'gardenism'.

Conclusion

The scope of this thesis is two-fold. Firstly, this study provides an exploration of the historic walled garden's future representation within public gardens with particular focus on the regional. There clearly exists a need to find new purpose and meanings for these sites, ones that transcend their origins yet allow them to identify as productive sites that acknowledge their past, albeit to varying degrees. Trelissick proves a valuable case study as a local walled garden that is currently a dormant space awaiting its next phase and it has the potential to inspire the regeneration of similar sites in Cornwall. That there are just two productive gardens in the county that are open to the public and identify as historic walled kitchen gardens is evidence of the predicament that these culturally significant sites face.

Secondly, this study has sought to contextualise walled gardens within the wider realm of garden history, a discipline that, although still in relative infancy, has fixed its gaze firmly upon the dominant hegemonic discourse associated with the 18th century landscape movement, to the exclusion of alternative perspectives and subject matter. I argue that garden history is at risk of heading towards a crisis point, like that which tested museology in the late 20th century and resulted in a period of self-reflection and major change within the international museum sector. The challenge facing garden history is not fuelled by falling visitor numbers but rather by a lack of perceived relevance, and the commonly held assumption that garden history discourse belongs solely within academia rather than the historic garden itself. What has become clear is that if garden history is to continue to evolve it must reassess its dependence upon elitist discourse that is centred around the 18th

century British landscape movement. Instead it must become a vessel through a wide range of methodological approaches can be shared, within academic and popular arenas. In doing so, garden history can be transformed into a dynamic dialogue between place and people that is open minded and future oriented, acknowledging the need for historical discourse to be relevant, agile and responsive.

Walled kitchen gardens offer an accommodating arena for such processes, reflected in this thesis in discussions around the future potential redevelopment of Trelissick's walled garden. Such spaces would still fulfil their original function, that is to provide food, but they can also provide meaningful experiences and the co-curated dissemination of knowledge, thus meeting the needs of its 21st century users. As a conservation and heritage organisation, the National Trust is well placed to reassess how it presents such sites and the narratives it chooses to share within them. Walled kitchen gardens lend themselves beautifully to the idea of a space made democratised and co-curated with a public upon whom its future survival depends. As new museology demonstrates, enticing people to visit is not enough – the forging of emotional and intellectual connections is vital to ensure that these places remain relevant and where dialogue and activity have their place.

Naturally a thesis of this size will always be limited in scope and several areas have emerged that have the potential for further study. From a regional stance, the fact that there are only two functioning walled gardens open to the public severely limits analysis of the Cornish perspective. It would certainly be useful to venture over the border into Devon (and beyond) to gain an understanding of the general health of public walled kitchen gardens in the south west of Britain. A further limitation has been the range of experts in their field that have been interviewed.

Steps towards a working relationship with professionals from the museum sector could inform the future direction of garden history and identify challenges and opportunities within the heritage sector that influence museums and historic gardens in the 21st century, enabling a more collaborative and multi-disciplinary approach. Similarly, interviews with visitors to historic gardens in Cornwall could further enlighten the guardians of sites such as Heligan, Trengwainton and Trelissick – what experiences do 21st century audiences seek and to what extent are their needs being met? In the case of Trelissick I was unable to talk openly to the property's visitors about the productive garden due to sensitivities surrounding future plans; until late 2019, redevelopment of the historic walled garden was an aspiration rather than a certainty and as such it was not deemed appropriate to discuss it.

Going forward, several recommendations for further study emerge. There is clearly more work to be done on garden conservation and the close relationship that it has with both the physical act of managing historic gardens and the study of historic gardens. Conservation can act as an interface between the two that can facilitate a harmonious blending of these perspectives, thereby enabling garden history to make the transition from academia into the historic garden itself. As the application of skills and knowledge in the care of historic gardens, conservation deserves a much stronger position within garden historical discourse than it currently enjoys. Indeed, the development of garden history outside of the academic arena depends upon it. I assert that in order to bring garden history into the historic garden, conservation must become embedded into the discipline. Historic England's adoption of the term 'constructive conservation', whereby contemporary purpose lies

at the heart of potential outcomes, certainly has much to offer in broadening discourse around the future development of garden history.

The research that I have carried out on Cornish walled gardens could easily be extended to a wider geographical remit to contextualise my findings, contributing towards a national picture of walled garden restoration and the varying forms that regeneration can take. Indeed, such a study would contextualise the regional perspective. A search for meaning and purpose in historic walled gardens on a national scale has the potential to reveal alternative narratives that these spaces can share with their audiences, as well as exploring how notions of relevance and dynamism can become engrained within renewed identities. It would be helpful to study other National Trust walled gardens beyond Cornwall, as well as those managed by private organisations, trusts and charities such as English Heritage, to identify the wide-ranging opportunities and challenges that guardians of such sites face.

I assert that major work must be carried out to explore different means of sharing narratives and discourse in gardens and landscapes. An organisation such as the National Trust would be well placed to produce such a study; Trengwainton demonstrates the detriment of a historic walled kitchen garden with no voice. What has emerged from this study is a clear need to give a means of communication to historic gardens. Such places do not speak for themselves, nor should they be expected to. To do so undermines their historical and cultural value and assumes that their visitors must already possess enough knowledge to be able to read the site and understand that historic value. Sign posting is necessary, albeit to varying degrees. It reflects the importance of understanding the uniqueness of each site, the

value in understanding its spirit of place and the wider context within which it sits; despite its walls, the kitchen garden is not a separate cultural entity. The vision outlined in this thesis for Trelissick walled kitchen garden can act as a valuable example, for it will allow the site to operate confidently within a historic framework but with a sense of agility, whereby the modern needs of a visitor attraction are not marginalised. Its new audience will essentially replace the previous owners as occupiers of this place, and their needs must be acknowledged to much the same degree.

The prioritising of notions of relevance and purpose can imbue upon walled gardens a level of protection; if the garden has the foresight to recognise the need for future change, albeit in a considered way, its vulnerability can be diminished. A long-term approach will focus upon the afterlife of a historic garden. It recognises and reaffirms the fragmentary nature of historiography; history is not linear or chronological, nor does it sit easily within conventional typologies. History is layered and complex and chiasmic, and it is imperative to discuss it in these terms, despite garden history's reluctance to do so. No single historiographical approach need be taken – garden history studies must invite in a plurality of historical, social and cultural approaches to make sense of its subject matter.

Walled kitchen gardens are a perfect arena in which heritage organisations such as the National Trust can demonstrate this transition, exploring new possibilities and taking inspiration from public history and new museology, thus moving towards more honest and authentic representations of walled kitchen gardens as dynamic and palimpsestic historic gardens. Horticulture has never stood still, and historic gardens have the potential to be transformed into relevant,

responsive and engaging places if they can keep such a simple but crucial message at the heart of the activities and processes that occur within them.

Appendices

i. National Trust Trelissick Spirit of Place 2015

Trelissick is a maritime peninsula, surrounded by water on three sides. Commanding the Carrick Roads and Fal estuary from a high and naturally confident position, Trelissick House is a constant presence watching over the rhythms of climate and tide that have formed this rich landscape. Trade and enjoyment over centuries have made Trelissick a home adding a human surface to nature's foundation, the two now blending harmoniously. Trading for enjoyment continues today as thousands escape from everyday life to pause, reflect and enjoy a once-exclusive view from the terrace of a home built to display status and success.

A history of dynamic ownership has led to successive generations of industrialists and traders making Trelissick their own. As their industrial fortunes ebbed and flowed like the surrounding tides, so Trelissick itself has been traded in much the same way as the commodities that brought the wealth to create the estate. Without a dominant influence or story, the past feels anonymous and this gives a freedom that invites continued progress and change in the present.

Today the historic parkland provides direct and unhindered access to the outdoors. Trelissick has become a popular and valuable social backdrop close to the hearts of many in the local community and as a result many have developed a strong sense of ownership and love of place. At its heart, the house conveys a sense of grandeur and pride. Around it a garden of immaculate paths and velvet grass has continually evolved to encompass new fashions. An open, energetic and welcoming spirit keeps Trelissick alive. Whether exploring or using this place as a social backdrop, Trelissick provides choice and enjoyment. The diverse offer, history of change and resulting sense of freedom allows everyone to make Trelissick their own.

ii. **Trelissick Statement of Significance**

Trelissick is a gentleman's estate situated between Truro and Falmouth at the head of Carrick Roads. Since the Lawrence family built the current house in the 1750s, the house, park and garden have constantly evolved, reflecting the taste and wealth of successive families until it was given to the National Trust by Mrs Ida Copeland in 1955.

Its sheltered position means that this area has long been prized as a trading post; a place of strategic importance requiring military protection. Its mild marine climate providing an abundance of natural resources means that the shores of Carrick Roads have been inhabited by humans for thousands of years.

Setting

The estate of Trelissick is situated on a peninsula; the house and garden at the summit only 50m above sea level. The parkland falls steeply to Lamouth Creek to the north, the ria (flooded river valley) of the Fal to the east and south to Carrick Roads, one of the deepest natural harbours in the world.

Views into and out of the estate are of exceptional importance. Pill Farm and Turnaware Point, which flank the view south (Carrick Roads and out to the English Channel) from the terrace of the house have been acquired by the National Trust in order to protect the view. The view north from Trelissick to Tregothnan (estate of the Earls of Falmouth) is also important; the Earl of Falmouth briefly owned Trelissick in the mid-19th century.

The visual connection between Trelissick and the busy waters of Carrick Roads, and the view of the former from the latter, was a key factor to Trelissick's changing ownership in the 18th and 19th centuries. Prominent local men bought the estate, with the advantage of being close to their business interests, spent their fortune on updating the house and estate so that their fashionable taste could be admired by all of Falmouth.

The river remains busy with traditional activities, small working boats dredging for oysters, mussel farming, and ferries that transport people up and down the river. King Harry Ferry (chain ferry), once part of the Trelissick estate, provides a crossing place from Feock to the Roseland peninsula, a busy tourist route and historically part of the route from the south of Cornwall to London. Trelissick now has its own pontoon as many visitors arrive by water. Sometimes, large ships awaiting work or retirement are anchored in the Fal above Trelissick and astonish visitors with their scale and proximity to the woodland walks.

The ever-changing seascape and constantly evolving weather provide a lively backdrop to Trelissick, glimpsed by visitors on their approach to and throughout their journey around the estate. The ceaseless activity of Carrick Roads provides endless interest for those viewing from the south terrace of the house.

Archaeology

Trelissick estate is rich in known below ground archaeology and archaeological potential. The landscape is a product of four thousand years of adaptation providing evidence of a military presence, trading and farming from the Iron Age to the 20th century.

Of particular importance is the Iron Age promontory fort at Round Wood: the only known example of its type in the UK, and extremely rare in Europe (SAM 32940). In the 18th century this fort was reused as a quay (GII) for shipping copper and tin ore from local mines and in the 19th century as a timber/boat yard, later again a coal yard. The advantage of mooring large ships at low tide secured its ingoing importance for the local economy.

Trelissick itself, the *Tre* of Trelissick denoting a settlement of early medieval date indicates the presence of the original medieval farm house (evidenced from recent excavation). By the medieval period the area would have appeared as a more open landscape much as we see it today, though the field system would have comprised strip fields. From this period, exploitation of the natural resources and waterways can be glimpsed by structural remains, earthworks, and aspects of the vegetation.

Charcoal was made in the woods, leaving dozens of working platforms, and quarries developed by Tolcarne Creek, with quays, now ruined, for shipping the slaty stone.

The most extensive archaeological remains from the 20th century relate to the World War II complex used in Operation Overlord at Turnaware. Here the piers for the vessels designed to land the invading troops with their amphibious tanks were dismantled after the war, though other elements of the infrastructure survive well, including more ephemeral remains of tank tracks and possible wartime graffiti.

Ownership

Very little is known about any house on the present site before the 1750s, when John Lawrence, a captain in the Cornwall Militia, commissioned Edmund Davey to build a two storey villa with single storey wings and a verandah. Its position was chosen to take full advantage of the panoramic views to and from Carrick Roads. A small park was laid out and a regime of tree planting begun, although there is no documentary evidence of this scheme.

After John's death in 1790, his family fell into financial difficulties and the estate was let out. Legal action by the Lawrence family's creditors led to Trelissick being sold and in 1805 it was bought by Ralph Allen Daniell. He was the son of Thomas 'Guinea-a-minute' Daniell who had made his fortune from tin and copper mining in Cornwall, and by marrying the niece and heiress of Ralph Allen of Prior Park.

In 1823 Ralph's son Thomas inherited the estate and in 1825 commissioned architect P. F. Robinson to remodel the house in a Greek revival style. The cost of the remodelling and the mining slump of 1832 caused bankruptcy and Lord Falmouth from Tregothnan bought Trelissick and it remained empty for over a decade.

In 1844 Trelissick was bought by John Davies Gilbert. Succeeded by his son, Carew Davies Gilbert in 1854 who commissioned Piers St Aubyn to make additions to the house, (the second storey to each wing). Carew spent much time travelling the globe, collecting exotic trees and shrubs, now some of the highlights of the garden.

In 1913 the house and garden were let to Leonard Cunliffe, former Director of the Bank of England, who spied the house from his yacht 'Laranda'. He bought the freehold in 1928 and left Trelissick to his step-daughter in 1937.

Ida was a conservative MP for Stoke-on-Trent and her husband Ronald was Managing Director of the family firm W.T. Copeland & Sons Ltd, which had produced Spode ceramics since the 18th century. Ida gave Trelissick to the National trust in 1955 but it remained the family home, with some public access to see the family's collection of Spode and Copeland ceramics.

In 2013 William Copeland, Ida's grandson, and his family moved from Trelissick. The National Trust secured key items representing the Copeland family tenure at the Country House Sale in July 2013 and in subsequent arrangements. Highlights include family portraits, the Rhododendron plates inspired by flowers from the garden, good examples of early 19th century Spode ceramics collected by the family, key pieces of furniture and the family archive.

House and ancillary buildings and structures

Trelissick House (GII*) is an important example of the Greek revival style in Cornwall. The original villa of the 1750s has undergone several schemes of enlargement and rearrangement by various subsequent owners. In 1825 its appearance was transformed with a giant portico with six Ionic columns on the south front, so that the house appeared temple-like from the water.

The majority of additions to the house were carefully designed to give the initial appearance of being of one period. The 18th and 19th century interiors remain in good condition, with plenty of original classical detailing on the ground and first floors.

The house is supported by an important group of estate and ancillary buildings including: the coach house and stable block, game larder, walled garden, New Lodge, Old Lodge, the water tower (all Grade II) and were built by various occupants of the estate in the 18th and 19th centuries. Vernacular home farm buildings, Pill

Farm, and a number of estate cottages, as well as Cornish hedges and walls built of local stone (once called Treliesserite) are of special local character.

Although not every individual element of the complex of buildings, archaeological remains and landscape is individually itemised within statutory designations, the relationships and group value of historic structures across the entire estate should be taken to mean that every element is affected by listing or designation protection.

Landscape and parkland

The land owned at Treliesser estate (GII*), a total of 590 acres, is part of the Cornwall AONB and valued for its historic farming pattern, parkland trees, oak woodland and the estuarine views. It is managed in hand and by farming tenants with beef cattle grazing the park. Within the last 25 years the National Trust has bought Tregew and Pill Farms in order to protect the views from and the setting of the house.

The parkland, said to have been developed in the 1750s along with the house, cannot be attributed to a particular architect, as no documentary evidence has yet come to light. As with the house, subsequent owners since the mid-18th century have made additions to the park and woodlands in keeping with fashion but also the work of their predecessors.

In the early 19th century miles of carriage rides were created across the estate; these routes now in use as the woodland walks and provide miles of access along the water and through the estate. Archaeological evidence at Turnaware indicates that a plantation enhanced the view from the house and possibly a seat provided at Turnaware allowed parties to enjoy the view back to the house.

For most visitors, access to the wider estate is largely visual and the further reaches of the estate remain a peaceful, still landscape, a foil to the activity on the water; a landscape to look at rather than be in.

The woodlands on the estate retain their traditional purpose, coppicing and charcoal burning continue and high quality timber is sold for boat building.

Garden

The garden (GII*) at Trelissick is the best known element of the estate, currently providing the focus for public access within 25 acres of woodland garden and pleasure grounds. The significance of the garden now lies in its 20th century character and plant introductions by Ida and Ronald Copeland, perpetuated and enhanced by National Trust head gardeners since 1955.

Whilst Trelissick remained a private home, the entrance to the garden was at the end of the south terrace of the house. Once the garden opened to the public, a new entrance through the garden buildings was created and so now exists a rather low key and confusing entry to the garden. Planting by the National Trust has also been designed to screen the house from the garden to ensure privacy and so the opportunity now arises to re-consider both garden entrance and planting close to the house.

The garden is informal; the sweeping lawns, colourful borders and well maintained gravel paths demonstrating high standards of care, providing a setting for important specimens of the exotic introductions as well as native species. Displays of rhododendrons, camellias, azaleas and magnolias which thrive due to the mild wet climate are at their peak in the spring.

Although the families at Trelissick were not directly involved in the late 19th plant hunting trips organised and funded by their Cornish neighbours, many of the plant specimens in the garden can be traced to these plant hunting trips. Leonard Cunliffe and then Ida and Ronald Copeland took great interest in the garden, introducing unusual plants from Bodnant and Trewithen. The garden now includes plant collections of national significance, hydrangeas, photinias, azaras, and hedychium.

These 20th century introductions sit against a backdrop of 19th century tree planting by Carew Davies Gilbert, who travelled extensively and brought back conifers and other species for shelter belt and ornamental planting. The element of surprise is important; glimpses of the wider landscape through the trees or viewed from benches and rustic garden structures provide excuses to linger.

Until 2013, the walled garden remained in Copeland tenure and is currently inaccessible to visitors. For the last few years, the productive element of the garden has therefore been the orchard, which grows around 70 local varieties of apples and underplanted by Cornish daffodil hybrids – a particular interest of the Copelands (several hybrids named after members of the family).

There is an aspiration to revitalise the walled garden, proudly described by the ambitious head gardener William Sangwin in 1897 as the ‘fruit garden of Cornwall’. The gentle east facing aspect of the walled garden, as well as many traditional orchards in the local area were perfect for growing fruit; Feock had a lucrative market gardening trade, sending produce to London. Kea Plums are a local specialism.

Ecology and wildlife

The property is situated on the Fal Estuary, an area of international significance for marine biodiversity, designated as part of a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), with seventy acres of foreshore included within the ownership. Rich diversity of species lives within the mudflats and provide a food resource for estuarine birds such as Shelduck, Little Egret and the Red List Black-tailed Godwit.

The history of development of land use on the property has resulted in an area that is also of great importance for terrestrial wildlife. Key features are the veteran trees within the parkland, woods and garden, also the woodlands fringing the estuarine shore and the extent of permanent grassland, much of it rich in wildflowers. Other important habitats include an area of lowland heath at Round Wood Quay, relict traditional orchard and an area of farmland at Tregew managed as a nature reserve to provide an important refuge for farmland birds, small mammals including Harvest Mouse and other wildlife.

The combination of old buildings, veteran trees and extensively managed pastureland have resulted in the property being important for bats, including the very rare Barbastelle and both Lesser and Great Horseshoe. The veteran trees are also of major significance for the lichens growing on their bark. These include good

diversity of species indicative of a long history of slow growing trees, probably dating back to the wildwood. Species include New Forest Parmelia *Parmeliopsis minurum*, a GB Red List Vulnerable species almost confined in the UK to the New Forest and a few sites in the SW of England. Two other Red List lichens have also been recorded.

The woodlands include relict ancient oak woodland, designated SSSI and SAC, along the estuarine margins and forming an important component of the Fal Estuary woodland complex. Locally rich ground vegetation includes the nationally scarce Bastard Balm. Woodland birds include the seriously declined Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Spotted Flycatcher, both Red List species.

The Pill Farm and Trelissick Garden include relict areas of unimproved pasture, rich in wildflowers whilst other grasslands, including those within the parkland are reverting towards more diverse swards following previous more intensive agricultural use. Good diversity of wax cap fungi are an indicator of the value of these areas for wildlife.

Future

Recent vacation of the principal part of the house by the Copeland family and the return of the house, stable yard and walled garden to National Trust management provides a significant opportunity to assess the visitor experience and to manage the estate in a more holistic way. Access to the house, the south terrace and the entrance to the garden can be reviewed alongside the addition of further elements of the visit, including the wider estate and the continued development of its conservation and outdoors offer.

The relationship with the extended Copeland family will be significant in the coming years as we explore the family archive and make decisions about the future of the house.

Emma Jones, John Lanyon, Neil Stevenson, Jim Parry, Janet Lister

July 2014

iii. Interview with National Trust curator A

Walled kitchen gardens and garden history:

- 1. To what extent (if any) is there a public appetite for productive gardens in the south west? If so, is it rooted in a historical perspective or a modern one?**
 - Not one I know the answer to, but I wonder if visitor experience teams can help here with audience insights? In general, I think people would be interested in both – they love the beauty of a historic walled garden, particularly where the proof and story are strong and links with the wider understanding of a place, and they are possibly interested in contributing to the idea of self-sustainability, organic produce, local produce and possibly also in the process and in getting something from the place in the shop or on their plate. Perhaps also learning why a walled garden, what was grown and eaten and how that produce shaped your meals. Seasonal story. In terms of contributing, I suppose particularly people with no gardens could benefit?

- 2. How important is a sense of *relevance* to our visitors' lives in regard to this?**
 - The main relevance I see is perhaps in learning - people understanding how food grows and where it comes from, what resources go into it and how special it is that you can get all from the supermarket now... a particular relevance for children and city dwellers?

- 3. What's your perspective on the sharing of garden history within the National Trust? Is a priority, and if not, should it be?**
 - I may not have seen enough places or been with the trust long enough, but although it has been mentioned to curators and I know there are trainings about historical gardens, I do not feel it is a priority as such or has been given as a priority for me (even though we have numerous gardens...) What does seem to be a priority and one I feel very passionately about is reconnecting inside and outside and telling stories of whole places, not just house and collections. This is a particular thing also I feel about for Trelissick. It is such a great opportunity, and we should think in terms of functioning places rather than divide into garden, estate, house...

Museums and New Museology:

- 1. Can museums and new museology enlighten how we share and interpret gardens? What can we learn? What are the limitations of new museology in a historical garden setting?**
 - What I think new museology teaches us is that there is a different way of approaching visitors and of bringing relevance and sharing stories than the traditional, authoritative one, which is a really positive development. Things can be more dynamic, more rooted in contemporary significance and more tailored to the audience. It is about relevance to today's and future audiences. This is something I think the NT is really looking into and trying to do. However, at the same time, the

current curatorial review is trying to get back to a more museum type curator and curation. In my opinion, the pendulum was very far to one side, has swung very far to the other side and is now heading to the middle. I think it is that middle ground that would be most fruitful. The challenge with new museology I think is that the pendulum has swung so far that, rather than being more open and less authoritative, the danger has been that all expertise and authority has vanished and become dangerous. It was visitors who could create exhibitions, say what they wanted etc, as if it is a free for all, which I think goes so far as to then question the role of museums even more. The middle ground I see for museum but also for the Trust is one where we have knowledge, skills and expertise but rather than sitting on that authoritatively, we employ that to share with our visitors in many ways. That I think has the most benefit to our visitors and communities, and that still means that you are partnering with the audience, perhaps even more.

2. As an organisation, do we tend towards ‘top down’ or ‘history from below’ in our storytelling, with regards to gardens and in general?

➤ I think it really varies! Trying to find examples of interpretation.....

3. Is there a chasm between how we present and interpret houses, gardens and countryside, or we aligned as an organisation on how we present and talk about all 3?

➤ No, I think it is very split, although the attention is now turned to aligning it more!

4. Thinking of the places that tell their stories in exciting ways, what is the defining factor that allows them to do this? Is it a clear story, is it the people who work/volunteer there, is it a combination of factors?

➤ All – I think it is giving people new insights, whether facts, histories or behind the scenes, as well as give personal links and draw out those elements people can connect to or picture.

5. How could we do better with gardens? What can we learn from museums and the changes that they have undergone in the past 10 years or so?

➤ I think cherish knowledge and skills, don't dumb them down, but share them with the audience in an equal way. It is not about saying don't touch that tree because it is really special or about saying climb all trees as all are equal, but about taking people along in explaining why climbing trees is great but why you better now climb certain trees – did you know it is this fragile and is this old and came all the way from... and has taken so many years of work. That middle ground. People want to learn new things but not feel like doing homework.

6. How successful is the NT (and in turn NT gardens) at getting a *dialogue* going, as opposed to a *monologue*, with our supporters?

- Again, to my understanding it is varied; there is the national level, regional level and the local level. On the level of individual gardens and gardeners – like with the rangers – I would say it is brilliant. So far, I have seen people really caring, knowing and sharing that with people who ask, really taking the time to do that. Nationally and on social media, I think it sometimes is more of a monologue. Understandable, but sometimes difficult for the other levels. What would help is time and resource to facilitate these important conversations.

7. Are we answering questions that our audience is asking, rather than making assumptions about what they want to know? Is it about what they want to know or what we want to tell them, and if so, how can we change that? How receptive are we to what they tell us they want to see/learn etc? Is our role 'interpreter' or 'legislator'? (Or both!)

- Tricky isn't it? My personal point of view is that you should know your audiences – as there are many – and that perhaps they are different in different places rather than those groups the NT identifies. Thinking from museum; we had general museum visitors, but for each collection we also had a particular group of interested people, and it is the people on the ground working with them who know them best. But knowing your audience and catering for them is not the same as having them tell us what to do, it is the balance again. I see our role as being the link between the collections (objects or plants) and their wider histories and conservation work and the audience. It works both ways: we can only cater to the audience if we know what types of things they are interested in, but we can also only share knowledge and skills with them if we know our collections!

iv. Interview with National Trust curator B

Re: Chasm between presenting house and gardens. Yes – I believe there is. Often when we talk of gardens, we say that they ‘speak for themselves’ – but that argument never seems to stick for houses and collections. As a result, I think gardens have largely been able to avoid having lots of interpretation added.

Perhaps because gardens are more ‘interactive’ in many ways (you can (mostly) walk on grass, smell flowers, sit on benches). They are also often more ‘active’. If we have a less sensitive area in a house, we tend to allow people to sit and perhaps read books (which does tend to be quieter and a solo activity). In gardens, less sensitive areas are dedicated to more recreational/social things e.g.: picnics, places for kids to play. It is more acceptable to ‘be loud’ outdoors.

I think this also relates to visitor motivations. Largely, gardens will be for people looking to walk, relax, take in the scenery. For houses, the motivations can be different and, I suspect, more will wish to have a ‘learning’ outcome.

Perhaps both gardens and houses should be learning more from each other e.g.: approaching interiors with a little more care about where we put interpretation, approaching gardens with an idea that we should provide more ways for visitors to understand the history.

A few examples that may be worth investigating off the top of my head:

- Hampton Court walled garden. Traditional but well-done interpretation.
- Barrington Court. We did a garden interpretation project there which launched last year – across the whole garden but including the walled garden. I can send on images and info if this would be of interest.
- Parke: an interesting case study? Historic garden and walls – but were turned over (at some point) to a rare breeds farm and now to community allotments. Given the importance of the history of the garden, when I did a little work there, we were looking at how we could bring back the historic elements whilst retaining the allotments (eg: bringing back structures of paths etc.)

14/11/2018

v. Interview with National Trust garden advisor

Jen Pina-Trengove: How well does the National Trust communicate the history and the story of its gardens?

Garden advisor: Garden history can be a difficult one because do you do a really purist, academic, this is a correct restoration of a historic garden that people like myself and Richard Wheeler feel is all very fascinating but for your average visitor it washes over their heads, sort of why have they only got plants in here that are pre-1850 or something, so being a purely academic historic restoration is of very limited interest. I think that whole historic side of gardens, for the vast majority of people it's a passing interest and nothing more than that. It's "oh that looks nice" or "oh that looks pretty" on the surface, it looks interesting, quietly titillating but it doesn't go any deeper than that. So (for the gardens) from a purely historic view, it's nice to do and we need to preserve things that are very very rare, for example, at Powis Castle there are terraces that are grade 1 listed, because of the structure rather than horticulture, so there's a very important need to look after the structures, and [understand] why they were there in the first place, ...terraced that garden with walls for growing fruit on in the 17th century...that kind of idea.

But how do you then make that relevant, and this is why you want to, with walled gardens or any gardens, think about why you want to restore them. And I think, certainly for walled gardens, the big thing about the future of gardens is this whole idea of well-being, people's well-being, so it's a nice place to walk around, see green.....and all the rest of it, and then you get into productive gardens and it's all the things to do with eating healthily, producing your own stuff, food miles or that sort of thing and everything that goes into lifestyle etc, so I think there are 2 quite distinct separate things - there's the academic historical stuff and there's the well-being side of the garden, and it's the well-being that's going to be about 80% of what it's going to be about

JPT - And I guess some places lend themselves better to that historical narrative, don't they? Places like Powis where you've got that very strong landscape element. I think in Cornwall we struggle with it more because of this reliance on soft landscaping - it's more about plants, so you've got that, combined with the transient nature of gardens anyway. It's impossible to freeze a garden in time as you can to a certain extent a house, which can be presented in a certain era. And you can to some extent with gardens, e.g. a Tudor garden, but essentially gardens want to keep moving

GA - Yes and that can be interesting as well. Going back to Powis there are 3 main terraces - the top terrace is now very full with exotic plants, everything looks great. The middle terrace is sort of reasonable and the one below that is the herbaceous borders and they're very nice, but all that planting is really 20th century onward among those very important 17th century walls, so that middle terrace we're actually thinking of putting back to the 17th century fruit walls so that you almost looking as if you can see the strata of rock, and see the different layers of garden along there. When you can get ways of doing that, I think it makes it interesting, but it's about pulling it back to something that's going to be relevant to the property and definitely not imposing something on there that's never ever been there before, like the proverbial winter gardens of 15 years ago that were put in everywhere. We need to make sure it's relevant to the significance and spirit of place - if it's anything historic then obviously it has to be that, and even then, how are you going to expand it beyond there.

JPT: And do you think that visitors understand that? Do you think that the gardens do just speak for themselves or do you think that sometimes we need to find different ways of sharing where we're coming from; why do we present this way we present it?

GA: I think it definitely needs lots of explanation, because people can go in, they can skim over the surface, go "oh that's nice", think they've understood it all and then go away when actually there's a whole load underneath it that would probably be fairly accessible to people but it just needs a little bit of teasing. I think it's always difficult for horticulturalists like ourselves, as we understand it anyway, to realise how, perhaps increasingly so in this day and age, how far removed people are from gardens and from nature and from the outdoors. People come to our gardens and know diddly squat about any of it.

JPT: And we (National Trust horticulturalists) take it for granted because we live and breathe it, it's our world, and it's reflected in the standards of behaviour we expect from our visitors. We assume, how could anybody let their child carve their name on to a tree or climb that tree...

GA: Yes and I've worked with schools in Cheshire where we started a countywide schools garden competition with primary school children and doing simple things like sowing a nasturtium seed - dead easy, you know it's going to work and the kids will go away happy, they've succeeded. I ended up realising I had to teach the teachers how to sow a nasturtium seed in the first place so that they could go back and teach the children - it's as basic as that, so when you're talking about this walled garden having backroom teaching spaces it's about realising what basic level it might have to be on. So, in a scenario like that it's about realising what layered options there will have to be, from the very very basic - frighteningly basic, actually, even for some adults - up to maybe professional training for the industry as well and maybe everything in between.

JPT: And I think we need to be aware as well about listening to what people want from us. I'm interested in developing this sense of dialogue. Are we good at listening to what people want or do we decide the picture we're going to present?

GA: I think the Trust recently in the way that they've worked, it's all they ever do is listen to what the outside wants and it was a little bit refreshing to hear, as our General Manager said earlier today [about a small group of professionals being in a position to make the decisions and then share outcomes with staff/vols etc] look, we're the paid professionals, let's to a certain extent....look, we know actually quite a bit about what people want, let's to a certain extent, let's nail our colours to the mast, as the historic, horticultural, curator type professionals; we're the professionals, this is how we see it, but yes, we see what you want. If we're forever going out asking people what they want, who don't know about historic gardens, what would you like, they're going to be offering suggestions on the basis of being ignorant through no fault of their own, of the opportunities that are actually there. So yes, listen to visitors and to any interested parties but feed that in to conversations of any professionals too, because you have to take the professional view. We can look at those old black and white photos and identify what that tree is, or say, yes that's a north wall so there wouldn't have been a peach on that north wall, it would have been a cherry.

JPT: So in terms of how we share our knowledge, can you think of any places where garden interpretation is done really well?

GA: One of the best ones I've seen is Attingham Park. They have a bothy in there which is still the staff area - they'll go in there and have a cup of tea, but it's set out with a bit of garden information

as well so visitors can wander in there, there'll be some staff and volunteers having their tea break with garden books on the shelves, they can ask questions and pull a book off a shelf, sit there with a mug of tea, have a chat with a gardener, and everyone goes off happy, and that to me is the perfect set up. You're there, right in the middle almost of the gardeners tea break, learning from them with the dirt under their fingernails, having a mug of tea and that to me is not a contrived saccharine way of presenting a garden, as it can all become contrived and twee, it's proper and authentic - you're looking into the proper workings of the garden and I think people get a lot more from that.

JPT: I've seen it work really well when you've got a space where you can share a bit more information, so whether it's an old bothy or a garden building of some kind. The struggle is in a garden, information doesn't always sit that well.

GA: Yes, having a hub where people can self-sort through stuff or you can take it down more advanced layers if you want to.

JPT: Yes, so there's that allocated space and then there's the people side of things, so getting, e.g., garden guides out there talking about the work that we do

GA: Yes, but it's always conscious that People working, up a ladder, training a tree, people can stop and ask questions, that can take up an awful lot of a member of staff's time. I remember being in the garden on those big double herbaceous borders, Tuesday was when the house was open and on a nice busy sunny day, midday lunchtime on a Tuesday it was hopeless me trying to get anything done on those borders. It was great and I will stand and waffle on to people about plants all day long, I could run an afternoon design your herbaceous border group for anyone who walked along there, but it wasn't doing the borders and so I had to balance the visitor interface, so I'd do a little bit of that and after a bit I'd go to my office, do a couple of hours work and once the buses had gone away I'd go back on to the borders in the evening and get tons more work done than I ever would with all the people around so you're balancing one with the other, and going into that scenario with your eyes totally wide open with the amount of time it actually takes off the hands on work.

JPT: Looking at the changes that have occurred in museums in the last 20 years or so, I wonder if gardens can learn anything that might inform how we interpret gardens and the history of our outdoor spaces?

GA: I think it's the whole experience. I think one of the best curated exhibitions I've ever been to in my whole life was last summer at the V&A - they did an exhibition on the history of opera - stage sets, music, design, and the social climate that was going on and actually informing what the opera was about, from the 1700s all the way to the 20th century. You walked in and were given headsets to put on your ears and every time you walked up to a display it immediately started playing through your earphones the sound of the music that was of that period, so you're reading all this information about 17th century London and all the socio-economic things that were happening that informed how the opera was done with the music playing in your ears at the same time. And it sounds, when you think about - isn't it so obvious, presenting a display about opera whilst you've got the sound in your ears. It's the first time I've ever been to an exhibition about music and actually had music playing in my ears. It sounds actually basic but I've never known it done before so if you translate that into a garden, I have to say the idea about tasting as you go round the garden, so it's not just 2 dimensional, so you might as well just be looking at a painting of a garden - the smells, the touches, the sounds, the tastes, the sense of immersion, and even coming out smelling the soil on your fingers.

JPT: It's almost about taking it back to basics and starting again. I think there's a real opportunity to do something different and be a bit braver....

GA: Yes it's such a new thing that you're doing [re-instating Trelissick walled garden], such a big project here, that you can actually go out of your way to NOT present it how it is traditionally gardened - the whole thing is a sensory experience

JPT: and it's important too that it's authentic - we're not merely reproducing what was once here, not another Heligan, not just for the sake of it

GA: Yes, it needs to be a garden with mud on its boots.

28/11/2018

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