

TROZE

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Gardens of Empire:
Wealth and power in
nineteenth century
horticulture**

By Megan Oldcorn

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TROZE

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'Troze: the sound made by water about the bows of a boat in motion'
From R. Morton Nance, *A Glossary of Cornish Sea Words*

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Falmouth's Great Gardens of Empire: Wealth and power in nineteenth century horticulture

Megan Oldcorn

The woods rising on the opposite side of the stream belong to Carclew, the seat of Sir Charles Lemon, Bart., M. P. for W. Cornwall, the liberal and distinguished patron of science [...] [The botanist] will be delighted with the gardens, so richly are they stored with curious plants. For many years Sir Charles Lemon has cultivated a collection of trees and shrubs, and as the climate is peculiar, the result of his experiments on exotic trees is most interesting.¹

Carclew House today commands very little. Where a sweeping drive or long avenue of trees once guided visitors to their destination, now the wanderer stumbles across what they are looking for. A path is followed, trees passed, and suddenly it is there. The briefest of glimpses might give the impression of a mansion among the trees and overgrowth, but prolonged observation reveals missing walls, fallen window frames, an empty façade. The house and its surrounding land are impressive, even majestic, but the ordered botany spoken of to travellers in 1851 is absent. Its appeal lies in the wild allure of ruins rather than the taming of nature and the display of curious exotics. However, traces of these exotics, which once made Carclew great, can still be found jostling side by side with ivy and sycamores as they both seek to colonise the remains.



Figure 1: The ruins of Carclew, former home of Sir Charles Lemon, today. The house was destroyed by fire in 1924.

Source: Author's photograph

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the garden served as a visual symbol of the wealth and connections of its owner, Sir Charles Lemon. Wealthy through mining and overseas trade, Lemon pursued his interest in botany and mobilised his contacts to create an estate through which one could travel the

¹ *A Hand-Book for Travellers in Devon and Cornwall* (London: John Murray, 1851), p. 203.

world: plants plucked from the landscapes of South America, Asia and Australia grew together as a marker of their owner's prosperity and access to foreign lands. Intentionally or not, in creating a horticultural paradise Lemon made clear his position of power. That power has now long dwindled away, his fine house destroyed in a fire and his gardens left either to overgrowth or redesign. The modern-day visitor to Carclew might find themselves in the position of Percy Shelley's traveller from an antique land, gazing on a representation of power that long ago ceased to be.² Yet much like Ozymandias' trunkless legs of stone, the creations of Lemon linger as a testament to what once occurred here.

Sir Charles Lemon inherited Carclew, just five miles from the centre of Falmouth, in 1824, and during his ownership became known both locally and nationally for his interest and expertise in botany. Lemon was involved in the business of Falmouth, through trading connections, friendship with the Fox family and official and unofficial roles as an MP for Cornwall and a local landowner.³ His fortune was made through mining: his great-grandfather William Lemon began his working life as a miner but rapidly rose to riches through investment in the industry. He died in 1760 worth £300,000, making him the equivalent of a multi-millionaire today.⁴ His wealth and privileged position in society allowed his descendent Sir Charles to take full advantage of the overseas links offered by the nearby port of Falmouth, as he had the economic power to travel or purchase rare and expensive imports. The same is true for the Fox family. Men such as George Croker Fox and Robert Were Fox technically belonged to the merchant class, being much closer to trade and the making of their money than Lemon, who had inherited the majority of his fortune. Nevertheless, they were wealthy and had the business connections to purchase or commission imports. Wealth was an important condition for access to the world's products: those who were powerless in society were largely excluded from global travel.

The notions of wealth, power and social rank are key to this article and to the history of horticulture as it relates to Falmouth. The town created and led a regional group of plant enthusiasts interacting with the empire, and it became recognised for its gardens during the first half of the nineteenth century. Without its overseas maritime connections based on travel and trade, men such as Sir Charles Lemon and George Croker Fox would not have had the easy access to empire that they enjoyed, and consequently would not have been able to obtain plant specimens as they did. This article will consider how Falmouth created an interest in the field of horticulture, allowing for the procurement of exotic plant species from around the world. The collection and display of such plants ultimately served as a means of distinguishing the wealthy and well-connected in Cornish society - those with the ability to access Britain's empire in all its natural glory. These early Cornish sub-tropical gardens can now be considered the fore-runner of many others like them, and serve as lasting reminders of Falmouth's links with the colonies.

² Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Ozymandias' in *Ode to the West Wind and Other Poems* (New York: Dover Publications, 1993), p. 5.

³ Lemon is regularly mentioned in the journal of Barclay Fox, was President of the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society and part of the group responsible for establishing it, and in 1836 he led a party from Falmouth petitioning against the removal of the Packet Service from the town.

⁴ Joan Rea, 'The Great Mr Lemon at Home at Princes House, Truro and Carclew, Mylor, 1740-1760', in *History around the Fal: Part Five* (Exeter: Fal Local History Group/University of Exeter, 1990), pp. 29-54 (p. 44).

Economy versus ornament

Horticulture as it relates to the British Empire is frequently discussed.⁵ In the context of empire, however, most existing studies focus on the realm of economic botany: defined as contributory to Man's survival on earth in terms of providing food, fodder or fuel, though other needs fulfilled by plants may also include medicines, chemical products, and fibres.⁶ Men such as Joseph Banks, working at Kew, imported plant species from overseas and re-exported them to British colonies to be naturalised and grown for these purposes.⁷ The usefulness of plants for the empire's economy was of primary concern in the field of botany from the eighteenth century.⁸ While Kew was certainly a highly influential leader in the field, far away from the metropolitan centre of London were other, smaller locations such as Falmouth which were similarly affected by Britain's expanding horizons. Away from Kew, there was also a greater freedom to explore different kinds of gardening and propagation; not simply focusing on useful crops. Today, Cornwall boasts a large number of sub-tropical gardens that were shaped by plant hunting expeditions during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. While exotic gardens are now dispersed across the majority of the region,⁹ some of the first were found in Falmouth and its surrounding areas, and the port's connection to the wider world was of vital importance.

Ornamental horticulture, as opposed to economic botany, is a term coined here to refer to the acquisition of plants that have an aesthetic value, rather than a chiefly economic one. The term 'horticulture' is used instead of botany, as many people acquired plants from plant hunters without necessarily having a botanical interest in them, though in some cases this was also true. Ornamental plants are defined in this context as plants that are not cultivated *primarily* as food, fodder or fuel. They may contribute to the economy, however, but they are not principally utilitarian. Prior to the eighteenth century focus on utility, the value of ornamental plants was appreciated by those who saw the potential within them for displays of power and prestige. In addition to a literal value – typified by the lucrative craze for Dutch bulbs in the seventeenth century – ornamentals had a cultural value as part of the 'aestheticization of power'.¹⁰ Between the Tudor age and the eighteenth century, ornamentals were used to create impressive gardens for royalty that projected the glory and might of a monarch and their reign.¹¹

The acquisition of specimens

The collection, cultivation and cataloguing of ornamental plants from around the world typifies a broader desire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to 'collect' and study the exotic. From within the natural world, enthusiasts collected plants, insects, animals, shells and minerals, among other things.¹² As horticulture became more broadly popular, societies were set up across Britain,

⁵ Such as Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), Lucile H. Brockway, *Science and Colonial Expansion: The Role of the British Royal Botanic Gardens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), and Max Bourke, 'Trees on Trial: Economic Arboreta in Australia', *Garden History*, 35 (2007), 217-226.

⁶ G. E. Wickens, 'What is Economic Botany?', *Economic Botany*, 44 (1990), 12-28 (p. 12).

⁷ Tim Fulford, Debbie Lee and Peter J. Kitson, *Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Era: Bodies of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 34.

⁸ W. T. Thiselton Dyer, *The Botanical Enterprise of the Empire* (London: George E. Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1880)

⁹ Cornwall boasts sub-tropical gardens from Trengwainton and Trewidden in Penzance, in the extreme south-west, to Menabilly in the east and Pencarrow in the north of the county.

¹⁰ Drayton, *Nature's Government*, p. 45.

¹¹ Drayton, *Nature's Government*, p. 43.

¹² Drayton, 'Knowledge and Empire', pp. 238-243.

along with various publications targeted at those with an interest in the subject. The Royal Horticultural Society of Cornwall (hereafter RHSC) had its first meeting in June 1832, and drew together plant enthusiasts, boasting that its rapid foundation was due to 'the support of the most influential men in the County.'¹³ The wealthier classes were often the primary funders and proponents of botanical research and its accompanying expeditions and dissemination, as they sought to demonstrate their wealth and leisure time as part of a show of 'conspicuous leisure', in which distancing themselves from work marks out the wealthier classes as honourable and decent.¹⁴

Falmouth's function as a port opened many doors, both in trade and leisure, for men such as the Foxes and Sir Charles Lemon.¹⁵ In the case of the Foxes, their fortune was made because of the port's maritime connections: their business interests lay in shipping, mining, and consulships to foreign nations. As noted, Lemon's fortune was already made, but through Falmouth he gained positions of power and influence, and made networking connections with men such as the Foxes and important travellers to the port. Because of the long-distance travel afforded by the town due to its regular Packet Service and its accommodation of large passenger and trading ships, those with money were able to access countries overseas, whether this was simply to travel, or to trade with them in some way.

Wealth granted its possessor the power to travel, but equally, travel provided the means to increase one's own wealth and power, as evidenced by the overseas mining trade carried out by the Fox family.¹⁶ This ability to travel, and to trade overseas, was vital for the acquisition of plant species. The importance of time-space compression – travelling greater distances in less time¹⁷ – in the context of horticulture and botany cannot be understated. While many explorers gathered and transported seeds, which could be dried and preserved, many also chose to send living plant specimens, which could not survive especially long journeys on a ship. The fast maritime connections offered by Falmouth made it a port ideally suited to receiving specimens. The RHSC, from its foundation, showed an interest in exotic plants that could not be matched by other groups in existence, such as those from Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Essex, which tended to focus on indigenous plants or those that were long-established in Britain.¹⁸ The Devon and Exeter Botanical and Horticultural Society, which could draw upon the resources of the exotic Veitch Nurseries, was one other society to boast a range of rare plants at its exhibitions, due to this plant-hunting contact.¹⁹ The RHSC is therefore significant as one of the first early groups dedicated to exotics, due to the proximity of its members to Falmouth.

Specimens could arrive in the port in a number of ways. The first to consider is the Packet Service: Falmouth's branch of the General Post Office's maritime

¹³ 'The Royal Horticultural Society of Cornwall', *The Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet and Plymouth Journal*, 7 July 1832.

¹⁴ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (London: Penguin Books, 1994), p. 35.

¹⁵ For the history of Falmouth as a port, see Helen Doe, 'Cornish Ports in the Eighteenth Century,' in Philip Payton, Alston Kennerley and Helen Doe (eds.), *The Maritime History of Cornwall* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2014), p. 189 and D.G. Wilson, *The Maritime History of Falmouth: Its Port, Its Shipping and Pilotage Service* (Wellington, Somerset: Halsgrove House, 2014).

¹⁶ The Fox family owned Perran Foundry, which exported mining equipment overseas, held shares in local mines, and were behind emigration schemes for miners.

¹⁷ Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994)

¹⁸ *The Gardener's Magazine, and Register of Rural & Domestic Improvement*, ed. by John Claudius Loudon (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1832), VIII, pp. 746-751.

¹⁹ *The Gardener's Magazine*, pp. 746-751.

mail delivery system.²⁰ Captains working for the Packet Service in Falmouth appear to have undertaken work additional to their postal duties, also exploring the places they visited in search of new plant varieties. One specimen of Gesneria, *Gesneria suttoni*, was even named after its discoverer, Captain Sutton. An 1834 report by the RHSC noted that:

We owe the establishment of this fine plant to Captain SUTTON, of His Majesty's Packet Establishment, at Falmouth, who informs us that he found it growing in a wood, on a sloping hill, near the Bay of Bomviago, Rio de Janeiro, at an elevation of between 30 and 40 feet above the level of the sea, and not exceeding 40 yards from the water. Its beautiful flowers attracted his attention, and induced him to dig up the plant and bring it home. On his arrival in England, in March, 1833, he presented the choice collection of Orchideous, and other interesting plants he had found, to Sir Charles Lemon, Bart. M.P., and George Croker Fox Esq. Grove Hill, Falmouth, in whose garden the present plant flowered.²¹

This example makes it clear that captains in the employ of the Packet Service, being so frequently called upon to travel to and from exotic locations within a short time frame – the mail being naturally delivered in a timely fashion – were ideally suited to plant hunting and could be called upon by those with power and influence, such as George Croker Fox and Charles Lemon, to procure items for them.

The Packet ships themselves were also useful to a plant hunter, as carriers of packages and people. In 1840, William Lobb, who became a notable plant hunter for the Veitch Nurseries in Exeter, began his career with the company by travelling from Falmouth to Rio de Janeiro on the Packet *Seagull*.²² Plants gathered overseas by Lobb were sometimes sent back to Britain by packet: in 1843, he sent specimens from Panama to Exeter via Falmouth.²³ Sir Charles Lemon had many links to the Veitch Nurseries, having employed and trained William Lobb and his plant hunter brother Thomas in the stove-house at Carclew.²⁴ The Lobbs' father worked on the estate as a gamekeeper. The brothers, despite working for Veitch in Exeter and travelling abroad for long periods of time, always visited their family after returning from a voyage,²⁵ and would almost certainly have seen Sir Charles, such an avid collector and former acquaintance. This is, of course, conjecture. Though the nursery forbade its collectors from sending specimens to any other source, Sue Shephard, a biographer of the Veitch family, believes that William Lobb may well have covertly sent plants and seeds to his former employer.²⁶

Travellers known to the men through their business or leisure interests could

²⁰ For example, see Adrian Webb, 'Captain William King, RN, the Admiralty Packet Service and the Hydrographic Office,' *Troze* v. 1, issue 5 (2009), http://www.nmmc.co.uk/index.php?/collections/troze/captain_william_king_rn_the_admiralty_packet_service_and_the_hydrographic; Tony Pawlyn, *The Falmouth Packets, 1689-1851* (Truro: Truran Books, 2003); and D. Mudd, *The Falmouth Packets* (Bodmin: Bossiney Books, 1978).

²¹ *The Floricultural Cabinet, and Florist's Magazine* (London: Whittaker & Co., 1834), II, p. 18.

²² S. Heriz-Smith, 'The Veitch Nurseries of Killerton and Exeter c. 1780-1863: Part I', *Garden History*, 16 (1988), 41-57 (p. 49).

²³ Heriz-Smith, 'The Veitch Nurseries of Killerton and Exeter c. 1780-1863: Part II', *Garden History*, 16 (1988), 174-188 (p. 175).

²⁴ Matthew Biggs, 'Lobb's Cottage', *Cornwall Gardens Trust*.

<http://www.cornwallgardentrust.org.uk/journal/2011-2/lobb%E2%80%99s-cottage/> Accessed 14 November 2013.

²⁵ Heriz-Smith, 'The Veitch Nurseries of Killerton and Exeter c. 1780-1863: Part II', p. 177.

²⁶ Sue Shepard, *Seeds of Fortune: A Gardening Dynasty* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2003), p. 94.

also be relied upon to share specimens if journeying through the port. One unique natural specimen still found to this day at Penjerrick, home to Robert Were Fox, is a brain coral, which can have a lifespan of several hundreds of years. This creature – not a plant at all, in fact, but nevertheless introduced to Fox's garden – was given to him by Captain Robert FitzRoy of Charles Darwin's expedition ship HMS *Beagle*, when the ship and its crew landed in Falmouth in 1836. Captain FitzRoy visited the Foxes for tea on October 3, as recorded in the diary of Robert Were Fox's daughter, Caroline. The link between the men on this occasion appears to be Fox's interest in navigation and magnetism. Being a man of science, interested in much more besides horticulture, Fox had invented a 'dipping needle deflector' for navigation at sea, and FitzRoy was, according to Caroline, 'highly delighted' with it.²⁷ The captain also spent time sharing with the family some of the details of his voyage, and the discoveries that Darwin had made.

Being situated within a global trading network, Falmouth attracted a great number of ships en route to exotic lands where plant specimens could be located. East India Company vessels regularly passed through Falmouth, and their captains became acquainted with residents that had an interest in horticulture.²⁸ During a meeting of the RHSC in July 1835, George Croker Fox was congratulated on his acquisition of 'some choice exotics' sent to him by Captain Jenkins of the East India Company.²⁹ In May 1841, a further reference is made to Captain Jenkins supplying the Society with seeds; in this instance *Camellia sinensis*, tea plants, from Assam.³⁰ The exchange of plants with the Company was a reciprocal one: in a Horticultural Society meeting of May 1839, it was observed that Captain Jenkins had sent Sir Charles Lemon some live specimens from India with a request that the Society return the favour by sending him plants from either South America or the West Indies.³¹ Clearly, networking was an important part of acquisition from captains visiting the port. The Fox family had shipping interests themselves through G. C. Fox & Sons, their ship agents firm, and were part of the social life of the port through their roles as consuls.³² Because of this, men such as George Croker Fox were well-positioned socially to commission captains – whether their own, those of the Packet Service, or those of other shipping companies – to share specimens with them, or obtain them on their behalf. It is possible that Sir Charles Lemon was introduced to these men through Fox, though he may also have met them through his own involvement in the social life of Falmouth.

Overseas contacts made through mining also proved valuable for procuring exotic plants. In March and April 1838, Lemon took delivery of a plant specimens and a 'large collection of curious seeds' from John Rule, the superintendant of the Real del Monte mines in Mexico.³³ In this instance the value of informal empire to spheres other than the industrial becomes apparent.

²⁷ Caroline Fox, *Memories of Old Friends: Being Extracts from the Journals and Letters of Caroline Fox*, ed. by Horace N. Pym (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1882), p. 9.

²⁸ For background on the East India Company officers and trading, see H.V. Bowen, 'Privilege and Profit: Commanders of the East Indiamen as Private Entrepreneurs and Smugglers, 1760-1813,' *International Journal of Maritime History*, Vol. 19, No. 43 (2007), pp. 43-88.

²⁹ *The Gardener's Magazine, and Register of Rural & Domestic Improvement*, ed. by John Claudius Loudon (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1835), XI, p. 694.

³⁰ 'Royal Horticultural Society of Cornwall', *The Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet and Plymouth Journal*, 21 May 1841.

³¹ 'Cornwall Horticultural Society', *The Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet and Plymouth Journal*, 31 May 1839

³² Bob Dunstan, *The Book of Falmouth and Penryn* (Buckinghamshire: Barracuda Books, 1975), p. 48

³³ John Lindley, *Edward's Botanical Register* (London: James Ridgway and Sons, 1838), XXIV, p. 53.

Because of incursions into Mexico made through the mining industry, the British were able to access other natural resources and export them back to Britain for collecting, cataloguing and naturalising. Some specimens, such as the one received by Lemon in March 1838 – later named *Commelina orchioides* Booth in litt. – had not previously been discovered by the British. The entry for this particular species in *Edwards's Botanical Register* for 1838 contains a detailed description and a note from Lemon himself: 'I do not find any described species with which the plant can be identified.'³⁴ Falmouth's importance to ornamental horticulture during this time here begins to become apparent: due to the trade connections made from the port and the fast communications facilitated by it, in addition to the wealth and influence enjoyed by men such as George Croker Fox and Sir Charles Lemon, Britain was able to acquire entirely new plant specimens for its plant registers and exotic gardens. If useful networking contacts were made through work and industry, Lemon had equally valuable ones through his standing as a wealthy gentleman of leisure. His passion for exotic plants led him to become a correspondent of William and Joseph Dalton Hooker, and one of the sponsors of the latter's Himalayan expedition of 1847-1851. In return for his funding, he was one of the first to receive rare rhododendron specimens discovered by Hooker, though Robert Were Fox is also said to have received rhododendrons from this expedition, perhaps due to his friendship with Lemon.³⁵



Figure 2: Rhododendron 'Sir Charles Lemon' in flower at Carclew. The fact that a specimen was named after Lemon is a testament to his great importance in horticultural circles.

Source: Author's photograph

³⁴ Lindley, *Botanical Register*, p. 54.

³⁵ Charles Fox, *Glendurgan: A Personal Memoir of a Garden in Cornwall* (Penzance: Alison Hodge, 2004), p. 63.

Aestheticising power

Clearly, wealth and social connections, to greater or lesser extents, were important for obtaining exotic plants from around the world. These plants, once obtained, served as either intentional or unintentional visual symbols of the power enjoyed by their possessors. Traditionally, in early modern European courts, the novelty, rarity and beauty of exotic plants had served as an 'aestheticization of power': a mask 'behind which arbitrary power could hide.'³⁶ By the beginning of the nineteenth century, exotic plants were beginning to become more available to wealthy people outside of the royal court and aristocracy. As global trade increased and plants came to be available to more people, it was possible for rich men such as George Croker Fox – from a family of merchants – to emulate a display of plants previously confined to the royal court. Ornamental horticulture continued to have major implications for the reinforcement and creation of hierarchies of power, but the site for this power play had shifted from the exclusive royal courts to include the gardens of the wealthy upper classes. Just as the gardens of the European courts symbolised the glory and global reach of the countries themselves, the gardens of Falmouth glorified Cornwall and Britain in their turn, proving their global reach.

Marking a class divide

The RHSC can thus be viewed as a means for the rich and powerful to advertise their overseas connections and leisure time, in addition to functioning as a space for the sharing and discussion of exotic and indigenous plants. Certainly, the group considered itself to be fulfilling real needs in society, which will be discussed in more detail shortly, but the display of wealth was a consequence – whether deliberate or inadvertent – of the way the group was organised. Its upper class members, such as Sir Charles Lemon, George Croker Fox and John Vivian, from Pencalenick House in Truro, used Society meetings and exhibitions to physically display their plants – many exotic but some indigenous – to the rest of the RHSC, and to the public in general.³⁷ The first exhibition, held on 29 June 1832, was reported to have seen the showroom 'besieged by crowds' keen to view the displays.³⁸ In this instance the public element within the work of men such as Lemon is undeniable. By becoming a part of the exhibition, in his case contributing a large amount of plants to decorate the hall in addition to showcasing other specimens, the extent of his leisure time becomes clear, as does the vast property that he must own in order to grow such quantities of beautiful plants for donation. The RHSC did not simply serve as a means of display, however. Indeed, this assumption is immediately complicated when attention is drawn to the fact that the lower classes, the 'cottagers', also displayed items from their own gardens at the exhibitions.³⁹

The RHSC appears to have identified two main aims or areas of focus upon its formation, and these aims clearly mark a class divide. It was stated in 1832 that the Society was formed '*for promoting the study and practice of Botany and Horticulture, and for improving the condition of the poor by the distribution of prizes to Cottagers*'.⁴⁰ The *Royal Cornwall Gazette* observed in a discussion of the first exhibition that the Society would lead to 'many important benefits, to the community at large'. Nevertheless, it was very much positioned publically as of interest to the upper classes, which organised its formation and management, and the lower classes, which were seen to benefit from this.

³⁶ Drayton, *Nature's Government*, p. 45.

³⁷ 'The Royal Horticultural Society of Cornwall', *The Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet and Plymouth Journal*, 7 July 1832.

³⁸ 'The Royal Horticultural Society of Cornwall', *RCG*, 7 July 1832.

³⁹ 'The Royal Horticultural Society of Cornwall', *RCG*, 7 July 1832.

⁴⁰ 'The Royal Horticultural Society of Cornwall', *RCG*, 7 July 1832.

Commenting on similar societies within the country, the newspaper continued: 'Their good effects are not exclusively confined to the rich; they pervade all classes of society, and tend more to add to the comfort and happiness of the Industrious Cottager, than to the possessor of the most splendid mansion.'⁴¹ In this atmosphere of apparent harmony between all strata of society, divisions and distinctions can be discerned which show how horticulture supported unequal power relations between the upper and the lower classes, which in supported the ideology of 'rulers' and 'ruled' that was inherent within the empire itself.

An initial divide can be seen in the areas of interest within horticulture that were pursued by the upper and lower classes. Reports of early exhibitions note that upper class men such as George Croker Fox exhibited 'rare and valuable plants' from Latin America and Australia, and expensive or exotic fruits such as melons and grapes, while in the designated cottagers' section, prizes were awarded for common or inexpensive items such as apples, geraniums, currants, and peas.⁴² This is not in itself surprising, as the lower classes would naturally not be in a financial position to grow rare or expensive items. However, as the years passed, the categories into which the cottagers could enter became restricted to exclude ornamental plants and focus activities on edible crops. This decision, made in 1841, was barely explained to the public, the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* observing only that 'for substantial reasons [the RHSC had] discouraged this part of the exhibition', with greater attention given to 'the more useful articles' such as leeks, potatoes, onions and lettuces.⁴³ Compared to the first exhibition, in which there were a number of categories for the upper classes to enter fruit and vegetables for judging, by 1841 the 'Flowers' category contained an extensive list of sub-categories and entrants. There were very few edible categories entered by the upper classes.⁴⁴ At this point, a divide becomes obvious between the upper classes and their ornamental plants and the lower classes and their edible produce. In the newspaper report, which could of course represent the event in a light contrary to the wishes of the Society itself – this cannot now be known – it appears that the ornamental category is far larger than the cottagers' categories, in which were awarded far fewer prizes. The 'substantial reasons' for these changes can only be surmised, but the decision was almost certainly linked to the view of proper employment for the working classes, tied in with ideas of the moral education afforded by horticulture.

Appropriate leisure

The upper classes believed, and indeed regularly stated, that the cultivation of vegetables by cottagers would lead to improved morals, and to a higher level of cleanliness and care in and around the home. In 1833, John Vivian explained that the 'principal object' of the RHSC was to 'better the condition and improve the moral habits and moral feelings of the laborer [sic]'.⁴⁵ Almost a year later, in a speech at the opening of a Society exhibition, William Carne, former Mayor of Falmouth,⁴⁶ stated that where the ground outside houses was cultivated, 'a correspondent degree of cleanliness will be found to prevail within

⁴¹ 'The Royal Horticultural Society of Cornwall', *RCG*, 7 July 1832.

⁴² 'Royal Horticultural Society of Cornwall', *The Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet and Plymouth Journal*, 20 July 1833.

⁴³ 'Royal Horticultural Society of Cornwall', *The Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet and Plymouth Journal*, 21 May 1841.

⁴⁴ 'Royal Horticultural Society of Cornwall', *RCG*, 21 May 1841.

⁴⁵ 'Royal Horticultural Society of Cornwall', *The Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet and Plymouth Journal*, 20 July 1833.

⁴⁶ 'Mayors of Falmouth, 1800-1899', Falmouth Town Council, <http://www.falmouthtowncouncil.co.uk/web/the-mayor/mayors-of-falmouth-1800-1899> Accessed 3 September 2013.

the cottage.⁴⁷ Concern with the morals of the working classes was common at this time. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the idea arose that the nation was in decline, with a focus on the corrupting power of commerce and luxury.⁴⁸ As the lower classes were viewed as corrupt and immoral, there was a drive to educate and improve them that continued into the nineteenth century. Societies were formed that saw the working classes carrying out activities alongside their social superiors, the intention being that they could be educated and their morals improved by this proximity.⁴⁹ It was generally thought that with the working classes more dedicated to improvement than raucous behaviour, the classes might coexist more congenially, and the threat posed by unruly masses be diffused.⁵⁰ Under the influence of the Foxes, the education of Falmouth children became more of a priority. In 1839 Anna Maria Fox established a children's horticultural society with an exhibition at Penjerrick, in order that the process begin earlier in life.⁵¹ It was seen as important to raise the morals of the lower classes and to direct their efforts towards disciplined, practical work to break away from social problems such as unrest and overpopulation.⁵² Knowledge and science became linked to moral, rational thought.⁵³

Conclusion

Due to the import of plant specimens through Falmouth, the formation of the RHSC, and the personal horticultural activities of men such as Sir Charles Lemon, a social hierarchy determined by power, wealth, and leisure time was reinforced in Cornwall. Social relations between the upper and lower classes were clear, with appropriate recreations established by the former with regard to the latter. Having created a local class identity for themselves based on exotic plants, the upper classes sought to influence class consciousness among the lower classes; to move the collective identity away from alcohol, gambling and rough games⁵⁴ to gentle productivity. With Britain's ever-expanding population, and the growing density of working class people in industrial areas, there was a real anxiety that the masses could become dangerous.⁵⁵ In Cornwall, as in so many other areas, riots were instigated by the working classes due to poverty and frustration with a hierarchical system that was unfair and detrimental to themselves.⁵⁶ W. M. Tweedy, Treasurer of the RHSC, argued that engagement with the ideals of the Society – notably proper recreation and productivity among the poor – led to an increase in national pride and loyalty to the state,⁵⁷ though this statement should probably be approached with a healthy level of scepticism.

The introduction of exotic plants to Falmouth had many repercussions for the local population. Gentlemen of leisure, such as Sir Charles Lemon, and even

⁴⁷ 'Royal Horticultural Society of Cornwall', *The Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet and Plymouth Journal*, 31 May 1834.

⁴⁸ Philip Connell, *Romanticism, Economics and the Question of 'Culture'*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 64.

⁴⁹ Andrew August, *The British Working Class 1832-1940* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2007), p. 58.

⁵⁰ August, *British Working Class*, p. 58.

⁵¹ Barclay Fox, *Barclay Fox's Journal*, ed. by R. L. Brett (London: Bell & Hyman Limited, 1979), p. 154.

⁵² Connell, *Romanticism*, p. 65.

⁵³ Richard Drayton, 'Knowledge and Empire' in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. by P. J. Marshall, 5 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), II, pp. 231-252 (p. 236).

⁵⁴ August, *British Working Class*, p. 51.

⁵⁵ August, *British Working Class*, p. 9.

⁵⁶ The National Archives, HO 45/1801.

⁵⁷ 'Royal Horticultural Society of Cornwall', *The Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet and Plymouth Journal*, 13 September 1850.

those who earned their own money, like the Foxes, were able to use these plants as a demonstration of their superior rank in society. Through the formation of the RHSC in 1832, he and other upper class associates found a space to share both plants and ideas, and to contribute to the formation of other ideas surrounding class, recreation and morality. In a time of great social change and anxiety, plants were a channel through which grand estates such as Carclew could be made yet more impressive, while simultaneously serving as a means of control over the potentially unruly masses existing at the base level of wealth production. The differences between people that these plants, as expensive, exotic, colonial products, could highlight was significant in forming class consciousness, and became a part of the upper class identity for those living around Falmouth. An interest in horticulture, awakened among the upper classes in Falmouth, ultimately led to the town, and surrounding towns, becoming part of a global dialogue about class and leisure that informed an understanding of the obligations and duties of society's rulers, or educators, and the ruled. While at first glance overseas travel and domestic gardens may not immediately appear to inform each other, they were nevertheless deeply connected during this early- and mid-nineteenth century period of exploration. The British domestic sphere, here typified in the form of the private garden, was not a realm removed from the ideologies of empire, but rather a silent force at the heart of it.