

Exhibition – Scotland's Lost Gardens

Saturday 3 August to Sunday 29 September 2013, 10:00 – 17:45,

✘ John Hope Gateway Decking, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (free)

An outdoor exhibition of stunning images that explores Scotland's lost gardens and the personalities and tastes of the individuals who created them

A new exhibition charting the history and cultural significance of the 'lost gardens' of Scotland, opens today.

Gardens and designed landscapes are an important part of Scotland's history, providing a fascinating insight into the social, political and economic environment of the times in which they were created.

While many of the gardens featured in the exhibition have long gone – vulnerable to changing tastes and needs, or derelict through lack of maintenance – their cultural significance remains.

Sitting within a wider British and European context, gardens respond to ideas embedded in religion, science, art and literature, while incorporating distinctive elements of Scottish history, climate and natural landscape.

Many of the lost gardens featured in the exhibition mounted by

the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) were discovered and documented through the organisation's aerial survey programme.

The exhibition explores the 'lost gardens' of Scotland over some 1,500 years, and includes:

- The earliest known gardens related to the monastic settlements from the sixth and seventh Centuries, in remote locations where a garden would have helped provide a basic diet
- Royal gardens and the gardens of the Scottish nobility, used for the production of food but also places for pleasure and recreation
- French and Italianate style gardens of the late Medieval period, showing the influence of formal European design
- Eighteenth century 'jardins anglais' designed to present an idyll of a pastoral landscape, including wandering livestock and classical ruins, as popularised by the designers 'Capability' Brown and William Kent
- Conservatories and winter gardens which became popular in the nineteenth century, following the repeal of the Glass Tax in 1845 and facilitated by improvements in steel and glass manufacture
- The horticultural fashions of the Victorians including 'ferneries', rockeries, swimming ponds and grottos
- Public parks, city gardens and allotments and open spaces including the roof garden on Princes Street in Edinburgh

Speaking about the exhibition, curator and RCAHMS architectural historian Clare Sorensen said, "*Gardens are one*

of the most important elements in the cultural history of Scotland. Like any art form, they provide an insight into social, political and economic fashions, they intimately reflect the personalities and ideals of the individuals who created them and they capture the changing fortunes of successive generations of monarchs and noblemen.

Yet they remain fragile features of the landscape, easily changed, abandoned or destroyed, leaving little or no trace."

Ian Edwards, Head of Exhibitions and Events at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh said, *'Historic gardens are a great draw for visitors to Scotland and I am sure that there will be a lot of interest in the exhibition from tourists who will be visiting the Garden over the next few months, as well as from our resident audience who have a real appetite for anything to do with our unique Scottish garden heritage.'*

This exhibition draws on a book published in September 2012 by RCAHMS, written by Marilyn Brown, an archaeological investigator who specialised in the study of historic gardens across Scotland through aerial and ground survey over the last thirty years.

The material featured in both the book and the exhibition is drawn from the extensive collections of RCAHMS, which has been creating a record of Scotland's historic environment for over one hundred years.