

Voicing the Garden

Juliet Day

Development Officer at
Cambridge University Botanic Garden



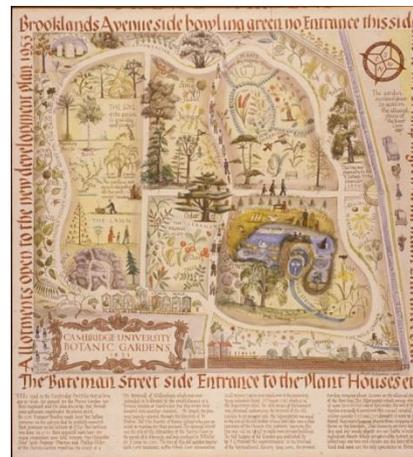
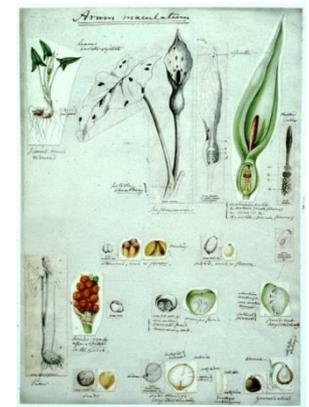
Context: the Garden is full of stories

The plants: for their biology as well as for their part in human history and development

The landscape: for its history of development and its history of history!

The collections: not only the plant collections, but the Herbarium, Library and Archive

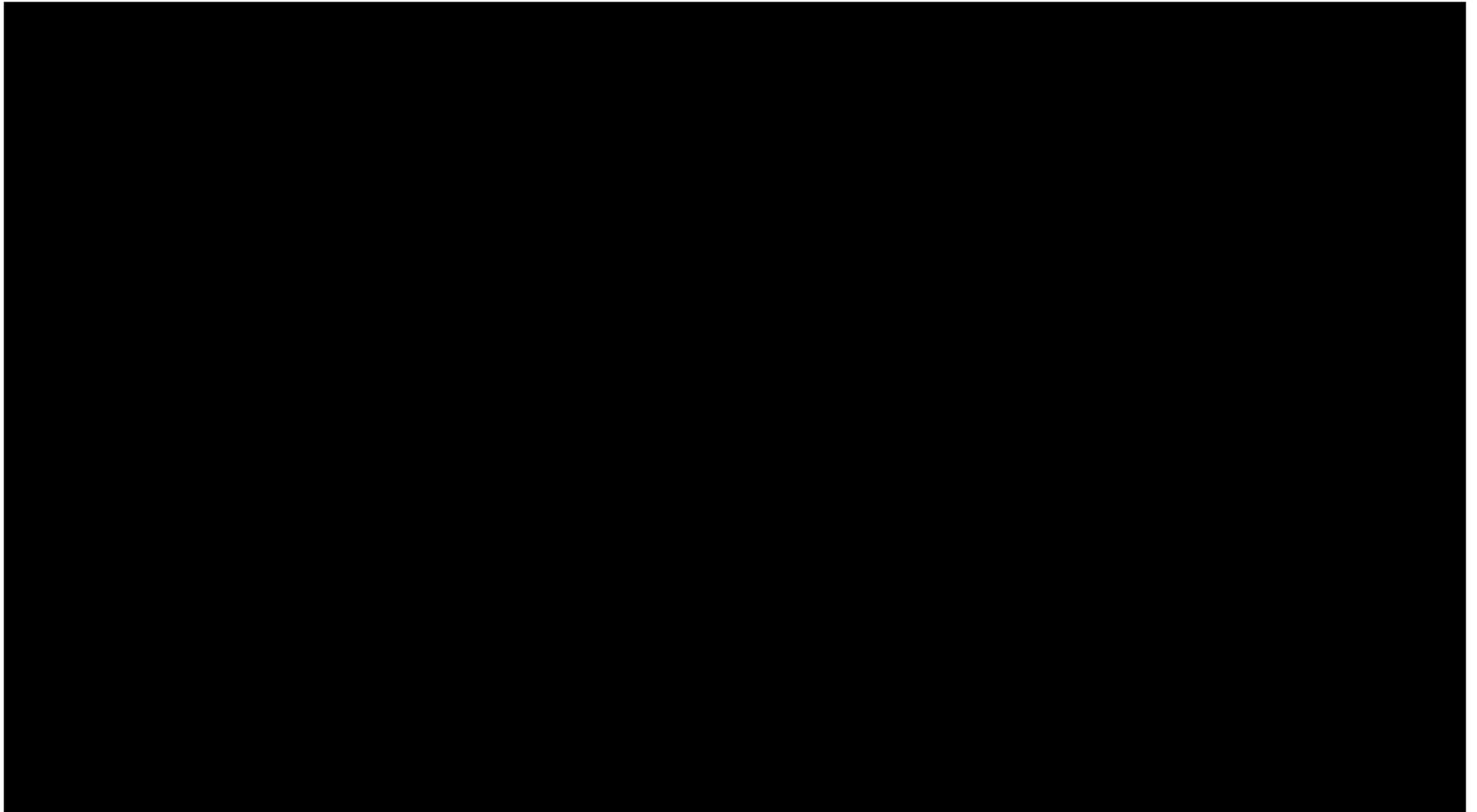
The people: their personal stories and contributions



Plants Inwards
by Ann Gray



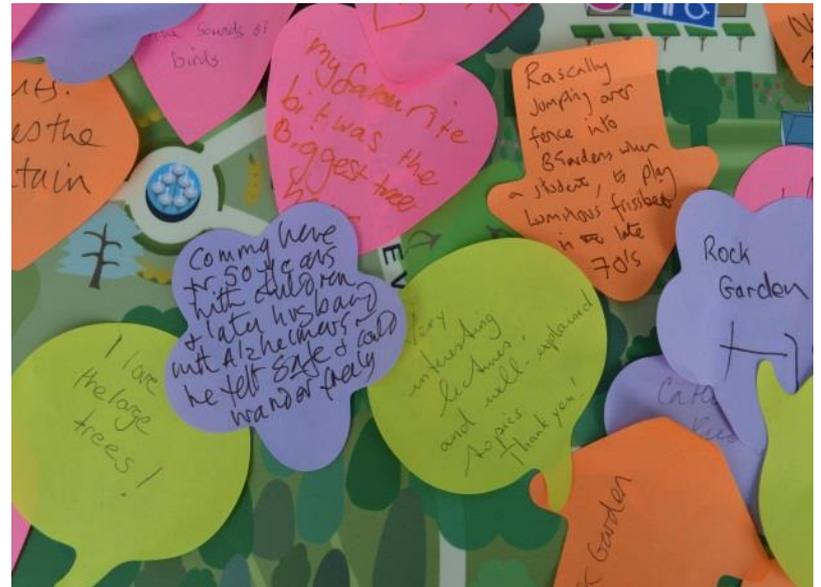
1953 summer garden party film



Exercise: grow a memory tree

Think about your earliest memories of plants or gardening. Write them down on the flower shaped post-its

Think about your strongest influence(s) and how did/do they inform your career. Write down their names and three descriptive words about them on the leaf-shaped post-its.



Voicing the Garden

An oral history project to collect, celebrate and share the stories of the people behind the plants – those who have made, grown up in or simply enjoyed the Cambridge University Botanic Garden.

Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Cambridge University Botanic Garden Association (CUBGA) for staff and staff alumni.



Starting out

- Recruiting volunteers: the importance of cake and resource support
- Oral history training: learning the art of the silent laugh



Learning the art of the silent laugh

- Research how oral history differs
- Professional oral history technique training
- Think about the final edit
- Think about questioning
 - research your questions, but don't write them down
 - warm up, setting and stance
 - ask open, not leading questions
 - follow one line of questioning to its natural conclusion, then back up and take the other route
 - prepare and ask the interviewee to sign a consent and copyright waiver form



Exercise: interviewing

Partner up with someone you've never met

Spend a minute or two sketching out questions in your head

Launch in and go for the interview.

Swap over and the interviewee becomes the interviewer

Report back to the workshop on how you found it.

If you are A:

You are doing an oral history project that seeks to understand the motivations that lead people to work in botanic gardens.

Try to gather what and/or who encouraged your interviewee's interest in plants

If you are B:

You are doing an oral history project explaining how childhood experiences affect our attitudes towards the natural world.

Try to find out what your interviewee's early experiences of gardens/gardening were like.

What we found: change and permanence

- Gardens grow and change
- Social practices change
- Horticulture changes
- Core values unchanged



What we found: anarchy!

- Not like a Guide Book!
- Personal histories and anecdotes
- People from the past
- Diverse voices



What we found: new knowledge

- Better understanding of our heritage
- Setting the record straight



Exercise: plotting change

- Have a think about change and permanence in your own organisation
- Use the grid to write down some examples of things that used to happen/have changed under the broad themes of horticulture and visitation/societal change.
- We'll plot them in a collective timeline!

[BGCI 2015: a collective history of change in botanic gardens worldwide](#)

Celebrating and Sharing

- voicingthegarden.com
- outreach partnerships



VtG

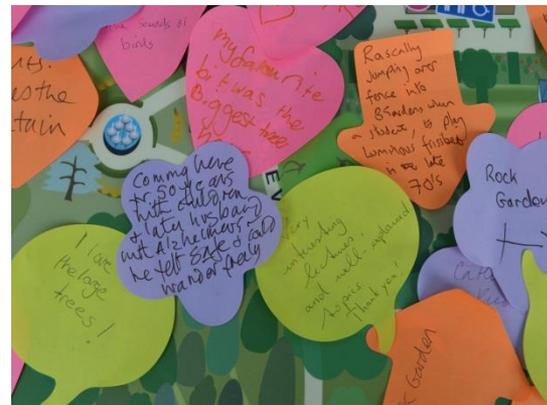
voicingthegarden.com

creating a collective, ongoing history

- Voices



- Memory Board
- Map your love: microblogging at its best!



Voicingthegarden.com new sources, new stories

- Archive



Voicingthegarden.com

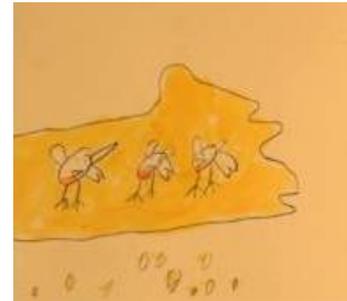
inspiring responses

- Shorts
- Anthology



Outreach partnerships: connecting generations through oral history

- Film workshops
- Touring reminiscence exhibition
- #vtg and screenings for digital festivals and exhibitions









Exercise: creating connections

- Get yourselves into groups of 4-5
- Listen to the two clips that follow
- Choose one which you think you could build an engagement project around. Discuss ideas and build a project. Report back to the workshop in 10 minutes, considering:

Which clip and why?

Which audience(s) would you work with?

Would you involve any other partners?

What would you do?

What might the project deliver

What kind of outcomes would you hope for?

How would you celebrate and share the project?

Setting the Lake on fire

Steve Hickman, horticultural student, remembers opportunities for mischief when clearing the Lake of overgrown waterlilies during the drought of 1976.



It needs a bit more clappy

Mike Pollock, horticultural student in 1959, recalls finishing the Rock Garden under the supervision of Boggis, and his love of labels.



Which clip and why?

Which audience(s) would you work with?

Would you involve any other partners?

What would you do?

What might the project deliver

What kind of outcomes would you hope for?

How would you celebrate and share the project?

Thank you!

Oral history projects invite others to co-author your history in a very personal way. Listen up and you will:

- Hear new and diverse voices
- Gain new and diverse perspectives and knowledge
- Discover new and diverse opportunities to connect creatively with diverse audiences