

The French Gardening Craze, 1908-1914

Horticulture, politics and the media in Edwardian Britain

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Abbreviations

BL	British Library
TNA	The National Archives
WAHIU	Women's Agricultural and Horticultural International Union
<i>AG</i>	<i>Amateur Gardening</i>
<i>DM</i>	<i>The Daily Mail</i>
<i>F&G</i>	<i>Farm & Garden</i>
<i>Fruit Grower</i>	<i>The Fruit Grower, Fruiterer, Florist and Market Gardener</i>
<i>GL</i>	<i>Garden Life</i>
<i>GW</i>	<i>Gardening World</i>
<i>JH</i>	<i>Journal of Horticulture</i>
<i>MMG</i>	<i>Market Growers' Gazette</i>

Introduction

Under the headline "Gold-Mine Gardening for Ladies" an article in *The Penny Illustrated Paper* of 20 April 1908 described a new form of vegetable cultivation practised at the Thatcham Fruit and Flower Farm near Newbury. The "French system" was a "veritable goldmine" and one Frenchman, it was claimed, had taken as much as £500 worth of produce off an acre plot in just one year. Photographs displayed the curiosities of a garden covered by glass bell-jars, lettuces and flowers growing intermingled in a small, wooden frame, and the sight of English lady gardeners, rakes in hand, alongside their "French gardener".¹

Several months later, discussing the same French system, the *Journal of Horticulture* identified the Thatcham garden as the place "from which the cult spread", *Gardening Illustrated* lamented the "twaddle" that had been written about it, while the *Fruit Grower, Fruiterer, Florist and Market Gardener* worked itself into a fury denouncing the "French garden craze", equating it with "other worked-up booms" that had been "the ruin of many who believed the half-told truths which have proved to be a lie and more".²

In the intervening months French gardening had intermittently seized the public imagination, prompted by high octane accounts of the system's profitability in the *Daily Mail*, and continued to do so until the outbreak of war in 1914. What was a specialised commercial system for growing early season vegetables came to have resonance beyond the narrow world of horticulture. From *The Times* to *Tit-Bits*, it

¹ 'Gold-Mine Gardening for Ladies', *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 20 April 1908, p.236

² 'French Gardening', *Journal of Horticulture*, 28 January 1909, p.71; 'French Gardening', *Gardening Illustrated*, 11 December 1909, p.709; 'Small Holdings', *Fruit Grower*, 26 November 1908, p.441

featured in the national press, King Edward VII twice visited a French garden, it was taken up by reformatory and industrial schools, and was even thought to have a role in the treatment of tuberculosis. Yet it is a phenomenon largely unexamined by historians.

This dissertation is a preliminary attempt to make sense of the craze, both the public debate and what happened on the ground in terms of real gardens established to grow vegetables on French principles. The methodology is based on a study of the press for the years 1908-14 with references there providing leads for further research.

Chapter 1 discusses the limited historiography of French gardening. It also identifies relevant literature from the fields of social, political and cultural history for, as this dissertation argues, the "craze" can only be understood in the broader context of "Back to the Land" values and proposals for national renewal in response to unemployment and agricultural depression. It also discusses sources and methodology.

Chapter 2 presents a narrative account of the major developments before and during 1908, the central craze year.

Chapter 3 asks "What was a French garden?", examining the horticultural principles and practical organisation of the French system.

Chapter 4 considers the French gardens started in Britain from the inception of the craze to 1914, drawing on a database of some 100 sites developed during this project.

It puts forward a classification scheme that reflects their owners' varying motivations for involvement with the craze.

Chapter 5 offers some conclusions about the project.

Chapter 1: Historiography, Sources, Methods

Literature Overview

In 1910 when compiling the 3rd edition of her pioneering *A History of Gardening in England* Alicia Amherst added a new chapter on 'Modern Gardening'. This included a brief half-paragraph on the "sudden craze to embark on the French methods of market gardening".¹ Garden historians have overlooked this reference and there are no modern studies of the French gardening craze in either the academic or popular literature. Several works make passing reference to French gardening in broader accounts of Edwardian horticulture.

Luckham's chapter in *The Garden: A Celebration of One Thousand Years of British Gardening* is the only work to employ the term "craze" while Battersby's PhD thesis mentions "a great controversy" caused by French gardening techniques.² Otherwise there is no suggestion French gardening was anything other than a narrowly horticultural phenomenon.

Thirsk's two page account in *Alternative Agriculture* is important for discussing French gardening in the context of long-term trends in agricultural history. She sees its brief Edwardian popularity as part of a broader process of agricultural innovation and diversification during the late nineteenth/early twentieth century agricultural

¹ Alicia Amherst, *A History of Gardening in England*. 3rd ed. (London: Dutton, 1910), p. 313

² Joy Luckham, 'Kitchen and Vegetable Gardens' in John Harris (ed.), *The Garden: A Celebration of One Thousand Years of British Gardening* (London: Mitchell Beazley, 1979), p. 143; R.J. Battersby, 'The Development of Market Gardening in England, 1850-1914' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1960), p. 108

depression.³ As markets for grain and meat weakened farmers sought more profitable uses for the land.

Webber's popular history of market gardening and Battersby's thesis on the English horticultural industry 1850-1914 provide background on commercial horticulture. For all its limitations - including a paragraph about French gardening in seemingly random position - Webber's book is useful in identifying critical issues for market gardeners.⁴ Battersby's brief account of French gardening provides some references to source material and is interesting for its attempt to relate French techniques to traditional English methods of forcing vegetables.⁵

Whether French gardening techniques were in any sense "new" and different from traditional English methods was a contentious issue during the craze.⁶ Thick's work on the Neat House gardens, in what is now Pimlico, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries shows that many of the basic horticultural techniques were indeed similar although there were major differences in cropping systems and organisation of the gardens.⁷

The most intensively researched aspect of Edwardian commercial horticulture is its attraction as a career for middle class women, specifically the horticultural colleges that provided a professional training. Although French gardening was quickly taken up at these institutions it is not discussed in these studies. Unmentioned in Obitz's

³ Joan Thirsk, *Alternative Agriculture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp.184-5

⁴ Ronald Webber, *Market Gardening: History of Commercial Flower, Fruit and Vegetable Growing* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1972), p.137

⁵ Battersby, 'Development of Market Gardening', pp.106-8; 130-5.

⁶ William Wicherley, *The New Market Gardening* (London: Cable Publishing, 1908), Chapter.1

⁷ Malcolm Thick, *The Neat House Gardens* (Totnes: Prospect Books, 1998)

work, it features briefly in Meredith's PhD thesis.⁸ Nevertheless, these studies are helpful for perspectives they offer on organisations important in the French gardening movement.

Beyond the world of horticulture, Marsh's *Back to the Land* contains an unindexed reference to French gardening significant for placing it in a wider social context, suggesting relevance to debates within Edwardian society about land reform as a remedy for unemployment and agricultural depression, and in particular the role small holdings could play.⁹

Readman's *Land and Nation in England* is the study this dissertation looks to most closely on land reform.¹⁰ Its particular emphasis is the public debate, what people were saying in pamphlets, journals, newspapers, books and speeches, as opposed to official party political programmes and parliamentary politics. Readman's work demonstrates just how deeply embedded the "land question" was in Edwardian society and how it permeated debates on many other topics. Although the work does not discuss French gardening, for the historian of the craze it strongly suggests the sometimes vitriolic arguments about the profitability, origins and techniques of the French system were about rather more than the narrow concerns of market gardeners and horticultural journalists.

⁸ Donald L. Opitz, "'A triumph of brains over brute': Women and science at the Horticultural College, Swanley, 1890–1910", *Isis*, 104 (2013), pp. 30–62; Anne Meredith, 'Middle-Class Women and Horticultural Education, 1890-1939' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 2001)

⁹ Jan Marsh, *Back to the Land: the pastoral impulse in England, from 1880 to 1914* (London: Quartet Books, 1982), p. 117

¹⁰ Paul Readman, *Land and Nation: Patriotism, National Identity, and the Politics of Land, 1880-1914* (Woodbridge: The Royal Historical Society, 2008)

As a phenomenon created by relentless coverage in the *Daily Mail*, the craze can also be approached through the historiography of the media. The only work to mention the craze is Pound and Harmsworth's 1959 biography of Lord Northcliffe in a paragraph about Northcliffe's vision that natural history should become a source of news.¹¹ More broadly, this literature enables the craze to be seen as an expression of contemporary media practice rather than an isolated and somewhat freakish episode in the history of horticulture. The work of Chalaby, Wiener and others demonstrates the *Daily Mail's* approach to French gardening embodied the New Journalism that had emerged during the late nineteenth century. This looked to address the general interests of readers and involved more sport, crime, entertainment and lifestyle coverage, and less politics. Their work also shows how the *Daily Mail* under Northcliffe was in the vanguard of taking the New Journalism in an aggressively commercial direction, prioritising circulation growth over any political or social goals.¹²

Sources and Methods

This project began with a single reference and has grown to encompass enough material for several dissertations.¹³ In the process an episode largely lost from the historical record has been retrieved. A concern has been to throw the evidential net as wide as possible to appreciate the full scope of the subject.

¹¹ Reginald Pound and Geoffrey Harmsworth, *Northcliffe* (London: Cassell, 1959),p.358

¹² Jean K Chalaby, 'Smiling Pictures Make People Smile: Northcliffe's Journalism', *Media History*, 6, no.1 (2000),pp.33-44; Joel Wiener, *The Americanization of the British press, 1830s-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011),pp.154-210.

¹³ 'French Gardening', *JH*, 28 January 1909,p.71

While making no claims to theoretical innovation, it draws inspiration from the approaches of two recent books. Following Readman it is alive to the importance of the land reform debate in Britain, and notes Wade Martins and Williamson's concern to tell a more complex story about the land during the Great Agricultural Depression than in conventional accounts.¹⁴ Underlying both these is a desire to see horticultural issues in their widest possible social context.

The project rests heavily on a study of newspapers and magazines, both horticultural periodicals and the general consumer press. A range of other archival sources illuminate the story revealed in press accounts, including local authority records, company accounts and census data, as well as contemporary pamphlets and books. Given the volume of material discovered in the press and the need to keep the project manageable, research did not extend far into private archives. It is entirely possible a more extensive study would identify material in private hands about the 90-plus French gardens discovered.

The study surveyed all eighteen London daily and evening newspapers published in 1908, London Sunday newspapers, and a selection of provincial newspapers, together with some twenty, largely weekly, gardening and horticultural periodicals. Other contemporary periodicals were also examined, including illustrated news weeklies, women's magazines, the agricultural press, and political reviews. These titles were examined in the form they are most accessible, a combination of online databases, microfilm and bound paper volumes. The research largely followed where the evidence led; those publications that gave most attention to French gardening were

¹⁴ Readman, *Land and Nation*, pp.1-13; Susanna Wade Martins and Tom Williamson, *The Countryside of East Anglia: Changing Landscapes, 1870-1950* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), p.215

examined at greater length than those whose treatment was more superficial. All titles were examined for 1908, the height of the craze, many for 1909, but only the core gardening/horticultural titles for 1910 and later. The exception were the periodicals - mainly newspapers - in online databases. These were searched for the full duration of the craze (and beyond).¹⁵ While it is unlikely major issues have been overlooked, interesting perspectives may have gone undiscovered and it is recognised this was a compromise to keep the project manageable.

This project is an exercise in the advantages and limitations of online periodicals databases for historians, as discussed in the literature.¹⁶ While the advantages are huge - principally the ability to retrieve relevant information in seconds from millions of text pages and to assess quickly a project's feasibility and main parameters - online databases are not a panacea and must be approached as critically as the sources they contain.

The need to refine appropriate search terms is one critical aspect. In this case going beyond the words 'French gardening' into the technical vocabulary of intensive cultivation to develop a variety of perspectives on the subject. The danger is not simply that material is missed but that studies are distorted by only finding what is originally searched for.

¹⁵ The fate of some gardens is revealed by sales advertisements from the 1920s

¹⁶ For example, Adrian Bingham, 'The digitization of newspaper archives: Opportunities and challenges for historians.' *Twentieth Century British History*, 21.2 (2010), pp.225-231; Bob Nicholson, 'The Digital Turn: Exploring the methodological possibilities of digital newspaper archives.', *Media History* 19.1 (2013), pp.59-73.

Perhaps the greatest danger of online databases is that they skew analysis towards titles that have been digitised.¹⁷ It would certainly have been possible to write *an* account of the French gardening craze solely from online databases but this would have missed a great deal of the response to the *Daily Mail's* claims. In particular, it would have failed to appreciate the variety of response and how that reflected the different perspectives and readerships of the periodicals concerned.

A further limitation is the presentation of search results as a series of discrete articles removed from their context on the printed page. Surrounding articles on other topics that may aid interpretation are lost.¹⁸ In this respect this study was fortunate so many periodicals remain undigitised; all gardening/horticultural magazines were examined in paper form; approximately half the London daily and weekly newspapers in microfilm; some 30 general interest magazines in paper or microfilm. Time was also taken to examine in microfilm titles searchable on databases, notably the *Daily Mail*.

The extent to which the press was concerned with small holdings during 1908 was a critical context recovered from this broader examination. Following implementation of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1907 on 1st January 1908, newspapers and magazines of all political persuasions ran almost daily coverage. Making a living from the land was an inescapable topic during 1908.

More broadly, any study resting heavily on newspaper and magazine sources, digitised or otherwise, must address questions of reception and accuracy. What was the public response to the press coverage? Was there widespread interest or was the

¹⁷ Nicholson, 'Digital Turn',p.61

¹⁸ Bingham 'Newspaper Archives',p.230

craze little more than a media phenomenon? The evidence is certainly limited compared to the body of press content but this study has tried to seek it out, partly by using non-periodical sources and partly by being alert to press coverage that suggests reader reaction.

Finally, can we believe what we read in the press? In the case of the *Daily Mail's* claims for French gardening the answer is emphatically "no". Although much of this study is about perception and opinion rather than strict factual accuracy. The newspaper's lies and exaggeration are so central to this study they have helped develop due scepticism when approaching other periodicals and much of the factual information must await conformation from other sources.

Chapter 2: The French gardening craze

French gardening can be said to have begun twice in Edwardian England: on 12th November 1904 when a letter to the *Evesham Journal* from "A Wellwisher" suggested the town's market gardeners visit Paris to inspect how growers there used glass to force early vegetables; and again on 20th March 1908 when the *Daily Mail* ran an article under the headline "Golden Soil. Frenchman's methods of cultivation. £500 off an acre" which began the craze itself.¹ It was the interplay between the worlds of professional horticulture and tabloid journalism that would characterise the French gardening craze.

"Wellwisher", who later revealed himself as Charles (C.D.) McKay, a partner in London seedsmen Watkins and Simpson, asked "where is the go-aheadness of Evesham gardeners?" and argued that the many thousands of pounds earned annually by French market gardeners supplying early vegetables to the London market could easily come to Evesham growers if they had the enterprise to investigate the most up-to-date methods as practised around Paris. In response, a deputation of thirty Evesham market gardeners, led by McKay, visited Paris in January 1905, inspecting market gardens south east of the city. Immediately afterwards the market gardener John Idiens began a garden along Parisian lines in Evesham, recruiting a gardener from France to supervise the operation.²

¹ 'A. Wellwisher', 'The Market Gardening Industry. Important Suggestion.' *Evesham Journal*, 19 November 1904,p.5; 'Golden Soil', *DM*, 20 March 1908,p.3

² 'The Gardeners Trip to Paris', *Evesham Journal*, 21 January 1905,p.8; 'Notes on Local Topics', *Evesham Journal*, 28 January 1905,p.5

The agricultural writer Edwin Pratt visited this garden in November 1905 and it is clear from his account that it featured all the classic elements of what would become known in Britain as a "French garden" and replicated the gardens seen outside Paris. Early vegetables - principally lettuce, radishes, carrots and cauliflower - were forced in glass-covered wooden frames about one foot high, and also under hundreds of bell-shaped glasses known as cloches. Both frames and cloches sat on a thin layer of soil above long beds of decaying manure that provided heat and were protected from frost at night by rye mats.³ [Figures 1 & 2]

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Figure 1: The Farnorth French Garden, Grange-over-Sands, Lancashire

It is also clear from these early reports that professional market gardeners immediately grasped the critical factors in any French gardening venture. The availability of large quantities of stable manure, unlimited water supplies, appropriate

³ Edwin Pratt, *The Transition in Agriculture* (London: John Murray, 1906), pp.144-50

climatic conditions, specialised seeds, market demand for winter salads, rail freight costs and effective marketing practices were all explored by Pratt.⁴

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Figure 2: Working with cloches, Mayland Land Colony, Essex

Over the next three years only limited interest was shown in French market gardening methods. John Idiens' garden was seen as an interesting experiment and an example of diversification in response to agricultural depression.⁵ The horticultural press reported sporadically on interest shown by other Evesham market gardeners and on rumoured plans for new gardens, although none materialised.⁶ In 1906 Idiens sold the garden to J.N. Harvey another Evesham market grower.⁷ Nationwide, it has only been possible to identify three other French gardens before the early months of 1908, at Bredon's Norton in Gloucestershire, Thatcham near Newbury, and the Mayland land colony in

⁴ Pratt, *Transition*, p.144ff;

⁵ This was the wider theme of Pratt's book

⁶ 'A French Market Garden at Evesham', *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 17 March 1906, p.173

⁷ 'The French Garden', *JH*, 30 July 1908, p.106

Essex. Another, at Henfield, Sussex, used similar methods to grow violets.⁸ The seed merchants Sutton & Sons and Veitch & Co, both won Royal Horticultural Society medals for early vegetables grown using French methods in early 1908 indicating they also experimented with French gardening, although when this began is unclear.⁹

May Crooke, Principal of the Bredon's Norton Gardening School for Ladies, began French gardening in 1906 following visits to Evesham. She saw it "rather as offering a suitable occupation for women gardeners than with any special expectation of very high profits"¹⁰ reflecting the contemporary view that all branches of horticulture - commonly referred to as *la petite culture* - were particularly suitable for women seeking a career in agriculture, given the light labour and attention to detail required for success.¹¹ The garden floundered until an expert in the system was engaged from Evesham.¹² The Misses Hughes-Jones and Peers who founded the Thatcham Fruit and Flower Farm, near Newbury, in autumn 1907 were from this tradition, both former students at Studley College. A French garden was just one part of their more broadly based horticultural enterprise and they engaged a French supervisor from the outset.¹³

The Mayland land colony near Maldon reflected a social reforming tradition that saw the creation of agricultural settlements as one solution to problems of rural depopulation and urban unemployment. Urban workers were offered plots of land on favourable terms and trained to farm them effectively, the operation underwritten by private benefactors or local authorities. Keir Hardie and George Lansbury were both

⁸ Charles Clarke, 'Violet Farming', *The Windsor Magazine*, April 1908, pp.677-682

⁹ 'Fruit and Vegetable Committee', *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society* Vol. XXIV (1908-09), p. li

¹⁰ May Crooke, 'The French Garden', *Studley College Agricultural Journal*, September 1908, p. 117

¹¹ Edith Bradley and Berthe Le Mothe, *The Lighter Branches of Agriculture* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1903), pp. xiii-xx

¹² Crooke, 'The French Garden', p. 117

¹³ Michael Roberts, *Brief Notes on Thatcham Fruit and Flower Farm School* (Henwick: [n.p.], 1996).

proponents of this approach which was deeply embedded in the labour movement and drew on the ideas of Prince Peter Kropotkin.¹⁴ Mayland was funded by the American philanthropist Joseph Fels and the horticultural training organised by Thomas Smith who later wrote a well received book on French gardening and lectured widely. A two acre French garden was established in February 1907 as a small part of the existing 230 acre settlement, with Frenchman Paul Aquatias engaged to supervise.¹⁵

It was through Mayland that the *Daily Mail* first covered French gardening. In common with much of the national press, agricultural issues often featured in its columns reflecting anxiety about the state of the nation in the wake of agricultural depression, rural depopulation and poor urban living conditions as rural workers fled the countryside. This was often perceived as a grave national weakness that extended beyond bare economic statistics, with the stock of healthy manhood compromised by urban squalor and a dangerous reliance on imported food supplies.¹⁶

As Readman and Packer have shown, these anxieties were a significant focus for party political debate. With the enlargement of the franchise by the Third Reform Act 1884, including its extension to most agricultural workers, solutions to the agricultural problem become inescapable for electoral politics and as such policies and legislation were widely discussed in the press.¹⁷ No more so than following the 1906 Liberal general election victory when land reform through the creation of small holdings had been a central election promise. It took effect through the Small Holdings and

¹⁴ Ian Packer, *Lloyd George, Liberalism and the Land* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2001),p.160

¹⁵ Thomas Smith *French Gardening* (London: Utopia Press, 1909) - Kropotkin wrote the Foreword; Marsh, *Back to the Land*,pp.112-35; Ronald Webber, 'Living off the Land', *Country Life*, 27 September 1979,p.958

¹⁶ Readman, *Land and Nation*,pp.96-99;

¹⁷ Readman, *Land and Nation*,pp.15-35; Packer, *Lloyd George*,pp.10-161

Allotments Act 1907 which introduced a statutory duty for county councils to meet the demand for small holdings, coming into force on 1 January 1908.¹⁸ As the *Albany Review* later remarked,

Whatever the Small Holdings Act of 1907 may or may not have accomplished, it has furnished an inexhaustible topic for conversation. People who have hitherto never evinced any desire for the betterment of agriculture have been drawn into discussion of the feasibility and advisability of the Act.¹⁹

In common with other newspapers the *Daily Mail* devoted considerable space to small holdings during 1907.²⁰ A central theme was how they could become commercially viable, and in this context articles examined examples of contemporary practice, including the Mayland land colony. A long article about the colony in August concluded with a few paragraphs on an experiment in French market gardening. Its sober assessment was that while it did require £2000 to equip a two-acre French garden there was no intrinsic reason why the system would not work for the "industrious smallholder in rural England".²¹

In January 1908 the newspaper's interest in small holdings culminated in a competition to find a tenant for the Daily Mail Farm, a specially purchased and equipped 14-acre small holding in Lincolnshire. "Our aim is to ascertain whether it is

¹⁸ The 1907 Act was consolidated with older legislation becoming the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908

¹⁹ Herbert Beaumont, 'The Small Holdings Act in Operation', *The Albany Review*, August 1908, p.546

²⁰ For example, H.W. Wilson, 'The Small Holdings Fraud', 3 May 1907, p.6; 'Unheroic Bill', 28 May, p.7; 'Wanted, An Agricultural Policy', 19 December 1907, p.4

²¹ Annesley Kenealy, 'Land Hunger', *DM* 17 August 1907, p.4

practicable and possible for the city-dweller to go back to the land".²² There were thousands of applicants and the winner, a railway clerk from Grimsby, was taken on a tour of horticultural good practice at farms around the country.

One of these was the Thatcham Fruit and Flower Farm and it was the French garden there that inspired the article that initiated the craze on March 20th 1908. It occupied almost a full column of the newspaper and its content is worth dwelling on for the response it provoked.

The emotive headline "Golden Soil" is followed by a subsidiary headline quoting a specific rate of financial return, "£500 off an acre", and an opening paragraph that highlights the *Daily Mail* smallholder's astonishment. "Nobody will believe you if you write it down" he is quoted as saying. What follows is a collection of superlatives as "this wonderful new form of cultivation" is described, emphasising the superiority over English methods. The level of heat from the manure hotbeds "would be difficult to maintain in even an elaborate greenhouse"; the Frenchman grows more produce on half an acre than a "good gardener would get into six or eight acres"; the English climate is defied and there are melons before the end of May. All this is possible because of the "secrets" - a word employed several times - of the system, the "secret of success" lying in the cropping methods and the soil (which French gardeners regard as "gold dust"). It is also a system that requires only small outlay. The acreage is tiny and the women who started the garden are described as beginning with "very small capital". The strangeness of the scene is also emphasised with the ground covered by bell-glasses and glass frames. The article concludes with a rallying cry: French

²² 'Small Holdings Experiment', *DM* 20 January 1908,p.5

smallholders have for years flooded English and French markets using this system; now "our smallholders can do the same".²³ [Figure 3]

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Figure 3: The first Golden Soil article (extract)

Two further articles followed before the end of March as the newspaper responded to "very many letters of inquiry about the French system of gardening". The first sought to clarify the potential returns from the system using the accounts of a Monsieur Ronce, a French gardener of unspecified location.²⁴ The figures quoted were so incomplete they served only to increase the allure without explaining financial reality. Startling quantities of vegetables were listed (20,000lb carrots, 6,000 heads of

²³ 'Golden Soil', *DM*, 20 March 1908,p.3

²⁴ 'Golden Gardens', *DM*, 24 March 1908,p.3

cabbage) without any reference to the revenue they attained or costs of production. The article concluded by framing these "prolific" returns in more meaningful terms for its readership: "An appreciable return can be got from a dozen lights and twenty bell-glasses laid out on a tiny strip of the land such as most cottagers have. The capital outlay on this would be at the outside £20." The second article re-hashed the initial account of the visit to Thatcham, stressing the superiority of French methods, the ease of replicating them, and developed the mystique of the French gardener's manure-based soil, "as black as a black hat... a wonderful mould". The headline broadcast the benefit for readers, "Golden Soil. How to make half-acre plots pay" and the final paragraph made clear that for all the detail of the system, "the first principles may be understood at a glance" and the rest "can be got by practice".²⁵

Over late spring and early summer articles in similar vein appeared prominently, approximately weekly. "Profits", "Golden Soil", or specific returns per acre (£600, £625 and £700 were all mentioned) were rarely absent from the headlines and there were several inadequate attempts to support the financial claims by quoting figures from real gardens.²⁶ The author of the earlier pieces on French gardening emerged from anonymity and under his by-line a more thoughtful strand emerged in the reporting.

William Beach Thomas had been the *Daily Mail's* writer on countryside affairs since 1904. An Oxford scholar and former schoolmaster he was intellectually equipped to put French gardening into a broader context. He began to present the system as one part of an urgent national requirement to move away from extensive agriculture to

²⁵ 'Golden Soil', *DM*, 31 March 1908, p.5

²⁶ For example, 'Golden Soil. First Outlay £314 an Acre. Profits and Expenses' *DM*, 5 May 1908, p.4

more intensive methods of production, drawing on the comparison Kropotkin had made between French and English agriculture in his *Fields, Factories and Workshops*. For the *Daily Mail* readership this was presented in the simplest of terms, but it meant that in an article concluding there were "thousands of places in England where the system could produce a good living" the case for French gardening had moved beyond personal profit to embrace questions of national well-being.²⁷

The *Daily Mail's* advocacy of French gardening reached a new pitch in late June when it published, *The French Garden: A Diary & Manual of Intensive Cultivation* by C.D. McKay.²⁸ [Figure 4] Until late August the book was advertised relentlessly in the newspaper, often on the front page under the headline "Small Plots, Large Profits", with copy proclaiming it "explains the methods by which French gardeners reap enormous profits from small patches of land".²⁹ [Figure 5] It was a rare day when the newspaper failed to include an advertisement, editorial promotion for the book or a more substantial article on French gardening. When the book quickly sold out the countdown until the arrival of freshly printed copies was milked for dramatic effect.³⁰

²⁷ William Beach Thomas, 'The New Agriculture', *DM*, 9 April 1908, p.6; Peter Kropotkin, *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (London: Hutchinson, 1899), pp.40-82; Derek Hudson, 'Thomas, Sir William Beach (1868–1957)', rev. Marc Brodie, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/view/article/36482>, accessed 6 Sept 2016]

²⁸ C. D. McKay, *The French Garden: A Diary & Manual of Intensive Cultivation* (London: Daily Mail, 1908)

²⁹ 'A New Era in Gardening' (advertisement), *DM*, 23 June 1908, p.3

³⁰ For example, 'The French Garden. Reprints Nearly Ready', headline of front page advertisement, 8 July 1908.

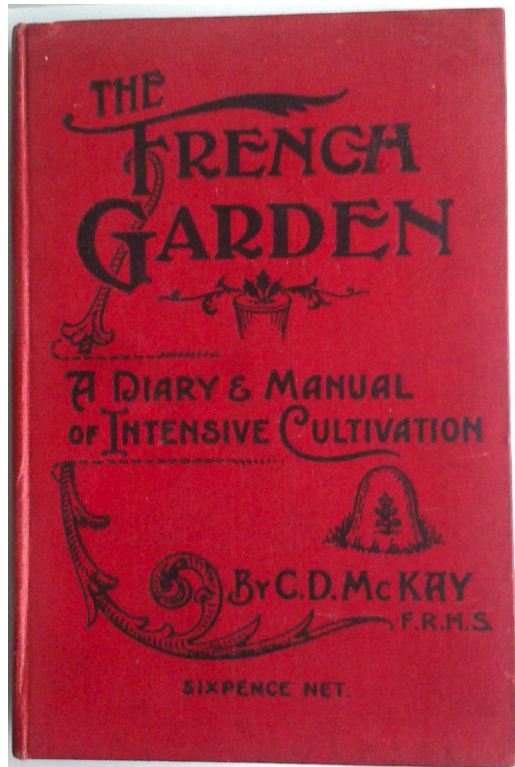


Figure 4: C.D. McKay, *The French Garden*

Figure 5: Advertisement for the book

At only sixty pages and priced 6d the book was designed to sell rather than be definitive. However it was well reviewed for its straightforward coverage of the practicalities of French gardening despite coming under attack for stating a garden could be started for as little as £200.³¹ There was sharp contrast between the down-to-earth tone of the main text and Beach Thomas's preface which rehearsed themes of patriotism and personal profit. "Today, when the work of keeping more people on the land has become an urgent national obligation, the French method should compel attention from all classes." It was suitable for the "better educated classes, who have a small capital, and wish to make a comfortable living", while "a little allotment may return a man and his family a good living".³²

³¹ This was pilloried in the horticultural press; see the book review in *JH*, 9 July 1908, p.37 and correspondence over following weeks

³² McKay, *French Garden*, p.iv

Later in the year, the newspaper went one stage further and offered readers a practical demonstration of French gardening. This was a small, working example of a French garden at the Ideal Home Exhibition, at Olympia in October, complete with Frenchman and wife giving lessons to the visiting public. The garden was organised by C.D. McKay who also produced *The Amateur's French Garden*, an adaptation of *The French Garden*, priced 3d, that reputedly sold 10,000 copies to visitors.³³

This 1908 event was the first Ideal Home Exhibition, launched by the *Daily Mail* as it made its first forays into the exhibition business that year. It relentlessly promoted the attractions in its pages over several months, with full page advertising, editorial features and special supplements. The model French garden played a more prominent role in this publicity than its position as one among many exhibits might suggest. Its topicality was considered a big draw. [Figure 6]

³³ The newspaper's own figure, 'Everything Sold Out', *DM* 26 October 1908, p.8

The image has been removed from the open access version for copyright purposes

Figure 6: 'Plan' of the Gardens at the Ideal Home Exhibition, 1908

During the exhibition's first week, the newspaper published an 800 word feature that suggests how it was positioning French gardening for its readers. Under the headline "Our French Garden. A true record of what two women did and with what result" it recounted the homely tale of how "Bessie and I" grew vegetables in their "London back-yard" after reading the *Daily Mail's* accounts.³⁴ Despite the writer having a "weak heart" and being "unfit for heavy work" and Bessie being "my old nurse" they cultivate large quantities of vegetables listed alongside an improbably precise series of weights. The methods described bear only fleeting resemblance to classic French gardening techniques - "our only frame was a shallow box from a grocer covered by the glass from a picture frame".

³⁴ 'Our French Garden', *DM*, 14 October 1908, p.3

From press reports, the model garden certainly attracted large crowds, but was criticised as too small to be an effective demonstration, *Farm & Garden* describing it as "an absolute farce".³⁵

The Reaction

The *Daily Mail's* advocacy of French gardening immediately struck a nerve, both in the press and more widely among the public. Individuals and organisations set out in pursuit of the promised profits and sought answers to two key questions - was what the *Daily Mail* said true? and how, on a practical level, did French gardening work?

The subject was widely discussed in the press. The arguments can be traced in national and regional newspapers, gardening magazines and in more general consumer periodicals where horticulture might not be expected to feature. While this study has only sampled the vast range of periodical material, the impression emerges of French gardening as an inescapable topic during the summer and autumn of 1908, albeit a minor one.

The illustrated weeklies were among the first to respond, satisfying demand for information about the appearance of French gardens. During April they carried entirely uncritical, full-page accounts of the Thatcham garden, each featuring several photographs and adapting the *Daily Mail's* headlines - 'An Acre That Yields £500', '£500 Off an Acre', 'Gold From the Soil', 'Gold-Mine Gardening for Ladies', 'A Berkshire Goldmine'. *The Sphere* noted the women who ran the garden had "made a

³⁵ 'French Gardening', *F&G*, 17 October 1908, p.787

little fortune" and thought the system "intensely interesting given the movement towards small holdings".³⁶ [Figure 7]

Small holdings provided the context for much of the initial response in the general consumer press. *Public Opinion*, which provided a "weekly review of current thought and activity" by reproducing the text of significant articles published elsewhere, republished two *Daily Mail* articles on French gardening, the first, in April, under its own headline "How to Make Small Farming Pay" rather than the original "Golden Soil".³⁷ *Reynolds Newspaper*, the first London newspaper to consider the *Daily Mail's* coverage, did so in an article discussing the various crops and commercial strategies that might generate profitable small holdings.³⁸

³⁶ 'An Acre That Yields £500', *The Sphere*, 11 April 1908,p.34; H.C. Davidson '£500 Off an Acre', *The Bystander*, 29 April 1908,p.244; 'Gold From the Soil', *Illustrated London News*, 11 April 1908,p.540; 'Gold-Mine Gardening for Ladies', *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 20 April 1908,p.236; 'A Berkshire Goldmine', *Lady's Pictorial*, 11 April 1908,p.595

³⁷ 'How to Make Small Farming Pay', *Public Opinion*, 24 April 1908,p.523; '£600 per acre. The Great Possibilities of the Soil', *Public Opinion*, 26 June 1908,p.812

³⁸ Northumbrian, 'Small Holdings. How to make them Profitable', *Reynolds Newspaper*, 5 April 1908,p.2

Figure 7: 'Golden Soil' in *The Bystander*

The Bystander, April 8, 1908 85

"Golden Soil"



£500 off an acre: French methods of Market Gardening for England

A Corner of the Market Garden at Thatcham, Showing the "Cloches," and Lady Gardeners at Work
On half an acre, under this method of close-cultivation, may be raised as much produce as is usually obtained from seven or eight acres



Picking Carrots Growing in a Frame
In frames of this size are cultivated thirty lettuces, a mass of carrots, and several cauliflowers



The "Cloches," or Glass Bells, under which the Vegetables are Forced
Under each "cloche" five lettuces may be grown



Photos

The Contents of a Frame: Carrots and Lettuces Growing Together



Topical Agency

Planting Out Lettuces

A very practical example of the way in which even a very small holding may be made to pay, and pay handsomely, is to be found at Thatcham, Berkshire. Here, on two and a half acres of land, a Frenchman is showing us how produce to the value of £500 per acre may annually be raised, by methods of close-cultivation. Almost every available inch of space is covered with frames and "cloches," or glass bells, under which lettuces, carrots, cauliflowers, melons, tomatoes, etc., are forced. By anticipating the seasons, these vegetables fetch excellent prices, and in the course of the year each inch of ground bears at least three crops. The secret is an open one, and is responsible for the comparatively affluent circumstances of small gardeners on the other side of the Channel, namely, industry, the utilisation of every bit of space, the use of glass, and the frequent and intelligent application of manure to preserve the richness of the soil. A great advantage of this method of farming is that it affords a most suitable field of labour for women

For the London daily newspapers there was little real news to report in the early months of the craze and they were perhaps reluctant to publicise a rival's story. There were brief pieces over the summer in many of the dailies, Northcliffe's other newspapers promoted McKay's book and in September *The Times* published a weighty analysis concluding, "but French gardens no more than English will grow golden apples of the Hesperides for the mere plucking".³⁹

In contrast, the mass circulation *Tit-Bits* included French gardening in an article on incredible returns from various forms of cultivation. The £625 yield an acre from a French garden "probably constitutes a record in England" and was compared with fantastic returns from Samoan cocoa plantations, West Indian pineapple farms and an acre of land growing the "sacred tree of a thousand images" in Tibet. This article was syndicated through the press empire of George Newnes, appearing in the *Westminster Gazette* and local newspapers.⁴⁰

The subject was reported in local newspapers across the country, with articles telling of golden soil and substantial profits reproduced verbatim from the *Daily Mail*.⁴¹ Through coverage of local events these newspapers also give some insight into what was said at local level. There was general agreement French gardening was a "subject at the present moment eliciting widespread interest in all parts of the country".⁴²

Covering a speech delivered by a Colonel G.M Jackson at the opening of the Clay

³⁹ 'How to Secure Large Profits from Small Plots' *Weekly Dispatch*, 2 August 1908,p.4; 'French Gardens', *The Times*, 9 September 1908,p.3

⁴⁰ 'Profitable Gardening', *Tit-Bits*, 30 May 1908,p.256; 'Some Profitable Acres', *Westminster Gazette*, 28 April 1908,p.12; 'Profitable Gardening', *Buckingham Advertiser*, 20 June 1908,p.3

⁴¹ '£625 Realised from an acre', *Cornish Telegraph*, 30 April 1908,p.7

⁴² 'Charlton Kings Horticulturalists', *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 20 June 1908,p.2

Cross Flower Show, the *Derbyshire Courier* reported his enthusiastic comments that what could be done at Evesham "can be done in the neighbourhoods of our large cities ... to stop the foreign stuff coming into our country which no Britisher liked".⁴³ There were critical voices among agricultural writers. Under the headline "Latest 'Back To The Land' Fad" the *Framlingham Weekly News* argued the quantities of manure required would limit the spread of the system, while the *Western Morning News* argued investment in greenhouses heated by hot water pipes was the truly modern way forward for British horticulture.⁴⁴

Magazines for suburban amateur gardeners, while quick to tell their readers "growing crops for market was outside the scope of this journal"⁴⁵ remained largely uncritical of the *Daily Mail's* claims and somewhat bemused by the phenomenon - "returns as astonishing as are the methods to attain them".⁴⁶ Their coverage, after an initial flurry, was infrequent and largely restricted to notices about books and places where the French system might be seen. Even so, the ubiquity of French gardening during the summer of 1908 is evident, *Gardening World* noting the interest that had been "so widely roused" when introducing an article on other uses for cloches.⁴⁷ *Gardening Illustrated* carried a positive account of its correspondent's visit to the French garden at Mayland.⁴⁸ *Garden Life*, which had been more sceptical than other magazines, began a week-by-week account of work in a commercial French garden - "for the

⁴³ 'The Luncheon', *Derbyshire Courier*, 15 August 1908,p.5

⁴⁴ 'Latest Back To The Land Fad', *Framlingham Weekly News*, 2 May 1908,p.4; 'Small Holdings and Forcing Frames', *Western Morning News*, 30 April 1908,p.6

⁴⁵ 'French Gardening', *AG*, 9 May 1908,p.26

⁴⁶ 'French Methods of Gardening', *GW*, 2 May 1908,p.293

⁴⁷ 'The Uses of Cloches', *GW*, 29 August 1908,p.553

⁴⁸ John Weathers, 'French Gardening in Essex', *Gardening Illustrated*, 27 June 1908,p.249

benefit of those readers who may be interested in this form of intensive cultivation" - which seems bizarrely specialised alongside its usual editorial material.⁴⁹

From references in these magazines it seems clear editors received high volumes of correspondence about French gardening from their readers. While these references should be approached with caution - it is a stock-in-trade of editorial self-promotion to describe oneself as inundated by reader response - they are so widespread across the consumer press as to surely have a basis in truth.⁵⁰ Beach Thomas at the *Daily Mail* was forced to recruit an extra secretary to handle his correspondence.⁵¹ The managers of French gardens were also inundated. The evidence here is limited but again there are sufficient references to suggest it was a common problem.⁵²

Visiting the gardens themselves was an obvious route to discovering the truth and those mentioned in the press suffered a surfeit of visitors, the crowds seriously disrupting work. At Evesham and Thatcham expensive entrance charges were introduced to deter visitors, 2s 6d and 1 guinea respectively.⁵³ Contemporary books on French gardening noted one of the purposes of the robust fencing they advocated was to keep out the curious.⁵⁴

Among the visitors were those conducting serious research for institutions.

Agricultural education had become a responsibility of local government under the

⁴⁹ William Wicherley, 'Work in the French Garden', *GL*, 24 October 1908,p.77

⁵⁰ 'French Gardening', *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 4 July 1908,p.12; 'Improbable Profit', *GL*, 9 May 1908,p.102; 'Intensive Culture', *F&G*, 30 May 1908,p.449

⁵¹ Northcliffe Papers BL Add. Ms.62219 f.9

⁵² e.g. G.D.E Chapman, untitled letter, *MGG*, 26 May 1909,p.280

⁵³ F.E. Green, *The Awakening of England* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1912),p.65; T. Newsome, *Gold Producing Soil* (Stroud: Frederick Steel, 1908),p.20

⁵⁴ Newsome, *Gold Producing Soil*,p.30

Technical Instruction Act 1889 and councils sought to investigate the potential for their agriculturalists. Delegations travelled from Lancashire County Council to Evesham, their report leading to systematic trials, and from Monmouthshire Council to Mayland, they concluding the system was inappropriate for their market gardeners. The Edinburgh and East of Scotland College of Agriculture sent a lecturer the considerable distance to Evesham and subsequently conducted extensive trials at Inveresk. Further research may reveal delegations from other bodies.⁵⁵

Certified reformatory and industrial schools were also notable for an early interest in French gardening. These schools, under the control of the Home Office, provided care and training for vagrant and destitute children; many, particularly those describing themselves as farm schools, offered agricultural training. The annual report to Parliament on these schools displayed a striking enthusiasm for French gardening, noting "as a medium of tuition to the boys [it] must surely be good".⁵⁶ It was a measure of the Home Office's interest that in early issues of a new journal for these schools launched in September 1908, the *Certified Schools Gazette*, it planned to include articles on best practice techniques written by C.D. McKay.⁵⁷ Several of these schools subsequently experimented with French gardening.

For serious debate about the *Daily Mail's* claims it was necessary to seek out the periodicals published for professional gardeners and horticulturalists. In 1908 there were as many as a dozen of these, segmenting the market into those for gardeners

⁵⁵ Lancashire County Council. Education Committee Minute Book. Agricultural Sub-Committee Report, 26 October 1908. Lancashire Archives CC/EM/3; 'Agricultural Education', *Cardiff Times*, 7 November 1908,p.8; 'French Gardening', *The Scotsman*, 16 July 1909,p.10

⁵⁶ 'Close Culture', *DM*, 21 April 1908, p.3; *Reports of the Inspector of Prisons - Reformatory and Industrial Schools, 51st Report*. 1908,Cd.4341,p.24

⁵⁷ 'Revolution in Gardening', *The Observer*, 28 June 1908,p.13; it has been impossible to locate issues of the *Certified Schools Gazette* earlier than 1912 to confirm these articles appeared.

employed by private households and councils, for market gardeners, and for small holders, as well as those read across these segments, notably the *Gardeners' Chronicle*. With expert contributors and an informed readership they were well placed to interrogate the substance of the *Daily Mail's* reporting.

Their tone was overtly hostile to the sensational aspects of "Golden Soil". At the same time they attempted an assessment of what French gardening might offer their readers. These generalisations disguise differences in approach that reflected the magazines' self-perceptions and positions in the marketplace. Some remained aloof from the more confrontational aspects of the debate, the *Gardeners' Chronicle* dismissing the financial claims in the "lay press" as something few gardeners could possibly believe.⁵⁸ Others, notably the *Journal of Horticulture* and *Farm & Garden* (the latter a magazine principally for smallholders), carried detailed critiques and clearly saw themselves as a forum for marshalling opinion against those trying to profit from erroneous claims. Conspiracy theories were at their sharpest in the *Fruit Grower* where the editorial line was vehemently against the land being seen as a panacea for the nation's ills, fearing attempts to encourage amateurs into commercial horticulture provided extra competition for the "legitimate grower". It was not alone in that view.⁵⁹

The reporting in these magazines took four broad themes. First, the *Daily Mail's* financial claims were demolished; the essential criticism being the newspaper deliberately obscured the distinction between gross and net revenue. "£600 or £700 per acre" was the revenue before costs and ignored the heavy investment required.

⁵⁸ 'The State of Horticulture', *Gardeners' Chronicle*, 9 May 1908,p.293

⁵⁹; 'The Unemployed and the Market Growing Industry', *Fruit Grower*, 5 November 1908,p.365; 'The Unemployed and the Land', *F&G*, 7 November 1908,p.841

There was a consistent demand for publication of proper balance sheets rather than outline figures.⁶⁰

Second, readers were helped to understand the practicalities of French gardening. A weekly or monthly diary of work in a garden was one approach. Columns of this nature, extending over many months, appeared in the *Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Trades Journal*, *Gardeners' Chronicle* and *Market Growers' Gazette*.⁶¹ An alternative was to reproduce the text of lectures, often split over several issues. That given by W.F. Giles of Sutton & Sons to the Alton Horticultural Society in October 1908 appeared widely.⁶²

Third was extensive discussion of factors critical to the success of French gardening. Was the English climate suitable? Was there enough stable manure for the hotbeds? Was there sufficient demand for early vegetables to maintain prices if production expanded? These are discussed in Chapter 5.

Fourth was concern to protect the public from false promises. Commentators were quick to draw parallels with what they saw as other deliberately "worked up booms" for poultry, potato and mushroom farming in the recent past.⁶³ There was general agreement the ignorance of the public about agriculture left them prey to unscrupulous operators. Familiar bogies were land speculators offering small holders plots entirely unsuitable for their purposes, wholesalers conspiring to buy produce at artificially low prices, and publishers cashing in on 'Back to the Land' enthusiasm

⁶⁰ 'Profits of French Gardening', *F&G*, 15 August 1908, p.637

⁶¹ 'Work on a French Garden', *MGG*, 28 October 1908, p.133

⁶² 'French Gardening', *JH*, 12 November 1908; 'French Gardening', *F&G*, 21 November 1908, p.873

⁶³ 'Intensive Culture', *F&G*, 30 May 1908, p.449

with books that made horticulture seem easy. These last were considered particularly guilty as for only a few pence they were luring the gullible towards potential ruin.⁶⁴ In May 1908 the Women's Agricultural and Horticultural International Union made the specific link between journalists who wrote about "certain Farm and Garden undertakings" with no real knowledge of the subject and the *Daily Mail's* coverage of French gardening.

One popular half-penny daily is a notorious sinner in this respect, and it is no wonder a very indignant protest has been published in a Trade Journal by a market gardener, whose methods (on the French system) and whose rate of profits are announced to the public by this means, quite incorrectly of course.⁶⁵

This was a reference to an angry letter in the *Market Growers' Gazette* from J.N. Harvey protesting that the *Daily Mail* had refused to publish his letter refuting the levels of profit they had claimed for his Evesham French garden, claims Harvey condemned as "foolish fairy tales" and "a string of ignorant nonsense".⁶⁶

The Daily Mail's influence

That the *Daily Mail* refused to publish Harvey's letter is indicative of its editorial approach. Why let the truth dilute a good story? The newspaper was certainly quick to claim its coverage of French gardening was influencing behaviour. Beach Thomas's preface to *The French Garden* explained how "many hundreds of private people have

⁶⁴ 'The Townsman's Farm', *The Gardener*, 8 August 1908,p.337

⁶⁵ 'Other Folk's Business', *WAHIU Monthly Circular*, May 1908,p.2

⁶⁶ J.N. Harvey, 'The Profits of the French Garden', *MGG*, 6 May 1908,p.14; Harvey wrote to other publications in similar vein.

turned their attention to the possibilities of intensive cultivation" and articles quoted from letters of readers supposedly considering the system.⁶⁷

It is unsurprising an issue championed by the *Daily Mail* might have an impact. Its circulation of 900,000 was by far the largest of the eighteen London daily morning and evening newspapers, outstripping its nearest rival the *Daily Mirror* (630,000) and "quality" newspapers such as *The Times* (45,000).⁶⁸ Introducing a 1/2d cover price had undercut the quality press and attracted a new readership from lower down the social scale. It was also the first London daily to print a northern edition, in Manchester from 1902, giving increased influence nationwide.

The newspaper's management maintained a sharp focus on how editorial material could be deployed in the service of commercial goals. It is clear from the Northcliffe archive reader engagement and circulation figures provided the backdrop to the newspaper's coverage of small holdings and French gardening. A memo from Beach Thomas to Northcliffe commented on the tenant of the Daily Mail Farm:

For dramatic purposes he is great - lives in the ugliest street of an ugly town - Grimsby - has been a clerk for 17 years ... I am sure that we can make the people feel that if they want to know about the land - from a hen to a Hereford - the *Mail* will help them better than anyone else.⁶⁹

In pursuit of reader engagement much of the newspaper's coverage of French gardening explored the boundary between truth and untruth, as much by exaggeration,

⁶⁷ McKay, *French Garden* p.iii; 'Close Culture', *DM*, 21 April 1908,p.3

⁶⁸ Neal Blewett, *The Peers the Parties and the People* (London, Macmillan, 1972),p.301

⁶⁹ Northcliffe Papers BL Add. Ms.62219, ff.7-8

omission and a careful choice of words as by outright falsehood, although it was unequivocal in the use of "profit" when it meant "revenue" on a great many occasions.⁷⁰ The cumulative effect created a picture of reality that simply did not exist. In later decades this approach would become familiar as classic tabloid reporting.

The Pursuit of Profit

From the late summer of 1908 several strands of commercial activity developed seeking to profit from the *Daily Mail's* journalism. These ranged from the entirely legitimate to the nakedly fraudulent. The new French gardens created in these months are discussed in Chapter 4. To be in full production from January to June, the most profitable months for early vegetable crops, preparation needed to begin the previous autumn.

The new gardens were able to draw on an emerging French gardening supplies sector. From July advertisements appeared for the cloches, frames and other equipment required. The French Cloche Company (owned by C.D. McKay) imported the "genuine French cloche" from Paris.⁷¹ Pilkington Brothers supplied the "British Cloche".⁷² These two companies ran advertising campaigns through to 1910, frequently including the distinctive image of a cloche which quickly became the symbol of French gardening. [Figures 8 & 9]

⁷⁰ The headline 'Small Plots Large Profits' recurred through the summer in advertisements for McKay's book.

⁷¹ 'Success', *AG*, 26 September 1908, p.vii

⁷² 'Land & Cloches', *The Garden*, 2 February 1909, p.xxii

CLOCHES For French Gardening.

La Vraie Cloche Maraichere.

Strong, French made, no blots, of greenish coloured glass, which does not allow the sun to burn the Lettuces or cause them to run to seed.

To be successful with a French Garden, the French-made Cloche is indispensable.

18 inches in diameter, 150/- per 100, 20,- per dozen
Other sizes are useless. Terms Cash.

Package for quantities under 50 charged for. Large quantities at very low prices.

FRENCH STRAW MATS
(PAILLASSONS).

Treated with Sulphate of Copper, 2s. each Per 100, 195s. Packing extra. These were used exclusively for the French Garden at the "Daily Mail" Ideal Home Exhibition at Olympia in October.

THE FRENCH CLOCHE COMPANY,
(Proprietor, C. D. McKay, Author of the 'French Garden.')

16, BENGWORTH, EVESHAM.

Figure 8: Advertisement for The French Cloche Company

£600 per Acre is the gross return from an English plot of land worked under the French method of intensive culture by the use of CLOCHES or Bell-glasses.

For the Propagation of Early Vegetables, etc.,

Pilkington's British
GLASS
Cloches

GIVE THE
BEST RESULTS.

THOUSANDS IN USE THROUGHOUT THE UNITED KINGDOM.

Made from same quality and colour of metal as PILKINGTON'S famous Horticultural Glass, known all over the World for pureness, strength, and equality. With and without Knobs, from 10 to 20 in. diameter. Carriage paid on lots of 50 upwards to Railway Stations on mainland.

Of all Dealers in Garden and Farm Requisites, or direct from—

PILKINGTON BROS., Ltd.,
Glass Works, ST. HELENS, LANCs.

LONDON:—Hois: Shoe Wharf, 10, Upper Thames Street, E.C.

Figure 9: Advertisement for Pilkington's British Cloche

More typically, the advertisements were from established horticultural retailers adding French gardening to their range. Badham & Co, Gloucester and Archibald Cutler, Birmingham are among more than thirty companies supplying French gardening requisites identified during this study.⁷³ Seed merchants were a distinct category of supplier trading only in seeds and nursery stock. C.D. McKay's firm Watkins & Simpson and Sutton & Sons were the heaviest advertisers but several other firms promoted the specialised seed varieties required for French gardening, among them Carter Page & Co, London and J&W Cross, Wisbech.⁷⁴

These advertisements frequently exploited the atmosphere whipped up by the *Daily Mail*. "Money Making Culture" ran the headline of one from W.Cooper Ltd that appeared widely;⁷⁵ while the Cheap Wood Company trumpeted "The Secret of Making Big Money out of French Gardening". [Figure 10] It was not unusual for advertisements to highlight marketing literature about French gardening that would be sent on request.⁷⁶ The survival of this ephemeral material is poor and can best be glimpsed in collections of seed catalogues.⁷⁷ All this material added to the volume of information about French gardening circulating at the height of the craze. As the *Manchester Courier* remarked in December when noting the appearance of Dickson, Brown and Tait's new seed catalogue, "a sign of the times is that there is a special section for seeds for French gardening".⁷⁸

⁷³ e.g. 'French System Gardening', *AG*, 11 July 1908,p.iii

⁷⁴ e.g. 'Vegetable Seeds for French Gardening', Anton, *French Gardening Without Capital*,p.42

⁷⁵ 'Money Making Culture', *The Gardener*, 12 September 1908,p.v

⁷⁶ 'Ware Frost', *Country Life*, 27 November 1909,p.xxvii; 'William.Cooper Ltd.', *AG*, 28 November 1908,p.439

⁷⁷ The Royal Horticultural Society Lindley Library has several examples including, 'French Intensive Gardening', *Kelway's Manual of Horticulture 1910*,p.241

⁷⁸ 'Alleged Incendiarism', *Manchester Courier*, 24 December 1908,p.8

THE SECRET of MAKING BIG MONEY

Write for our new "F.G." List.

out of FRENCH GARDENING is starting with the *right* outfit. Success is not governed by the costliness or size of your equipment. We are the only firm supplying all the new types of Frames and Lights for French Gardening and the materials for the **ULTRA-INTENSIVE CULTURE** advocated and explained by Mr. Anton in his new book, *French Gardening without Capital*.

The "HANDY" LIGHT is another of our modern specialities.

We are sending equipments all over the country. They range from £5 to £5,000. We supply a single Light from 3/6 or an outfit for a fifty-acre garden farm.

Every article the best of its kind, and sold at dock or factory price.

DON'T START till you have seen our Illustrated List of F.G. Requisites.

DON'T SPEND for the sake of spending. You can succeed without unduly straining your resources if you start economically.

Lights
Cloches
Mats and
all "F.G."
Accessories

THE CHEAP WOOD CO.

Office:
16 and 17, DEVONSHIRE SQUARE,
LONDON.

Works and
Factories:
DEPTFORD, S.E.

Figure 10: Advertisement for the Cheap Wood Company

A number of rapidly produced books appeared as publishers saw the potential for profit. All slim, paperback volumes their titles, such as *Gold Producing Soil* and *French Gardening Without Capital* reflected the heady atmosphere while their content was of variable quality.⁷⁹ [Figures 11 & 12] French gardening was seen as sufficiently attractive subject matter for one, *The New Market Gardening* from the publishers of

⁷⁹ T. Newsome, *Gold Producing Soil* (Stroud: Frederick Steel & Co., 1908); E. Kennedy Anton, *French Gardening Without Capital* (London: Stanley Paul & Co., 1908); William Wicherley, *The New Market Gardening* (London: Cable Printing and Pub.Co., 1908)

the *Market Growers' Gazette*, to be advertised as a free gift for new subscribers to that magazine.⁸⁰

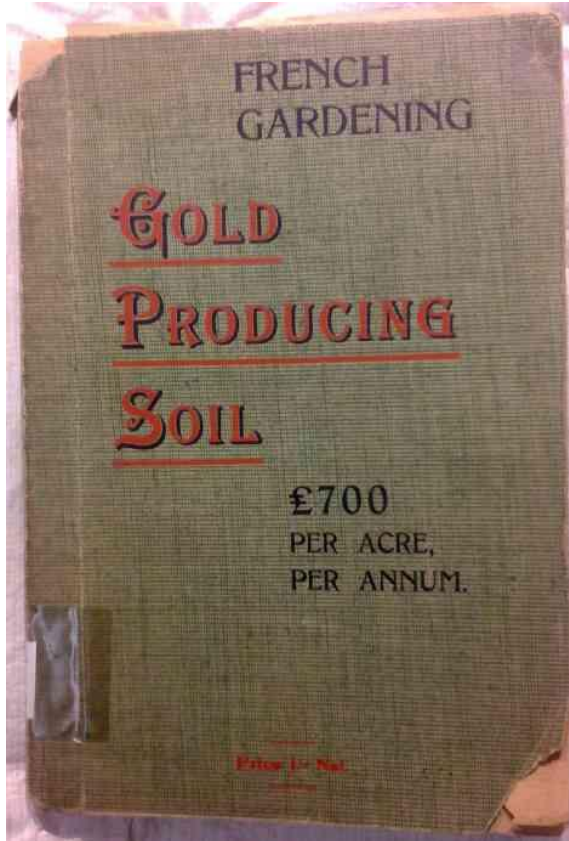


Figure 11: T. Newsome, *Gold Producing Soil*

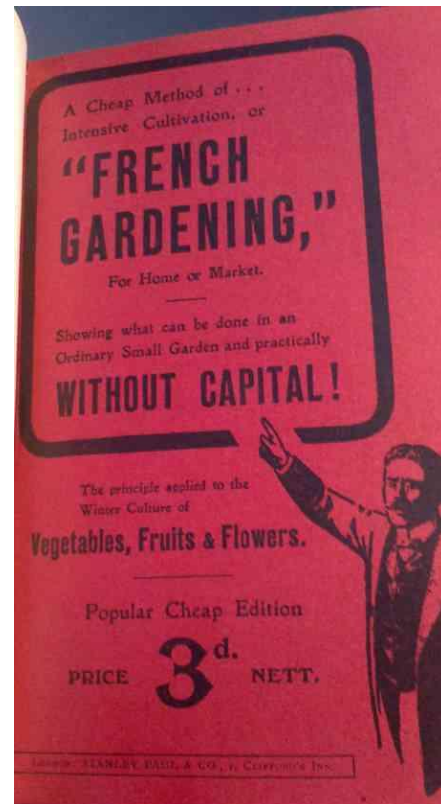


Figure 12: E. Kennedy Anton, *French Gardening Without Capital*

Sales figures for these books are unknown. Their major contribution to the craze was perhaps the opportunity they afforded for book reviews. Many periodicals that did not usually cover horticulture tackled the topical subject of French gardening via this route, either at length - *The Field* ran a series of well-informed reviews that were among the most nuanced discussions of the subject - or as brief summaries entirely

⁸⁰ 'Special Christmas Offer', *MGG*, 23 December 1908, p.317

uncritical of the content. Cumulatively these added to public awareness and by repetition of titles such as *Gold Producing Soil* reinforced popular misconceptions.⁸¹

Advertisement columns for land and property sales began to reflect the interest in French gardening. This study has not conducted a systematic analysis of these advertisements, and their number should not be exaggerated, but they are a recurring feature in the *Daily Mail*, *Morning Post*, *Gardeners' Chronicle* and elsewhere. The words "suitable for French gardening" were typically appended to otherwise standard descriptions of land; although in some cases there is a specific pitch to horticultural entrepreneurs.⁸² This language is perhaps no more than standard estate agents' vocabulary but it does echo fears speculators were ramping land values using false promises of French gardening's profitability. Here, the activities of Essex entrepreneur Frank Mynott might bear further investigation. A failed serial entrepreneur who later went bankrupt, and for a time owner of a French garden outside Tiptree, he advertised several land schemes. The most visible, involving a letter-writing campaign to local newspapers across the country in 1909, offered tuition in French gardening.⁸³

If Frank Mynott was not crooked Ebenezer Cox and George Beverley certainly were. They were behind Anglo-French Market Gardens Limited and Johnsons Limited, two attempts to raise money by offers of shares to the general public. Both prospectuses were published widely in the press and promised 10% dividends from "the introduction into the London district of the highly profitable system of French Market Gardening". It was "well known" the system generated profits "about £400 per

⁸¹ 'French Gardening', *The Field*, 14 November 1908,p.911; 'Gold Producing Soil', *Barry Dock News*, 26 June 1908,p.8

⁸² 'Freehold Land for French Gardening', *Morning Post*, 14 September 1908,p.10

⁸³ e.g. 'Small Holdings', *Manchester Courier*, 17 April 1909,p,10

acre".⁸⁴ Both fundraising schemes ultimately failed but only after a public battle with C.D. McKay in the columns of *The Financial Times*, including threats to sue McKay, and after Cox and Beverley were exposed as the men behind a number of fraudulent fundraising schemes.⁸⁵

The Pursuit of Training

A further development during late 1908 was the emergence of a training sector to impart the technical expertise required for successful French gardening. This developed from three existing strands: ladies' horticultural colleges; the system of taking working pupils at market gardens; and the lectures on French gardening that were a feature of 1908.

C.D. McKay, Thomas Smith and W.F. Giles from Sutton & Sons were the most visible lecturers from press reports, largely speaking to local horticultural societies. The board minutes of Sutton & Sons show the company increasing the frequency of Giles' lectures as a deliberate marketing strategy.⁸⁶ In subsequent years the proprietors of French gardens, county agricultural demonstrators, principals of agricultural research establishments and the Frenchmen employed to manage gardens can all be identified lecturing across the country.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ 'Johnsons Limited', *Daily Telegraph*, 17 December 1908,p.2

⁸⁵ C.D. McKay 'Anglo-French Market Gardens', *The Financial Times*, 19 October 1908,p.3; 'Anglo-French Gardens Dispute', *JH*, 22 October 1908,p.407; 'Anglo-French Cabbage Gardening', *Reynolds Newspaper*, 25 October 1908,p.8

⁸⁶ Museum of Rural Life, TR SUT ADI/7, 30 December 1908,p.218

⁸⁷ 'Bury Horticultural Society', *Bury Times*, 2 October 1909,p.1; 'Brighton & Sussex Horticultural Society', *Mid Sussex Times*, 10 February, 1910,p.6

The ladies' horticultural colleges would later add French gardening to their curricula. But in late 1908 it was specialist institutions that began to appear: the Crowborough School of French Gardening, the Henfield School of French Horticulture and the Stour Valley School of Anglo-French Gardening near Canterbury all advertised for pupils.⁸⁸

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Figure 13: Advertisements in *Country Life*, December 1908

The Stour Valley School provides a useful case study as a series of demonstration lectures given in its grounds, from December 1908, were reported in detail by local newspapers. The school had been founded during the autumn of 1908 by Mrs Eugene O'Sullivan and was located in the grounds of her home outside Canterbury. She later became one of the most vigorous proponents of French gardening, organising conferences and lecturing widely. The demonstrations were delivered by Paul Aquatias, the Frenchman engaged at Mayland, and extended over six months. For historians of the craze, most interesting are the lists of attendees quoted in the press

⁸⁸ 'School of French Culture', *Morning Post*, 14 December 1908,p.1; 'Kent-French Gardening School', *Morning Post*, 9 December 1908,p.1.

reports, including local market gardeners, school masters and the gardeners of local aristocratic families. While this list is uncorroborated by other sources, it is suggestive of the interest generated in one local community by French gardening. One of those present, George Tebbutt, a Canterbury market gardener, is certainly known to have incorporated French gardening into his business.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ 'Anglo-French Gardening at Westbere', *Canterbury Journal*, 12 December 1908,p.8; 'French gardening Conference at the RHS Hall', *MGG*, 26 May 1909,p.278

Chapter 3: What was a French garden?

This chapter explains the underlying principles of French gardening and the organisation of a garden. Several contemporary books explained the techniques at length - perhaps the most helpful is Thomas Smith's *French Gardening*¹ - so this account focuses on only the core aspects. Much of the practice can be understood in terms of the four principles of intensive culture set out in 1913 by the French gardener Paul Aquatias.²

Although French gardens might present a "very peculiar" sight in the landscape, "a sea of enormous bubbles",³ [Figure 14] they were based on the rigorous application of unremarkable commercial and horticultural principles.

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Figure 14: A sea of enormous bubbles

¹ Thomas Smith, *French Gardening* (London: Utopia Press, 1909)

² Paul Aquatias, *Intensive Culture of Vegetables on the French System* (London: Upcott Gill, 1913) pp.9-11

³ J.N. Harvey, 'French Gardening for English Gardeners', *Studley College Agricultural Journal*, June 1908,p.89

The commercial logic was twofold: to produce crops that could be sold for the highest prices by bringing them to market at times when they were conventionally scarce; and growing as many of these crops as possible on the available acreage. This meant a focus on early season produce, forcing salad, vegetable and some fruit crops weeks ahead of their natural growing seasons; growing crops as densely as possible; and producing several crops in quick succession. A narrow range of varieties was typically grown in the French *maraicher* gardens, concentrating on those in demand for the hotel and restaurant tables where the highest margins could be achieved, notably lettuces, carrots, radishes, turnips, cauliflowers, cucumbers and cantaloupe melons.

The horticultural logic amounted to giving plants everything they needed - warmth, water and nutrients - at all times. Consequently, they would grow rapidly and be ready for market in the shortest possible time, even in unfavourable meteorological conditions. This is what Aquatias described as the second and third principles of intensive culture - "Constant and Even Growth" and "Working with and Assisting Nature".⁴

A French garden was essentially a machine for delivering this commercial and horticultural logic. In so doing it utilised Aquatias's first principle of intensive culture: "Uniformity".⁵ As far as possible, appliances and procedures were standardised to turn the garden into a factory operation: appliances so they could be moved and used interchangeably around the garden; procedures to increase speed and accuracy.

⁴ Aquatias, *Intensive Culture*, pp.10-11

⁵ *Ibid*, p.9

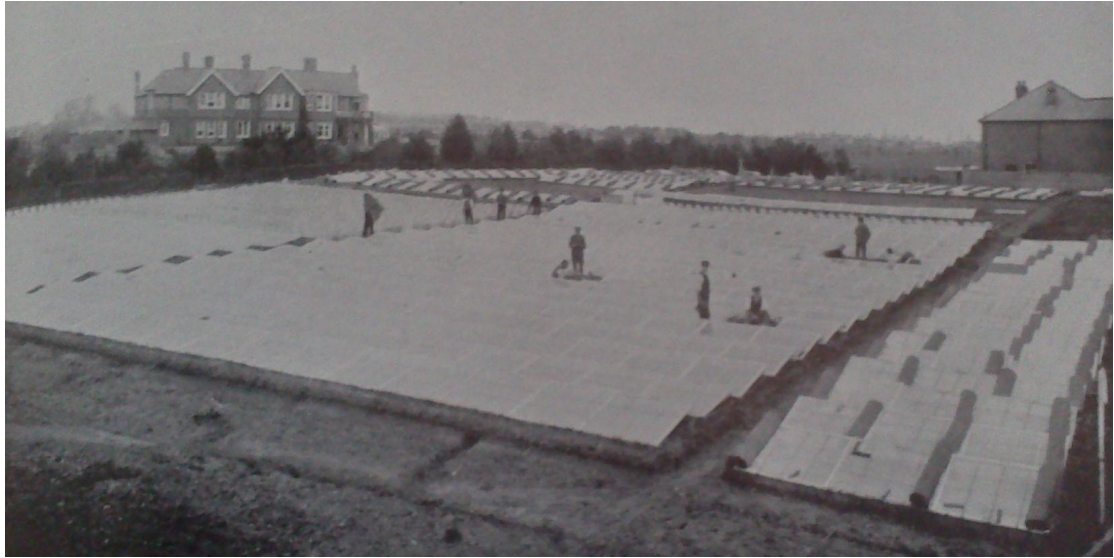


Figure 15: Uniformity at the Christchurch French Garden

The functional appearance and simple layout of a typical French garden were reflections of this principle. [Figure 15] Plans in the manuals depict rectangular gardens, cloches occupying one half and frames the other. Both frames and cloches were tightly packed and arranged in rows of identical length. All other elements - sheds, water tank, manure stacks - were arranged around the perimeter. There is enough photographic evidence of gardens to suggest this layout was followed in practice. These rectangular gardens were small. The typical *maraicher* garden outside Paris was two acres or smaller and the majority of British gardens identified by this study, where the area is known, fit this pattern.⁶

⁶ John Weathers, *French Market-Gardening* (London: John Murray, 1909),p6.

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Figure 16: Frame with three lights

The central feature of any French garden was the system of hotbeds covering most of the area. These were constructed from decaying stable manure, the heat from the fermentation process providing the warmth for crops to flourish outside their natural growing seasons. The crops were grown on a thin, 6"-8", layer of soil above the manure and were covered by the glass so evident in photographs, retaining the heat and moisture. The glass took two forms: wooden frames with glass lights and bell-jars or cloches; a two acre garden typically employing 300 frames and 3,000 cloches.⁷ Rye mats covered the glass when protection from low temperatures and snow was necessary. The hotbeds were of uniform width and length; the width exactly sufficient for one frame or three cloches, which were themselves standard sizes. [Figures 16 & 17]

⁷ *Ibid*,p.25

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Figure 17: Mats and Frames

A French garden required prodigious quantities of stable manure for its hotbeds; 500 tons per acre per year was advised.⁸ [Figure 18] It was essential this should be stable manure as that contained a substantial proportion of straw bedding-litter (half the bulk was considered ideal). This led to slower fermentation and gentler, but longer-lasting, heat. Problems with the availability of stable manure became, perhaps, the single greatest limiting factor on the expansion of French gardening, with the motor car fast replacing horse-transport and the rapid expansion of electric tram networks.⁹ This was an inescapable issue in any serious discussion of French gardening.¹⁰ Manure was collected throughout the year and stacked awaiting use.

⁸ Thomas Smith, *The Profitable Culture of Vegetables* (London: Longmans, 1913),p.66

⁹ Oliver Green, *Rails In The Road: A History of Tramways in Britain and Ireland* (London: Pen & Sword, 2016),pp.98-99

¹⁰ 'General Notes', *The Times*, 15 November 1909,p.4

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Figure 18: Building a hotbed

A near unlimited water supply was the other critical input. This might be on contract from the local water company or taken from nearby rivers. Gardens typically drew the water to an elevated tank, using a motorised pump, from where it was distributed through a network of pipes and hydrants. Figure 19 shows these on a plan. The manuals specify the tank's height, capacity and diameter of pipes for efficient daily watering. This was recommended by hose although there are photographs of gardeners filling watering cans from hydrants.¹¹

¹¹ Smith, *French Gardening*, pp.115-118

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Figure 19: Plan of a French garden showing water pipes

[broken lines = pipes; dots = hydrants]

Moving items around the garden - principally manure and harvested crops, but also cloches and frames - was a manual process. There was no space for wheelbarrows on the narrow paths between hotbeds and specialised baskets and other devices had developed in France [Figures 20 & 21].¹² Some of the larger British gardens installed a system of light rails to facilitate transport around the garden.¹³

¹² For efficient use of space paths should never exceed 1ft, Aquatias, *Intensive Culture*,p.38

¹³ Newsome, *Gold Producing Soil*,p.18

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Figure 20: Carrying manure

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Figure 21: Carrying cloches

The manuals explained the standardisation in great depth. There were detailed procedures for the orientation, construction and maintenance of hotbeds; measurements for the construction of frames and mats; techniques for handling cloches with speed and minimum breakage.¹⁴

Standardisation went far beyond glass and hotbeds into the minutiae of cultivation. A complex system of inter- and successional cropping lay at the heart of securing the maximum yield from a garden, growing different crops together under one frame or cloche, harvesting them at different times and replanting with other crops.

"Intercropping" was Paul Aquatius's fourth principle of intensive culture and is the single greatest distinguishing feature of French gardening from other approaches to vegetable forcing.¹⁵ The manuals reproduced detailed diagrams of how this could be achieved; for example Figures 22-24 showing how a succession of cos lettuce could be harvested by planting seedlings both in and outside cloches, harvesting those inside before moving the cloches en masse to cover those outside that had initially grown less quickly. At the same time quickly-growing radish and carrot crops were sown inside the cloches alongside the lettuce.¹⁶ The best of the manuals contain this level of cultural detail for each variety of vegetable.

¹⁴ Smith, *French Gardening*, pp.23-30

¹⁵ Aquatias, *Intensive Culture*. p.13; This point was made by contemporaries, e.g. H.P. FitzGerald, 'French Gardening', *Fruit Grower*, 3 November 1910, p.483

¹⁶ Aquatias, *Intensive Culture*, pp.83,96,104

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Figure 22: Arrangement of the cloches, February

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Figure 23: Arrangement of the cloches, April

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Figure 24: Arrangement of the cloches, May

Although the manuals present a year-round calendar of activity, peak production came between January and June. The hotbeds were conventionally begun in January, used first for salad vegetables, with new beds built for cucumbers and cantaloupe melons which became the focus from April onwards. In summer crops were commonly grown

in cold frames or the open-air on the decayed hotbeds using the same intercropping methodology. Autumn was the time for maintenance and growing seedlings under glass for next year. That being said, the main departures in Britain from Parisian practice were to extend the hotbed season backwards into late autumn and grow a wider range of crops than was typical in France.¹⁷

After the first year, the topsoil was made from exhausted hotbed manure, turned, broken-up and passed through a fine screen. This fertile, manure-based soil was the "wonderful mould", "as black as a black hat" of the early *Daily Mail* accounts.¹⁸

The above indicates how capital and labour intensive was French gardening. The more credible manuals were in broad agreement £1,600 and £700 were the approximate start-up and annual running costs for a fully-equipped two-acre garden.¹⁹ They all far outstrip the £200 start-up cost for a two-acre site suggested by McKay in 1908.²⁰

It was a system that demanded constant, detailed attention. Daily intervention was required to water and ventilate crops (or cover and uncover with mats on the coldest nights), a process that involved opening several hundred lights and propping open thousands of cloches (and later closing them). Linings of hotbeds must be reduced or thickened to regulate temperatures.²¹ In addition there was the precision involved in successional cropping. Commentators highlighted the work ethic and vigilance of the

¹⁷ W. Wicherley, 'French Gardening Notes', *MGG*, 10 March 1909, p.18

¹⁸ Smith, *Profitable Culture*, p.83; 'Golden Soil', *DM*, 31 March 1908, p.5

¹⁹ Smith, *Profitable Culture*, p.66; Weathers, *French Market-Gardening*, p.25; Aquatias, *Intensive Culture*, p.17

²⁰ McKay, *French Garden*, p.7

²¹ *The Fruit Growers' Year Book 1910*, (London: Cable Publishing, 1909), p.115

Parisian *maraichers* - "unceasing watchfulness, unlimited industry, and a Spartan disregard for the limits of a working day" - often suggesting this might be beyond their British counterparts.²² More than one owner noted how "dull and monotonous" this work was.²³

The system also required expert judgement. Knowing precisely when to take action was as important as detailed knowledge of the procedures themselves. Peak prices for early crops were often attainable for only brief periods and in the winter months apparently minor mistakes could compromise financial success by delaying cropping beyond the optimum moment. It is clear why it became standard practice to recruit an experienced Frenchman to supervise a new garden.

²² Henry Hopper, 'French Gardening in England', *The Estate Magazine*, September 1908,p.404; 'Intensive Gardening', *The Garden*, 25 April 1908,p.207

²³ May Crooke, 'The French Garden', *Studley College Agricultural Journal*, September 1908,p.117

Chapter 5 - The French Gardens

Writing in 1910 the agricultural journalist J.W.R. Scott commented he had "hitherto been a little nervous" writing about French gardening because "it is difficult to get at the facts". He presented a list of 28 places where it was being tried.¹ This study has identified as many as 100 sites where French gardening techniques are likely to have been practised between 1908 and 1914, and argues there were many more.

This choice of words and the qualification are important. Uncertain evidence and varying definitions of a French garden complicate the study of the gardens created in response to the craze. The Parisian *maraicher* garden was a specialised enterprise, devoted exclusively to the commercial forcing of fruit and vegetables using traditional techniques. However, several of the "French gardens" in England added French gardening to an established market gardening business. There might also be only partial adoption of traditional methods; notably using cloches without hotbeds because of difficulty obtaining stable manure.² There were also gardens that used French techniques without commercial motivation, purely to grow early produce for private consumption. Given the *Daily Mail* specifically urged this private experimentation, amateur French gardening is integral to the craze. Accordingly this study has used a broad definition and recorded any site described as a French garden or as practising French gardening techniques. The sites identified are listed in the Appendix.

¹ Home Counties, 'The Spread of French Gardening', *The World's Work*, April 1910,p.643

² 'Intensive Culture at the Poole Market Garden', *JH*, 19 May 1910,p.453

Geographical distribution

Figure Q depicts the location of all French gardens identified by this study. A map on this scale, and showing amateur, commercial and educational sites together, is of limited value but it does show the majority of gardens in the more climatically favourable parts of the country. Location was most critical for commercial gardens and closer examination of those shows most near the market of a substantial town or city and close to a railway station for efficient distribution.

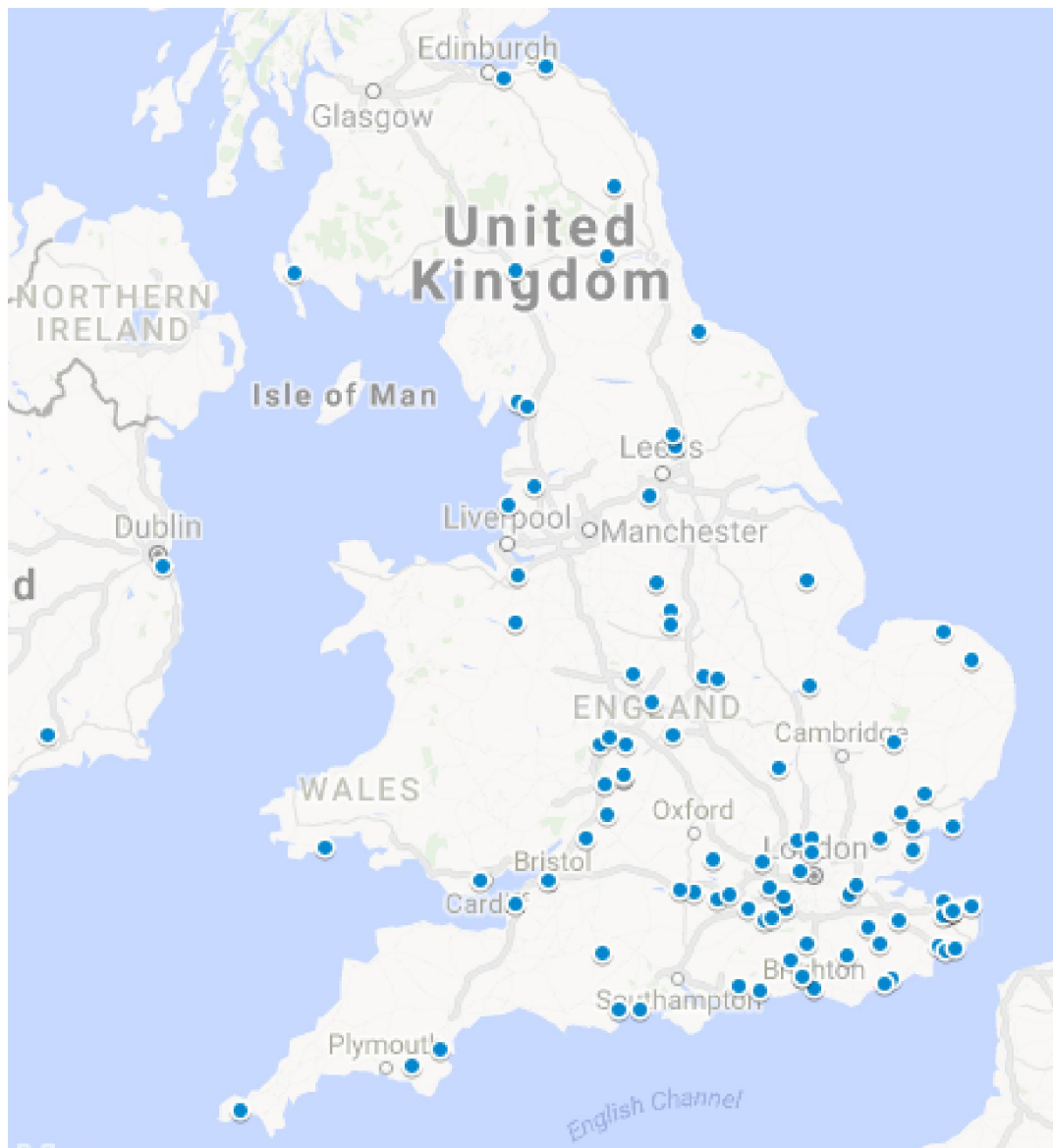


Figure 31: Location of French gardens

Dates

The majority of French gardens identified by this study were begun in the winter of 1908/09, with a second, smaller wave the following winter. There are examples starting as late as 1913.³

When gardens closed or ceased French gardening is more difficult to establish. There is no evidence of widespread closures before 1914, although a number were sold as early as 1911 and 1912. Without specific information on individual circumstances it is difficult to draw conclusions. The sale of the garden at Southwater, near Horsham, for example, was probably prompted by Olive Cockerell's cancer diagnosis rather than difficulties with the garden.⁴ The Stonehouse, Gloucestershire, garden was sold in 1913 but its purchaser continued French gardening.⁵

Most likely is a gradual erosion of French gardening methodology as techniques proved difficult to implement and the promised goldmine failed to materialise. This is the implication of comments by Mrs Chamberlain, Secretary of the WAHIU, to the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1914.⁶ Several gardens certainly continued after 1918, appearing in sales advertisements from those years, and C.D. McKay's garden at Burhill was supplying Covent Garden in the 1920s.⁷ The possible evolution of gardens is illustrated by a 1940 article about the Halliford French Nurseries. The enterprise had

³ 'Members' Advertisements', *WAHIU Leaflet*, January 1913, p.11

⁴ Wendy Parkins, *Jane Morris: the burden of history* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp.160-1

⁵ 'For Sale', *WAHIU Leaflet*, August 1913, p.10

⁶ 'French Gardening', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 14 April 1914, p.8

⁷ 'Kent. The French Garden', *The Times*, 6 May 1920, p.28; 'C.D. McKay/Philip Brachi', *London Gazette*, 15 December 1922, p.8905

survived as a commercial market garden, still employing frames and cloches, but techniques had changed substantially, without hotbeds and using an overhead irrigation system, and vegetables were no longer produced in the earliest months of the year.⁸

Size

Most French gardens identified by this study were two acres or smaller. This is broadly comparable with Parisian *maraicher* gardens. However, conclusions must remain tentative as sources for acreage figures are often uncertain: in many cases it is unclear if an acreage refers to the French garden or a larger market garden of which it was part.

That being said, the variation in acreages perhaps reflects different approaches to French gardening. Miss Mortimer's 0.25 acre is the personal enterprise of a recent Thatcham pupil and was part of a diversified market garden, whereas the gardens clustering at the top of the range were specialised French gardens where, in some cases, capital is known to have been available for expansion should land become available.⁹

⁸ Our Home Correspondent, 'French Gardening in England', *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 27 September 1940, pp.9-11

⁹ 'A French Garden', *JH*, 16 January 1913, p.63

Frenchmen

Frenchmen working at the garden have been identified in 20 cases, with references to an unknown Frenchman at several others. The 1911 census has proved helpful here. The gardener was commonly in his late twenties or thirties and accompanied by his family, as at Westfield, Sussex where Charles Heiniger, 37, lived with his wife and three children.¹⁰ There are examples of Frenchmen moving employment from one garden to another.¹¹

The background and recruitment of these migrant gardeners remains a topic for future research, as does their fate after 1914. The most high profile, Paul Aquatias, became a British citizen in 1909.¹² Several Frenchmen were recruited by C.D. McKay at the request of garden owners.¹³

Categories of French garden

French gardens were owned by a diverse array of individuals and institutions. This study has allocated each garden to one of nine categories, based on the garden's ownership and perceived intentions of those owners. While there is considerable overlap between some categories, and insufficient evidence about some gardens to allocate with confidence, it is a step towards an analytical framework.

¹⁰ Census of England & Wales <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=gbc/1911/rg14/04799/0063/4>

¹¹ Heiniger himself moved to C.D. McKay's garden at Burhill, Surrey ('First Class French Gardener', *The Times*, 26 July 1913,p.15)

¹² TNA 144/890/171059

¹³ C.D.McKay *The French Garden in England* (London: Daily Mail, 1909),p.66

- Specialist Commercial French gardens

This is the largest category - 35 gardens - probably because it is the default where gardens are assigned when there is little evidence. They are defined as gardens in private ownership devoted predominantly to French gardening and where the goal was commercial profit. J.N. Harvey's garden at Evesham provides the model. [Figure 26]

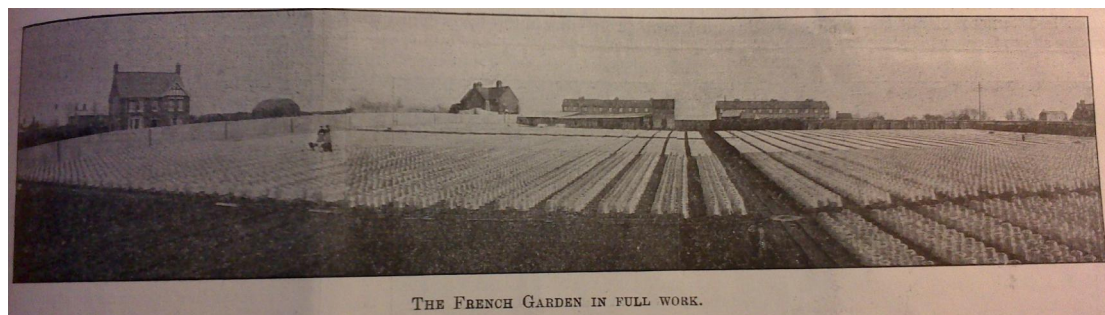


Figure 26: Bengeworth Nurseries, Evesham

Where the ownership structure can be identified, it lay in the hands of private individuals - including partnerships and limited companies.¹⁴ At least one, at Hexham, appears to have been owned by the local gardeners' association.¹⁵

¹⁴ TNA BT31/13786/119360; Surrey History Centre, Articles of partnership between John Wentworth Angell and Geoffrey Francis Paget, 7129/1

¹⁵ 'Sunderland Gardeners' Society', *Sunderland Daily Echo*, 30 June 1910, p.4

- Ladies' market gardens

The model for this group is the Thatcham Fruit and Flower Farm. [Figure 27] It was a mixed enterprise, involving other market gardening activity, was owned and run by women educated at ladies' horticultural colleges, and took pupils in a formal manner, entering them for Royal Horticultural Society examinations.¹⁶

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Figure 27: The Thatcham Fruit and Flower Farm

Examples are the Mercia Smallholding, Kent, [Figure 28] owned by Edith Bradley, formerly first Warden of Lady Warwick Hostel, and The Garden Colony for Gentlewomen, Lincolnshire.¹⁷

¹⁶ Roberts, *Thatcham*, p.16

¹⁷ 'Mercia Small Holding', *Women's Employment*, 4 November 1910; L.H. Turner, 'The Garden Colony for Gentlewomen', *WAHIU Leaflet*, April 1910, p.2



MERCIA SMALL HOLDING.
GREENWAY COURT, HOLLINGBOURNE, Kent.

MISS EDITH BRADLEY
(Late Warden Lady Warwick College, Starley Castle) and
MISS BAILLIE-HAMILTON

Receive a limited number of Resident Students for Practical Instruction in the regular work of the Small Holding, supplemented by Lectures and Theoretical Instruction. Women are thus trained for country life by a knowledge of Gardening, Dairying, Poultry and Bee Keeping, Riding, Driving, Fruit Growing, Picking and Preserving, and the Marketing of Produce.

A French Garden, under the direction of an experienced Frenchman (Diplomé Versailles School of Horticulture) has been commenced this Term. Students (non-resident) received for special instruction in Intensive Culture. **The Half Term commences Monday, Oct. 31st**

Figure 28: Advertisement for the Mercia Small Holding

- Diversified market gardens

These are established market gardens that added a French gardening capacity.

Examples are Frank Boswell's market garden at Evesham, which began French gardening in 1908, and George Tebbutt's outside Canterbury.¹⁸ It is perhaps surprising there are not more examples and some may feature among the French gardens already discovered where there is, so far, little information. Additionally, a research

¹⁸ John Boswell, *Not Only Cabbages* (Malvern: Aspect Design, 2009), pp. 16&32; 'French Gardening Conference', *MGG*, 26 May 1909, p. 278

methodology that involves, at least partly, text searching on databases may not identify them as readily as sites explicitly described as French gardens.

- Reformers

This category includes gardens in private hands where the owner's motivation was more complex than straightforward commercial profit. The model here is Mayland with its educational role in the wider land colony and ideological commitment to the land as a solution for unemployment. [Figure 29]

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Figure 29: The Mayland French garden

This is a diverse group, including the garden at Dr Jane Walker's sanatorium in Suffolk, Lady Wimborne's garden outside Poole, and that at Goudhurst, Kent, owned

by H.P. Fitzgerald a former science master at Wellington College.¹⁹ It also includes Harvey du Cros' garden near Wallingford. From the limited evidence available it seems the multi-millionaire, former MP, saw his garden as a site for technical experimentation that might ultimately benefit the nation.²⁰

- County Councils

Several counties explored French gardening on county farms or agricultural stations. Lancashire is the model, its trial providing the best surviving records of an investigation into the system's viability.²¹ Other counties identified were Cornwall, Worcestershire, Essex and Glamorgan.²² A systematic survey may well reveal others. The *Daily Mail* claimed activity from Oxfordshire County Council but no trace has been found in the surviving records.²³

- Horticultural/gardening schools

French gardening was taught at the established ladies horticultural colleges, Swanley, Studley and Bredon's Norton. It also featured in advertisements for a number of

¹⁹ William Wicherley, 'French Gardening Notes', *MGG*, 19 May 1909,p.254 'Intensive Culture in Sussex', *MGG*, 16 February, 1910,p.466

²⁰ 'Intensive French Gardening', *Hastings and St Leonard's Observer*, 27 November 1909,p.8

²¹ Lancashire County Council. Education Committee Minute Book. Agricultural Sub-Committee Report, 25 April 1910. Lancashire Archives CC/EM/3

²² 'Gulval Experimental Plot, Penzance', *Fruit Grower*, 17 April 1910,p.441-4; Alfred Wilcox, 'What Worcestershire is Doing for Horticulture', *GL*, 2 March 1912,p.401; 'The Essex County School of Horticulture', *GL*, 8 April 1911,pp.30-32; 'Small Holdings Scheme', *Glamorgan Gazette*, 23 September 1910,p.6

²³ 'The French Garden', *DM*, 22 June 1908,p.6

smaller institutions, including the Leatheringsett School of Gardening, Norfolk, and Lows Hill School of Gardening for Educated Women, Berkshire.²⁴

A number of French gardens also branded themselves as 'schools' but it is unclear what form the teaching took and if there was a formal curriculum. Many gardens advertised for fee paying pupils and this practice was pilloried in the press as no more than a ruse for recruiting free labour and securing a more reliable income than vegetables.²⁵ Annual fees of as much as £200 for a year's course and advertisements highlighting the local golf and shooting attractions, perhaps lend weight to these criticisms.²⁶ Only gardens specifically describing themselves as schools have been included in this category.

- Reform schools

The Home Office inspectorate responsible for industrial and reformatory schools embraced French gardening with enthusiasm.²⁷ Its annual reports to Parliament summarised the inspections of each school, and at twelve French gardening was singled out for comment. These were predominantly farm schools with a curriculum designed to prepare pupils for agricultural labour so the opportunity to develop expertise in an, apparently, lucrative field was attractive. The references are usually unspecific but occasionally mention quite substantial French gardens: half an acre at Stoke Farm, Worcestershire; while 40 frames were in use at Birkdale Farm School,

²⁴ 'Leatheringsett School of Gardening', *Women's Employment*, 7 May 1909,p.14; 'Lows Hill School of Gardening', *Women's Employment*, 18 August 1909,p.14

²⁵ 'Touting for Horticultural Pupils', *Fruit Grower*, 14 April 1910,p.462

²⁶ Advertisement for Crowborough School of French Gardening, *Country Life*, 26 December 1908,p.xxiii

²⁷ *Reports of the Inspector of Prisons - Reformatory and Industrial Schools, 51st Report*. 1908,Cd.4341,p.24

Lancashire.²⁸ There is evidence other reformatories tried French gardening beyond those highlighted in these summaries.²⁹ The publicity given to the opening of a French garden at the Church Army School in Stonebridge Park, Middlesex, indicates charitable schools also took an interest and there may be other examples.³⁰

- Seed companies

Sutton & Sons ran an experimental garden at the University of Reading where French gardening featured.³¹ Veitch & Co won Royal Horticultural Society medals for early vegetables grown using French methods.³² Other seed companies sold the varieties required for French gardening but it is unknown if their seed grounds employed the French system.

- Amateur French gardening

Amateur French gardening is less visible than its commercial counterpart. The *Daily Mail* painted a picture of private citizens embracing hotbed and cloche en masse. While it is easy to dismiss this vision, a mosaic of evidence suggests considerable experimentation with aspects of French gardening in the gardens of private individuals.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 53rd Report. 1910,Cd.5203,p.54; 54th Report. 1911,Cd.5753,p.40

²⁹ 'Warwickshire Reformatory School', *Leamington Spa Courier*, 29 April 1910,p.8

³⁰ 'A Useful Church Army Institution', *Daily News*, 26 October 1909,p.11

³¹ W.B.T., 'Best Garden in England', *DM*, 9 April 1909,p.3

³² 'Fruit and Vegetable Committee', *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society*, Vol.XXIV (1908-09),p.li

There are references to kitchen gardens on private estates incorporating French gardening. Among them, a new kitchen garden was laid out at St Fagan's in 1908 which included a French garden; the head gardener at Little Dalby Hall, Leicestershire was sent to the Poole French gardens to learn the techniques; French gardening was tried at Mollington Hall, Cheshire, by the President of the Chester Paxton Society.³³ But at none of these are the precise details of vegetable cultivation known. Sales advertisements for country houses with French gardens appeared in the press.³⁴ In a regular feature in *Garden Life* interviewing head gardeners, several mention trying the system.³⁵

How widely amateurs experimented on allotments or in back gardens is unknown. Several did around Canterbury, if press reports are to be believed.³⁶ Gardeners are sometimes met who originally bought cloches for French gardening but then used them for other purposes.³⁷ While individuals following the *Daily Mail's* call to make money from the system were not unknown. "Choice lettuce and radish, grown under glass, may now be obtained from Mr. Russell, of No.2 Jubilee Cottages, Tenby, who is attempting a small French garden".³⁸

Critical here is the distinction between French gardening and other approaches to vegetable forcing. From the earliest days of the craze, when encouraging amateur participation the *Daily Mail* had presented the most basic use of glass coverings as

³³ Christine Stevens, 'An Edwardian Kitchen Garden at St Fagans Castle' *Garden History* 13, no. 1 (1985), pp.60-67. 'Golden Soil', *DM*, 31 May 1909, p.2; 'Paxton Society's Show', *Cheshire Observer*, 14 November 1908, p.2

³⁴ 'To be Sold at a Moderate Price', *The Bystander*, 4 February 1914, p.iv

³⁵ 'Holfield Grange, Essex', *GL*, 4 September 1909, pp.401-3; 'Allestree Hall, Derbyshire', *GL*, 6 December 1913, p.173

³⁶ 'Instruction in Anglo-French Gardening at Westbere', *Whitstable Times*, 23 January 1909, p.2

³⁷ 'French Gardening at Hythe', *Folkestone Herald*, 13 April 1912, p.2

³⁸ 'Local Siftings', *Tenby Observer*, 3 March 1910, p.2

French gardening, even though this was far removed from the techniques and commercial scale of classic *maraicher* practice. Following the craze, articles that blurred this distinction continued to appear in the consumer press, and some *Garden Life* interviews implied techniques were modified.³⁹

At present the evidence does not permit firm conclusions about 'amateur' French gardening. However, this study is prepared to hypothesise that following the 1908 craze there was considerable experimentation with vegetable forcing techniques in both kitchen and back gardens. In most cases this could only loosely be described as French gardening, even though its participants might believe it was exactly that.

³⁹ 'The Uses for Cloches', *GW*, 29 August 1908,p.553; W.Beach Thomas, 'French Gardening for Gentlewomen', *The World & His Wife*, March 1910,p.269; 'Our Garden Circle. French Gardening', *Walsall Advertiser*, 3 September 1910,p.4.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

Was French gardening profitable?

This question deserves separate attention given the focus of the craze. Commercially, the two major problems owners faced were selling produce profitably and finding a reliable supply of stable manure.

Several gardens supplied Covent Garden, and there is evidence of produce dispatched there by rail from considerable distance.¹ Supplying direct to customers offered higher prices and, if local, lower transport costs. The chapter on marketing in a book written by two women who began French gardening in Sussex discussed the issues they had faced. They largely supplied private customers, London hospitals and hotels, with weekly hampers and door-to-door sales of cucumbers particularly successful. They emphasised the difficulty of building business connexions quickly, the need to present produce attractively to secure the highest prices, and the low prices at wholesale markets unless crops were genuinely early.² The Thatcham Fruit and Flower Farm supplied a London hotel with lettuces on a daily contract, and the Blue Star shipping line in Southampton.³ Accounts for the Park Hill French Garden in Devon show contracts with local hotels.⁴ Door-to-door selling was sufficiently widespread to provoke the ire of the market gardening press.⁵

¹ Boswell, *Not Only Cabbages*, p.16; Flintshire Archives D-BP/B/1/1/21 (Credit Account from Cambrian Railways)

² Helen Nussey and Olive Cockerell, *A French Garden in England*. (London: Stead's Publishing, 1909), p.131

³ 'Thatcham Fruit and Flower Farm', *WAHIU Leaflet*, May 1911, p.3; Roberts, *Thatcham*, p.11

⁴ TNA BT31/19983/115488

⁵ 'South Eastern Notes', *Fruit Grower*, 6 January 1910, p.3

Shortage of stable manure was a repeated complaint and its supply preoccupied owners. At Mayland it was brought in by barge from London; at Evesham, Great Western Railways were contracted for transportation from Birmingham; while at Thatcham it came on horse-carts from Newbury.⁶ Difficulty sourcing manure featured repeatedly in press reports and emerges from Lancashire County Council's trial where the hotbeds were regularly delayed for that reason.⁷ Concerns about "manurial problems" arising from "the steady decline in horse traction" were expressed across the horticultural sector; and the *Daily Mail* ran a fundraising campaign for distressed horse cabmen put out of business by motor transport.⁸ Several gardens experimented with undersoil heating using hot water pipes.⁹

It was often claimed the English climate was unsuitable for French gardening, especially its relative dampness and lack of winter sunshine compared to France.¹⁰ However, the Frenchmen employed in English gardens do not seem to have considered it an insurmountable problem.¹¹ It was also an issue specifically addressed and refuted in the Lancashire County Council trial.¹² It did, though, persist as a prejudice and perhaps provided a convenient excuse for failure with the meticulous techniques of French gardening.

⁶ Alfred Wilcox, 'French Gardens in England', *GL*, 13 June 1908,p.187; Pratt, *Transition in Agriculture*,p.146; Weathers, *French Market-Gardening*,p.3

⁷ Lancashire County Council. Education Committee, Farm Sub-Committee Minute Book. Horticultural Sub-Committee Report, 5 February 1912. Lancashire Archives CC/EAS/1/9

⁸ Bernard Dyer and F.W.E. Sewell, *The Manuring of Market Garden Crops* (London: Vinton,1910),p.7; 'Cabby', *DM*, 23 April 1909,p.5

⁹ 'Bath & County Notes', *Bath Chronicle*, 5 August 1909,p.4

¹⁰ 'Intensive Culture', *F&G*, 30 May 1908,p.458

¹¹ 'A French Market Garden at Evesham', *Gardeners' Chronicle*, 17 March 1906,p.173

¹² Lancashire County Council. Education Committee Minute Book. Agricultural Sub-Committee Report, 25 April 1910. Lancashire Archives CC/EM/3

One further obstacle to commercial success was said to be lack of demand for salad vegetables. There is some evidence this was true for more exotic leaves, such as sorrel and chervil, but gardens do not appear to have had difficulty disposing of their core crops.¹³

Specific evidence of French gardening's profitability (or otherwise) is limited. Owners of the longer established gardens made it plain there was no goldmine. Thomas Smith stated £50-£60 net profit per annum was the maximum expectation per acre (his Mayland accounts were never published).¹⁴ J.N. Harvey explicitly said French gardening was no more profitable than other forms of market gardening.¹⁵ The limited accounting information available does not contradict this perspective. Detailed cost accounts survive for the French garden on the Bryn-Y-Pys estate, Shropshire, which began as a commercial enterprise, but revenue data is sparse. There is no indication the garden was profitable and accounts cease in July 1910 after a balancing cheque from the owner.¹⁶ Lancashire County Council's experiment made a small profit in its second year before depreciation.¹⁷ The Droitwich Experimental Garden recorded a small profit after interest and depreciation in the second year of its trial.¹⁸ Company records for the Farnorth French Garden, Lancashire, and Park Hill French Garden, Devon both document new investors introduced in 1911 to recapitalise the businesses.¹⁹

¹³ H.P. Fitzgerald, 'Search for New Salads', *DM*, 21 February 1910,p.8

¹⁴ 'French Gardening', *Morning Post*, 10 November 1909,p.2

¹⁵ 'Truth about the French Garden at Bengeworth', *Fruit Grower*, 17 September 1908,p.205

¹⁶ Flintshire Archives D-BP/B/1/1/21 (Account Book of French Garden)

¹⁷ Lancashire County Council. Education Committee Minute Book. Agricultural Sub-Committee Report, 27 February 1911. Lancashire Archives CC/EM/4

¹⁸ Alfred Wilcox, 'What Worcestershire is Doing for Horticulture', *GL*, 2 March 1912,p.401

¹⁹ TNA BT31/13786/119360; TNA BT31/19983/115488

However, claims of a successful business from French gardening should not be entirely dismissed. In 1913, the owner of the Halliford French Garden's chief concern was that he "cannot get more room for expansion".²⁰ Neither Smith nor Harvey had said it was impossible to run a business; there was simply no goldmine. An efficiently managed garden close to good markets might well turn a profit.

Conclusions

This project began with the deceptively simple aim of recovering a forgotten episode in the history of horticulture. There were two questions. Was there sufficient evidence for a preliminary understanding of the public excitement, and also of whatever horticultural activity followed?

A substantial volume of press material has been discovered. To such an extent, the original intention to present an account of the craze from 1908 to 1914 was refocused on 1908 alone to permit a sufficiently detailed treatment of the material. It is regrettable Edward's VII's involvement with French gardening, the model gardens on public display, and attempts to construct an alternative 'British' intensive gardening must await a larger study.

The project was more successful answering its first question than the second. In part because so much press material was discovered. To keep the project manageable, there was a limit how far research could be pursued into private archives where evidence about individual sites is most likely to be found.

²⁰ 'A French Garden', *JH*, 16 January 1913,p.63

The press material reveals there was indeed a 'craze'. During 1908 a highly specialised form of commercial horticulture was the focus of considerable public curiosity and debate. A professional interest in French gardening had already developed among a limited number of horticulturalists, following the Evesham gardeners' trip to Paris and drawing on Kropotkin's thought, and this provided the raw material for the *Daily Mail's* sensationalism.

On one level, the explanation for what happened is straightforward: a tabloid newspaper repeatedly proclaimed the prospect of easy wealth to its large readership. Amid any discussion of political, social or horticultural background, this simple driving force should not be forgotten. The French gardening craze was about making money. The prospect attracted a diversity of individuals and institutions. Many saw it as an opportunity for personal profit. Others identified a capacity to underwrite other goals, be they attempts to resettle urban unemployed on the land, equip disadvantaged boys with a lucrative training, or enhance the prospects of middle class women engaged in horticulture. Commercial organisations followed, as did speculators. It is this frenzy about money that justifies the term 'craze'.

For all the simplicity of that point, this study does suggest the public craze was the product of a particular historical moment, with particular circumstances - the months following implementation of the Liberal government's small holdings legislation. A popular newspaper found a dramatic storyline that struck a public nerve. Not simply because it was relevant to small holdings, but because much of the debate on that topic could be reduced to a single question, how could the land be made to pay?

French gardening, however fleetingly and erroneously, appeared to offer a positive answer.

In that sense this study contributes a popular dimension to the political debates discussed by Readman.²¹ Further research might explore the relationship of French gardening with other aspects of the Edwardian land question. It was, for example, one of a number of European agricultural methods tried in Britain.²² Equally, the desire to replace imports with home-grown crops echoed the contemporary tariff reform debate.

Missing from this study is any great evidence of how individuals engaged with the craze. For a richer interpretation it would be necessary to seek out diaries, correspondence and other personal material. Land reform issues may have had a presence in the press, but how deep an engagement was there among typical *Daily Mail* readers? Were the crowds at French gardens during 1908 much more than a momentary response to the latest curiosity?

This study has been less successful exploring the gardens created following the craze, although the list of some hundred sites identified is a significant advance. Research remains to be conducted into activity at these locations, and into established market gardens that may have added a French gardening capacity. Evidence of the techniques actually implemented at local level is crucial for understanding the practical impact of the craze.

²¹ Readman, *Land and Nation*, p.1

²² 'In the Garden', *Daily News*, 9 January 1909, p.2

Perhaps the clearest finding of this project is that Britain did not become covered by French gardens. While the few dozen commercial French gardens discovered may yet provide new material for study, collectively they represent a tiny fraction of the country's horticultural activity. This adds an approximate quantification to the interest in French gardening mentioned by Thirsk.²³

French gardening required substantial capital investment, demanded a precision and technical expertise that was difficult to acquire, alongside a forbidding work-ethic, and its principal input, stable manure, was becoming scarce through fundamental shifts in transport technology. Even when executed properly it offered no greater returns than conventional market gardening. This study has not examined the horticultural industry's use of heated glasshouses, but it is perhaps no surprise some commentators saw these as a more reliable investment and the future for British market gardening.²⁴ Away from the professional sphere, there is enough evidence of amateur experimentation to suggest further research would be worthwhile.

For media historians this study offers a case study of an early tabloid newspaper's ability to manufacture national news, perhaps the first with a gardening theme. It is also a striking example of how overtly a newspaper was prepared to lie about financial matters, reinforcing interpretations that stress the aggressively commercial nature of the *Daily Mail's* journalism.²⁵

Finally, for garden historians there is a point about sources. Gardening periodicals are often recommended as source material, but the volume of content in unindexed, hard-

²³ Thirsk, *Alternative Agriculture*, p.184

²⁴ 'Small Holdings and Forcing Frames', *Western Morning News*, 30 April 1908, p.6

²⁵ Chalaby, 'Smiling Pictures', pp.33-44

copy volumes can make the process of finding relevant information seem forbiddingly time-consuming. This study suggests perseverance can be worthwhile.

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Standard

Star

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Penny Illustrated Paper

Reynolds Newspaper

The Observer

The People

The Sunday Times

Weekly Dispatch

Regional Newspapers

Barry Dock News

Buckingham Advertiser

Bury Times

Canterbury Journal

Cheltenham Chronicle

Cheshire Observer

Cornish Telegraph

Derbyshire Courier

Dundee Courier

Evesham Journal

Folkestone Herald

Framlingham Weekly News

Glamorgan Gazette

Gloucestershire Chronicle

Gloucestershire Echo

Hastings and St Leonard's Observer

Isle of Wight Observer

Lancashire Daily Post

Leamington Spa Courier

Manchester Courier

Manchester Guardian
Mid Sussex Times
Montgomeryshire Express
North Wales Weekly News
Salisbury Times
The Scotsman
Sunderland Daily Echo
Tenby Observer
Walsall Advertiser
Western Daily Press
Western Morning News
Whitstable Daily News
Whitstable Times
Yorkshire Post

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Appendix

Database of French Gardens

[extract from database compiled for this project]

Key to Categories:

1. Specialist French gardens
2. Ladies' market gardens
3. Mixed market gardens
4. 'Reformers'
5. County councils
6. Gardening schools
7. Reformatory, Industrial and Charitable schools
8. Seed companies
9. Private individuals

Name	Location	Category	Owner	Began	Ended	Acreage	Frenchman
Bengeworth Nurseries	Evesham	1	John Idiens / J.N. Harvey	Jan. 1905		5	yes
Stephenson	Evesham	1	Walter Stephenson	1908		2	

Burhill Intensive Garden	Hersham, Walton-on-Thames	1	C.D. McKay	autumn 1908	still going in early 1920s	8	Adolphe Beck / Charles Heiniger (1913)
Withdean French Garden	Patcham, Brighton	1	Captain Alexander Fraser	autumn 1908		2 or 1.25	Pierre Lecoq / Armand MacHefer (1911)
Hatch French Market Gardens	Tisbury, Wilts.	1	Captain Benett-Stanford	Jan. 1909		2 (or 2.5)	Mons. Vion
Halliford French Gardens	Shepperton, Middx	1	Percy Yates	1910	Still going 1940	8	Adolphe Beck
French Garden Co.	St Osych Road, Clacton on Sea	1	William Ferens	before Apr 1910		5	
Bedford	nr. Bromham road bridge	1	E. Graham Falcon	1909		2	
Ifield	Crawley, Sussex	1	B.C. Webb	before Apr 1910		1	
Nussey & Cockerell	Southwater, Horsham	1	Misses Nussey & Cockerell	1908	Sep. 1910	2	
Westfield	Westfield, East Sussex	1	Miss Kingcombe (Francis Girdlestone)	autumn 1908	Apr. 1912	2 (or 1)	Charles Heiniger

			manager)				
Christchurch French Gardens	Stour Road, Christchurch	1	J.H.Pain	1909		2	Henri Vallais
Hawley	Hawley, Blackwater, Hants	1					
Crowmarsh French Gardens	Howbery Park, Crowmarsh Gifford, Wallingford	1	Harvey du Cros	spring? 1909		4	Alfred Sausy
Stonehouse French Gardens	Stonehouse, Gloucs	1	Arthur Bonsey / M.H. Heald buys in 1913	Nov.1909		2	Jean Malgonne
Leckhampton	Cliff House, Leckhampton, Gloucs	1	Catherine Faulkner / Ethel Smith	1910			
Tiptree	Brook Hall, Tiptree	1	Frank Mynott	1908	Oct. 1910	1 1/4	Paul Aquatias (from early 1909)
West Ashling	Funtington, Chichester	1	Mssrs Barnett & Sedgwick	Oct. 1908	for sale March 1911	2	Edward Martinet
Golden Green	Golden Green, Tonbridge	1	Frederick Shrivell (?)		for sale Apr.1920		

Park Hill French Gardens	Ipplepen, Newton Abbot	1	Thomas Butler	1908		3 acre site	
Crowhurst	The Meadows, Crowhurst, East Sussex	1	R.J. Chandler		sold June 1912		
Stanford	Stanford Kent	1	Dr Eric Pridmore	late 1908		3 acre site - only part FG	yes
Rowsley	The Hall, Rowsley Derbyshire	1		by Oct. 1909			
The Grange French Gardens	Spofforth, Yorkshire	1	Hon. W.Dundas	by Dec. 1909			yes
Eye	Eye, Peterborough	1	Horrell (?)	early 1909			
Hexham French Garden	Hexham	1	(poss.) Hexham Gardeners Mutual Improvement Society	1909?			
Cobham French Garden	Cobham, Surrey	1		1909			Jules Gilbert
Bryn-Y-Pys	Bry-Y-Pys estate, Ellesmere, Shropshire	1	Mrs Peel	autumn 1908			no

Guildford French Garden	Worplesdon, Surrey	1	G.J. Paget & J.W. Angell	1910			Justin Rinderer
Farnorth French Garden	Grange-over-Sands, Lancashire	1	Arthur Molyneux	before Apr 1910	company wound up 1919		Paul Aquatias (from 1911)
French Intensive Garden	Coombe Dingle, Bristol	1	Mr. E.J. Robertson	Sep. 1912		2.5 whole garden (but only small portion cultivated)	
French Garden, Milton	Weston-super-Mare	1		late 1908			
French Garden, Silverdale	Carnforth, Lancs	1		before June 1909			
Belper	Bridge Hill, Belper, Derbyshire	1	Mr Strutt (?)				
The French Gardens	Dundrum, Dublin	1	Kenneth Wells-Bladen	1909(?)		2.5	
Thatcham Fruit and Flower Farm	Thatcham	2	Lily Hughes-Jones	1907		2 (whole site 5)	Mons. Coq
Henfield Violet Nurseries	Henfield, Sussex	2	Misses Allen-Brown	1906			

Cottesmore	Stratfield Mortimer, Berks	2	Lucy, Ina & Stella Frost	before Apr 1910		0.25	
Mercia Small Holding	Greenway Court, Hollingbourne, Kent	2	Edith Bradley & Miss Baillie-Hamilton	1910			Albert Panvert
The Garden Colony for Gentlewomen	Horsington, Lincs.	2	Miss Hestor Jane Turner				
St Alban's Fruit & Floral Farm	London Colney, St Albans	3		before Apr 1910		1.5	
Boswell	Evesham	3	Frank Boswell	spring 1908		2	no
Brookman's Estate French Garden	Bell Bar, nr Hatfield	3		before Apr 1910		1	
Leicester Frith Home	Groby Road, Leicester	3		1909 (?)			
Elmcroft Nurseries	nr. Chichester	3	Miss C.M. Dixon	autumn 1908	ceased by Nov. 1910		
Tebbutt	Vauxhall House, Sturry Road, Canterbury	3	George Tebbutt	autumn 1908			
Pouces Nurseries	Ramsgate, Kent	3					

Oatwood	Whitstable, Kent	3		1912			
Houston Mill	East Linton, East Lothian	3	Mssrs Brown & Webster	Sep-09		2.5 (6 acre market garden)	
Fiddown Fruit & Flower Farm	nr. Waterford, Ireland	3	A.V. Brickenden	autumn 1909(?)			no
Pierce	Beauxherne, Harbledown, Kent	3	Mr. W.R.Pierce	late 1908			
Lidwells	Goudhurst, Kent	4	H.P. Fitzgerald	autumn 1908	sold June 1920	2 (or 1.5)	yes
Poole	Stanley Green, Poole	4	Lady Wimborne / DG Chapman manager	Oct. 1908		2.5 or nearly 4	Clement Fedou
The Times Experimental Station	Sutton Place, Surrey	4	Lord Northcliffe (Charles Foster manager)	1909			
Mayland	Althorne, Essex	4	Joseph Fels (Thomas Smith manager)	1906	Land colony sold 1912	Jan-00	Pierre Lecoq / Paul Aquatias
East Anglian Sanatorium	Nayland, Suffolk	4	Dr Jane Walker	autumn 1908			yes (2)
County Farm	Hutton, Fylde, Lancs	5	Lancashire County Council	1909	still going 1914	0.05	
Gulval Experimental Fruit Farm	Penzance	5	Cornwall County Council	1908			

Droitwich Experimental Garden	Droitwich, Worcs.	5	Worcestershire County Council	1909		0.25	
Essex County School of Horticulture	Rainsford End, Chelmsford	5	Essex County Council				
Stour Valley School of Anglo-French Gardening	Sturry, Canterbury	6	Mrs Eugene O'Sullivan	autumn 1908		0.25	Armand Perochon
Henfield School of French Horticulture	Henfield, Sussex	6	Misses Allen-Brown	autumn 1908			Louis Terasse
Crowborough School of French Gardening	Crowborough, Sussex	6	Charles Bannister	Jan. 1909			yes
Sellindge Agricultural School	Sellindge, Kent	6		by Sep. 1910			
Studley College		6	French garden supervised by Misses Hughes-Jones and Peers	1908			
Swanley College	Kent	6		autumn 1908			

Edinburgh and East of Scotland College of Agriculture	Inveresk, East Lothian	6		1909			
Bredon's Norton	Bredon's Norton, Worcs	6	May Crooke	1906	spring 1909		
Devon School of Gardening	Ivybridge, Devon	6	May Crooke	1911			
Lows Hill School of Gardening for Educated Women	Hoe Benham, Newbury	6	Principal: Mrs Stephen Batson	by 1910			
Leatheringsett School of Gardening	Leatheringsett, nr. Holt, Norfolk	6		1909	1910		
School of French Gardening, Shepperton	Kilmiston Gardens, Shepperton	6		before March 1909			
Stonebridge Park Church Army Home	Middlesex	7		Oct. 1909			
Stoke Farm Reformatory for Boys	Bromsgrove, Worcestershire	7			1908		

Birkdale Farm School Reformatory	Birkdale, Southport, Lancs	7		1908			
Calder Farm Reformatory for Boys	Mirfield, Yorkshire	7		by 1909			
Chadwick Memorial Industrial School	Stanwix, Carlisle	7		by 1909			
Church Farm Industrial School	Barnet, Herts	7		by 1909			
Birmingham Industrial School for Boys (Shustoke)	Shustoke, Birmingham	7		by 1909			
Buxton Industrial School	Lamas, Norwich	7		by 1909			
Netherton Training School	Northumberland	7		by 1909			
St. Vincent's Industrial School	Dartford, Kent	7		1910			

Midland Truant Industrial School	Litchfield	7		1910			
Stranraer Reformatory for Boys	Wigtonshire	7		1910			
Middlesbrough Industrial School	Yorkshire	7		by 1911			
Warwickshire Reformatory School	Weston-under-Weatherley, Warks.	7		by 1910			
Sutton & Sons	Reading	8		1906?			
Mollington Hall	Mollington, Cheshire	9	Thomas Gibbons Frost	autumn 1908			
Hall Barn	Beaconsfield	9	Lord Burham				
Allestree Hall	Derbyshire	9	Sir H.H. Raphael Bt. MP.				
Cavenham Park	Mildenhall, Suffolk	9	Mr A.B.H. Goldschmidt				
Holfield Grange	nr. Coggeshall, Essex	9					
Little Dalby Hall	Melton Mowbray	9	Captain James Burns-Hartopp	1909			

St Fagan's	Glamorgan	9		1908			
Tenby	2 Jubilee Cottages, Tenby, Pembrokeshire	9	Mr Russell	1910			
Pidduck	Westbere, Kent	9	Mr. R. Pidduck	late 1908			
Brown	Glenbrook Bungalow, Westbere, Kent	9	Mr Brown	late 1908			
Duraz	Seabrook Road, Hythe, Kent	9	Mr. C. Duraz	late 1908			
Mount	Folkestone	9	Mr Percy Mount	late 1908			
Hutchinson	Hunterscombe, Knaresborough, Yorks.	9	Miss Hutchinson	late 1908			
Beaumont College	Old Windsor	misc.	Beaumont College (Roman Catholic school)	1909			Louis Terasse

