

The Happy Heterotopia: Science and Leisure in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens

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Abstract

The botanic garden is a space of leisure, scientific endeavour, passive recreation, education and conservation. These roles are contradictory, yet coexist ‘happily’ in a single space. The central aim of this thesis is to investigate the diversity of spaces and meanings in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens from the perspectives of both users and producers of this space. The fieldwork component involves interviews with staff members of the Botanical Services Team at the Gardens, and selected people at the Christchurch City Council offices who were connected with the Gardens in various ways. Additionally, I use the data gathered during my participation in tours of the Gardens.

This thesis is both an historical and contemporary analysis of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. In a general history of the Western botanic garden, I show how colonialism, the Garden City movement and science shaped how botanic gardens functioned in society. This discussion contextualises the history of Christchurch’s Botanic Gardens, which I compiled using archival material based on site, and the social practices that take place in this space.

Using Foucault’s concept of the heterotopia, I analyse the multiple and seemingly conflicting sites that exist inside the boundaries of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. I explain how these sites are able to coexist inside what Foucault terms a ‘happy, universalizing’ heterotopic space. I conclude that conflicts between science and leisure, and colonial spaces are not experienced inside the Gardens by visitors. In reality, for visitors to the Gardens, the paradoxical nature of the space and the resulting tension deriving from its multi-faceted role in society continue to exist in harmony. However, conflict between science and leisure is claimed by those who produce the Gardens. This is because the producers are conscious of the competing roles of the Gardens yet are involved in creating a space that caters for a diverse group of visitors.

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Introduction

Walking along the banks of the Avon, about to cross over the bridge into the Botanic Gardens to spend another afternoon immersed in archives, I'm stopped by two staff members. Sarah, the Information and Promotions Coordinator, and John, the Operations Manager, are surveying the entrance to the Gardens. "Can I ask your opinion on something?" says Sarah. "What do you see when you look over there?" She gestures vaguely to the scenery just beyond the bridge. Wondering what she was getting at, I say that I like how the silhouettes of large trees in the distance frame the green palms and flax bushes by the river in the foreground. "But what about some colour?" Sarah responds. Getting the hint and realising that everything did look green, I reply that yes, some colourful plants wouldn't go amiss. Sarah agrees, and pleased that I've come to the same conclusion, looks at John. She continues to convince him how the entrance would look more enticing to the visitor with some colourful embellishments. She thanks me for my opinion and I continue over the bridge towards the information centre.

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As a local Christchurch resident, I visited the Christchurch Botanic Gardens on many occasions to surround myself in nature, away from the built environment. I enjoyed the diversity of the landscape, the fact that I could walk through alpine rockeries and open lawns, enter a different climate in conservatories of tropical plants; an interesting array of nature for me to take in at my leisure all in the one space. I would pick a path and follow it along the banks of the Avon River, walking past enclaves of gnarled trees, conservatories of tropical plants, the rose garden, the fragrant herbaceous border, usually ending up near the Curator's House. The impressive diversity of the trees and plants would pass by accepted and unquestioned, but admired as a sequence of exhibits in a museum or an art gallery.

It did not occur to me how strange it was that in the middle of Christchurch city, there was a garden that displayed the trees and plants of countries from all over the world. Although I had noticed that the plants were labelled in Latin, and I was aware that some sort of behind the scenes work went into creating the collections and gardens, I did not fully appreciate the scientific value of the Gardens.

Originally, I had looked at studying the Christchurch Botanic Gardens as a tourist attraction. However, after a bit of background research, I became more interested in the history of the Gardens and delving further into its seemingly passive role in Christchurch city. I wanted answers: Why did Christchurch have a garden like this? How did all of these plants get here? What does a botanic garden actually do? The ubiquitous botanic garden needed further investigation.

The Gardens Today

In the Christchurch Botanic Gardens, there are smaller gardens and within each, is a variety of botanical collections. These comprise of the annual bedding display, a central rose garden, azalea garden, herbaceous border, heritage rose garden, New Zealand garden, primula¹ garden, rock and heather gardens, bog garden, Archery Lawn, daffodil Woodland, pine mound and the pinetum².

In addition to the variety of gardens, there are also the conservatories: Garrick House, Cunningham House, Fern House, Townend House, Foweraker House, Gilpin House and a Bonsai House. There are also facilities not of a botanical nature, which include the Curator's House Restaurant, an information centre, the Gardens Café, and a children's playground (www.ccc.govt.nz).

The Botanic Gardens is located in the centre of Christchurch city, within the confines of Hagley Park, and nestled inside a loop of the Avon River. The Gardens are part of the 'Cultural Precinct,' a newly introduced amalgamation of various cultural places and attractions in Christchurch. These include the i-SITE visitor's centre, the

¹ *Primula* is the genus under which collections of flowers such as primroses, polyanthus and cowslips are displayed (Oxford Dictionary).

² This is an area in a botanic garden where species of pine trees or conifers are grown for display.

Christchurch Tramway, Our City O' Tautahi,³ the Canterbury Provincial Council Buildings, the Centre of Contemporary Art, Christchurch Cathedral, the Christchurch Art Gallery, the Arts Centre district, the Canterbury Museum, and Christ's College⁴ (www.culturalprecinct.co.nz).

The 'Father of the Atom' Ernest Rutherford, attended the old University and graduated in 1894. The building where Rutherford conducted experiments, named 'Rutherford's Den' is now a tourist attraction and a salute to the scientific endeavours carried out in the old University (www.artscentre.org.nz). Like the traditional medicinal and herbal gardens of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the old Canterbury University (then called Canterbury College) was linked to the Botanic Gardens. The university utilised the Gardens in a number of ways, a place for painting classes, and of course, for students of horticulture.

A stroll from the Arts Centre leads to the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. There are two entrances to the Gardens. The main entrance is on Rolleston Avenue next to the Canterbury Museum, tourists or visitors who come to the Gardens via the Arts Centre from Christchurch city mainly use this gate. The other entrance is over the bridge on Armagh Street next to Christ's College, locals mainly use this entrance, as it has a car park and is next to local sports clubs. The visits I made into the Botanic Gardens were from this entrance, as I would walk once a week from my home through Hagley Park to the Gardens.

Christchurch won the international award of 'Garden City of the World' in 1995 (www.ccc.govt.nz) and the Garden City image is an historical construction that is still used in commercial marketing campaigns to describe the city of Christchurch today. The Gardens are referred to by the Christchurch City Council as the 'green heart of the city,' and cover 74 acres of land in the centre city. According to an article in the local newspaper, the Botanic Gardens and Hagley Park are "75% the size of Central Park, New York, making it the second largest central city park in the world." (*Christchurch Star*,

³ A building used by the Christchurch City Council and the public to meet and discuss a variety of issues and ideas about cultural, socio-economic and environmental issues that concern the city (<http://www.ccc.govt.nz/OurCity>).

⁴ This is a private boy's school, an historical building that borders the Botanic Gardens and the Canterbury Museum.

10th September, 2004). Over a million people visit the Gardens every year and it is therefore Christchurch's most popular tourist attraction.

The Anthropology of a Botanic Garden

The subject of gardens is a well-defined topic in anthropology. Helen Leach (2000), for example, traces the histories of different garden styles and fashions in Europe and New Zealand. In doing so, Leach dispels common myths that have confused the origins of particular styles. British garden fashions are evident in botanic gardens, and the Christchurch Botanic Gardens incorporate a multitude of garden styles and fashions imported from Victorian Britain.

Jack Goody (1993) comments that although there has been a plethora of literature on the subject of gardens, flowers and botany, there is a lacuna of ethnographic work that uncovers the symbolic and practical uses of flowers in society (1993: xii). Goody provides a detailed exploration of the symbolic significance of flowers in cultures all over the world, and links the history of the meanings of flowers in the Middle East and Europe to their place within gardens. He mentions the first botanic gardens as places in the East built with botanical conquests from foreign countries.

Robert Rotenberg (1995) provides a history of Viennese gardens as distinct sites of contestation, renewal, discovery, order and reaction in relation to the urban environment. He analyses the juxtaposition of gardens in their urban environment using Foucault's notion of the heterotopia, which I will explain in more detail in the next section. Rotenberg looks at the creation of public parks and domestic gardens and the meaning that people attribute to these particular spaces. Rotenberg, like Goody, uses a "dual approach to the meaning of the urban landscape through history and ethnography" (1995: 21). In this way, he documents the emergence of the ideas and meaning of landscape in the city. I look at the botanic garden in the same way; I use an historical account of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens, in conjunction with an ethnography of the Gardens. Thus, I can also trace the emergence of the meanings imbued in the spaces today.

Additionally, there is an abundance of literature on the histories of botanic gardens. This mostly covers their role as gardens in which plants were propagated for distribution during the period of colonisation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Amongst the literature, there is particular reference to England's Kew Gardens as the precursor and role model for the establishment of colonial botanic gardens. For example, Brockway (1979) explores the relationship between colonial expansion and the propagation of economically useful plants in botanic gardens as part of the British Empire. Her "historical-anthropological" account of Kew Gardens analyses its connection with the distribution of scientific knowledge across the globe, and the impact it had on spreading the hegemony of science in the West during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

This is somewhat akin to the work of McCracken (1997) who provides a comprehensive account of the spread of the botanic garden in the Victorian British Empire, as well as an explanation of the multiple functions of the botanic garden itself. He focuses specifically on the colonial botanic garden, including those established in the Antipodes, with brief references to Christchurch Botanic Gardens. McCracken also emphasises Kew as the central hub of the spread of botanical knowledge and specimens to the British colonies.

The history of Kew Gardens is of particular interest to this thesis, as it was a role model for Christchurch Botanic Gardens. The conflicts that arose between science and leisure at Kew were later mirrored in Christchurch when the Botanic Gardens became popular with a growing community. The staff had to comprise some of its scientific practices in order to accommodate the aesthetic tastes of visitors. In this case, the work of Desmond (1996) is useful. He focuses on the historical construction of Kew Gardens, the development of the scientific institution and its competing role as a public park.

On a local level, Tritenbach (1987) outlines a chronology of events and activities that have shaped the botanic gardens of Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin (all in New Zealand) over the years. The history of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens outlined by Tritenbach is comparatively apolitical to the academic literature, however, the detailed timeline of events in the Gardens since its beginnings have proved most useful for the historical part of this thesis.

Nevertheless, there is a dearth of literature on the contemporary socio-cultural practices that take place within a botanic garden, and of the meanings constructed through botanic gardens in their urban environment. The ‘botanic garden’ is an interesting and intricate space to theorise. Although I had visited several botanic gardens before I had even thought about writing a thesis on the subject, I had little knowledge about where they came from and of the multi-faceted roles that they perform. In fact, like many visitors to botanic gardens, I do not think these questions had even crossed my mind; I simply enjoyed looking at the unusual flowers and relaxing in a pleasant environment.

My knowledge of botany and horticulture borders on embarrassing—I am not yet able to definitively discern all the weeds in my garden from the ‘good’ plants—however, I was interested in how the studies of botany and horticulture came to exist within the green space of what is experienced by the majority of people as a public park. I wished to discover what you get when science is ‘thrown into the mix.’

The word ‘botanic garden’ in its juxtaposition of science and leisure is an oxymoron in that it simultaneously denotes a space of work and leisure. It is an institution that creates and displays the ‘science’ of nature through the order and classification of the natural environment. It is also a garden that exists in a city, its role to propagate, protect, study and showcase the world’s flora.

The botanic garden is a centre of science, and this is what separates it from a public park. It is an institution where staff conduct horticultural and botanical research, address conservation issues, and provide a range of educational programmes for special interest groups, school children and the general public. It is also a place that is visited by tourists and locals to relax and to partake in passive recreational activities. For example, at Christchurch Botanic Gardens, the majority of staff are there to work on cultivating gardens and plants, while visitors picnic on the lawns, feed ducks and gaze at pretty flowers. The science and leisure roles of botanic gardens contradict each other, yet they are experienced simultaneously in the same space.

There are nearly 2,000 botanic gardens found in 148 countries (www.bgci.org.uk). Many of these botanic gardens have mission statements, which I have found on their official websites. These vary in the emphasis they place on the public

and scientific use of the gardens. For example, the Singapore Botanic Gardens mission statement focuses less on scientific horticultural research and more on “Connecting people and plants” and the use of the gardens as a “key civic and recreational space” (www.sbg.org.sg), whereas Edinburgh’s Royal Botanic gardens mission is simply “to explore and explain the world of plants” (www.rbge.org.uk).

There is a continual negotiation between scientific and public use of space felt by staff at the Christchurch botanic gardens. The Gardens does not yet have a mission statement on its website. It is in the process of re-development and is working towards a new statement that incorporates a more “people friendly” approach, as well as a celebration of plant diversity. This is a theme that I expand on later.

Theorising Space

The botanic garden is the main character of this thesis that I will deconstruct and analyse using theoretical perspective of space. Theorists of space and place have brought attention to the importance of location as a critical element in deciphering social and cultural meaning. Theorists have approached this subject in various ways, and I look at some of these in this section. Generally, however, they aim to unearth the ways space and place “encode, produce and reproduce, alter and transform patterns of socialability” (Atkinson et al 2001:262).

Gupta and Ferguson (1997) note that the concept of space in some ethnographic writing took the form of a “neutral grid,” whereby the geographic location of a culture was described and situated, yet space, as a theoretical concept, was not enforced:

The clearest example of this kind of thinking are the classic “ethnographic maps” that purported to display the spatial distribution of peoples, tribes and cultures. But in all these cases space becomes a kind of neutral grid on which cultural difference, historical memory, and societal organisation is inscribed. It is in this way that space functions as a central organizing principle in the social sciences at the same time it disappears from analytical purview (1997:34).

There have also been studies of landscape as a critical context in ethnography (see Hirsch 1995; Stewart & Strathern 2003; Gray 2000; Bender 1993). Comparisons have been drawn between the concept of landscape in anthropology with that of the body, in that these two notions are often taken as a given, and are left as neutral and therefore unproblematic (Hirsch 1995:2).

The key concept of space and place is that space is not simply a backdrop in which people are situated and amongst which cultural events and activities take place. On the contrary, it is “the active and interactive context within which social relations and social structures are produced and transformed” (Moore 1996: x). In other words, space is not neutral because it plays a dynamic role in localised social practices and is an ‘active’ context in which wider social and historical processes are expressed.

McCoy Owens (2002) suggests that in order to create a holistic anthropological study of a particular culture, the location in which people conduct their daily life must also be critically analysed.

[A]nthropologists, and other cultural theorists have realized that it is as inappropriate to consider places as mere locations in which the work of socio-cultural construction occurs as it is to consider a point on a watch dial to be a culturally neutral way to situate an “event” in time (2002: 271).

Space is never devoid of meaning. The meaning imbued in space is not static or ahistorical; it is in a state of continual flux that is changed by, and through, political and economic structures, and the historical and socio-cultural processes of the society in which it exists. Space is complex and multifaceted. It is open to negotiation, contestation and interpretation. Margaret Rodman (1992) demonstrates that ethnographic location contains within it multitude of meaning that are constructed spatially. She uses the concept of *multilocality* to analyse the complexities of social space and landscape. Multilocality is a term used to understand that places and landscape have different meanings for different users, thus, “a single space can be experienced quite differently” (1992:647).

A critique of structuralist analyses of space, whereby space consisted of “abstract symbols” that reflected “social categories and classifications,” led to an emphasis on

collecting the “concrete utterances and practices of individuals in particular social contexts” (Moore 1996: 4-5). The symbolic meaning of space is not just a reflection of the social structure, it must be uncovered and understood by analysing the opinions of those who use it and how they used the space. That is to say, the “meaning of any spatial order is not intrinsic, but must be evoked through practice” (Moore 1996:8). ‘Space’ is not an agent, it does not create itself and thus it is a *product* of social structures and social relations. That is, space itself does not exist *sui generis*; it is the people, or ‘social actors’ who make, use and interpret space, and therefore the meaning of space is gleaned by analysing the practices that take place within it.

However, Asad (1979) argues that by emphasising the significance of thoughts and meanings that arise from individuals’ social practices in space, the influences of “historical and cultural conditions which govern their production and transformation” are ignored (1979: 607, cited in Moore, 1996:7). Thus, according to Asad, the social structures and processes from which these daily practices in space derive should be taken into account, because these conditions can alter and shape localised meanings. History is crucial if we are to understand the changing meanings and perceptions of people’s lives in social space, because “history as involved continuously in the making and remaking of ideas about place” (Stewart & Strathern 2003:3).

A middle ground between the two approaches is evident in Low’s analysis of the Plaza Central and the Plaza de Cultura in Costa Rica. Low uses the *social production of space* (the means of creating the physical environment) and *social construction of space* (the social processes that shape that environment) as conceptual tools with which to study public space. The social production of space is the historical, economic and political processes that have shaped the urban environment. The social construction of space is the daily social practices and interactions that take place, as well as people’s memories and images that transform the social space. Low asserts that both perspectives are important for analysing space:

An effective anthropological theory of the spatialization of culture and human experience must therefore integrate the perspectives of social production and social construction of space, both contextualizing the forces that produce it and showing people as social agents constructing their own their realities and

meanings. But it must also reflect both these perspectives in the experience and daily life of public-space users ([1996] 2002:112).

I have attempted to find such a suitable middle ground to analyse the space of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. The social construction and social production of space is the broader theoretical framework in which I position my analysis of Christchurch Botanic Gardens. I will look at the social practices that take place within Gardens, but in order to escape a “false context” I have provided a detailed historical, social, and economic account of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens that serves to contextualise the practices in the Gardens that take place today. I investigate the means through which the Gardens are ‘produced’ and the experiences and interpretations of the public and others who use the space. In doing so, I am able to explore the wider political, social and economic factors that lead to the construction of the Gardens in Christchurch, and how these are articulated and localised in this public space.

The Social Space of the Heterotopia

Spaces do not exist separately from each other, in every culture there are spaces that exist side-by-side that connect, divide and contrast social practices and meaning. There are relations between spaces. Lefebvre (1991) describes space as a social reality, in that its meanings are acquired and understood through its relations and interrelations with other spaces, as well as with the social and historical contexts in which it is situated:

It is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather it subsumes things produced...it is the outcome of a sequence and set of operations, and thus cannot be reduced to the rank of simple object (1991: 73).

Lefebvre (1991), Foucault (1986), Hetherington (1997), Rotenberg (1995) and McCoy Owens (2002) convincingly argue this point, that analysing the relations and interrelations of space is the most appropriate approach to uncover meaning from spaces in modern and postmodern society. McCoy Owens claims:

In postmodernity we experience and articulate our lives more as a series of locations among which we move than as progressions of events. Furthermore, these locations and the elements within them are juxtaposed in ways that are unconstrained by convention (2002: 275).

That we experience our lives amongst space that is juxtaposed in unconventional ways, rather than as a “progression of events” is based on the assumptions explained by Foucault (1986) and his concept of the heterotopia. The word *heterotopia* is Latin for a ‘place of otherness’ and was originally a medical term to describe bits of the body that are missing, extra or incongruous with the space in the rest of the body, such as a tumour (Hetherington, 1997: 42). The concept was developed by Foucault as a type of social space that was different in some way to the other spaces that surrounded it. Foucault elaborates on the heterotopia as a social space in a paper he gave to a group of architects in March 1967 entitled *Des Espaces Autres* which was released posthumously in 1984 and later translated into English as *Of Other Spaces* in 1986 (Hetherington 1997: 42). Foucault’s six principles of the heterotopia that he outlines in *Of Other Spaces* is the main theoretical model which I use to analyse the data gathered on the Christchurch Botanic Gardens.

Before I outline these principles, it is necessary to know the context in which the heterotopia is framed. The premise of the paper was to argue that space has become a more appropriate and important tool with which we can understand modern day society. According to Foucault, whereas the nineteenth century was the epoch of history with the focus on the “great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world,” the current twentieth century would be the epoch of space (1986: 22). Foucault believes that modern society is in the “epoch of simultaneity” that is made up in juxtaposed spaces of “the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed” and therefore, time as a chronological concept, is redundant:

We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein (1986: 22).

Foucault characterises contemporary society as a one that contains a multitude of diverse spaces. Nevertheless, he does not disregard history or time; on the contrary, Foucault

asserts that history is intrinsically connected with space; because space is not without time. How we perceive space has changed over time. To illustrate this point, Foucault uses the example of the Middle Ages, where there was a hierarchy of places: “sacred places and profane places; protected places and open, exposed places; urban places and rural places”, and there were also celestial places and supercelestial places that were located outside of the “terrestrial space” of real life (1986: 22). Medieval society was composed of hierarchical space.

Foucault contrasts medieval space with contemporary juxtapositions of space, in which sites are created and defined by proximity and points of contact, and are designed according to demography. He refers to technologies that characterise this use of space, such as storing data in computing machines. It is here that he states the crux of his argument: “Our epoch is one which *space takes for us the form of relations among sites*” (1986: 23, my emphasis).

Foucault explains that spaces do not operate in vacuums, and thus are not void of intersecting relations between people and objects. He suggests that one could define a space by looking at the various relations and activities that occur in the site. For example, we could classify the beach and the cinema as places of relaxation by looking at how people are behaving in each space.

However, of particular interest to Foucault are those spaces that “suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror or reflect” (1986: 24). There are two types of space that do this—the *utopia* and the *heterotopia*. The former is an imagined site of perfection or “society turned upside down” and therefore an ‘unreal space’ (1986: 24). Although the heterotopia has similar properties to the utopia, it is distinctly different in that it is a real place:

[It is] a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places like this are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality (1986: 24).

Foucault did not develop the concepts in *Of Other Spaces* in consequent works, and the brevity of his explanation for each principle of the heterotopia, along with the diverse assortment of examples has left sufficient room for interpretation by later theorists of

space and place. The concept of heterotopia is mentioned in Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*. Lefebvre (1991) comments that there are complex spaces in society, and these can be placed into "conceptual grids" of "isotopias, or analogous spaces, heterotopias, or mutually repellent spaces, and utopias, or spaces occupied by the symbolic and the imaginary" (1991: 363).

Hetherington (1997) uses the concept of heterotopia in a broad sense, emphasising that heterotopia are spaces of "alternate ordering" in that they are spaces where a "new way of ordering emerges that stands in contrast to the taken-for-granted mundane idea of the social order" (1997: 40). Rotenberg (1995) claims heterotopia "attempt to reflect the everyday experience, but they do so in a way that is highly selective of ideas" (1995: 16). In this way, they are a kind of paradoxical space because they are defined as extraordinary spaces amongst ordinary spaces. A heterotopia is a space that is made up of sites that contest and contradict each other, yet are juxtaposed and experienced simultaneously in that particular space. In other words, a "heterotopia provokes one who encounters it to wonder what kind of a place it is, and thus to relate one place to another" (McCoy Owens 2002: 276). Heterotopic spaces are not separate from the spaces of the everyday; they are the 'other spaces' in society that are linked to everyday spaces by "a logic of contradiction" (Casid, 2005: 96).

In this thesis, I concentrate mainly on the six principles of the heterotopia defined by Foucault that I will briefly summarise:

- 1) 'Heterotopia' are found in every culture in one of two forms. They take the form of spaces that encompass either a *crisis* or *deviation* from the norm. For example, 'primitive' societies have forbidden places that are occupied by individuals going through a state of crisis, such as menstruating women, adolescents and so on. The West has places such as prisons and hospitals that house individuals in states of crisis (1986:24). This experience of a heterotopic space can be likened to Victor Turner's concepts of liminality (see St. John 2001).

- 2) The function of a heterotopia can change as society changes. It may begin with specific functions, but because a heterotopia is not a static space, it can exist with different functions that are affected by historical processes (1986:25).
- 3) According to Foucault heterotopias “are most often linked to slices in time” and to enter a heterotopic site there must be a break in normal time. These breakages in time occur in two distinct ways, a heterotopia can be fleeting, like a fairground or a fête. This type of heterotopia, Foucault states, is “not oriented toward the eternal, they are rather absolutely temporal” (p. 26). Conversely, a heterotopia can be “indefinitely accumulating over time,” such as the juxtaposition of archives and exhibits in a museum.
- 4) Even though a heterotopia is a site amongst others, there is always “a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable” (p. 26). Therefore, a heterotopia is separate from everyday space, and is often sanctified because of this.
- 5) Although heterotopia are separated in various ways from other spaces “they have a function in relation to all the space that remains” (p.27). This function is executed in two distinct ways. One takes the form of a space of illusion by partitioning certain aspects of society and exposing these real spaces as illusory. The other form, which is of particular significance for this thesis, is the role of the heterotopia in presenting a real space that is “as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed and jumbled” (p. 27). This is termed the heterotopia of *compensation*, and can be found in colonial spaces.
- 6) A heterotopia can juxtapose in a solitary real place many spaces that are incompatible and contradictory. Foucault gives the example of the Oriental garden as an ancient example of this type of space. In the traditional gardens of Persia the space was ordered into four parts and each represented the four corners of the world. The garden is a heterotopic space in that it contains within it “the

smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world” (p.26).

Foucault comments that the “garden has been a sort of happy, universalizing heterotopia since the beginnings of antiquity” (p. 26). I shall explore what he might mean by this later.

The garden’s ability to encompass in a single space seemingly conflicting sites, is a central aspect of this thesis. A walk through the Christchurch Botanic Gardens illustrates the variety of sites that reside within its boundaries. The formal rose garden, the native New Zealand section, the bonsai house—these different garden styles from different countries exist ‘happily’ in a single enclosed space. The sites are comprised of botanical specimens, yet they are also to be enjoyed for their beauty by a relatively ignorant public. I use the notion of heterotopia to analyse and explain the existence of the various conflicting sites within the Gardens.

The heterotopia as a compensatory space is another important facet that I discuss with regard to colonialism. In the beginning, the Christchurch Botanic Gardens served as space through which an imitation England could be fashioned for the new colonists, who naturalised the environment by introducing flora and fauna from their homeland. In this way, it was compensation for the settlers who missed the familiar English Landscape. The physical space was an ordered Victorian Botanic Garden that compensated for the untamed native landscape that surrounded it.

A heterotopia continually changes with the social structures of which it is a part, and this model helps to understand the multifaceted uses that botanic gardens have today. An investigation of the history of the botanic garden shows how its roles within society have changed with, and influenced by, wider political and economic structures and social processes.

Similar to the example Foucault gives of archives and exhibits in museums as a heterotopia that juxtaposes an accumulation of space and time, the botanic garden is a space where the past and present exist simultaneously. Christchurch Botanic Gardens contains archives in the information centre as records of the construction of the space, as well as trees of historical significance that were planted when the Gardens were created. Juxtaposed with the historical aspects are current collections of plants for ‘exhibition.’

Methodology

After formulating my ideas into a topic, I had to find the best way to research and analyse the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. I decided the most appropriate strategy would be to analyse the people and the institution behind the space, as well as those who use it. I also thought it necessary that I should be in the Gardens as much as possible, so that I could observe the activities and events that took place. My first steps into the field were tentative, I made initial contact with the Curator of the Gardens, who kindly arranged to meet with me. My impression was that he was interested, yet slightly bemused that I was writing a thesis on the Gardens with no botanical or horticultural understanding. Sitting in his office on the second floor with staff tending to plant nurseries in the large greenhouses below us, I was also a little overwhelmed. However, he was keen to discuss the history of the Gardens and we got talking, and my research developed from there.

With fortunate timing, I began this project in conjunction with the Christchurch City Council's first steps in the implementation of a re-development plan for the Botanic Gardens. This provided insight into what aspects of the Gardens the Council wished to change, or improve on for visitors and the citizens of Christchurch, and insight into the policy used to execute such a plan. I began my research at the Christchurch Botanic Gardens information centre, where the staff kindly adopted me as a regular there. Currently, all the archives are kept in a store room at the information centre in folders and scrapbooks. The scrapbooks contained clippings of local newspaper articles about the botanic gardens and various parks in Christchurch. These ranged from the 1920s to the present. The folders dated from the 1860s to the 1970s and contained reports by Head Gardeners and Curators, City Council minutes, and miscellaneous correspondence between the Gardens and local and overseas businesses. I traced the documents that were released after the 1970s to the National Archive Centre on Peterborough Street, Christchurch, where they were amalgamated with minutes and reports of other major parks in Christchurch under the Parks and Recreation department of the Council

Because the articles in the scrapbooks had been cut out of newspapers, page numbers, article titles and authors were often not attached, or were not clearly visible. This made it difficult when it came to appropriately referencing this type of data. Fortunately, nearly all had been diligently supplied with the date and the year in which they were written. Where I have quoted such articles, my solution has been to reference as much information as was available directly after the quote, as opposed to a shorter in-text citation accompanied and a full reference at the end of this thesis.

The benefit of these resources was that I was able to document the events and the opinions within the Gardens compared with public responses. The place in which the archive was kept doubled as a storeroom for the gift shop, so to give me the space to read the archival material the staff let me use their tearoom, which was also of a modest size. Once a week between the months of April and September, I visited the information centre either before or after lunch so as to not interrupt staff breaks. There was an added bonus to archival research in the cramped tearoom, it gave me the opportunity to regularly interact with the staff, occasionally gleaning the odd fact or anecdote on the Gardens, and permitted a more comfortable interview process with people with whom I was more familiar.

Because the archives were housed in the Gardens, I walked through them on a weekly basis, which proved useful in making and noting my observations of activities in the Gardens. Most of my visits were throughout autumn and winter so the Gardens were relatively quiet as opposed to the busy spring and summer period. They would often be populated in the morning with joggers, and in the afternoon by families with young children.

I was kindly entrusted with a copy of a market survey that had recently been carried out on the Gardens, and this turned out to be an important source of information for my research. I used the qualitative data gathered from focus groups as a reference and backup on public opinion of the present uses of the Gardens. Access to a comprehensive survey of a large amount of people on their thoughts, expectations and opinions of the Gardens was something time would have not permitted for this particular thesis, and it was an added bonus for my research.

Most of the data from my research is from informal loosely structured interviews with key staff members of the Botanical Services Team, a division of the Christchurch City Council, which was situated in the Gardens. People included were the Botanic Gardens Curator who was the overall director of the Gardens, a tour guide who doubled as a security officer, the Botanical Resources Coordinator who had a wealth of knowledge on the history of the Gardens, the Information and Promotions Coordinator who marketed and promoted the Gardens to the general public, and the Operations Manager who was in charge of the staff.

At the Council offices I interviewed a landscape architect and a structural architect who were working on the long-term re-development project for the Gardens, and the *Learning Through Action* Coordinator who arranged curriculum-based school trips to the Gardens. I interviewed one person independent of the Council, an ex-President of the Friends of the Botanic Gardens Association, who provided me with insights into the running of the Gardens, a personal tour of the Gardens, and some interesting anecdotes.

A postmodern view of the role of the researcher regards him or her “as another actor in the social context being investigated” (Blaikie, 2000:54). This is particularly characteristic of an anthropological approach to research. I favour this notion, as it avoids extracting the researcher from the ethnographic context, of which he or she is a part. I thought it necessary to not only observe activities in the Gardens on a weekly basis, but also to be a part of them. After identifying the key members of staff, I managed to get involved with three different tours of the Gardens. My first tour was with the Learning Through Action programme, which took a class of students, aged about 11, through the Gardens to learn about the natural environment. For most of the time I looked on, but occasionally I helped the staff and children when called upon.

My second tour was with an ex-president of the Friends association. This was a personal tour, and was very informative because not only did it give a ‘Friend’s’ perspective on the space in the Gardens, but also some ‘behind the scenes’ anecdotes of taking tourists around the Gardens. I also went on a tour with a middle aged to elderly American tourist group, which was arranged by the main tour guide at the Gardens. This, again, gave me another perspective of how the space was used and interpreted by

international tourists. Attending tours, weekly observations, interviewing staff members and undertaking detailed archival research enabled me to paint a holistic picture of the historical and contemporary uses and interpretations of the Gardens.

I have structured this thesis in a similar order to how I conducted my research. In chapter one, I begin broadly with the history of botany and the botanic garden and illustrate how this knowledge and space has changed throughout Western history from Ancient Greece and Rome, through to the Renaissance, the Age of Enlightenment and end with its ties with colonialism. I also explore why the botanic garden has become associated with an urban environment in the context of the 'Garden City' movement in nineteenth century Britain.

In Chapter two, I expand on the significant relationship between colonialism and the proliferation of the botanic garden, with specific reference to the colonial history of Christchurch. I discuss the beginnings of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens when it served as a space through which an 'imitation England' could be fashioned for the new colonists. They 'naturalised' the environment by introducing flora and fauna from their homeland. Using reports and newspaper articles from the archives I also analyse opinions of the staff and the public on the 'Englishness' of the Gardens.

Following Low's notion of the social production and social construction of space, I provide an historical and contemporary analysis of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. I contextualise the Gardens with an account of the historical, social, political and economic processes that have shaped its construction.

In chapter three, I 'fast forward' through time into the present space of the Gardens with a detailed account of the tours I attended, as well as interviews with staff on the diverse uses of space in the Gardens. This chapter largely assumes the 'user' point of view of the Gardens. I demonstrate how the historical and social processes of science and colonialism are expressed in the present day-to-day practices that take place in the Gardens, and the heterotopic characteristics of Gardens as a diverse space.

In chapter four, I concentrate on the 'producers' of the Gardens. In interviews with staff, I explore to what extent the diverse uses of space impinge upon the running of the Gardens. I discuss the possible conflict between science and leisure and the ways in

which the staff cater for the variety of visitors to the Gardens. I explain that the ideology of knowledge is important to the staff at the Gardens in distinguishing it from a public park.

In chapter five, I analyse the joint interview I conducted with the landscape architect and architect on the future plans for the Gardens. The two architects are essentially designers who have to negotiate a heterotopic space. Their opinions highlight the conflicts between scientific and leisure uses of the Gardens, and I illustrate how their jobs deal with this conflict over the space. Additionally, I consolidate the data from chapters three and four, and draw conclusions on the Christchurch Botanic Gardens as a 'happy' heterotopia.



[Fig. 1] Current Map of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. All main areas in the Gardens are highlighted. Reproduced by kind permission of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens.

Chapter one

A history of Botany & the Botanic Garden

“If space is produced, if there is a productive process, then we are dealing with *history*”

Lefebvre (1991:46)

Conducting preliminary research on the topic of botanic gardens in New Zealand, I arrived at the assumption that because British colonists thought it necessary to create several botanic gardens in the main centres of New Zealand (Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin), that it must have acquired significant status in the ‘homeland.’ With this in mind, I formulated two central questions for the historical component of this thesis: *why* and *how* had a botanic garden had been created in Christchurch, New Zealand? An investigation of the history of the botanic garden led to further questions of the relation between botanic gardens and western society.

This historical chapter ‘sets the scene’ for a contemporary analysis of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens, that I develop later in chapters three and four. The focus of this chapter is to provide some answers to the questions posed above, and to provide a context in which to situate the story of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. By documenting the origins of the Western botanic garden, I try to explain the structural processes that have shaped the production of the space, and that have in turn influenced the social use and meaning in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens today. In doing so, I follow Low’s notion of social production of space, an account of the “historical emergence of space” and the development of the “sociopolitical ideologies and economic forces involved in its production” ([1996] 2002: 114).

I have presented an historical account of the emergence of botany and the western botanic garden that provides an ‘active context’ and insight into the meanings found in the Gardens today. According to Low, the social production of space is “those factors whose intended goal is the physical creation of the material setting” ([1996] 2002:112).

Using this conceptual framework, I discuss the socio-political aspects of British colonialism, the dawning of scientific study in the Enlightenment and the ‘Garden City’ movement in Industrial Britain as structures that have altered and shaped the production of the botanic garden over time. Additionally, I investigate how these structures have created a physical, heterotopic space.

Botanic Beginnings: Ancient Greece to the Enlightenment

There is some uncertainty as to when the first botanic garden was established. People and their gardens have existed in a timeless partnership in most countries of the world.

Humans have always been around nature and have had to make sense of it, and over time, societies have found ways to control the reproduction of nature by keeping plants and growing seeds in an enclosed space. The word ‘garden’ derives from the ancient Indo-European word *ghordos* meaning an enclosure (Leach 2000: 77). Hunter-gatherers relied on their knowledge of edible plants, and when which plant was available in a particular season, as well as which plants were poisonous (Morton, 1981: 1). This knowledge was ‘basic,’ in comparison with modern scientific practice, yet it still involved learning from nature, categorising nature, *in* nature—fundamental to the concept of the botanic garden.

The name ‘botanic garden’ is a juxtaposition of the word ‘garden’ with a link to the scientific study of botany. *Botany*, the word a derivative of the Greek *botane*, meaning plant, derives from the discipline of biology and is the scientific knowledge of plants practiced on a number of levels. Modern botany involves the scientific classification of plants, studying the properties of a plant at molecular, genetic, and biochemical levels. Plant anatomy, morphology, physiology, and the wider subject of plant communities and populations are various subfields within the discipline (Morton, 1981: 451).

If we are to describe the historical botanic garden as a place for the cultivation of medicinal and herbal plants then we can trace the origins of the botanic garden to a much earlier historical period. According to Goody (1993) botanical and horticultural knowledge, and indeed botanic gardens, existed in their early forms well before the

Renaissance of Western Europe. The XVIIIth Dynasty of Egypt (1570-1085 B.C) gathered botanical information through defeating enemies and by extension of their empire:

The booty of Queen Hatshepsut's sea-borne expedition to the south included over thirty perfume shrubs in baskets which were planted in Thebes. A botanical garden was created, complete with catalogue, consisting of local trees and plants as well as exotics brought from afar (Goody 1993: 37).

It is evident that the knowledge and the practice of cultivating and examining plants has been around for thousands of years. It was the accumulation of exotic, foreign plants that expanded the classificatory systems that were built on local knowledge and as a result reshaped previous botanical understandings:

The shift from local folk schema to a more inclusive one was not a process first encountered by Aristotle, let alone much later with the Renaissance and the expansion of Europe; the deliberate introduction of plants, including cultivated flowers, was a long established feature of Eurasian society...Aided by the use of written records, the collection of exotics meant breaking through the bounds of local classifications and establishing a broader system of botanical knowledge which was the precursor of later 'scientific' schemes of the Renaissance (Goody 1993: 38).

Ancient botanic gardens nurtured plants for medicinal, as well as for aesthetic purposes. Personal hygiene was important to the Egyptians; women used flowers as a sweet smelling perfume and plants, from which one could make henna for example, for cosmetic purposes such as eye liner and eye shadow to attract men. A multitude of plants and spices were used by Egyptian doctors who "included some seven hundred ingredients, mostly vegetable, in their pharmacopoeia" (Goody 1993: 38). Goody illustrates that plant cultivation and collection has been around for longer than we tend to think in the Western world, and that Egyptian knowledge of spices and plants of neighbouring countries such as India, East Africa and Arabia served as "a model for the later studies of Greeks and Arabs" (1993: 38).

The study of botany is thought to have originated with the Greeks and Romans. Some historians give more precedence to these ancient 'botanists' than others. Some

critics (see Emboden 1987), stress that although some of the plant descriptions are highly detailed, and even ordered in some sort of classificatory system, the collections are merely descriptive and display little or no scientific understanding of plants; therefore botanical knowledge was rudimentary. Other historians (see Morton, 1981) assert that these early works provided an essential ground work for the later pioneers of botany and did demonstrate a basic scientific understanding of plants.

Theophrastus, born 370 B.C and student of Aristotle, is claimed by some to be the ‘father’ of botany. His books in the *History of Plants* and the *Causes of Plants* detail plant classifications and “climatic and edaphic [soil conditions] factors, cultivation, plant diseases and the causes of plant death” (Emboden 1987: 35). This showed evidence of a holistic approach to plant cultivation, and insight into providing rational explanations into ‘scientific’ thinking as to why plants might die, and symptoms of plant disease. Although we have to be careful not to read too far into the works of Theophrastus, as it is still unclear as to what extent the data was description and observation, rather than detailed interpretation (Emboden 1987: 82).

Another Roman, Pliny, born approximately A.D 23, wrote *Natural History* a work documenting a collection of over 1,000 plants. An impressive number, but some academics are unconvinced that this was a scientific study and claimed that this vast accumulation was just that; a discussion of a collection of plants. Pliny did not possess the skills to interpret his collections further (Emboden 1987: 84).

Materia Medica written circa A.D 70- A.D 80 by the Greek, Dioscorides, documents 600 plants ordered under the categories; aromatic, alimentary, and medicinal (Emboden 1987: 82). *Materia Medica* is credited with being the first book detailing plants in a way which was “at once logical and practical, which, in addition to its scientific caution and freedom from superstition, probably established its pre-eminence” (Morton, 1981: 68). However, some claim that Dioscorides’ botanical knowledge lies in the form of descriptions, not in a ‘primitive’ form of the scientific analysis we would recognise today. Nonetheless the manuscripts of Dioscorides, Theophrastus and Pliny were a significant stepping stone in the development of botany and were still referenced as important texts hundreds of years later.

The first Western botanic gardens were originally medicinal gardens that contained herbs and plants to be studied by students of medicine in Europe (Heywood 1987: 67).

Although it is acknowledged that there were developments towards botanic gardens by civilizations in other parts of the world, such as China, pre-Hispanic Mexico and the Arab world, there is little known about them in the Western world, and that they are much less likely to have influenced those in Europe.

The first medicinal gardens originated in sixteenth century Italy and gradually spread to other countries in Europe. Heywood (1987: 6-7) documents their dispersion:

The first was at Pisa, and was founded in 1543...it was followed closely by Padua (1545), Florence (1545) and Bologna (1547). Then came Zurich (1560), Leiden (1577), Leipzig (1579), Paris (1597), Montpellier (1598), Oxford (1621), Uppsala (1655), Edinburgh (1670), Berlin (1679) and Amsterdam (1682). All of these botanic gardens exist to the present day, most of them in their original locations...

Medicinal gardens in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as enclosed spaces intended for the cultivation and study of plants, were the beginnings of the modern botanic garden.

Gardens of Science: Botany Finds a Place to Grow

A key question arises; why and how did botany manifest itself in the form of a public garden? The Renaissance was perhaps the most fruitful period for the development of botany as a science. As a result of the discovery of the New World, a flurry of exotic flora was collected by Italian merchants and arrived on the shores of Italy. It was at this time in Italy that gardens and botanical collections were first combined.

Private gardens were *en vogue* with the wealthy and Italian royalty, and their gardens hosted collections of exotic plants and flowers (Emboden 1981: 118-119). Although these aesthetically pleasing private gardens of wealth and status were not used specifically for scientific endeavours, they signalled a move towards the production of a garden space that displayed a juxtaposition of foreign species in contrast to the native landscape. This was characteristic of a heterotopic space. In one real space, a variety of plants plucked from different foreign countries were superimposed as scientific

‘specimens’ in contradiction with the surrounding ‘natural’ environment. The botanic garden contained within it sites that were incompatible with other spaces that surrounded it.

There is direct correlation between royal gardens and the establishment of some botanic gardens. In later years, royal gardens were often relinquished to become the property of the state. This meant that the grounds became available to organisations that used the space to cultivate botanical collections as well as display them in what became public pleasure grounds (Goody 1993: 29).

Contemporaneous with the private collections of exotic plants during the Renaissance, Italian universities used newly created gardens to host collections of plants for scientific study for students of medicine and botany, and the latter had become a discipline in its own right at university, a separate study from medicine (Emboden 1981: 120).

The eighteenth century brought about a new way of thinking that paved the way for the creation of the modern botanic garden. The Enlightenment, a philosophical movement that encouraged logical reasoning and scientific analysis, of which the study of natural history was a central discipline, also celebrated beauty and aesthetics. This amalgamation of science and beauty created a suitable backdrop within which botanic gardens could flourish. Botanic gardens, as gardens of ordered botanical collections were aesthetically pleasing spaces that were symbolic of this ideology:

Botanic gardens epitomized this philosophy: it combined the grandeur of the landscape movement, symbolized the new era of peace which descended on Europe between the 1760’s and 1790’s, and gave practical expression to the ideas of the great Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus (McCracken 1997:1).

The movement towards the science and logic of natural history in the eighteenth century was characterised by an emphasis on classificatory systems. The Swedish botanist Carl von Linné, or Carl Linnaeus, as he was referred to in Latin, had a pivotal role in how botany is practiced today. Linnaeus first established the practice of assigning flora and fauna into a hierarchy of *family*, *order*, *class*, and *divisions*. This ideology of taxonomy is the foundation of botany that is still used today (Morton 1981: 267). Thus, nomenclature

became an important aspect in establishing botany as a *bona fide* science whereby plants could be assigned to, and described by, a fixed set of rules. Plants were described as ‘specimens’ and were ordered into Latin nomenclature according to a scientific model. In this case, the system established an order to nature and a universal language of plants was born:

The public often fails to understand the utility of scientific taxonomy. Without classification there is chaos. The taxonomist’s work is valuable in establishing the true relationship between the world’s plants, both spatially and temporally... in an international nomenclature understood by botanists whose native language may be Urdu, Tagalog, or Finnish (Brockway 1979: 6).

In terms of the social production of the botanic garden, the emergence of botany was a key factor in shaping the physical space. The popularisation of scientific knowledge and ordering of plants and the manifestation of this discipline in an increasingly public environment was the first image of a botanic garden that bore some resemblance to the modern botanic gardens found in cities today. What is more, the ‘displacement’ of nature from private cultivated gardens into the public sphere was an integral process in the Enlightenment. A curious public could access the botanic garden, which was usually used strictly for scientific purposes.

Taking a Cue from Kew: the Expansion of the Botanic Garden

Low (2002) seeks to understand the built form by locating it within the larger context of history and social institutions:

The analysis and interpretation of building decisions cannot be understood apart from social and economic institutional forces that continually influence actors, nor can the interpretation of symbolic meaning be divorced from these forces or history (2002: 111).

The construction of the built environment also applies to the creation of a botanic garden. The ‘building decisions’ that took place in the construction of the colonial botanic garden

were shaped and produced by the social, political, economic and cultural values at the time of the British Empire. Here lie the influences and origins of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens in New Zealand.

In an effort to classify as many plant species as possible, and to expand scientific knowledge, Kew gathered botanical specimens from other countries:

In 1880 the director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew described a botanic garden as ‘a garden in which a vast assemblage of plants from every accessible part of the earth’s surface is systematically cultivated (McCracken 1997: viii- iv).

The study and collection of plants in botanic gardens worldwide is a result of historical encounters with new exotic plants brought back from foreign countries through travel, trade and invasion. The spread of botanic gardens out of Europe and into countries in Asia, Africa and the Pacific was also a result of the expansion of colonial rule by the British Empire. Voyages into new lands opened up a new world of plants for botanists, and were integral to establishing a colonial botanic garden network. These expeditions were fronted by men who were sponsored by either “the Crown, the Royal society, Kew Gardens, private individuals, or a combination of these sources of support” (Brockway, 1979:74).

With an increase in botanical resources and a developing interest in botany, thousands of plant species were returned to Kew for study and to add to herbaria⁵ collections. Sir Joseph Banks, director of Kew, and Captain James Cook, reportedly brought back 17,000 plant specimens whilst voyaging to Australia to claim it for the Crown. Charles Darwin also increased his botanical knowledge by accompanying many naturalists on different expeditions. Those who explored and sought new plants specimens were coined “Kew collectors” when Kew became the central governing botanical centre (Brockway 1979: 189).

One of the first colonial botanic gardens was the Pamplemousses garden in Mauritius in 1735, where a garden was constructed in order to grow fruit and vegetables for settlers from the ships at the port. This developed later into a “trials garden” in which plants of economic value to the colonisers were cultivated in various small plots of land

⁵ Plural of herbarium, a place where dried plants are kept for systematic classification (Oxford Dictionary).

(McCracken 1997: 11). The majority of botanic gardens found in the world at the time of the British Empire were in Europe, but aided by the pursuit of colonisation, they were gradually spreading into new and exotic countries:

Botanic Gardens, 1543-1901

Europe 226
British Empire 126
United Kingdom 26
Continental empires 25
Rest of the world 38

Total 441
(McCracken 1997: viii)

In spite of some botanic gardens in the British colonies that endeavoured to stay true to plant research and botany; expert botanical knowledge did not necessarily reach the colonies, and some of the gardens 'lost' their botanical focus. In addition to this, the facilities needed for botanical observation, such as herbaria and libraries were inadequate:

colonial botanic gardens tended to rest in the hands of enthusiastic amateurs: local planters, civil servants, journalists, doctors, businessmen and the like. No matter how zealous these men might have been, they were not intellectual scientists...the cream of the British scientific elite stayed at home (McCracken 1997: 146-147).

Interestingly, British reports on botanic gardens in New Zealand claimed that New Zealand did not have any suitable botanic gardens. Criticism arose from the fact that instead of investing in one national botanic gardens, like Kew, the colony had established minor gardens in various towns and cities. The 1884 *Gardeners Chronicle* announced that New Zealand had "No public garden worthy of a name" (cited in McCracken 1997: 39). Botanic gardens were established in New Zealand in 1863 in both Christchurch and Dunedin, and in Wellington in 1869. There is some discrepancy as to whether Christchurch Botanic Gardens was indeed a botanic garden in the proper sense of the word. According to McCracken (1997: 30-31), both gardens in Wellington and

Christchurch were not classified as scientific, although they did distribute plants for economic exchanges and therefore were recognised as being more than a public park.

The colonial botanic gardens differed from their European equivalents in that gardens within gardens were not as common, although the majority of colonial botanic gardens did have “rockeries, landscaped quarries, bamboo gardens and arboreta” (McCracken 1997: 116). A plant nursery was a central component for all colonial botanic gardens. They were carefully guarded from vandals and thieves, ensured the propagation of economic plants and provided the gardens with additional funds.

It was not typical of a colonial botanic garden to have an abundance of flowerbeds, as these gardens were usually bigger in size and hosted large amounts of trees and native bush:

While Kew could boast 400 flowerbeds in 1859, these existed only because of official pressure put on the director. Public opinion demanded carpet bedding, herbaceous borders and clipped hedges, but scientists balked at uniformity and lack of variety (McCracken 1997: 123)

According to McCracken, “Two keys to the popularity of a colonial botanic gardens were lawns and water” (1997:116). Without these two sources, a botanic garden could not function and grow; and, just as important, the look of clean cut lawns surrounded by fountains and lakes was, of course, a look of Victorian England, as opposed to wild uncultivated jungle. Having said there was not generally a collection of sub-gardens in a colonial garden, there was the ever-present English rose garden, which became a popular feature in gardens all over the world. The symmetrical Victorian rose garden with its formal, trellised pergolas was an interesting contrast to the jungle and wild bush found in the rest of the tropical colonial gardens. The rose garden became very popular in most colonial botanic gardens from the 1870’s onwards (1997:124).

Changes were happening with the way botanic gardens were ‘produced’ in the nineteenth century and twentieth century. The spread of botanic gardens across the globe as spaces of colonial endeavour with a ‘diluted’ scientific purpose shaped the future functions of colonial botanic gardens. In the colonies gardens were municipally run, therefore administered by the authority of the local government. This was the case in New Zealand and Australia, as well as places in Europe and the United States. Many

colonists who maintained botanic gardens shifted their focus from the scientific, or botanic functions to an emphasis on horticultural practices and the economic production of plants (Heywood 1987: 10-11).

Many of these municipal gardens did not invest in scientific research or taxonomy. Horticulture, the study of garden cultivation and management, became more popular as botanic gardens relied more upon the space in which the collections were presented. Nonetheless, the name 'botanic garden' stuck, and "was sometimes applied to gardens which had no real claim to the title at all" (Heywood 1987: 10-11). Botanic gardens, in this sense were redefined as institutions with a horticultural focus with an interest in "building up and maintaining collections of usually well-labelled plants, and exchanging seeds with other botanic gardens throughout the world" (Heywood 1987: 10-11), and ironically into a garden with declining botanical significance in the true sense.

A Home Away From Home

Those who established colonial botanic gardens, being far from home, used the space to create a home away from home. This was done by changing the natural environment. The space of the botanic garden was a symbol of colonial power and dominance over the indigenous landscape, as well as a space that enabled a physical change in the surrounding landscape.

A characteristic shared by botanic gardens in New Zealand is that they were often associated with acclimatisation societies. These were societies developed by colonists to introduce and propagate flora and fauna from Britain to the native land. While others failed to become the botanic gardens worthy of official titles because they were seen more as public parks, Wellington Botanic gardens earned recognition as the official colonial botanic gardens. It began as a botanical reserve of native bush and by 1869 it became a botanic gardens. Things were difficult in the 1880's when New Zealand experienced a financial depression; usually funded by government grants, the botanic gardens lost their funding (McCracken 1997: 39).

Those who arrived in New Zealand from Britain in the late eighteenth century brought with them Victorian ideals about landscape and garden from the Victorian society from which they came. Faced with a different and diverse landscape, settlers endeavoured to emulate garden styles at home. Colonial botanic gardens in the tropics took on a jungle feel, with lush green bush or swampland, and it was difficult to reproduce an ordered English landscape. In addition, the gardens tended to be larger than those in the homeland. In fact, some colonists thought they were too large. However, they commandeered these open spaces with their “Victorian love of clutter and of the spectacular” (1997: 112).

In England, the Victorian practice of gardening was an indication of social status, a way of showing the amount of time and expertise one could spend on creating detailed, ornate geometric patterns in one’s garden. The Victorians seemed obsessed with stamping their footprint on nature and this was very much the case in the colonies. In fact, it was possibly emphasised more in the colonies because of the wild looking landscape colonists were first faced with that had to be tamed and cultivated.

Generally, colonial botanic gardens did not have a collection of gardens within gardens, a characteristic of their European counterpart, but rather a more open appearance. Although, botanic gardens in the Antipodes took a different turn to their colonial counterparts; both Australia and New Zealand experimented with geometric designs and flowerbeds. The focus on forming a scientific institution was also somewhat diluted across the seas, and the layout of botanical collections in the Linnaean style of plant classification was less common (1997: 112).

It was typical of a colonial style garden not to cultivate native plants for collection. Rather, plants and trees from Europe were grown in the new foreign soil, which led to a physical change in the environment and a landscape that embodied the new colonial influence. In Victorian times, it was important that new species of plants be collected and sent to Kew for classification to add to the growing scientific collections (1997: 113). The lack of interest in collecting indigenous flora was also due to its ubiquity; why bother showcasing plants and flowers that are to be found everywhere? This would mean that the plants “would look no different from the local countryside...

what was wanted was the grand and the spectacular, the novel and the colourful” (1997:114).

The political, social and economic factors of colonisation reconstructed the space of the botanic garden. In Low’s terms, the social construction of space can be understood as a “symbolic experience of space as mediated by social processes such as exchange, conflict and control” ([1996], 2002:112). The space in colonial botanic gardens took on more than science and aesthetics; it was as a space of colonial control, a microcosm of Victorian England.

The Built Environment and the ‘Garden City’ Movement

A city centre seems an unusual place for a garden. I was intrigued by this notion whilst I was conducting research. How did a botanic garden come to reside in the depths of an urban environment? According to Rotenberg (1995), the first developments towards the combination of nature and the built environment happened as early as the Bronze Age with the construction of walls around the buildings of the elite. The green space that had existed in and amongst these dwellings were encased inside these walls and “mixed together” with the buildings (1995: 20).

However, it was not until the advent of the Enlightenment in Europe, when philosophies on synthesising the country landscape with city living, and of towns and cities as places of entertainment and leisure, that the botanic garden entered the public arena in full force. Space in the city was “being rebuilt with fine public buildings, opera houses, palaces, squares and public parks” (McCracken 1997: 1), the scientific botanic garden amongst these constructions. The philosophy of science and beauty in the Enlightenment set the scene for the ‘Garden City’ movement which took place in England and America a century later, and which effected the role of the botanic garden.

With the ideology of ‘healthful’ living in nineteenth century Britain, botanic gardens in general were predominantly used by the public as a space in which one could be amongst nature and engage in passive recreation as a break from a noisy, industrial town. What also became apparent was an increasing number of visitors, who had little or

no knowledge of botany, and to whom collections of scientifically classified exotic plants meant little or nothing. Heywood (1987) asserts that:

The public, visiting them in increasing numbers, viewed what was put on show uncritically on the whole, with the gardens making few concessions to public education other than the provision of labels with minimal information which were probably aimed more at students than at the general public (1987:15-16).

Kew Gardens was no exception. The beautiful plant displays attracted many visitors, and with this came national recognition, but these displays were “only the outer façade for the real work of science” (Brockway 1979: 81).

They were more than just parks, for while they might provide aesthetic delight and casual recreation, satisfy idle curiosity and even excite wonderment, their purpose was universally recognized. They were to accumulate botanical and horticultural knowledge and to disseminate that knowledge (McCracken 1997: viii- iv).

The pioneer of the Garden City movement in England was Ebenezer Howard, an Englishman who founded the Garden Cities Association in 1899. Howard’s 1902 book *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, a re-working of his earlier work of 1898 entitled *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, was a programmatic work that outlined the ways and means by which a town should be designed and synthesised with nature. Howard ([1902] 1985: 11) claimed that “human society and the beauty of nature are meant to be enjoyed together.” The town, for Howard, was the “symbol of society” in that it contained kinship networks, social relationships and was the centre of “science, art, culture and religion.” The country, as a “source of all health, all wealth, all knowledge” was a “symbol of God’s love” and its splendour stimulated art, music and poetry ([1902] 1985: 11). The précis of Howard’s work was that a combination of these two entities created a better living space.

Written during the period of industrialisation, this book was an attempt to remedy Howard’s concern for a healthy community. Howard’s *Garden Cities* includes diagrams, along with financial and administrative methods through which one can create a ‘Garden City.’ Howard’s somewhat utopian vision saw the town and the process of urbanisation as mimicking those of nature: “A town, like a flower, or a tree, or an animal, should, at

each stage of its growth, possess unity, symmetry, completeness, and the effect of growth should never be to destroy that unity, but to give it greater purpose..." ([1902] 1985: 39). In Howard's model of the Garden City, he proposed that in the centre should be a public park which would provide "ample recreation grounds and within very easy access of the all the people" ([1902]1985: 16).

The philosophy of the Enlightenment and Howard's concept of the 'Garden City' were defining movements that eventually led to a division of interest between the producers of the botanic garden and the public which used them. This division occurred in England's Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. The availability of the botanic garden as a green space in a built environment meant that it was frequented by a public who used the space as a pleasure grounds, whereas, those who worked in the botanic gardens perceived the space as one of scientific practice. Conflict arose between the staff at Kew, who although they appreciated the popularity the Gardens were receiving with public access, were concerned that the scientific integrity of the Gardens was being compromised because the majority of visitors had no clue about botanical collections. A First Commissioner of Kew once commented that Kew had turned into a "gaudy flower show" (cited in Desmond, 1996: 181). Other staff were conscious that Kew's public role was important to the well-being of society, and as a public park it could provide "lungs in congested streets" (1996: 181).

In the nineteenth century, the public Pleasure Grounds in Kew were fenced off from the Botanic Gardens. What also became apparent were the conflicts between displaying botanical collections and landscape aesthetics; sometimes plants and trees that 'belonged' in scientific collections did not make aesthetically pleasing landscape. Conversely, beautiful arrangements did not correspond to botanical classifications.

Evidence of this can be seen in the relationship between Sir William Hooker, the Director of Kew and the Landscape gardener, W.A Nesfield. Hooker resisted Nesfield's ideas of French-style parterres and geometrical flowerbeds and gardens, favouring 'natural' looking gardens that also displayed alike scientific specimens (Desmond, 1996: 174). Nevertheless, in 1847, according to his annual report, Hooker did acknowledge that "Health, pleasure and instruction seem to be the main guiding motives of the visitors to the Botanic Gardens." (cited in Desmond, 1996: 181)

Concurrent with the Garden City movement and with an increasingly industrialised environment in the late eighteenth century, Kew Gardens struggled with the pressures of providing the public with a green space for fresh air and leisure, as well as retaining its objectives as a place to study plant specimens and conduct scientific research. The location of Kew by the river Thames rendered public use of the Gardens as a leisure space unavoidable; because like most botanic gardens, it was surrounded by city life. However, Kew contributed to 'beautifying' the city by providing the surrounding parks with trees that were grown in a purpose-built nursery (Desmond 1996: 182).

A Sanctuary of Conservation and Education

In the twentieth century many botanic gardens suffered from a "*crise d'identité*" because of the complexities and uncertainty surrounding their function as a scientific institution and a public park (Heywood 1987:15-16). Heywood mentions that this had led one botanic garden to change its title to 'botanical research institute' to reassert its scientific identity. Heywood (1987) suggests that the conservation role adopted by many botanic gardens served as a remedy to the identity crises and became "one of their major goals and indeed justifications" (1987: 15-16). By the twentieth century, botanic gardens in Europe had collected and classified thousands of plants from countries all over the world, and they prospered as green spaces in the middle of towns and cities. They had become places of science, and places of leisure, and they were yet to subsume another function.

A concern for looking after the environment was a result of the mass urbanisation and industrialisation of the Western world. This kind of concern was not new, as I have discussed, the Garden City movement was borne out of a concern for healthy living amongst industrial environs. The sanctification of space is a characteristic of the heterotopia. Foucault (1986) claims that heterotopia are separate from everyday spaces through a system of open and closing. Because of this, they contain an element of sacredness. The botanic garden went from a garden of sanctuary for the public to a sanctuary for the plants themselves. The paradoxical location of a botanic garden is a poignant reminder of the depredation of nature and the domination of the urban

environment in the West. As Rotenberg (1995: 20) writes “Green space is alien to the city and must be tended carefully.” Propagating and protecting endangered plants from all over the world is currently a crucial role for many botanic gardens.

Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI), the official worldwide network of botanic gardens, takes this role very seriously. The importance of this function was outlined in a document on their website, entitled *2010 Targets for Botanic Gardens*, released in November 2005. The document outlined major steps for botanic gardens to take to protect, and raise awareness of the world’s plant diversity. These included ensuring botanic gardens documented, conserved and sustained the plants in their collections, and promoted awareness of this problem through education programmes (www.bgci.org.uk).

An article in the bi-annual environmental review journal *Roots* on the BGCI website evocatively sums up the changing role of the botanic garden as a modern day haven:

My favourite metaphor...is the sanctuary. Mediaeval engravings of gardens show a dark or mysterious forest beyond the protective walls, a place with wild animals and other untold dangers lurking suspiciously in the shadows. In modern times it is likely to be an urban landscape outside the garden as the environment in our cities becomes less habitable with each decade (Darwin Edwards 2001: 37)

Although the science of the collections may be lost on most visitors, botanic gardens aim to transfer knowledge and expertise of the staff to the public through a variety of education programmes. These are often targeted at children, but they have become popular with adults. By educating the public, the botanic gardens also ‘train up’ its visitors and creates awareness and understanding of its scientific role in the community:

The challenge for botanic gardens is to provide a diversity of adult and public education programmes that appeal to a broad audience. This can assist botanic gardens, not just in a financial capacity but also in fulfilling their mission to promote sustainability within the community (www.bgci.org.uk)

Many gardens, including the Christchurch Botanic Gardens, give information sessions and lectures to people who may already have some knowledge of this subject area, for others, education is imparted through tours of the gardens. Tours are an effective method

of articulating the space in the gardens for the visitor as they convey the knowledge and meaning held by the staff. This is a key concept, and I expand on this in more detail in the following chapter.

Summary

The history of the botanic garden has highlighted the dialogic relationship between the social, historical, economic and political processes that have shaped its production. I have illustrated that the botanic garden is an 'active' context in which meanings in space can be challenged and contested in the relationship between its users and producers. We begin to see the heterotopic nature of the botanic garden exemplified in its conflicting roles as a working scientific institution, as a place of leisure, and as a colonial space. Further more, as a separate green space in the middle of a town or city, the botanic garden provides a sanctuary for the protection of plants from extinction, and for people to escape an unhealthy industrial environment. This is also an aspect of a heterotopic space, it is an inversion or a paradox in relation to other spaces around it.

In the following chapter, I will continue to unpack the conflict between these roles further in reference to Christchurch Botanic Gardens. I focus more specifically on the creation of the Gardens as a heterotopia of colonial compensation, and how it served as a symbolic and practical means of creating a 'little England' in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Chapter two

An English City Garden in the 'Garden City'

“Christchurch is considered the most English city in the most English dominion, a reputation we are most proud of”

(Christchurch Star, 31st January, 1960)

The previous chapter was a somewhat condensed socio-cultural and historical exploration of the botanic garden. An investigation into the rich history of the botanic garden illuminated three significant social, economic and political frameworks that have produced and shaped the space of the botanic garden. These are the hegemonic role of scientific (botanical) knowledge, the 'Garden City' philosophy and the expansion of the British Empire. The processes provide the focus of this chapter, which is a history of Christchurch's Botanic Gardens.

This chapter lays the foundations for understanding the social practices and meanings found in the Gardens today. I will uncover the ways in which British colonists established a botanic garden in Christchurch, and how they created a space that contained conflicting ideologies between scientific and public use, a problem that mirrored what had previously occurred at Kew Gardens in the 'Motherland.'

Moore (1996) asserts, “the meaning of any spatial order is not intrinsic, but must be invoked through practice” (1996:8). Therefore, to uncover meaning within the Gardens, the social practices that take place in the space must be understood. How the colonists physically created and used the Gardens not only reveals meanings of the space, it also reveals how the social production of the Gardens is manifested in the physical space.

The Gardens are a product of British colonial transformation of the New Zealand landscape, and a space constructed by people with ideals about science and nature that originate in the society from which they came. My discussion of the 'English city garden in the garden city' reveals how the Christchurch Botanic Gardens was created as an

inherently English garden that was a 'home away from home.' The majority of the data for this chapter is drawn from my fieldwork conducted at the information centre. It is based on scrapbooks containing articles from local Christchurch newspapers, monthly curator's reports on the running of the Gardens as well as anecdotal letters from members of the community to the Botanic Garden's staff and letters to the editor in the local newspaper.

Setting the Scene: Colonial Encounters with the Land

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, central to the discovery and collection of new plants were expeditions to new lands. Many botanic gardens became a place in which colonials could showcase the world's flora and fauna as well as generate revenue from 'economic plants,' these were plants of economic importance such as tobacco and sugar maple, that could be propagated in the gardens and bring in revenue to the colony. However, with colonial towns increasing in size some botanic gardens had a strong social role as central pleasure grounds that overshadowed their economic function and the botanic garden soon became "an accepted part of British colonial life" (McCracken 1997: 166).

Establishing botanic gardens was also a medium through which colonists could symbolically, and practically, impose their domination of the landscape in the name of science. In this way, they made part of a foreign environment more familiar and accommodating. The Christchurch Botanic Gardens were a place where botanical specimens were studied and grown, and it was also space that visually replicated British colonial culture.

According to Gibbons (2002), not only did settlers replicate the ideals of their culture and society in the landscape, they attempted to make it better than before:

...migrants seek to transform the new world they are entering into a simulacrum of the old world they have come from—one which re-creates an imagined former Golden Age or an improved version of whatever part of the metropolitan society they had recently quit (2002: 8).

The space of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens was, and still is, a microcosm of British colonial power and scientific practice. These concepts are articulated in different and often conflicting ways by the producers and its users of the space. An example of this was found in two articles written by members of the public in the same local newspaper at different times. The first is a romantic vignette summarising the ‘Englishness’ of a day in the Gardens⁶:

My first thought is that I might still be in England. The verdant, daisy-studded lawns were being mowed and the sweet air was filled with the sweet familiar music of singing blackbirds and thrushes. Workers sunning themselves during their luncheon break on the willow-graced banks of the Avon River, throw morsels of bread to the several families of fluffy ducklings while tiny children, recalling illustrations in their pet-books, pointed with gleeful recognition (W.H Howell, *Christchurch Star*, 26th December 1964).

The same view of the Gardens as a typically English space is expressed in a letter to the editor in the 1970’s, but this is an assertion of English heritage coupled with a strong rejection of the City Council’s attempt to plant native trees in Hagley Park:

The department is spoiling Hagley Park- which in a sense is an English park. I think it is shocking to see clumps of cabbage trees dotted all around North Hagley Park. It’s an awful anachronism and it’s ruining the aesthetic value of the whole place (*Christchurch Star*, 21st August 1973).

The fact native trees are considered an ‘anachronism’ is openly claiming that Hagley Park’s colonial heritage should be preserved and that replanting native trees is a reversal of what happened in the past.

Supposedly, the land on which the Botanic Gardens is currently situated in Christchurch was claimed from local Maori in 1842 by pioneers William and John Deans, who “negotiated” a lease of land constituting a six-mile radius, of which Hagley Park was to become a part (Tritenbach 1987: 102). Immigrants from Britain had arrived under the promise of a successful and prosperous colony by Edward Gibbon Wakefield. Wakefield

⁶ As I mentioned in the introduction, quotes taken from newspaper clippings in the archives appear with as much information that was available in the main text of this thesis.

planned to take over ‘waste land’ and the indigenous people of New Zealand, with a scheme for ‘systematic colonisation’ (Evison, 1997: 83).

With the transformation of the land in the Gardens into a Victorian colonial space, came the ‘displacement’ of native species and native people:

European scientists and collectors, first as visitors and then, later, as colonists, ‘discovered’ and classified, according to Linnaean rules, New Zealand flora and fauna. The indigenous species were expected to die out, like Maori themselves, displaced by what the colonists imported (Gibbons, 2002: 11).

There is little acknowledgement in the general history of the Gardens that the land which is now Hagley Park and the Botanic Gardens had been previously settled by Maori. There is no mention of Maori land in the Curator’s reports, and the non-academic literature on the Gardens glaze over this possibility.

A couple of newspaper articles in the archives raised the issue in the seventies. Yet this subject was quashed with responses from the Council, which was quick to assert its authority over the space. One sub-heading read: “No Maori land in Hagley Park. Hagley vested in Canterbury Domain Act 1946. No record found of any part of Hagley Park being set aside as a Maori reserve” (*Christchurch Star*, 23rd November, 1970). Having received a couple of objections to this sweeping statement in the Letters to the Editor section, the newspaper printed a second mention of the Maori land reserve issue a week later. This time it reaffirmed that regardless of whether the land may have been inhabited by Maori, the fact was that it was handed over to the City Council in the Domains Act of 1946. The article acknowledged that a book entitled the *Lore and History of the South Island Maori* written by W.A Taylor in 1950, which had been mentioned by a reader of the newspaper, did give an account of Maori use of the land. However, in response to the possibility of Maori habitation on the land, the article asserted that the “ important point, however is the Christchurch Domains Act 1946, where the whole of Hagley Park was vested in the Christchurch City Council (*Christchurch Star* 30th November 1970).

Interestingly, an article written in 1920 entitled *37 Years in the Gardens- Mr. James Knights story: Memories of a Wilderness*, involuntarily confirmed Maori presence

on the land currently occupied by the Botanic Gardens. Knight, a previous gardener, named some 'curious discoveries' that had been revealed in the Gardens over the years, he recalled that an "excellent specimen of a Maori axe was also found some years ago" (*Christchurch Press*, September, 1920).

With an increasing interest in establishing a colony in New Zealand, John Robert Godley started the Canterbury Association in London in 1847 for the purpose of creating a Church of England settlement on the South Island's East Coast, the Association's objective was to create "an Anglican replica of an English shire" (Tritenbach, 1987: 113). By 1850, Christchurch was officially settled and the creation of Christchurch's Botanic Gardens occurred just thirteen years later in 1863.

Evident from early maps of the Christchurch area, drawn up in 1849 by the Canterbury Association under the authority of Queen Victoria, a site for a botanic gardens resided in the colonial consciousness from the very beginning. The maps shows all four sides of Christchurch town as spacious areas that were designated as Town Reserves, including labelled spaces what would later become Hagley Park, and nestled in the loop of the Avon River, the Botanic Gardens (Tritenbach 1987: 103). Under the authority of the English Parliament, the Canterbury Association later became the Canterbury Provincial Council, and in 1855 the first Superintendent of the Council, James Fitzgerald, stipulated in the one of the earliest acts that the land be protected by law, asserting that "'the land commonly known as Hagley shall be reserved forever as a public park'" (cited in Tritenbach 1987: 104).

Within the area of Hagley Park, a fifty-two acre section of land was set aside for the early Botanic Gardens, known at this time as the 'Government Domain,' or the 'Pleasure Grounds.' The Government Gardener, Mr. Enoch Barker, supervised the planting of twenty one acres of forest on this designated land, but unfortunately many of the trees died from drought (Tritenbach 1987: 104). It was not until the ceremonial planting of an English Oak tree marking the commemoration of the marriage between Prince Albert, Edward VII and Princess Alexandra on the 9th July, 1863 that the early Botanic Gardens started to develop. This date is now widely accepted as the official 'start' of the Botanic Gardens. It is claimed that five seedlings were sent by Queen

Victoria to New Zealand and that the oak tree that stands in the Gardens at present was one of those seedlings [see fig.2].

The Gardens played a significant role in the transformation of the landscape. Once the land for a botanic garden had been secured, there was a vested interest in establishing methods to ensure cultivation and propagation of introduced flora and fauna in Canterbury. This resulted in the formation of societies and interest groups that could help transform not only the space in the Gardens, but the surrounding landscape to a place that was familiar and productive for the new colony.

The Canterbury Acclimatisation Society was founded with the intention to “promote the cultivation and planting of the Government Domain” (Tritenbach 1987: 104). The society formed on the 25th April 1864 and in the following month was granted four acres of land between the Avon River and the Public Hospital that was part of the Government Domain (Lamb, 1964: 17). The Canterbury Acclimatisation society was responsible for introducing and naturalising foreign species into the New Zealand landscape. Acclimatisation societies were fashionable in the Antipodes, and colonists in Australia had already established others. The societies often “worked hand in hand” with botanic gardens (Tritenbach 1987: 36).

The Christchurch Botanic Gardens received imported plants, trees and animals not only from England, but also from other countries around the world. The acclimatisation grounds bore the nickname ‘the Zoo’ as the area of Hagley Park soon became home to a collection of exotic animals such as monkeys, emus, kangaroos, bears, and the like, some intended for naturalisation in New Zealand, others as a novelty to satisfy the whims of wealthy individuals (Lamb, 1964: 22). The society introduced a variety of birds and animals from England, such as thrushes, blackbirds, linnets, skylarks, hares and pheasants. In 1885, bumble bees were introduced so that new plants could pollinate successfully (Tritenbach 1987: 104).

In 1928, the Acclimatisation Society relocated to a site near Lake Ellesmere, and the ground on which it had previously stood was returned to the Domains Board and became ‘The Woodlands’ as part of the Botanic Gardens (Tritenbach 1987: 108). The Woodlands today plays host to thousands of daffodils and is a very popular place for locals and tourists to visit in the spring.

Contemporaneous with the introduction of animals was the importation of a variety of English trees and plants that were seen to ‘improve’ the colony. Dr Julius von Haast, the Canterbury Provincial Geologist, had also obtained seeds for the new Gardens from Kew’s Royal Botanic Gardens. In the same year of 1864, the sum of £1,000 was granted by the Provincial Superintendent to pursue the first developments in the Botanic Gardens in what is now known as the Armstrong Lawn (1987: 104).

The Role (and Problem) of Funding

What becomes very clear in reading various Curators reports and newspaper articles is the amount of literature on the topic of funding for the Gardens. This issue spans the years the Gardens have been open and to a certain extent has shaped the way the Gardens have operated as part of the community. The Botanic Gardens has contributed in a number of ways to the wider Christchurch community, playing host to various community events such as flower shows, royal visits, band concerts, picnics, weddings, and supplying trees and plants to local bodies, to name but a few. The issue of funding was somewhat different during the colonial era when the botanic garden was supposed to produce some sort of revenue for the colony. As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the functions of a colonial botanic gardens were to provide revenue by propagating ‘economic plants.’ This was attempted at the Christchurch Botanic Gardens: olive, mulberry, tobacco, arrowroot and sugar maple, amongst others, were grown for revenue. However, due to insufficient funding for wages and other expenses work on propagating these plants was halted (Barnett, Gilpin & Metcalf: 1963, 24)

With the development of the Gardens came the ubiquitous problem of funding the running of such a large area. Christchurch Botanic Gardens, according to McCracken (1997: 31), was categorised with a selection of other colonial botanic gardens which “were municipal-run, which were more than public parks, which often distributed economics [sic], but which could not be classified as scientific gardens.” Christchurch Botanic Gardens has undergone several management changes. With these have come

changes in the funding process, which governed to a large extent the production and development of the Gardens.

In 1870, as botanic gardens were being developed in the main centres of New Zealand, in Christchurch, Dunedin Wellington, and Auckland, there was some debate within the government in Wellington as to the best place to invest in a botanic garden that would be useful for the whole colony. The debate began with the request of £300 “to be placed on the estimates for the purpose of laying out the Botanical Garden, Wellington” (1870 v.9: 433). A dispute followed, with the opposition suggesting that this should be spread equally amongst other botanic gardens. A government nursery was suggested for Wellington, as it was important to have a centre at which the Colony could receive and exchange seeds from around the world and therefore cultivate plants that “would be beneficial to New Zealand.” That a central botanic garden, much like Kew, had not yet reached full economic potential in New Zealand, was vexing for some. A minister is quoted as saying: “it was not very credible that a colony of which had existed for some thirty years could not yet boast a botanical garden worthy of New Zealand” (1870 v.9: 433).

Before the Christchurch City Council took control in 1946, the Gardens relied heavily on the donation of funds from local bodies. Provincial government control was revoked in 1876, and with this came a reduction in the Board’s activities in the Gardens and a withdrawal of all grants to the Domain (Barnett et al, 1963: 24). The Gardens struggled financially and the Board had to ask clubs and other local organisations for money to support the wages and other expenses incurred.

According to the Christchurch Domains Act 1913, the Board was entitled to a contribution to the Gardens from local authorities within a 10 mile radius of the Post Office. This provided the Gardens with a total of £2,500, which according to the Board in their 1922 Annual Report became insufficient as the Board was now using £3,945 to maintain an increasingly popular Botanic Gardens. Therefore, in 1923 the Board saw fit to increase the contributions from local bodies to cover maintenance costs (*Annual Report 1923*).

Due to the increasing population of Christchurch city the Board felt the pressure of providing services in the Botanic Gardens and it was suggested by a council

representative on the Board that charge of the Gardens be placed into the hands of the City Council. In 1946, an Act was passed in Parliament placing Hagley Park and the Botanic Gardens under control of the Christchurch City Council (Barnett et al, 1963: 24). The City Council assured the Board that it “would maintain the existing domain and the Botanic Gardens, recognising the need for continuing the Botanic and scientific aspects” (*CCC Minutes* 1945)

In addition to funding implemented by legislation, bequests were of great importance to the continuous progress of the Gardens. Notable members of the community donated funds for conservatories, plants, trees, or objects for ornamental display. The interest and concern for the up-keep of the Gardens is expressed in the generosity of these donations by local citizens. Examples of this generosity from an interested public are the two large conservatories that are still popular today. Cunningham house built in 1926 costing £10,000 was a bequest from Mr G.A.C Cunningham, and Townend House was gifted to the Gardens in 1914 by Mrs Townend (Barnett et al 1963: 144).

The ongoing need for financial support created important relationships with established members of the community and local businesses. So that the Gardens could continue with its botanical and horticultural practices, it relied heavily on the contributions and donations from the public.

Beautifying the Community: The Social Role of the Gardens

Over time, the Gardens contributed greatly to the image of Christchurch as a ‘Garden City.’ This was achieved through the Gardens’ close liaison with the local community. Most colonial botanic gardens served a variety of community organisations with plants and trees:

Colonial botanic gardens serviced their community by supplying government offices, churches, hospitals, schools, cemeteries, public parks, sewerage farms, jails, almshouses, reformatories, police and military barracks, leper colonies, orphanages, and of course, government house with flowers, palms, roses, orchids,

ferns, and an array of foliage plants. In addition, curators were expected to provide public assemblies, concerts, balls, fetes, tea meetings and bazaars with decorative flowers and plants. (McCracken 1997: 172)

Not only did Christchurch's Botanic Gardens occupy a central green space within the city, it became the centre of supplies for the local community. Supplying trees and plants to the wider community was beneficial to the Gardens as it was a crucial part of its funding, and at the same time, it 'beautified' Christchurch. In the archives is a list compiled by Curator John Armstrong in 1882 detailing the "return of trees to district bodies from the Domain nursery since 1869." In which a total number of 763,034 trees were distributed into the community over a thirteen-year period (*Curator's Report* 1882).

There is also mention of fetes and community activities held in the Gardens to raise funds to keep the Gardens operating. The 1909 Curator's Annual Report states there to be an "arrangement of a fete in the Gardens during February, to raise funds for further improvements." The fete was a great success, raising a profit of £1217, which was spent on new improvements to the Gardens, including a "Rose garden, a new native section, extension of the gardens, purchase of herbaceous border, new gates two new wells and a small lake, few walks and existing ones improved" (*Annual Report* 1909).

The necessary relationship between the Gardens and the local community developed over time as Christchurch grew, with increasing numbers of both visitors to the park and the establishment of community organisations. There are letters in the archives from local organisations thanking the Gardens for their support. A letter from the Medical officer in-charge at the Military Sanatorium for soldiers in the First World War writes:

Sir, I wish to tender to your Board my appreciation and thanks for the many ways in which this institution, the Military Sanatorium, has been helped by the curator of your Board, Mr James Young...I feel that the progress that has been made with the laying out of the sanatorium grounds and flower beds has been greatly helped by the ready and kind assistance thus received (15th July, 1921).

Stewart & Strathern (2003) note that landscape "is a process because its shape at any given time reflects change and is a part of change" (2003:4), this is also applicable to the Botanic Gardens. The space in the Gardens served as a "contextual" landscape, which

was continually open to changing social processes, and at the same time, the Gardens assumed an active role in changing the landscape around it. The supply of trees to various parts of the city contributed to Christchurch's growing image as a Garden City.

According to Cookson (2000), "Christchurch was most remarkable for the extent to which it applied this garden concept outside parks to other public spaces in the town." It was probably because of the amount of community involvement in the beautification of Christchurch, and of course the establishment of a Beautifying Association in 1897 that "Christchurch people themselves began to develop and promote their identity." The Association sought to make the city more attractive by encouraging garden cultivation in areas all over Christchurch. It was in this way that "Christchurch's sense of being an English place was subsequently pushed forward rapidly by civic beautification" (2000:29-30).

The 'Garden City' as a social movement is something I introduced in the previous chapter as a movement that began as a way of bringing the country into the town, and providing a healthy and aesthetically pleasing environment. The first mention of Christchurch as a Garden City is said to have been made at the 1906-7 International Exhibition in Christchurch by Sir John Gorst, British Commissioner at the time. This label at the time invoked a sense of future development: "it implied progress (the desert, or swamp, had been made to bloom), charm and Englishness" (Cookson, 2000:30).

The concept of the 'Garden City' as an identity employed by the residents of Christchurch comes from this philosophy of town and nature combined, but has been reasserted as a tangible, marketable identity. The Botanic Gardens as the pinnacle of Englishness and of a Garden city is something that I came across as a dominant theme during my research through the archives. This theme is intrinsically linked to Christchurch's British colonial heritage and ideas of 'bettering' the native landscape through planting trees, keeping ordered lawns and flower borders. The creation of the Garden city was, and still is seen as, a triumph over swampy native bush:

Councils of the past, and that of today have all contributed to the city's beauty. Out of a tree-less waste of swampy ground, with a flax and raupo lined sluggish stream, Christchurch has been made into a Garden City (*The Leaguer* no date, 1948).

Native landscape that was once “tree-less” and ground that was all but a swampy waste, was transformed into a liveable place by beautifying the land with trees and gardens. It is significant to note that throughout the early development of the Gardens, all of the curators who worked there as producers of the space were British, most coming from England, and it was not until 1933 that the Gardens were run by the first New Zealand curator, James McPherson. The construction of a botanic garden on foreign soil was an effective method in establishing control over, and forming an identity with, what was once a ‘foreign’ landscape. According to Cook (1998):

Our ultimate act in possessing the wilderness is to adopt it as an idea and maintain it as such. In so doing it acquires the characteristics of a garden with the inevitable instability and fragility resulting from our intrusion into its status quo. It becomes as artificial and potentially ephemeral as a bed of tulips, and its survival is entirely dependent on human intervention (1998:51-52).

The transformed garden space also served as a “visual link to migrants personal and collective past, a projection of the European presence across the landscape, and a promise of continuing development of the future” (Raine in Dalley & Labrun, 2000: 76). The order and form of the botanic garden looked strikingly different from the native landscape. One can think about control over nature as not only part of a wider landscape that colonials were endeavouring to change, but right down to the flowerbeds in parterres bordering manicured lawns. To the Victorians, the formal garden as an “antithesis to the wilderness” was also a statement of middle and upper class ideals because “it implied art, culture...signs of real civilisation” (Cook, 1998:55).

The Gardens were a compensatory space for settlers. The prospect of immigrating to New Zealand invited the idea that people were travelling to a ‘better’ place than England. They were enticed with the opportunity of more chances to succeed in this new land, which would provide a superior lifestyle than their current one in their home country (Graham 1981: 113). The new colony targeted specific social classes and jobs that would enable a smooth running of the cultural and economic aspects of society; a transplant of all the best parts of British society. The people targeted by the New Zealand Company to create a prosperous colony in the 1840s were “hard-working rural groups” and “cultured men of capital” (Graham 1981: 114).

The strong ties that the staff felt with the Gardens' colonial heritage is reflected in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens' commemorative centennial book *A Garden Century 1863-1963*, published by the City Council. A copy was given to Queen Elizabeth II on her visit to the Botanic Gardens in the same year. The book, compiled by those in charge of the Gardens, is an ideal source from which the reader can get a feel of the image the Gardens wished to convey. Not surprisingly, in a description of Hagley Park and the Botanic Gardens, the staff made comparisons to England:

It is the main central park of the city and provides both active and restful recreation for thousands of people of all ages. It is what Hyde Park is to London...The native vegetation, while of interest to botanists, had little appeal to the settlers (Barnett et al,1963: 19).

Up until the 1980s, the articles are punctuated with references to British royal visits and tree plantings in the Gardens, as well as quotes from visiting royalty praising the Gardens. With this comes a real sense of dignity and pride expressed by the staff at the Gardens and from the majority of locals. The Christchurch Press in the 1960's published a comment by the Duke of Devonshire that "he had never seen better kept gardens or spent a happier hour...and I'm not just saying that out of politeness" (*Christchurch Press*, no date, 1961). The connection to the royal family and heads of state in England is physically apparent in the Gardens through the planting of trees in commemoration of royal occasions like weddings and deaths.

What is more, the land on which these trees were planted was, up until 1946, exclusively Crown property according to the Chairman of the Domains Board, Mr Henry Kitson:

Very few people realise that the Christchurch Botanic Gardens is the only reserve in New Zealand where the whole area is crown property...and that the board, as trustees for the crown, has government-appointed representatives on it. Being free from civic control, the board members can concentrate on one thing only and that is the development of the gardens, so that in a few years the gardens can take a place alongside such great institutions as the Botanic gardens of Melbourne, Sydney, Kew, Edinburgh, Dublin and Arnold Arboretum (*Christchurch Sunday Star*, 2nd May, 1936).

The fact that the Gardens were situated on Crown property for a period of time meant that members of the Board had a piece of land that was not under control of the local government, and were free to create a space that would emulate the botanic gardens of Britain and Australia, regarded as institutions to look up to. This also inferred that developments would be of a scientific nature and not geared towards improving its role as a public park.

Resistance to ‘Beautification’

For gardeners and Curators concerned with establishing an institute of research in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens, it was in their interest to showcase collections of exotic flora and fauna, and they took pride in creating a botanical garden that displayed a diverse range of plants from countries around the world:

In this seventy-five acres of garden is probably the finest collection of exotic and indigenous plants in New Zealand. Plants from most countries are represented, either outdoors or under glass. Alpine plants from the European Alps, the Himalayas and America flourish in the rock garden while nearby Australian gum trees tower upwards to the sky. In the bog garden are plants which range from the southern regions of Chile to the tropical isles of Hawaii (Barnett et al 1963: 16).

The insistence by some to assert the true botanical role of the Gardens meant that they resisted the advances of ‘anglicising’ the Gardens with the lawns and walks of a public park.

The Curator (then called the Government Gardener) of the Gardens J.F Armstrong and his son, J.B Armstrong, preferred to collect New Zealand specimens to study as opposed to beautifying the Gardens for enjoyment of the public. The Armstrongs planted many trees in the Gardens that still survive today. J.F Armstrong had a specific interest in botany and exchanged seeds and plants with botanic gardens elsewhere in New Zealand, and with Dr Hooker at Kew Gardens (Pawson, 2000:66). The Armstrongs resisted beautifying the Gardens with neat colourful flowerbeds, and this resulted in clashes with the Board who had less regard for botanical specimens and were intent on making the

Gardens attractive to the public. The Board tried to ensure this by making sure the Armstrongs submitted detailed reports on the improvements of the Gardens that would suit the enjoyment of the public, rather than the cultivation of plants. This impasse between the Board and the Armstrongs resulted in the resignation of father and son in October 1889.

This tension was also expressed by a member of the public in a letter to the editor of a local Christchurch newspaper in 1911:

Sir- ...Again, our Gardens that used to be as lovely in its wilderness, is gradually becoming a place of stiff parterres— flamboyant and suburban; all its grace, its delicacy, its distinction, is giving place to the worst kind of cockneyism, its is becoming a place where ‘Arry and ‘Arriet, did they exist here, might disport themselves in coster fashion, and feel thoroughly at home... (*The Press*, 19th April, 1911).

This was a blatant rejection of the beautification of the Gardens and a consideration of the ornamental flowerbeds as garish and inappropriate. However, the association with the Gardens as a colonial space was still strong. The fear or anger at the Christchurch Botanic Gardens becoming a space that might attract “the worst kind of cockneyism” due to its rejection of the natural wilderness, is based on socio-economic values and an upper class English loathing of the potential transgression into a space used by the common working class.

The issue as to whether the Gardens should celebrate its English colonial ties or concentrate on planting more native trees continues today. In a recent survey of the Gardens, a member of the public called the Garden “the jewel in the crown of the garden city” (Opinions, 2004) which encapsulated the opinion of many, that the Botanic Gardens is the centre of the Garden City. The words ‘jewel’ and ‘crown’ invoke the feeling of an imperial English colonial Garden. It seems even with the fashionable celebration of nationalism and a New Zealand identity in the post-colonial era, many users of the Gardens like to think of the Garden as English. On the homepage for the Christchurch Botanic Gardens website is a statement that invokes the colonial attitude to a ‘triumph’ over nature:

Until 1863, the Gardens were largely natural wetlands and sand dunes. Since this time, they have been transformed into a place of beauty with undoubtedly one of the finest collections of exotic and indigenous plants to be found anywhere in New Zealand (www.ccc.govt.nz).

Summary

The history of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens shows the formation of space in the Gardens and highlights its contradictory, heterotopic nature. The conflict between science and leisure is evident in the history of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. This resulted in a contradiction: it was simultaneously involved in beautifying Christchurch, by decimating the native landscape, yet it served as a space where botanists could preserve and study native plant species. The label ‘Garden city’ is an oxymoronic way of describing an urban space. The appeal of nature, specifically a garden, brings with it images of beauty, green space and the ‘natural’ to market a city. Those who oversaw the running of the Gardens were not only intent on creating a scientific collection of plants, but also invested time and money to create an inner city garden that displayed the order and presentation of nature in the style of its Victorian heritage.

The Gardens became a heterotopia of compensation. They were more ordered, more English, and an aesthetic ‘improvement’ on the native landscape. In the broader scheme of things, the new settler society was to be better than life before, as people with desirable jobs were plucked from Britain in order to establish a well-oiled, functioning colony without such ‘defects’ as unemployment and poverty. In the next chapter, I jump forward in time and analyse the current social practices in the Gardens. Using interviews with key staff members and accounts of the tours I participated in, I demonstrate the link between contemporary meanings and experiences in the Gardens and those I have discussed as part of its history.



[Fig. 2] The Albert-Edward Oak, the marker of the creation of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens, planted in 1863. *Photo:* Susannah Wieck, 2005



[Fig.3] The Peacock Fountain in the Gardens, behind is the Canterbury Museum. *Photo:* Susannah Wieck, 2005



[Fig. 4] A punter dressed in Victorian garb on the Avon River in the Botanic Gardens.

Photo: Susannah Wieck, 2005

Chapter three

Diverse uses of Space: Tours in the Botanic Gardens

Following on from an historical analysis, in this chapter I focus on the contemporary production and use of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. An analysis of tours in the Gardens, and interviews with tour guides bring together the processes of the social production and the daily practices that make up the social construction of the Gardens. Low ([1996], 2002) who in agreement with Lefebvre (1991), notes that the social production and social construction of space are somewhat “illusory” separations of space, and that “social space is a whole, and any one event or illustration has within it aspects of that whole” ([1996] 2002:114). In this chapter and in chapter four, the relationship between the two perspectives is evident. I show how the space in the Gardens is experienced and contested by those who use and produce it on a daily basis, contextualised within the various historical processes that have, in turn, shaped these experiences and contestations.

The majority of my fieldwork was spent in the Botanic Gardens, from sitting in the information centre tea room amongst the archives, glancing outside the window at passing foot-traffic, to wandering through the Gardens observing and taking notes, to participating in official tours. During my observations, I learnt that the Gardens were used by a variety of people in a variety of different ways. On any given day I could see families out for a walk, children playing in the playground, tourists punting or canoeing on the Avon River, people taking photographs and admiring the flowers and trees, and so on. I had visited the Gardens many times as a local resident before I started this research project, going for an evening run, feeding the ducks and showing around visiting relatives, not all simultaneously.

As a part of my fieldwork I was involved in three different tours of the Gardens and each group gave me a different perspective on the way in which the Gardens were used. The first was a school trip managed by the Environmental Education Coordinator at

the City Council who created curriculum-based programmes for experiential learning in the Gardens for schoolchildren. Another was a personal tour with an ex-president of the Friends of the Botanic Gardens, and I also accompanied an American tour group through the Gardens. Participation in the tours gave me a three-dimensional experience of the Gardens that accompanied the archival research on activities, events, and the day-to-day running of the Gardens I had conducted.

What we have seen from the history of botanic gardens is that they are complex public spaces that play host to several different roles for a variety of people. To recapitulate, botanic gardens are centres usually involved in most of the following areas: education, conservation, science, research, and aesthetics. The aspects of the Gardens that the tour guides showed and what they chose to say about the Gardens gave me an insight into how they were represented and packaged to suit different groups of people. Additionally, being on the tours provided first-hand knowledge of the reactions and perceptions of the Gardens from members of the group. I interviewed the members of staff who took the tours which provided me with the perceptions of those who were essentially attributing meaning to the physical space, and therefore shaping the experiences of those who used it.

In the last few years, there has been a shift in the way the Gardens are presented to the public. Tourism in the Gardens has accelerated and this has been recognised by the City Council, who use the Garden tours as an effective method of promoting the Gardens to the visitor. This has impacted on the internal structuring of the Gardens, as the Council created a new position to promote and market the Gardens that was filled just over 18 months ago.

Tours at the Gardens

Martin⁷, a staff member who doubles as Security Officer, usually leads tours at the Gardens. Helping out the staff at the Gardens are volunteers from the Friends of the Botanic Gardens, who also conduct regular tours of the Gardens for visitors. Martin and

⁷ I have used pseudonyms for all those interviewed for this thesis.

the Friends' tour guides have a symbiotic relationship. Martin helps the Friends by sharing his knowledge of the Gardens, providing any anecdotes or comments he thinks will enhance the tours, and the Friends take tours for Martin if he is too busy, or double booked. The tour guides cater for local and overseas tourists, horticultural/botanical interest groups, and offer educational tours for schoolchildren who are taken on curriculum-based excursions during term time.

I did not attend scientific tours of the Gardens. However, I found out through my interview with Martin that tours for interest groups, with a specific botanical or horticultural focus are tailored to the group's specialist area and often involve a member of the Garden staff with a high level of knowledge particular to that area. Martin informed me that last year they had a couple of rose interest groups that visited the Gardens, and for that sort of occasion he would "involve one of the gardeners," making sure there was someone there who was "more technical, more specialised" than himself in that subject.

I asked Martin if there was a 'standard tour' that he took through the Gardens, meaning whether he did the same pre-mapped course and a prepared presentation on the highlights of the Gardens for each group that came through. Martin replied that this was not really the case, but rather the tours varied and were shaped to suit the requirements and interests of the group:

If it's a general group from overseas and they've already been touring around we try and start with where they've been and what they've done and its very much a case of playing by ear and going on what type of information people like to gain from the group as you go along. So if people are leaning towards native type stuff then I'll try and make sure that we have a little bit of a walk in the native section. It can be difficult with some of the groups and time limitations. But some of the people that come around, I mean you've got husband and wife and husband's not happy about being dragged around the Gardens, and it shows in a way, but its part of the tour and they're stuck with it. So you try and make it as entertaining as possible, throw in a few funny stories and things that happened in the Gardens...

Initially, I was surprised at the amount and variety of tour groups the Gardens receive from overseas. Not only are there tourist groups interested in the history and culture of the Gardens, but some groups, such as a group of market gardeners on visitation from

England, want to know about the internal day-to-day business side of running a botanic gardens. Martin structures these types of tours very differently, because he knows they are interested in comparing things like business methods, he emphasises the ‘behind the scenes’ goings on to these groups as well as the highlights:

I get a couple of English tour groups that come through that are retired plant people, usually market gardeners. So they’ll come in and I’ll give them a walk around the Gardens, show them native stuff. Perhaps tell them a little bit more about our set up, how we’re funded and administered here, whereas some of the groups are not quite so interested in, but with this group that is part of their learning, part of what they’re interested in.

The Gardens are also frequented by those who have donated trees and plants, or sums of money, and are helping maintain the Gardens. Martin takes around retired Rotarians and Lions Club members, both of which are prominent community organisations, and points out to them the trees that have been donated by their respective groups. Martin told me that there are a number of trees that have been planted by presidents of Rotary in the children’s playground and makes sure they see them.

Alumni of Stanford University and Harvard University, what Martin called the “more salubrious kind of U.S universities,” visit the Gardens regularly. Martin informed me that tours for this group are usually part of a larger tour of New Zealand or the South Island:

We have a company here called *Pionair*, the DC3 plane that travels around, we’ve got two of them I think. And they specialise in these types of groups, obviously richer Americans, part of the alumni from Stanford or whatever. So they come and they organise tours around New Zealand, or around the South Island and they will arrange for them to come here and I’ll meet them for an hour, an hour and a half and walk them round, [and show] all of the highlights.

I asked Martin what kind of information this kind of group is interested in learning, and he replied that he would normally talk about the historical aspects of the Gardens, and show them some native plants, similar to the tours that I attended.

There are groups that use the Garden tours as educational experiences, not only to learn about the Gardens *per se*, but to learn about larger conservation and environmental

issues. This is exemplified in the case study of the school trip I participated in described later in this chapter. However, Martin told me that along with their usual groups of visitors they would “get the one offs.” For example, he had recently been contacted by a primary school who had a group of Chinese teachers visiting for two weeks. The school had asked if Martin could take the teachers around the Gardens to show them how children are taught in Christchurch. He said he would probably show them some of the biodiversity programme that I had participated in, which I explain in detail later.

Martin has also taken through Asian groups who are involved in English learning programmes in Christchurch. Their teachers wanted to use the tours in the Gardens as a way of listening to English speech. As the tour was focussed more on learning the English language and less on what the Gardens had to offer, and was a free service, the staff decided that this was not in the interests of the Botanic Gardens and they discouraged further tours of that nature. Other Asian visitor groups visit the Gardens as part of their official visit to Christchurch. Martin explained:

...part of their visit is the fact that they go to the Christchurch City Council here and have a look at the [organisational] structure and they come [into the Gardens] with an interpreter. But that’s a market that’s being looked at as we know we got a lot of Asian visitors through here but we have no involvement.

They have also had groups from Austria and Finland, who usually go through the tour with an interpreter.

Case Study: A Walk with a Friend of the Gardens

I have included this case study for two reasons. Firstly, because I am conducting a spatial analysis of the Gardens it serves an illustration of the physical spaces, and how these are navigated in social practice. It is more than a narrative of a tour; it contextualises the Gardens in an exploration of its history and meanings as seen through the eyes of the tour guides and visitors.

Secondly, as I am guided through the juxtaposition of conflicting sites, this case study exhibits the heterotopic aspects of the Gardens. Foucault (1986) writes that in (post)modern society “We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed.” Meanings from the past and present are juxtaposed in the same social spaces, and can be experienced simultaneously. A heterotopic space also contains conflicting and diverse meanings that are experienced “side-by-side” by individuals (1986: 22). These conflicting sites and meanings are experienced on the tours⁸.

My personal tour of the Gardens was led by the ex-President of the Friends of the Botanic Gardens, Margaret. Because it was only Margaret, and myself it was a lot easier to take in the information, and it quickly took on the form of an informal chat, rather than a structured tour. For the purposes of avoiding repetition, but including as much information as possible, I have inserted additional material gathered from my tour with Martin and the American tour group. Martin’s tour of the Gardens was conducted in conjunction with *Grand Circle Tours*, a coach tour attended by middle-aged and retired Americans who had flown in from a brief tour of Australia the day before. By using material from both tours in my description, I can take the reader through the Gardens and articulate the commentaries on the space as I experienced it first-hand.

The tour with Margaret had come about when I had picked up a leaflet at the information centre on the Friends Association. On the back of the leaflet was a contact number for the secretary of the association so I gave her a ring, only to be told by her husband that she was overseas. He suggested that I might like to contact the ex-president of the association for any queries I had. I apologised for interrupting his gardening, which I thought was quite fitting, and gave Margaret a call.

I wanted to know a bit more about the Friends, as they seemed like an interesting group to explore for my research. The Friends is a volunteer organization with about 400 members, they are keen advocates of the Gardens and promote them in their spare time, and with their own funds. When I called, I told Margaret that I was conducting some research on the Gardens and was interested in what the Friends did and what they had to

⁸ See map [Fig.1, p.27] as a reference guide to the various collections and gardens that I discuss in this section.

say about the Gardens. Margaret was unsure about what I wanted to know, as was I to a certain extent because I was just beginning my fieldwork. However, later in the conversation she asked if I would like to go on a personal tour of the Gardens with her and I took her up on the kind offer.

When we met at the Gardens for my tour, Margaret began with a briefing about the Friends and their relationship with the Gardens. This was not usually done as part of the normal tours of the Gardens, but for my benefit as a researcher. Margaret was interested in what I was researching at the Gardens, but I could give no concrete answer. I was aware that I did not want to dictate to Margaret exactly what to talk about, as I might have missed out unforeseen valuable information. Nevertheless, to give her a focus for the tour, I said that she could discuss whatever she would normally talk about for a tourist group. I realised that the information I gathered from this particular tour would differ in focus from that of a public Friends' tour of the Gardens. Although I first thought it meant that I was not getting an 'authentic' tour, this was beneficial to me as Margaret was able to give an insiders account of what would happen on a tour, as well as anecdotal comments on tourist behaviour that would not have been made otherwise.

Margaret began the tour just as she would for any other group and somewhat tailored the tour with respect to my interests, yet in keeping with the highlights the Friends would normally talk about. What became apparent from Margaret's description was that the tours were very much guided by the interests of the tourist group in session, something that Martin confirmed. When I had asked Margaret to relay the same information that would normally be told to visitors, she replied that this was dependent on what members of the group wished to know. For example, she remarked that the Americans "love colour" and that she would therefore tailor the tour to incorporate the more colourful plants and flowers. Margaret mentioned that the Friends have had to learn about the birds in the Gardens as visitors often want to know about native birds, and that many people come for the trees, which is another major focal point. Tours last for about an hour to an hour and a half and the Friends tailor both horticultural and historical information to suit the interests of the tour group.

The groups that the Friends take through the Gardens range in size from a few people to about fifteen. If the groups are bigger than this, then they get two guides. The

tour guides have recently been equipped with new microphones and speakers, which they can attach to their waists so that large groups can hear their commentary. Martin had recently told me that a few of his tours were conducted using wireless microphones, enabling him to commentate, and the tour group to spread out and explore parts of the Gardens whilst listening to him with individual headsets. Martin claimed that it was sometimes difficult to guide in this manner as he had to remember not to shout and to keep track of where everybody was going.

According to Margaret, to become a guide Friends must undergo forty hours of training. After the training, they take the tours accompanied by a mentor until they are confident enough to go by themselves. The organisation does more than take tours; volunteers liaise with the garden staff, and are regularly kept up-to date with happenings in the Gardens, by attending lectures given by the staff at the Gardens at the beginnings of each season. Margaret noted that although the staff at the Gardens are very busy, they are good at keeping the Friends updated.

This liaison with the staff is important, as the Friends have another crucial function as volunteers and protectors of the Botanic Gardens. The Friends often take the form of a political group, which can campaign on behalf of the Gardens, against the Council if need be. Margaret informed me that this is an important role because in a particular circumstance where the staff at the Gardens find it difficult to see eye-to-eye with their employer, the Friends act as an independent volunteer-based organisation, and approach the Council for them.

The issue of funding, as I have mentioned in previous chapters is of continuous concern to the Gardens, and has caused the Friends to become more politically minded over the years, negotiating and lobbying for more funding from the Council. Funds are crucial in order to develop the Gardens. Although the Council has allocated about \$10 million for new developments, there is still concern amongst the Friends that the Gardens receive the funding they deserve. Margaret informed me that as the Gardens are part of the Council, the money raised “goes into the ‘everything pot’ of the City Council and doesn’t necessarily come back to where it was created.” The Friends have a desire to see the status of the Gardens equal that of the Canterbury Museum and Art Gallery. While we were on the topic of the Council, Margaret told me that visitors to the gardens are

surprised to learn that it under the control of the Council. I think what she meant by this is that many American and European visitors are used to walking around privately owned Gardens.

The fact that the Gardens are now funded by the Council, and that prior to 1946 they did not have funding, was mentioned by Martin to the American tourists at the start of his tour. Martin also informed us that Christchurch has 881 parks in the city, which was fitting given its 'Garden City' image. We learned that 90% of the trees in the Gardens were introduced, and that the Gardens are the second biggest central city park in the world, following Central Park in New York. The Americans seemed quite impressed by this statement. Martin called the Gardens an 'English park;' before the English arrived it was all swampland and the settlers wanted to create a piece of English heritage in the new colony with an 'English feel' to it. Martin told us that Christchurch had an English Anglican image, alluding to the architectural style of the surrounding buildings in the Arts Centre.

Margaret noted that the tour would not normally begin where we were standing, but by the Canterbury Museum entrance to the Gardens, and that we were in fact doing the tour backwards. Gardens staff had researched where the majority of tourists were likely to be, and it was in the area by the Museum. This is also where they would collect the money for the tour, which cost \$5. This led to further discussion of funding for the Friends. Margaret informed me that the Friends also make money through donations and by selling plants outside the information centre. The Friends have their own greenhouses situated in the Gardens, and grow these plants on site, abiding by strict rules to minimize the risk of disease that the plants might pick up from elsewhere. Margaret mentioned that there are several rules in place that almost takes the pleasure out of being a volunteer, but she said now that since she was over 60, she "didn't care!"

The conversation turned to education when I mentioned that I planned to look at the educational side of the Gardens as well. Margaret said that the Friends did have an education programme that operated in the school holidays, with four seasonal programmes, before the Council restructured things. They would give children 'detective sheets,' which asked questions about plants and flowers so that they had to hunt through the Gardens for the answers. This was designed to get them out of the children's

playground and into the gardens. Margaret commented that the Friends are surprised at the number of people who do not know half of what the Gardens has to offer until they do this sort of activity.

This activity was successful in its day, but was discontinued and the Friends have involved the Gardens in a programme called *Kidsfest*, a large activity- based programme with events happening all over Christchurch. Kidsfest involves a range of educational, adventure and sports activities for children, taking place in sites such as the Aquarium, Orana Wildlife Park (the local zoo), and Canterbury Museum (www.kidsfest.co.nz). The particular activity at the Gardens was called ‘S.O.S – Save Our Seeds.’ During regular visits to the archives, I witnessed preparations for this display. The information centre had been decorated with a giant seed attached to a ceiling fan, posters, diagrams and other such media informing the public of the importance of seeds and links with conservation. The kids had to collect endangered seeds and deposit them into the special seed bank in the information centre.

My tour of the Gardens ‘officially’ began with Margaret noting a tall Canadian pine by the information centre. She commented that these varieties grow bigger here than in Canada, due to the nature of our climate. We continued along the path and stopped at a hebe bush, a popular New Zealand native bush. Margaret told me that there is a purple variety found in the mountains and showed me how to recognize the distinctive leaf shape, which looks like a cross.

Opposite the hebe bush was the weather station, comprised of a small hut and a fenced enclosure. The hut was where Captain Scott calibrated his instruments before his expedition to the Antarctic [see Fig.5]. Had Captain Scott not gone there, Margaret said, “the Antarctic thing would never have happened,” referring to the fact that the Antarctic Centre, as a tourist attraction in Christchurch, would not have existed. This sounded like the Gardens were involved in a significant piece of history and I wondered why this had not been marketed. Margaret informed me that the hut is soon to be restored and will be viewable by the public. I had been inside the hut, which is small and inconspicuous, as part of the school trip I attended at the Gardens. The class had sat on chairs listening to instructions from educators. The plain walls in the interior of the hut contain nothing of interest or any evidence of its historical significance. I would not have known of its

connotations if I had not been told by Margaret. Adjacent to the hut is an enclosed meteorological station that provides, along with the readings at Christchurch airport, the weather readings for Christchurch city.

On the other side of the path, looking over towards a small lake by the information centre, Margaret pointed out a number of cormorant nests in the trees. She explained that cormorants are killing the trees in the gardens, but staff cannot kill the birds as they are a protected species, and the tourists like to look at them. Margaret commented that the Gardens have staff who watch the cormorant's flight patterns, and use this information to try and change where they nest. Next to this lake we came to a ginkgo tree from China. Margaret said it used to be "a nuisance," with it stinking in the summer and shedding hundreds of red berries that had to be cleared. Now these berries are no longer a problem, they disappear quickly because Asian tourists pick them to eat in their stir-fries. This has brought the tree more popularity with the public, and less strife for the staff.

We walked past the ginkgo and came to a tree-lined cross-roads called the Lime/Linden/Tilia walk (Margaret said all three alternative names for the tree, and claimed that it depended on where the tourists came from as to which name they identify with; she believed that 'Linden' was the English name). Margaret told me to stop in the middle of the intersecting paths and to turn to look into the rose garden, embellished with pergolas that were entwined with roses, and which at that particular angle perfectly framed the central sundial. Then Margaret asked me to do a 180° turn to face the New Zealand native garden, which appeared dark, green, and wild. Margaret informed me that she did the same thing with her tour groups, as this created a contrast for the tourist by juxtaposing the Victorian colonial style garden with the original native bush. Margaret did not comment further about this, other than that it was interesting to see the two garden styles. I did not go into the native section with Margaret, but I did with Martin's group.

As we walked into the native section, it got greener and darker and as the bush became denser we immediately heard the sound of native birds. Martin explained to the group that it was the bellbird that we could hear. Amongst the native bush, Martin told us about the New Zealand sporting symbol, the silver fern. It began when the New Zealand

rugby team went to play overseas in England, and they realised that they did not have a matching uniform, like England's team, so they dyed their uniforms black and the coach gave them a silver fern to pin to their pocket to remind them of home. During the story, Martin illustrated to the group how the silver fern tree is silver only on its underside, by turning over a branch. Martin stated that the silver fern always has a smaller 'back up' tree that grows attached to the main trunk, and that he thought it was also quite fitting in keeping with the sports analogy. Martin also pointed out the koru⁹ design, in the buds of the ferns, and told the group that they may have seen this design at the Marae they had visited that morning, or as a Maori tattoo. Martin showed us a piece of rangiora also nicknamed 'bushman's friend' (used as toilet paper!) and is also a good leaf for writing on.

The American tour group also went into the Rose Garden. Here Martin informed us that the gardeners were experimenting with eco-friendly sprays on the roses such as seaweed spray and garlic to stop diseases. As we walked through the Rose Garden, it was evident that the group was impressed at both the layout of the garden and the flowers. One lady remarked "I love the design" and another, looking closely at some rose buds, exclaimed "these are really healthy roses!"

As Margaret and I walked past the Rose Garden we came across a Kauri tree, and Margaret pointed out that people used to dig for Kauri gum, which was worth a lot, even more so than gold at the time. Highlighting some of the scientific uses of the Gardens, Margaret informed me that the annual *BioBlitz* that happened a few months ago found mudfish and whitebait in the nearby pond, which surprised the staff.

The *BioBlitz* is a relatively new environmental and educational programme, with it only being the second time it has operated in New Zealand. The aim of the programme is to "count as many species as possible in a 24-hour survey of a large urban park." This event brought together specialists in subfields of biology, such as botanists and entomologists to study species in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. The *BioBlitz* is a significant event for those involved, as the website suggests, because "it is rare for so many different types of biologists to be able to work together in the same place, at the

⁹ The *koru* is a circular shape that looks like an unfurling scroll. It is based on the look of a fern shoot, which has curled up tips that unfold into a full leaf. It is a sign of birth and spirituality to Maori, the design is popular in Maori bone carving, and is often sold as a necklace pendant in tourist shops.

same time and on the same project” (www.landcareresearch.co.nz). The mention of the *BioBlitz* on my walk with Margaret was a reminder of the scientific usage of the Gardens, and that the space contains not only scientific collections of plants, but a variety of fauna hidden within them. This was an activity that the Curator of the Gardens was actively involved in, being a keen botanist.

We walked towards the rock garden and Margaret pointed out to the tallest tree in the Gardens, a Eucalyptus. Margaret informed me that there are 37 gardeners that look after the Gardens. On Martin’s tour, he informed us that when new shrubs and trees are planted they often put in new irrigation. However, they do not take water out of the Avon River as they are not allowed to, and they “wouldn’t want to anyway.” We stood in front of the giant eucalyptus tree, and Martin told the group that there are 1,000 varieties of eucalyptus ranging from the Blue Mountains in Sydney to the state of California. The trunk is very twisted and we learned that the bark peels off the tree for protection. Martin joked that of course in the Southern Hemisphere the trunks twist the other way! I heard a couple of people actually considering this, undecided if it was a joke. The group was very impressed with the tree and someone asked how old it was, Martin said it was 120 years old.

We continued past the rock garden and Margaret commented on the mallard ducks that have returned to the Gardens, and the *scaup*, a native black diving duck. She explained that there has been a resurgence of birdlife as a result of the re-structuring of the waterways, creating more riverbanks, the natural habitat for the scaup. The scaup almost disappeared, but since the 1990s it is now back in full force. While we were on the topic of birds, Margaret commented that “people really like the woodpigeons” in the Gardens.

Next we came across the Albert-Edward Oak, the tree that officially marked the creation of the Botanic Gardens in 1863. Margaret told me that there were five seedlings sent over by Queen Victoria from England, and this is where one of them was planted. The tree has a small hedge border around it to prevent root damage from people who may wish to get up close to it, and it also has a small plaque in front of the tree detailing the commemoration. I remembered that I had read a couple of newspaper articles kept in scrapbooks in the archives which contained accounts claiming that the ‘real’ Albert Oak

was potentially planted elsewhere in the city. These claims have gone unheeded, however, and the tree in the Botanic Gardens is considered an original. Later on in the tour, Margaret informed me that there are plans to take an off-cut from the Oak and start another tree growing in the Gardens to take over when the original dies.

Opposite the Oak tree across the Avon River is the Woodland area where the memorial band rotunda is situated. The Woodland hosts thousands of daffodils that flourish en masse in the spring. Admiring the yellow and orange blanket of flowers is a popular attraction for visitors. A large metallic sculpture of a giant daffodil has recently been added in this area. Martin told us that the daffodil woodland is the result of thousands of bulbs that were donated when the Curator at the time had asked for donations from the public. The land next to the rotunda was used as a miniature zoo in the 1960s. These were the Acclimatisation grounds. Martin informed us that squirrels were introduced to New Zealand here, but unfortunately they brought over two males! People laughed at this. I thought it was most likely a blessing, unsure as to how welcome the furry, skittish creatures would be in our treetops today. Martin also mentioned that it was here that the first salmon and trout were released into the Avon River and that bumble bees were introduced in 1885 to help with pollination.

In this area of the Gardens, Margaret pointed out the band rotunda, built in 1923 in commemoration of the bandsmen of World War One “who drummed the troops into battle.” Margaret commented that many people misinterpret the bandstand as a memorial to the soldiers who fought in the war. Margaret also noted that the rotunda is one of the three official places where the public can get married, the other two are the native area and the pinetum.

In an interview with the Botanical Resources Coordinator, Linda, I learned that at the time the rotunda was built, the Gardens still followed strict observances of the Church of England, so there were no photographs taken on Sundays as a sign of respect, as it was God’s day. She told me that the rotunda was officially opened on a Sunday and therefore there is no photographic evidence of this event. Sundays were considered a day off from chores and an opportunity for people to dress up in their Sunday best to promenade through the Gardens, simply to be seen. Sweets were not sold from the kiosk, the

children's playground was locked, and visitors were to first obtain written permission from the Curator to enter the glass houses.

As we continued on our walk, Margaret pointed out the rhododendrons which are apparently popular with the tourists. This was confirmed later on my tour with the American coach group, who admired the brilliant red flowers, and a woman claimed, "we don't have these at home!" A few members of the group had photographs taken with themselves next to them. Margaret showed me how the leaves differ in texture and size and gave me a quick horticultural tip- if I was to pick a bouquet for my house that did not flower for awhile, rhododendrons would be good choice because the leaves are interesting to look at in themselves whilst waiting for the flowers to bloom.

Looking across to the other side of the Avon, Margaret pointed to a sculpture of two bodies intertwined, somewhat resembling a sexual position. She claimed that this sculpture raised more complaints than anything else in the Gardens and that "the phone lines were running hot!" Margaret's comment reminded me of the letters to the editor that I had read on this topic in the archives, angry citizens wrote in calling the sculpture 'crude' and 'abysmal.' Attention to this sculpture subsided when the public found out it was called 'The Wrestlers' and they were happy with the possible euphemism. Margaret remarked that artwork is important to the Gardens because it brings in different people, when they have art exhibitions they bring in people who would never usually come in.

Standing opposite 'The Wrestlers' I learned from Martin's tour that the Avon River was called Shakespeare Stream for awhile, no doubt a reinforcement of the 'Englishness' of the Gardens. It is unclear how or why the river was renamed the 'Avon,' nonetheless, there is a connection with the two names as Shakespeare resided in the town Stratford-Upon-Avon. The Maori name for the River was the *Otakaro* (Tritenbach, 1987: 102). We came across a cabbage tree on the river bank, and Martin informed the group that it is so named because the Maori would steam the leaves like cabbage, and that the tree is very hardy and versatile because it grows in the mountains as well as at the sea-shore. At this point, Martin asked if anyone could smell vanilla, and then pointed out a vanilla tree to the group and we all smelt the fragrant tree. During our tour, Martin would occasionally give the Latin names for some flowers and plants, which seemed to reinforce the scientific/educational facets of the Gardens.

At some point in my tour with Margaret, it had started to drizzle and this raised the subject of the weather. Margaret said that they conduct Garden tours rain or shine, because some tourists are part of bus tours and only have one day and a certain amount of time to see them. They usually cannot postpone their tour, and the Friends really want visitors to see the Gardens. Margaret commented that she talked about the New Zealand weather to tourists, especially mentioning that New Zealand has distinct seasons, unlike some other countries where this is not the case, such as Singapore. She said that some people are surprised that New Zealand even has seasons! Margaret mentioned that at the same time she gave statistics of the Gardens, such as how big they are, how old and so on, and she would also talk about the native trees.

The people on Martin's tour were also interested in statistics. When the tour ended, the talk drifted towards the topic of the weather, as the day was particularly cold and unpleasant. Martin assured the group that they had "had a lovely last couple of days except for this one!" People wanted more details about the weather and also of the prominent trees in the Gardens: How big? How old? How much rain?

We continued towards the old Curator's House, that apparently no new curators wanted and is now leased out as a restaurant. Margaret admitted that the Friends should have campaigned for it as their headquarters, but she said they did manage to secure the Curator's Garden, which they use as a 'home garden' to demonstrate to the public interesting gardening methods they can use in their own gardens. I had not noticed this formal vegetable garden, or *potager*, which backs up on to the restaurant, on my previous visits. The garden grows a good selection of herbs, shrubs, vegetables and fruit trees, from New Zealand and other countries.

As we passed the Curator's House and went on to the Curator's path, Margaret pointed out that it was here that she would normally start a tour and give a "brief history lesson" by the statue of William Sefton Moorhouse. It was Moorhouse, immortalised in bronze sitting in a chair with his arms folded, who created the rail tunnel from Christchurch to the port of Lyttelton. He was from the period when England saw Christchurch as a sort of 'farm' to the 'Mother Country.' The first settlers saw a swamp, and then they made it into a desirable place to stay. Margaret told me that the Maori did come to this part of the country but that they did not stay because it was too cold for

them. As I have mentioned in Chapter one, whether Maori did reside on the land on which the Gardens are situated is a moot point. Margaret also remarked that the Gardens were laid out by the same person who designed the Adelaide Botanic Gardens. From our standpoint we could see the Museum, which Margaret told me was established at the same time as the Gardens.

The main entrance to the Gardens is surrounded by other tourist attractions, the Canterbury Museum and buildings across the road of old Christchurch that are now part of the Arts Centre precinct. As we walked past the Moorhouse statue, Margaret pointed to the formal flower beds along the border of the path that are changed twice a year. Apparently it is a difficult task to find the right type of flowers for display and is costly. The beds contained small, bold coloured flowers, I did not know their name due to my lack of botanical knowledge. There were red poppies in the centre of each bed for added height.

Like many botanic gardens around the world, Christchurch Botanic Gardens has a plethora of memorials in all shapes, forms and sizes in its grounds—trees, statues, plants, lakes, bridges and benches—that commemorate royalty, heads of state and benefactors to the Gardens. Perhaps the most noticeable and indeed the most controversial of these memorials is the Peacock Fountain. The name is a little misleading, although the fountain displays bright colours of turquoise, blue and gold, it has nothing to do with its feathered namesake.

During our tour, Margaret pointed out the Peacock Fountain and referred to the fact that it does not have any peacocks on it, but was named after a Mr J.T Peacock, a prominent politician and businessman who had donated a large sum of money to the Gardens. It was gifted to the Gardens by the Christchurch Beautifying Society and both the original and the present fountain were re-built in England. Margaret told me it was going to be painted red, but the Society eventually decided on the gold, white and turquoise motif of herons and dolphins. The original fountain had three tiers and stood in the middle of a circular pool and was first erected in 1920 on the Archery Lawn. The fountain suffered maintenance difficulties and was dismantled in 1949, when it was re-built, only to be dismantled again and re-built in 1995, to both the delight and horror to

Christchurch locals, who either loved it or hated it. Nowadays the Peacock Fountain attracts the many tourists that flock in through the main gates by the Museum.

Margaret informed me that over one million people visit the Gardens every year. Alongside the wall of the museum, she pointed out a New Zealand native tree called a lancewood, also nicknamed the shoelace tree, and showed me that the spiky leaves grow down and then as it gets older, they grow upwards. Margaret said people do not realise this, and often plant them in a narrow spot, not knowing that the tree will need more and more space as it grows.

Next to the Museum is the building that housed the Robert MacDougall art gallery. This was the main art gallery in Christchurch until the new, bigger one was erected a few metres down the road in 2003. Margaret commented that the Friends lobbied for use of the gallery, but they did not get it. She went on to say that it is the Friends' duty "to protect the boundaries of the Gardens" and that they watch carefully what happens to the Gardens' boundaries next to the Museum.

We walked from the old Robert MacDougal art gallery up towards the pinetum. On the way, Margaret pointed out the monkey-puzzle tree and said that the tree was an indicator of high social status in England. The legend behind its name was that an Englishman brought back some monkey-puzzle nuts from Chile and when the tree grew, someone said, "that would be a puzzle for a monkey to climb."

Along the way, Margaret noted that the Friends do a variety of themed walks at the Gardens such as plant hunting, where the object of the walk would be to find specific plants within the Gardens. Margaret talked about effects of pollution and showed me evidence of this as the appearance of damp bark on several trees in the Gardens. She pointed out another ginko tree and commented that the tree tolerates pollution really well, so it thrives in the Gardens.

The pinetum is situated on a grassy hill, which was originally a sand dune. The pines mainly come from the South of France, and South Africa. Margaret informed me that this small area has its own microclimate. We walked down the steps towards the long, rectangular Archery Lawn, which was indeed used for archery originally. We came across a redwood tree and Margaret was pleased that she had showed an American his

first redwood a few days earlier. There, Margaret pointed out the sculpture and fountain called 'Regret' on long term loan in the Archery Lawn.

We reached the herbaceous border, which is, according to Margaret, one of the biggest of its kind in Australasia. This part of the tour led us past the private boy's school Christ's College. Margaret said that she also talked about the history of the school to tour groups. She also commented on the trees on the other side of the herbaceous border path and that she would show people the different cones each one produced. Of particular interest was the cork oak, and Margaret instructed me to feel the cork bark, after which it is named. Margaret commented that in summer, she talked about cicadas to tour groups, explaining how the insects damage the bark when they dig into it with their legs.

We then walked towards the formal herb garden, situated next to the Friends' greenhouse that had just been re-developed. It was more structured and defined in shape than the herbaceous border. On the opposite side of the herb garden is another New Zealand native section that contains grasses and the kowhai tree, the national tree of New Zealand. Next to this is the Australian section. Margaret informed me that the nearby begonia display is popular amongst visitors. We approached the intersecting pathways again and Margaret gestured towards a macrocarpa, she commented that it was a particularly large tree by New Zealand standards, where it was usually the size of a bush. Further along towards the Orchid House, Margaret pointed out the Dawn Redwood, a tree of particular significance in the Gardens, as it was believed to be extinct for many years, but remarkably the species was 're-discovered' in China in the 1950s.

We reached the Orchid House but we did not go in. Usually Fay would take visitors inside, she asked if I had seen inside and I said I had, so we continued on. Next to the Orchid House are the Cactus House and the Fern House. We entered the Fern House and Margaret showed me a silver fern and explained that the Maori used it as a night time guide by turning over the fern and revealing its light, silvery underside to mark trails. Outside the Fern House Margaret showed me the pohutakawa tree, or what is also called the New Zealand Christmas tree. As we walked back towards the information centre where we first started the tour, Margaret pointed towards a Swamp Cypress and told me that some areas of the Gardens were warmer than others, particularly by the banks of the

Avon River, allowing palms, like the Cyprus, to thrive. We reached the information centre, where we had started and on completion of the loop, the tour ended.

Making Sense of Tours in the Gardens

As Rotenberg (1995) suggests, “Extraordinary sites cannot be reduced to a single meaning. They are multivocal symbolic artefacts that mean different things to different people” (1995: 17). What I learned from both tours with Martin and Margaret was that the tours are designed to capture the interest of the visitor using a variety of methods to communicate the story of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. By engaging in the tours I was able to experience the way the tour guides navigate the groups around the public space. What occurred to me was that I had learned statistics, anecdotes, and ‘facts’ about the Gardens spanning a range of subjects- botanical, horticultural, historical, socio-cultural, environmental and geographical information. The tours further emphasised the multi-faceted nature of the Gardens and highlighted what aspects the staff believed to be of interest to the visitor and how they ‘packaged’ the Gardens for a general audience.

The dominant theme that emerged from the tours was the ‘Englishness’ of the Gardens, with continual references to colonial history and the celebration of Victorian gardening styles. The Gardens’ role in ‘Garden City’ image of Christchurch was also mentioned, not simply linking the Gardens to the larger Christchurch community, but asserting they were central to this image of Christchurch. In contrast to this was the showcasing of native flora to the tourists as a way of characterising a unique New Zealand landscape. References to Maori culture came with facts about the native plants in the New Zealand section. However, most exclamations of interest came from the group whilst craning their necks underneath huge trees, gazing at snowy blossoms, or at a particularly beautiful flower.

The role of the tour guide is to add meaning and to navigate the tour group through the space in the Gardens. The commentaries of the tour guides framed the experience of the space for the visitor, by relaying their knowledge not only of the physical space, but also of the historical, social, economic and political structures that

have shaped the meaning of the space. I learned more than just about the plants in the Gardens, I was told the story of the Gardens and how the different sites represent different aspects of the story. Knowledge is what separates the botanic garden from any other park or pleasure grounds. Tour groups experience the beauty of the Gardens, but they also learn something while the beauty is experienced.

“It’s a Business:” Tourism in the Gardens

In an interview with Martin, I wanted to find out about the ‘production’ side of the tour. Whilst we were discussing the popularity of the native section with tourists, Martin raised an interesting point. He told me that he makes a conscious effort to show some groups the native section, particularly those on coach tours, simply because they will not have the opportunity to experience being in the bush during their visit. Many coach tours travel through native bush, but the passengers do not get off and amble through the countryside. Martin explained:

You know, with some of the American groups I take, just a common American tour, then I’ll try and include some of the native stuff in there, a silver fern, and rimu, and a kauri plant and take them for a walk in our little bush area. Because a lot of them won’t get that close to the New Zealand bush, because if they’re in a bus or a plane, they don’t tend to immerse themselves that much. So I find, and I think a lot of the tour guides quite like that, the fact that we can go in and show them a bit.

Having been on a tour with this kind of group, I noticed that Martin did exactly this. We journeyed into the cool, dark green native area where we listened to the song of a bell bird and Martin told us about the native plants. The group of Americans were able to see, hear, smell, and feel native New Zealand bush and “immerse themselves” in the unique environment.

As we already know, the Christchurch Botanic Gardens is a colonial garden. Its history is steeped in Victorian garden styles and fashions. Early settlers to Christchurch, although from all over Britain, were largely of English origin and Christchurch indeed

became a very 'English' town. What was evident in my interview with Martin was that the native area plays a secondary part in tours of the Gardens with many of the overseas visitors. Martin explained this point in saying that it is the transformation of the landscape from uninhabitable swampland to Botanic Garden that captivates the interest of visitors.

I find a lot of the groups I take, all the overseas groups, they don't necessarily lean towards the native stuff. They just want a tour of 'the Gardens' and I suppose because when the English settlers arrived here this was basically swampland and I mean they more or less planted what they wanted, they wanted to create a little bit of England really. So the people that are coming are more interested in what have the settlers done and what have they created here as opposed to, you know, 'we know you've got a good collection of native this or native that.' Because unlike a lot of other centres of course, we didn't really have the plant base here already, I mean what was here wasn't that great, so they could afford to start.

At first this sounded surprising to me, having thought that the visitors would want to see something different, something peculiar to the country they are visiting. However, I started to think about my visits to botanic gardens in other countries. As a tourist, I could not recollect specifically wanting to see plants native to Hong Kong or Singapore, but admiring everything and anything that looked pretty or unusual. Additionally, I looked for the familiar standard classics like the herb gardens and rose gardens, engaging in the same behaviours and expectations as visitors do at the Christchurch Botanic Gardens.

As is evident by now in this section, the Gardens is a space used and experienced by an array of visitors. I use the term 'visitor' because this denotes all public users of the Gardens- local residents, interest groups and international tourists. According to the information gleaned from the archives it was not until the 1960's that international tourism really grabbed the attention of the Gardens. This was evident in the concern expressed in a report about the availability of pamphlets and the opportunity to target tourists who had arrived in Christchurch on holiday.

One disappointing feature has been lack of publicity given about the Gardens particularly for people such as tourists off the cruise ships. In fact talking to several passengers it was evident that they had been told little about the Gardens or that no attempt had been made to sell them guide maps so that they could see

what the Gardens had to offer. Perhaps the Canterbury Public Relations office could be approached re this, for after all the Botanic Gardens are one of the foremost tourist attractions in Christchurch. (*Curator's report, 1962*)

There was also a suggestion in the 1960 Curator's Report to sell a set of colour slides of the Gardens showing the different seasons in an effort to promote the Gardens as well as make a small profit. Prior to this, there was mention by Curator James McPherson in the 1935 Annual Report of funds for the "compiling and printing of an attractive guide book."

Martin had noticed an increase in the amount of tourists in the Gardens relatively recently. This in turn, has led to a shift in focus for the Gardens with an emphasis on the marketing and promotions side of things.

I think in the last six to ten years there's been more tourism. Tourism was never a feature in the early days when I started. I think it was something that happened and they didn't think about it. Now of course, we've done surveys...and we're looking more at the type of people that come here, and why do they come, and the recreational side, or the tourist side, and looking into the way of even generating new revenue from that.

The increase in visitors has meant an increase in the number of tours offered in the Gardens. The tours are now re-defined as a kind of marketing tool able to showcase highlights of the Gardens to its consumers as well as gaining a small fee that helps fund it. During our discussion on the tourism aspects of the Gardens, I suggested that the Gardens was a marketable business and Martin agreed, "It's a business" he said, and commented that, as part of the Council, it is in a position where funding was crucial to its survival. The Gardens need to be promoted and marketed to show people what they have to offer. Martin explained this further:

In this day and age the Council no longer is a place that can just do things and not worry about finance. I mean nowadays they're saying hey, we need to recoup what we can. And with money, there's more of an emphasis on Christchurch now about whether the Museum and the Art Gallery should be charging for their overseas visitors, whether local rate payers should have some kind of card [to use]. The Gardens have been mentioned as well, about the number of visitors and

should we be making more from the out-of-towners, not the locals, just out-of-towners generally.

Charging for admission is not the avenue the Christchurch Botanic Gardens is likely to go down. They are very aware of putting people off, especially the locals, if they incur a charge. I commented that Kew Gardens charge £10 per adult, to which Martin replied that it cost him £1 for a whole year's pass to Kew in the seventies before he left for New Zealand. There have been suggestions to charge for special exhibits, and to increase secondary spending (like buying souvenirs) in the information centre. I discuss this in more detail in Chapter four. By conducting the many tours of the Gardens that are tailored to suit the needs and interests of its users, Martin claimed that they are able to tap into something that will help raise the profile of the Gardens as well as contribute to its funding:

I mean realistically as I've said as the years have gone on, tourism and tours were something that were done very infrequently and then obviously there's the realisation that hey, there's a function here that we can offer that specialises and its been taken a bit more seriously now. Same with the education side of it. The education people come to the Council to do a certain amount of outside education work.

Education in the Gardens is another project that Martin undertakes with help from educators at the Council. Educational activities in the Gardens are focussed towards school age children. I was interested in how the Gardens were used as a place of environmental learning.

An Educational Experience in the Gardens

I investigated this further when I took part in a curriculum- based school trip in the Gardens, taken by the Learning Through Action programme (LTA). The LTA programme is conducted by the Christchurch City Council and is supported by the Ministry of Education as part of the Learning Experience Outside The Classroom (LEOTC) initiative. The LTA covers a range of sites of environmental significance in

Christchurch, such as the Travis wetlands, the wastewater treatment station and the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. The LTA teaches environmental education to students, with a large emphasis on being *in* and experiencing the environment you intend to study. The trip to the Gardens was taken by two Gardens staff members, with Martin heading the tour, and two educators from the Council, led by Michelle who is the Environmental Education Coordinator. I mostly observed what was happening, but occasionally participating and helping the groups in select activities.

I met up with a class from an intermediate school (ten and eleven year olds) and their teacher at the information centre at 9.00am for a briefing about the Gardens from the staff. The tour leader, Martin, who briefly discussed the concepts of the programme, spoke to them about: *biodiversity*, *native species*, and *habitat*. We then walked towards the hut where Captain Scott calibrated his instruments before the Antarctic. Once inside the hut we all sat on the chairs as Martin went over the main concepts again- getting the children to define the terms *biodiversity*, *extinct*, *native*, *endemic*, *introduced species*. The class had to choose a living thing—plant, fungi, animal, insect, or bird—that was different to another person, they wished to ‘be’ before leaving the hut, the majority chose animals like cats and dogs. Incidentally, conscious of thinking outside the square in front of the staff, I chose seaweed.

After choosing a living thing, each child, representing their living species stepped inside a large circle made of rope to represent the world. This was to illustrate that ‘biodiversity,’ was a concept that encompassed every living thing. Remembering their chosen species, they got into groups according to whether they were ‘native’ or ‘introduced’ to New Zealand, with the help of the educators. This was followed by a game where the educators taped a picture of a bird, plant, insect, or animal to each person’s back. The aim of the game was to guess the name of the species they had on their back by asking their peers a series of yes or no questions about the characteristics of the species: does it have fur? can it swim? and so on. Once they had completed the game they separated into introduced, native, extinct/threatened species, according to the type of species they had pinned to their back.

After this activity, the educators rolled out a large illustration depicting a timeline onto the grass. The timeline was a pictorial display of the development of Christchurch.

The first picture was of an uninhabited swampland, followed by a second frame of native bush with a Maori man fishing. The next was of a family of European settlers in Victorian garb, and the last picture was of the Christchurch cityscape as it looks presently. The children had to place their species on this timeline under the headings of *extinct*, which appeared early on, then on to the categories *introduced* and *threatened* which ran parallel to each other, visually highlighting to the pupils the direct correlation of cause and effect between the two. The lesson learnt at the end of the game was that introduced species were disturbing and destroying the native species' habitat.

The next part of the trip involved using the Gardens' native area to educate the children about native plants and trees. The class split into two groups, I went with the first group into the native area, while the other group played a game about habitats. The interactive exercise in the native section involved searching for information signs attached to certain trees and plants hidden amongst the bushes. Each sign displayed a heading such as *culture*, *science*, *medicine*, *recreation*, *art* or *sport*, and contained information on the different ways various native plants could be used. For example, the *sport* sign was attached to a silver fern tree, with a brief statement about where we would find a silver fern on the outfits of various sports teams. The *culture* sign was attached to a flax bush, and explained how Maori would use this to weave things. The children had to record information on each plant on to a worksheet.

The second exercise was a game about habitat and environmental dangers, similar to that of musical chairs, but with ice cream container lids as representing 'habitats.' The group, except for three children who were picked to stand on the sidelines, 'flew' around their habitats like native birds until they were told to stop and find a habitat to land on. The catch was while they were flying around one of the children on the sidelines took away a container lid so that someone was left without a habitat. The child who took away the lid read from an information sheet and explained to others the particular environmental factor, pollution for example, that caused the habitat to disappear. The game continued with further habitats being removed and more explanations as to why the damage occurred, and more children flying around without their habitats.

After the school trip in the Gardens ended I followed the educators back to the information centre, where over cups of tea and coffee they evaluated how the morning

had gone- what went well, what could be done better. Comparisons with Auckland Botanic Gardens were drawn, they noted for my benefit that Auckland have an education team employed at the Gardens, as well as a lot more funding for this activity. Michelle informed me that Christchurch has educators that come in from the Council and team up with the Botanic Gardens staff, who have other jobs in addition to helping out with school trips. Michelle thought that the Christchurch set up was probably better, as the knowledge comes directly from the experts with separate educators on hand to facilitate teaching and plan for learning. The staff also asked me what I thought about the trip, being an objective outsider, to which I replied I thought it was fun and the games in the Gardens were a good way of engaging school children in environmental concerns.

Summary

The themes of colonialism and ‘Englishness’ that I explored in Chapter two are manifested in the tours themselves. As we navigated through the diverse spaces, not only were we listening to a commentary of the Gardens’ history; the history was visible, embodied in the memorials and in the flowers, trees and plants. By referring to the history of the Gardens, the tour guides made sense of the space for themselves and to the group. Martin and Margaret continually made references to the English nature of the Gardens and its colonial history. Fragments of the Gardens’ history are communicated to groups in order to highlight its unique character. The Gardens is a heterotopic space where time and space are juxtaposed in such a way as to bring historical meanings seamlessly into the present.

According to Martin, the colonial creation of a ‘little England’ in the Gardens is the main attraction for the tourist. Aspects of Maori culture were mentioned in the native area in reference to the names and uses of native plants. However, this was the only time when Maori culture was discussed throughout the entire tour. In contrast to the tourist experience of the Gardens, there are the educational activities that take place, particularly aimed at local schoolchildren. Rather than learning about environmental issues in the

classroom, they do so amongst nature and are able to actually see, touch and smell the native plants that are so important to New Zealand.

How the relatively new role of the Gardens as a marketable public attraction contends with the other roles of an essentially scientific institution is something that I investigate in more detail in the following chapter.



[Fig.5] Deep in the dark, green Native section of the Botanic Gardens. *Photo: Susannah Wieck, 2005*



[Fig.6] The formal rose garden. *Photo: Susannah Wieck, 2005*



[Fig.7] The unassuming hut opposite the childrens' playground, where Captain Scott calibrated his instruments before his trip to the Antarctic. Adjacent to the hut is the weather station. *Photo: Susannah Wieck, 2005*

Chapter four

Behind the Scenes: Producing the Botanic Gardens

One central question that I asked myself on my experiences in the Gardens was *who is behind the creation of this space?* It is easy to forget that while you are in the Gardens, either enjoying the displays, or engaging in some sort of passive recreation, that there are gardeners, managers, a curator and a city council behind the scenes who essentially shape how the Gardens look, and have specific ideas as to how they should be experienced by the public. On most days in the Gardens, you will see the occasional truck and trailer parked next to various gardens and the gardeners attending to trees and plants. On one of my visits to the Gardens I came across a gardener replanting the Fragrant Garden, the area cordoned off with tape. I sat down and watched her for awhile, the occasional passer-by would express interest in what the gardener was doing, keen for a glimpse into the production side of the Gardens. It had not really dawned on me that every single thing I could see had been planted or, in the cases of the hot houses and various memorials, built by somebody.

The physical space in the Gardens is a manifestation of the social production of space actualised and experienced on a daily basis. As a space that is continuously shaped and re-shaped by social processes, “the garden becomes a product of its creator” (Rotenberg 1995:151). In this chapter, I analyse how meanings of science and leisure are negotiated by the producers of the Gardens by seeking the opinions of the staff who are actively involved in creating this space.

People or Plants? The Divergent Roles of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens

For the average visitor to the Gardens, it is also easy to forget that the majority of the surroundings are collections of botanical specimens. My archival research and interviews with staff members highlighted different impressions of the Gardens from those who

produce the space. To explain, areas of botany, horticulture, scientific research and conservation are not conspicuous to the general public, yet they are very important roles that define a botanical institution. Without these roles, the Gardens would be relegated in status to that of a public park. This is not to say that the Christchurch Botanic Gardens does not welcome its 'public park' element, in fact the consensus gathered from my interviews was that the public were accepted as a valued part of the Gardens. This is reflected in the surveys and questionnaires the Gardens conduct to gain opinions from its visitors on how it can improve to satisfy their needs.

The Gardens have always been conscious of visitors' perceptions of the place, and since the staff records began in the late nineteenth century, comments on public activity in the Gardens, both good and bad, arise invariably. What I will also elaborate on in this chapter is the changing focus of the Gardens and a shift towards catering for the public as a tourist attraction.

According to a recent market survey, recreation and aesthetics are the two most popular reasons for the public to visit the Christchurch Botanic Gardens (Opinions 2004: 4). For the staff, these two roles often conflict with the scientific aspects of the Gardens. Contestation has arisen over the years as to how best to meet the needs of the public as well as the scientific interests of the staff. What I will discuss further in this chapter is the impressions of staff at the Gardens on this issue, and the way in which they deal with this in promoting the Gardens as a marketable commodity.

The Curator commented to me during one of my visits that "Kew could close its doors tomorrow and still function as a botanic garden." What he meant by this was that although most botanical institutions are open to the public, some are focused largely on scientific research, and the public play a secondary role. 'Scientific research' at Kew involves studying both living and preserved plant collections, keeping up-to-date with scientific literature and undertaking research into horticulture, plant conservation and taxonomy (www.rbgekew.org.uk) Kew's Royal Botanic Gardens mission statement succinctly articulates this approach:

To enable better management of the earth's environment by increasing knowledge and understanding of the plant and fungal kingdoms - the basis of life on earth (www.kew.org.uk).

In comparison with this statement, the Singapore Botanic Gardens' mission statement illustrates its variety of functions and emphasises its relationship with the public through:

Connecting people and plants through publications, horticultural and botanical displays, educational outreach, and events, provision of a key civic and recreational space, and playing a role as an international Gardens and a regional centre for botanical and horticultural research and training (www.sbg.org.sg).

The many roles of the Singapore Botanic Gardens are akin to those of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. However, these activities were not addressed in the 1993 Management Plan mission statement, which emphasised the botanical expertise of the Gardens, which was:

To promote understanding and appreciation of the world's flora (its botanical attributes and uses) including special areas devoted to Southern Hemisphere plants (www.ccc.govt.nz).

Notwithstanding, the relationship between visitors and the Gardens is acknowledged in the first of several 'secondary goals' after the initial mission statement in the 1993 Management Plan:

To assist visitors in their understanding and appreciation of the beauty, variety and complexity of the plant world.

As the Gardens enter a new phase with the current re-development, a new Management Plan is in the works to broaden the focus of the mission statement to accommodate "people-friendly" goals, in recognition of the Gardens' important role in educating the public and providing a place of recreation. Information from the public has been gathered from the market research surveys to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of the Gardens in the eyes of its users. This information collated the main reasons the public went to the Gardens, what they thought was good about the Gardens and possible areas for improvement. In sum, the places in the Gardens that were most commonly used were the children's playground, the swimming pool and the lawns surrounding the playground (Opinions 2004: 4).

In an interview with the Operations Manager at the Gardens, John, I brought up the issue of the differing roles of the Gardens and the fact that the majority of the public come to the Gardens to relax in a pleasant environment, rather than to see the botanical collections. Although John acknowledged these reasons, he clearly emphasised that the Gardens have important roles to fulfil other than simply providing an enjoyable public space:

I think we acknowledge that a vast majority of our visitors like an open space, they like coming to a place where they can wander around; its relatively peaceful...there's no traffic, and for its aesthetic value. It's not necessarily its scientific value. But we are providing that aesthetic value by undertaking the science work and maintaining our collections. And we have a broader role than just looking after the public, but we can achieve it by doing that. We have a conservation role, we have a research role, we're involved in maintaining plants that are potentially dying out around the world and that's part of our function as well, so it's not just providing a pleasant place for people to hang out.

John brought up an interesting point in saying “we are providing that aesthetic value by undertaking the science work and maintaining our collections.” The plants, trees and flowers provide aesthetic enjoyment for the visitor, not in spite of, but *because* they are in botanical collections. I thought about this on my next trip to the Gardens, and understood what John meant by this statement. As with all botanic gardens, there are gardens within gardens that contain similar species of plant that share the same environment, such as the rock garden, rose garden, native section, and so on. Then there are the conservatories that house collections that must have a specific climate, for example, hot humid conservatories that grow tropical plants. It is the way flora that has been gathered from all over the world in the name of science is ordered and showcased in unique, diverse environments that make the Gardens beautiful and interesting. John commented:

People say they like the large trees, they don't say they like the whole variety of trees we have, but we know providing a variety of trees as part of our collections, that's the element they're appreciating.

The public may profess to show scant interest in the scientific aspects of the Gardens; however, the space in the Gardens looks like it does ultimately because of the scientific subjects of taxonomy, horticulture and botany. Depending on the knowledge of the visitor

the plants are appreciated on different levels; the untrained eye may see a daffodil, the trained eye, a *Narcissus sylvestris*.

John acknowledged that the main reason the public visited the Gardens was for passive recreation but he emphasised the diverse uses of the Gardens, and mentioned some more of the technical functions:

I would say that we have, like any botanic gardens, a variety of people come for a variety of reasons. You will have your dedicated people looking for plants and wanting plant research. With Lincoln University you obviously have students who are doing horticulture, agriculture forestry, landscape design so they're coming for those sorts of technical aspects. We have people who are generally interested in plants, so we have associations that cover in horticultural type groups and herb societies those sorts of people who are interested in plants, and the rose society, so they are coming for specific plant collections.

The research and conservation work that the Gardens undertakes is not widespread public knowledge, nor is there directly visible evidence of it. The nurseries that propagate the plants are in an off-limits 'staff only' part of the Gardens, along with most of the staff offices. On my trips to the Curator's office I had the opportunity to enter the closed doors and walk through some of the greenhouses that I would not have known existed.

The Gardens are also involved in 'plant trials' which test new varieties of plants that will eventually be released on the market to see how they respond to Christchurch's climatic conditions. John asserted that these are not for public use, but they are a recognised as a prospective asset "that can be used for a lot of other research and scientific and education purposes." They are also collecting tree rings from those trees removed due to health and safety reasons. This way they will have records from a slice of tree that will help them in climatic research. This side of the Gardens that is rarely noticed by the public is an area that John was keen to be a part of:

So potentially we see ourselves as being a useful resource for people who research into a wide range of activities. We'd like to help and be involved.

Part of the new re-development plan for the Gardens is the intention to build a new information centre, and new education facilities including a herbarium and library.

According to John, one of the future aims would be to provide more detailed and easily accessible plant information for the public:

We could make people's experience here better. [For example] our plant records, we've got to offer those in an easier format for people; identifiable plants. People come and visit plants and see plants, and basically we want to have a better customer interface, so that they can come, self-serve, look at the plants, and go off and find them. Potentially, we realise that we may be a central point that can offer information about other gardens, other conservation other areas in the city, so we see ourselves as a point for people to come for information.

Enhancing the experience of the visitor and a reflexive outlook towards public use is the direction the staff are taking in marketing the Gardens. Additionally, they are making sure signage and information on plants are readily available to the public, as well as interesting.

The Gardens need the public for financial support, not just from bequests and donations but they need to show the Council that the Gardens are a worthy attraction to be funded. This means the Gardens need to appeal to public interest. An increase in tourism has impacted on how the Gardens are developing and promoting themselves. Visitors to the Gardens have been documented for over a century in the various staff reports. As I noted in chapter three, actively promoting the Gardens as a tourist attraction was first addressed in the Curator's reports of the 1930s. Nonetheless, the rose garden and the children's playground were often remarked upon as popular public attractions in the 1900s; yet these are illustrated in short sentences, as passing observations of goings on in the Gardens, rather than issues for the staff to pursue:

During the holidays the rose garden and the native section have been well patronised by visitors from different parts of the Dominion (*Curator's Report*, 1918).

All through the school holiday period, the Gardens were well patronised both by children and adults. The rose garden provided great attraction for visitors (*Curator's Report*, 1921).

From the early 1980s though to the present day, the Gardens increasingly focussed on marketing their role as a public attraction. There are specific sections in the Curator's reports¹⁰ that document each month the parts of the Gardens most popular with the visitor, here are two examples:

Large numbers of people are visiting the Botanic Gardens on most days now. The main attractions on display have been the Woodland daffodils, the rock garden, magnolias and various *prunus* species (*Curator's Report*, 1982).

Fine weather continued to attract many visitors. The main features were the Rose garden, conservatories, Bedding Plant displays, water garden, Herbaceous Border and playground (*Curator's Report*, 1981).

There was a proposal in the early eighties to start a column in the gardening section of the local newspaper detailing the goings on in the Gardens. This was eventually taken up and still runs presently.

In 1988, the Gardens celebrated its 125th Anniversary. This was a prominent year that saw the Gardens intensify their attention towards public information and interest, by setting some goals for consideration in the Curators report:

Public activities are to include special displays at the information centre, special features and displays throughout the grounds, and conducted tours of the Botanic Gardens. Other proposals for the year include the production of a special brochure, the establishment of "Friends of the Botanic Gardens" and the production of a Management Plan for the Gardens (*CCC Minutes Book*, 1988).

A new Management Plan and an overall master plan for the Gardens and the surrounding area of Hagley Park is currently under review. I could not obtain much information on the future plans for the Gardens, because most of the information was confidential. However, it was clear that the staff were undecided on several issues. There has been no final word from the Council, which according to one person I interviewed, is taking a frustratingly long time to come up with a definite plan. The general consensus from those who I interviewed was that the revised Management Plan was long overdue. The Gardens are

¹⁰ The Curator's reports at the Gardens are amalgamated into the City Council Minutes Book for Parks and Recreation after 1976

re-developing not only the space itself, with the possibility of new buildings, but also how they present themselves to the public as a visitor attraction. They are heading more towards a professional marketing profile to showcase the variety of services the Gardens provide, as well as re-defining their link to the city of Christchurch.

Knowledge and Symbolism in the Gardens

In addition to scientific endeavours, the importance of conveying knowledge to the consumer at the Botanic Gardens was a central theme in the interviews I conducted with the staff. Conveying knowledge to the visitor plays a large part in promoting the Gardens to the public. Due to the number of visitors with varying levels of interest in plants, gardening, and local history, information has to be made available on a number of levels. To be a popular attraction the Gardens have to cater for the enjoyment and interests of as many people as possible; different aspects of the Gardens are promoted in different ways.

During my visits to the information centre, I regularly bumped into the new Information and Promotions Coordinator, Sarah, whose office was adjacent to the tearoom where I leafed through the archives. After several chats during morning or afternoon tea breaks, I became interested in the methods Sarah was using to promote the Gardens and how her appointment in the new position was shaping the marketing of the Gardens. Sarah summarised her role as one that enhances the experience of the visitor by providing a “holistic enjoyment” of the Gardens.

I see it as I deal with the customer service end of it...so anything I can do to enhance that and also to say “hey look the Gardens are here and this is what Gardens do,” and all of those sorts of things. If I can promote the Gardens while people are in here and while people are out and get them to come in the first place then that’s good. It’s a little bit of marketing, a bit of line management, a little bit of customer service and front of house, team management and some project stuff as well, sort of you know, education and art sculptures and different bits that again, add to the holistic enjoyment of its users.

Coming up with a marketing plan is a new direction for the Gardens. It has brought about the need to be more reflexive about its profile as a public attraction as well as a place of

plants. Sarah explained that the Gardens needed to “ask itself various fundamentals like, why are we here? And what are our messages?” This new outlook is altering how the space is interpreted by its users, in that it is being shaped to be more user-friendly. Sarah commented that she is still at the experimental stage, trialling different ways of promoting the Gardens:

So, this year I’m experimenting now with different forms of media and different things going on within the gardens to see what works best; but generally being more proactive in terms of linking to events, linking to various city centre festivals and things... I’ve got a poster campaign coming up for the daffodil woodlands and that will be interesting to see how successful that is. But it will go out to contacts that I have now made in the libraries and in civic offices and probably be out to the sports centres as well which again, is a new thing that we just haven’t done before...

The Gardens are promoted in two ways; by providing symbols within the Gardens to convey information to the visitor, and externally, by linking the Gardens to the greater community and to entice potential visitors. Keeping the Gardens’ profile high within the Christchurch community is an effective way to grasp a wider audience. However, Sarah informed me that her priority at the moment was to concentrate on enhancing the visitors’ experience once they are in the Gardens. Sarah has drawn on the information gained from the market research survey to gauge the opinions and perceptions of different groups of people who visit.

The links with Christchurch’s ‘Garden City’ image were made very clear with most of the locals. A tour operator in one of the focus groups described the Gardens as “the jewel in the crown of the Garden City” (Opinions 2004: 5). This quote has resonated with some of the staff at the Gardens, and it was repeated in my interview with the information and promotions coordinator. She commented, “it *is* ‘the jewel in the crown of the Garden City’—and it should be, and certainly from my way of thinking it should be the pinnacle of the Garden City.” Although the connection to the Garden City image was very strong among some of the groups in the survey, it was noted that most international tourists interviewed did not really make the connection. They perceived their visit to the Gardens as an experience of New Zealand flora and fauna, as well as to see the English trees (Opinions 2004: 5).

To help with its future profile, Sarah was eager for the Gardens to take more advantage of Christchurch's Garden City image. Sarah asserted that this image was central to marketing the Botanic Gardens as many locals had already formed associations with the Gardens as being a central attraction in the 'Garden City.' A local resident was quoted in the market survey: "Christchurch is the city of gardens, parks and trees...and the Botanic Gardens are a key part of this" (Opinions 2004: 24). Sarah informed me that the Council had attempted to change the 'Garden City' logo and update it to "something more upbeat and funky." However, the efforts went unheeded when the market research showed that the cost and effort to change the image of an entire city was too great. Sarah assumed this was because the association with Christchurch as the 'Garden City' was "too ingrained." In Sarah's opinion, if the Council wanted to update the logo, all they had to do was "tweak it" rather than change it, and she was of the understanding that this was what they had decided to do. It is within the Gardens' interest for Christchurch to keep the Garden City image; as it the biggest, and arguably the most impressive garden in the city.

The survey highlighted a local controversy regarding whether the money that was spent on the Gardens by the City Council was perhaps favouring the tourist over the local resident. It is clear that the locals and visitors interpret the Gardens in different ways, but according to Sarah, in the large scheme of things that does not really matter. Sarah thought that as long as she was able to enhance the experience of the Gardens in some way, whether they be a tourist or a local:

I think that if you do something, and this is my personal opinion and what I try aim towards, if you do something that enhances anybody's experience, their personal experience in the gardens- it doesn't matter if it's a tourist or whether it's for a resident- if you do something that is accessible to all, so, you know there's various projects. There's an art project going on [*shows me a picture of an art sculpture on computer screen*] and, when I did the brief for it, I purposefully asked for something that hadn't got any writing on it. Because as a tourist, but even as a local resident, English may not be their first language now, so when we talk about accessibility and try and make it wider than just paths, or opening hours that sort of thing...

To illustrate the point further, Sarah explained the sculpture to me in more detail. It was to be situated outside her office and looked like a large curved seat. It consisted of sedimentary layers, each one representing the flora and fauna of the port hills, the marshlands and the wetlands respectively. Sarah chose this sculpture because it was “Canterbury specific, but also Gardens specific,” as there was also information on the sculpture about the speed of a fly compared to the speed of a butterfly, the sort of things you would find in the garden. The important thing for Sarah was that it could enhance anybody’s experience and was open to varying levels of interpretation. Sarah felt that this sculpture was something that worked well for the locals and tourists, and there was “no reason why both can’t inhabit the same spacing.”

The fact that tourists and locals inhabit the same space has problematized how to best layout and define the space for the visitor. A point was raised in regard to the signage in the Gardens. The locals believed it was an added charm that the Gardens had a variety of walkways that allowed visitors to explore different parts of the Gardens, and stumble across displays and gardens that they had not yet seen, but contrary to this, there needed to be more signage in the Gardens to highlight its collections and services, especially for the tourist (Opinions 2004: 7). There was concern by local residents, however, that too much signage would spoil the enigmatic nature of the Gardens. Signs in the Gardens in a number of different languages for the international tourists would become an eyesore.

Sarah found a way to avoid the dichotomy of local versus visitor and the resulting tensions caused by catering for one group over another, by using symbols instead of signs. She asserted that a sign is simply a sign, and if it is in a foreign language then it does not mean anything to the person who sees it. However, if you replace that sign with a symbol, something that is interpretable on a number of levels, it has more chance of being meaningful to that person. The symbols would be used as an educational tool, and therefore they enhance the visitor’s experience. Sarah believed this was a far better way to cater for both groups simultaneously, and without disturbing the overall look of the Gardens. Sarah acknowledged that because it is a botanic gardens “we need to keep true to the faith of botanical signing our plants,” yet, with regard to directions and other forms of signage in the Gardens “there are far better ways of doing that.” This philosophy

exemplifies the interpretable and sometimes contradictory nature of a botanic garden.

Sarah gave me an example of a project she was working on:

For example the herb garden's just been redone and I've got some old colanders and things here [*shows me a couple of silver metal colanders by her desk*], which we are going to spray paint and they're making sections of the herb garden about cooking and so we're going to have colander hanging baskets and wall plantings and, again, you use the cooking implement. It starts as a visual cue and without actually saying: "these things blah blah blah" and *another* sign...Look at the market—people aren't coming to look at the signs, they're coming to look at the plants and you know, they learn something very lovely; but a good, large percent of people are just coming to enjoy the place. Now if you can subliminally get to them with those kinds of messages without it being in your face 'read me' kind of chore, then all the better.

This insight came naturally for Sarah who does not have a horticultural or botanical background. However, Sarah's emphasis is still very much on drawing the public's attention to learning and experiencing the Gardens, no matter what kind of information they may take from it. Sarah was conscious of the fact that the majority of visitors to the Gardens, both local residents and from overseas, are not there to read the Latin names of plants, nor to look specifically for scientific collections. Nevertheless, she was looking for innovative ways of enhancing the public experience of the Gardens, which she admitted is, after all, a botanical institution that provides scientific information on plants and trees:

...It therefore is, in some way, a centre of excellence. You know, look at the expertise the gardeners and the curators have, they are not your normal park ranger who will cut grass and be with done with it. They will *know* their subject matter, and there is that academic basis.

One of the things that Sarah talked about in the interview, and an overriding theme in most of the interviews I conducted was an emphasis on providing the visitor with some kind of educational experience. It did not seem to matter in what form, but that they were able to read a bit deeper into their surroundings rather than simply walk around. This emphasis on knowledge and learning, whether it is botanical, horticultural, environmental or historical, relates to the wider picture of botanic gardens generally. I asked Sarah for

her thoughts as to whether the Gardens experienced the age-old conflict between the scientific role versus the public park role. She replied that it was felt amongst the staff at the Gardens, but not by the visitors:

I don't think [the conflict is experienced] so much externally because I think a collection of plants that are planted aesthetically can look just as nice as a traditional bedding plan...If you look at other areas, for example the rock garden or what have you, and that looks beautiful whatever time of year; just as beautiful as the bedding display. Even though botanically it's a collection of plants, so you can do that, and I think to the public, I mean the vast majority of people who visit, they don't see that contention. But I think internally it's more of a difficult option. Because you don't just have gardeners here, you have people that are curators of collections, there's a whole different world about it being a botanical gardens that I've learnt in the last twelve months. You know there's that old debate that rages on.

I have noted the many ways the Gardens are used and interpreted by the visitor, who experience and use the Gardens according to their interests, whether it be taking their children to the playground or looking for gardening tips. Thus, conflict in how the Gardens are used does not really occur amongst visitors. Internally, however, there are jobs at the Gardens that fulfil quite different aspects to cover this diverse space, and it is the producers that experience this conflict. The staff, most of whom are trained botanists and horticulturalists, have knowledge of the Gardens that is far beyond the average visitor. They also have to present their botanical collections and horticultural techniques to the public, most of whom do not appreciate the surroundings at the scientific level.

There were internal concerns about Sarah's new role, because some staff initially thought that by marketing the Gardens to the general public, it would compromise and perhaps threaten its botanical role:

When I first came here, they thought I was a mad woman, because a lot of the curators without any...what's the word for it, I don't intend any disrespect, but they're like the gardening version of librarians...They would show me around their areas to get me used to the gardens and where things were and I would go: "look at that pink flower, that's fantastic what's that?" and they would give me the Latin name and I'd say; "what?...That's a daisy isn't it?" And I didn't want to know, and there was this little period, two or three months into it there was a stand off, you know, what is she doing here? She doesn't want to know the Latin

names for this or that, she is asking us questions in layman's terms, she's going to change everything and be quite disrespectful. And it's taken a long time to prove that there needs to be this base level with a backup of a botanical nature behind it. But that's the right way for the Gardens to go, because otherwise it becomes this exclusive club that you can only join if you know Latin.

As a result, Sarah has come up with the idea of an information hierarchy to avoid "belittling the botanical nature" of the Gardens, but also including people who only know a little about plants and would like to know more. Sarah explained that there were general markers that relayed the rules and directions in the Gardens. Then there were the signs that focus on the botanical names for plants, of which she commented, the majority of users are not interested.

By making the information for the public more accessible, it also helps to increase interest in the Gardens and, hopefully their popularity. Sarah thought of the information hierarchy as a "stepping stone" to understanding the spaces in the Gardens. From a marketing perspective, there is a risk of alienating the customer by either presenting them with a product that is too overwhelming, or too boring. Therefore, Sarah believed, to entice visitors it was better to display different levels of information that could inspire and intrigue visitors enough to return. They need to be interested because that is what brings them back to visit again. Sarah noted that gardening, as a leisure activity, was on the increase and if she could inspire people to learn from the Gardens tips for their own garden then that would also entice them back.

Having had trouble in understanding information at a level beyond her knowledge of plants and gardens first-hand, Sarah ensures that the public are able to take from the displays at a level of information at which they are most comfortable. She makes sure that they are able to understand and relate to the Gardens, which in turn keeps them interested:

...you can take it or leave it, you know you can walk past it and not give it a second thought, or you can take it to another level and think 'oh yeah' and 'oh yeah' 'oh right, that's really cool and groovy. I'd like plants that are doing that at home, what shall I get?' and then you come to information centre, you get the leaflet on herbs and away you go! And you go and do it at home.

The scientific components to the Gardens can be daunting to some. Most of the staff at the Gardens are trained in botany and/or horticulture and see it as a place of work. Sarah recognised that essentially this is what the Gardens are all about, and she did not want to compromise that. However, she wanted to smooth over the disjuncture between expert and visitor by making the staff aware that, even as a member of staff at the Gardens, she did not have a clue about gardening or plants. For instance, it was a “big shock” to some of the gardening experts that Sarah did not know how to deadhead a plant. In order to move away from this “exclusive” club, Sarah wanted them to know that many people who enjoy the Gardens have little or no knowledge of plants or gardening.

Sarah wanted the Gardens to be an interactive learning experience for visitors, as she believed it was the best way of learning. Knowing that visitors cannot learn something if they do not understand it in the first place, she wanted to inspire them. Sarah recognised, and appreciated the Gardens as a public space, where a variety of activities take place. It is clear that her job as the information and promotions coordinator for the Gardens has a direct effect on how she thinks the Gardens should be used. Her job is to keep the consumer coming back and to create as large a consumer base as possible, you need to market a space that provides enjoyment for and includes as many groups as possible.

Interactive Experiences and Education at the Gardens

Children’s activities in the Gardens are an important facet in the marketing of the Gardens. In an interview with Michelle, the Coordinator for the Learning through Action programme, she explained why they used the Botanic Gardens for their school trips. What became apparent was that the Gardens were a great space for the children to engage in ‘experiential learning.’ As I was unfamiliar with this concept, Michelle explained:

it’s more than just doing, it’s taking into account that holistic picture of getting a little more value...making decisions and doing things for themselves. For teachers we usually say ‘hands on’ activities because some of them are familiar with experiential learning and some of them aren’t. Some of the games we do are examples of experiential learning, like the habitat game.

Michelle told me that it takes careful consideration of school activities in the Botanic Gardens and elsewhere in their programme to fit the requirements of the curriculum, so that students can get out of the classroom in the first place. The activities are tailored to a range of age groups. The five year olds come to the Gardens to do general topics like ‘flowers,’ but Michelle believed this type of subject is “quite shallow learning.” The key to experiential learning is that the space in which the children are learning becomes an active context from which they can interpret meaning. Their experience in the Gardens engages the senses; the children see, touch, smell, and hear the environment.

It is quite clear that the LTA use the Gardens for children to experience the environmental issues that concern the Council. I asked Michelle why they chose the Botanic Gardens for study:

Well there have always been kids going there, so that’s the main thing, the fact that they existed already...We’ve got a link with the museum for one programme, which hasn’t been that successful, but there’s intention to involve it more in the future, and definitely with the Botanic gardens, it makes sense that it is right on people’s back door step...

The popularity of the Gardens with children and the importance of maintaining children’s interest in the Gardens was expressed in my interviews. The general opinion was summed up in a comment made by Margaret:

[W]e feel very strongly that from an education point of view, the children are the future...there’s a huge number of parents and guardians who bring their children to the playground, but never actually go past the playground, so this is why we try to develop our programme which will lead the children further into the gardens and sort of excite them.

To ensure that children become interested in the Gardens, and at the same time provide them with an educational experience, activities such as *Kidsfest*, and the LTA school trips are designed to get children to explore the Gardens further. Sarah was of a similar opinion with regard to children: “they’re the future and if you don’t have that link [with the Gardens] and they don’t care about the Gardens then they’re not coming back.” To ensure the Gardens remains a marketable entity, there needs to be sufficient and

sustainable interest from the consumer, which is why it is important to engage the younger visitors with positive experiences to ensure they will want to keep coming back. Sarah asserted: “if you get them at an early age and if you can get them into the psyche of exploring further into the Gardens then it promotes the Gardens from the inside, you know?” The staff had organised a children’s trail through the Gardens, which consisted of five different activities they had to do through out the Gardens. Sarah commented that this was “to show that there is more to the Gardens than just the playground.”

The significant aspect of the space in the Gardens is that is it used simultaneously in diverse ways. Sarah outlined the multi-faceted use of the space in the Gardens, as something that was unique and endearing to its character:

...if you go down the front you’ve got kids playing in the trees and screaming and you can’t see the kids—all you’ve got is this big triangle of tree that moves now and then and all you can hear from it are these screams! And you just think, ah, that’s wicked! And in the summer you walk round and people standing at the herbaceous border and they’re: “Oh I’ve got that!” or “isn’t that beautiful? What’s the name for that? I want it in my garden,” those sorts of things going on, but going on *side by side*. And then you’ve got our regulars and we’ve got some local people and there’s a chap there who comes in everyday, rain or shine, summer or winter for exercises in his wheelchair and his wife comes along with him and they speed walk, or he wheels, up and down... everyday and that’s his daily ritual and his exercise. So you see them as well, and they’re not in here because they want to know the botanical name of something. They’re not in here particularly because it’s the season and they want to see *that* kind of plant; they’re in here everyday and they enjoy it, and its always changing, its always different, and that’s what they like about it. You can’t get that at an art gallery, or a museum...

Sarah’s description of the multiple uses of the Gardens that are carried out side by side is a description of its heterotopic nature. In a single real space, there are sites of science and leisure that are juxtaposed as contradictions. Comparisons between the Gardens and the Museum and art gallery were often drawn with several of my informants, usually expressing that the latter were favoured by the Council more so than the Gardens. Sarah’s take on this was that the Gardens were unique because they offered more than a space to wander through and look at things, visitors could go in (for free) and *experience* a diverse environment in a variety of ways.

Summary

An ethnographic approach to the study of space enables the meanings and social practices of space in relation to the broader social, political, historical, economic processes to be worked out empirically ([Low 1996] 2002:134). Confirming what I had read on the history of botanical gardens on contentions between public enjoyment and the botanic garden's scientific role, it was apparent many people were not there to expand their botanical knowledge and their Latin lexicon, but to look at the pretty nature and enjoy a green open space in the middle of a city. I do not wish to belittle the botanic nature of the Gardens, because it is precisely the scientific collections which draw attention from the visitor, but I mean to say is that they are not interpreted as such by most of the visitors. They do not see specimens; they see the aesthetics, the curious-looking flowers, trees and plants. The staff are aware of the conflict between the scientific and leisure aspects of the Gardens, because they experience this as part of being in an institution. However, conflict can be mediated by incorporating interpretable symbols in the Gardens. This method does not visually compromise the botanical collections, but it allows for a diverse range of people to understand and learn from their surroundings— a crucial facet of the botanic garden.

Tying together the previous chapter on the diverse uses with the production of the Gardens, I have provided an ethnographic account that has highlighted the ways the social production and social construction of space are actualised and experienced on a daily basis. Additionally, the case study and interviews highlighted the heterotopic aspects of the Gardens. That is, the diversity of sites and meanings that exist in a single space. In the following chapter, I bring together the users' and producers' perspectives of this heterotopia in an interview with the two architects who have to design spaces in the Gardens that address the needs of both groups.

Chapter five

Past & Present Spaces at the Christchurch Botanic Gardens

The central issue that arose from my research for this thesis was the conflict between science and leisure in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. During my investigation I uncovered the way in which the conflict is articulated and resolved by those who produce and use the space in the Gardens. In chapter one, I illustrated the longevity and complexity of Western botanic gardens. The complexity of a botanic garden derives from its multi-faceted and often competing roles regulated by the society of which it is a part. I traced the creation of the botanic garden and documented how the physical space changed over time. Historical and social processes altered the physical space of botanic gardens, and shaped how they functioned in society. What started as a place to grow medicinal herbs has become a place to showcase plant collections, to conduct research, to remember the past, and to provide green lawns and open space in sanctuary from the urban environment.

What remains a constant in the kaleidoscopic world of the botanic garden is that it has always been a place where knowledge is learned, practised and taught about nature, *in nature*. Knowledge of plants has been imparted over the years through the scientific study of botany. Botany became increasingly popular during the Enlightenment, it was offered as a subject at universities in Europe, and gardens containing the plants that were being studied were often attached to these institutions.

As I explained in chapter two, botanic gardens were affiliated with the expansion of the British Empire, often serving as an ‘economic’ garden for the propagation of useful plants for trade and consumption for the colonists. They also served another important purpose for settlers, the reconstruction of native landscape by planting familiar trees and shrubs transformed a foreign land into a ‘home away from home.’ I demonstrated in chapter three and four how a history of science and a colonial past was applied and expressed in the contemporary use and production of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens.

My research at the Christchurch Botanic Gardens provided me with a place that I could visit on a regular basis, where I could observe and participate in some of the activities, talk to the staff, read official documents and research its history. Historical research was crucial to this thesis. I needed an understanding of what *had* happened in the Gardens, therefore I documented events, changes or common themes that had arisen over the years and compared them to what was occurring today.

During my fieldwork and interviews, it soon became clear that the staff relied heavily on the historical status of the Gardens to promote its identity and importance within Christchurch city. The Gardens' colonial history is still drawn upon today in tours; it is also an integral part of marketing the Gardens as part of Christchurch's 'Garden City' image. On the tours I attended, we were navigated through the Gardens by the tour guide with a commentary which drew from facts and events from its history. I also discovered that people glean meaning from the spaces in the Gardens by using events from the past to construct a 'history' of the Gardens. The meanings that the Gardens carry, explained in this thesis are not static but changing over time. This concept is expressed by Rotenberg (1993):

All meanings are historically situated. That is, they can be fully understood only when they are seen as either changed or unchanged from some earlier understanding. Each generation reinterprets its world based on the inherited understandings of the past and experiences of the present. Thus, all meaning, and hence culture itself, is in constant flux...Spatial meanings must be seen in this light. They are historically contingent. That is, they take the form they do because of the exigencies of the present-time conditions in which they form (1993: xiv).

Low's ([1996], 2002) social construction and social production of space provided a theoretical framework for this thesis that would allow for a macro and microanalysis of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. Meaning is not found in the space itself, but space is an active location that is contextualised by historical, social, economic, political and cultural processes. Meaning is understood by interpreting the ways in which the Gardens is used on a daily basis. The spaces in the Gardens are continually open to negotiation in terms of the changing needs of society. For example, the growth in the tourist market in Christchurch has produced the need to market and promote the Gardens, and to create a

more informative, interactive and interpretable space for the international visitor. To achieve this, the Council created a job at the Gardens to establish it as a top visitor attraction and to raise its profile. Sarah's job ensures that a wide range of visitors are attracted, without compromising the integrity of the botanical collections. Sarah told me that she would like to see the Gardens become a more interactive place in the future, to inspire visitors with "lots of things that reflect the different areas." Sarah's job and the advent of an increasing number of tourists has reconstituted the use and interpretation of space within the Gardens. As I have previously noted, the changing function of space in the Gardens is characteristic of its heterotopic nature.

I showed in chapters three and four that the conflicts between spaces of science and leisure is not experienced by the public. Individuals use the Gardens simultaneously in diverse ways, but an individual who visits the Gardens to look at a botanical collection does not 'experience' this conflict when passing by a family enjoying a picnic on the lawn next to it. Conflict is, however, experienced by the staff, the majority of whom are trained horticulturalists and botanists. In this final chapter I will attempt to show how these tensions are somewhat masked and have been able to exist for centuries in botanic gardens using Foucault's concept of heterotopia.

Unifying Conflicting Spaces: Designing the 'Happy' Heterotopia

Thus far, I have investigated the interpretations of the Gardens as a heterotopic space by those who use it and those who produce and shape the space. In this section, I will explore another perspective on this space that is important to understand, that is of those who design the various spaces in the Gardens. The designers have a complex job. It involves monitoring visitor behaviour in the existing space, gauging public opinion on the space, and ultimately penning a design that will function as well as fit in with the overall look of the Gardens. The design of space in the Gardens is a significant aspect to consider because it involves having to take into account the needs of both the users and producers of the space. Therefore, the two architects I spoke with had to design spaces in

the Gardens which met the needs of both science and leisure. Essentially, they are the creators and negotiators of this happy heterotopia.

By pure coincidence, I began my research at a time when the Christchurch City Council had allocated \$10 million for the re-development of the Gardens. Not surprisingly, this topic came up in most of my interviews and each informant had different ideas, depending on their interests, about what this would mean for the Gardens. As I mentioned in Chapter four, the Council sought the opinion of the public and are working with staff at the Gardens to construct a future master plan for the Gardens and Hagley Park. The City Councillors will make the ultimate decision on this plan.

The landscape architect, Fiona, and structural architect, Matthew, were currently working on the re-development of the Gardens at the Council. As Council employees, drawing up design plans for the Gardens was one of several contracts they were undertaking, which meant the Gardens were not their sole focus. My interview with Fiona and Matthew provided me with an insight into how the spaces in the Gardens were conceptualised from a design point of view, as well as their personal opinions on the spaces.

Fiona informed me that they had initially begun the project with a simple purpose, but this had evolved into something bigger than they had first anticipated:

Matthew was going to design a building and I was to help with the location of it and make sure it fitted with the Gardens. But we started, through our analysis of the Gardens, to discover there's more- that you don't just plonk a building in the middle...

Most of my discussion with the architects was centred on the intricacies of re-organising and designing space in the Gardens, and of the best method to execute such a plan. Both Fiona and Matthew wanted to stay true to the "overall feel" of the Gardens, and had become interested in the history of the Gardens which they had learned through their research. The rich history of the Gardens, coupled with a unique physical environment makes it a difficult space to change. The problem that they were attempting to address was how to alter spaces in the Gardens without compromising the existing meanings.

The large trees are part of the problem that comes with altering the design of the Gardens. Fiona commented that there are many old trees that cannot be moved because of their age and more importantly, their cultural value. I thought of the countless trees in the Gardens planted to commemorate important figures for over a century and could imagine the furore that would arise in the community if one was chopped down.

In an interview with the Operations Manager, I learned that there are trees in the Gardens that have conservation value, meaning that they may be a protected or threatened species. The staff had analysed the Gardens in terms of the tree network, circulation patterns of visitors and pathways so that they can identify problem areas and improve circulation. He informed me that the staff had even “put a hold on [planting] commemorative trees unless they’re heads of state or obviously royal family” so that space in the Gardens could be altered. Some large trees in the Gardens could be moved by mechanical means, but the older trees would have to stay put.

Part of Matthew and Fiona’s role was to implement an overall “vision” for the Gardens that would encompass the diverse spaces, to ensure that the public were getting the most out of the Gardens. There are spaces in the Gardens that appear disjointed, and paths that lead nowhere in particular. This is partly because of a history of Curators who have had different opinions on the layout and running of the Gardens. According to Linda, the Botanical Resources Coordinator, environmental factors were also to “blame” for the “disorderly” look to the Gardens. I learned that the Gardens had been damaged by fire years ago and the staff had to re-construct collections in piecemeal fashion. Linda enjoyed the look of the Gardens, she did not see it as “disorder,” but charming, because it showed how the Gardens have expanded and evolved over the years.

Matthew commented that although the Gardens needed a vision, the variety of botanical designs and garden features were endearing:

Issues in the Gardens itself are kind of a haphazard affair being the result of years of independent development. Its just individuals exerting their presence and there’s no kind of visions to the space and because of that there’s...really a complete diversity which is kind of great.

Fiona described the Gardens as a place of “ad hocery,” and agreed that the individual development of the Gardens had created certain charm, yet was concerned that the Gardens would lose their charm if they were to continue to develop in this fashion. Fiona claimed that “there was never anyone who looked at the Gardens and said “let’s create a design, let’s consciously design a site [and] that’s where we come in.”

Matthew and Fiona did not reveal their exact plans for the future of the Gardens, which was due in part to considerations of confidentiality. However, it was clear that the main issue for Fiona and Matthew in implementing a new vision was to make the space in the Gardens easy to navigate and to optimise visitor circulation. During my interview, they showed me detailed drawings from their portfolios of the different pathways that snaked through the Gardens. The paths followed no particular route, which bothered both architects. Matthew noted that for the visitor there was “no sense of I’ve gone in and done a circuit” and this meant that they were also potentially missing out on some of the collections. Matthew exclaimed that some visitors had complained there was no native section in the Gardens “because they hadn’t got there yet!” Matthew and Fiona recognised that there was a fine line between making the most of the space in the Gardens by providing designated pathways for visitors, especially the international tourist, and keeping the whimsical nature of the Gardens for the locals to explore. Matthew commented:

The thing with space though, it’s a dangerous thing; you don’t want to make it so open and straightforward, then it becomes kind of boring...there’s really a delicate balance between the two.

Although the plans include building new facilities for staff, such as a new information centre, library and herbarium, the issue of space in the Gardens is mostly an issue of how to best design a space that will display the Gardens for the enjoyment of the public. According to Fiona and Matthew, this will be achieved by optimising public accessibility to the collections in the Gardens, by creating clearer pathways, and by consciously developing a vision for the Gardens to unify its diverse design elements and improve its marketability.

My interview with the landscape architect and architect made me realise that spaces in the Gardens are not only experienced in complex ways, but how to best design the space to alter or enhance these experiences is also a complex issue. Both Matthew and Fiona have to take into account the wishes of the staff and of the public, as well as their own professional opinions on the appropriate look for the Gardens. The reason why the architects have struggled with creating an encompassing vision for the Gardens is that they have to contend with a diverse range of sites. Endangered trees, memorials, historical buildings and botanical collections are not malleable spaces. Because the sites represent the different functions of the Gardens, they are difficult to incorporate into an overall vision.

Foucault's comment that "the garden has been a sort of happy, universalizing heterotopia since the beginnings of antiquity" (1986: 26), resonates with the central concepts of this thesis. That is, in reality, conflicts between science and leisure, in a colonial space are not experienced as such because the garden, as a 'happy' heterotopia, has the ability to mask the contradictoriness of these ideals. This is achieved because it is a place that is simultaneously "mythic and real" (1986: 24). Even though the architects, as producers of the space, have to deal with conflicting ideologies about the space in the Gardens, the real experience of the space "universalises" these ideologies and they co-exist happily juxtaposed in the same space.

Juxtaposing Time and Space in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens:

It is not just the physical space that is hard to unify, it is also the diverse meanings and contexts that exist in the same space. This is characteristic of a heterotopic space.

Foucault claims that the garden is one of the oldest examples of a contradictory site. His example showed how the Oriental garden is "capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several sites that are in themselves incompatible" by its ability to simultaneously be "the smallest parcel of the world" and represent "the totality of the world" (1986: 25).

Within the Christchurch Botanic Gardens, there are numerous conflicting spaces that are juxtaposed. First, there are different types of gardens that make up the Gardens as

a whole, each containing botanical collections from various parts of the world that are in reality growing on the New Zealand landscape. By walking through the Gardens, a visitor can view tropical plants and experience the simulated humidity of a jungle climate in the hothouse, meander through a Victorian rose garden, enter the hot, dry houses of cacti, and ramble through a simulation of the native New Zealand bush. The diversity of spaces in which plant life is showcased in the Gardens is the result of three hundred years of scientific practice and British colonial expansion. What is more, the meanings and practices derived from these processes occupy the same space simultaneously, therefore the Gardens is a place where space and time are juxtaposed in such a way as to contradict one another. The Gardens' relation to the space around it is also contradictory; it is a garden in a city.

In addition to the physical spaces in the Gardens, the themes I have explored in this thesis in relation to the Gardens are also of a contradictory nature: public versus private space, activities of science and leisure, and the celebration of both a history of colonialism and a post-colonial New Zealand identity. The latter of these themes was manifested in the market survey of the Gardens in the contentions between planting more 'natives' and keeping the Gardens' English heritage. The debate over the type of signage in the Gardens is symbolic of the conflict between leisure space and scientific space—how much signage should be available for the international tourist to navigate through the Gardens, without detracting from the signage used to detail plant varieties? There are distinct boundaries in the Gardens between private ('staff only') and public space. The private spaces contain propagating houses, nurseries, a herbarium, library and staff offices, and are associated with the scientific practices in the Gardens.

The Curator's reports in the archives and interviews with staff members detailed an ongoing conflict of interest in regards to retaining the scientific integrity of the Gardens, as opposed to catering for public enjoyment. The public do not experience this conflict of the heterotopia. The diverse interest groups, tourists and locals that visit the Gardens do so for their own purposes and the result is a space that is used in a variety ways by a variety of people simultaneously and side by side. However, when prompted to formulate opinions by the producers of the Gardens in a market survey, conflicts between

science and leisure, and the native versus 'traditional' English plants arose from different groups who favoured one or the other depending on how they used the Gardens.

How time is experienced in a heterotopia enables diverse meanings of the Gardens to be interpreted in different ways by different people. When you enter a heterotopia, there is a break with 'traditional time.' According to Foucault (1986), heterotopias "are most often linked to slices in time" and to enter a heterotopic site there must be a break in normal time. A heterotopia can be "indefinitely accumulating over time" (1986:26). Foucault gives an example of museums and libraries as spaces that collect and archive time, and because they are heterotopic spaces their functions have changed over time:

...in the seventeenth century...museums and libraries were the expression of individual choice. By contrast, the idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself out of time...in an immobile place, this whole idea belongs to our modernity (1986: 26).

The Christchurch Botanic Gardens is an "immobile place" that juxtaposes the past and future in its present spaces in a number of ways. The various garden styles found in the Botanic Garden, for example the Victorian rose garden and the *potager* garden, are from a particular period in time, but they presently share a space with other styles and garden fashions from different eras at the same time and in the same place.

In the present the Gardens is a place of the past; memorials such as trees, Lawns and buildings commemorate Royalty, Heads of State, Curators, War victims, and prominent people who have donated considerable sums of money to the Gardens. On site are archives that consist of Curator's reports, Council minutes and scrapbooks of newspaper articles on the Gardens for future reference. The Gardens is also a place of the future as it is used to educate the future generations, by teaching children to look after native species and their environment.

According to Rotenberg (1995: 18), the break with normal time allows the heterotopia to confuse past and present meanings:

The temporal break can be achieved through the accumulation of meaning over time. The contemporary meaning of the place and the aggregate of its past meanings are indistinguishable

Perhaps this is how the conflict between science and leisure and between the celebration of colonial past and a post-colonial identity can exist in relative harmony for the users of the space in the Gardens. When you enter the Gardens, the break in normal time causes history to be 'universalised' in a single space.

Foucault claims we experience life as a "network that connects points and intersects with its own skein" he believes space should perhaps take precedence over time. However, time is an important facet in determining a heterotopic space, because over time the function of a heterotopia can change:

As...history unfolds, [it] can make an existing heterotopia function in a very different fashion; for each heterotopia has a precise and determined function within a society and the same heterotopia can, according to the synchrony of the culture in which it occurs, have one function or another (1986: 25).

This characteristic helps to explain the changing functions of botanic gardens, originating as 'primitive' herb gardens in Ancient Greece to the 'physic' gardens of the Renaissance, to the gardens of botanical science and beauty of the Enlightenment and the amalgamation of these functions, coupled with conservation, education and research components in the present day.

Foucault asserts that although it may not appear as such, space in our society still contains elements of sacredness and that "perhaps our life is still governed by a certain number of oppositions that remain inviolable" (1986: 23).

These are oppositions that we regard as simply givens: for example between private space and public space, between family space and social space, between cultural space and useful space, between the space of leisure and that of work. All these are still nurtured by the hidden presence of the sacred (1986: 23).

These oppositions can all be found in the Gardens. For visitors, it can be a place of leisure activities for families and friends in which they can socialise, and a place of culture, for admiring works of art, or learning about Christchurch's heritage. For the staff

employed by the Gardens it is a place of work, it is a 'useful' space and because it is separated from the public space, it is a private space.

Most botanic gardens are found either in the centre of a city, or in close proximity of the centre and as the spaces around it become increasingly urbanised, the green space in the city becomes more important. It becomes sacrosanct. In the instance of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens, although it seems many locals take the Gardens for granted; if the space is ever threatened with change, it invokes a strong reaction. This is evident in the Letters to the Editor and the responses in the market survey. One letter in particular summed up this point:

Sir - hands off the Botanic Gardens! Besides being a sanctuary for birds, the Gardens are the only quiet and beautiful sanctuary for mothers, young children, and young people where a few hours without the worry of traffic and noise can be spent (*The Press*, 7th November, 1968).

Masking Colonial Space: the Contradictory Nature of the Gardens

In this thesis, I have told the story of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens and have made explicit the conflicting ideologies that exist in its space —is it a place of science or leisure? Should the development be for tourists or locals? Should there be more focus on New Zealand native plants, or on the traditional English gardens? I have discovered that what appear to be contentious issues in theory are not experienced as such on a daily basis inside the Gardens. Another central conflict that I have explored in this thesis was between the Gardens as colonial space amongst the New Zealand landscape, and the protection of native species coupled with the celebration of the English heritage used to market the Gardens. Colonial history in the Gardens is both masked and celebrated simultaneously. In this section, I shall explain how this is possible.

According to Foucault, a heterotopia must “have a function in relation to all the space that remains” (1986: 27). This means the space of a heterotopia does something to the social space that surrounds it, or of which it is part. One function of a heterotopia is to compensate for the space around it, what Foucault calls a heterotopia of *compensation*.

As the name suggests, it is a real site that compensates for the space around it, which is “as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled” (1986: 27). Foucault considers this function of the heterotopia with regard to colonialism, and gives an example of the Puritans arriving from England in America in the seventeenth century and creating a real “perfect other place.”

There are parallels found here with the Christchurch Botanic Gardens and the early English Settlers. As I have previously noted, the Gardens served as a space for the proliferation of English flora and fauna by establishing acclimatization grounds and nurseries for plant propagation. This concentration of Englishness in a foreign land was a compensation for the landscape of home. Because it was a compensatory space, it was made to be as ordered and as close to perfection as possible.

The spaces, although ‘disorderly’ in their creation and juxtaposition in the Gardens, are nevertheless spaces of ordering. They have been constructed to order the natural environment in a particular way as to modify and perfect the existing native landscape. Just as the settlers were creating a new colonial order. There is evidence of this meticulous appropriation of space in the Gardens detailed the reports by Head Gardeners and Curators for over a century. James Young, who served as a Curator for 23 years reminisced:

It is a maxim of mine that good lawns and good walks are the making of a garden...in those days the back part of the garden was nothing but broom¹¹ and littered undergrowth (*The Press*, 10th June, 1931).

The literature on the Gardens has expressed the aim of bettering of the native landscape, I refer again to the quote “out of a tree-less waste of swampy ground...Christchurch has been made into a Garden City” which summarises the dominant view of the colonial ‘improvement’ of the landscape. The derision of the native landscape as uninviting and uninhabitable is somewhat of a myth used to validate the colonial reconstruction of the environment. It can be interpreted as a ‘mythical charter¹²,’ a widely accepted story

¹¹ Broom, is a shrub that has many yellow flowers and long wiry stems (Oxford Dictionary). It is considered a ‘pest’ in New Zealand, as it difficult to eradicate.

¹² This concept was introduced by Malinowski (1926) in his book, *Myth in Primitive Psychology*.

authenticated by history, which served to satisfy political and cultural attitudes and values (Beattie, 1964:160).

However, that the British colonial appearance of the Gardens is the most appropriate look has been questioned over the years, by both users and the staff. I refer in particular to the English and native areas, from native cabbage trees in the Gardens disparagingly quoted as an “awful anachronism,” or, conversely “a place of stiff parterres” that was ‘too English.’ The statements are symptomatic of the identification of colonial endeavour and a post-colonial assertion of the value of native bush, they are two conflicting meanings imbued in the same space.

Conclusion

I stated in the introduction that botanic gardens are an interesting and intricate space to theorise. I have found that the conflicts between science and leisure and colonial spaces are not experienced as such inside the Gardens. Visitors are a heterogeneous group that use the Gardens in a number of ways, indulging in a variety activities that suit their particular interests. However, conflict between science and leisure is expressed by those who produce the Gardens. This is because the producers are conscious of the competing roles of the Gardens and are involved in creating a space that caters for a diverse group of visitors. The production of the Gardens is centred; the staff are a homogenous group that work under the same organisation. Because of this, they are aware of the multifarious uses that contrast with their specific roles at the Gardens.

Foucault’s fleeting remark that gardens are a ‘happy, universalizing’ heterotopia and break with ‘normal’ time of everyday life confuses past and present meanings and allows them to exist unheeded in the same space. What I gathered from my research was that the majority of the staff at the Gardens appreciated the multi-faceted role of the botanic garden. A quote by the Curator of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens sums up this positive reception of its variety of roles: “Botanic Gardens are a fusion of science, education and attractiveness, celebrating global plant diversity and people’s relationship to it” (*Christchurch Star*, July 2003).

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