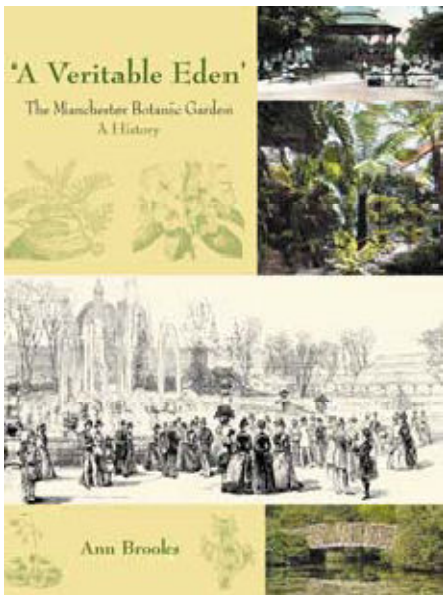


A history of a lost city garden; an edited reprint of a classic; philosophies for gardeners



'A Veritable Eden'. The Manchester Botanic Garden A History by Ann Brooks

Published by Oxbow Books

ISBN 978-1-905119-37-0

PAGES: 161pp

ILLUSTRATIONS: col & b/w illus Paperback

PUBLICATION DATE: 15 March 2011

PRICE: £19.95

How do you write about a botanical garden which no longer exists and for which there is no plant catalogue? Tell the story of its rise and fall, which is what Ann Brooks has done in this book. She tells the story of raising money (by subscription), opposition and a design competition with three winners, only for the garden to be largely designed by its first curator. One wonders how many ideas he took from those prize-winners. The Manchester Botanical and Horticultural Society was founded in 1827 to allow members the opportunity to study botany and horticulture . and to create the garden. There is a full description of the development of the garden, with its exhibitions, and an international reputation. Then the idea of a scientific garden with all plants named was gradually overcome by the ornamental idea - presumably to attract visitors and ensure repeat subscriptions. It appears, in hindsight, that the beginning of the fall was the decision not to open to members of the public, even though funds were sadly depleted at the time. Eventually it became the responsibility of the local Council, in association with the Society, but not for long. It was sold off to become an outdoor amusement park, and is today a shopping centre, with only the gate still in existence.

This is a story which is familiar - a good idea followed by a struggle for funding followed by an actual living project. The ending hopefully not to be shared by many projects today - although the National Botanic Garden of Wales came very near.

Excellent researched and clearly written by Ann Brooks, it is a story worth telling, and an important book for future generations who might wonder about that rather splendid entrance.