



ULSTER
ARCHÆOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

Survey Report

Reference: **Survey Report No. 50**

Author: **June Welsh**

Location:

**Glasshouses
Walled Garden
Florence Court
Co.Fermanagh**

In association with:

 **THE NATIONAL TRUST**



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Cover illustration: Cover illustration: Florence Court Walled Garden c. 1930

R.H.Pierce

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1. Summary

1.1 Location

A site survey was undertaken at the nineteenth century lean-to glasshouses, believed to be located at the north wall of the Lower Walled Garden at Florence Court in County Fermanagh. This is in the townland of Florence Court and in the parish of Killesher. Florence Court is located 8 miles to the south-west of Enniskillen in County Fermanagh.

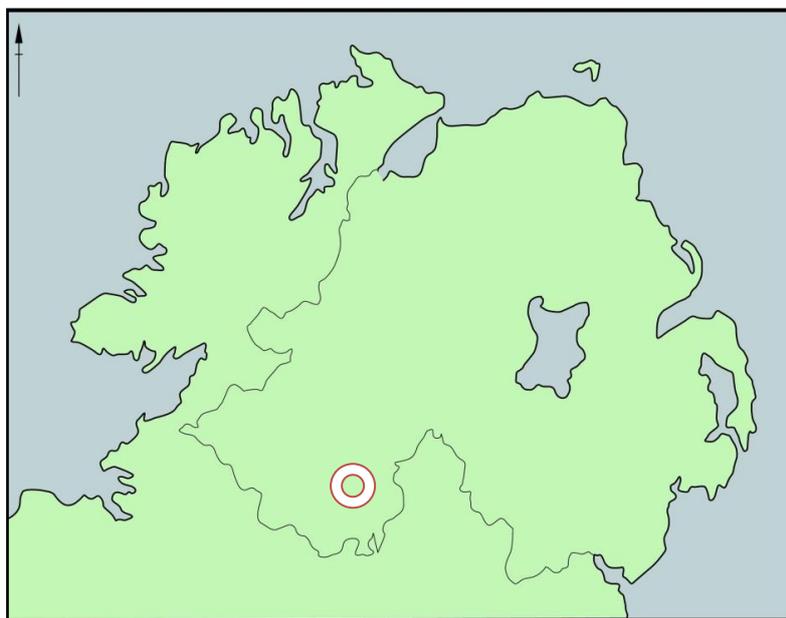


Figure 01: Location map for Florence Court, County Fermanagh

This former demesne is set against the backdrop of Benaughlin and Cuilcagh Mountains and was originally part of a much larger 30,000 acre estate owned by the Cole family, the Earls of Enniskillen. Today the National Trust owns 250 acres within the former demesne, including its centrepiece, the Grade A listed house, some key estate buildings, Pleasure Grounds, Walled Garden and much of the historic parkland. The Historic Demesne at Florence Court is included in the register of Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesne (Ref: F014) compiled by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency: Built Heritage and this designated area includes the Walled Garden. The Walled Garden is also included in the National Trust Historic Buildings, Sites and Monuments Record (HBSMR), with a site reference of 131725 and Grid Reference H17703480.

The Walled Garden is delimited on the south and east sides by two long, narrow, ornamental ponds or canals. Greenhouses had been designed as lean-to glasshouse structures along the north wall of the Lower Garden. All the buildings in this part of the garden, which included another glasshouse, a mushroom house and a potting shed, were demolished after 1974 by the Forest Service.

The survey was the sixth in a series of planned surveys undertaken by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society during 2014.

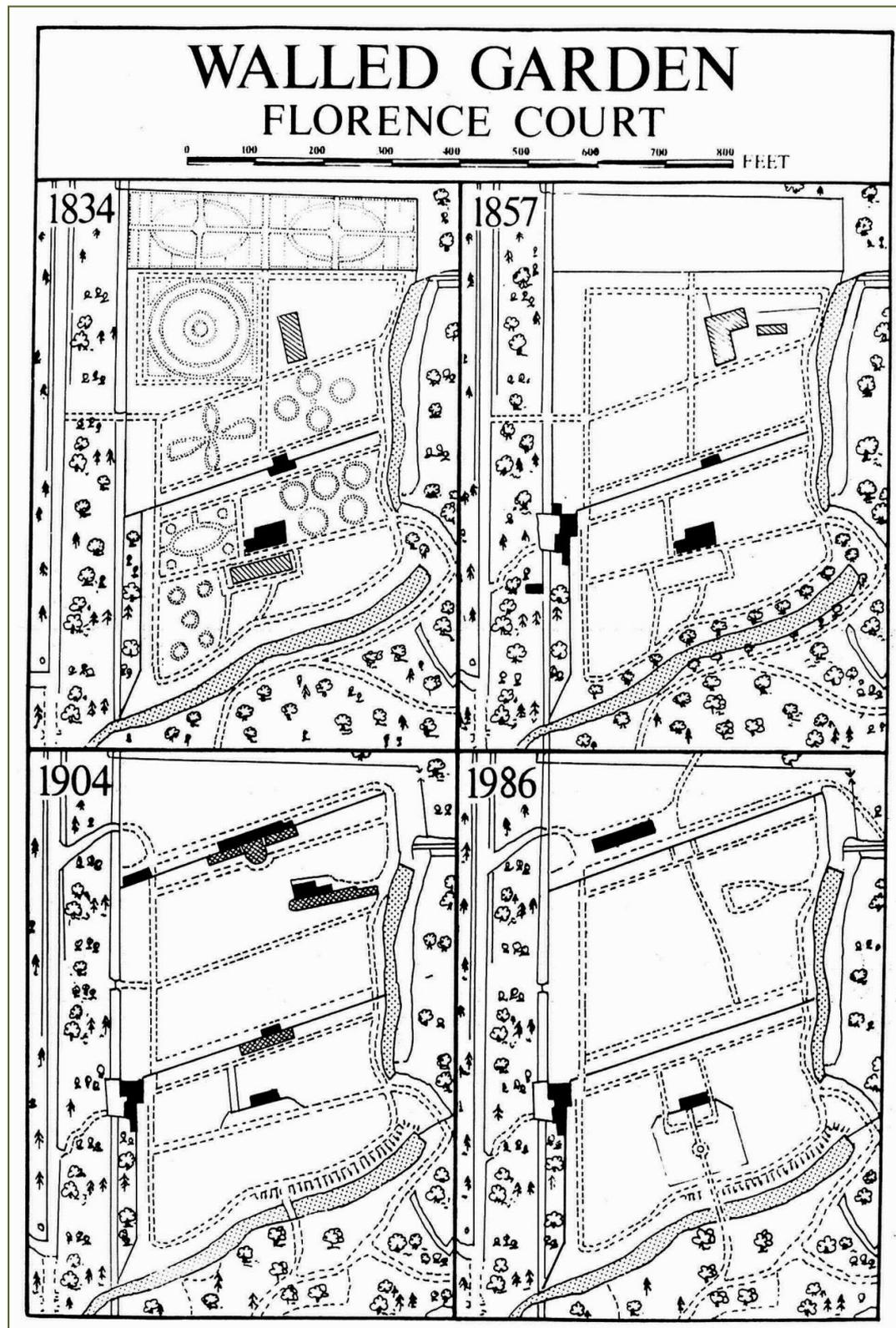


Figure 02: Florence Court Walled Garden: Progression of Layout: 1834, 1857, 1904, and 1986 OS Map extracts (after T. Reeves-Smyth 1990).

1.2 Aims

In order to enhance the archaeological record of this site, the aims of this survey were to produce accurate plan drawings of the monument and carry out a photographic survey. This information was compiled into a report and copies submitted to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, to the National Trust and to the archives of the Ulster Archaeological Society.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background

The survey of the Lower Walled Garden was undertaken on Saturday 30 August 2014. It was carried out by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society, in response to a decision taken by the committee of the society to extend an opportunity to members to participate in practical surveys of archaeological monuments that had not previously been recorded. This followed a bequest to the society from the late Dr Ann Hamlin, from which the items of survey equipment were purchased. During discussions with Malachy Conway, Survey Archaeologist of the National Trust in Northern Ireland, it was noted that many archaeological sites on National Trust property had not been subject to a detailed archaeological survey. It was therefore agreed that members of the survey group would commence a programme to survey these sites and the Lower Walled Garden was subsequently chosen to be the fiftieth of these.

2.2 Previous archaeological surveys

During 23-31 August 2014, Malachy Conway, the Survey Archaeologist of the National Trust in Northern Ireland, conducted an archaeological evaluation of the site of the two nineteenth century lean-to glasshouses, located at the north wall of the Lower Walled Garden at Florence Court, through excavation of four test trenches. The primary aims were to verify if the foundations of the two former glasshouses had survived within the Lower Walled Garden and to establish the ground-plan of the glasshouses, which had been demolished in 1974. Future proposals may include the rebuilding of the glasshouses on their original footprint.

The principal features within the Walled Garden are an attractive rose garden and the Gardener's Cottage, which has recently become a popular holiday cottage. Rose Cottage was built around 1840, originally for the head gardener and was located in the northwest corner of the Upper Garden. It must be emphasized that both the Pleasure Grounds and the Walled Garden offer visitors to Florence Court access to one of the few public gardens in County Fermanagh.

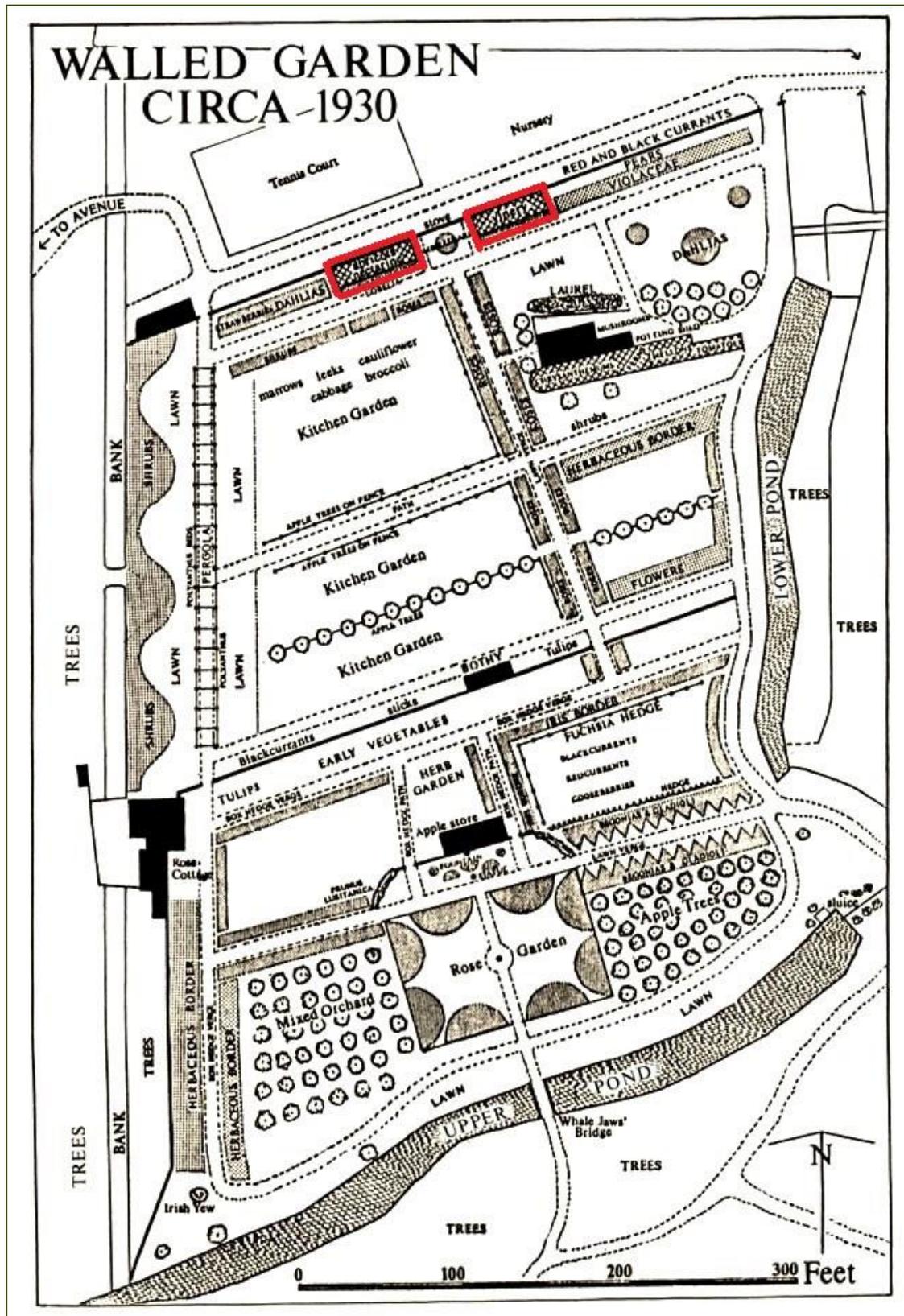


Figure 03: Florence Court Walled Garden 1930s Layout (after T. Reeves-Smyth 1990); site of lean-to glasshouses marked in red.

2.3 Cartographic Evidence

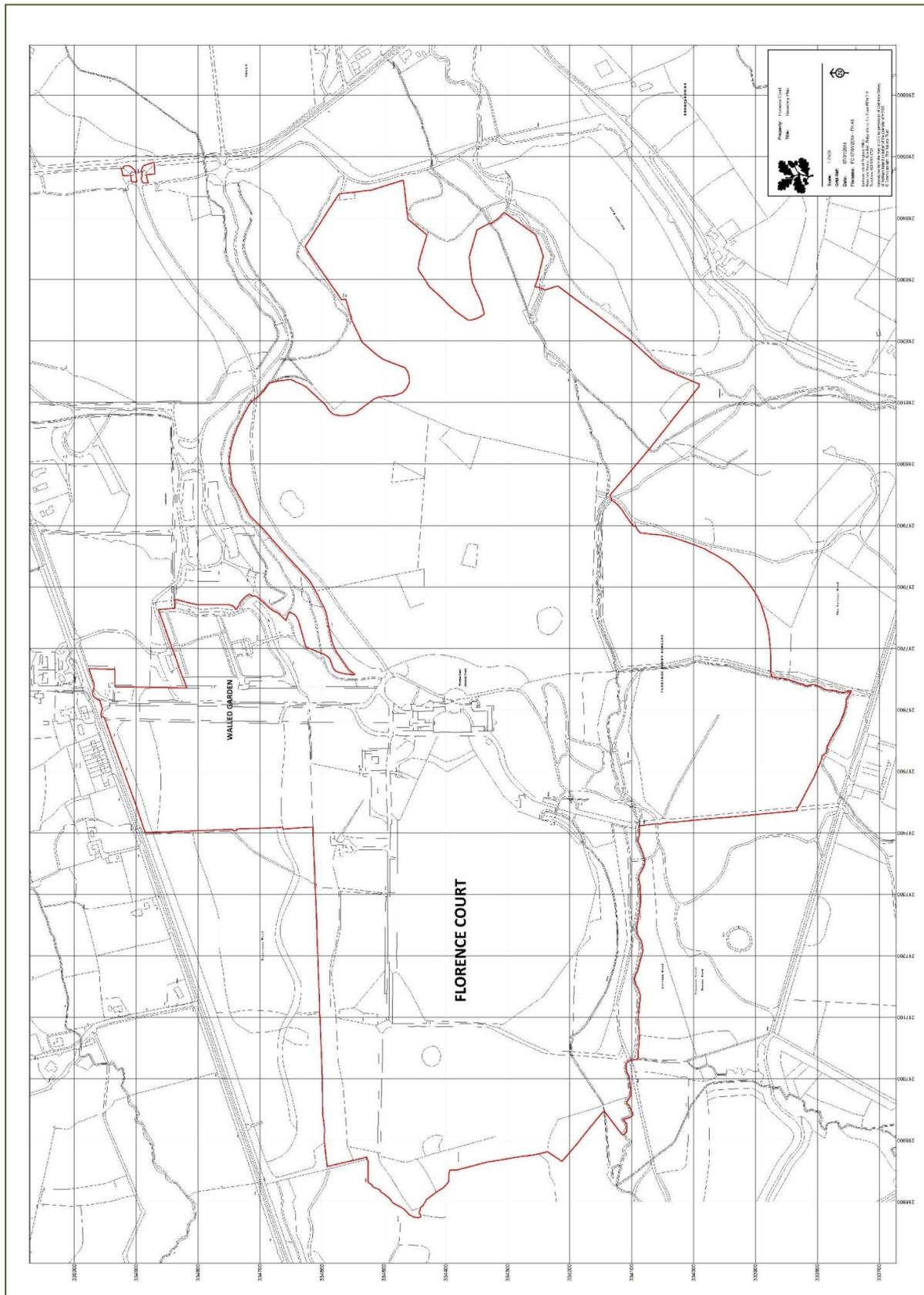


Figure 04: Florence Court, National Trust Property Boundary

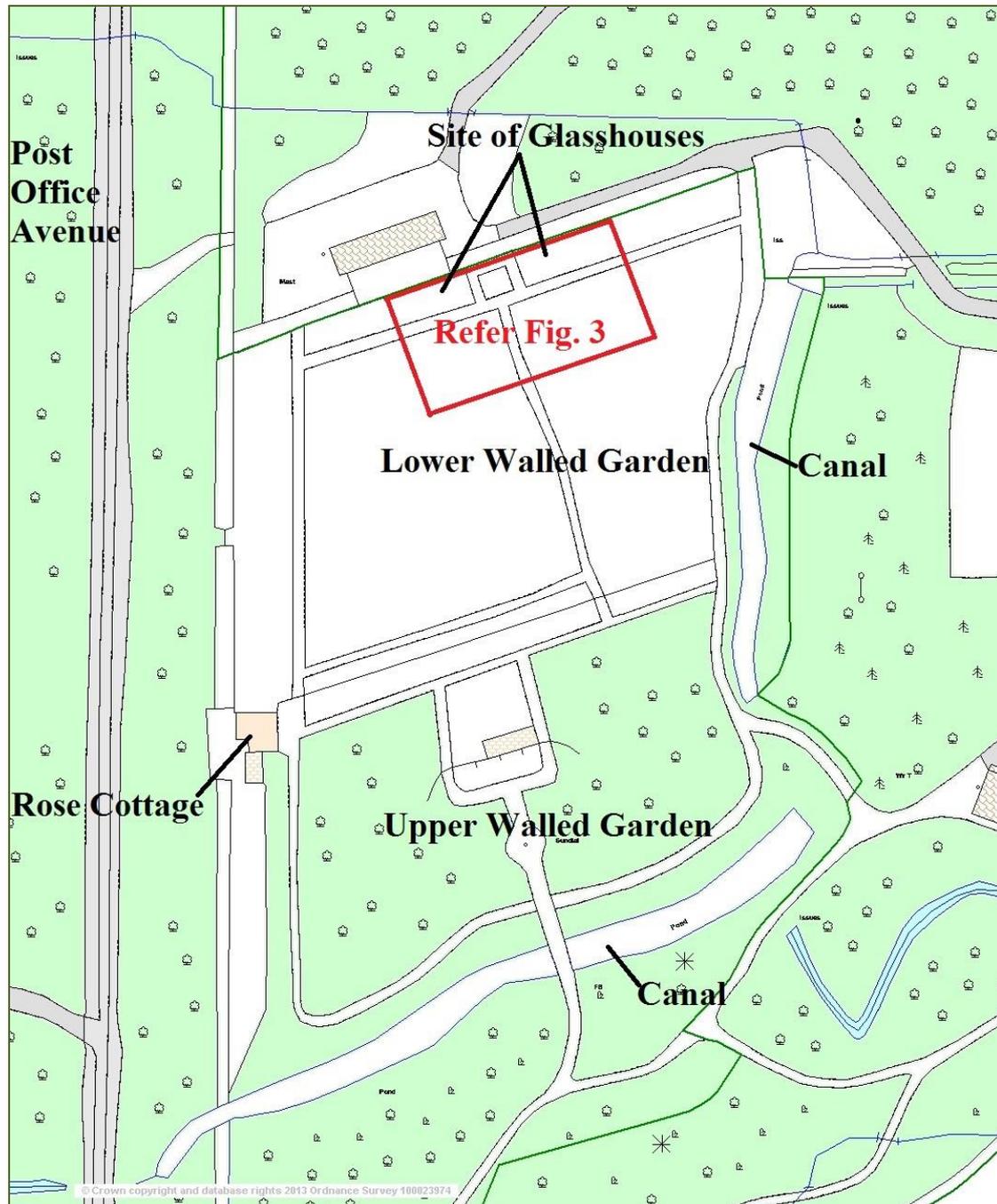


Figure 05: Florence Court, Walled Garden

2.4 Archiving

Copies of this report have been deposited with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, the National Trust and the Ulster Archaeological Society. All site records have been archived by the National Trust at Rowallane, Saintfield in County Down.

2.5 Credits and Acknowledgements

The survey was led by Harry Welsh and other members of the survey team included Janna McDonald, Ian Forsythe, George Rutherford and June Welsh. We were delighted when Janna's mother from Russia, Farida Alfeeva, joined us for the day as part of her holiday in Northern Ireland. The Ulster Archaeological Society is particularly grateful to Malachy Conway, Survey Archaeologist for the National Trust, who worked closely with the survey team in choosing the site and facilitating access.

I am also indebted to Malachy Conway for granting me access to his excavation report, which provided much of the excellent detail necessary for this report.

3. 2014 UAS Survey

3.1 Methodology

It was decided that the survey would take the form of the production of a plan drawing, accompanied by a photographic survey. This report was compiled using the information obtained from these sources, in addition to background documentary material, with the National Trust resources available.



Figure 06: Leica Sprinter electronic measuring device in position during the survey

3.2 Production of plan drawings

Plan drawings were completed, using data obtained from the field survey. Measurements were obtained by using the society's *Leica Sprinter 100* electronic measuring device. Due to the constant rainfall, we did not attempt to draw up our plan in situ, as we would normally do. Instead, we recorded all the measurements in a notebook and completed the plan at a later date. The field plan was later transferred to a computer-based format for printing.

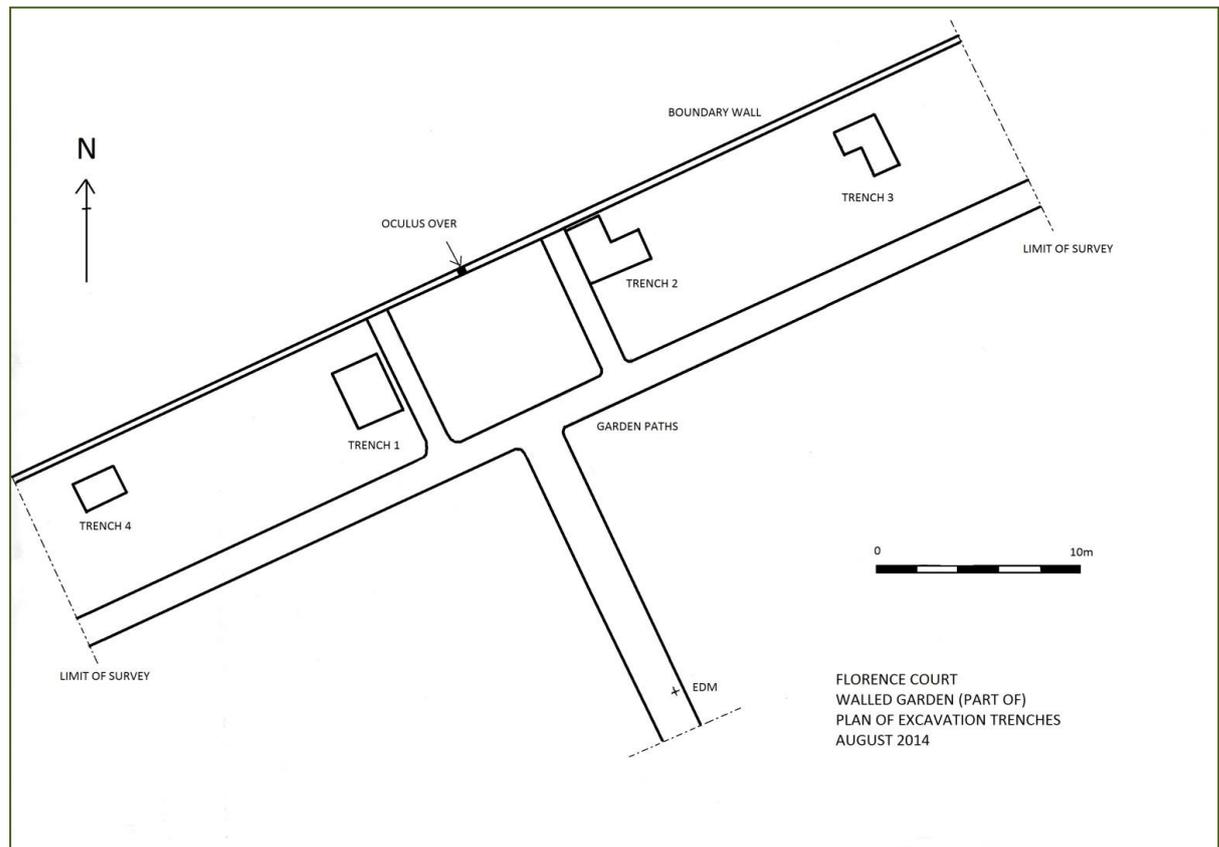


Figure 07: Layout plan of excavation trenches, Lower Walled Garden, Florence Court

3.3 Photographic archive

A photographic record of the site was taken by using a *Ricoh G800W* 8 megapixel digital camera and a photographic record sheet was employed, corresponding to photographs taken during the site survey on 30 August 2014. The archive has been compiled in jpeg format and saved to compact disc.



Figure 08: Trench 1 with pottery sherds and evidence of pipe, which provided the heating for the glasshouses



Figure 09: Trench 2 with pottery sherds and evidence of the original, white, painted wall formerly inside the glasshouses



Figure 10: Trench 3 with evidence of robust red brick base and walls



Figure 11: Trench 4 with its grey-brown metallised surface

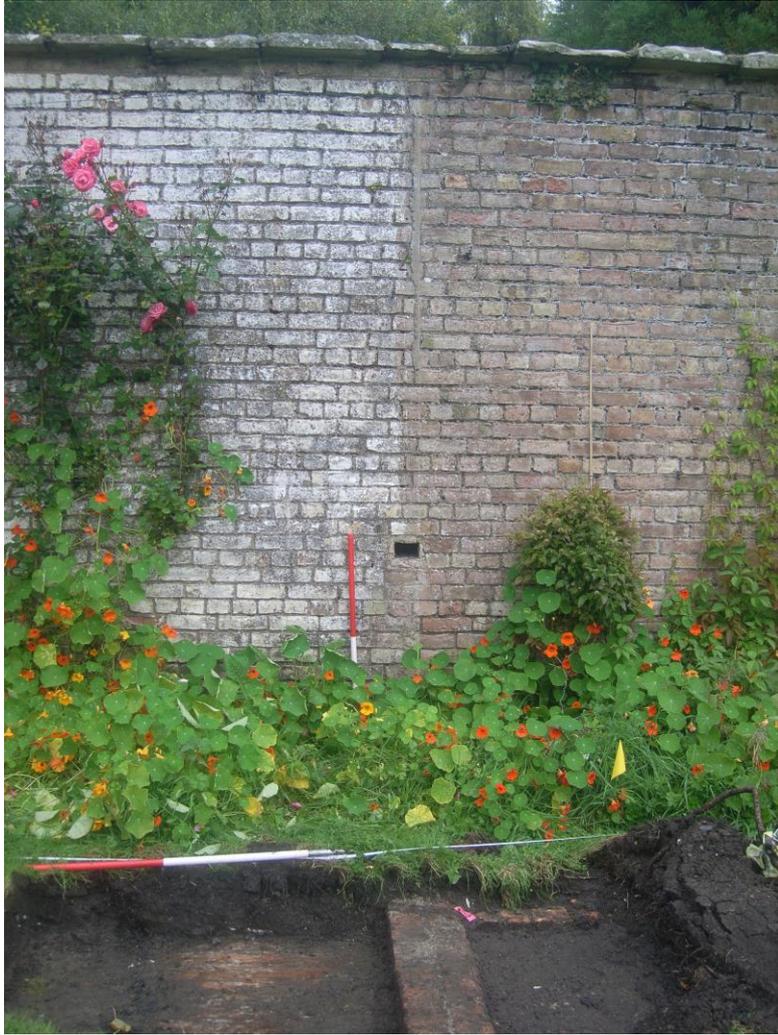


Figure 12: Trench 3 red brick wall, lined up perfectly with the white-painted wall, formerly found inside the glasshouses

4. Discussion

The Walled Garden design, as portrayed on the 1834 and 1857 Ordnance Survey maps (Figure 04) appears to have remained largely unchanged until 1869, when Viscount Cole, later to become the fourth Earl of Enniskillen, married Charlotte Baird, a rich heiress from Dumfriesshire in Scotland. As a result of this marriage, the Cole family fortunes were revitalised and one of the first projects undertaken was the building of the north wall to the garden, at the princely sum of £300. It was also at this time that the glasshouses in the Lower Garden were constructed. Originally, the vinery and apricot greenhouses against the north wall had a curvilinear central section, which were dismantled around the time of the First World War. Another glasshouse, which had been built against the south wall in the Upper Garden, was also dismantled at this time.

In 1886 Charlotte, Lady Enniskillen, embarked upon a remodelling of the Walled Garden, with the expert help of James Sutherland as head gardener. He had been specially brought over from Scotland for the task ahead and remained at Florence Court for at least eighteen years. During his time, the Rose Garden was planted beside the waters of the upper pond c.1890 and a bridge was added to create a new approach to this part of the garden. He was also responsible for creating the pergola in the Lower Garden, with its climbing roses and clematis and also the tennis court and nursery in the region to the north of the wall. Sutherland introduced a Roman garden, an Italian garden and also an English garden, each with its own distinctive characteristics. His brilliant designs gave the amazing impression that this was one huge ornamental garden, while indeed a very large area was actually devoted to fruit, vegetables and herbs. Following his 1908 departure, the garden was managed successively by a Mr Magee, Mr Monteith, James Hanna and finally by another Scot, James Sheppard, after whose departure the Walled Garden was gradually abandoned in the 1940s.



Figure 13: A 1930s view looking east along the north wall of the Lower Garden showing the lean-to glasshouses (R.H.Pierce)

The glasshouses along the north wall housed vines, peaches, nectarines and apricots. Nearby in the north-east quadrant, there was also a conservatory/greenhouse which featured chrysanthemums, ferns, melons and tomatoes. A building for mushrooms and a potting shed were also found nearby.

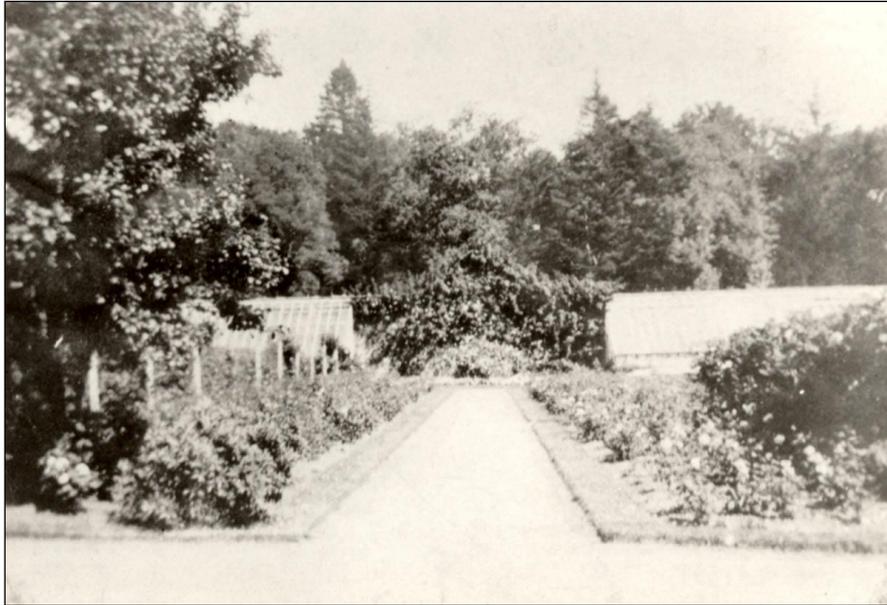


Figure 14: A 1930s view of the north wall of the Lower Garden showing the lean-to glasshouses and tympanum area (R.H.Pierce)

At the centre of Figure 14 above, you will identify a triangular arch between the two lean-to glasshouses, which appears completely covered in vegetation. At its apex a brick-lined circular aperture of c.1.2m in diameter is located. It has been suggested that this once contained a clock. However, it seems more likely that it was intended to provide additional light to the greenhouse, which stood here in this central position prior to World War 1.

The glasshouses that existed within the Lower Garden were built around 1870 and comprised a pair of lean-to structures against the north wall, along with a free-standing conservatory within the north-eastern sector. Each lean-to glasshouse was recorded as being 15.2m long and they were spaced 11.4m apart. The western glasshouse contained apricots, nectarines and peaches, while the eastern glasshouse contained the vinery. Both were heated with pipes extending from a heating plant, which was located on the north side of the garden wall. Both lean-to glasshouses survived in a ruined state until they were demolished by the Forest Service after 1974. The white-painted areas are a physical reminder of their former presence, as indeed are the contemporary photographs taken in the 1930s.

The finds recovered during the excavation were the kind of objects expected from a garden structure constructed of glass: broken earthenware flower pots, broken tiles and bricks, fragments of plate glass and small stones. Cast iron pipe fragments from the heating system were also recovered. One interesting find, recovered from Trench 1, was a clear glass bottle, embossed with the name J. McAllister & Son, Ballymena. This company were established in 1854 and produced Old Irish Whiskey.

A more personal item found was a plain clay pipe bowl and part of its stem, obviously belonging to one of the gardeners, as it was dated to the end of the nineteenth century or the beginning of the twentieth century. All of the bricks appeared to be hand-made red or red/yellow bricks and are likely of mid-nineteenth century date. Most likely these bricks were made either at Florence Court Demesne or within the wider estate.

In Trench 1 a portion of the single heating pipe was found to be supported on single red bricks. This would suggest that the base level of the heating pipe may represent the floor level of the glasshouse. This arrangement was a common feature of mid-late nineteenth century and early twentieth century glasshouses, as seen in the vinery glasshouse in the Walled Garden at Crom, also in County Fermanagh. The vinery glasshouse in Mount Stewart's Walled Garden is of a similar design.

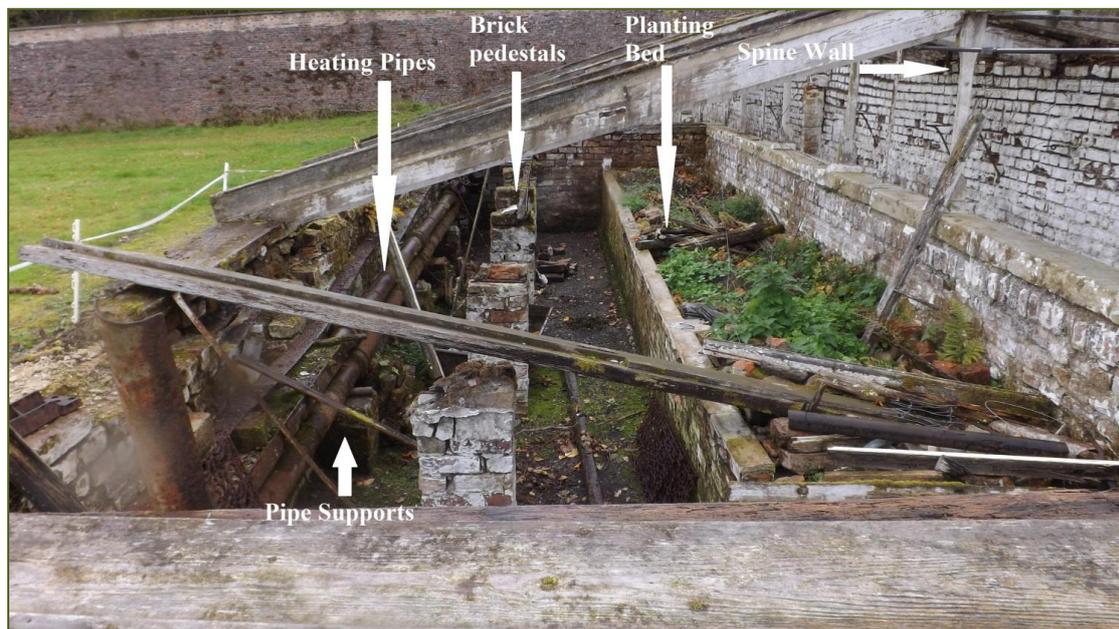


Figure 15: View of surviving internal arrangements of a ruined vinery glasshouse within the Walled Garden at Crom Demesne in County Fermanagh (M. Conway)



Figure 16: View of surviving internal arrangements of a vinery glasshouse located within the Walled Garden at Mount Stewart in County Down *M. Conway*



Figure 17: View of the internal lean-to glasshouse in the Walled Garden, Bangor Castle, County Down *H. Welsh*

5. Conclusions and Recommendations for further work

As part of the on-going Florence Court Walled Garden restoration project, the summary, plans and photographs from the excavation archive will be made available to those responsible for the Florence Court property to disseminate on site within the Walled Garden.

Further excavation work may be considered necessary to better understand and document the layout of the two lean-to glasshouses in the Florence Court Walled Garden and to explore more fully the heating system utilised.

6. Bibliography

Reeves-Smyth, T. 1990 Florence Court Demesne. 3 Volumes Historic Landscape Survey, Unpublished, National Trust

Conway, M. 2014. Archaeological Evaluation of Site of Glasshouses, Florence Court Walled Garden AE/14/125. Saintfield: National Trust.

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD FORM

Site: **Florence Court Walled Garden, County Fermanagh**

Date: **30 August 2014**

Make and model of camera...*Ricoh G800W* & others

| Frame no | From | Details |
|-----------------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| RIMG0020 | South | View of UAS survey instrument in Walled Garden |
| RIMG0111 | South-west | Post-excavation view of Trench 1 |
| RIMG0015 | East | Post-excavation view of Trench 2 |
| RIMG0029 | West | Post-excavation view of Trench 3 |
| RIMG0002 | West | Post-excavation view of Trench 4 |
| RIMG0034 | South | View of North Wall of the Walled Garden |
| RIMG2353 | West | View of glasshouse in Bangor Castle Walled Garden |