

## **Farnorth French Garden and Nursery at Allithwaite Lodge, Allithwaite, Grange-over-Sands**

The 1911 census showed that Arthur Molyneux, the head of the household at Allithwaite Lodge was the owner of the nursery. His youngest daughter was born in London in 1906 and sometime between that date and 1911 he returned to the house that his father had purchased in 1879, in Allithwaite, and set up the nursery.

French gardening can be said to have begun twice in Edwardian England: on 12th November 1904 when a letter to the Evesham Journal from "A Wellwisher" suggested the town's market gardeners visit Paris to inspect how growers there used glass to force early vegetables;<sup>1</sup> and again on 20th March 1908 when the Daily Mail ran an article under the headline "Golden Soil. Frenchman's methods of cultivation. £500 off an acre" which began the craze itself.<sup>2</sup> The article described a new form of vegetable cultivation practised at the Thatcham Fruit and Flower Farm near Newbury. The "French system" was a "veritable goldmine" and one Frenchman, it was claimed, had taken as much as £500 worth of produce off an acre plot in just one year. Early vegetables - principally lettuce, radishes, carrots and cauliflower - were forced in glass-covered wooden frames about one foot high, and also under hundreds of bell - shaped glasses known as cloches. Both frames and cloches sat on a thin layer of soil above long beds of decaying manure that provided heat and were protected from frost at night by rye mats.<sup>3</sup>

From 1908 The Daily Mail newspaper was full of articles about the system and emphasis was on how it could produce a good living. In 1908

a working model at the Ideal Home Exhibition in London may have inspired Arthur Molyneux. In view of his financial problems following the failure of his stocks and shares dealing business his estate at Allithwaite looked suitable for starting a new life outside of London. A plentiful supply of horse manure was required for the hot beds (500 tons per acres was advised) and this would have been available from the nearby farms and estates. A plentiful supply of water was also needed and there were streams nearby. A market for the produce would be the hotels and guest houses of Grange – over –Sands and the Peninsula.

The procedure was capital and labour intensive. The more credible manuals were in broad agreement that £1,600 and £700 were the approximate start-up and annual running costs for a fully-equipped two-acre garden.<sup>4</sup> They all far outstrip the £200 start-up cost for a two-acre site suggested by McKay in 1908.<sup>5</sup> The system also required expert judgement. Knowing precisely when to take action was as important as detailed knowledge of the procedures themselves. Peak prices for early crops were often attainable for only brief periods and in the winter months apparently minor mistakes could compromise financial success by delaying cropping beyond the optimum moment. It became standard practice to recruit an experienced Frenchman to supervise a new garden.

The majority of French gardens identified across the country were begun in the winter of 1908/09, with a second, smaller wave the following winter.<sup>2</sup> Farnorth French Garden and Nursery at Allithwaite Lodge was set up before April 1910, incorporated in 1911 and dissolved before 1916.<sup>6</sup>

**Paul Auguste Aquatias** was a French man employed at Farnorth French Garden and Nursery as the nursery manager, according to the 1911 census. He was 33 years old and was naturalised in 1908. His wife of 3 years was Ruth Lilian born in Glentworth, Lincolnshire in about 1880. It is not possible to identify which house they lived in other than they were in the village of Allithwaite. Paul and Ruth had married in the district of Maldon, Essex in the middle of 1907.

In December 1908 the Canterbury Journal, Kentish Times and Farmers' Gazette reported on the first of a series of lectures about French Gardening given by Mons. P Aquatias of Mayland, Althorne, Essex at the Anglo –French Stour Valley Gardening School , Westbere, Sturry, Kent. The East Kent Times and Mail 12 May 1909 carried an advert for an open air demonstration at the Anglo –French Stour Valley Gardening School , Westbere, Sturry, Kent by Monsieur Paul Aquatias CRHS. He was working for Brook Hall French Gardens in Tiptree, Essex by December 1909 when the owner, Mr Mynott, had a letter published in numerous newspapers over the next couple of months, stating that he was willing to take on a number of workers to learn from Monsieur Paul Aquatias 'one of the ablest of the French experts in this country'.

A report in the Scotsman of 29 November 1912 about a book written by Monsieur Aquatias on 'Intensive Culture of Vegetables on the French System' mentioned that he was formerly French gardener to Mr A J Molyneux. Therefore his time working at Allithwaite was between 1910 and 1912.

By 1914 and for many years after he is recorded in the Electoral register for Altringham, Cheshire and in Slater's Directory 1914 he is described

as a nurseryman in that district. They had a son, Harold in 1918. Paul died in 1959 in Cheshire.

### **1911 Census, some employees**

From the 1911 census **Joseph Goldsmith**, aged 29, from Sussex, a lodger at the Moorby's house in Allithwaite, was described as French gardner (stet).

**Edgar Clark**, a 15 year old was described as a French gardener and was living at Boarbank Lodge with his parents. Two members of the family were gardeners (domestic) and possibly employed at Boarbank House.

These were the only 2 gardeners who can definitely be linked to the nursery. However in houses close by there were possibly 4 other employees.

**John Bell Rigg**, aged 51, and his son **George Gilbert Rigg**, aged 23, were living at Barn Hey, opposite to the Nursery, and were described as gardeners. In 1929 George was occupying the land and greenhouses.

**Samuel Wood** aged 17 living at the Wyke was a gardener and could have been employed at the nursery.

**John William Martin** aged 22 living at Wraysholme was also described as a gardener and may have been employed at the nursery.

### **The Molyneux Family**

William Field's log book records on 17 September 1879 that 'Allithwaite Lodge sold by private to Mr Molyneux a Somersetshire gentleman'. On Oct 1<sup>st</sup> it was noted

*‘ It is reported that the person who it is said had bought Allithwaite Lodge had thrown it up again – owing to something in the deeds not being according to the terms he bought it on but it is now made right so purchased by Mr Molyneux ’.*

Thomas and Margaret Molyneux with their sons Arthur and Percy were recorded as living at Allithwaite Lodge in the 1881 census. Thomas had been a trader in small arms but by the time he moved to Allithwaite he was described as an annuitant. He had married Margaret Burns of Colton, Lancashire in 1872. Thomas died in 1891 aged 53; Margaret had died in 1882 aged 37. Both were buried at Rusland St Paul’s Church. Percy, born in 1878 tragically died in 1897 in a riding accident at Aldershot, a month after joining the 15<sup>th</sup> Hussars. Arthur, born in Southgate Middlesex in 1875 and educated at Giggleswick School, married Mary (May) Leigh the eldest daughter of James Leigh of Fernleigh, Wilmslow, Cheshire on 15 August 1899. In 1901 they were living at Ashley Gardens 89 St Margaret and St John, St George Hanover Square, London where Arthur’s occupation was a stock and share broker. Allithwaite Lodge was the home of Hannah Maria Burns (born 1851), Margaret’s sister, in 1901. Hannah died in 1944 and was buried at Colton.

Arthur and family were living at the Lodge in 1902 when he was appointed honorary captain of Allithwaite Fire Brigade and soon after lost his uniform in a fire at his own residence. (Westmorland Gazette 27 May 1922 an article about Allithwaite Fire Brigade being set up 20 years previously).

The 1911 census record that Arthur, Mary and their daughters Pamela (born 1903 in Weighbridge) and Kathleen (born 1906 in London) were living at Allithwaite Lodge, Allithwaite.

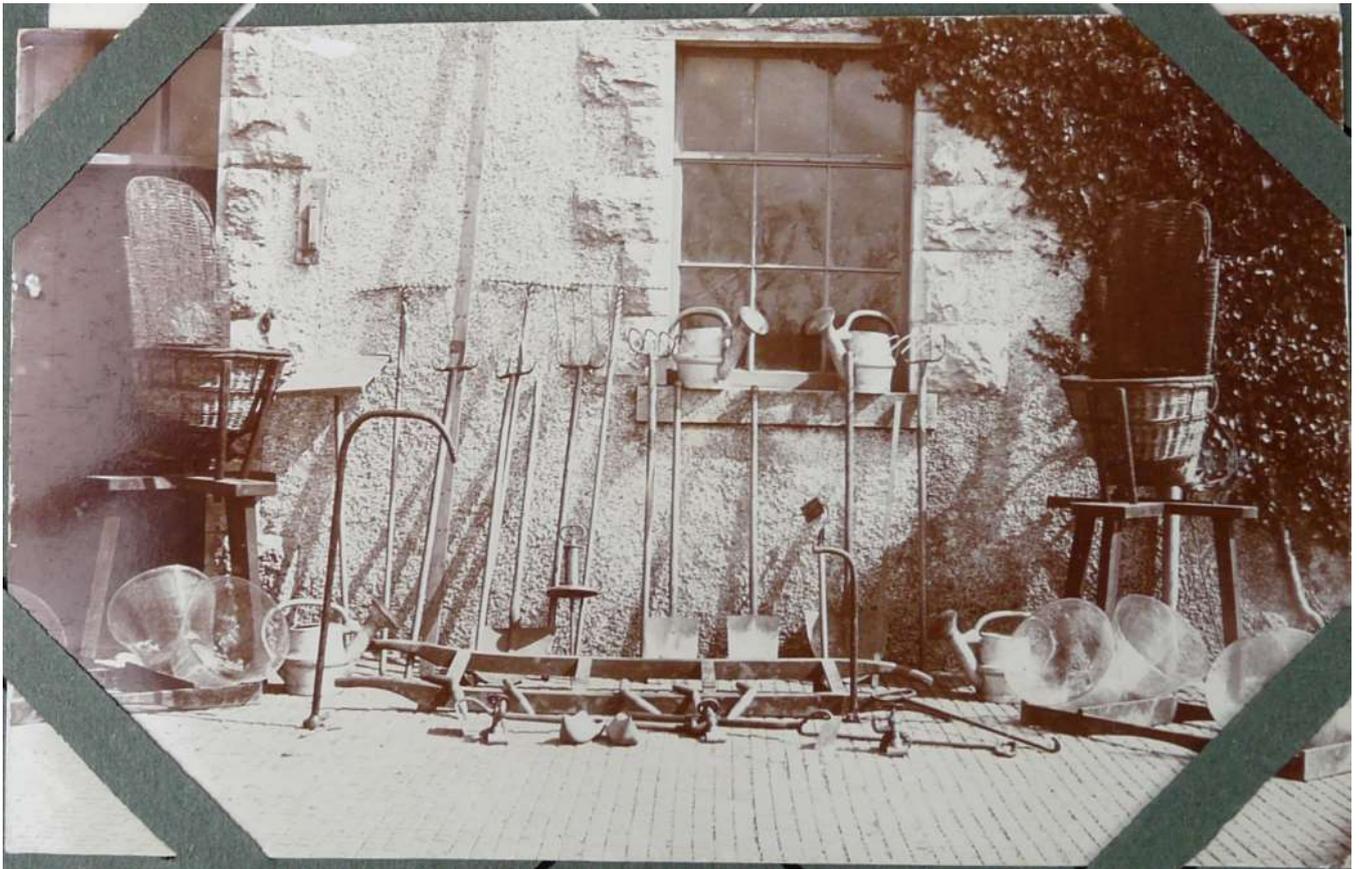
In 1915 a newspaper reported Arthur's sad story. He had been a partner in a stockbroker firm that had failed. He lost all of his money and gave way to drink. He tried to redeem himself at the start of the war and obtained a commission in the Kings Own Royal Lancaster Regiment. In January 1915 got into trouble through drink and was transferred to the Worcester Regiment which he never joined through drinking. He was removed from the service. A few days later he was found guilty of passing a dud cheque; he had committed other offences for which he was not prosecuted.

He returned to Allithwaite and was still shown as living at Allithwaite Lodge in 1929. The land and greenhouse was occupied by Geo. G Rigg. Arthur's death was registered in 1942 in Edmonton, Middlesex.

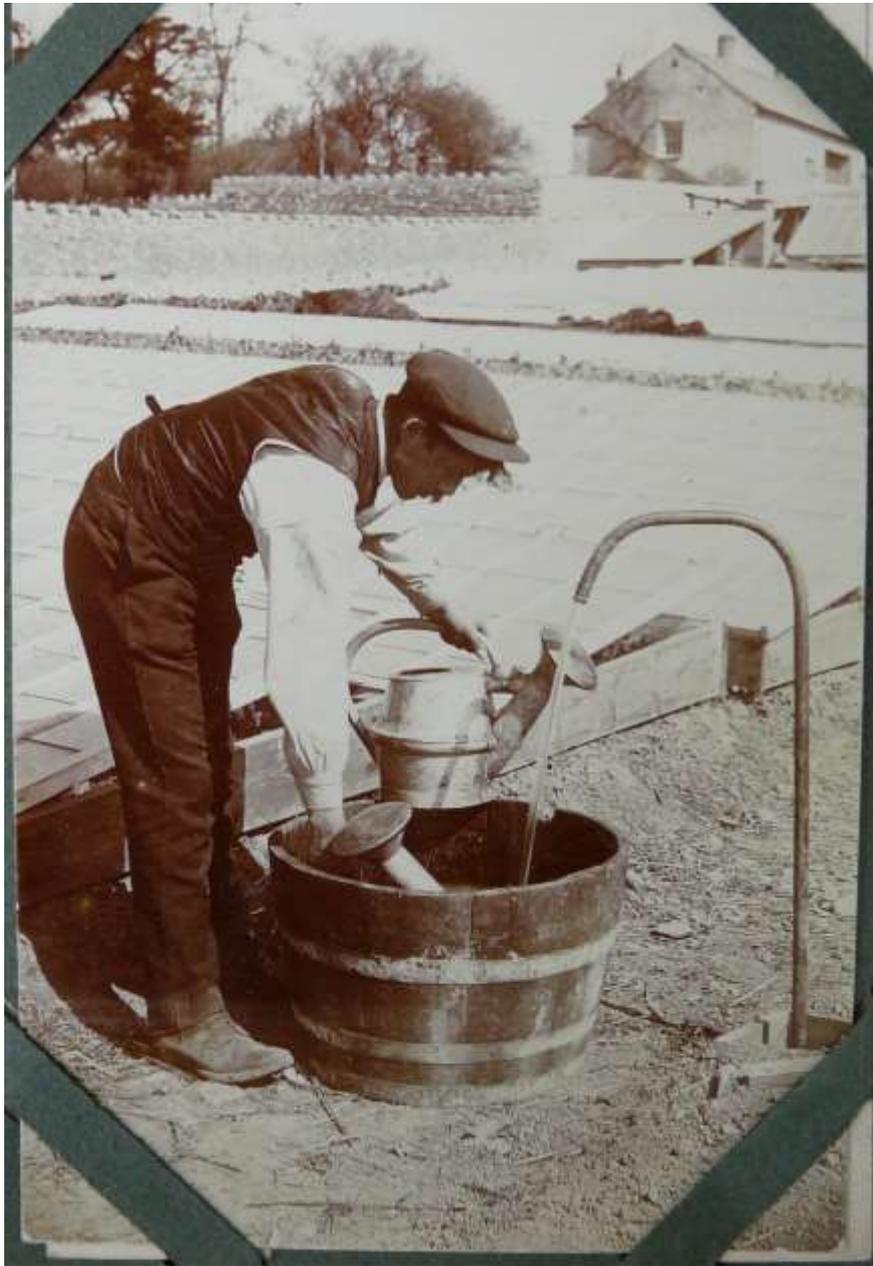
## **Pictures from Mr Lamb archive circa 1911?**

A local amateur photographer who lived in the village took these historic photographs of the French Garden.

Tools, bell jars and tool shed



Drawing water



Glass covered hot beds were laid out in rows. 5 gardeners shown at work



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Ref

1. 'A. Wellwisher', 'The Market Gardening Industry. Important Suggestion.' Evesham Journal, 19 November 1904,p.5; 'Golden Soil', DM, 20 March 1908,p.3
  
2. The French Gardening Craze 1908-1914. Horticulture, politics and the Media in Edwardian Britain  
[https://sas-space.sas.ac.uk/6876/3/FrenchGardeningCraze\\_AndrewShort\\_2017%282%29.pdf](https://sas-space.sas.ac.uk/6876/3/FrenchGardeningCraze_AndrewShort_2017%282%29.pdf)  
accessed 24 Dec 2020
  
3. Edwin Pratt, The Transition in Agriculture (London: John Murray, 1906),pp.144-50
  
4. Smith, Profitable Culture,p.66; Weathers, French Market-Gardening,p.25; Aquatias, Intensive Culture,p.17
  
5. McKay, French Garden,p.7
  
6. TNA BT31/13786/119360 Farnorth French Garden and Nursery Ltd