

Gloucester Gardeners 1650–1763

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In the summer of 1763 *The Botanist's and Gardener's New Dictionary* was published by James Wheeler, 'Gardener and Nursery-man in Gloucester'.¹ It was not an innovative or original work. The *Critical Review* allowed that it 'is systematical; the subjects are well arranged, and the matter judiciously selected', but much of it 'is certainly transcribed from the last edition of Mr Miller's *Garden Dictionary*'.² The main virtue of Wheeler's work was its small octavo size and correspondingly modest price of 6s., which brought horticultural expertise to a wider readership. The emphasis was on useful garden plants, 'exotics, which the gardener is supposed never to have seen, and common weeds, being deemed unworthy a place'.³ The book opened with an introduction to Linnaean classification, the explanation of which Wheeler described as his principal motivation in producing the work. The Linnaean system was well known among botanists by the mid 18th century and was adopted by the British Museum, opened in 1759, but it was still controversial.⁴ James Lee's *Introduction to Botany* (1760) was the first work to present the system to British readers. James Wheeler's book was derivative and unoriginal in its content, but it offered the reader in digested form the cutting edge of botanical thought.

What was unusual about *The Botanist's and Gardener's New Dictionary* was the description of its author on the title page. It was common for horticultural authors to associate themselves with famous gardens and the leading London nurseries. Stephen Switzer, a garden designer associated with gardens such as Castle Howard and Blenheim, emphasized his training at Brompton Park, the leading London nursery founded in the reign of Charles II. He described himself on the title page of *Iconographia Rustica* (1718) as 'Gardener, several years servant to Mr London and Mr Wise', who ran Brompton Park. Philip Miller, the superintendent of Chelsea Physic Garden for almost half a century from 1722 and the most prolific horticultural author of the period, identified himself as 'Gardener to the Botanick Garden at Chelsea, and F.R.S.' and as 'Gardener to the Worshipful Company of Apothecaries, at their Botanic Garden, at Chelsea' on the title pages of the *Gardeners Dictionary* (1731) and the *Gardeners Kalendar* (1732) respectively. In the *Introduction to Botany* James Lee, who had trained under Miller at Chelsea, described himself as 'Nursery-Man at the Vineyard, at Hammersmith'. The Vineyard was one of the most famous of the London nurseries, where Lee with his partner Lewis Kennedy was responsible for introducing many new plants into cultivation in Britain.⁵ However, to assert a trade association with a provincial city as

1. It was advertised in the *Glouc. Jnl.*, 20 Jun. 1763, as to be published on 30 Jun.; see also *London Chron.*, 28–30 Jun. 1763.
2. *Critical Review* 17 (1764), 184–91.
3. J. Wheeler, *The Botanist's and Gardener's New Dictionary* (1763), v.
4. P. Fara, *Sex, Botany and Empire* (2003), 38–40.
5. J. Harvey, *Early Nurserymen* (1974), 51–6, 84–5; E.J. Willson, *James Lee and the Vineyard Nursery, Hammersmith* (1961). *The Gardeners Dictionary* went through eight editions in Miller's lifetime with an additional eight of the *Abridgement*, while 15 editions of the more practical and cheaper *Gardeners Kalendar* appeared.

James Wheeler did was unprecedented. This paper will explore what Wheeler's designation as a gardener and nurseryman in Gloucester would have meant to his potential readership through an examination of the professional gardeners in the city from the Civil War to the publication of his book.⁶

The century following the English Civil War witnessed a revolution in garden design. The second half of the 17th century was dominated by the formal influence of the French and Dutch styles, as evidenced by John Kip's illustrations of Gloucestershire gardens published in *Britannia Illustrata* (1707) and Sir Robert Atkyns's *Present and Ancient State of Glostershire* (1712). These gardens were dominated by straight lines, axial layouts, canals and parterres. As Kip's engravings were published a new, less formal style was emerging, which drew inspiration from the Arcadian landscapes of Claude Lorrain and Nicholas Poussin. Arcadian gardens featured ornamental buildings based on classical temples and pavilions. A related style known as Rococo featured more eclectic buildings, drawing on Gothic, Chinese and Turkish models. The layout of paths, woodland and streams grew more sinuous and naturalistic, until in the mid 18th century the landscape garden associated with Lancelot (Capability) Brown came to dominance. Although the majority of householders lacked the space and resources to follow developments in garden design in the manner of the county gentry, they were influenced by changes in horticultural fashions.⁷ As far as Gloucester was concerned, Kip's engraved plan hints at the extent of the city's gardens and their formal layout. There is also evidence of the adoption of Rococo fashions in gardening among the wealthier of the city's inhabitants as the 18th century progressed. In 1736 John Loveday described a garden in Westgate Street, which would delight 'florists and those that understand Gardening', where there was an octagonal, elaborately painted summerhouse topped by a flower basket carved from stone through which the smoke from the chimney escaped. Later two Rococo gardens were recorded by the artist Thomas Robins in the city's suburbs. One was at Marybone House and incorporated a pagoda on a mound above wriggling paths. It belonged to Benjamin Hyett, who went on to create the Rococo garden at Painswick. The other was created in Barton Street by Dr Charles Greville and incorporated 12 separate enclosures and structures drawing inspiration from a wide range of sources.⁸

Sources

This study concentrates on those men who identified themselves or were identified by their neighbours as gardeners in written records. It excludes people who were employed in horticulture, but were identified as labourers at one end of the scale, or yeomen at the other. The borders between the labourer, the gardener and the yeoman were ill-defined and fluid. Individuals might be described in different ways at different stages in their careers and a man might see himself differently from the way others viewed him. All the men included in this study were described as gardeners in at least one document. Because of the vagaries of early modern spelling and the tendency of sons to be named for their fathers and to follow them into the same profession, it is difficult to be certain about the exact number of individuals involved. There are, however, around a hundred individual gardeners identifiable in the records for Gloucester for the period concerned.

6. For an exploration of the personnel in other trades in Gloucester during a similar period, see P. Ripley, 'The economy of Gloucester, 1660–1740', *Trans. BGAS* 98 (1980), 135–54.
7. See T. Mowl, *Historic Gardens of Gloucestershire* (2002), chapters 3–6.
8. J. Harris, "'Gardenesque": the case of Charles Greville's Garden at Gloucester', *Jnl. of Garden Hist.* 1 (1981), 167–78; Mowl, *Hist. Gardens of Glos.*, 82–4; M.E. Richards, 'Two eighteenth-century Gloucester gardens', *Trans. BGAS* 99 (1981), 123–6.

Since over half of the gardeners identified appear in only one record, although their working life may have covered three decades or more, it is difficult to quantify how many gardeners were active at any one time. The available evidence suggests that there was a substantial increase in the number of gardeners in the city in the years following the Civil War, which was sustained in the two decades following the Restoration, showed a slight decline at the end of the 17th century and then increased substantially at the start of the 18th century and was sustained thereafter. However, with such a small and closely interrelated occupational group the apparent decline may be a function of the nature of the surviving documents rather than an actual decrease in numbers. I would conservatively estimate that there were 20 gardeners active at any one time in Gloucester at the start of the period under study and that this had increased to 30 by its end.

A variety of records have been examined in an attempt to identify Gloucester's gardeners for this study. The primary source is the apprenticeship records.⁹ There are 57 gardeners who appear either as apprentices, masters or fathers of apprentices in the period of this study. These include only 15 apprenticeships to gardeners, compared to more than double that number of apprenticeships of gardeners' sons to other trades. It is apparent from other sources that sons frequently followed their fathers into gardening, but it was only in the 1720s that gardeners formally registered taking their own sons as apprentices. There is a decline in references to gardeners in the 1680s and 1690s, which as we have seen may reflect an actual decline in their numbers. A similar drop in the 1710s followed the introduction of stamp duty, which discouraged people from going to the trouble and expense of arranging formal indentures. The register for 1742–65 has been lost and can only partially be made up from the records of tax payments preserved in London, which include only those apprentices subject to stamp duty and do not record the occupation of the apprentice's father. Consequently only one gardener can be identified in the apprenticeship records for the last two decades of the period under study. Serving an apprenticeship was one of the ways to acquire the privileges of a freeman. The comparative lack of interest among gardeners in acquiring those privileges before the 18th century may have reduced the number of formal apprenticeships to gardeners. Only 19 entries mentioning gardeners appear in the registers of freemen for the city and of those all except one occur in the 18th century.¹⁰

Wills and inventories are among the most informative records, but only 17 wills, five grants of administration and 12 inventories have survived for individuals included in this study. Their evidence indicates that gardeners in Gloucester were not a wealthy or powerful occupational group. The bequests were modest, with no individual being left more than £40 as a lump sum. Three-quarters of the inventories had values under £20, although in some cases the valuation of a gardener's inventory appears to underestimate his wealth. Some of the probate inventories would have been made for men who died in old age, were no longer active in their profession and may have disposed of some of their property before they died. Other men may have been ill for some time before their deaths, which would also be likely to decrease the value of the estate they left. Only four inventories include valuations of land, although two-thirds of the wills make bequests of property. While freehold land was not included in probate inventories, leased land should have been valued as part of the estate, but seems on occasion to have been omitted. The wills of the brothers Richard Price (d. 1706) and John Price (d. 1712) specifically referred to leased land, but neither of their probate inventories included leases.¹¹ The valuation of both estates at around £15

9. See J. Barlow (ed.), *A Calendar of the Registers of the Apprentices of the City of Gloucester 1595–1700* (Glos. Rec. Series 14, BGAS 2001) ; *1700–1834* (Glos. Rec. Series 25, BGAS 2011) .

10. J. Juřica (ed.), *Registers of Gloucester Freemen, 1641–1838* (Glos. Rec. Series 4, BGAS 1991), 32.

11. Glouc. Dioc. Rec. (GDR) [in Glos. Archives (GA)] wills 1706/259; 1712/343; inventories 1706/174; 1712/156. Richard Price was buried on 31 Mar. 1706, but probate was not granted until 30 Dec.

does not appear to reflect the brothers' wealth. Since £81 of the £109 7s. valuation of the estate of Samuel Best (d. 1700) represented the value of his leases, the effect of omitting leased land from probate inventories is clear.¹² Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that most gardeners made a modest living. The surviving wills also suggest that the level of illiteracy among gardeners was high, with around half of the testators making a mark.

The leasebooks of the corporation and of the dean and chapter provide further information about the land that was under cultivation by gardeners in this period to supplement that in the wills and inventories. A minority of the gardeners in the study group feature as leaseholders in their own right, while others appear as sub-tenants or their holdings are mentioned in the description of the boundaries of a piece of land to be leased. The type of land leased by gardeners fell into two main categories. Firstly, there was agricultural land. In 1651 John Cooke leased Milking or Milcomb Furlong in Barton Street, a close of over 20 a., while in 1718 Robert Millard, John Price, Thomas Heath and Thomas Williams all leased strips of land in Pedmarsh Field to the north of the city.¹³ Secondly, there were messuages and gardens situated in the suburbs of the city. Often a single lease would include several small plots of land, some of which adjoined each other or other land held by the gardener. In 1678 Richard Price leased a garden of around $\frac{3}{4}$ a. outside the Lower Northgate, a little langet or narrow, projecting piece of garden ground on the other side of the road and a garden in Newland on a single lease.¹⁴ Other corporation records in which gardeners can be traced include the registers of the Tolsey Court, where actions for debt were heard, the Quarter Sessions indictment books and the Hundred Court and Court Leet records. Unfortunately the Quarter Sessions indictment books cover only the first three decades of the period covered, the Hundred or Mayor's court actions are only recorded to 1704 and the Court Leet presentments start in 1738.¹⁵ A final significant source for the last decades of the period are the advertisements in the *Gloucester Journal*, which appeared in 1722 but survive in a reasonably complete series from 1730.

The Gloucester background

Gardens were an important part of the topography of early modern towns and the gardeners who cultivated them made a significant contribution to the urban environment. References to plots of land known as the Woad Garden, Hop Yard and Vineyard indicate how small-scale production in gardens contributed resources to the local economy.¹⁶ There will have been professional gardeners in Gloucester from medieval times to tend the extensive gardens at the castle and Llanthony priory.¹⁷ It is only from the end of the 16th century that such gardeners become visible as named individuals. The first to appear in the apprenticeship records are William Launder and Roger Michell, named as 'gardener, deceased' in 1598 and 1605 respectively.¹⁸ In 1608 there were ten gardeners identified in the county of Gloucestershire as a whole in the course of the military muster organized by the indefatigable John Smyth of Nibley, representing just under 0.06 per cent of those whose occupation or status was listed. No gardeners were recorded in the entries for

12. GDR inventories 1700/176.

13. GA, GBR J 3/5, ff. 68–71; J 3/8, ff. 103v.–106v.

14. *Ibid.* D 936/E12/5, ff. 39–42.

15. *Ibid.* GBR G 6/4; G 3/Sib/1–2; G 10/3; G 8/5.

16. See e.g. *ibid.* GBR J 3/4, ff. 506–9; D 936/E 12/6, f. 261 and v.; GDR wills 1720/208.

17. J. Harvey, *Medieval Gardens* (1981), 10–11, 83–6.

18. Barlow, *Apprentices 1595–1700*, 7, 23.

Gloucester city, although there was one, John Mason, in Barton Liberty and Southgate Street.¹⁹ William Emott, who was described as a gardener when his son began his apprenticeship to a cutler that year, does not appear in the military muster. Presumably Emott was too old or unfit for military service and too poor to be required to provide equipment.²⁰ Richard Smyth, who in 1621 took an apprentice, is the only gardener to appear in the apprenticeship registers during the reign of Charles I.²¹

The Civil War and its aftermath appear to have had a significant influence on the growth of gardening as a profession in Gloucester. In the first instance the difficulty of securing supplies from the surrounding countryside during the hostilities would have increased the importance of the city's own resources. Then, during the siege, houses in the suburbs to the east and north of the city were destroyed to prevent them being used as cover for the attacking forces. The rebuilding of these houses was a slow process and well into the 18th century the plots of land where they had stood were being leased to gardeners.²² These factors served to increase the opportunities for market gardeners in the city. The city's status as a port also encouraged the development of commercial horticulture. Seed grown upstream in the Vale of Evesham passed through Gloucester and local nurserymen could transport trees economically along the Severn.²³ After the Restoration all branches of the gardening profession benefited from the growing recourse to and influence on the city of the county gentry, as the demand for retail goods and professional services increased. Gardening offered careers that had few barriers to entry. There was no necessity to undertake an apprenticeship and no formal body to admit or reject gardeners.²⁴ The tools required were comparatively few and inexpensive, and a gardener employed by someone else might have even these supplied.²⁵ The combination of increased opportunities and lack of barriers appears to have encouraged a rapid expansion of the profession. A century after Smyth's survey twice as many gardeners are known to have been active in Gloucester as were recorded in 1608 for the entire county.

There were essentially three forms of occupation covered by the term gardener in the period of this study. The first was a man who looked after the flowers, fruit and vegetables that grew in someone else's garden. The second was the market gardener who grew vegetables and fruit to sell in the market. Finally there were the gardeners who grew trees and plants to sell to the public and who in the course of the 18th century came to be known as nurserymen. These categories do not reflect hard and fast divisions. A gardener employed by someone else might also have his own patch of ground on which he grew plants to sell. The nurseryman might be employed to lay out a new garden and then superintend its maintenance. The seasonal nature of the gardener's trade meant that they might also work in other trades during the winter. Nevertheless this basic division is useful in unpacking the term gardener in relation to early modern Gloucester.

19. J. Smyth, *Men and Armour for Gloucestershire in 1608* (1980), 9, 18; A.J. Tawney and R.H. Tawney, 'An occupation census of the seventeenth century', *Econ. Hist. Review* 5 (1934), 25–64. No occupations were recorded for Kingsholm. A hive-maker was recorded in the East Ward, indicating probable garden-related activity.

20. Barlow, *Apprentices 1595–1700*, 30.

21. *Ibid.* 52.

22. GA, D 936/E 12/5, pp. 311–14; E 2/1, p. 21.

23. M. Thick, 'Market gardening in England and Wales 1640–1750', in J. Thirsk (ed.), *Agricultural Change* (1990), 258.

24. The Company of Gardeners of London was incorporated in 1605, but its remit never extended more than 6 miles beyond the city. See A.F. Steele, *The Worshipful Company of Gardeners of London* (1964).

25. There few inventory valuations for tools. Hopkin Jones (d. 1664) had an old chest and working tools worth 6s. 8d. (GDR inventories 1664/27) and John Price (d. 1712) had a cart, other utensils of husbandry and working tools worth 15s. (*ibid.* 1712/156).

The employed gardener

Then, as now, many householders were their own gardeners, but a city like Gloucester also had its cohort of professionals. The wealthier families would have included a gardener within their household staff, although the advertisements in the *Gloucester Journal* suggest that he would often have been required to undertake additional duties in the house or stables. Less substantial householders could employ a jobbing gardener by the day. There were a number of gardens detached from houses on the outskirts of Gloucester, which provided the wealthier inhabitants with an enclosed refuge from the bustle of the city, where they could walk among the fruit trees and take refreshment in a summer house.²⁶ For many of these inhabitants it would have made more sense to employ a gardener by the day than as a member of their household in the centre of the city. The nurserymen and larger market gardeners identified in this study may also have needed to employ gardeners, although their needs may have been supplied by apprentices, family members and casual, unskilled labourers.

The employed gardeners are the most difficult to identify in the records, since they did not take apprentices or lease land. At the same time they probably constituted the majority of the professional gardeners in Gloucester at any one time – an assumption that is indirectly borne out by the high proportion of gardeners for whom no reference to their holding land is found in the records. Such gardeners, whether members of a household or employed by the day, would have required a general knowledge of all aspects of kitchen gardening, the management of fruit trees and the raising of flowers. Within this group of gardeners, who worked on the land of others and under their direction, was a subgroup who were involved in the creation and laying out of gardens. One such was presumably Geoffrey Waterson, whose occupation in the apprenticeship records was given as paviour and gardener.²⁷

The market gardener

The earliest use of the term ‘market gardener’ recorded in the *Oxford English Dictionary* dates from 1727, although no such description has been found in the Gloucester records for the period covered by this study. Some market gardeners occupied no more than the garden attached to their own houses. Others rented small orchards and garden grounds, though only the most successful acquired leases of land from the corporation, dean and chapter or other landowners. These wealthier market gardeners would sometimes be described as yeomen, indicating their increasing social status. Gardeners who engaged directly in the retail life of the city had the greatest incentive to become freemen for the commercial advantages they thus acquired. The produce of market gardeners was important to the variety and quality of the city’s food supply. By 1731 the ‘Garden-Market’ was sufficiently established as a distinct area for the grocer William Viner to use it to describe the location of his shop. Six years later the corporation attempted to ease congestion around the Cross on market days by confining the city market gardeners to the vicinity of the King’s Board and those from the country to the upper part of Eastgate Street.²⁸

The hamlet of Kingsholm, lying north-east of the centre of Gloucester, became the focus of a small community of market gardeners in the late 17th century. The siege of Gloucester had seen the destruction of 11 houses and a barn at Kingsholm, which lay on the approach to the city

26. For a similar development on a grander scale in Bristol, see R.H. Leech, ‘Richmond House and the manor of Clifton’, in M.J. Crossley Evans (ed.), *‘A Grand City’ – ‘Life, Movement and Work’: Bristol in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries* (2010), 27–46.

27. Barlow, *Apprentices 1595–1700*, 158.

28. *Glouc. Jnl.*, 10 Aug. 1731; *The Victoria History of the County of Gloucester (VCH Glos.)*, IV, 259–62.

from Tewkesbury. By 1672 only eight houses in the hamlet were assessed for hearth tax.²⁹ Two of these were occupied by gardeners from the same family: John Best and Thomas Best (d. 1683). Two of Thomas's sons, Samuel (d. 1700) and John (d. 1716), followed him into gardening, while his daughter Dorothy married the gardener Henry Ricketts (d. 1710) a year after her father's death. Henry Ricketts had witnessed Thomas Best's will and would later be one of the appraisers of his brother-in-law Samuel's estate. Samuel Best amassed several leases for small plots of land, while his brother John leased a garden and orchard from Brasenose College, Oxford. Henry Ricketts leased a garden called the Vineyard close to Alvin Gate from the dean and chapter, which by 1716 was in the possession of his nephew Thomas Best (d. 1720), John's son. Thomas and his cousin, Samuel's son Samuel, both became gardeners and were admitted as freemen in the first decade of the 18th century.³⁰ The interconnections were close between the Bests and other families of gardeners in Kingsholm, such as the Jennings, Richmonds and Kerseys. They took their neighbours' sons as apprentices, witnessed their wills, appraised their goods for probate and stood as guarantors for bonds.³¹ When Thomas Best died in 1720 he was in his late thirties. His will reveals that market gardening had proved a comparatively lucrative career for him. He had added to the leased land inherited from his father and his comparative prosperity is reflected in the bequests of gold rings and substantial amounts of pewter to his wife and children. By this time the expansion of Gloucester was creating a demand for the small plots of land used by gardeners such as the Bests. When Thomas Best's two sons died childless, his daughter and her yeoman husband sold the land known as Best's garden and its adjoining cherry orchard. In 1756 these were bought by a pair of speculative builders. They were sold the following year to Alderman Samuel Farmer and incorporated into his adjoining garden.³²

Closer to the centre of Gloucester there was a concentration of market gardeners to the north and east of the city, where over a hundred houses had been destroyed during the siege.³³ This provided an opportunity for market gardeners to acquire plots of land, although they were in competition with householders who wanted to increase the size of their existing gardens or create a separate pleasure garden away from the bustle of the city centre. This competition led to a concentration of both market and employed gardeners in this area, in a way that was not seen further out from the city at Kingsholm. The area around Barton Street immediately beyond the east gate had been associated with market gardeners before the Civil War. In 1642 Richard Price of Barton Street, gardener, was indicted for allowing his dunghill to obstruct the king's highway.³⁴ It may be the same Richard Price (d. 1679) who in 1651 acquired a lease from the corporation of land near the Lower Northgate where formerly there stood 'a faire dwelling house with a malthouse thereunto belonging which was destroyed at the time of the besieging of the said City of Gloucester'. This marked the start of a steady accumulation of plots of land in the vicinity over three decades.³⁵ When he died, Richard Price was able to leave land to three of his four sons: John (d. 1712), Richard (d. 1706) and Thomas.³⁶ John, and subsequently his son, also John,

29. *VCH Glos.* IV, 386; GA, D 383, p. 120.

30. GDR inventories, 1700/176; wills 1700/243; 1683/144; 1716/81; GA, D 936/E 12/6, f. 216r–v; GDR wills 1710/183; inventories 1710/95; Juřica, *Freemen*, 59, 64.

31. GDR wills 1724/44; inventories 1710/95; 1724/153; GA, D 3117/3933–4; D 936/E 12/8, ff. 174v.–175; Barlow, *Apprentices 1595–1700*, 199; *Apprentices 1700–1834*, 22.

32. GDR wills 1720/167; GA, D 936/E 135.

33. *VCH Glos.* IV, 121.

34. GA, GBR G 3/Slb 1.

35. *Ibid.* GBR J 3/4, pp. 189–93.

36. Barlow, *Apprentices 1595–1700*, 156, 195.

acquired further plots of land in the area on lease from the corporation and the dean and chapter. Writing his will in 1708 John Price described himself as a yeoman, although in other documents he and his son continued to be described as gardeners. In 1718 the younger John jointly leased 16 a. in Windmill field in Wotton and Pedmarsh field in Kingsholm. The acquisition of plots of land further from the city centre are indicative of his move to larger-scale production.³⁷ While his brother followed a career trajectory of market gardener to yeoman, Richard Price (d. 1706) moved in the direction of the retail trade. In 1682 he leased five plots of land without the Lower Northgate from the dean and chapter, where he undertook to build a new house. This was done by 1692, when the lease was renewed.³⁸ He died in the spring of 1706, although his probate inventory was not taken until the following December. His goods included in the 'Backroome a parcell of Seeds & Baggs' worth £2 and in the 'Shop one large Cisterne & Board' worth 4s. The cistern is mentioned in his will as the great stone [sink] 'used to wash garden stuff in' bequeathed to his son Henry.³⁹ From this it appears that the shop was used to sell both seeds and fresh produce. The plots of land mentioned in his will make it clear that Richard was involved in growing as well as selling garden produce, but apparently had established a shop rather than joining the bustle of the market. Since Richard described himself as 'old and infirme' when making his will, Henry may by this time have been responsible for the actual gardening.

It is frustratingly difficult to be sure what the market gardeners of Gloucester were growing. Probate inventories refer to seed of 'all' or 'severall' sorts or 'the garden stuff', although onions are occasionally mentioned separately.⁴⁰ The inventory of Thomas Ravener is more helpful, listing 'pease, french beans, onions, onion and porret seeds and apples'.⁴¹ The bequest by Thomas Best (d. 1683) of the 'Croppes of corne or garden stuffe upon any my groundes now Rented by mee or which shall be Rented or croped by mee at the time of my deces' to his then unmarried daughter and executor Dorothy indicates that gardeners would on occasion grow crops associated with smallholding rather than gardening, demonstrating the fluidity of the boundary between the gardener and the yeoman.⁴² There is also some evidence of commercial seed-growing in Gloucester. The inventory of Samuel Best (d. 1700) included 200 lb of 'seed of all sortes' valued at £4.⁴³ Samuel Best made his will at the end of October and his inventory was taken a month later. The seed trade is inherently seasonal and then, as now, the seed was produced in the autumn for sale early in the new year. Although Samuel Best was one of the more successful of Gloucester's market gardeners, it is unlikely that he would have needed such a large volume of seed for his own use.⁴⁴ Nor would he have been likely to save his own seed in the autumn for planting in the spring. It had long been recognized that it was a false economy for a grower to continually save and sow his own seed.⁴⁵ A gardener growing for the market in particular would want to harvest the best of his crops before they set seed, and saving seed from inferior plants would be poor practice. The assumption must be that Samuel Best was growing seed to sell, either within the local community

37. GDR wills 1712/343; GA, D 936/E 12/8, f. 129 and v.; GBR J 3/8, ff. 17–18, 103v.–105.

38. GA, D 936/E 12/5, ff. 311–14; E 12/6, ff. 184v.–185; E 12/7, ff. 112–113v.

39. GDR inventories 1706/174; wills 1706/259. Richard Price was buried at St John's on 31 Mar. 1706.

40. *Ibid.* inventories 1700/176; 1712/156; 1724/153.

41. *Ibid.* inventories 1714/105. 'Porret' meant either a small onion or a leek.

42. *Ibid.* wills 1683/144.

43. *Ibid.* inventories 1700/176.

44. Given that the types of seed are not specified and planting densities differed, no accurate calculation can be made of the area of land that 200 lb would cover. Onions might be planted at 1 lb to an acre, cabbages somewhat less and carrots rather more. See J.H. Harvey, 'Vegetables in the middle ages', *Garden Hist.* 12 (1984), 89–99.

45. J. Harvey, *Early Nurserymen* (1974), ix.

or further afield through the port of Gloucester. The ‘parcell of seed of severall sorts’ included in the inventory of John Price in September 1712 and valued at £2 suggests he too may have been growing seed commercially.⁴⁶ Six decades later the presence of a ‘seed room’ in the house of Thomas Lewis suggests that he was involved in the commercial production of seeds, while the ‘10 Dozⁿ 4 Cucumber Glass’ indicates that he was growing cucumbers for the market.⁴⁷

The nurseryman

While some market gardeners in Gloucester might have produced seed commercially, there is no evidence that they grew plants to satisfy the burgeoning demand for trees, shrubs and florists’ flowers.⁴⁸ To some extent the needs of Gloucester’s gardeners might be supplied by friends and by importation from outside the city, but during the first half of the 18th century specialist nurserymen appeared to service this demand. The *Oxford English Dictionary* records the use of the term ‘nurseryman’ in 1629, although its earliest identified appearance in Gloucester was when Joseph Hockley described himself as ‘Gardener and Nursery-Man’ in an advertisement in the *Gloucester Journal* in 1741.⁴⁹ Twelve years before John Cullurne instructed that his stock of trees should be sold to provide the money for the bequests in his will, indicating that he was a nurseryman, although he described himself simply as a gardener.⁵⁰ The term ‘seedsman’ came into use to mean a trader in seeds in the late 17th century, although it does not appear in the Gloucester records until the second half of the 18th.⁵¹ Seeds were often sold by grocers and other retailers, who might source the standard herbs and vegetables locally but would purchase seeds of new and more exotic plants from London seedsmen. The gardeners who described themselves as seedsmen may also have been importing some or all of their seeds.

Setting up as a nursery required more capital than starting a market garden, since the stock had to be built up over more than one season. Consequently, a pioneer nurseryman was liable to have accumulated some capital by working for someone else as a gardener, often on a large estate or in another nursery. Alternatively, he might be of a higher social class than the majority of gardeners and have inherited some property to help him get established. He would certainly need a higher level of literacy and numeracy to manage his business than the significant proportion of the employed and market gardeners who were unable to sign their own names.⁵² The nurseryman was likely to be a man of experience and entrepreneurship, who was willing to take on the considerable financial risk of establishing a nursery. It is, therefore, not surprising that nurserymen appear to have been more likely than market gardeners to migrate into the community where they set up

46. GDR inventories 1712/156.

47. *Ibid.* inventories 1770/8. Thomas Lewis died intestate and the valuation of a horse ‘upwards of 20 years old since dead upwards of two years’ indicates that the inventory was taken at least two years after he died. Only an old tub was listed in the seed room. Cucumber glasses were used to make the fruit grow straight.

48. Florists’ flowers – anemone, auricula, carnation, polyanthus, ranunculus, tulip – were those popular with amateur hybridizers. See R. Duthie, *Florists’ Flowers and Societies* (1988).

49. *Glouc. Jnl.*, 6 Jan. 1741.

50. GDR wills 1729/638.

51. The first use of the term ‘seedsman’ I have found in the advertisements of the *Glouc. Jnl.* was 10 Oct. 1738 in relation to Joseph Phillips, whose nursery was in Devizes, Wilts. The first advertisement for a Gloucester seedsman, Samuel Harris of Southgate Street, was on 24 Feb. 1756. Harris was a grocer, who also sold tea, watercolours, snuff and prepared hair.

52. In 1758 William Cullurne prosecuted Thomas Wadley for the cost of his board and lodging and the trouble of writing his letters: GA, GBR G 6/9.

their business. In Gloucester none of the pioneer nurserymen can be confidently linked to existing families in the city.

The earliest of the Gloucester nurserymen was John Cullurne, although he described himself simply as a gardener. He appears to have originated in Malmesbury (Wilts.), where his mother Makepeace was living when he died in 1729.⁵³ He settled in Barton Street and leased land beyond the Lower Northgate from the corporation. He appears to have been a comparatively young man at his death, since all his six children were under 25 and his wife Mary lived on as a widow for at least 30 years. In his will he appointed trustees to sell his leases, goods and stock of trees in order to raise £150 to pay his bequests to his children. No inventory survives for Cullurne, who on the basis of his will appears to have been one of the wealthier of Gloucester's gardeners. This impression is strengthened by his son James having been apprenticed to a barber-surgeon in 1725, since this was one of the more prestigious trades.⁵⁴

The nursery business was continued by John's wife Mary after his death. In 1744 she leased Hides Croft, 'sometime an orchard' of about 1¼ a. without the Lower Northgate from the corporation, which was bordered to the north by a garden 'belonging late to Mr James Herbert but now the Widow Cullerne'.⁵⁵ Mary Cullurne continued her husband's emphasis on the growing of trees. Their son William, however, established a specialty in the popular florists' flowers and as a seedsman. In 1748 William advertised that he sold 'all sorts of kitchen-garden and flower seeds and flower roots ... wholesale and retail' at his nursery without the Lower Northgate. Two years later he offered a 5 gn. reward for information after two men went into his garden and stole 'out of 90 (or more) Pots, more than 140 plants of Auriculas and a Quantity of seedling Carnations'.⁵⁶ Although his premises were quite close to the city centre, William found it necessary to take a stand in the market during the early spring in order to sell seeds. In 1757 he advertised that he would operate a stall near the Tolsey 'every Saturday during the Seed-season, for the better dispatch of Business' and may have done so earlier.⁵⁷ He clearly found this aspect of his trade adversely affected by the competition from grocers, whose premises were more central than his nursery. His advertisements make a point of his specialization, as compared with those who sold seeds along with ham, prepared hair, watercolours and other groceries.⁵⁸ Although William included shrubs and trees when advertising in 1758, it is likely that these were supplied by his mother. In 1761 they jointly advertised as 'Mary and William Cullurne, Gardeners' and the greater emphasis on trees on this occasion was presumably due to her influence.⁵⁹ Two years later Mary Cullurne alone advertised a variety of trees 'with all sorts of nursery goods'.⁶⁰ There are no further advertisements in the *Gloucester Journal* for either William or Mary Cullurne and the last reference to William identified is as a juror for the court leet in 1763.⁶¹

In 1741 Thomas Hockley, gardener and nurseryman of the Chapel House, advertised in the *Gloucester Journal* a 'collection of espaliers upon the true French Paradise stock or Free stocks, being the best collection in the kingdom, twenty years in making', as well as other trees 'the

53. GDR wills 1729/638. Cullurne is a Wiltshire surname and there was a reasonably well-to-do family of that name in Malmesbury in the 18th century.

54. Barlow, *Apprentices 1700-1834*, 56. The next apprentice that John Heaven took was the son of a gentleman.

55. GA, GBR J 3/9, f. 87. It is not clear whether this was an expansion of the enterprise.

56. *Glouc. Jnl.*, 9 Feb. 1748; 11 Sept. 1750.

57. *Ibid.* 8 Mar. 1757; 17 Jan. 1758.

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.* 20 Jan. 1761.

60. *Ibid.* 7 Feb. 1763.

61. GA, G 8/5, s.a. 1763.

particulars whereof are too tedious to mention'. He also offered his services for the pruning of espalier trees and wall fruit 'after the new method of pruning, either in the French, Dutch or English way', claiming that his father planted and pruned the first espalier in England.⁶² This claim suggests that Joseph Hockley's father may have worked at Brompton Park, the largest and most famous of the London nurseries at the start of the 18th century.⁶³ The training of espaliers according to the method of Jean de la Quintinie, gardener to Louis XIV, had been introduced to the English by John Evelyn's translation of his work as the *Compleat Gardener* in 1693. This was abridged and 'made more use' by George London and Henry Wise of the Brompton Park nursery in 1699.⁶⁴ The Chapel House nursery covered 3 a. of land between the houses in Watering Street (now St Catherine's Street) and the River Twyver and was bounded to the west by Chapel House Walk (now Dean's Walk). It took its name from the former chapel of St Thomas, which had stood in the north-west corner of the site and had been replaced by a new house sometime during the 17th century.⁶⁵ Joseph Hockley was in Gloucester by 1726, when he was sued for debt by Eleanor, the widow of Richard Engley, bricklayer.⁶⁶ In 1748 the Chapel House and Garden 'late in the occupation' of Joseph Hockley was advertised for sale along with the stock in the garden. It may be significant that Joseph Hockley was not referred to as deceased or his status as a nurseryman stressed, as was common when a site and stock became available after the death of a nurseryman. This suggests that the availability of the nursery may have been due to debt. The costs of running a nursery were considerable and bankruptcy was not uncommon.⁶⁷ Whatever the fate of Joseph Hockley, the Chapel House continued as a nursery. It was taken over by Robert Holbert, who was apparently an immigrant to Gloucester, and run by him until 1782, when he removed his business further out of the city to a site in Kingsholm near the turnpike on the Tewkesbury road.⁶⁸ His business subsequently failed under the management of his sons.⁶⁹

In 1748 one of those selling the Chapel House and Garden was Daniel Wheeler of Tetbury, mercer. It seems likely that the mercer was in some way connected with James Wheeler, the author of *The Botanist's and Gardener's New Dictionary*, who is first found in Gloucester on his marriage at the cathedral in 1749. His familiarity with the Linnaean system suggests that James Wheeler trained at a London nursery, possibly under James Lee at Hammersmith. His arrival in Gloucestershire coincides with Charles Barrow acquiring the manor of Minsterworth and establishing his seat at Hygrove House. Charles Barrow, who became MP for Gloucester in 1751, was the trustee of the marriage settlement for Wheeler's wife Arabella Hackett and subsequently left her £50 by his will. It seems likely that Wheeler was involved in the design and establishment of a new garden for Barrow and subsequently decided to start a nursery in the city, where he enjoyed the patronage of a wealthy and influential man. Wheeler established himself in Hare Lane, where 1½ a. of land were converted into a nursery and bowling green.⁷⁰ In 1755 he took a lease

62. *Glouc. Jnl.*, 6 Jan. 1741.

63. Harvey, *Early Nurserymen*, 51–6.

64. J.C. Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (1824), 41.

65. The Chapel House Garden is clearly marked on Cole's 1805 map of Gloucester. The size of the garden is taken from an advertisement in the *Glouc. Jnl.*, 15 Dec. 1788.

66. GA, GBR G 6/8, 16 May and 11 Jul. 1726.

67. *Glouc. Jnl.*, 15 Nov. 1748; Harvey, *Early Nurserymen*, 90–1, 114.

68. GA, P 154/12 IN 1/1, baptisms 1756–9; GBR G 8/5 – Robert Holbert, gardener, appears in the list of jurors for 1763 and 1768; *Glouc. Jnl.*, 1 Apr. 1782.

69. *Glouc. Jnl.*, 27 Oct. 1787; 28 Oct. 1793.

70. GA, D 3117/14; The National Archives, PROB 11/1183/67; S. Draper, 'Minsterworth: Manors and Estates' (VCH Glos. XIII, draft text, 2010, accessed online at www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/Gloucestershire), 4.

from the dean and chapter of a message in Watering Street that had formerly been occupied by the market gardener Thomas Ravener.⁷¹ Later the nursery expanded into Kingsholm, apparently taking over the land vacated by the failure of the Holbert nursery.⁷² Although he described himself in 1763 in the preface to his book as an ‘obscure person’, James Wheeler had the resources to establish himself firmly as a nurseryman in Gloucester and to look out beyond the city. He was particularly associated with the growing of fruit. In 1780 he supplied the Brompton Park nursery with Ashmead’s Kernel, a dessert apple that originated in a Gloucester garden later destroyed by the building of Clarence Street. He was subsequently credited with raising two new varieties: Wheeler’s Extreme and Wheeler’s Russet.⁷³ The reason for publishing his book in 1763 is unclear, although he may have been encouraged into print by Robert Raikes. The Gloucester printer was one of the publishers named on the title page and the book was repeatedly advertised in the *Gloucester Journal* for three years.⁷⁴ The repeated advertisements and the lack of a second edition suggest that the work was not a commercial success. James Wheeler never ventured into print again. He continued in business until 1802, when he handed over the running of the nursery to one of his sons. At that time the nursery was stocked with ‘a large quantity of all kinds of the most improved sorts of Fruit and Forest Trees, Evergreens, Flowering Shrubs, Greenhouse Plants, Garden and Flower Seeds, Bulboes, and Fibrous Flower Roots &c’.⁷⁵ His was the only Gloucester nursery to remain in the same family from the 18th into the 19th century.⁷⁶

Conclusion

In 1760 a proposal was advanced to expand the Company of Gardeners of London to the rest of the country. It was estimated that the extended charter would incorporate around 1,000 principals, including 100 nurserymen and 200 market gardeners. John Harvey accepted the estimate of the number of nurserymen as roughly correct.⁷⁷ This study of the gardening profession in a single provincial city suggests that the estimate for both nurserymen and market gardeners was far too low. Although there were particular circumstances that influenced the development of professional horticulture in Gloucester, there is plenty of evidence that the provincial expansion attributed to the 19th century actually occurred far earlier in Gloucestershire and its surrounding counties.⁷⁸ Perhaps James Wheeler, publishing *The Botanist’s and Gardener’s New Dictionary* three years later, intended his description on the title page as a ‘Gardener and Nursery-man in Gloucester’ to be a statement of the robustness of the provincial trade. James Wheeler was the most successful gardener in Gloucester and by publishing his book he underlined his distinctiveness, but he was part of a sizable and well-established community.

71. GA, D 936/E 12/7, ff. 225v.–226v.; E 12/11, ff. 213v.–214.

72. *Ibid.* D 936/M 11.

73. B. Maund, *The Botanic Garden* XII (1825), 42–3; R. Hogg, *The Fruit Manual* (1884), 11–12, 237–8; G.W. Johnson and R. Hogg, *The Journal of Horticulture, Cottage Gardener, Country Gentleman*, N.S. 9 (1870), 226; J. Russell, *Man-made Eden* (2007), chapter 4. Hogg was doubtful that Wheeler had bred Wheeler’s Extreme, but the variety was at least popularized by him. Wheeler’s Russet is still in cultivation.

74. *Glouc. Jnl.*, 20 Jun. 1763; 4 Jul. 1763; 29 Aug. 1763; 5 Sept. 1763; 11 Oct. 1763; 5 Mar. 1764; 12 Mar. 1764; 11 Jun. 1764; 3 Sept. 1764; 18 Nov. 1765; 26 May 1766.

75. *Ibid.* 13 Dec. 1802.

76. The Wheeler nursery operated into the 20th century, but the last nurseryman in the family, Alfred Cummins Wheeler, died in 1899.

77. Harvey, *Early Nurserymen*, 6.

78. For example, Devizes (Wilts.) had three substantial nurseries in the 1730s: *Glouc. Jnl.*, 1 Oct. 1734; 9 Sept. 1735; 10 Oct. 1738.