

# The Latham Family welcomes you to The Woodland Gardens at Trebartha

## Introduction

Trebartha appears in the 1086 Domesday Book. The name is derived from two old Cornish words: "Tre" - house or homestead and "Bartha" - stream or fountain. Trebartha was purchased by the Latham family in 1941 from Major Stanhope Rodd.

Your walk can take between one and two hours, depending on how far and how fast you want to walk - see the attached map. The open vista makes it difficult to get lost; you will always reach the river Lynher if you go downhill. ***Please note that this is a woodland walk with roots and stones across paths, which are uneven and may be slippery. All visitors must take care. Please keep dogs on leads and do not stray from the paths.***

Many of the trees and shrubs you will see were planted in the 19th century. Large scale clearance of *Rhododendron ponticum* has taken place over the past four years following identification of *Phytophthora ramorum* ('sudden oak death'). Though initially, the cleared ground looks bare, this is providing a unique opportunity to renew and improve the planting.

On your arrival, you have the old laundry on your left - where you can finish with afternoon tea and there are toilets - and the old game-larder to the right. Beyond the laundry, the old rock garden has been replanted with dwarf rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias.

On the raised area near the gate from the laundry area, traces can be found of the foundations of the old house, Trebartha Hall. The Spoure family first built a house on this site in 1500 which was destroyed by fire. A replacement was built in 1720, shortly before the estate passed to the Rodd family, by marriage, in 1729. During the Second World War, Trebartha was used successively for an army medical unit for evacuees from Dunkirk, Italian prisoners of war, and American and Polish airmen before they embarked at Plymouth for the Omaha beach in Normandy in June 1944. By 1948, the house was in a very poor state, and it was decided it should be demolished.

## The Ladies Mile and Swan Pool

Cars are parked in Lawn Field between the site of Trebartha Hall and the river Lynher. On the horizon of Bodmin Moor you can see Hawks Tor (329m). Walk down towards the footbridge. You will pass on your left a fenced enclosure. Within this, there is an old spring called 'St. Tawneys Well', around which slated shelves were constructed. It is surrounded by Celtic Crosses and an old five-sided road sign from Five Lanes. This stretch of the River Lynher is known as the Ladies Mile. Otters visit here. Just before the footbridge, on the bank to your left is an ancient lime tree, at least 300 years old.

The Swan Pool dates from 1900. The clearance work exposed ground where there were once rills and circular ponds now functional. On the western side, you can see the Boathouse, and a Tinner's Stone. The mound at the southern end is dominated by a county champion Oregon Maple (*Acer macrophyllum*). A footpath behind the mound leads to a footbridge at Watersmeet where the Withey Brook meets the River Lynher. In the distance you can see Castick Bridge, one of the largest single span bridges in Cornwall. Please do not cross the footbridge; the area on the other side is not open to visitors.

## The Turbine House for the Trebartha Hydro Project

The American Garden is now dominated by the Turbine House which has been operational since December 2015. It is clad in cedar and the roof finished with Cornish slate. For around 35% of the year, the river flows are likely to be below the levels at which we are permitted to divert water for the hydro scheme.

Water is taken off at the intake area on the Withey Brook at Bryce's Crossing just below Hawks Tor, through a 1.2 kilometre stretch of pipe dropping 90 metres down to the Turbine House. The first 300m of the pipe is buried in an old leat which runs above the upper cascades and has a minimal fall. This old leat used to take water down to an 1860's water wheel at the Sawmill. The main length is in 720 mm diameter polyethylene continuously welded pipeline. This is all buried through challenging, boulder strewn, and often very steep, terrain through Cascade Wood. A



large number of granites were dislodged, many of which are visible in the American Garden and Tinnars Field.

The turbine is a 4 jet vertical shafted pelton wheel with a 350 kW generator. The power is fed to a high voltage transformer in the adjoining upslope grey enclosure before being exported into the local WPD grid. The scheme is estimated to generate some 1,000 MWhs of energy a year (enough for some 200 domestic properties); this could vary by +/- 30%, depending on rainfall.

In 2014, the glade was cleared on *Rhododendron ponticum*. A large amount of subsoil was moved to construct the Turbine House. Over the summer, we have taken the first steps to landscape this area and have restored the old stream, incorporated some of the large granites unearthed during the turbine project and created some new paths.

### **The American Garden, Arboretum, Cascades and Terraces**

A gate next to a large *Rhododendron* Cornish Red takes you into the American Garden which was planted by Colonel Francis Rodd in c1820, including such North American trees as Douglas Fir, Hemlocks, Western Red Cedars, Californian Sequoias, Cypress and Wellingtonia. The large conifers on your left just inside the gate are a Sawara Cypress (*Chamaecyparis pisifera*) and a large Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata*).

In the American garden, we encourage you to spend time exploring the various paths and plantings before heading up on the Cascade path which takes you up to the Terraces. **Please do not exit via the farm track through the field.**

The recent *ponticum* clearance combined with the Hydro scheme has allowed us to reassess the future of the American Garden. Planting has already started using predominantly North American trees and shrubs.

If you follow the track, you will be taken into the Arboretum where a number of species trees were planted to mark the Millennium. As you turn left along a rough grass track, look out for the following numbers: Japanese Stewartia (*Stewartia pseudocamellia* - No.2); Kashmir Rowan (Soana - No.64); Yellow Birch (*Betula alleghaniensis* - Nos.65-67); Beech Chinese Red Birch (*Betula albo-sinensis* 'K Ashburner' - No.42); (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Aspleniifolia' - No.41); Persian Ironwood (*Parrotia persica* - No.80); Shag Bark Hickory (*Carya ovata* - No.53); Fern Scarlet Japanese Rowan (*Sorbus commixta* 'Embley' - No.74); a Himalayan Birch (*Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii* 'Doorrenbos' - No.47); and Silver Lime (*Tilia tomentosa* - No.43).

After visiting the lower cascade, you can walk back to the Swan Pool or continue to ascend a steep, rocky path, looking down onto more cascades. At the top, follow the "right turn" marker up a short, steep path. At this point, you look down to where the pipe runs under Tinnars field to the right of an oak into the American Garden. If you look up, you can see where the pipe was cut through the granites in Cascade Wood. At one point igneous bedrock was encountered; it took two large excavators five days to chisel through it.

You have a choice of paths along the lower, middle and upper Terraces, with good views across the Lynher valley, and the tower of North Hill church in the distance.

### **The Sunken Lane and Lemarne garden**

At the end of your walk along the terraces, turn right and descend the sunken lane a short way to Lemarne, an 18th century cottage, where the estate gamekeeper used to live. You are welcome to turn left visit this modern garden, created since 2008. Moira Latham may be on hand to answer any questions. (A toilet is available here, as well as in the laundry building.)

Then continue down to the bottom of the sunken lane, where you have another choice: if you turn right you will soon complete your walk; or you can turn left, through the kissing gate, to visit the Fish Ponds. Shortly before the kissing gate, you may spot on your right the remains of Leys Cottage, which was demolished c1900.



## The Fish Ponds

This area was mined for tin in the 17th and 18th Century. Some gold was also found - sufficient to make a ring for one of the Rodd daughters. Some low mounds on the north-west side of the upper mound, which have been planted with trees, are probably spoil heaps. A leat fed by springs traverses the area; it was probably used by the miners to wash away waste. The three Fish Ponds were created by Colonel Francis Rodd (1732-1812) in the 18th century, by erecting three dams across the valley. The bluebells at the far end of the Fish Ponds are well worth a visit.

All these ponds had silted up when the Lathams came to Trebartha in 1941. In 1992, a tornado uprooted all the beech trees by the lower pond and the opportunity was taken to remove the silt. The dam was restored, but it became apparent that it was not completely watertight. Work has been done to remedy this. In 2014, the *Rhododendron ponticum* on the site of the upper ponds was cleared and now you can see across the whole area. The view through tree trunks can look magical in sunlight.

The trees below the lower fish pond, as you ascend on the left hand path, include a Wellingtonia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum* - the largest tree in the world measured by volume); a Coast Redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens* - the tallest tree in the world); and a Sitka Spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) which has been recently damaged by a storm. The small brick pump house was built during the Second World War to pump water for the American troops who were billeted at Trebartha Hall and the nearby donkey field.

You can walk all the way round the area of the three ponds and back to the kissing gate. The dams either side of the lower pond are walkable, if you would like to cross the area rather than simply walk round; but there is a breach in the dam between the middle and upper ponds. ***You must keep to the paths - the upper ponds are very boggy.***

You may also spot a young Wollemi Pine which was planted in 2011 and is the most exotic tree at Trebartha. Whilst fossil remains had been found from Antarctica to New Zealand of up to 90 million years old, the first living specimen was only discovered in 1994 in a deep impenetrable gorge in the Wollemi National Park in West Sydney, Australia. It is one of the oldest tree species in the world, having survived ice ages and bush fires. Less than 100 mature trees now live in the wild; the oldest, "King Billy", is thought to be over 1,000 years old. Kew has been active in aiding its conservation and horticultural potential.

### Return to base for tea and home made cakes, via the walled garden

Go back through the kissing gate, and straight ahead, crossing Skew Bridge and the River Lynher, Skew Bridge was constructed in 1846 to provide access to Trebartha Hall from the newly constructed North Lodge at Plusha, near the A30. You can see the field used for parking is straight ahead, and a tree with a wooden guard below the parking area. This is a Cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*) which came as a sapling from Jebel Makmel, Lebanon, in 2001.

Turn left, up the grass path to the gate in the wall. Then you can turn left to visit the ornamental Walled Gardens or right towards your starting point, the old Laundry, for tea and cake. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the Rodds had a number of glass houses with exotic fruits; in the 1930s, there were nine glass houses; now there is just one.

We hope you enjoy your visit to Trebartha, and that you will come again, to see how the gardens develop over time, and to view them at different times of year.

Caroline Latham,  
Jim Briggs, Head Gardener.  
2017.