

No Swinging on Sundays.

Kirsten Elliott.

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There has been much written about the pleasure gardens of Bath in the past but so often those accounts have centred on the Spring Gardens and the Sydney Gardens.

Even symposia on the subject have barely begun to attempt what Elliott has achieved and that is a comprehensive assessment of as many gardens as possible.

No Swinging on Sundays describes numerous small and largely forgotten enterprises as well as the more famous, puts them into chronological order and into the social context of their times. She shows how they overlapped, competed with one another, blossomed and faded.

The sometimes overweening ambitions of the various entrepreneurs are chronicled, the tenuous financing explored and the wonderfully exaggerated advertisements in the press are recounted

The book abounds with period maps and plans and includes some rarely seen images. These are topped out with archival and new photographs which reveal not only parts of gardens and associated buildings that were cleared in the 20th century but a number of surprising, sometimes fragmentary, survivals which remind us of past splendours.

Those who read the book will be able to judge the success of the proposed revival of the Sydney Gardens against an in depth understanding of their heyday.

For students of Bath history this book is essential reading, as well as an absorbing amusement and a necessary reference book for anyone who would aspire to write about the social life of Bath.

Michael Rowe