



Some of the gardeners and staff who worked at what is now the 'Lost Gardens of Heligan' in the early 1900s

Heligan to pay tribute to gardeners who served in the First World War

BY SIMON PARKER

Staff at the Lost Gardens of Heligan are joining forces with Cornish theatre company WildWorks to create a tribute to men from Mevagissey, Gorran and St Ewe who served in the First World War.

The initiative aims to discover more about the lives of those who fought, and those who died, between 1914 and 1918, along with the families and communities who waited at home for news from the front lines.

Candy Smit, of Heligan, explained that the idea was to commemorate all the men of those who enlisted from the villages and hamlets in the area.

WildWorks, which is well-known for its site-specific productions on cliff-tops and in former industrial buildings, will begin researching the project at a series of tea-and-cake sessions starting at the weekend.

"We are delighted that WildWorks has accepted our invitation to work as partners on this epic project," said Candy. "They not only have experience working in contemporary war-torn communities but

are also as captivated by First World War history as we are.

"We intend the coming year of preparations, culminating in a day-long site-specific event on the centenary, to create new memories that will be passed down future generations. Our mission is to promote healing and peace."

The gardens at Heligan, which were restored in the

'Our mission is to promote healing and peace'

Candy Smit, Lost Gardens of Heligan

1990s, were once home to a number of men and boys who enlisted at the outbreak of the Great War. In recent years the Heligan team has met some of the men's descendants and recorded more of their life stories.

A number of pencil-written signatures of the gardeners can still be made out on the wall of a "thunderbox" toilet on the estate.

The poignant list of 23 names are dated August 1914 and were rediscovered in 1990.

At least eight are known to have died in the war.

In 1998, the gardens hosted a commemorative project involving ice sculptor Heather Keir Cross, who created life-size figures at work in the flower beds and vegetable patches. "Witnessing their disappearance back into the soil overnight was an experience never to be forgotten," said Candy.

A decade later, Heligan commissioned "lenticular" 3D light artist Michele Noach to install flickering images of garden boys, dressed and equipped for war, projected on the doorways and in the windows of potting sheds and greenhouses.

For next year's event, WildWorks intends to mark the lives of all those who were involved in the hostilities, both on the front line and at home.

The first information-gathering meeting will be held at Mevagissey Jubilee Hall on Sunday October 6 at 6.30pm. It will be followed by a similar event at St Ewe Village Hall on Wednesday October 9 at 6.30pm and Gorran Barley Sheaf on Friday October 11 at 6.30pm.