Everything is evolving, nothing is stable - nothing can stay the same. However, the rate at which things evolve, shift or change is relative to the circumstance encountered and dependent upon the artefact in time... One thing is certain though - in time everything as it is today will eventually be lost.

So then, how does one say 'I was here'?

This project is about lifespans, and the importance of the footprints they leave behind -The lifespan of a person, the lifespan of a building, the lifespan of the ground on which the building stands and of the natural world that surrounds it.

In this sense, the immediate idea that springs to mind is a time capsule or archive - the idea that we protect the most important relics of our present so that future generations may learn, understand and relate to their ancestry - however, what if we could archive a piece of nature, preserve it and utilise it in the future?

The project is set on a dynamically shifting coastline in Maryport in Cumbria, where the insertion of a new tidal barrage will impact upon the rate of erosion in an important place of special scientific interest. This onslaught of erosion - alongside the threat of rising sea levels - will mean that in as little as 200 years, this place and the rare natural vegetation it is home to will be lost, forever.

The building then acts as a marker, a point of reference, of not simply a lost place, but of a time, an ecology, and the life of a man who has devoted his existence to ensuring that future generations can discover, understand and utilise what he has left for them - a scientific archive of a lost world.

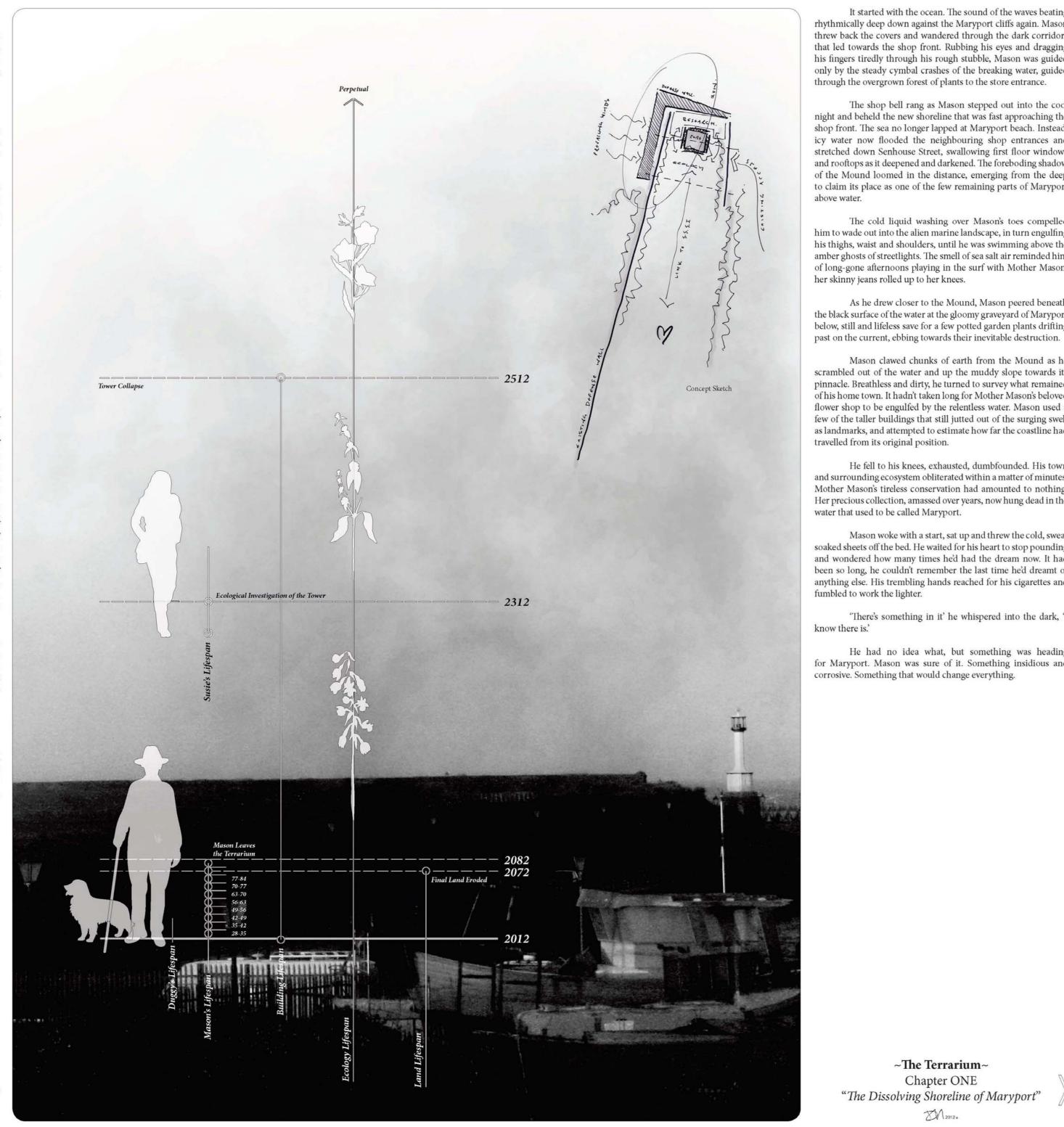
Through the architecture there is an opportunity, not just to preserve, but allow one to read the story of several points of existence which once coincided. 500 - 1000 years in the future, then, our successors can discover the derelict overgrown ruins of this place. An ecology which has evolved from the original plant species on the land can be discovered, interwoven through the exteriority of the building - created and encouraged to grow and self-sustain by the inhabitant. Within this ruin there will be layers of the inhabitant's personal archive of plant remains, seeds, books, measuring equipment, soil samples, journals, etc. in a protected environment which was once his home - a fixed point in time of the surrounding land now washed away. In this way, two points of reference within the natural world are established. The inhabitant's way of life is also preserved and ingrained upon the internal spaces of the structure, however the corroded and battered exterior of the tower tells of the extreme weather conditions which is has survived, and the erosion it has suffered over the centuries. Perhaps even sediment has begun to form around the base - the beginnings of a new island.

The following is a story board following the extended lifetime of 'the terrarium', which has been adapted from my final design thesis for the Master of Architecture programme at Liverpool John Moores University. The project was developed with a strong sense of narrative to both explain the rationale of the project and to provide a basis for the poetic intent of the design.

The light ocean spray sparkled playfully as it showered the boy. The sound of each wave crashing against the cliff face far below brought with it an excited anticipation of this colourful cascade. As the fine mist caressed his face, the young Mason giggled with glee, tasting the salty brine on his lips...

(Continued in the attached story)





'You want it where?!' The foreman raised his eyebrows with genuine surprise and concern.

'Just like the plans say' Mason reassured, 'up there.' They stood in a car park near Maryport docks from which Mason pointed to the summit of a small mound. Atop this mound sat an old sandstone ruin looking out onto the ocean.

The foreman scratched his head with a pencil and sucked on his bottom lip. It wasn't every day someone asked you to build a 'vertical landscape' on top of an old pile of stones. A nice change of pace from two-up, two-downs, but still!

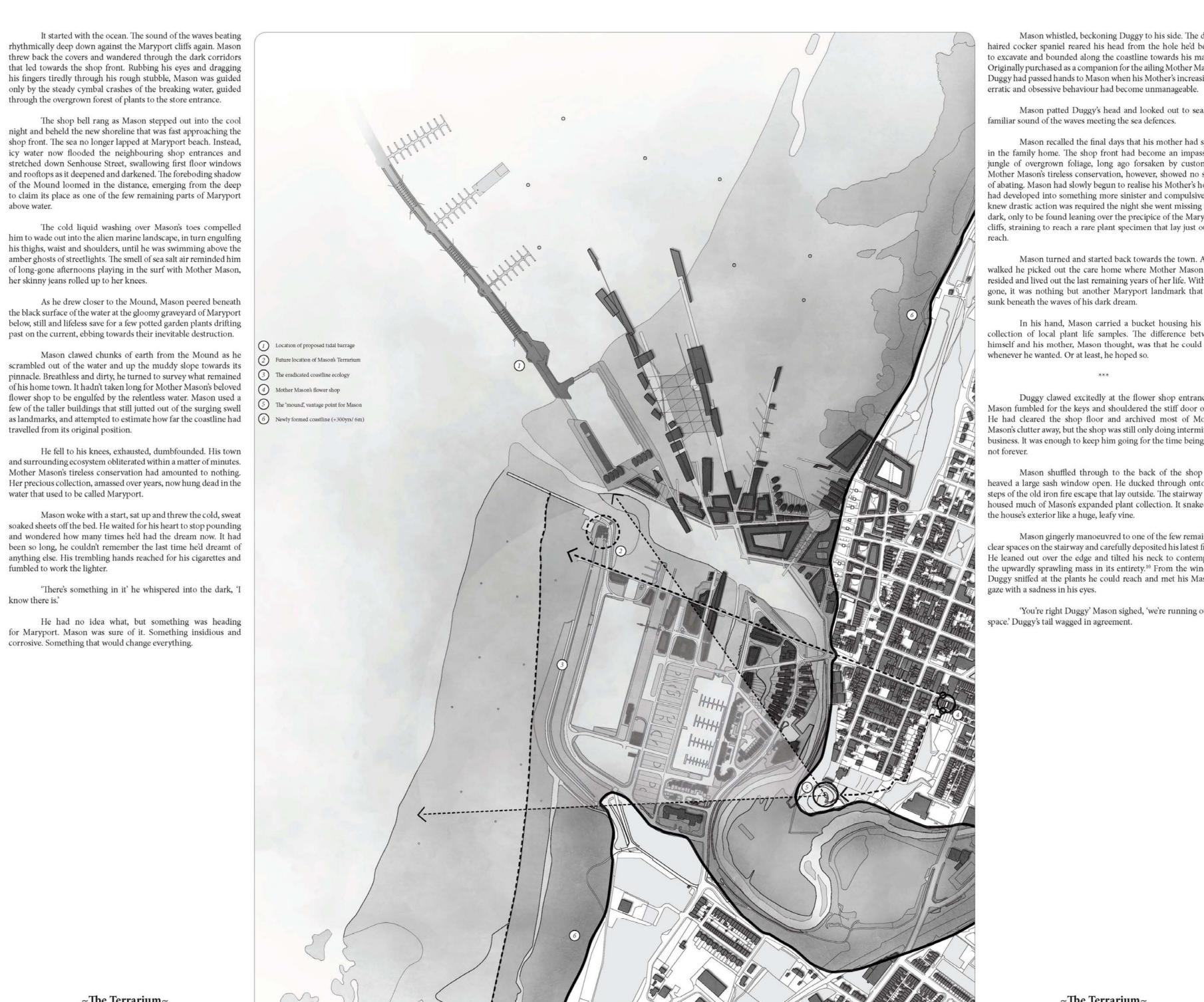
'Okay mate, you're paying for it.'

Mason had anticipated such antagonism, but it was true, he was paying for it. The old house and adjoining shop had been sold. Mason hadn't gotten the price he was after, but the sale combined with his personal savings and a sizeable inheritance from his distant Aunt - her will named 'next of kin', all of which remained Mason - ensured there was enough to commission the construction of the tower.

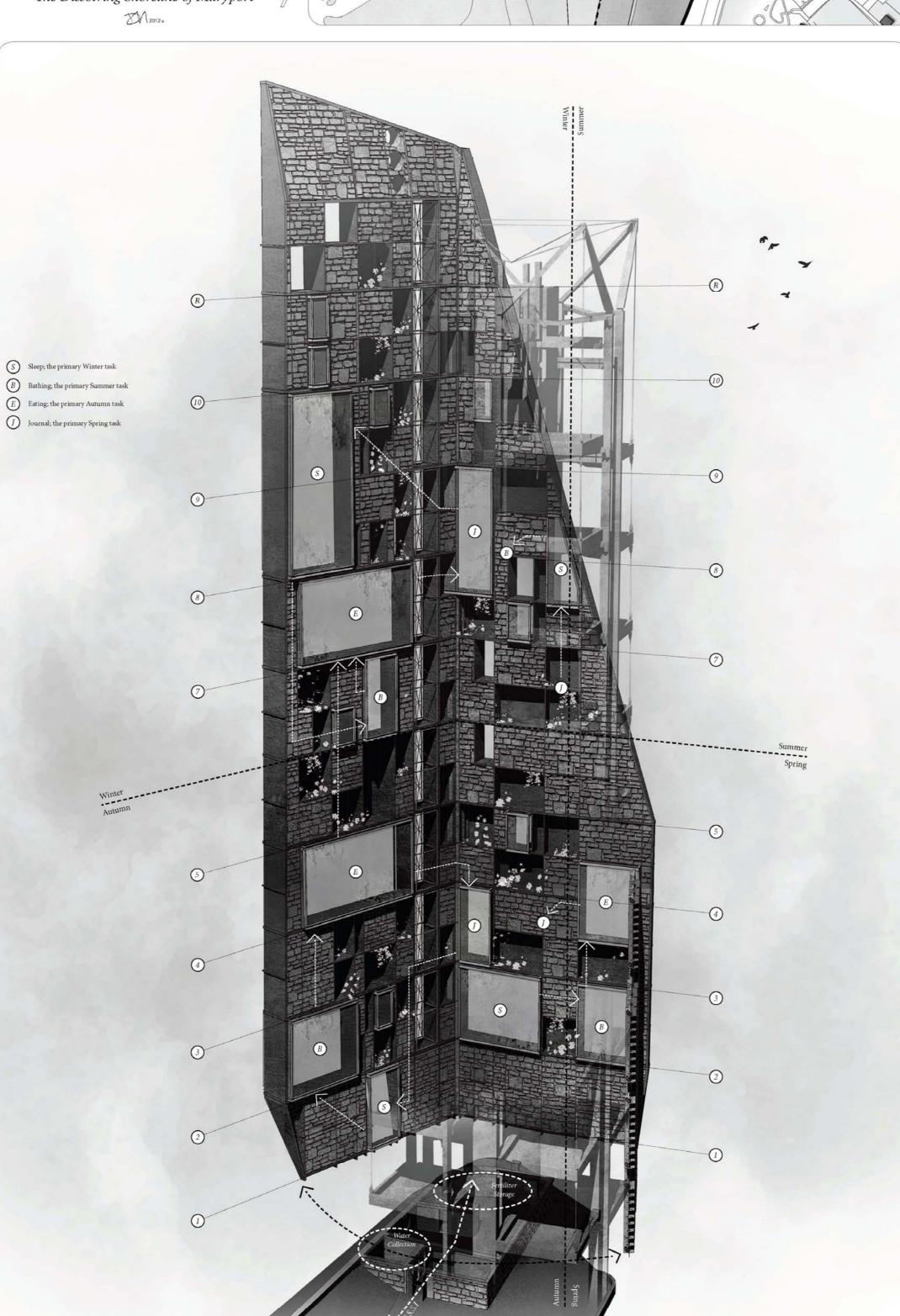
As the workers began to organise themselves nearby, Mason looked down at Duggy who was panting mindlessly at his feet. Their lives were about to change more radically than either of them could ever have imagined.

There was little left for Mason in Maryport these days. At the tail end of his twenties, most of Mason's friends had either moved away permanently or just fallen out of touch. Most were starting families of their own and were well established in their chosen careers. Meanwhile, the flower shop continued to flounder and Mason found himself alone and depressed more and more often. He knew things had hit rock bottom when he finally turned to alcohol.

With years of AA meetings, sleepless nights and soul searching behind him, Mason had finally reached the point where he felt sane and focused again. He considered the task ahead of him and realised for the first time in a long while that he was excited about something. He had no idea how he was going to do it, but he was determined to save every plant and insect he could from the fate they had suffered in his cataclysmic nightmare. He would build his ecological ark.



~The Terrarium~ Chapter ONE "The Dissolving Shoreline of Maryport"



Mason entered the first level of the tower and glanced over the first few plates he had already filled with his existing plant collection from Mother Mason's florist shop. He arrived at his living quarters where Duggy bounded towards him, barking

Above them, the remaining levels of the tower were still being constructed. Until they were ready, the workmen had built Mason a rudimentary wooden hut containing a bedroom, kitchen and bathroom. For the time being, the hut would provide shelter during the winter months which Mason had planned out meticulously along with the other seasons.

Winter meant hibernation and maintenance. No new plants would be growing, but he could make short rounds of his collection to prevent any frost damage. Spring would bring with it the collection of newly budding samples and the notation in his journal of all the natural changes occurring around him. Summer was for basking on the open terrarium platforms, soaking up the sun alongside his plants and bathing in the nearby sea. And finally, Autumn would arrive, the natural time for harvest of his food stores and stocking up for the winter once more.

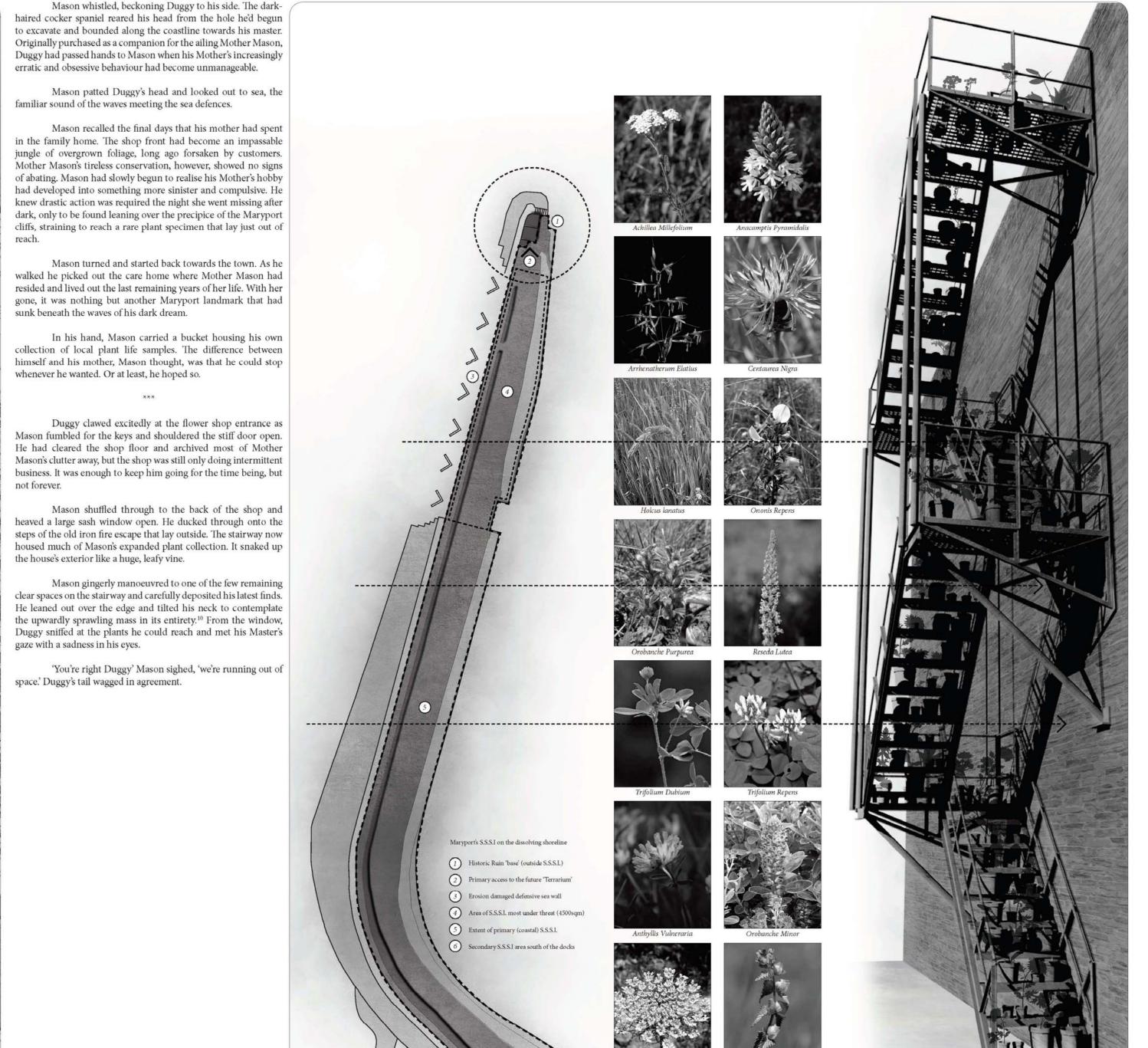
old dressing gown. Opening his journal, Mason began to plot the overall scheme of his ark's ecology. Before adding more plants and insects, he was determined to organise and maximize the potential of his existing collection. He could see the overall plan for his terrarium in his mind's eye. Level after level of plant life would interconnect to

Mason entered the hut, undressed and slipped into his

provide homes to a wide range of insects and create the perfect, sustainable habitat. While maintaining this, he would experiment with different methods of farming and cultivation to enhance the tower's productivity. All the while, Mason would safely stow away any samples

of particular importance in a specially constructed 'core'. This would house only the most precious and valuable specimens that warranted preserving for future generations.

Mason sat over his journal long into the night, just as he



~The Terrarium~ Chapter TWO Ecological Collections of Scientific Interest" ZM 2012.



Mason trudged through the fields just outside Maryport while Duggy padded by his side. The dog's youthful spark had been replaced by frequent rests. This familiar journey was one of the few the poor animal could manage anymore.

along well. While his friends lagged behind to smoke cigarettes, Mason was at Mac's side, collecting every seed of botanical knowledge that was on offer. If Mason had known his father, he would have wanted him to be like Mac. The relationship was shortlived, however, ending along with Mason's high school career. As they reached the first Maryport town houses, Mason

Mason had previously shared these fields with his

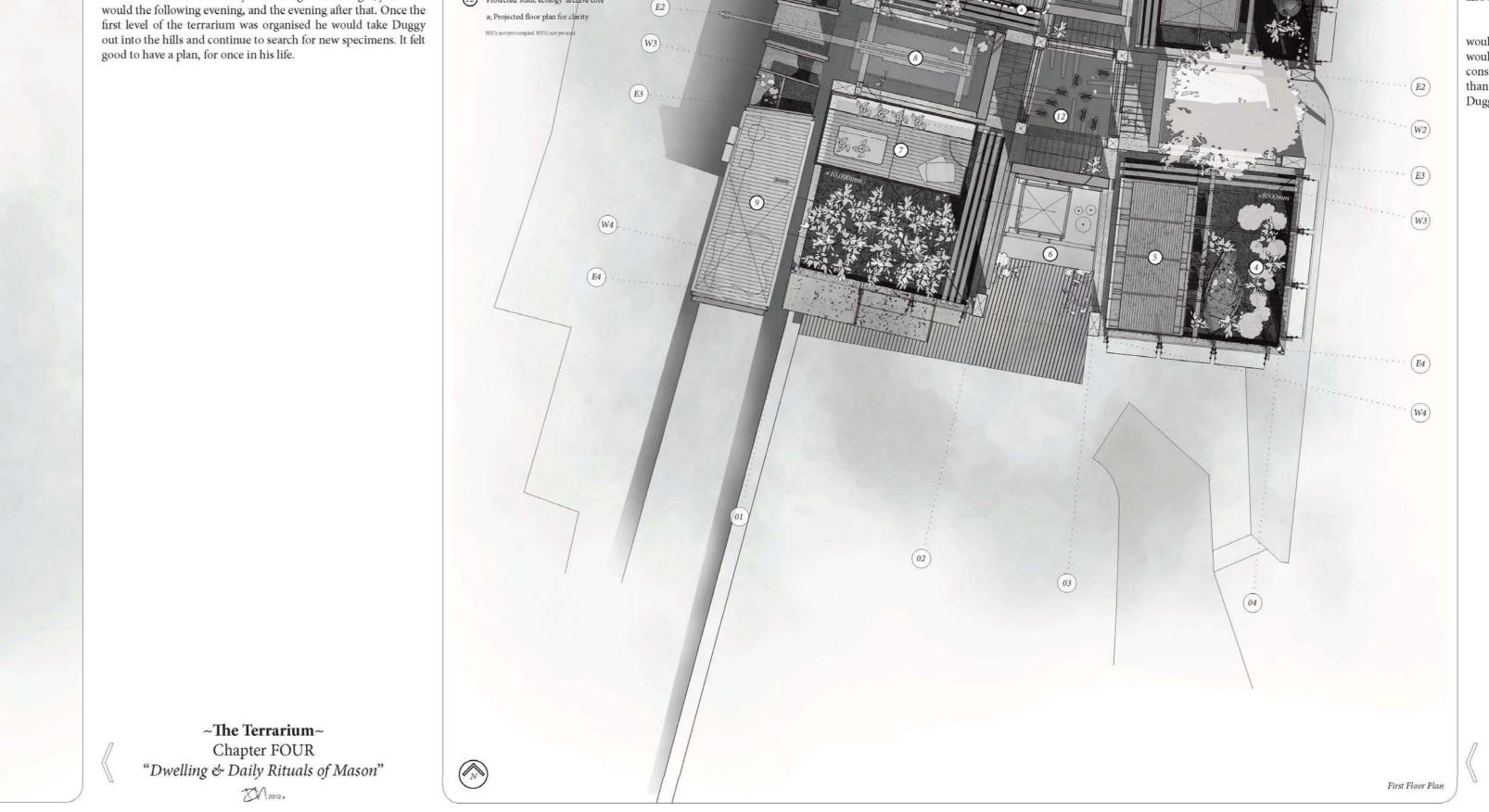
lent down to clip on Duggy's lead, though he doubted Duggy had the energy run off. They continued, a bucket of specimens in one hand, Duggy's lead in the other, through the streets littered with discarded wrappers and lined with overflowing council bins.

It had never bothered him before, but since beginning his sparse tower existence, Mason's patience for the wantonly wasteful society around him had waned. Before living in the terrarium, Mason had known as little about recycling and living a green existence as anyone else, but it had taken hardly any time to learn. And if he could learn, anyone could.

Mason visualised the tasks that lay stretched out into the remainder of the day. His mornings were dedicated to rambling and collecting specimens, but the afternoons were set aside for the

The crops needed watering, the bee hive he had installed was full of honey and the tower's plant filled levels were in dire need of pruning. All these tasks needed seeing to, along with the emptying of his rainwater containers and the always pleasant (always pungent) task of putting his waste to good use. He would

In the evening, with Duggy snoozing at his feet, Mason would open his journal to note the day's findings and how they would fit into the overall scheme of the terrarium. A challenge, considering the first level was almost full. Mason's days were busier than they had ever been, but they would seem a lot emptier when



~The Terrarium~ Chapter THREE "A Framework for Lifespans' DN 2012.

maintenance tasks necessary to sustain his solitary existence. And the terrarium required more attention with each year that passed.

also have to go out and fish for his supper.

Duggy was gone.

~The Terrarium~ "The Infiltration of Nature

Climbing the terrarium step by exhausting step, Mason passed the level that he used to call home. Over the last few years, his collection of plants and insects had grown to the extent that a relocation was necessary. Accordingly, Mason had moved to the middle of the tower¹⁸, taking his few personal possessions with him. The extended climb was almost more than his aging body could stand, especially after a day of coastal rambling. The tiring thought that he might have to repeat the process in another few years was certainly not one he wished to entertain at this precise

Mason arrived at his new seasonal living quarters and collapsed into his seat, letting out a long sigh. His main living area was now built into the terrarium wall but, imitating his hut on the tower's lower levels, he had constructed a number of crude 'labs', each varied to suit his many research tasks.

The lab in which he currently sat was kitted out for environmental study. The changing seasons seemed to be effecting the tower's ecology, causing his plants to grow rapidly and spread to all corners of the terrarium.

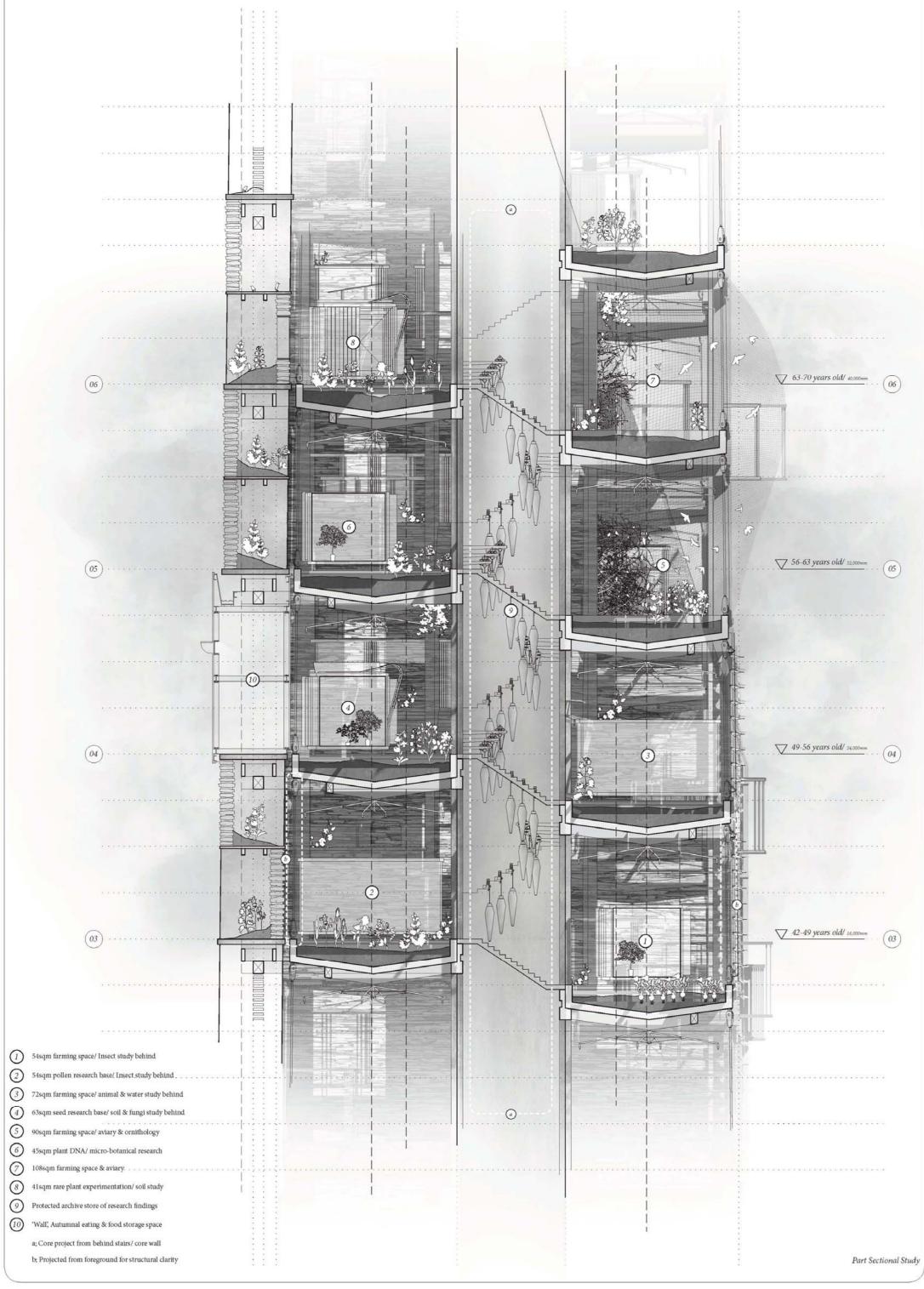
Mason had planned to carry out tests all afternoon, but instead found himself staring into space and nostalgically thumbing the frayed remains of Duggy's old lead. He had held onto it for sentimental reasons after the dog had passed away and didn't normally pay much attention to it. But today he felt a maudlin surge of unease.

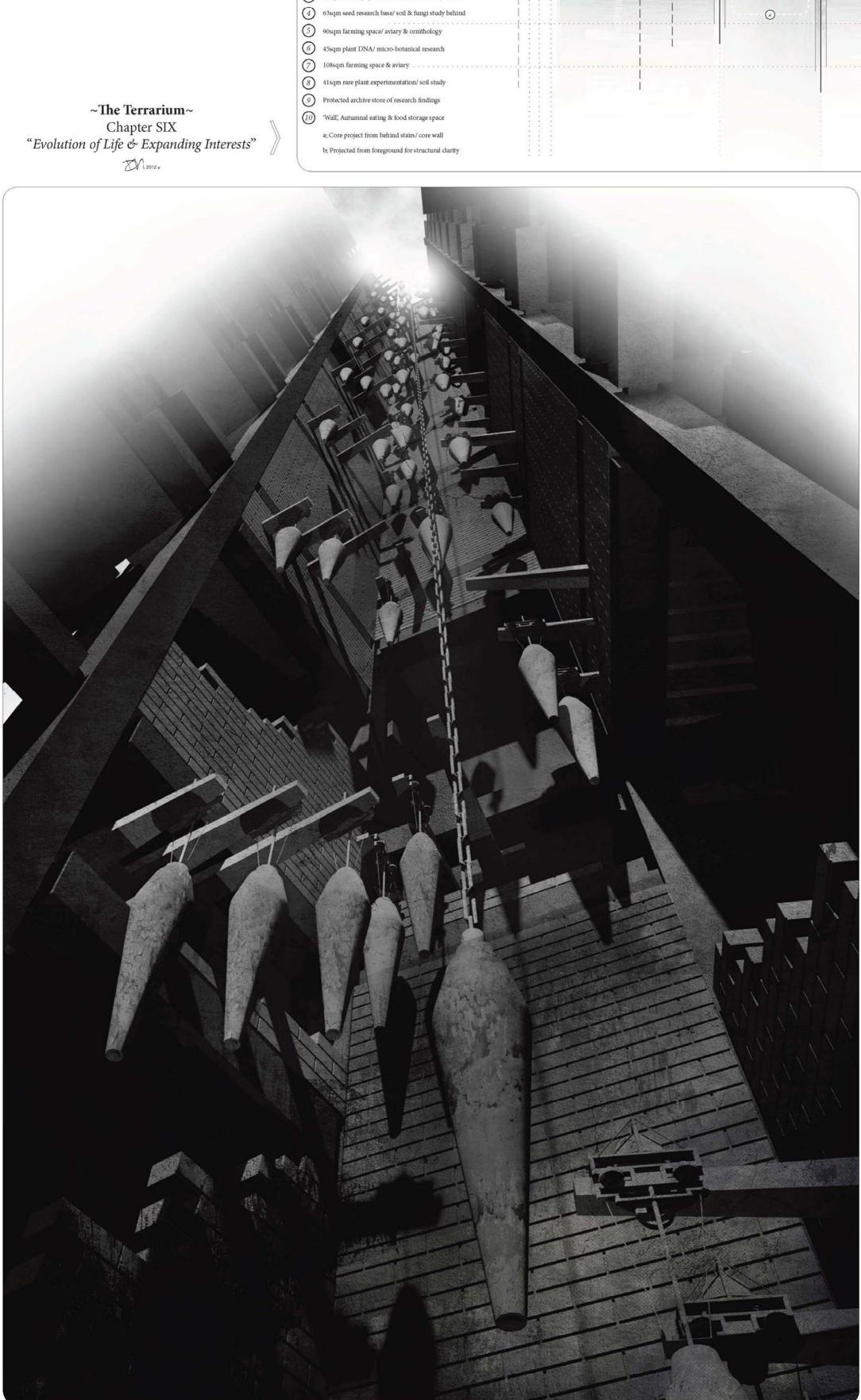
How melancholy, he thought. How very unlike him. Mason wished he had someone to call on, some old friend or distant relative, but there was no one. Duggy and Mother Mason were dead, his friends and acquaintances were non-existent and his Father had never been around to start with. He knew the path he had chosen would be a lonely one, but the years since Duggy's death had been especially hard.

Slipping his spectacles over his ears and gathering his papers into order, Mason persevered to continue his ecological research there was a whole new level to plot out and fill with specimens but after a futile attempt at concentration, Mason slumped back in his chair and began to cry. He had never felt so alone.

The hot tears rolled off Mason's cheeks, splashing down on his grand plans.

Far below, the ever advancing ocean waves continued to edge towards the base of the tower. The coastline seemed to be receding almost day-by-day. Soon it would be non-existent, much like Mason's contact with the outside world.





Dr. Sue Adams held onto her hat as the cruiser sliced through waves, carrying her colleagues and herself towards the lonely tower in the ocean. As the boat drew near, the tower seemed to grow taller above them. It looked about ready to crumble, but something held it fast. Perhaps the network of trees that had burrowed through the tower's interior to poke their leaf strewn branches out into the open air. The tower was still the mysterious green sentinel that had stood alone in the ocean of her childhood.

The captain pulled the huge ship up against the side of the terrarium, allowing Sue and her team to step out onto one of the platforms. They got to work immediately, unloading sealed specimen boxes specially designed to house delicate items of plant life. They had also brought with them a few portable habitats for any unusual animals they came across. A preliminary visit to the tower a few months back had confirmed Sue's suspicions that a larger scale reconnaissance effort was required.

The mission was planned down to the most minute

detail. The building's core was to be completely cleared out and archived chronologically. The remaining specimens in the building were to be sampled and stored on the ship. The team had specific instructions, however, to box up anything that was unidentifiable onsite. There were also some interesting instances of evolution she was keen to document. Sue and her team scuttled off into the tower like a colony

of ants searching for food to please their queen. What they would return with would provide the beginnings of new food stocks and medicines, both of which were in short supply back on the

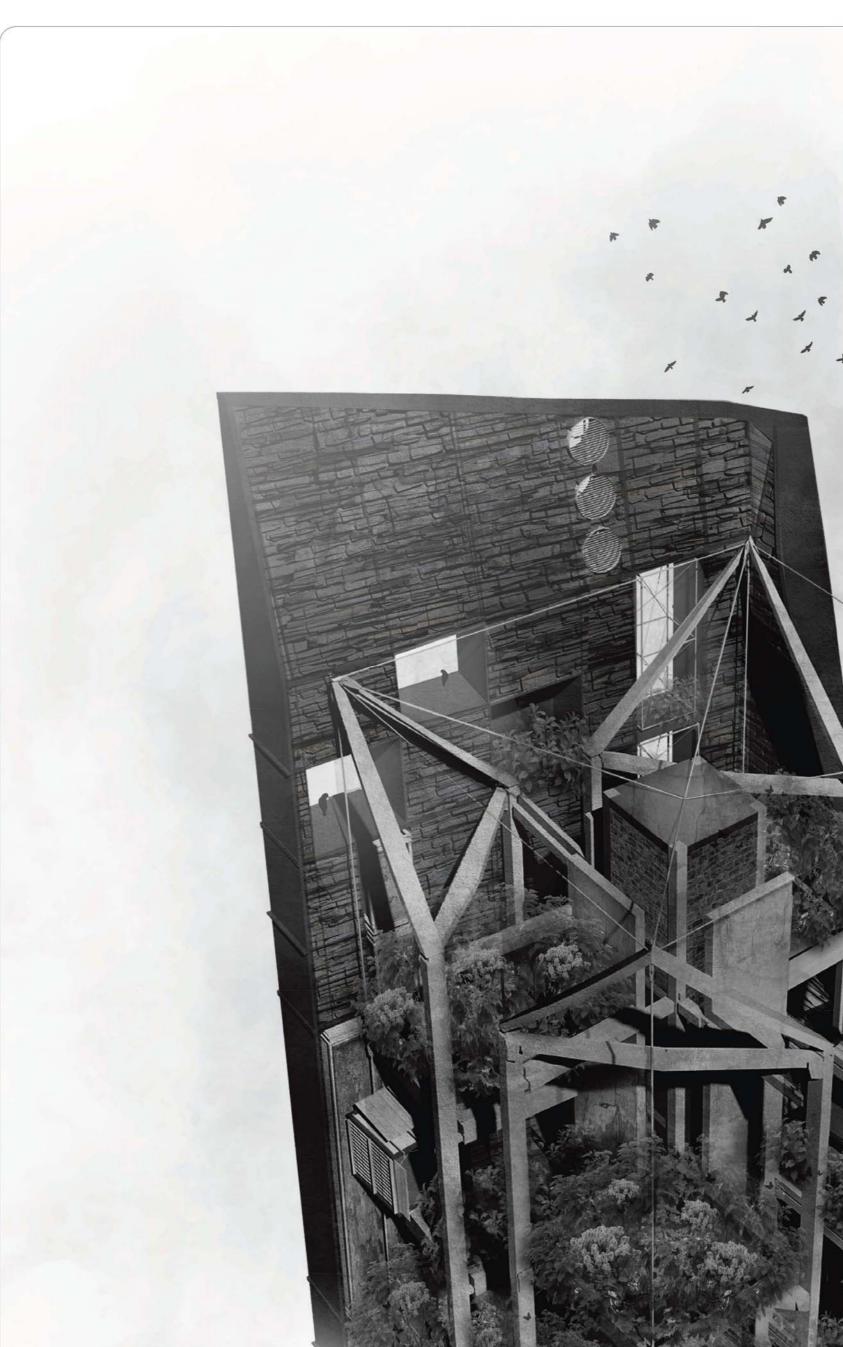
On breaking through the core's worn brick wall and peering inside, the team were greeted with an unanticipated spectacle; an intimidating number of intricately hung seed-like containers. Each pod contained carefully preserved information on the ecology that had once thrived on the lost coastline. Sue and her team scaled the core's limits and painstakingly lowered each container to the boat below. They would be broken open, and the contents studied later.

Sue felt the adrenaline pumping through her body and savoured it. She had restlessly anticipated unearthing the contents of the core, but her secret hope of unmasking the mysterious man responsible for this place was a door from her past she longed to

~The Terrarium~

Chapter NINE

Scientific Inhabitation & The Decanting Process"



~The Terrarium~ Chapter SEVEN "Saturation of the Landscape" ZN 2012.

The sun sent broken beams dancing across the sleeping

Mason's maintenance rituals had become completely

The evidence of his inactivity was all around him. The

Although he was pleased to have created a working

Mason struggled to his feet and began the arduous task of

Mason hadn't left the tower for years now. He hadn't

Steadying himself against the wall, Mason began to

As he worked his way through the branches and vines

A great sense of fulfilment grew inside Mason. No grand orchestral swells or standing ovations, just the quiet contentment of a life's work completed and a dream achieved. He would rest

man's white-bearded face. Mason stirred, blinking hard and lifting

his frail arms to cover his dazzled eyes. With great effort, he sat

up and gazed down upon his withered body. He had lost weight

dormant. He was simply too old, and too tired, to keep up with the

watering, pruning, collecting and preserving. His few possessions lay discarded across the many abandoned living areas throughout

the tower, leaving the latest incarnation in which he lay almost

terrarium had blossomed of its own accord, covered from top to

bottom with flourishing plant life, both inside and out. Leaves

sprouted from every available crevice. The sea had gulped down

most of the earth surrounding the tower, driving the coastline

inwards and leaving the tower shining like some kind of vertical

ecosystem made up of plants and insects now largely lost to the

area that was once Maryport, Mason's real pride was the large

dressing himself. He was older now than Mother Mason had been

when she passed away. It was a strange feeling indeed, he thought,

needed to. Not since his own crops had proven adequate

sustenance. It had been a long time, in fact, since he had been

further than a few storey's down from the floor on which he now

descend through the tower, edging down the terrarium staircase.

Far above him, the cries of a mating pair of falcons echoed through

the tower's levels. They had moved in a few years ago, treating the

tower as a substitute for their more traditional cliff face nesting

grounds. No doubt their old spot had eroded over time and

that crowded the stairs, Mason was delighted to be greeted by all

manner of natural constructs. An aviary on one level, a collection

of decaying research huts on another, all cultivated by himself

originally, but now grasped and sustained by nature alone. Each

level he descended through reminded him of how much he had

resided. Mason decided he would visit the earth one last time.

catalogue of items were securely hidden away in the core.

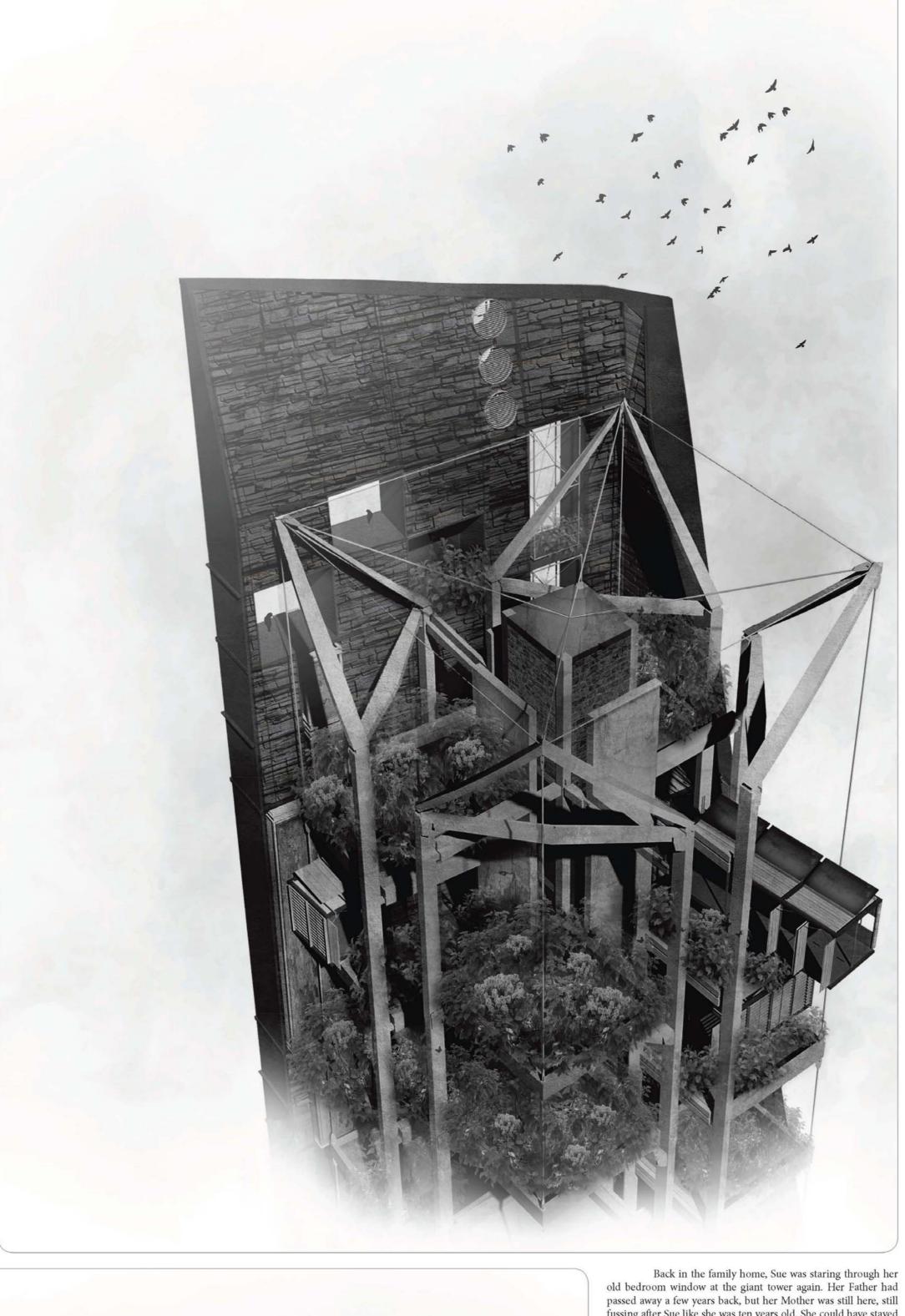
paradise on it's own little island in the ocean.

to be older than one's mother.

crumbled off into the sea below.

when he reached the ground.

rapidly over the last few years.



During their decanting of the tower, several of Sue's teammates had noted aspects of interest in the terrarium itself. The remnants of rudimentary technology and outdated building techniques had justified further investigation. The site was like a living museum of some forgotten age.

short notice but Sue had made it a priority to request a complete archeological survey of the tower with special attention to details of historical significance. It might be possible, she thought, to piece together parts of the decaying structure and theoretically surmise the building's other unusual artefacts.

turning to dust as Sue's team had moved through the tower.

causing a large chunk of one side to break off and crash into the ocean with an impact so loud Sue heard the distant rumble from where she sat. The follow-up team were scheduled to visit the tower tomorrow morning. Sue had left the entire day free to watch from her window through her old binoculars.

Back in the family home, Sue was staring through her old bedroom window at the giant tower again. Her Father had passed away a few years back, but her Mother was still here, still fussing after Sue like she was ten years old. She could have stayed in a hotel while she carried out her business with the tower, but Sue knew her mother would never forgive her if she ever found out her daughter had been nearby without visiting. Anyway, no hotel for miles could match this view.

It had been difficult to convince her employers at such

While Sue's team had removed what items they could from the tower, although it seemed structurally sound for the time being, it would not stand forever. Some of the walls were already

She flinched as a wave struck the side of the terrarium,

'That's lunch ready Susie!'

Her mother hollering up at her, just like old times. Being home was a bittersweet experience. Sue enjoyed the nostalgia of her old room, and visiting her aging but independent mother. But the whole scenario highlighted her decision to forego having a family of her own in order to pursue her dream. There was a short window of opportunity left, she thought, but Sue knew in her heart it would never come to pass. She was watching the closest thing she would ever have to a legacy through her binoculars.

~The Terrarium~

Chapter TEN

"Living Ornament & Technological Decay"

DN 2012.



~The Terrarium~ Chapter EIGHT "The Lost Ruin in the Sea" ZM 2012.

otherworldly luminescence.

mist like some sea bound ghost.

what she loved and not be bothered by anyone else.

worship as he rose from the water below.

be falling apart for all we know.'

alright up there?'

part of her identity.

to thrive.



The tower stood defiant against the brooding sky. The wind began to pick up and the wet, groping waves gradually reached upwards to begin battering the terrarium's foundation. Black storm clouds rallied around the building and hurled thunderous taunts at it for daring to reach up into their sky.

With a terrible flash and a deafening clap, the storm roused itself into violent action, flinging itself at the terrarium with all the might of a thousand battleships firing in unison. The tower swayed back and forth, whipping the remaining plants within it in all directions. Crashing against the tower's exterior, the sea began to tear away chunks of stonework, dragging bricks away like well cooked flesh from a bone. Piece after piece of the tower hurtled down into the water and sank to the bottomless depths.

terrarium fought proudly, but eventually succumbed to the overpowering might of the ocean. In its final spectacular moments, the bottom level of Mason's terrarium buckled, sending the rest of the tower straight down, crumpling in upon itself like a soda can under a child's stamping foot.

After nearly five centuries of standing strong, the

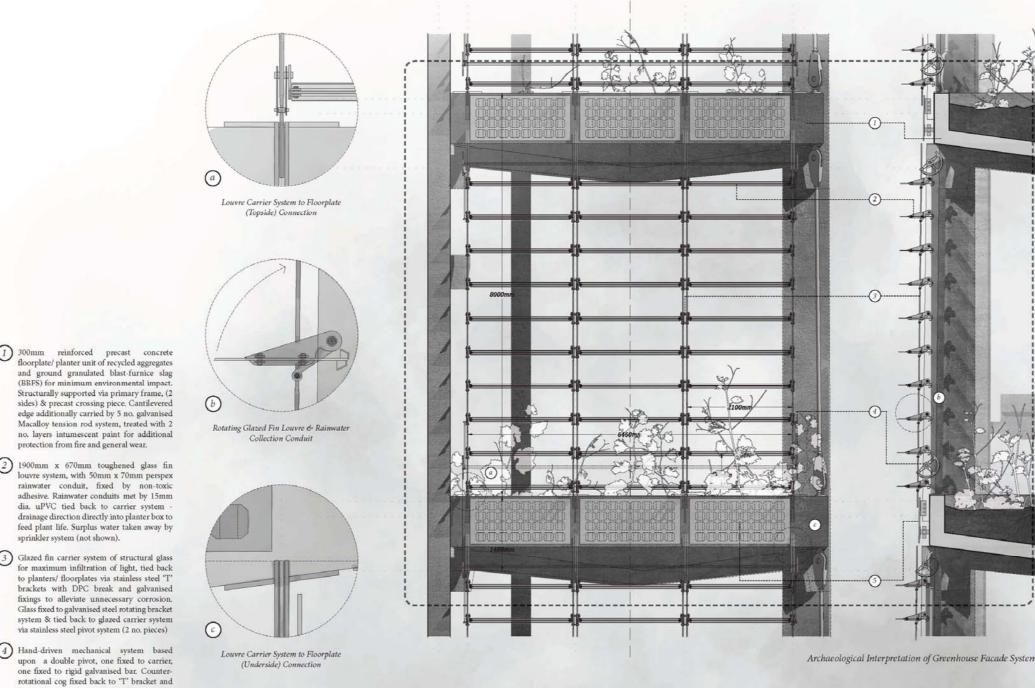
It was an eventuality Mason had planned intentionally. Back when Maryport still existed, had the tower unexpectedly plunged towards the ground, no harm would come to any of the surrounding buildings or people. To the townsfolk of the time, the terrarium's passing would have been nothing more than a light dusting of debris.

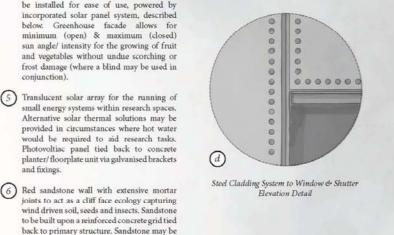
Now, of course, no one was around for miles. Even Dr. Sue Adams's family home had been derelict for many decades before it slipped off the eroding coastline and into the sea.

The raging storm carried off most of the plants and animals that were catapulted from or killed within the tower as it fell. Mason's terrarium piled on top of itself to leave a heap of rubble that sat just above sea level to form a strange man made island.

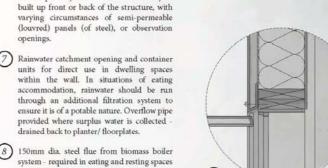
When the sea levelled and the sun revealed itself once more, the smallest bud of hope began to sprout from the crest of the artificial atoll. Through the writhing morass of junk, a single green shoot climbed upwards towards the sun's life-giving rays. With the years that passed, more exploring shoots followed the initial adventurous stem. Mason's terrarium had some life left in it

~The Terrarium~ Epilogue "The Autonomous Island" ZN 2012.





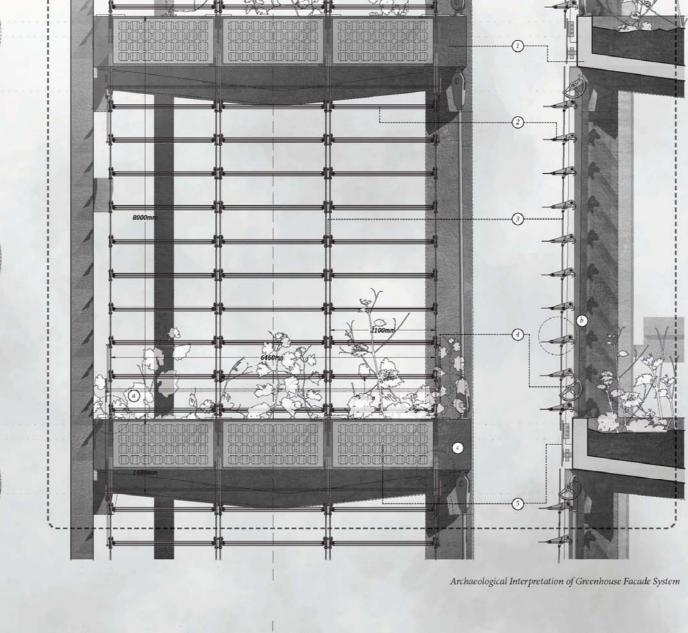
Window Head & Shutter Construction

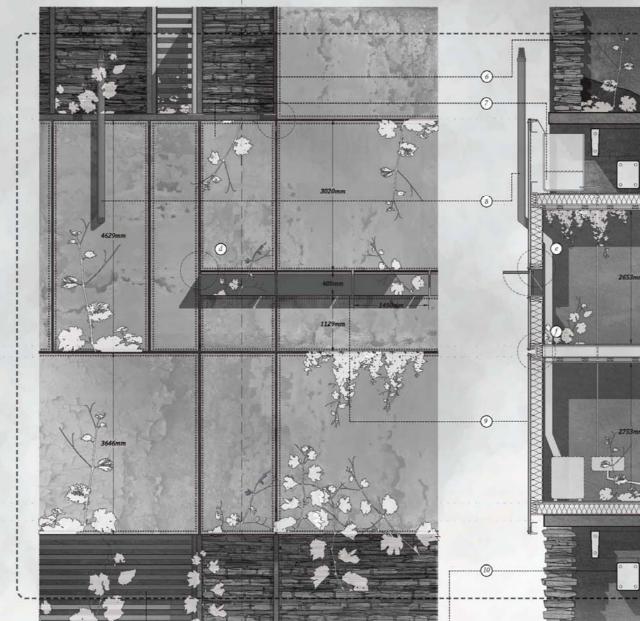


drained back to planter/ floorplates. (8) 150mm dia steel flue from biomass boiler system - required in eating and resting space in winter. Fuel for the system to be decaying organic matter when possible. Biomass byproduct, ash, may then be used as fertilizer for the development of new plantlife. Galvanised steel, rivet fixed, cladding system on standard UBs embedded in concrete wall structure, lined with a durable DPM and extruded polystyrene rigid insulation panels finish to evoke a sense of simplicity and a humble, monastic existence. 20mm openings gaps provided in the external finish to captu

small energy systems within research space

and encourage the growth of nature and wider ecologies within the fabric. (10) Wall of reinforced insitu concrete slabs tied back to (and partially cantilevering from) primary structure at 4 key points on the northern and westerly edges at 8 metre intervals vertically. Additional loads/ stability captured at ground level by 2 no. large scale cantilevering reinforced concrete piers pinned to bedrock. If these piers should erode to failure, primary cantilevers across upper floors should suspend the wall for some





Archaeological Interpretation of Wall Technologies Floor - Capturing & Encouraging Nature