

GRAPPENHALL HEYS WALLED GARDEN

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN



Prepared by the Parish Council of Grappenhall and Thelwall

with assistance from

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GRAPPENHALL HEYS WALLED GARDEN

Conservation Management Plan

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

This Conservation Management Plan (CMP) relates to the walled garden at Grappenhall Heys in south Warrington. The walled garden is the only remaining part of the estate of the Parr family, which had a significant role in the economic development of Warrington in the 19th Century.

The estate as a whole was in the hands of the Parr family until the period following WWII, after which the estate fell into decline and the house itself was demolished, though the walled garden remained. The walled garden survived and eventually came into public ownership; firstly it was owned by the Commission for the New Towns, then by English Partnerships (EP) and finally, today, by the Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council.

Significantly, in the late 1990s, the area around the walled garden was developed for housing with great success, probably because of its proximity to the motorway network which provides ready access to Manchester and Liverpool.

The walled garden was transferred to the Parish Council by EP in 2005 with a capital sum sufficient to maintain it in the condition prevailing at transfer. By this time, however, the Victorian glasshouses of the walled garden were in ruins. Since 2005, the Parish Council has used the income from investment of the capital sum to fund a full-time Gardener/Manager and to make the garden available to the public; this position is sustainable.

The issue today is therefore that of the derelict glasshouses, which was not addressed at transfer. The glasshouses as they stand are certainly a visual blot on an otherwise beautiful garden but on the other hand they are also an opportunity to regenerate further the walled garden as a whole and in particular to provide the surrounding area with a community resource which it currently lacks.

The CMP provides evidence that there is substantial public support for this initiative. This CMP has therefore been prepared with a view to addressing the question of the future of the derelict glasshouses at Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden. It identifies the issues associated with the conservation of the glasshouses and demonstrates that regeneration of the garden as a whole via redevelopment of the glasshouses is both feasible and desirable.

1.2 Grappenhall Heys

Grappenhall Heys was an estate formed in the nineteenth century by the Parr family who were of great importance in the business and cultural development of Warrington. The Parrs created a gentrified country estate, of which the walled garden combining kitchen garden and pleasure grounds together was a central feature.

The zenith of the garden appears to have been from 1875 to the early 1900s. The estate began to decline prior to the Second World War, mirroring the fate of many others across the country, and some of the surrounding farmland was sold.

The effects of the war finally prompted sale of the whole estate in 1951. The house itself was not valued by subsequent owners, and deteriorated to the point where it was demolished, but the walled garden that had been built to serve the house remained. The Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden is thus the only significant part of the Grappenhall Heys estate that remains intact today.

The garden too was neglected, but during the 1990s local people began to take an interest in it and campaigned vigorously for its preservation and possible restoration. As a result English Partnerships (EP), who had charge of the estate as part of the New Town Development Corporation's assets, agreed that the garden should be restored as a local amenity associated with the new housing that was developing in south Warrington.

EP commissioned research from the University of York, and spent considerable resources in restoring the garden, its walls and the back-sheds to the glasshouses; the glasshouses themselves remain derelict to this day.

Although the University of York study was a formative influence on the restoration, EP did not set out to faithfully reproduce a Victorian garden, but rather to create a garden which followed the general form of the original within the context of an amenity for the local population.

The Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council had long been anxious to see the garden available to the public and had been in contact with EP on several occasions since 1995, making plain its interest and its willingness to become involved if that appeared desirable. In 2004, new guidance from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister created the impetus for EP to divest itself of the walled garden and at that point EP drew the Parish Council into substantive discussions. In 2005, the garden was transferred to the Council's ownership along with an endowment fund which was provided by EP for its continued maintenance. The size of the fund was calculated on the basis that the Council would maintain the garden in the condition it was in at transfer.

1.3 Significance

The walled garden at Grappenhall Heys is the only significant physical element of the estate of the Parr family that remains intact today. The family was important in the economic development of Warrington in the nineteenth century as they founded and operated Parr's Bank in the town - the bank was later taken over by NatWest but the Parr's original bank building, close to Warrington's Central Station, remains in use by NatWest.

The family also built the Parr Hall in the town centre and gave it to the town in 1895; it remains Warrington's only large public hall. The Parr Arms public house in the ancient village of Grappenhall also bears the family name.

The family built its estate, including house, walled garden and parkland, at Grappenhall on the southern edge of the town. Grappenhall village itself is less than a mile from the walled garden; it is an ancient settlement, mentioned in the Domesday Book and still retains its cobbled street and mediaeval church. It is easy to walk from the village to the garden and the significance of the garden must be seen in the historic and geographical context of the area generally, as it provides an historical link between the old village and the present day.

Recent development in the area has closed in on the garden and but for the actions of EP and the G&TPC it might have been lost for ever; it is important that it should not only survive but be viable in the long term and to tell the story of the area to future generations. The walled garden was studied by a team from the University of York's Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies; Landscapes and Gardens in 1996. The authors of that report concluded that in spite of the loss of the house itself, *'the park and garden survive as an entity'* and are *'a valuable group because of their original function within the landscape'*. They considered that *'the treatment of the walled garden, with its adjacent kitchen garden and ornamental pond features is of great local and regional interest'*.

The same team concluded that *'the prevailing interest of the site is historic'* and that *'the estate is of value both aesthetically and as an amenity for the local population'*. They judged its amenity value to be high *'because of its proximity to industrial Warrington, and its ability to offer varied recreational opportunities as well as educational features'*. They went on *'because of its complete nature it can provide a wide range of amenity interest....it has historical features which could provide educational opportunities for various group in the local community'*.

The heritage is important to residents of Warrington as an opportunity to learn about the past, to those interested in walled gardens because of its unusual layout, and to the residents of Grappenhall and the surrounding area because of the opportunities for participation, both in education and leisure that the garden offers. The area surrounding the walled garden has been heavily developed for housing in the last ten years but it has no community facilities - the regeneration of the walled garden would offer a way to meet this need.

1.4 Key Issues and Policies

The Council sees the walled garden as both a heritage asset and a community asset. As it stands today, the walled garden is fully funded and makes a significant impact in both categories. Nevertheless, at the present time, the walled garden still falls short of achieving its full potential in both categories because of the derelict glasshouses; they are visually unattractive and no activity, horticultural or other, can be carried out in them. Reconstruction of the glasshouses would enhance the value of the walled garden in both respects; the reconstructed glasshouses would restore to the garden its chief visual asset and they would become available to the community for horticulture and other uses.

The key issue is therefore that of financing the reconstruction of the glasshouses and operating them thereafter. The Council's policies are:

- to continue to manage the walled garden (with the exception of the glasshouses) as it does today, financing it from the endowment provided by EP;
- to seek funding for reconstruction of the glasshouses;
- to operate the restored glasshouses using volunteers under the management of the Gardener/Manager;
- to seek support towards ongoing maintenance of the glasshouses from the Friends of Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden.

1.5 The Future

No detailed plan for the future of the garden was formulated before acquisition, and the present Conservation Management Plan therefore provides the framework for the future of the garden.

Regeneration of the garden is desirable because:

- the garden has historical significance for the area in which it sits and a wider area because, unusually, it combines a kitchen garden and a pleasure ground within a single walled space;

- there is demonstrable public interest and use by the public already takes place;
- there is evidence that educational and community uses are feasible.

Regeneration is moreover feasible because:

- the work already carried out by EP was done with an eye to community use and provides a sound base for future development along the same lines;
- the garden is in well-managed and in general in very good condition; the Pleasure Grounds and the Kitchen Garden are both well-maintained and attractive;
- the garden is adequately funded to maintain it in its present state.

The issues that should be addressed in order to realise the garden's potential as a community asset are:

- there is little enclosed space and the space that exists is not well-suited to public use;
- the range of glasshouses adjacent to the kitchen garden, from which the public is currently excluded, is visually unattractive because: a) it is derelict; and b) the measures that have been taken to make it safe are themselves visually unattractive.

Appropriate regeneration of the derelict glasshouses would resolve the issue of safety, enhance the appearance of the garden and improve the quality of the space for community and educational use. There are credible options for dealing with the higher visitor numbers and demand for better access arrangements that would undoubtedly result from the regeneration of the glasshouses.

1.6 Mission Statement

To regenerate the walled garden by addressing the issue posed by the derelict glasshouses and thus to enhance the value of the garden to the community.

2.0 BACKGROUND TO THE PLAN

2.1 Introduction

This Conservation Plan has been prepared over a period of months from autumn 2007 to spring 2008. The community has led the production of the plan, in that it has been prepared by staff and members of the Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council. They have been assisted by the Friends of Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden. They have also had professional input and assistance from Lloyd Evans Prichard Architects and Luczak Associates, landscape architects who have been involved with the management of the garden for the last 10 years.

English Partnerships commissioned a historic landscape survey and assessment of the Grappenhall Heys estate from the University of York Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies in 1996. The study was carried out by David Jacques and Sarah Rutherford. The study has formed the basis of our understanding for the garden and its context, in terms of the estate of which it was a core part.

This report is a substantial document and is available at the Parish Council office.

2.2 The site

Grappenhall Heys is situated in the south of the Borough of Warrington, close to the M6 and M56 motorways, in one of the final areas of development of the Warrington New Town. The estate lies 3 miles south of Warrington and approximately 0.5 mile south west of Grappenhall village (it is about 10 minutes walk from the village centre).

The garden, of approximately 4½ acres, is unusual among walled gardens, as within one wall it contains both kitchen garden and pleasure grounds with ponds. It is the most significant remaining core part of the Grappenhall Heys estate which was created by the Parrs, an important family in the history of Warrington. The garden was partially restored by English Partnerships in the 1990's.

2.3 Owners and stakeholders

In 2005 the garden was acquired by Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council ('the Council' from here onwards), together with an endowment for its maintenance in the condition at the time of transfer. At that time restoration was at an advanced stage, but did not include the rebuilding of the glasshouses, fitting out of the back sheds or permanent surfacing of the courtyard.

Current stakeholders in the garden, plus a plan indicating ownership in 2005 are shown at the end of document, **Appendix 6.1**.

2.4 Purpose of the Conservation Plan

Production of the Plan has enabled the Council to develop and agree its approach to the garden, in terms of what is significant, how vulnerable that significance is, and our policies for retaining and enhancing the garden in the future.

2.5 Structure of the Conservation Plan

The Plan has four subsequent sections as follows:

- **Understanding** - a summary of the history of the estate (using an earlier historical research study) which describes why the site has its present form;
- **Significance** - which identifies the remaining features which are historically significant, and explains why they are;
- **Issues and Policies** - which examines the issues arising from the significant features, and how they could be addressed by future management policies;
- **Appendices**

2.6 Updating the Conservation Management Plan

The Parish Council understands that preparation of a Conservation Management Plan is the beginning of a process to establish the best way forward for the garden. This document is to be updated and expanded through that process, until it is accepted and agreed by all the stakeholders in the garden.

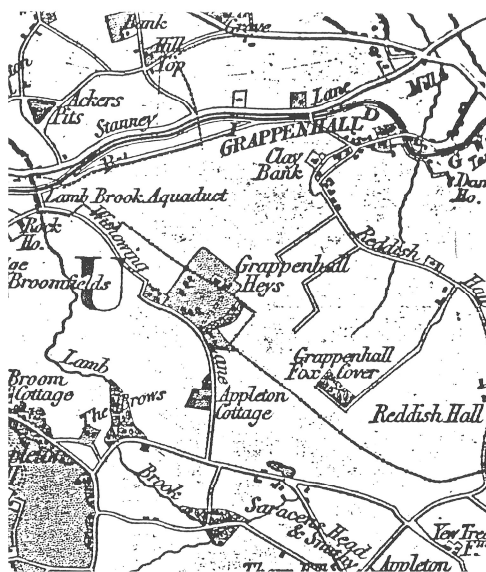
3.0 UNDERSTANDING

3.1 Historical research

- 3.1.1 The historic landscape survey and assessment of the Grappenhall Heys estate by the University of York Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies in 1996 has formed the basis of our understanding for the garden and its context, in terms of the estate of which it was a core part. Rather than duplicate the content of the study here, reference section therefore summarises this earlier report. The full document can be seen at the Parish Council office. A chronological list of key events can be found at the back of this document, **Appendix 6.2**.

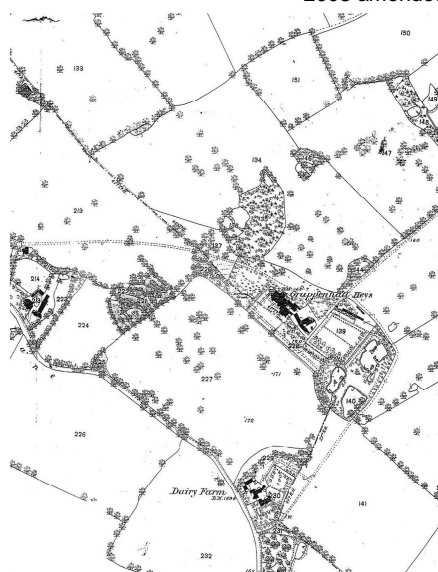
3.2 The estate in the social and economic context of Warrington

- 3.2.1 Grappenhall Heys straddles two parishes, Appleton and Grappenhall. In Roman times, Warrington was an important crossing point of the Mersey and the principal north-south Roman road passed through Appleton. Grappenhall is first mentioned in Domesday as 'Gropenhale', a ditch or drain through the flat alluvial land by the river (Mersey). The early village developed around the medieval church. Domesday also mentions two 'heys' or enclosures, which being so early, are quite rare. The presence of the ponds shows the area was used for marling, which was carried out in Cheshire from the 13th to the 19th centuries. The Grappenhall Tithe Map was created in 1829 and shows that the area remained agricultural; it is devoid of features apart from Witherwin Farm. The Appleton Tithe Map was created in 1847; the maps therefore respectively record 'before' and 'after' the creation of the estate.
- 3.2.2 The Grappenhall Heys estate, including the garden, was established by Thomas Parr (1792-1870). The Parr family had been involved in sugar refining in Warrington, and may have been the last to do so. Joseph Parr, with others, established the first bank in Warrington in 1788. Thomas was his son. Parr's Bank was converted into a joint stock bank in 1865, with Thomas Parr as Chairman. The bank today is part of Nat West, the town centre branch of which retains a splendid historic banking hall and the name 'Parrs Bank' over the entrance. Thomas Parr also became an eminent magistrate and Deputy Lieutenant of Cheshire.



Bryant's Map 1829

(from the University of York Survey)

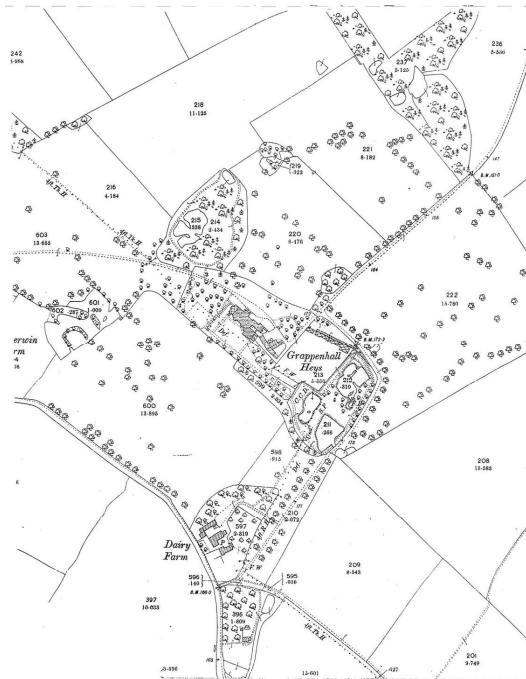


Ordnance Survey Map 1875

(University of York)

- 3.2.3 In 1870, Joseph Charlton Parr (1837-1920) inherited the house from his father. Like his father, he was regarded as a pillar of the community, holding office as Mayor and Chief Magistrate of Warrington Borough from 1901-1903. In 1896 he erected Parr Hall, a concert hall in the centre of Warrington costing almost £10,000, which is still very much in use for this purpose. Other public buildings were erected by Joseph. He was made a Freeman of the Borough in 1897. Joseph Parr lived at Grappenhall Heys until 1918, at which time he moved to Staunton Harold in Hereford.
- 3.2.4 When Joseph Parr died in 1920, his son Roger Charlton Parr inherited both Grappenhall Heys and Staunton Harold.
- 3.2.5 Henry Charlton Parr, Roger's son, moved to Oxfordshire from Grappenhall Heys in 1941. During World War II the house was used to house WRENS based at HMS Blackcap in Stretton.
- 3.2.6 In 1951 the core of Grappenhall Heys estate, including the house and its formal garden, was sold to the British Transport Commission (BTC). Several farms and other buildings on the estate had already been sold. During the ownership by the BTC the house was used by Pickfords to store furniture, and there was a fire in part of the building.
- 3.2.7 In 1951, the walled garden and its surrounding land were gifted separately to Jack Power, the former gamekeeper to the Parrs. On the death of Jack, the walled garden passed to his son Philip and daughter Edie. Philip lived at Keepers cottage until his death in 1995. Edie who died earlier, had lived in the bothy at the walled garden and kept poultry in the kitchen garden.

3.2.8 In 1975 the house and its surrounds were acquired by Warrington New Town Development Corporation, (whose successors are English Partnership). Due to severe dilapidation, the house was then demolished and the site cleared. The walled garden remained, but was in very poor condition. The Warrington Organic and Wildlife Gardening Society (WOWGS) were asked in 1988 to garden organically within the walled garden. On Philip Power's death in 1995, the WOWGS leased the site from the successor to the Development Corporation. The site of the house, together with the overgrown formal gardens and other woodland areas of the former estate, were handed over to the Woodland Trust. English Partnerships repaired much of the garden in the 1990s, and added some features. The garden was to form the central open space (park) in the masterplan for a large area of residential development.



Ordnance Survey Map 1899
(University of York)



Ordnance Survey Map 1996

3.3 The Victorian estate and garden

- 3.3.1 The estate, when constructed, was in a rural landscape typical of much of Cheshire. It was predominantly agricultural, with several woodlands and ponds. The house was built around 1830 following the consolidation of Parr's landholding to form the 150 acre estate. Thomas Parr created his estate, which constituted parkland surrounded by farmland, using the features of the existing landscape such as trees and ponds. To this he added the planting of individual parkland trees, avenue trees and shelterbelts. The estate comprised three farms, a western lodge, and three entrances. It is likely that the kitchen garden was established around 1830, and appears to be the only area surrounded by a wall at this time.
- 3.3.2 From photographs, the house was neo-classical in design and sat on a slight prominence. It faced west over terraced lawns, with an uninterrupted view across a ha-ha into the park and then the countryside beyond. There were several specimen trees, a conservatory and a bowling green, as evidenced from historical maps. The terracing, ha-ha and some of the trees remain although they are not in the ownership of the Council. Stables and other service buildings linked the house to the walled garden.



Grappenhall Heys House – Front



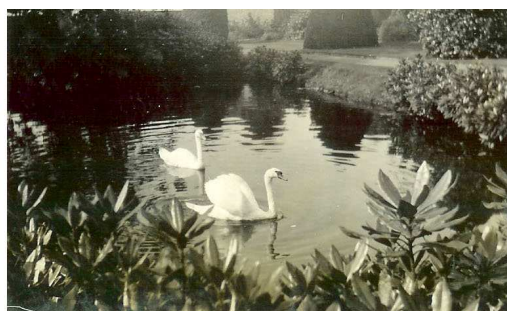
House – Rear

- 3.3.3 By 1875 the Ordnance Survey (OS) map shows the wall around both the kitchen garden and pleasure grounds. It would appear that the design of the pleasure grounds aimed to utilise the group of three ponds to best effect, by placing a circular path around them which ran parallel to the inside of the wall, thus creating long views across the garden. Within this structure ornamental trees and shrubs were planted. It seems that on inheriting the estate in 1870, Joseph embarked on a series of changes.

- 3.3.4 The OS maps of 1875 and 1899 show other changes in layout of the estate. Another lodge is added to the north east and the associated drive re-aligned, an avenue of trees is planted along the southern drive, and House Covert is extended to incorporate another pond. Clearly the landscape is being upgraded and does not continue to expand after this, so this period can be thought of as the zenith of the garden and estate.



Walled kitchen garden

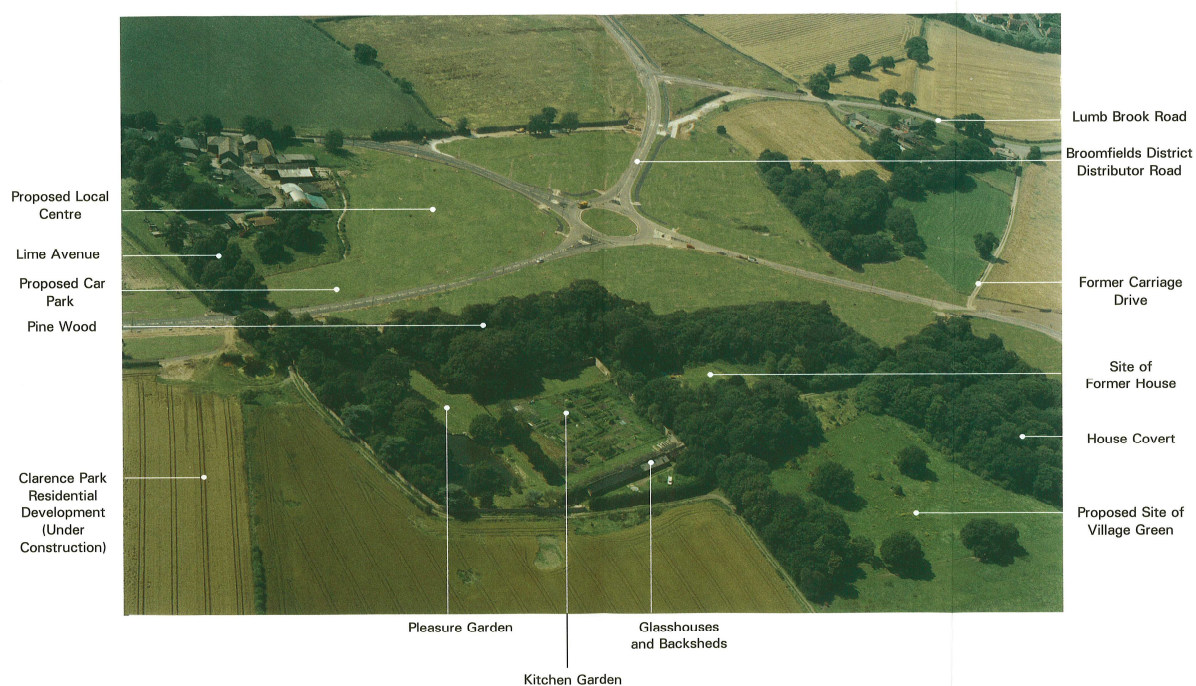


Pond complete with swans

- 3.3.5 The ponds within the pleasure garden pre-dated the estate and were, in all probability, marl pits. It appears that the inclusion of the pleasure grounds with ponds within the wall may have been due to the Parr's passion for waterfowl. There are several small sets of stone steps leading down to the water; these may have been for the wildfowl as they are too small for humans. It was reported in the Warrington Guardian of 1951 there were up to 46 different varieties of waterfowl.
- 3.3.6 A range of glasshouses is shown on the OS map of 1875, extending about half way along the south side of the north wall. By the OS map of 1899 the original length has doubled. Labels on the glasshouses (now stolen) indicated that they were supplied by Foster & Pearson (F&P) of Beeston, Notts. F&P were one of the foremost horticultural builders of the Victorian age, and usually supplied all necessary components for their glasshouses, including pipe work, boilers and fittings. They provided greenhouses to the botanic gardens of Sydney and Hong Kong, as well as to Queen Victoria. A more detailed report on the glasshouses can be found in the Heritage Impact Assessment study. See **Appendix 6.3**.
- 3.3.7 The back-sheds were a range of single-story buildings built in the traditional lean-to fashion against the back wall of the glasshouses. They housed the working and some accommodation space (the bothy) for the gardeners, and the boilers in the cellars. The yard to the rear of back-sheds contained further glass structures, perhaps cold frames, and presumably other working and storage areas.

3.4 The garden owned by the New Town

- 3.4.1 The walled garden site was included in the area designated for residential development in the New Town Development Plan, which was subsequently confirmed by the Local Plan Inquiry. Three housing developments were completed by EP, before the moratorium on greenfield development came into force. There remains plenty of vacant land designated for housing. Witherwin Avenue is a new road which at present serves the existing housing developments and a new primary school. It was also built to service future development and was intended to provide a through-route to the east, connecting with the M6/M56 junction, although this will not be completed until development re-commences.
- 3.4.2 A group of local individuals formed the Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden Conservation Group to campaign for the walled garden site to be retained as a community resource, and prevent housing being built within the garden. They were successful and EP designed the public open space network around the garden, which became the central feature or new local park. EP utilised the other landscape features of the estate, such as trees, hedges, ponds and woodland to form the green-space infrastructure for the new community.



Grappenhall Heys Garden and environs towards South West

Showing new road way for Phase 2 housing development

- 3.4.3 Vehicular access to the garden is via Astor Drive or Witherwin Avenue, both of which were constructed as part of the Grappenhall Heys housing development. Aside from the housing, these roads were probably the single most significant change to the estate landscape, since they changed the levels and cut through the original view from the front of the house. Pedestrian access to the garden is by a paved footpath and cycleway from Grappenhall village, which is constructed along the north-east drive. It follows the east wall of the garden and heads south past Dairy Farm to Keeper's Cottage, along the line of the south drive. A section of the original Lime avenue remains, and the footpath passes two large areas of estate woodland, Parr's Wood and House Covert.
- 3.4.4 The garden was overgrown with aggressive species, the ponds had silted up, the walls, gates, glasshouses and back-sheds had become derelict. EP repaired or re-built all these features with the exception of the glasshouses. The back-sheds were completely rebuilt to a traditional design in suitable materials (brick with a slate roof), and power and water were supplied. The kitchen garden was re-designed with a square layout similar to that shown on historical maps. New paths and fruit trees created the structure.



Kitchen Garden before restoration



Following restoration by EP



Pond being de-silted during restoration



Pond following restoration by EP

- 3.4.5 Two major new features were added to enable the garden to function in its new role as a local park and major pedestrian through-route; these were the main north-south footpath, and associated fencing and gates for the protection of the kitchen garden. A new raised border with a modern planting scheme was also added adjacent to the path. Smaller scale planting of a historically sympathetic design was undertaken elsewhere in the pleasure grounds and kitchen garden.
- 3.4.6 EP's approach was not a slavish recreation of a Victorian walled garden, rather, it was a modern interpretation of such a garden. Whilst sympathetic to its origins, it reflected the style of landscape design carried out in the 1980s and 1990s. This more modern design is now part of the history of the garden.

3.5 The garden owned by the Parish Council

3.5.1 The majority of the structure of the walled garden, apart from the glasshouses, had been repaired or rebuilt by EP. EP transferred the garden to the Council in 2005, together with an endowment fund for its continued maintenance. The running costs of the garden are met entirely from this endowment fund - the Council does not feel the garden should be funded by the small number of households within parish through the Council tax, but should be a financial concern regionally.

3.5.2 The Council has appointed a Gardener/Manager whose functions are to maintain the garden, engage with visitors and to work with, encourage and manage community involvement in the garden. Both the kitchen and pleasure gardens are open to the public every afternoon each week. Entry is free during public opening, as required (for the pleasure garden) under the terms of the transfer agreement with EP. A member of staff or volunteer warden is always on site during public opening to guide visitors around the garden or to provide information. In addition, there are volunteer gardeners to assist the full-time Gardener/Manager.



Pleasure Garden



Produce from the Kitchen Garden

3.5.3 The Council has fitted out the back-sheds to a basic standard. All the rooms are utilised, and include storage, toilets, an office, kitchen and meeting/class-room.

3.5.4 A number of local primary schools and other organisations (e.g. the Women's Institute, art club, historical society, Probus) have visited the walled garden outside the public opening hours. They have been given guided tours, including explanations on the relationship between the estate, house and garden, and the uniqueness of the garden.

- 3.5.5 Direct community involvement is encouraged by the formation of a 'friends' organisation, supported by the Council and by subscription. The Friends have organised a number of well-attended events, including an Apple Day, Summer Fayre, Bat Walk, Halloween Pumpkin Carving and Christmas Fayre. Half-day horticultural courses (on Christmas wreath-making, hanging baskets and pruning) have also been run successfully. Refreshments are served on a weekly basis from March – November (monthly from December – February).



Open day with the Warrington Organic & Wild Life Gardening Society stall

- 3.5.6 The Council has established a website (see www.ghwalledgarden.org.uk) and leaflets, interpreting the history of the garden and giving visitor information. Leaflets are available in local outlets such as pubs and at the Tourist Information Centre in Warrington, as well as at the garden and Parish Council office.

4.0 SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 Historical significance

4.1.1 The connection with the Parrs

The Grappenhall Heys estate has considerable local significance as the home of a prominent Warrington business family, the Parrs, for over one hundred years. It can be related to a significant public building, the Parr Hall, which is still used for its original purpose in the centre of the town. The estate is also an example of similar ones which existed for a small number of business families who formed a powerful network in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; these included the Greenalls, Lyons, Parrs and Rylands, all of whom lived close to one another in south Warrington.



The Parr Family (date unknown)



Roger Charlton Parr (right)

4.1.2 The Estate

Thomas Parr created his estate, which constituted parkland surrounded by farmland, using the features of the existing landscape such as trees and ponds. To this he added the planting of individual parkland trees, avenue trees and shelterbelts. Eventually the estate comprised three farms, two lodges, two avenues and three entrances. The majority of these features still remain because they were deliberately incorporated into the New Town landscape, since this was the basis of their master-planning approach. As a collection, the estate features form a locally significant record of a landscape designed in the manner of 19th century gentry estate.

4.1.3 The Walled Garden

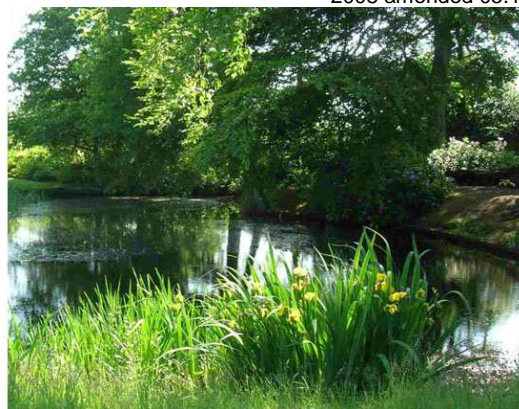
The walled garden is significant in incorporating both a kitchen garden and pleasure grounds within one walled area. This is significant regionally and perhaps nationally. It is very unusual to find an ornamental area of pleasure grounds and ponds so closely associated with a productive walled garden, both being bounded by the same wall. The perimeter wall is a significant historical feature. Much of the material and location of the wall appear to be original, although extensively repaired. The two areas of the garden continue to be separated by the Yew hedge, which from historical maps appears to have always separated them. This, together with photographic evidence, illustrates the separation that was required by the Victorians between the productive garden and that available for the pleasure of the family. This is also illustrated in the chosen materials; sandstone in the pleasure grounds but brick around the kitchen garden. This arrangement of the garden is therefore original and of significance. The walled garden is also significant as the one feature from the core of the estate that remains.



Walled Garden – sandstone (left) and brick (right)

4.1.4 The Pleasure Grounds

From map evidence the ponds pre-date the construction of the estate in 1830 and are probably marl pits. It would appear that the design of the pleasure grounds aimed to utilise the group of ponds to best effect, by placing a circular path around them which ran parallel to the inside of the wall. Within this structure, ornamental trees and shrubs were planted. Historical maps of 1875 and 1899 show this layout clearly, and, being constrained by the ponds, it has changed little. However, the majority of the circular path has been lost, and a north-south footpath was laid in the 1990s. There are still numbers of mature trees (Oak, Cut-leaf Beech and Beech), and shrubs (Rhododendron, Holly, Skimmia, Gaultheria), which were part of the Victorian planting. Although somewhat degraded by the central path, the pleasure grounds therefore still contain areas of historically significant layout and planting.



Pleasure Garden, still with some reference to the Victorian planting scheme

4.1.5 The Kitchen Garden

The 19th century design of the kitchen garden was lost due to dereliction. EP comprehensively re-designed this part of the garden, albeit with a path layout which reflects that shown on the OS maps of 1875 and 1899, and in traditional materials. There are therefore no historically significant features that remain in this part of the garden, with the exception of the boundaries – the walls, Yew hedge and glasshouses. The walls and hedge have been discussed above, and the glasshouses are discussed in the following section.

4.1.6 The Glasshouses

Today's structures appear to be from the late 19th or early 20th century – it may be that the original structures were demolished and rebuilt in the same style as the new one. The skeleton structures of the glasshouses remain but they are in a very vulnerable condition. The back wall to the glasshouses is in good condition, with the back sheds at the rear having been restored by EP. The glasshouses are significant because they are a) the largest surviving historical remnant, and at the core of the estate; b) the central feature of the kitchen garden; c) an indication of the status of their owners and skill of their gardeners, and d) supplied by one of the premier manufacturers of the period, Foster and Pearson.



Derelict glass houses in kitchen garden

4.1.7 Social history

The garden has considerable local significance in terms of social history. The garden provided work for many staff, but its productive and visual output was principally for the enjoyment of one family. In particular the divided structure of the one garden, into kitchen garden and pleasure grounds, emphasised the division between the social classes. The route of the paths ensured that members of the Parr family did not have to enter the kitchen garden, and when they did, they were enclosed by flower borders on either side of the 'Master's Walk.' The restored back-sheds still contain the privy and the bothy, the buildings in which gardeners lived, as well as those where they worked. The existing buildings, Yew hedge and footpath routes, as well as photographic evidence, therefore have considerable value as artefacts of social history.

4.1.8 Record of New Town development

Landscape was the central principle in master-planning for the new community which has been created in south Warrington over the last 15 years. Development was planned by English Partnerships to conserve as many of the existing landscape features as possible whilst adapting them for modern use where necessary. The garden eventually became the central feature of public open space for the Grappenhall Heys residential development, and determined the location of the rest of the infrastructure such as roads and footpaths and the housing parcels. This type of landscape-led master-planning was a key theme of most New Towns in the 20th century, and is therefore a significant record of that style of town planning and development.

4.1.9 Central resource for a new community

A new community has been created around the garden, and further development sites will be built on when the moratorium on green-field development is lifted. The garden is located at the centre of a new community and therefore has great potential as a resource for community development and cohesion. In addition, Grappenhall Heys has historically always been connected to the much older community of Grappenhall village. As the only public facility that is located centrally between the two parts, it can become a vehicle for interaction between both 'old' and 'new' Grappenhall. The garden therefore has considerable local significance as a resource for community development.

4.1.10 Landscape design and horticulture

Due to its history of abandonment, the garden is a living record of two greatly separated eras of landscape design, the Victorian and late 20th century. The walls, division into kitchen garden and pleasure grounds, circular path route, mature trees and shrubs are an example of the former style of designed landscape. The central footpath, associated walls, gates and herbaceous planting are an example of the latter. This is an unusual combination and of local significance.

4.1.11 Ecology

The garden provides a range of habitats in a relatively secure environment. Predominantly it combines mature trees and shrubs together with ponds. There are also buildings, long grass and cultivated areas. The bird and bat population particularly exploit this combination of habitats, which provides plenty of food material. A good range of birds (including species such as Heron, Kestrel and Kingfisher), and 3 species of bat are seen in the garden. The garden therefore has significant local habitat value.



5.0 ISSUES AND POLICIES

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 This section examines the policies and issues associated with owning and managing the walled garden. Firstly, the policies arise from the Council's aspirations for the future use of the garden in general; these are discussed in 5.2. Specific issues arise from owning the garden, and these necessitate the development of policies to address and manage them in relation to possible change in the future. These form the second sub-section, 5.3.

5.2 General policies

5.2.1 Community resource

The garden is located within a suburban area of Warrington, and there is housing on three sides of it. The amount and density of housing will increase considerably in future years since the currently vacant land is designated for residential development in the Local Plan. Visitor monitoring and feedback to the wardens indicates that many visitors are local, and come on foot or by cycle, as well as by short car journeys. The Council therefore considers that for the most part the majority of its visitors will come from the immediate surrounding area, though as the garden becomes more widely known they are coming from further afield.

Policy

To develop the walled garden as a community facility, with both buildings and gardens being available for the use of local people and also the wider community.

5.2.2 Community development

Grappenhall Village and Grappenhall Heys are separate communities. The walled garden is linked by a footpath with the historically old community of Grappenhall Village one mile to the north, but lies much closer to the New Town development of Grappenhall Heys which is immediately adjacent to the garden. Although the direct distance between Grappenhall Heys and Grappenhall Village is relatively small, Grappenhall Heys is in fact a separate community, 3 miles by road from Grappenhall Village. The modest community facilities that exist in Grappenhall Village are thus little-used by the residents of Grappenhall Heys. In addition, due to the government moratorium on greenfield development, there will be no community facilities for the newer residents at Grappenhall Heys for a number of years.

Policy

To make the walled garden available not only as a garden but as a community facility at Grappenhall Heys in order to enhance community life there and to encourage social cohesion in the area generally.

5.2.3 Education

The garden is well-placed by virtue of its location (close to motorways), and wide horticultural scope, to offer an educational resource for schools related to the guidelines of the National Curriculum. School users may visit from a wider geographical area than other visitors. To date three subject areas have been focused on at KS 1 and 2:

- 'Habitats' for Science, using the ponds and woodlands of the pleasure gardens;
- 'Healthy Eating and Food' for Design and Technology, using the kitchen garden;
- 'What was it like to live here?' for History, using the kitchen and pleasure gardens, the site of the house and the estate.

Local schools have already shown interest and have sent groups, and a schools pack has been prepared and school resources are available on the website. There would also be a niche for the garden in adult education, and a number of small courses have already been run. The walled garden of Allesley near Coventry is an interesting model; this walled garden is vibrant with activity in spite of having no covered space at all. In this regard, Grappenhall Heys has a substantial advantage.

Policy

To promote the garden as an educational resource, exploiting its uniquely wide range of horticulture and history within a relatively small, contained space.

5.2.4 Community involvement – the Friends

Public support for the garden is shown by regular visitor numbers of over 200 per week, and especially when an event is advertised, for example Apple Day 2011 attracted around 500 visitors, and the wreath-making classes of Christmas 2006 sold out. It is also attested by the existence of the Friends of Grappenhall Heys, a support group independent of the Council, with a membership of 236 (November 2011). The Friends have organised many events in the garden and are the main channel through which volunteers come to work in the garden under the direction of the Gardener-Manager, or to act as wardens. There are in excess of 70 active volunteers. Money raised from events is used to support the garden and purchase equipment.

Policy

To maintain good relations with the Friends Group and support them when appropriate.

5.2.5 Redevelopment and sustainability

The walled garden is not a Listed Building, nor does it sit within a Conservation Area. Redevelopment options for the glasshouses therefore cover a wide range – at one extreme they could be restored in their entirety with historical accuracy, or at the other they could simply be demolished or demolished and replaced by a modern structure, which in principle need not even observe the existing footprint of the old glasshouses. The Council considers that the long-term future of the garden lies in its dual role as both a heritage asset and a community asset as outlined in 5.2.3 above. The Council is mindful of the need to ensure that the development of the walled garden in this way should be sustainable.

Policy

To secure the heritage asset represented by the garden by achieving a reconstruction of the glasshouses in a way which respects their historic value and to develop community use of the garden for both horticulture and community activity generally. To this end, a Heritage Impact Assessment has been commissioned. The Council will seek a strategy for development of the garden that is financially sustainable in the long term and that exemplifies building sustainability.

5.3 Issue-based policies

5.3.1 Finance

The Council has funds sufficient to maintain the garden in its present state over the long term as a result of the terms of the acquisition from EP, whereby the Council received a significant endowment fund. The principal feature that is not funded by the settlement with EP, and for which there is no immediate solution, is the range of derelict glasshouses. During negotiations on the transfer of ownership, the funding of glasshouse restoration was raised by the Council; EP declined to include such funding as part of the transfer. They took the view that such funding could not be justified by their own internal rules; these required the garden to be disposed of in its existing condition. In addition, the Council does not feel it should levy the costs of running the garden on the small number of households within the parish through Council tax.

Issue

There are no current funds or arrangements for the restoration and ongoing maintenance of the glasshouses.

Policy

The Council will fund the Gardener/Manager post and will carry out maintenance of the garden in general using interest on the endowment from EP. It will seek a grant to reconstruct the glasshouses and will seek financial assistance from the Friends for major maintenance of the reconstructed glasshouses.

5.3.2 Manpower

The Council employs a single, full-time Gardener/Manager, and a part-time visitor warden, both funded by the endowment from EP. The endowment sum cannot sustain any more employed staff, and volunteers therefore play an important part in the maintenance of the garden. Depending on their design and functions, the redeveloped glasshouses could add significantly to the maintenance workload.

Issue

General operations and minor maintenance within the reconstructed glasshouses will be carried out by the Gardener/Manager, supplemented by volunteers. Major maintenance will therefore need to be carried out by external contractors and a source of funding for this must be identified.

Policy

To select a design for the reconstructed glasshouses which will be acceptable in heritage terms and financially sustainable. The Council will look to the Friends to provide financial support for major maintenance of the reconstructed glasshouses, which will be carried out by contractors.

5.3.3 Competition with other walled gardens in Cheshire

It is important to recognise that there are a number of walled gardens in the local area that constitute a competitive environment for the garden at Grappenhall Heys. These 'competitor' gardens are:

Walton Lea (specialises in gardening for people with learning disabilities, owned by a trust),

Norton Priory (adjacent to the remains of Norton Priory for which it was the kitchen garden, owned by Halton Borough Council),

Arley Hall (part of the extensive Arley Hall gardens with its wide-ranging plantings, owned by the Viscount Ashbrook),

Tatton (part of the Tatton Park estate and adjacent to Tatton Hall, with an extensive restored kitchen garden, owned by the National Trust and managed by Cheshire County Council).

In this context the garden has both advantages and disadvantages. It has both a kitchen garden and pleasure grounds with ponds within one wall. This is an unusual combination, perhaps in the whole country, and certainly in the North-West. Thus it has a similar amount to offer compared to Walton Lea, or perhaps Norton Priory, but is outgunned for sheer scale and historical authenticity by both Tatton and Arley. Furthermore it has no building attraction such as at Tatton, Arley and Norton Priory. However it is the only walled garden that is effectively owned by its local community, via the election of parish councillors.

Issue

There is a significant amount of 'walled garden competition' in north Cheshire. However the gardens have a different offering, both from each other and Grappenhall Heys.

Policy

To develop and agree a 'unique selling point' and vision for Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden. This will be based on a future role for Grappenhall Heys as a community garden and buildings, for use primarily by local people. Given the unique combination of kitchen and pleasure gardens with ponds, a particular focus on educational use would best exploit this resource.

5.3.4 Parking and access

There is a courtyard to the rear (north-east) of the garden adjacent to the back-sheds that is currently used for disabled, staff and official visitor car parking. On part of the area a large permanent gazebo has been constructed. However the courtyard is less than satisfactory since it can only accommodate around 8 cars, and is approached by a narrow, un-surfaced track that becomes difficult to negotiate in wet weather. Furthermore, the use of this area entirely for parking is undesirable, because it is adjacent to the back-sheds and is worthy of a garden-related use, e.g. for sales of plants or produce, events and exhibitions. If the garden is to increase visitor numbers, it will be necessary to provide appropriate parking facilities for more cars and for larger vehicles such as coaches. The Council owns a car park on the south side of Witherwin Avenue opposite the garden. This was transferred to the Council by EP specifically for the use of visitors to the garden. However this is also used by the local residents and parents for pick-up from the primary school.

Issue

Parking spaces immediately adjacent to the garden are limited, and access for larger vehicles is very restricted.

Policy

To promote more use of the existing car park adjacent to Witherwin Avenue, and to provide additional facilities for car parking and a drop-off point for coaches at a future date. The option to provide a lay-by on Witherwin Avenue as a drop-off point is feasible and the planning authority has indicated this is acceptable.

5.3.5 The Estate

The Council owns some of the land adjacent to the garden, but it mainly consists of the New Town landscape treatment, not the historic remnants of the Parr estate. The majority of the historic landscape relict from the estate is owned by the Woodland Trust (WT). This includes the site of the house and stables, the formal gardens and the woodland garden. Most of these areas developed into woodland after WWII and have then received an informal, amenity landscape treatment by EP.

Issue

The Council does not own and therefore have control over the historical sites that closely relate to the garden. The aims of the WT may not always align with those of the Council.

Policy

To develop a good relationship with the WT for the benefit of the public and visitors to the garden, in order to foster interpretation of the historic estate.

5.3.6 The Kitchen Garden

The kitchen garden is the central feature of the garden, both visually and functionally. Interest in the kitchen garden has been clearly established since opening to the public, as evidenced by visitor-feedback to the wardens and school visits. Compared to the pleasure grounds alone, the kitchen garden provides a greatly increased range of possibilities for community involvement. The glasshouses provide the visual and historic focal point for the kitchen garden, are its principal feature, and were one of its most important functions. The garden would therefore benefit greatly, by functioning in a way similar to that for which it was designed, if they were restored to an appropriate use.

Issue

The glasshouses are a major feature of the whole garden, but the principal feature of the kitchen garden, in terms of both the aesthetics and future function of the site.

Policy

To develop the use of kitchen garden specifically due to its capacity to engage and educate the community, and therefore seek to restore the glasshouses to use.

5.3.7 Covered space and the Back-sheds

Generally the garden has little covered space; with the glasshouses derelict, the back-sheds provide the only available rooms. They are therefore well utilised. Although they are not small, they are already all used and each has a specific function (storage, toilets, office, kitchen, meeting/class-room). The principal drawback to the use of the back-sheds is that they are narrow, and with their traditional design and orientation to the north, natural lighting is not good. Also, they have only been fitted out to a basic standard. The permanent gazebo erected in 2010 provides additional covered space, particularly for events and refreshments.

Issue

The garden lacks covered space. The back-sheds provide this to some extent, as does the gazebo, but their size and lighting restricts the uses that they, and therefore the garden, can accommodate.

Policy

To encourage the use of the back-sheds and gazebo in their existing form, to seek extension of the backsheds and development of the glasshouses.

5.3.8 The Glasshouses

Generally, the garden was in good condition at the time of transfer to the Council's ownership. The back-sheds had been rebuilt, the ponds de-silted, the walls re-pointed and a small car park created. After restoration by EP, the pleasure grounds and kitchen garden had been maintained. The single, remaining un-restored feature is the glasshouses. The glasshouses would have been the horticultural pinnacle of the gardens when owned by the Parrs, demonstrating both the wealth of their owners and the skill of their gardeners.

Issue

In their derelict condition, the glasshouses are now the most vulnerable feature of the garden. Because they are un-restored they are also one of the most historically significant features, since other areas of the garden have already been repaired by EP.

Policy

To redevelop the glasshouses in some form; to consider whether this should take the form of either a historically authentic restoration, or a historically sympathetic redesign.

6.0 APPENDICES

6.1 Stakeholders

(a mix of users, interest groups, statutory consultees on planning, and relevant landowners).

Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council
The Friends of Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden
The Woodland Trust
Warrington Borough Council – Chief Executive
Warrington Borough Council – Head of Planning
Warrington Borough Council – Director of Children's Services
Warrington Borough Council – Local Studies Library/Museum
Warrington Borough Council – Highways
Warrington Borough Council – Landscapes
Appleton Parish Council
Stockton Heath Parish Council
Walton Parish Council
Stretton Parish Council
Grappenhall Heys Primary School
Appleton Thorn Primary School
Bradshaw Community Primary School
Bridgwater High School
Broomfields Junior School
Cobbs Infant School
Grappenhall Hall Residential School
Grappenhall Heys Community Primary School
Lymm High School
St Monica's Catholic Primary School
St Thomas's C E Aided Primary School
St Wilfrid's C E Primary School
Stockton Heath Primary School
Stretton St Matthew's C E Primary School
Thelwall Community Infant School
Thelwall Community Junior School
Thorn Cross YOI
English Heritage
English Partnerships
Warrington Disability Partnership
Warrington NHS Retirement Fellowship Walking Group
Grappenhall Youth and Community Assoc – Senior Citizens Group
Penketh and Sankey Gardening Society
Parr family, if any can be traced
NatWest bank – as successors to Parr's bank
Warrington History Society
U3A
Cheshire Gardens Trust
Walled Kitchen Garden Network
Women's Institute
Archaeology groups
Scouts, Guides, Brownies, etc.
Other local clubs who have visited in groups. (Gardening, Art, Walking, Photography etc)
Local Residents

6.2 Timeline

CHRONOLOGY/TIMELINE

1829

Thomas Parr, Warrington banker, owns various parcels of agricultural land in the adjacent parishes of Grappenhall and Appleton

circa 1830

Thomas Parr consolidates his ownership of agricultural land to 150 acres, creates the Grappenhall Heys estate, and builds a house and gardens at the centre of it

1830-40

Small-scale marl extraction becomes uneconomic, leaving numerous ponds within in rural Cheshire including those at Grappenhall Heys

by 1850

The Mansions of England and Wales states there are 'grounds of considerable extent beautifully laid out and well wooded'

1855

Park surrounds the house with eastern and western drives and a western lodge; formal gardens to north, west and south of the house, with service buildings to the east and a walled garden east of these. Wall appears to extend only around kitchen garden, not the ponds

1870

Thomas Parr dies and the estate is inherited by his third son, Joseph Charlton

1875

Walled garden entirely walled to include the 3 ponds; division present between rectangular kitchen garden and pleasure grounds with circular walk, glasshouses in north west corner

1890

Eastern drive moved further north and addition of an eastern lodge. Glasshouses almost doubled in length. Trees along southern avenue from Dairy Farm

1896

Joseph Parr builds and donates the Parr Hall in central Warrington to the people of the town

1901- 1903

Joseph Parr is Mayor of Warrington Borough

1920

Joseph Parr dies at his house in Herefordshire, and Grappenhall Heys is inherited by his son, Roger Charlton

1941-45

WRENS stationed at HMS Blackcap (Stretton), billeted at Grappenhall Heys

1951

Estate sold by Joseph's son, Major Henry Charlton; house bought by British Transport Commission; walled garden is gifted to the former gamekeeper and is used for poultry rearing

1975

Estate and house bought by the Warrington New Town Development Corporation as part of their purchase of large areas of south Warrington; house demolished due to severe dilapidation. Warrington Organic and Wildlife Gardening Society has allotments in the kitchen garden

1991

Areas of woodland which were part of the estate, plus the overgrown sites of the house and gardens, are transferred to the Woodland Trust

1995-2005

Restoration of the garden as the central park in a network of public open space serving substantial areas of new residential development implemented by New Town successor organisations, Commission for the New Towns and English Partnerships (EP)

2005

Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council negotiates for and becomes the owner of the walled garden, with an endowment for its maintenance from EP

2006

Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council becomes the owner of public open space adjacent to the walled garden, including the Village Green and a public car park on Stansfield Drive, with an addition to the endowment by EP

2007

A full-time gardener is appointed to the garden and frequent public opening commences

2008

The Friends commence events on a regular basis.

2009

The garden commenced daily opening.

6.3 Glasshouse Study / Report

A Heritage Impact Assessment study was carried out in September 2011 by Fiona Grant and Jeremy Milln of the Walled Kitchen Garden Network. A copy is available from the Parish Council office.

6.4 Bibliography

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