

Memories of Malcolm Hitt, son of Reg who took over the job as Head Gardener at The Heyes in the late 1940's

"In 1948 my family moved to Grappenhall near Warrington where my father got the job of Head Gardener at The Heyes, a big estate. We lived in a cottage on the estate from which a long track led up to the big gardens which my father looked after. Before I went to school I remember helping my father and the other gardeners in the Walled Garden put in seeds, plant out and pick the fruit & vegetables which they took to market to sell.

Next to the Garden there were three big ponds where we used to go for picnics and father used to catch fish there which were kept in the huge water tanks under the staging in the greenhouse. Beside the main entrance to the gardens there were some large chestnut trees where we could find conkers in the autumn. Also in the autumn I would go with my father to pick sprouts to take to market. The sprouts were grown in a field beside the front exit of the estate and sometimes there would be mushrooms growing beneath them.

One night I was helping my father work late in the gardens when we heard a terrible squealing from the wood nearby, when we went to find out what it was we found a rabbit caught in a snare. My father put it out of it's misery and we had it for dinner.

I went to Grappenhall village primary school in 1949 where I asked a girl called Heather to marry me. Unfortunately she burst into tears! I also remember going to see the big ships going up the ship canal at Latchford Locks; to me they were always the "big ships sailing up the illy ally oop on the last day of September" which was a song we used to sing at school then."