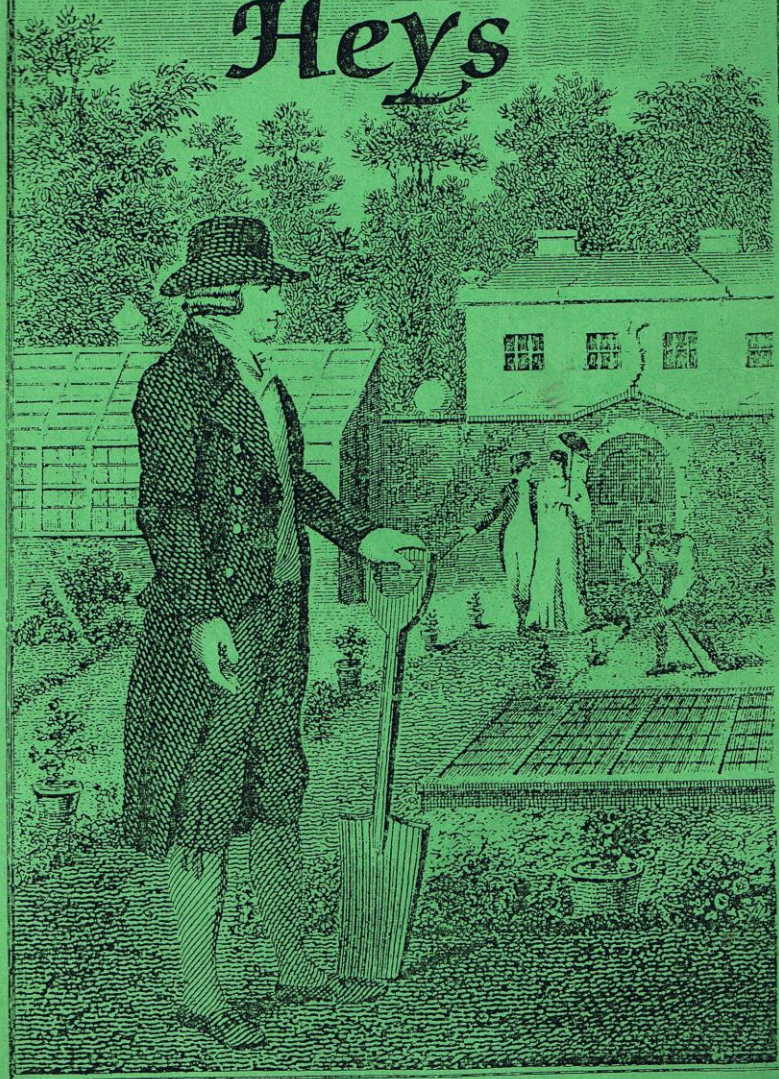


# Grappenhall Heys



WARRINGTON ORGANIC & WILDLIFE GARDENING SOCIETY

1995



## THE LOCAL GROUP OF THE HENRY DOUBLEDAY RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

The Warrington Organic and Wildlife Gardening Society is affiliated to the Henry Doubleday Research Organisation, which is the largest organic organisation in Europe. It is a registered charity whose aim is to promote organic gardening and farming worldwide.

The HDRA :

- promotes and gives advice on organic gardening, growing and food.
- runs courses on a wide range of organic and related subjects, at the National Organic Education Centre.
- runs a consultancy for local authorities and industry.
- carries out scientific research into growing techniques that do not rely on chemicals. This research does not involve animal experimentation.
- runs Ryton Gardens : ten acres of attractive organic gardens open to the public, the year round.
- helps developing countries, where drought and the spread of deserts is a serious problem, by giving practical advice to subsistence farmers about the best trees and crops to grow.
- saves old fruit and vegetable varieties that would otherwise disappear from cultivation, through the Heritage Seed Programme.
- spreads the organic message far and wide through TV, radio, books, leaflets and national newspaper and magazine articles.

If you would like to join the Warrington Organic and Wildlife Gardening Society, please contact John Campbell on 01925 263545.



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## INTRODUCTION

Grappenhall Heys is located on the boundary between the Parishes of Grappenhall and Appleton in the south of the Borough of Warrington, Cheshire, as shown on Figure 1. It lies on a gentle slope which rises up from the River Mersey to the north, and the Lumb Brook valley to the west.

The area has a long history with archaeological evidence suggesting that the Mersey Basin has been inhabited from the time of the last ice-age, over 10,000 years ago.

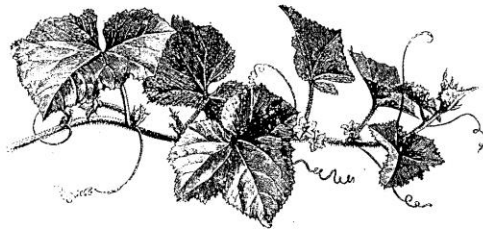
In 1830, Thomas Parr esq. built a fine house at Grappenhall Heys, together with a large walled garden and pleasure grounds which included woodlands and ponds.

Today, Grappenhall Heys sits within the characteristic rural landscape of Cheshire, which although predominantly agricultural, has a significant number of small woodlands and ponds linked by a comprehensive hedgerow network, as can be seen from the aerial photograph at Figure 2.

The combination of archaeological heritage and ecological value serves to make this area unique in Warrington, and it is likely to also be of county importance.

This report discusses the historical and ecological interest of the Grappenhall Heys area within the context of local and national planning policies and designations.

Proposals for its protection and sympathetic restoration, together with suggested mechanisms by which this may be implemented are also discussed.







GRAPPENHALL HEYS

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH

Not to Scale

FIGURE 2

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF GRAPPENHALL

Archaeological evidence suggests that the lower Mersey basin has been inhabited since the end of the last ice-age, about 10,000 years ago.

The area around Warrington would have been particularly favourable from this time because it was the first available crossing point downstream of the River Mersey, and it is also at the tidal limit of the river. The surrounding land is slightly elevated, thus avoiding flooding while providing a good defensive location for settlement.

A number of artefacts dating to the Bronze Age, which began about 4,000 years ago, have been found in Grappenhall.

In Roman times, Warrington, then called Veratinum, was an important crossing point of the River Mersey, and a Roman road ran through Stockton Heath and Appleton, the route of which is now followed in part by London Road.

The name of Grappenhall is thought to be derived from the Old English words 'grope' and 'halh'. 'Grove' may be a name while 'halh' is a nook or corner of land, or land in the bend of a river; a water-meadow, the latter meaning being the most appropriate here.

Grappenhall is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. The Domesday Survey was carried out in response to geographical division of the country and resulting land ownership, and provides a wealth of information about the landscape of the time.

Grappenhall was part of the Hundred of Bochelau (Bucklow) and is described thus :

'The same Osbern holds Gropenhale and Edward of him. The same and DOT held it for ii manors and were free men. There is i hide and half a virgate of land rateable to the gelt. The land is ii carucates. One and a half are in the demesne and [there are] ii serfs and i villein and iii bordars. There is a wood i league long and xl perches broad. There are ii heys. In King Edward's time it was worth v shillings now vi shillings. It was waste.'

Two heys are mentioned. 'Hey' is thought to be derived from the Old English word '(ge)haeg' which means enclosure.

Early enclosure of land is quite rare, with most land up to the first Enclosures Acts in the sixteenth century being common land. In the Domesday Book the remaining land in Grappenhall is described as 'waste', which is uncultivated or common land. A number of fields in Grappenhall are given names in the Tithe Map Apportionment of 1829 which suggest that the land was

previously common land, for example, there are several fields called 'Common Field', together with 'Upper Common Field', 'Near Common Field', 'Far Common Field', 'Common Croft', 'Long Old Field' and 'Far Ash Acre'.

Woods at Grappenhall are mentioned in documents of 1352 and 1519.

#### HISTORY OF GRAPPENHALL HEYS ESTATE

The Tithe Map for Grappenhall, which is dated 1828/1829 shows land owned by Mr. Thomas Parr, esq. which he acquired from Mr. Smith Barry esq. (Figure 3).

The Grappenhall Heys Estate was established in 1830 when Mr Parr built a mansion with walled garden and pleasure grounds. The estate covered 150 acres.

The Parr family were well known and respected in Warrington. They owned Parr's Bank which was located in the building now occupied by the National Westminster Bank in Winwick Street, and in 1895 gave the Parr Hall, built at a cost of £10,000, to the people of Warrington. The Parr Hall celebrates its centenary this year.

Mr. Joseph Charlton Parr, son of Mr Thomas Parr, was Mayor of Warrington in 1902-1903, at the unanimous request of the Town Council, while his son, Mr Roger Charlton Parr represented the parish of Appleton on Cheshire County Council.

In 1939, Kelly's Directory described the Heyes thus :

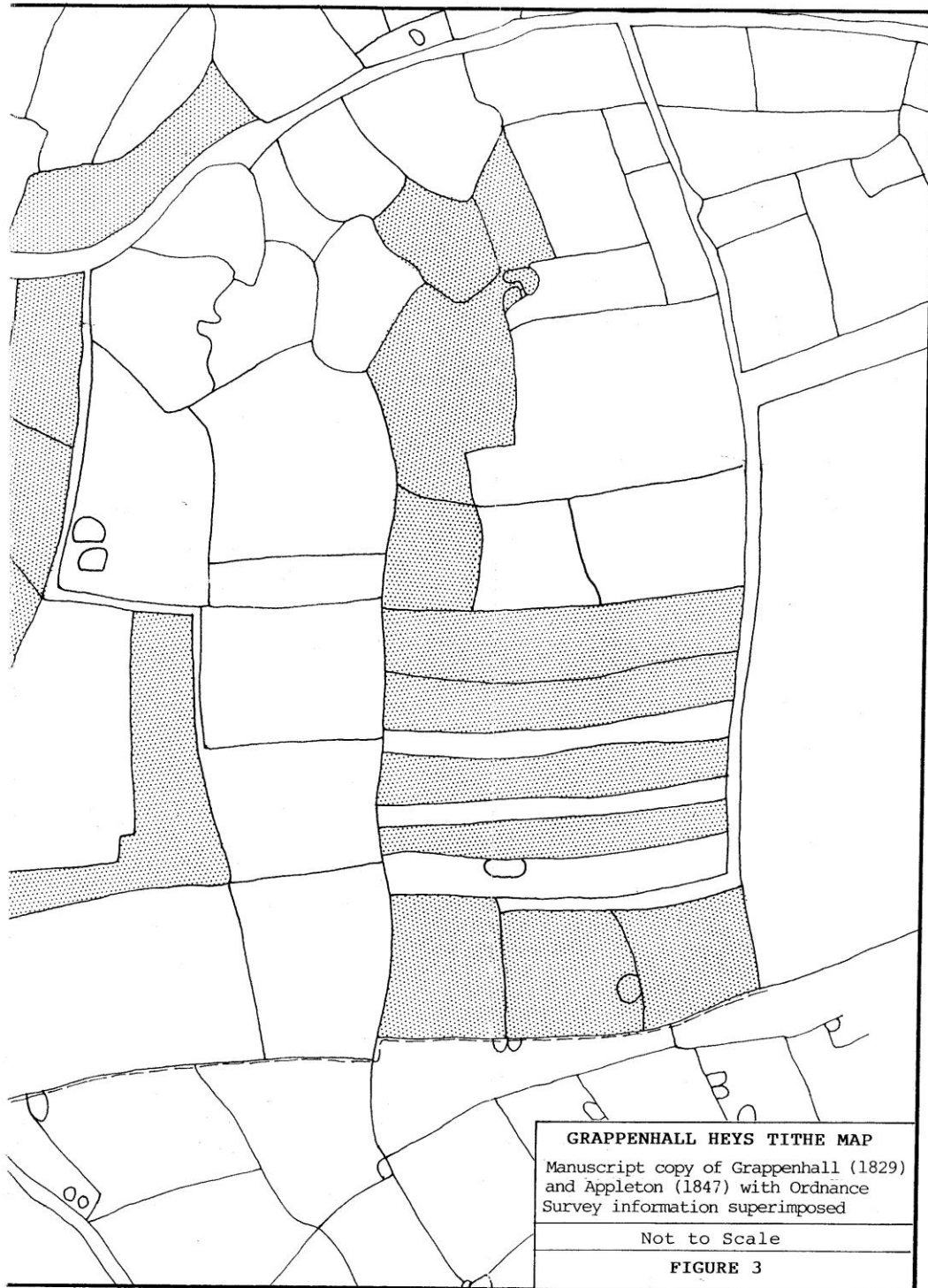
'The Heyes, the seat of Roger Charlton Parr esq. DL JP, is a mansion pleasantly situated in a park of 150 acres. Roger Charlton Parr esq. DL JP is the chief landowner. The soil is light, the subsoil is sand. The chief crops are oats, wheat and potatoes.'

The house enjoyed fine views across the parkland, with a ha-ha allowing vistas uninterrupted by boundary walls (Figure 4). These views still remain in the landscape of today (Figure 5), and although many of the parkland trees have been lost, additional woodland planting carried out during the lifetime of the estate, together with mature trees associated with ponds and hedgerows serve to maintain the high landscape value of the area.

The woodland planting around the house, within the walled garden and in House Covert was well established by the time of the 1st. edition Ordnance Survey map of 1876, but Beech Wood was much smaller than it is today, and the Shelterbelt had not been planted at this time. The lime avenue at Dairy Farm (Figure 5) also post-dates the 1876 map, although the track is present.









The walled garden



The ha-ha



The sandstone wall



Remains of the ice house

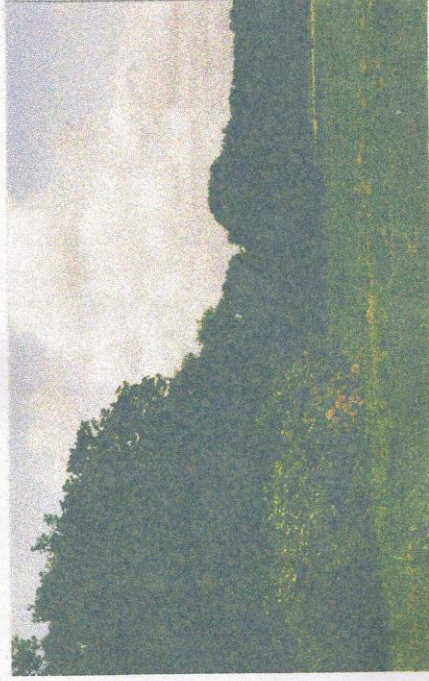


The lodge on Lumb Brook Road

∞



The Lime avenue



The view from the house



The ornamental pond in Parr's Wood

FIGURE 5

## THE GARDENS AT GRAPPENHALL HEYS

The history of gardening worldwide dates back to the times of the Ancient Greeks and Egyptians. However in Britain the introduction of gardening can be attributed to the Romans.

Little is known of gardening in the Dark Ages, but the Norman Conquest reintroduced an interest in horticulture which had survived in Europe from Roman times.

This interest continued to grow throughout the Mediaeval period, particularly through the monasteries, which had gardens for both pleasure and food production.

Gardening reached a peak in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries where it was considered a highly respected artform practiced by eminent landscape architects like Capability Brown and Humphrey Repton.

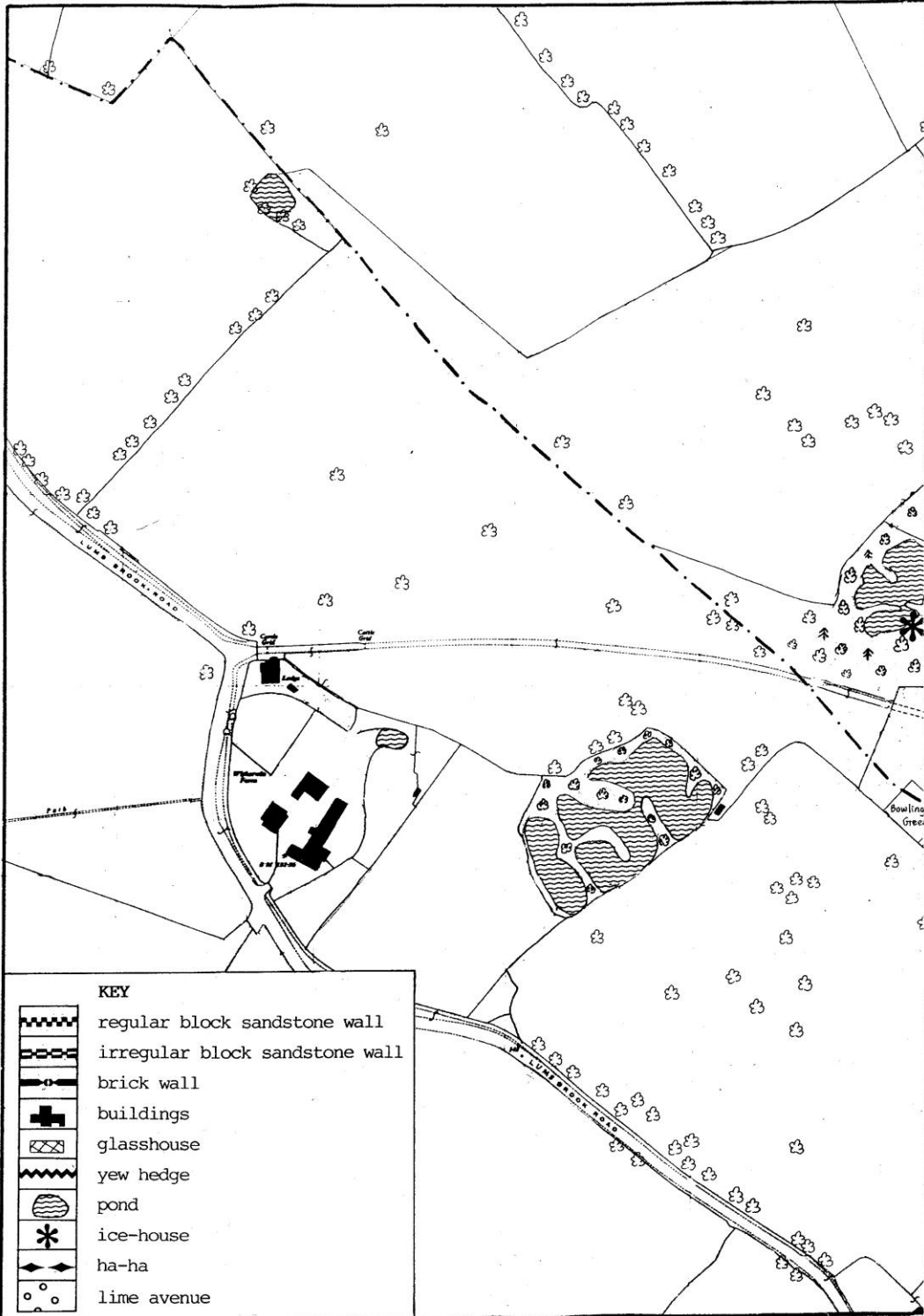
By the Victorian era, gardening was well-established with many smaller estates like Grappenhall Heys seeking to emulate the great masters with formally laid out pleasure grounds and productive kitchen garden, hidden behind high walls.

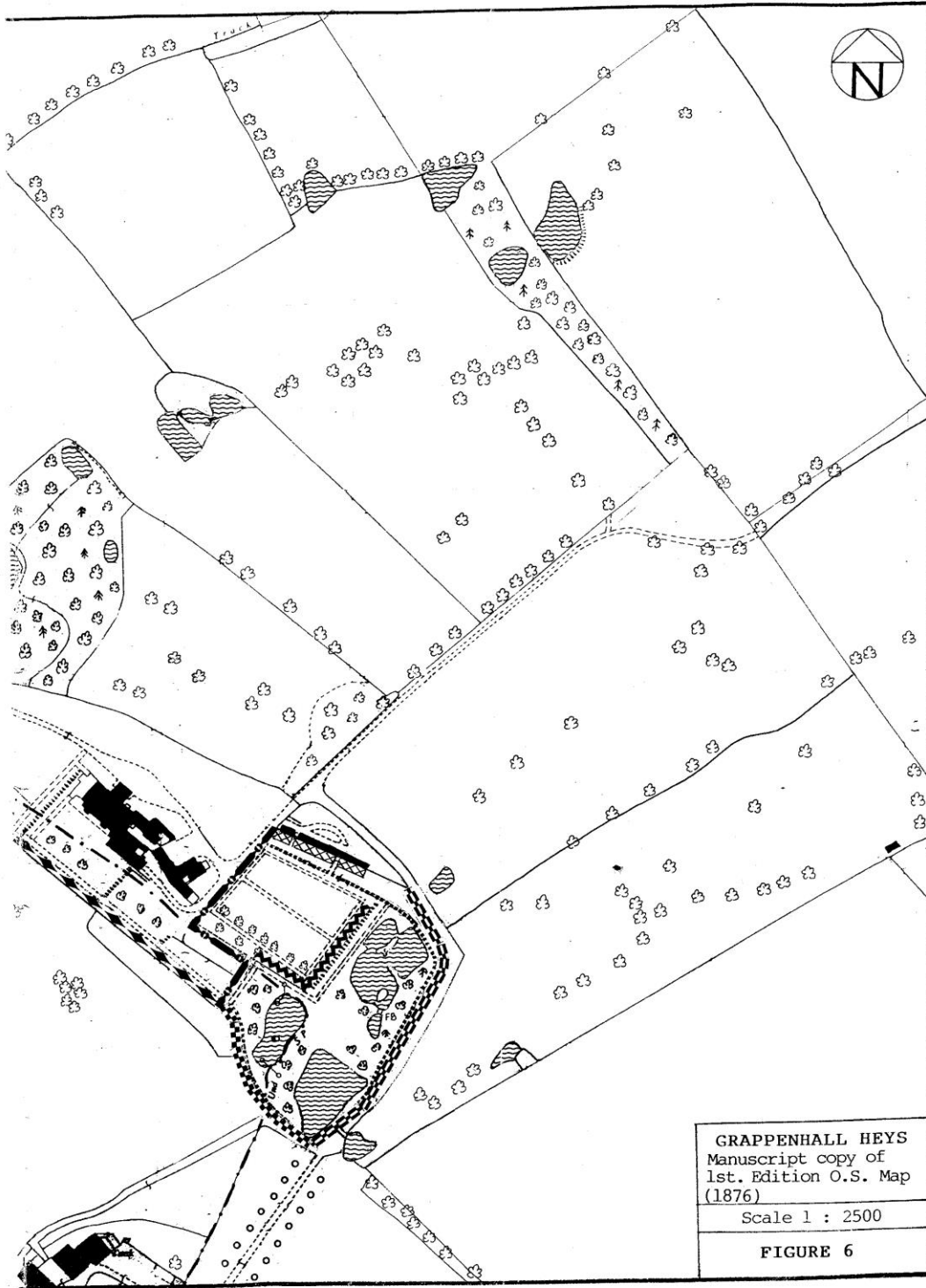
The Victorians were also great explorers, and brought many exotic specimens from abroad to plant in their gardens.

At Grappenhall Heys, there remains much of the original Victorian garden of Thomas Parr. Although the house is no longer standing, the pleasure grounds remain, with terraces and walkways through ornate metal archways. The First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1876 shows a bowling green, (Figure 6), but little evidence remains to indicate its existence today. In the less formal Parr's Wood are remains of an ice house adjacent to landscaped ponds, which would have provided ice for the house for most of the year.

The walled garden is unusual in that the formal kitchen garden is enclosed by brick walls, while the fish ponds and pleasure grounds are surrounded by sandstone walls constructed in two different styles (Figures 4 and 6). The kitchen garden is separated from the pleasure grounds by yew hedging, and has glass-houses complete with underfloor heating, but which are in a poor state of repair, on the south-west facing wall. The south-east facing wall supports a number of the original fruit trees, some of which still have their nameplates showing the variety (Figure 7).

The gardeners bothy and workshops are located on the outside of the wall to the north-east (Figure 7).







Nameplate showing fruit variety



The walled garden



The outbuildings



The fish pond within the walled garden

FIGURE 7



The walled garden straddles the boundary between the parishes of Grappenhall and Appleton, and in 1878 the local newspaper reports on 'Beating the Bounds', an annual event where the people of the parish walk the boundaries :  
'From Bradley Hall where three Townships meet, Lymm, Grappenhall and Appleton, and the boundary turning at right angles stretched away to Grappenhall Heyes. So far the weather had been most favourable but now came on a thunderstorm. The sky having cleared they proceeded through the beautiful grounds of Mr Charlton Parr in indian file down to Lumb Brook'.



Today's landscape is the product of human activity over thousands of years. Any historical artefacts remaining in the landscape of today can therefore be considered as a finite and non-renewable resource, and for this reason should be protected wherever possible.

The criteria used for assessing ancient monuments, as cited in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, is as follows :

PERIOD

All types of monuments that characterise a category or period should be considered for preservation.

RARITY

A monument can be rare because very few artefacts survive from a particular period, or it can be rare because it is an unusual representative of its type.

DOCUMENTATION

The significance of a monument can be enhanced by the existence of documentary evidence.

#### GROUP VALUE

The value of a monument can be enhanced by the presence of associated features nearby, which may not be of the same type or period.

#### SURVIVAL/CONDITION

This criterion includes the quality of the monument; its standard of preservation, and if in poor condition, the feasibility of its preservation.

#### FRAGILITY

The fragility of a monument is its vulnerability to damage or loss. Some monuments are very robust, for example henge monuments, while others constructed from less durable materials can be easily damaged or destroyed.

#### DIVERSITY

A monument may have a number of interesting features from one time period, or have characteristics from a number of different time periods.

#### POTENTIAL

Many monuments have the potential to reveal further archaeological information, for example they may occupy the site of an earlier construction, or have yet undiscovered associated features nearby.

The criteria used for the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, compiled by English Heritage, include historic layout, historic features and architectural ornaments. The Register is non-statutory, but is a material consideration for planning purposes. There are three grades of listing, Grade I, Grade II\* and Grade II.

All the criteria discussed above can be used generally to assess any historical structure or artefact.

There are a large number of Victorian Estates still in existence today. However that of Grappenhall Heys, despite the loss of the house, is unusual in its layout, and is certainly unique in a local context, and may also be unique at County level. Extensive documentary evidence pertaining to Grappenhall Heys may still survive in private collections.

Local Authorities can impose non-statutory designations on historic landscapes, based on landform, vegetation and cultural/historic components. Landscapes are more than the sum of their component parts because of their intrinsic appeal, a factor which should be recognised by local planning authorities.

## ECOLOGY

The area of Grappenhall Heys as shown on Figure 8 has been surveyed using Phase 1 and Phase 2 Habitat Survey methodology which was devised by English Nature in the 1970's as a standard way of mapping wildlife habitats. Phase 1 identifies habitats based primarily on broad vegetation types, for example broadleaved woodland, and these are mapped using a standard colour coding system. Areas identified as being of particular ecological interest are target-noted for Phase 2 Survey which describes vegetation communities in more detail and includes a study of invertebrates and vertebrates.

The locations of nearby woodlands and ponds, together with hedgerows, which serve as wildlife corridors, were also mapped.

Phase 1 Survey of the area is shown on Figure 8.

A Phase 2 Survey was carried out in the following areas indicated on Figure 8 by target notes :

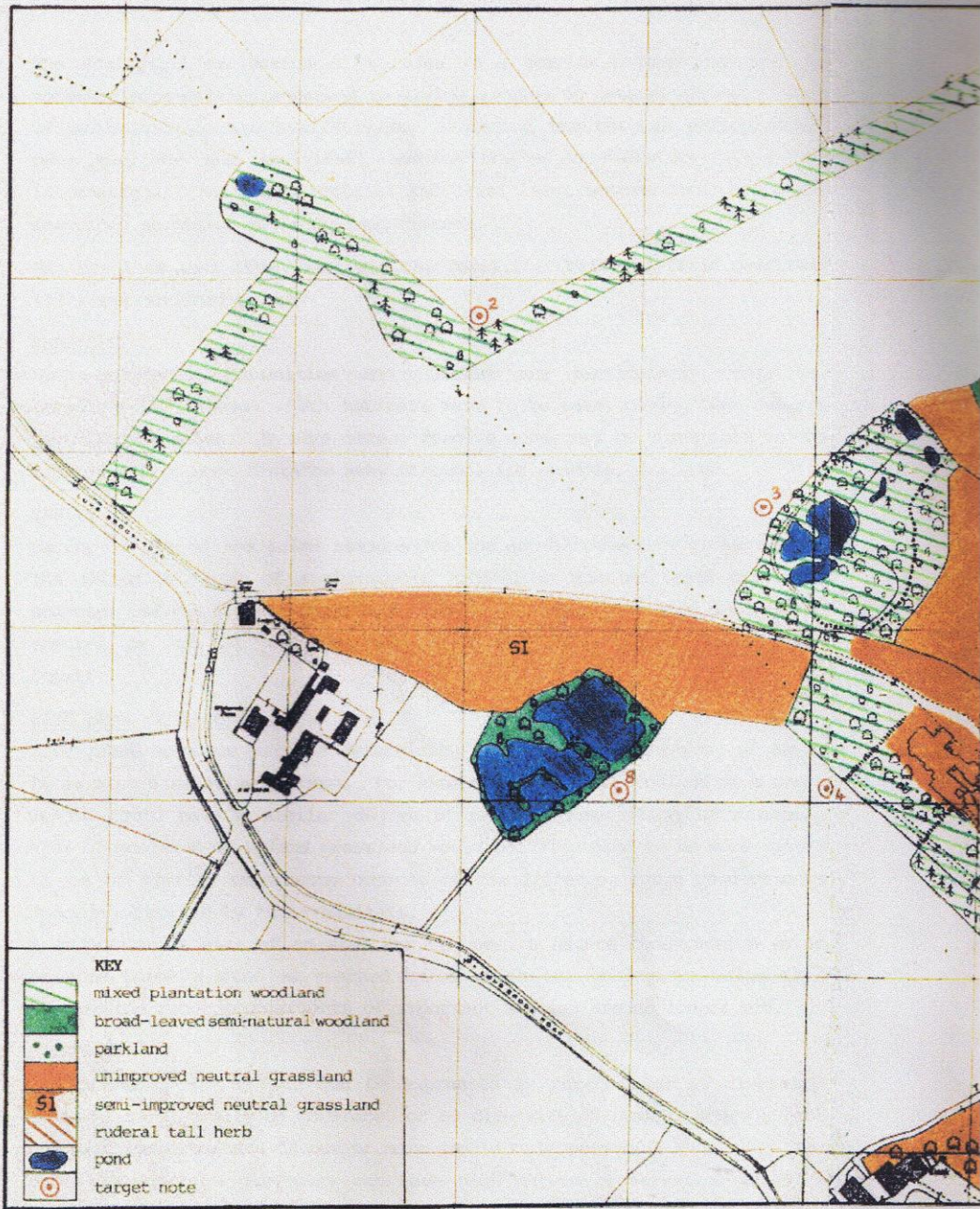
1. Beech Wood, including ponds
2. Shelterbelt, including pond and woodland up to Lumb Brook Road
3. House Covert (Parr's Wood)
4. Pine Wood, including site of house
5. Parkland
6. Home Wood
7. The Walled Garden
8. Angling ponds and associated woodland

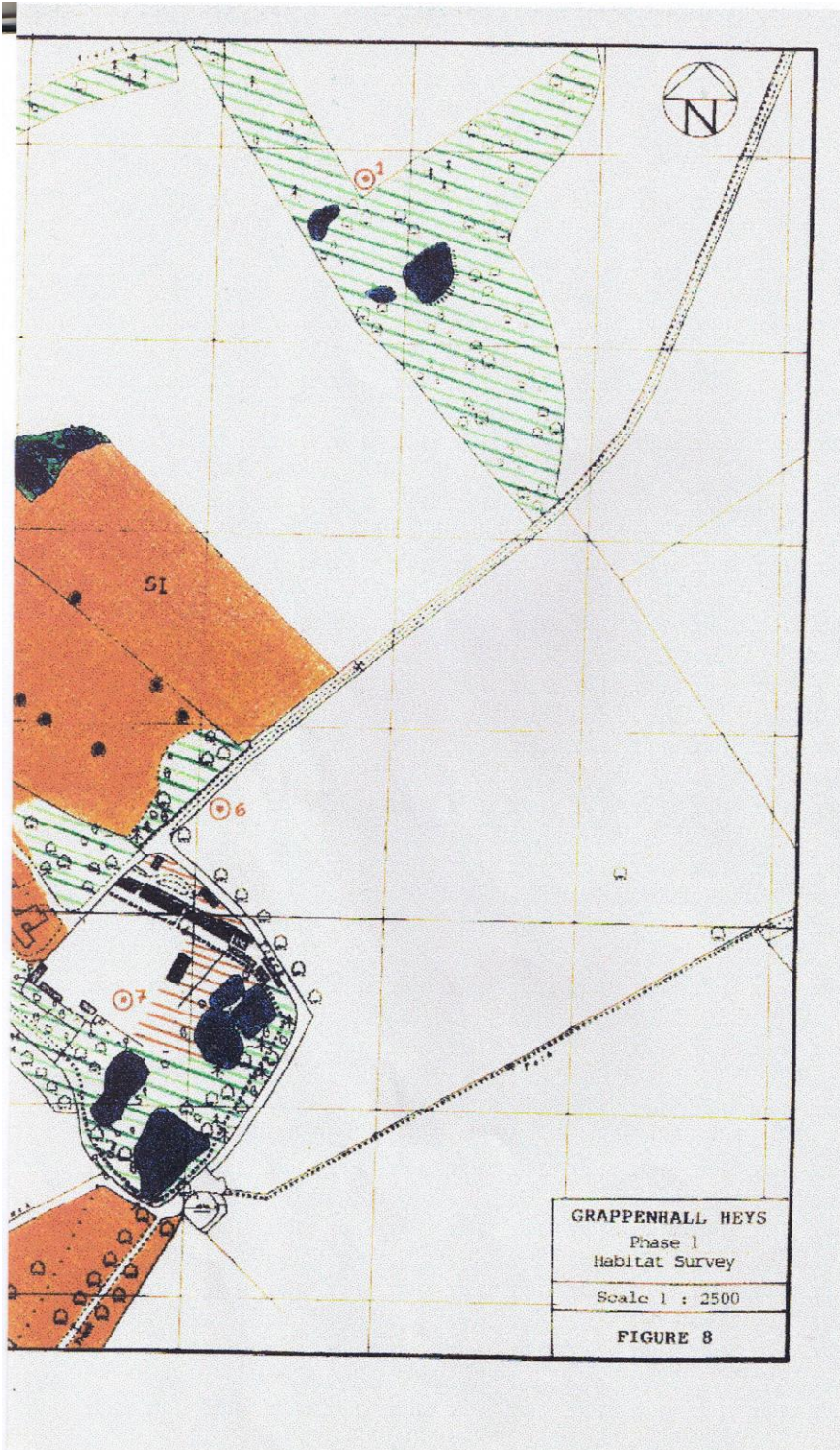
Species lists are presented at Appendix 1.

The walled garden was identified as being of potential interest for invertebrates because of its diversity of habitat, and a survey is being carried out by the Lancashire and Cheshire Entomological Society. Their interim report is contained in Appendix 2.

The whole of the Grappenhall area provides a range of important habitats for birds. A bird survey has been carried out and the results are presented at Appendix 3.

In addition, suitable habitats have been identified for a number of species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (with amendments, 1985) including bats and badgers. A bat survey has been commissioned and a report is at Appendix 4 while a confidential badger report is included at Appendix 5.





The ecological evaluation of an area is a complex process because of the inherent subjectivity attached to giving a value to nature. However a number of methodologies are available for assessing the natural environment, and many habitats and individual species now enjoy statutory protection at international, national, regional and local level because their value can be described according to recognised criteria.

The criteria most often used are the Ratcliffe Criteria, first described in 1977, and outlined below:

#### FRAGILITY

Some habitats, communities and species are particularly sensitive to environmental change. Such habitats tend to be rare, having been subject to past fragmentation. In some cases, fragile areas may be vulnerable to change from an effect some distance away through, for example, drainage.

#### RARITY

Rarity is one of the prime reasons for the establishment of protected areas. The threat of loss of a particular habitat or species lends value to the organism and the site it occupies. Rarity is also a matter of definition. A species or habitat can be internationally rare, but relatively common locally.

#### SIZE (Area or extent)

Size plays a major part in determining the ecological interest of an area. It is also a relative concept. For example, a 30 acre woodland or a one acre meadow could have a similar degree of nature conservation importance. An area of moorland or upland grassland would normally need to be more extensive to be of similar importance because of the differing range requirements of species supported by these habitats.

A reduction in size of an area can reduce its nature conservation value. At some point a size is reached below which the ecological value is lost because the range requirements of important species are no longer met.

#### DIVERSITY

The diversity of a site can be expressed in three ways; as diversity of species; as diversity of habitats, or as diversity of numbers where a habitat supports large numbers of one or more individual species.

Both low and high diversity can have high nature conservation value, with high species diversity being important, for example, for a meadow grassland, whereas low species diversity would be equally important for moorland or reedbeds.