



FRIENDS OF GRAPPENHALL HEYS WALLED GARDEN

www.friendsofgrappenhallgarden.org.uk

NAMED GLASSHOUSES

If you have visited the garden, you will probably have noticed that two (more correctly, four) of the glasshouses are named – glasshouse 1 (the Display House) is named “The John Campbell Glasshouse”; glasshouses 2-4 (the community glasshouse) is named “The Fountain Room in memory of Elizabeth Fountain”. Do you know why? There is no mention on the garden’s website. So we will try to tell you why here.

The John Campbell Glasshouse

John Campbell was involved with the garden long before it was transferred to Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council (G&TPC). He was part of an organisation called the Warrington Organic & Wildlife Gardening Society (WOWGS).

In 1995, the WOWGS published a 70 page booklet detailing briefly the history of Grappenhall, the Grappenhall Heys Estate, and the estate gardens. It contained lots of detail on the ecology, and surveys of various species present – this is available for download as a PDF file from our website (be aware that the files are large as they are compiled from photographs of the pages).

He was an avid campaigner for the garden to be kept and restored, and not demolished with houses built on the land as part of the development of Grappenhall Heys. After a lot of campaigning by the WOWGS and local Parish Councils, the walled garden was eventually restored by English Partnership (EP), though not exactly as it would have been at the time it was cultivated for the Parr family. The WOWGS began to cultivate in the restored kitchen garden, paying a peppercorn rent to EP, with each member having their own plot.

John was also part of the original Friends of the Walled Garden (the Friends). At this time, there were very occasional open days to show the garden to the public, and visitors were encouraged to join the Friends on these occasions.

In 2005, the garden was transferred by EP to G&TPC following changes in Government policy.

The WOWGS continued to cultivate in the vegetable garden. The Friends was relaunched by G&TPC following the transfer of the garden to them. John became not only a member, but was the Visitor Warden Volunteers Representative on the Executive committee.

In 2007, G&TPC appointed a gardener/manager, who wished to return the kitchen garden to be similar to how it would have been when growing food for the house. This meant that the WOWGS were unable to continue to operate in the garden.

John continued to support the Friends up until his death. As well as the Display Glasshouse being named after him, there is a small tree in his name planted by his family by Beech Pond.

The Fountain Room

The Fountain Room is named after Elizabeth Fountain, as the sign by the main entrance to the community glasshouse says. Elizabeth was co-opted onto G&TPC after attending many of their meetings as an interested member of the public. She was also appointed to the Estates Committee of G&TPC, which was responsible for the management of the garden.

Elizabeth joined the Friends in 2007, and in 2008 was appointed to the Executive Committee with joint responsibility for organising events along with her friend Mary. She was also one of G&TPC's representatives to the committee.

At the early events, very basic refreshments were available for the public to buy. In 2008, Elizabeth felt that the Friends could start to serve refreshments on a more regular basis – it was agreed that this would be done on one Sunday each month as well as at events. Work was carried out by G&TPC to improve the kitchen facilities, and in November 2008 the regular café opening hours started. It soon became apparent that the café was very popular, even though the choice of food and drink was limited. Elizabeth even opened the café on Boxing Day 2008/New Year's Day 2009 to serve all those people out walking off their Christmas and New Year dinners! This became a tradition in most years thereafter.

The café continued to become ever more popular, and eventually was open every Sunday, though the winter opening days were reduced due to a lower footfall. Elizabeth continued to manage it with the help of many volunteers until March 2013, when it was closed as work was due to start on the glasshouses regeneration – the work didn't actually start until late October. She also baked around 12 cakes almost every week, for which the café became very well known. The range of food and drinks was also extended, to include toasties, ice creams, crisps, etc..

Whilst still managing the café, for a few years Elizabeth remained the Joint Events Co-ordinator, expanding the programme to the extent that there would be an event almost every month between Spring and Autumn, plus Christmas. Eventually, she passed this responsibility onto other volunteers. In 2010, Elizabeth also took on responsibility for producing the quarterly Newsletter, which she continued to do until Spring 2013, and posters for the Friends' events. She also kept beehives in the garden.

Elizabeth was passionate that the derelict glasshouses should be restored, and, with others, persuaded G&TPC to apply for Lottery Funding. She was a member of the working group that put together the unsuccessful first application, then the successful second application, and played her part in determining how the regenerated glasshouses and backsheds would be used, particularly about the kitchen facilities.

Early in 2012, Elizabeth was diagnosed with bowel cancer. She continued with all her activities connected to the garden and the Parish Council, even during treatment, until it became impossible for her. She passed away in November 2013, just a week or two after work started on the glasshouses. She never got to see her dream of the restored glasshouses, but, if you look into the new kitchen, you will see purple splashbacks around the walls – when asked, during discussions in the working group, what colour she would like the kitchen, she immediately said "purple"! She had also said she didn't want to be remembered by having anything named after her, but was eventually persuaded to agree to have the community glasshouses named "The Fountain Room". There is also a tree planted by her family in her memory – the large willow by Beech Pond.