



Nantwich Walled Garden Society

Newsletter: Issue No. 5, Spring 2017

Welcome to Issue No. 5 of the *Nantwich Walled Garden Society Newsletter*. If you missed previous Issues, they're on the Society's web site here <http://nantwichwalledgarden.org.uk/newsletters/>.

Planning Application

Since publication of our last Newsletter, 4 Real Developments, owners of the Walled Garden site, submitted an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate concerning their 2008 planning application. Following a hearing and rejection of the planning application, 4 Real challenged the Planning Inspector's decision. The outcome of this is not yet known. For the planning history, see Cheshire East's Planning Portal at <http://planning.cheshireeast.gov.uk/applicationdetails.aspx?pr=P08/0917>.

Visit to Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden

Two NWGS members visited Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden on a sunny Saturday in the autumn. This traditional early Victorian garden, which is in a lovely setting adjoining an ornamental park with



herbaceous borders and ponds, was originally the kitchen garden for Grappenhall Heys estate, the Warrington home of the Parr family from the 1830s. It supplied the household with fruit, vegetables, herbs and flowers throughout the year, just as our Walled Garden would have supplied the Wilbrahams at Townsend House here in Nantwich. The extensive Victorian glasshouses at Grappenhall Heys fell into disrepair but were renovated and reopened in 2014, thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund, and are now a lively

community resource. Many keen volunteers, under the expert guidance of Manager/Gardener Graham Richardson, have restored the garden itself, which had become overgrown and derelict after the demolition of the house, and it now provides a wide range of produce, including some heritage varieties, which is sold on site to raise funds. We thoroughly enjoyed a stroll along the tranquil sheltered paths and some excellent coffee and cake in the café! For more information on this inspirational garden, visit the Friends of Grappenhall Heys web site <http://www.friendsofgrappenhallgarden.org.uk/>.

John Gerard Booklet and Discovery of a Gerard-Wilbraham Connection

A short booklet, by NWGS members Helen Cooke and Graham Dodd, is now on sale in Nantwich Museum shop, price £2.95.

For some time, the NWGS has been endeavouring to confirm that Gerard and the Wilbraham family of Townsend House had met. Although Gerard left Nantwich before the house and garden existed, recent research has identified a connection. Rebecca Laroche, in her 2009 book *Medical Authority and*

Englishwomen's Herbal Texts 1550-1650, quotes Gerard as describing a medical experiment for a cure for the ague by "a worshipfull gentlewoman called mistress Anne Wylbraham", who according to Laroche is "the only actual woman to be named within any English authoritative herbal before 1650". Anne, née



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John Gerard and his *Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes*

Pierson, was the wife of Thomas Wilbraham, b.1555, of London. Thomas was the third son of Richard Wilbraham (who built Townsend House in the 1570s), and uncle of Richard's grandson and successor at the house, also named Thomas (1589-1643), who extended it and undertook garden construction work. So finally we have a connection, though we haven't proved yet that Gerard visited the garden.

Townsend House and Walled Garden Research Project



Although the history of Townsend House and the Walled Garden has been recorded in several publications, for example James Hall's 1883 book *A history of the town and parish of Nantwich* and several archaeological reports, the information is scattered and incomplete. Therefore, three members of the NWGS are undertaking historical research into the subject which will be published in a short booklet, which, when complete, will be sold by Nantwich Museum. This has involved extensive research into the Wilbraham archives at the Chester Record Office and reviewing a number of other publications. It has been confirmed by an NWGS member, who is a garden historian, that from the date it was first inhabited Townsend House would have had a kitchen garden, but not necessarily with walls. The Wilbraham archives indicate that construction of walls was over a period of time from the mid-1620s, so this must be assumed to be their period of origin. Unfortunately, original references from the period when the house was built (1575-80), if they exist, have not been discovered yet.

When available, the booklet will be advertised on our web site, via social media and in a future Newsletter.

Societies Spectacular

The Societies Spectacular is held in Nantwich Town Square each summer to promote local interest groups. At the 2016 event, several NWGS members distributed information about our campaign to save the Walled Garden and we were pleased to find people very supportive of our aims. We also enjoyed hearing reminiscences about the garden from some of our senior residents. Please come and visit us at our stand this year on **Saturday 15 July 2017**.

Would you like to get involved? If so, please email the NWGS Secretary, follow us on Twitter or Facebook, and visit our web site. We welcome input from all members of our community to help us secure the future of this important historic site in our town.

Further Information

Join the Nantwich Walled Garden Society: email secretary.nwgs@gmail.com or complete the form here <http://nantwichwalledgarden.org.uk/join-the-nwgs/>.

Annual subscription: £10 (family membership).

Visit: Nantwich Museum, Pillory Street, Nantwich.

Visit our website: <http://nantwichwalledgarden.org.uk/>



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