

<b>SITE NAME:</b> Address	<b>Thelwall Hall</b> (dem), Parry Drive, off All Saints Drive, Thelwall, Warrington, WA4 2JH.				
Unitary Authority:	Warrington Borough Council				
Parish:	Grappenhall and Thelwall				
Location:	Approximately 2 miles SE of Warrington centre				
Grid Ref:	651873				
<b>Owner:</b>	Part now Elizabeth Park, managed by Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council				
<b>Recorder:</b>	EJW	<b>Date of Site Visit</b>	02.04.2019 06.10.2020	<b>Date of Report:</b>	07.01.2021

## Summary

**Thelwall Hall** was the seat of the Lords of the Manor of Thelwall. By **1753** plans were being made to demolish the original mediaeval hall and replace it with a Georgian hall. This was demolished around **1955**.

There are no details relating to the gardens and their design so information comes almost entirely from maps. It would appear that the gardens of the mediaeval hall survived and were extended when the new hall was built.

Houses and a park now occupy the site of the former **Thelwall Hall**.

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## Principal remaining features

Some of the **park**, mainly to the north and north-east of the hall

### **Church**

Small sections of **boundary wall** on All Saints Drive

**Boundary wall** on Thelwall New Road

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## History

According to **George Ormerod**<sup>1</sup> there was no mention of Thelwall in the Domesday Book so the area was probably waste land. Around 920 (923?), a town was built by **King Edward the Elder**. For a long time the meaning of the word 'Thelwall' was said to be a fort surrounded by staves but a modern interpretation is that 'thel' is Old English for plank and 'wael', also Old English, means a deep, still part of a river or pool – a pool or river with a plank bridge.<sup>2</sup>

In his book, Michael Taylor records that the manor of **Thelwall** came into the ownership of the **Duttons** by the middle of the **thirteenth century** at the latest. The family took the surname 'de Thelewalle' to distinguish them from the 'de Duttons', which suggests they were living in Thelwall and probably built a hall for themselves.<sup>3</sup> A document dated **1620** mentions a capital house called the **Hall of Thelwall**.<sup>4</sup> By this time the **Brookes** owned the manor and, in a deed dated 30 January 1616, a piece of land called Dovehouse Croft is described as being 'near unto the orchard belonging to the mansion wherein the said **Thomas Brooke** now inhabits and dwells'<sup>5</sup>, further proof that by now there was a hall in Thelwall. According to the National Trust, 'Until the seventeenth century, the right to keep doves was a privilege enjoyed exclusively by the aristocratic elite. For this reason, dovecotes created before this period are almost always found within or close to castles and great houses'.<sup>6</sup>

Over the years the hall was either lived in by the Lord of the Manor, or rented out until, in **1662** it was bought by **Robert Pickering**.

In the **mid-1750s** a new, Georgian hall was built for **Thomas and Elizabeth Pickering**. The earlier, mediaeval hall was likely to have been timber-framed and thatched. The only image found is the one which appears on an estate map of **1743** (map 1).<sup>7</sup> **Thomas Pickering** sorted out the financial mess the previous generations of Pickerings had generated. The last Pickering to own the hall and substantial land and property in the area was **Thomas Abree Pickering**. He died in **1837** leaving the estate in deep debt once again. **William Nicholson** bought the manor and estate of Thelwall but much had to be sold off until a much smaller estate became solvent. Following the **Nicholsons**, the estate passed to the **Jones-Parrys** who were the last people who could be regarded as Lords of the Manor. After his first wife died he re-married and moved to Bournemouth where he died in **1920**. The hall continued to be lived in by various families until the war years when it was requisitioned by the military. It was demolished in the **1950s (1958?)**.

The above is a quick summary of ownership and development of the Thelwall estate. "No Mean City" by Michael Taylor provides a detailed account of the history of Thelwall, the Lords of the Manor and the hall.

## **THE GARDENS AT THELWALL HALL**

### **1 THE MEDIAEVAL GARDEN**

No information relating directly to the garden design around the hall has been found so it has been necessary to examine the maps available and, in more modern times, the photographs taken of the hall and gardens. In addition there are 3 surviving "pocket books" kept by **Thomas Percival** which provide an insight into what was being grown in the grounds of Thelwall Hall.

The oldest estate map available is dated **1743** when the mediaeval manor house existed (maps 1 and 2). This suggests the surrounding land was used for growing food and included an orchard and a dovecote. The map does not include information indicating a formal garden. If the various Lords of the Manor were either absent or in debt, it is possible that little attention was given to the garden layout. The money seems to have gone on maintaining the old hall.<sup>8</sup>

In **1741 John Pickering** engaged a steward – **Thomas Percival** – to help manage his affairs. **Thomas Percival** was wealthy in his own right and held several positions in the local community that required mathematical and literacy skills. When he took up the role of steward to **John Pickering**, he started keeping a notebook. Three of these survive and are held in Warrington Museum. They have been transcribed and edited by Michael Taylor and it is these pocket books which give a glimpse of what was grown in the grounds of Thelwall Hall up until the new hall was built. **John Pickering** died in **1747** and the new Lord of the Manor, **Thomas Pickering**, declined to live there, probably because the building was now in a poor state of repair (the pocket books record work having to be carried out). In **March 1750, Thomas Percival** and his family moved into the hall<sup>9</sup> for about a year<sup>10</sup> and by **1753** he was supervising the building of the new hall and demolition of the old hall.

In **1752** the hall court was levelled but no reason for this was recorded.<sup>11</sup> It may have been preparation for the building of the new hall. According to the third of the surviving pocket books, there was a walled garden at the hall. On **17 and 19 February 1752, Thomas Percival** planted the walled garden with apple trees for espaliers. It is difficult to see on the estate map of 1743 just where the walled garden was, although the enclosed rectangular area to the NE of the house and up to what is now Thelwall New Road could be a walled section. Following the building of the new hall, 2 hedged or walled gardens appear to have been constructed opposite to each other and parallel to the pathway from the front gates up to the hall (map 4).

On 19 March **1752**, Percival rented the (hall) orchard, presumably for about a year. In **1753** (2 June), Thomas Pickering rented out to Thomas Percival the orchard and grass of the courts on the north side of the hall for 3 years. In his pocket book, Percival mentions that the agreement included the Pickerings having the right to all the filberts and Spanish nuts and grapes near the kitchen door.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout his pocket books, Percival records the plants and trees he raised. These included cabbage plants, cauliflower, savoy, peas and asparagus. The fruit included apples, pears and gooseberries. Appendix 1 is a list of apples he grafted in **1751/1752**. There are only 2 references to flowers, one when Mr Pickering viewed the flowers of Mr Maddock (a gardener), considered exceedingly beautiful<sup>13</sup>, and one when Mr Maddock gave Percival a parcel of ranunculus roots for Mr Pickering<sup>14</sup>, indicating that there may have been some ornamental beds near the hall.

The third surviving pocket books finishes just as plans are starting to be made for the building of the new hall. In the absence of any information about the design of the garden of the new hall, maps have been referred to. The **1743** map of the old hall shows little in the way of formal gardens, only areas for producing food.

## **2 THE GEORGIAN HALL AND GARDEN; MID-1750s ONWARDS**

The 1845 Tithe map showing the replacement hall and a new church also indicates that formal gardens had been created together with a water feature and a new dovecote (map 3).<sup>15</sup> The gardens may well have been laid out once the new hall had been completed and the old hall demolished. The First Edition Ordnance Survey map of **1873-6** (map 4) includes considerable detail of the garden design and the surrounding fields which may have become parkland by this time. Map 5 shows the area of the estate grounds which included a lodge to the west with a driveway leading to the front of the hall, and a dairy farm just to the west of the hall gardens. Dairy House Cottage now stands amongst modern housing along All Saints Drive.

The kitchen gardens and glasshouses are still to the north (front) of the hall. A driveway comes off the road to the north and goes straight through the parkland and kitchen gardens to the turning area at the front of the hall. There is another access drive from the road to the west of the house (All Saints Drive) to the front of the hall. The south side of the hall has a small area of garden with a water feature in the form of a canal which draws the eye towards the dovecote set within a moat.

The new hall was built around the **mid-1750s** when the influence of European gardeners may still have been important. Features included long vistas, canals, parterres, groves and walled gardens. All these are suggested by the **1873-6** map. Even when the landscape movement became popular with designs by 'Capability' Brown, not all the gardens of the minor gentry and clergy changed and thus it was at Thelwall Hall.

The aerial photograph (1) from probably the **1930s** shows the gardens just as they appear on the earlier maps. According to the **1910** OS map (map 6), the canal had been filled in and a path created along the length of the south-facing garden. In the photo the dovecote is completely surrounded by trees so it is impossible to tell if the moat was still there. Map 7 shows a moat but the date of survey is not clear. The photograph clearly shows the features of the gardens to the north of the house. The north-south track to the front of the house remains, as does the turning area. The walled kitchen garden to the east (left) side of the photo may have been close to the same site as the walled garden mentioned by Percival, in which case it possibly dated to the time of the building of the mediaeval hall (see endnotes 4 and 5). However, the estate map does not seem to be to scale so it is difficult to determine the exact position of this old garden. Within the Georgian gardens are glasshouses (mainly in the east garden) but there was also a range of glasshouses (conservatory?) on the south side of the wall

facing the house (First Edition OS map and 1910 OS map). These glasshouses do not appear on the photograph. The walled garden to the east side appears to have been used for growing vegetables and there are plants along the west-facing wall, possibly fruit trees and bushes. Immediately in front of the house, around the turning area, is an area of formal gardens which, at the time of the Jones-Parrys, had been well maintained with bedding plants. If this photo were taken in the 1930s, this was a time when the hall changed hands more frequently until it was requisitioned by the army, which would suggest that it was already in decline, hence the absence of bedding in the front and the rather unkempt appearance of the rear garden.

## Description

The second hall was Georgian. It was demolished in the 1950s along with all the outbuildings, walled gardens and dovecote. Map 8 shows the Tithe map overlaid with a contemporary map. Housing and gardens are on the site of the western half of the hall, gardens and western walled garden. The eastern side of the hall and gardens is now a park. The access road to the front of the hall from All Saints Drive remains, and is called Parry Drive (after Jones-Parry, the last Lord of the Manor). This drive ends in the former turning area. Much of the south-facing (rear) garden is under housing and gardens. There is also a mound which is said to be the rubble from the demolition of the Georgian hall. Without knowledge of the history of the site, it is impossible to tell that there was once a hall with accompanying gardens on the site.

## TREES

There are many recently planted trees in Elizabeth Park. According to photo 1, there were few trees planted in the area of the walled gardens and only 2 of any decent size. It is almost certain that one of these (the one to the east of the original 2 trees) remains in Elizabeth Park. Around the boundary of the hall and along paths across the parkland, more remaining trees may be seen.

Photos 4 – 7 show views of Elizabeth Park and the text alongside tries to explain what was once here.

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## Appended information

### CRAB STOCKS GRAFTED BY THOMAS PERCIVAL IN MARCH 1751, IN THE COURT<sup>16</sup>

(Italics indicate modern names of known surviving varieties.)

Nonpareil (40)  
Aromatic Russet (40)  
Golden Pippin (20)  
Golden Rennett (30)  
Wareham Russetts (*Weaverham Russet*) or Chister (*Chester?*) (20)  
Katt apples (10)  
Royal Dolphin (10)  
Scarlett (3)  
Hollands Pippins (3)  
Piles Russett (5)  
Green apples (3)

Plus a selection: “those before the chapel”, and 5 from Morris’s.

### APPLES GRAFTED IN 1752 BY THOMAS PERCIVAL, IN THE HALL COURT<sup>17</sup>

Nonpareil (6)  
Reading Pippin (4)

Lording (*Lording Apple*) (4)  
Margill (*Margil*) (4)  
Lording (2)  
Aromatic Russet (12)  
Jilliflowers (*Gilliflower*) (4)  
Welch Pearmain (4)  
Worcestershire Pippin (4)  
St Gorman pear (2)  
Golden Pippin (10)  
St James apple (4)  
Golden Rennett (*Reinette*) (15)  
Fenoliet (6)  
Margot apple (*Margil?*) (4)  
Virgin (2)

Michael Taylor has researched these apples with some interesting findings. The Wareham Russett which Thomas Percival also called Chister was being propagated by Percival in **1751**, the earliest reference (by 70 years) to an apple variety raised at Weaverham (pronounced Wareham). It does not appear in an RHS catalogue until 1820.<sup>18</sup>

Many other apples in Percival's lists – Nonpareil, Golden Pippins, Golden Rennett, Piles Russett and Hollands Pippin – appear in Furber's catalogue of **1732**, but Percival was raising them in Cheshire (Furber lived in Kensington, London).

Percival also grew gooseberries. According to Michael Taylor, the following list is one of the earliest lists of gooseberry types ever recorded in England. In July **1753**, Percival planted:

Common white, soure smooth red, Dunkerk red, rough red, rough green, green walnutt, plats white or damson, amber, white, hard white and late ripe, and red with thick skin.<sup>19</sup>

Michael Taylor also mentions Thelwall Hero, common red and rough white as being planted at the same time, but these do not appear in the list transcribed from the pocket book.<sup>20</sup>

Gooseberry Society lists began around **1780**, RHS lists in **1826** and William Forsyth's 'Treatise of the Culture and Management of Fruit Trees' in **1802**.<sup>21</sup>

**Please note** that this report contains the research and recording information available to Cheshire Gardens Trust at the time. It does not purport to be the finite sum of knowledge about the site as new information is always being discovered and sites change.

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<sup>1</sup> Ormerod, G. 1882. *History of the County Palatine and City of Cheshire, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Routledge.

<sup>2</sup> Taylor, M. 2018. *No Mean City – a local history of Thelwall in Cheshire*, revised edition. M & M Taylor, 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 35.

<sup>4</sup> Nicholson. 1846. *Chronicles of Thelwall, Co. Chester*. Quoted by M Taylor (*ibid*) 51.

<sup>5</sup> Taylor, M. 2018. *No Mean City – a local history of Thelwall in Cheshire*, revised edition. M & M Taylor, 58

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<sup>6</sup> [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/what-is-a-dovecote](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/what-is-a-dovecote)

<sup>7</sup> Maps of estates of John Pickering of Thelwall Hall, 1743. Cheshire Archives and Local Studies (CALS). DWW 1/429-431.

<sup>8</sup> Taylor, M, ed. 2014. *Thomas Percival's Pocket Books*. M Taylor, 6.

<sup>9</sup> Taylor, M. 2018. *No Mean City – a local history of Thelwall in Cheshire*, revised edition. M & M Taylor, 109

<sup>10</sup> Taylor, M, ed. 2014. *Thomas Percival's Pocket Books*. M Taylor, 69

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*, 100

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*, 123

<sup>13</sup> *ibid*, 155

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, 161

<sup>15</sup> CALS Thelwall Tithe Map 1845. EDT 390/2

<sup>16</sup> *ibid*, 79

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*, 98-99

<sup>18</sup> Gentil, T. 7 April 2010. Cheshire Apple Project (private letter)

<sup>19</sup> Taylor, M, ed. 2014. *Thomas Percival's Pocket Books*. M Taylor, 125-126

<sup>20</sup> Taylor, M. 2018. *No Mean City – a local history of Thelwall in Cheshire*, revised edition. M & M Taylor, 113-114

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 112