

**BRENTWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL
GREAT WARLEY**

**HEADLEY GARDEN
NOW THE CROFT**

Grid Ref: TQ 586 912

The Headley Garden was formerly the headquarters for vegetable and fruit growing for the Warley Place estate.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

From about 1890 Frederick Willmott of Warley Place had added to his estate by purchasing twenty-two acres of land on the opposite side of the road to Warley Place: this included the Headley Garden which became the headquarters of the vegetable and fruit growing for the estate. Also included was the Bothy (now The Croft and The Glen), two semi-detached cottages where some of the Warley Place estate workers lived. The Bothy is marked on the first edition Ordnance Survey map surveyed 1866-7 and 1872. The Croft and The Glen are a pair of semi-detached houses probably built in the 1840's and known in Miss Willmott's era as the bothy. The 1901 census suggests that The Croft housed all Miss Willmott's single gardeners while The Glen appears to have housed the female domestic staff. These houses are on the opposite side of the road to Warley Place and close to Headley Common.

Audrey Le Lievre describes the Headley Garden in her 1980 book *Miss Willmott of Warley Place* as having 'neat rows of vegetables and chrysanthemums (some outdoor and some greenhouse varieties, including a pale pink one named 'Nellie Preece'); backing onto the wall behind the carpenters' workshop were peach and grape houses, and fig trees too. In the centre was the pond'.

William Walker's 1904 estate map of Warley Place shows the layout of the Headley Garden marking the paved way leading to the garden and the positions of the peach house, the vinery, the frames, potting sheds, the orangery, the carnation house, and nearer the house, now The Croft, the oak tree lawn and the beech avenue.

In 1907 Ellen Willmott, now owner of the Warley Place estate, was beginning to have financial problems and she borrowed £15,000, secured upon Warley Place, Warley Lea, Warley Place Farm, the Headley garden, and several cottages. During Ellen Willmott's financial troubles she asked James Preece to find another post. Preece had been made Head of Gardens prior to the wedding of Rose Willmott to Robert Berkeley. Ellen Willmott allowed James Preece to rent the Headley garden and run it commercially under his own name. Letterheads still survive with the firm's name: James Preece & Sons, Fruit and Chrysanthemum Growers, Headley Garden, Brentwood, Essex.

In the 1920 sales documents The Croft (0.75 acres) was let to Colonel Turner from 8 March 1920 while his military duties kept him in the area. The Headley Garden (1 acre) in these sales particulars is described as 'an area of fertile market garden land, well sheltered and with south-west aspect.'

Included in the lot are the well-placed glasshouses, as follows: span-roofed tropical plant house, carnation house and fernery, heated from a stokehole adjoining. Also a three-quarter span vinery with 16 vines and peach house, both heated'. The Glen's gardens, adjoining those of The Croft, were described as 'large and shady'.

In the 1935 sales document the Headley Garden was described as 'an enclosure of freehold derelict garden ground containing an area of about one acre two rods and twenty perches'. The garden was partly enclosed by a high red brick wall and had two entrances from the public highway. The Garden 'contains a number of fine old trees and shrubs and various fruit trees: there are some glass-houses (in disrepair), a small ornamental pond and some massive rock work'.

The semi-detached cottages that were originally The Bothy have become private dwellings and are now named The Croft and The Glen.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

The ground slopes from 375 ft. east of the previously named Horse and Groom public house to less than 20 ft. north of Bury Farm, and the soil consists of London clay with an outcropping of Bagshot sands. Two streams flow south and eventually join the Mardyke: one rises in the west of the parish near Hole Farm; the other for much of its length forms the eastern boundary with Little Warley.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The Croft is approached from the Warley Road and is situated behind electronic gates. A gravelled driveway leads to a large turning circle with central circular bed and onto the main entrance of the house. The drive is hedged on one side and bordered by lawns on the other.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

A large six bedroomed brick built semi-detached Victorian house.

REFERENCES

Books and Articles

Le Lievre, Audrey 1980 *Miss Willmott of Warley Place* Faber and Faber London pp 79, 96, 127-8, 132, 161, 166

Maps and Images

1898 second edition 6" ordnance survey map sheet LXVII SE

1904 *Plan of Warley Place* William Walker

1935 *Plan of Warley Place Estate* in sale catalogue Messrs Kemsley, London

Archival Items

1920 Sale catalogue for Warley Place Estate (Essex Record Office B1986) Messrs Humbert and Flint, London

1935 Sale catalogue for Warley Place Estate (Essex Record Office B921) Messrs Kemsley, London
2007 Garden Plan drawn by Michael Leach
2007 September 30 Warley Place Research Work Party Minutes

Researcher: Jill Plater
Site visit 2007