

# The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens for Tunbridge Wells Borough



## The Grange, Benenden



April 2009



# The Grange

Benenden, Kent

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

With many thanks to the owners of The Grange for allowing access to the gardens and sharing their archives.

## INTRODUCTION

This site dossier and description has been prepared as part of the **Review of The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens for Tunbridge Wells Borough 2009**, and should be read in conjunction with the full project report which can be found at <http://www2.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/>. This site is one of many sites that have been researched, visited and written about across the Borough and as a consequence has been included in the revised list of Historic Parks and Gardens covered by the Borough Councils Planning Policies. The list is not conclusive and further gardens may be added over time as research continues or information comes to light

The review for Tunbridge Wells Borough was a pilot project to establish a partnership and methodology for the review of the compendium across Kent and provide an example of good practice across the County and the region. The research was largely carried out by volunteers of the Kent Gardens Trust with support and training from the project consultants Virginia Hinze and Dr Barbara Simms.

The extent of the area identified represents the remains of the designed landscape and does not necessarily cover all remaining elements or the historical extent of landscape changes and takes no account of current ownership. Further Information is available from the contacts listed below. The partnership would like to thank the volunteers and owners who have participated in this project and given so much of their time, effort and hospitality to complete this challenging and rewarding task.

Planning Services Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Town Hall Royal Tunbridge Wells Kent TN1 1RS 01892 526121 <a href="http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk">www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk</a>	Kent County Council Heritage Conservation Invicta House County Hall Maidstone ME14 1XX 01622 696918 <a href="http://www.kent.gov.uk">www.kent.gov.uk</a>
Kent Gardens Trust <a href="http://www.kentgardenstrust.org.uk">www.kentgardenstrust.org.uk</a>	High Weald AONB Unit Woodland Enterprise Centre Hastings Road Flimwell East Sussex TN5 7PR 01580 879500 <a href="http://www.highweald.org/">www.highweald.org/</a>

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

KENT

THE GRANGE

TUNBRIDGE WELLS

BENENDEN

TQ 8082 3275

## **SUMMARY OF THE HISTORIC INTEREST**

An informal shrubbery and woodland garden with a notable Japanese cherry tree collection laid out from 1919 by the horticulturalist, plant collector and hybridist Collingwood Ingram (1880-1981) around a late C19 house.

## **CHRONOLOGY OF THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT**

In early Saxon times, in the area that later became the manor of Benenden, there were many woodland pastures or dens used for the seasonal pasturage of pigs. In 1067 the manor was given by William the Conqueror to Odo, Bishop of Baieux and is referred to in the Domesday Book of 1086 (Hasted). Subsequent owners included the Earl of Albermarle and the de Benenden, Brenchley, Watts and Norris families until 1780 when it became the property of Thomas Halet Hodges of the adjoining manor of Hemsted.

In 1858 the British Conservative politician, Gathorne Hardy (from the 1890s 1st Earl of Cranbrook), bought Hemsted and began a programme of building and restoration throughout the manor. In 1859-62 he commissioned a new house at Hemsted from the architect David Brandon, and new lodges and other houses from George Devey (1820-86). It has been suggested, alternatively, that The Grange was built later, in 1893 as a dower house for Hemsted House (personal communication) although Kelly's Directory 1899 records Hardy already in residence. The 2nd edn OS map of 1881 appears, however, to confirm the earlier date of construction as it shows a house named The Grange on the same site where previously there had been open farmland (1st edn OS map). The map records extensive gardens, a stable block and a kitchen garden.

The Grange was bought in 1919 by Captain Collingwood Ingram who found it 'to all intents and purposes without a garden' (*A Garden of Memories*). During the subsequent sixty years he developed the garden as 'a succession of sylvan glades' which he planted both with specimens he brought back from plant hunting expeditions and his own hybrids. He was in regular contact with other noted C20 plantsmen including Lawrence Johnston, Vita Sackville-West, Reginald Cory and Christopher Lloyd. The Grange garden became celebrated for its collection of Japanese cherry trees and in 1948 Ingram published his book *Ornamental Cherries*. He also contributed regularly to *Country Life* and the *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society* (RHS) and won more than 70 awards for horticulture, including the RHS Veitch Memorial Medal (1948) and the Victoria Medal of Honour (1952).

In the ten years following Ingram's death in 1981, the property had several owners until in 1991 it was converted to a residential home for adults with learning difficulties. Many of Ingram's plantings remain (some in poor condition) and the gardens are maintained by the residents with the assistance of a professional gardener. The property remains in single, corporate ownership.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

### **LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING**

The Grange lies within a landscape of undulating ridges, gentle valleys, fields, and scattered copses and woodland that characterizes the Kentish Weald. The site lies about 70m above sea level, sheltered by the garden's mature woodland and shrubbery planting particularly to the north-west and to the north. It is situated immediately west of Benenden Green, approximately 5km south-east of Cranbrook, 7km west of Tenterden and 29km south-east of Royal Tunbridge Wells.

The c.4ha site is bounded to the west by New Pond Road that runs south from Benenden to Iden Green, and to the north-west by the boundary fences of the gardens of houses on The Street (B2086). On its north-east boundary are the gardens of Ash Lawn (a mid-C19 house designed by George Devey) and on its south-east side it abuts the grounds of Benenden Church of England Primary School and Church Cottages. The southern boundary is formed by the gardens of Balmoral Cottage and the adjoining fields.

### **ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES**

The entrance to The Grange site is from the west, off the east side of New Pond Lane. A rolled gravel drive (2009, in need of repair) is lined on its north side by early C20 cherry trees in rough grass and on its south side by rhododendron. There are views to the immediate north of the cherry trees to grazed pasture with mature oak trees (now in separate private ownership), this land separated from the gravel drive by a post-and-wire fence and occasionally by mature conifers. The drive winds in a south-easterly direction for c.200m with views south-east through the trees to the house and to the tower of St George's Church 150m to its south-east to arrive at a gravelled forecourt on the north-east front of the house. The drive continues in a south-easterly direction for some 70m through overhanging trees and evergreen shrubs to an entrance on its east side to a C19 stable block, coach house and cottage built in a similar Tudor-Gothic style to the house. The cottage (Grange Cottage), formerly accommodation for Captain Ingram's estate manager, is now privately owned. The stable block and coach have been converted to housing (The Stables and Middle Coach House) and are also in separate, private ownership.

A second service drive and approach enters at Benenden Green and continues for 50m to the stable block. Both these approaches to The Grange, from the west and east, are shown on maps from 1881.

On the south side of the forecourt is an informal lawn laid out as glades with rhododendrons and mature trees. To its east side and partly obscured by trees

and shrubs is a pond, now within the grounds of the adjoining property, Ash Lawn, but formerly part of Ingram's estate.

#### PRINCIPAL BUILDING

The Grange is a two-storey red-brick building with attic and basement. Built in a Tudor-Gothic style by the architect David Brandon (1813-97), later in 1872 the architect of the new mansion at Bayham, it has a hipped, tiled, roof with tall chimney stacks and tile hanging on its first floor. The attic windows are gabled. There is a brick entrance porch on its west end and a C19, single-storey brick extension under a tiled roof with a domed light on its east end (2nd edn OS map). A two-storey bay with a gabled window projects from the centre of the south-west, garden façade. Adjoining its west side is a wooden loggia supporting a balcony enclosed by turned, wooden balustrades. To the loggia's west end is a two-storey projecting bay comprising four sides of an octagon. A 1905 photograph shows the balcony extending to the projecting bay and this was probably altered after Ingram's death in 1981 (Modern OS map).

#### GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The ornamental gardens are on the west, east and south fronts of the house and are laid out as informal, lawned glades enclosed within mature trees (including a C19 eucalyptus and conifers) and shrubs, many surviving from Ingram's plantings. A door from the south front opens onto a raised, paved, stone terrace between the two projecting bays. At its foot a broad gravel path runs along the south front of the house and then in a westerly direction for some 90m between glades and shrubberies of surviving camellias, magnolias and cherry trees, all surviving from plantings by Ingram in the 1920s. The path eventually joins the gravelled drive leading to the main entrance on New Pond Lane. Within the shrubberies, about 40m north-west of the house, is a second pond enclosed by mature oaks. Some 80m south-east of the house, due south of the stable block and approached by a gravel path from the house, is a wire-enclosed tennis court (in a dilapidated state).

The layout of the paths at The Grange survives from the C19 (2nd edn OS map) and provided the framework for Collingwood Ingram to add his 'profusion of plants' around them (Wright). Each glade he created was 'designed to terminate at its furthest end in a sharp bend ... to close every vista in order to intrigue the eye and to make a stranger wonder what new treasures awaited him round the hidden corner' (*A Garden on Memories*). The structure of the glades survives, along with many of his plantings, but others have now either been lost or are in poor condition.

#### KITCHEN GARDEN

The site of The Grange's brick-walled kitchen garden (c.50m x 50m) lies some 50m south of the house and in the 1980s was sold to the owners of adjoining Balmoral Cottage. It appears to have been built on land attached to an adjoining farm called Stonefield at least by 1881 (1st edn OS map), the farmhouse providing accommodation for a gardener during Ingram's ownership. OS maps give no indication of the garden layout or the construction of glasshouses on the site and the site has been incorporated into the garden of Balmoral Cottage.



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- Lawrence Smith, 'Cherry Ingram', *British Library Magazine* (1980).
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### Maps

- |         |                                     |
|---------|-------------------------------------|
| OS maps | 1st edn 6" OS map 1862              |
|         | 1st edn 6" OS map 1881              |
|         | 2nd edn 6" OS map 1897              |
|         | 3rd edn 6" OS map 1907              |
|         | 4th edn 6" OS map 1929              |
|         | OS map 1971                         |
| OS maps | 1st edn 25" OS map 1870 Sheet 78/5  |
|         | 2nd edn 25" OS map 1898 Sheet 78/5  |
|         | 3rd edn 25" OS map 1908 Sheet 78/5  |
|         | Revd edn 25" OS map 1938 Sheet 78/5 |

Michael Zander and Michael Lear, *Notable Trees at The Grange* (30 October 1980).

Kent Compendium Map 1996.

Modern Mastermap 1:10,000 2007.

### Illustrations

Postcard of house front 1905. Cranbrook Museum.

B/w photo of the garden in *A Garden of Memories* 1970.

B/w photos of Ingram and his plants in *Telegraph Sunday Magazine* (no date).

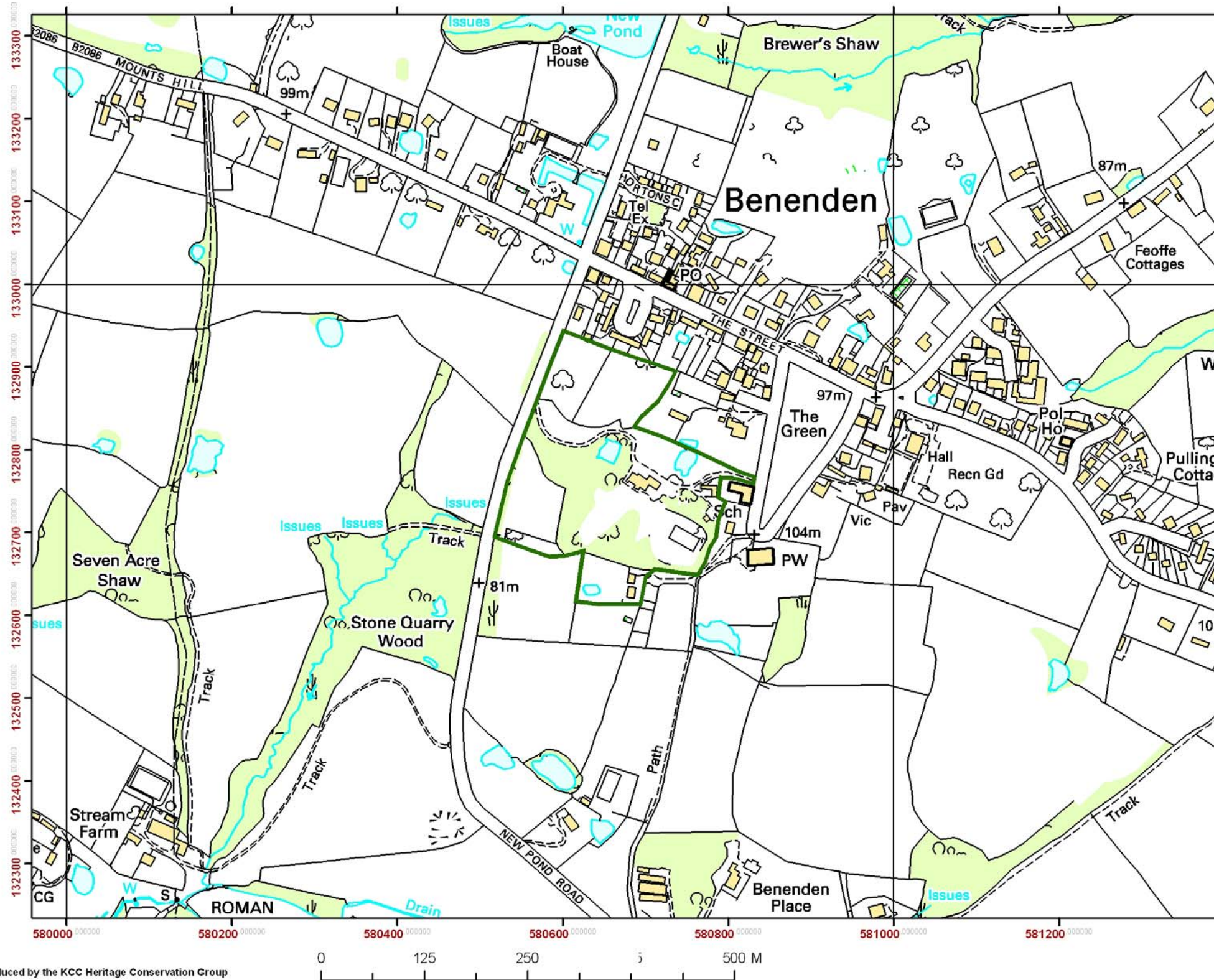
Colour photographs of Ingram at The Grange. Undated (private collection).  
Aerial photograph 2003

**Archival items**

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, *Conservation Areas Appraisal. Benenden and Iden Green*. April 2005.

Research by Stella Smith  
Description written by Barbara Simms  
Edited by Virginia Hinze  
April 2009

Fig. 1 Boundary map



The Grange, Benenden

Address:  
The Grange  
Benenden  
Kent

Map centred on NGR:  
580675 132780

Report completed April 2009

**Legend**  
 Boundary

N

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

ENGLISH HERITAGE

Kent County Council

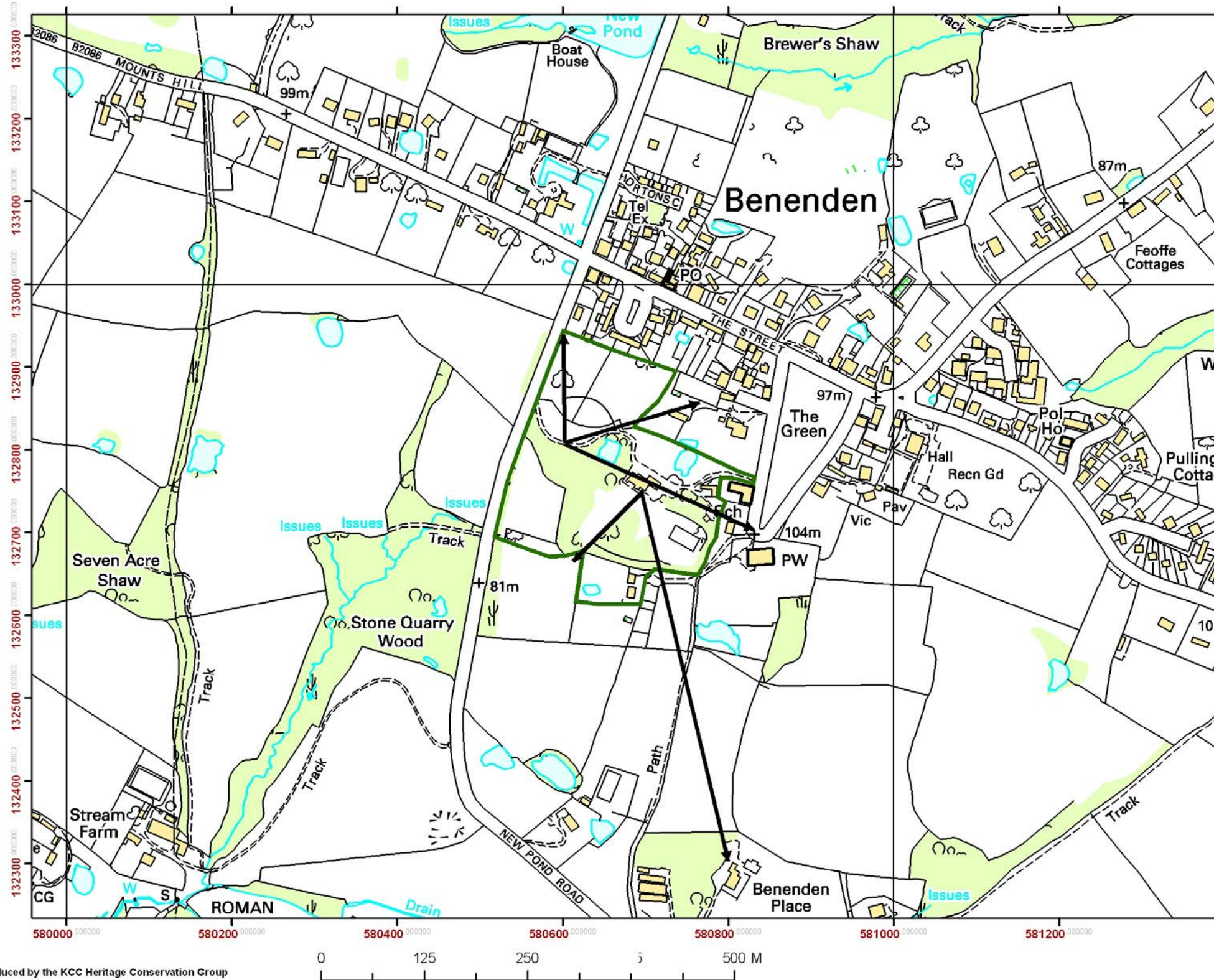
HIGH WEALD JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Kent Gardens Trust

Produced by the KCC Heritage Conservation Group

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Fig. 2 Key views map



**The Grange, Benenden**

Address:  
The Grange  
Benenden  
Kent

Map centred on NGR:  
580675 132780

Report completed April 2009

**Legend**  
 Boundary

N



Tunbridge  
Wells  
Borough  
Council



ENGLISH HERITAGE



Kent  
County  
Council



HIGH  
WEALD  
JOINT  
ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE



Kent Gardens  
Trust

Produced by the KCC Heritage Conservation Group

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# Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2009 review of Tunbridge Wells Borough

## Fig. 3 Aerial photograph



The Grange, Benenden

Address:  
The Grange  
Benenden  
Kent

Map centred on NGR:  
580675 132780

Report completed April 2009

**Legend**

 Boundary

N

 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

 ENGLISH HERITAGE

 Kent County Council

 HIGH WEALD JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE



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