

The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens for Sevenoaks District



Edenbridge House, Sevenoaks



March 2012

Edenbridge House

Sevenoaks, Kent

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INTRODUCTION

This site dossier and description has been prepared as part of the **Review of The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens for Sevenoaks District 2011 - 2013**. This site is one of many sites that have been researched, visited and written about across the District and as a consequence has been included in the revised list of Historic Parks and Gardens covered by the District Council's Planning Policies. The list is not conclusive and further gardens may be added over time as research continues or information comes to light

The research was carried out by volunteers of the Kent Gardens Trust with support and training from the project consultant Virginia Hinze. The project was supported by English Heritage and Kent County Council.

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.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Age, rarity and survival: The site's typical 1930s compartmental form survives as laid out with limited subsequent alterations.

Part of a C19 orchard survives incorporated into the garden layout as do buildings from the site's former use on a working farm including a C19 Kent oast house and a wooden granary mounted on staddle stones.

Historic association: Well known figures from public life are known to have visited the property including the late Queen Mother, Ginger Rogers and Ivor Novello who was inspired to write the song 'We'll Gather Lilacs.'

Designed Landscapes: The formal rose garden was reconstructed and replanted in the late C20 by the nurseryman Roger Platts, winner of many Chelsea Gold medals and who also worked at Tanners (qv)

SITE DESCRIPTION

KENT
SEVENOAKS
EDENBRIDGE PARISH

EDENBRIDGE HOUSE

TQ 4367 4840

SUMMARY OF HISTORIC INTEREST

A formal, compartmentalised garden laid out in the mid 1930s mainly to the west and south of the house the origins of which date back to at least C16.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The site on which the present Edenbridge house stands was known for nearly a thousand years as Lyndhurst (various spellings). It was first mentioned in the Saxon Charter in AD973 and is one of the oldest place names in Edenbridge. John Irwin (*Place Names of Edenbridge*) suggests that this derives from the Old English meaning the edge of the (Eden Valley) forest or possibly 'the wood near the rush beds' due to the name 'Rushetts' used nearby. The site was a tenanted farm into the C20 with owners in the early C19 including Robert Holmden and Lord of the Manor, James Shearman (History of Edenbridge). The occupants from the middle of the C19 included the Coleman, Saunders and Tidy families until 1934 when the house with about 5 hectares (including two fields) was sold off separately from the rest of the farmland. Around this time the property name was changed to Tibbs Farm, reputedly after Mrs. Tidy's cat. Wealthy city merchant Harold Mosenthal, a South African, and his wife, the fashion designer Eileen Mitchell (known as Idare) bought the property. The Mosenthals divided the garden into its current layout of different areas and reduced the size of the old Victorian orchard (pers.com. later owners; previous extent is shown on 3rd edition OS map of 1907-23). Following Harold Mosenthal's death, Sir Val Duncan, chairman of Rio Tinto, bought the property with his wife Lorna c1953 and renamed it Edenbridge House. They added the water garden and put in the swimming pool. (pers.com) Both the Mosenthals and the Duncans enjoyed having houseguests and over the years many famous names signed the visitors' book including the Queen Mother and Ginger Rogers as well as Ivor Novello who was inspired to write 'We'll Gather Lilacs' during his stay.

A Dutch national, Mr. Schaafsma, and his wife bought the property (through a company) from the Duncan estate in 1977. A wealthy international businessman, he retained the existing head gardener, Frank Sands (who had worked in the garden since a boy of 14) with three under-gardeners. It was during this era that the garden was first opened to the public under the National Gardens Scheme (pers.com)

In 1986, David Lloyd, a London solicitor and his wife Mair came to live there with their family. They refurbished the attics as living accommodation but their main interest was the garden. Maintaining much of the Mosenthals original

layout, Mrs. Lloyd restored and enhanced the garden, enlarging the beds and improving the borders and planting. A 21m (70ft) long greenhouse was also restored. Mair did most of the gardening herself, originally helped by a full time gardener and latterly by four part-timers. The Lloyds opened the garden up to eight times a year under the National Garden Scheme, as well as to various local charities for fund raising garden parties and concerts. The house was sold again in 2010 and remains in private ownership.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

Edenbridge House is situated c2km north of the centre of Edenbridge on the western side of the B2026, now known as Main Road (originally Marlpit Hill), just south of its junction with Hole Lane. Crockham Hill lies 3k to the north. The c5h site lies on land that slopes gently southwards down to the River Eden and is surrounded by gently undulating Wealden pastureland with fields bounded by hedges and trees. The site is bordered to the east by Main Road, to the north by a bridle path and open fields, to the west by the private road leading to the farm building complex of the now re-named Gaywood Farm, and to the south by fields.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The principal entrance to Edenbridge House lies on its north-east corner on the west side of Main Road. Twin 2m high brick and stone pillars topped by red tiled pyramids support two close-boarded gates, matching the fence, which open onto a gravelled drive. The drive is bordered by hedges on either side and follows the site's northern boundary. After 50m a left fork sweeps south past a small lawned area with flower beds to the east onto a circular gravelled forecourt outside the front door on the northern façade of the house. A shrub border lies along the western side of the forecourt. The drive continues west for another 50m past a yard on its north side, and then (on its south side) past a granary, a wooden building raised on staddle stones (which first appears on the 3rd Ed OS on the north side of the orchard), cold frames and glasshouses, with a potting shed and store to the north before ending on the western boundary of the property alongside the 21m glasshouse on its north side and the kitchen garden on its south side.

Some 25m south of the main entrance on Main Road is a further, tradesman's entrance. A slightly recessed open gateway in a boarded 2m fence gives access across a concreted yard to the back door and ancillary accommodation of the main house 25 metres to the west. On the north side of the entrance stands a single storey lodge converted from a double garage erected in the 1930's (pers.com later owners).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Edenbridge House (listed grade II) is a C16 or earlier timber framed building with modern extensions facing Main Road. The original house is visible from the garden and comprises two storeys and attic with four irregular windows. The high, pitched, tile roof is hipped to the north and extended on the south to join the projecting new wing. There is a tall compound chimney stack just below the ridge. There are two pent dormers and the first floor is tile hung. There is a C19 red-brick ground floor with diaper of blue headers and modern leaded casements and a pent hood to the studded plank door. Inside, the inglenook has a flattened Tudor arch and there is much exposed timber. The two wings on the west side formed part of the 1930's extensions built by the Mosenthals (OS 25" 4th Ed).

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The ornamental gardens lie predominantly to the south and west of the house and comprise different areas separated by yew hedges, low retaining walls, or informal shelter belts. They are laid out variously with a paved parterre, formal lawns, herbaceous borders, a water garden, a swimming pool, and a dry gravel garden.

French windows on the south façade open onto a broad flagstone terrace which surrounds the house on its south and west sides. On part of the east, road-facing façade, this terrace enlarges into a paved parterre garden separated from the lawn to the south by a raised brick wall with planting along its top. This garden enclosure is hidden from the back yard to its north by an L-shaped high brick wall which runs from the house to a round brick summerhouse in its north-east corner and then to the south along the eastern edge of the parterre. The lawned area beyond the parterre stretches southwards, screened from the road to the east and the field to the south by a shelter belt of mixed shrubs and trees. To the west of this lawn and separated from it by a line of trees and shrubs running north south, is a swimming pool surrounded by lawn lying directly south of the house.

The terrace on the western side of the house is bounded by a brick retaining wall incorporating lattice-work with a gap midway (between the two wings of the house) from which a flight of four brick-edged stone steps leads down to a formal lawn. Backed by clipped yew hedges this lawn comprises two terraces with a circular stone pool in the centre of the first terrace. The second lawn tapers elliptically at its western end to feature a large, stone, straight-sided vase. To the north, mainly behind the first lawn and protected by yew hedges, is the formal rose garden which was reconstructed and replanted for the Lloyds in the late C20 by Roger Platts, winner of many Chelsea Gold medals.

Beyond, again to the north, is the newest part of the garden, a dry gravel area planted with bananas and palms. A gap in the hedge on the south side near the western end of the second lawn leads into an orchard, the surviving part of a larger orchard shown on the tithe map of 1840.

An oast-house built in the C19 is situated in the north-east corner of the orchard. It lies close to the corner of the house terrace between the top lawn and the shelterbelt of trees and shrubs running north south on the eastern side of the orchard. From an upper pond beside the oast-house on its western side a stream edged with a York stone path flows gently south down the hill and under two rustic bridges to a lower pond near the shelterbelt of trees on the south boundary. The improvement of this water garden by Sir Val, possibly based on an existing minor water feature from the Mosenthal era (OS 4th Ed), dates to the 1950's (pers.com later owners). The Lloyds later added a pump to recycle the water in dry periods. To the east and west of the lower pond an alpine area has been planted. There are further alpine areas around the upper pond as well as to the east of the Oast house where a path leads southwards down to the croquet/tennis lawn to the west of the swimming pool.

KITCHEN GARDEN

In the north-west corner of the site beyond the formal lawn enclosure, and bounded by hedges to the east and west, lies the kitchen garden about 30m x 50m in area and sloping gently to the south. To the north, and built onto a 3m high brick wall which forms part of the northern boundary at that point, is the 21m long glasshouse with heating chimney. This former peach house, more recently used to grow tender or more exotic plants, was erected after 1952 (OS 4th Ed 1929-1952).

REFERENCES

Books and articles

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H.L. Somers-Cocks and V.F. Boyson, *History of Edenbridge* 1912

The English Garden May 2001 pp 54-60

Wealden Times March 2009 pp 58-70

Financial Times 23rd March 2005 "Open house entertains best of causes"

Maps

Tithe Map 1840

OS 1st Ed 25" (1862-75)

OS 2nd Ed 25" (1897-1900)

OS 3rd Ed 25" (1907-1923)

OS 4th Ed 25" (1929-1952)

Illustrations

Portrait of Mrs. Harold Mosenthal c1935 [Getty Images]

Archival items

Census data 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901

Electoral Rolls 1914-1987

Kelly's Directory 1855-1938

Hookers Directory 1935

Sales particulars Savills 2010

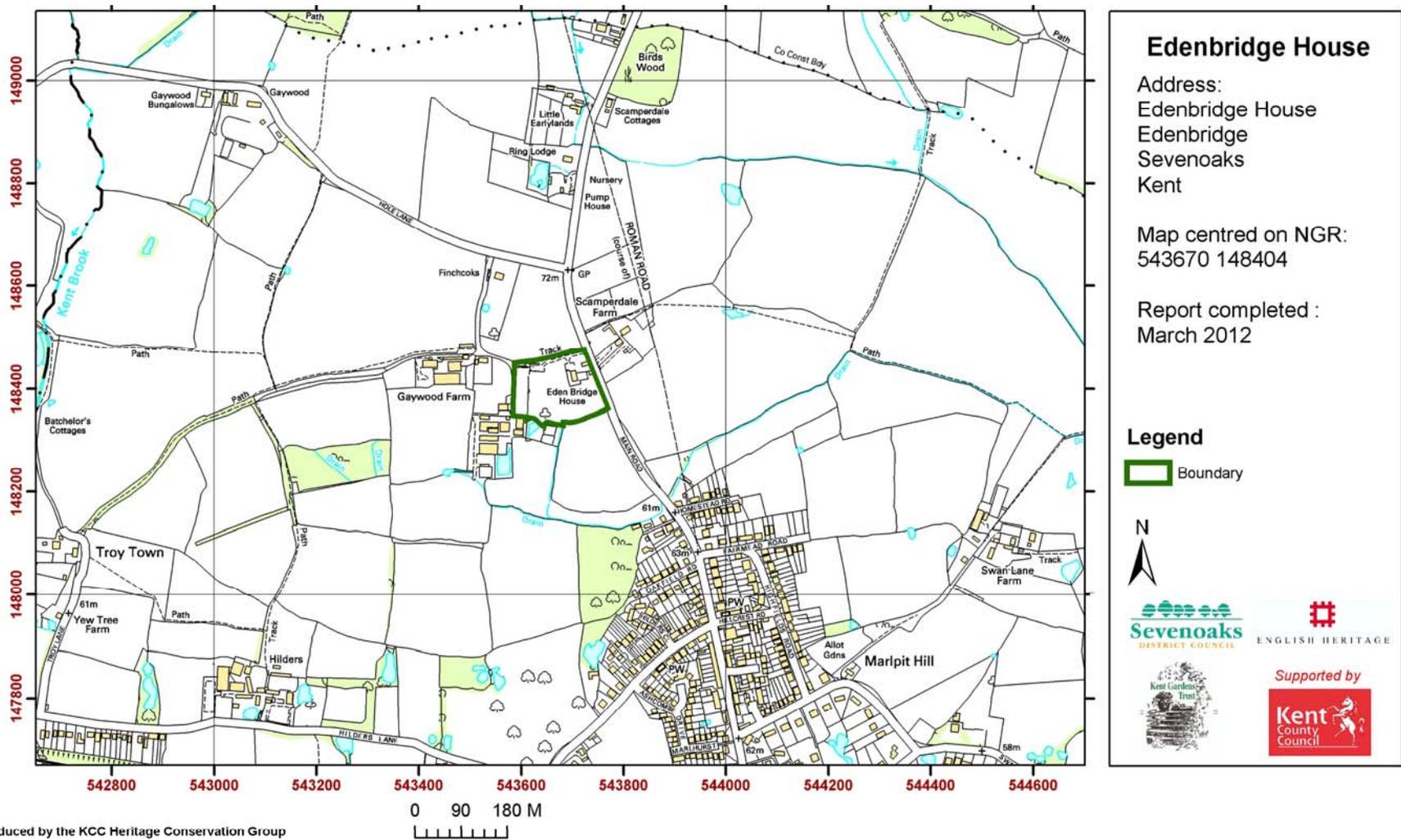
Listed Buildings Schedule (post 2002) Department of the Environment,
Sevenoaks District Council

Research by Peta Hodges

Virginia Hinze (editor)

Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens 2011 - 2013 review of Sevenoaks District

Fig. 1 Boundary map



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Fig. 2 Aerial photograph (2007)

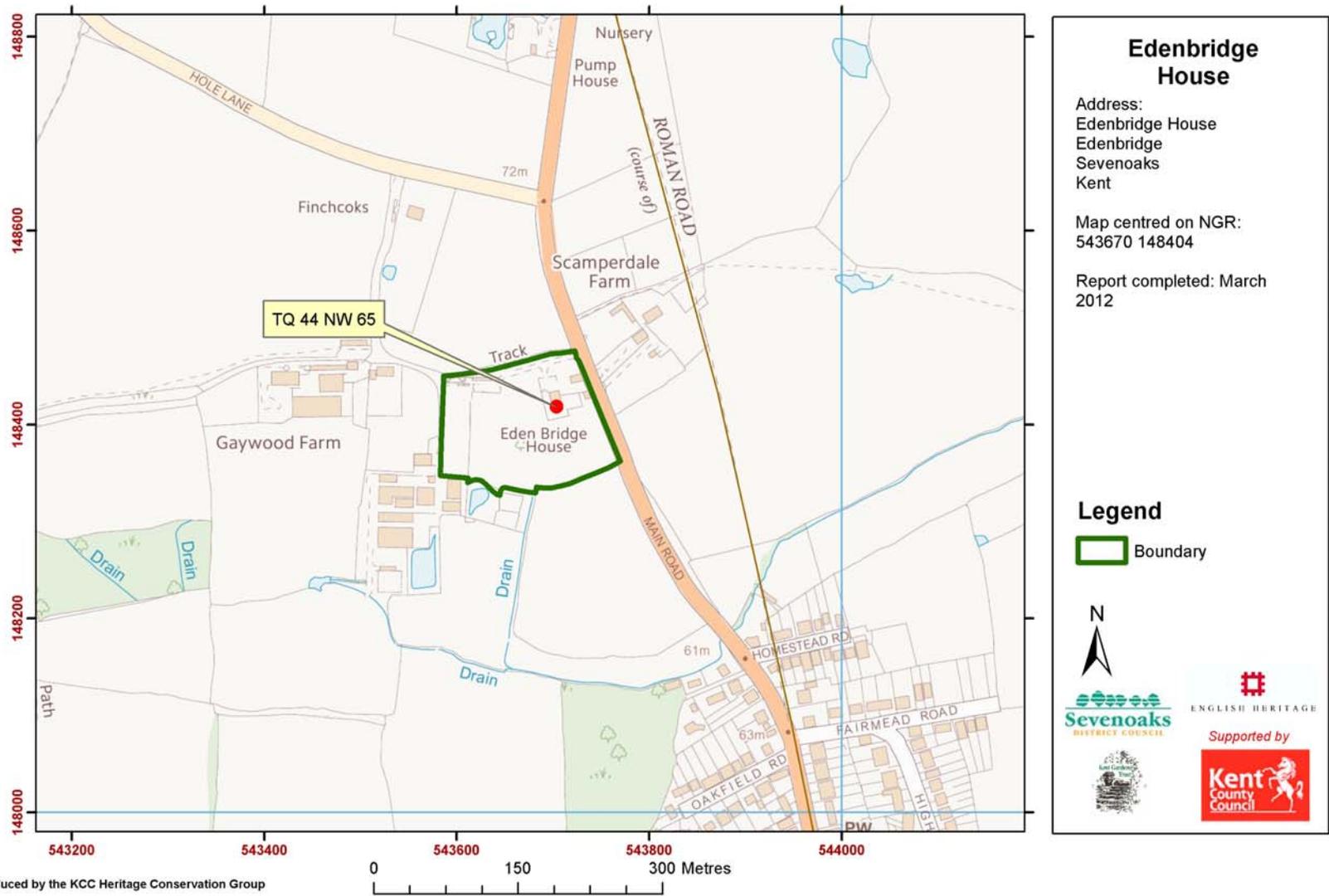


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Fig. 3 Map of listed buildings



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Fig. 4 Listed buildings at Edenbridge House (from the Kent Historic Environment Record)

Kent Historic Environment Record Reference: TQ 44 NW 65

The following text is from the original listed building designation:

EDENBRIDGE MARLPIT HILL 1. 5280 Main Road
(West Side) Edenbridge House TQ 44 SW 48/468 II 2.
C16 or earlier timber framed building with modern extensions facing road.
Original house visible from garden: 2 storeys and attic, 4 windows, irregular.
High pitched tiled roof hipped at left, extended at right to join projecting new
wing. Tall compound stack just below ridge. 2 pent dormers. Tile hung 1st
floor. C19 red brick ground floor with diaper of blue headers. Modern leaded
casements and pent hood to studded plank door. Inside, inglenook has
flattened Tudor arch. Much exposed timber.
Listing NGR: TQ4370548423