

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



## Glassenbury Park, Cranbrook



April 2009



# Glassenbury Park

Cranbrook, Kent

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

With many thanks to owners of Glassenbury Park for allowing access to the gardens and to Steve Trumble, estate manager, for sharing his knowledge.

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

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

KENT

GLASSENBURY PARK

TUNBRIDGE WELLS

CRANBROOK

TQ 7470 3665

## **SUMMARY OF THE HISTORIC INTEREST**

Early C18 formal gardens set within woodlands and a park with lakes laid out around a C15 moated mansion (with later additions).

## **CHRONOLOGY OF THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT**

Glassenbury (sometimes Glastenbury) is an ancient manor that takes its name from the Saxon words *glastney* (meaning watery) and *burh* (a fortified place) (Greenwood). The manor was the property of the Tilley family until 1377 when, following the marriage of Joanne Tilley to a Stephen Rockhurst, the land was transferred to her husband (Hasted). In 1399, they built an imposing stone house, 'a fair sumptuous mansion' (Hasted), on Winchet Hill, to the south-east of the present mansion. The Rockhursts were descendants of an ancient Scottish family and when Walter Rockhurst inherited in 1470, he was keen to improve his family's standing. He changed his name to Roberts and built a new mansion 'which he moated around, and inclosed a large park' (Hasted). The new moated mansion was in a valley below Winchett Hill on the site of the present Glassenbury. The 1629 *Great Pedigree* of the Roberts family described it as situated 'before Moorishe [marshy] ground, very woodye and nigh their former habitacion upon the hill'. The soil from the moat was evidently used to construct a platform for the house and the valley was dammed to ensure a good depth of water (Wyndham).

Thomas Roberts was created a baronet in 1620. In 1714, his grandson, also Thomas, commissioned a survey of his Kent holdings. A drawing of the 11.5ha Glassenbury estate showed the mansion with its moat, a forecourt, a 'Parlour' garden, a 'Long Walk to the Grove', a bowling green, a stable yard, a kitchen garden and ponds, a meadow and a grove (Olsen). The south-west corner of the mansion was destroyed by fire in 1726 and when, in 1729, Sir Thomas's brother, Walter, inherited he began a programme of rebuilding (1748 plan). Sir Walter's estate passed to his 14 year old daughter Jane on his death in 1745 and in 1778 she bequeathed it to the Roberts family of Britfieldstown, Co Cork, Ireland, erroneously considered to be part of the same family.

Until 1830, the Irish Roberts were absentee owners and allowed the estate to fall into disrepair, its management being in the hands of the agent, Thomas Redford and from 1812, his son, also Thomas. It was offered for lease in 1819 with 'a garden including the kitchen one of more than 2 acres, a bowling green etc, and 58 acres of the meadow and pasture land ... there are 1500 acres of woodland ... well stocked with game' (Olsen). A number of short-term tenancies took place between 1826 and 1829 during which time minor repairs were made

to the mansion and the grounds. In 1830, Colonel Thomas Roberts, a 'lover of field sports' (Olsen), began to repair the estate. Account books record a new coach road and a bridge over it, the construction of stables and the planting of over 500 young trees. The Tithe Map shows the new drives, a stable yard and the kitchen garden and lists pleasure grounds, plantations, walks and ponds. In the 1860s the house was remodelled in a Victorian Gothic style and the 1st edn OS map shows the enlarged mansion and details of the layout of the walks and kitchen garden.

In 1882, Glassenbury became the property of the Colonel's nephew Major John Roberts Atkin, who assumed the name John Roberts Atkin-Roberts. He continued the estate repairs begun by his uncle. On his death in 1913, his son, Malcolm, inherited, but due to his ill-health, his sister and her husband, the Baron and Baroness of Nettelblatt, managed the estate. After World War I, to offset financial difficulties, Glassenbury was used as a school, but by the 1930s it was also necessary to sell extensive tracts of land. When Malcolm died in 1940 the Nettleblatts assumed ownership, selling further land and woods but also commissioning a local architect, Denis Brown, 'to remove the Victorian extravagances' on the mansion (Olsen). After the Baron's death in 1961 the property was offered as a venue for films and television, weddings and business conferences; rooms were adapted as overnight accommodation and further land and woodland were sold.

The residual property with its moat, gardens and park, totalling approximately 7ha, was eventually offered for sale in 1975. Some 607ha, ten farms and various cottages remained in the Roberts family who moved into the converted coach house. The new owner was a speculative investor, a Mr Meyer, who in 1982 sold Glassenbury on to a Mr and Mrs de Jong. They purchased an additional 24ha of land from Jane Roberts. There were two further changes of ownership before 1998 when Glassenbury became the home of Lord Philip and Lady Pauline Harris who restored the house and grounds. The present owners bought the estate in 2001 and it remains in single, private ownership.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

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

Glassenbury stands enclosed in a small shallow-sided valley which forms a typical feature of the High Weald's undulating topography with its patchwork of small fields and woodlands.

It is situated some 800m to the south of Iden Green village and the A262, on the west side of Glassenbury Lane (A2085) which runs south-east from the A262 to Hartley. Goudhurst lies approximately 3km to its north-west and Cranbrook 2.5km to its south-east with Royal Tunbridge Wells some 12.5km further north-west.

The c.41ha site is bordered to the east by Glassenbury Lane and to the west, east, north and south boundaries by arable fields and pasture.

### **ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES**

Glassenbury Park is entered from the west side of the A2085 through a 1m high wooden gate with pedestrian gates at either end. Immediately on its north side is Glassenbury Lodge (listed grade II), a C19, two-storey red brick house with tile hanging to the first floor, a plain tiled roof and tall chimney stacks. It is now the estate manager's cottage. A gravel drive descends for approximately 300m in a westerly direction lined by young lime trees, behind which are mature trees planted in the rough pasture of the parkland.

Some 100m west of the lodge a fork off the drive runs 80m from the main drive in a northerly direction to serve the C19 stable block. On arrival at the mansion's south front, the drive curves sharply northwards to cross the water of the moat by a single-span, arched, bridge whose sides are formed by 1m high stone balustrades with stone piers at each end topped by stone ball finials (added in the 1860s). The bridge brings the drive onto the moated island and to a circular, gravelled forecourt on the south entrance front of the mansion.

The forecourt is set within mown lawns which extend along the west, north-west and east fronts. These are contained by low brick walls which form the edge of the moat, which is itself retained by walls of dressed stone, some of which is ivy covered. At the foot of some parts of the brick walls and on the lawn side there are flower and shrub borders. On the mansion's east front, a second bridge with solid brick sides crosses the moat to serve a north-easterly service wing. Two small service courtyards lie to the north and east of the mansion.

From the south side of the moat the main drive continues in a north-westerly direction for some 150m through rough pasture and along a line of young field maples towards the kitchen garden (in separate ownership since 1975) stopping short at a wire fence marking the present property boundary. The present approach drives were laid out in the 1830s by Colonel Thomas Roberts and are shown on the 1840 Tithe Map. A drive from the west is recorded on maps since 1748, an estate map of this date showing it as tree lined. A gated forecourt on the south side of the moat is also shown. In 1778, Hasted's map placed the entrance forecourt to the mansion's south-west but reached by a drive through the park from the east. The western approach to the mansion appears to originate in Little Glassenbury, 300m to the south-west (1st edn OS map).

#### PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

Glassenbury (listed grade II\*) is a medieval moated mansion originally constructed c.1474 (Olsen). Elements of this original structure survive in the north-east corner of the present mansion which mainly dates from the C18, although further changes were made in the 1860s and again in 1951. It is mostly of two-storeys with attics under a tiled roof with tall brick chimney stacks and small dormer windows at attic level. The main, south entrance front is nine bays wide and constructed in red brick with sandstone quoins, window sills and eaves parapet. A protruding central five-bay projection supports a wide, imposing pediment. The north side of the mansion extends in the form of large, irregular wings with buttresses and stone-dressed mullion windows; extensions on the north and west sides were part of the 1860s remodelling.



Described by Pevsner as 'an uneloquent muddle' (Newman), Glassenbury's appearance is now largely as remodelled in 1951 when the earlier Georgian façade was reinstated. The mansion was previously remodelled in the 1860s in a Victorian Gothic style, possibly to the designs of the architect Anthony Salvin (1799-1881), who had worked on nearby moated Scotney Castle for Edward Hussey (Olsen; photographs). However, it is likely that William Colvill, a local builder, carried out the building work (Olsen; account books 1861-64). This included removing the classical pediment from the main façade to accommodate gabled, dormer windows crowned with mini-pediments. On the east end of the new façade, a tower with protruding bay windows at ground and first floor levels and a high pitched roof with eight inclined faces meeting at a single point high above the roofline of the existing building was added (Olsen). All this was removed in 1951.

### GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The outer south and west banks of the moat are grassed with some shrub planting. Formal gardens lie to the west of the moated island and are laid out around an orthogonal path system surviving from that first shown on the 1748 plan and then occupied by a bowling green, grass plats, ornamental gardens and garden buildings. Some 50m south-west of the mansion an C18 holm oak survives (1748 map) and the formal gardens are now planted with C20 clipped yew hedges, shrubs and flower beds. Forty metres north-east of the formal gardens and enclosed by a 2m high beech hedge is a lawn on which is sited a wire-enclosed tennis court.

From a point near the north-west corner of the moated island a lime avenue (now, 2009 in poor condition) runs for 120m in a north-westerly direction towards a chain of lakes. It was planted in the early C18 (1748 plan) and, in 1829, it is recorded that a Mr Green 'walked up and down the lime avenue' when Jaffa, one of Napoleon's horse who had been retired at Glassenbury, had to be shot (Roberts papers). The lime avenue was also much visited in the late C19 and early C20 centuries (*Archaeologia Cantiana* 1874; postcards).

On the north side of the moat, where the ground drops steeply away, a sluice allows water from the moat to cascade over rockwork into the topmost of the chain of five lakes. The lakes, probably of medieval origin (Olsen), extend for about 700m northwards into Gill Wood, the largest lake (named Fish Pond on OS maps until the 1930s) of c.4.5ha lying 240m north of the mansion. A chalybeate spring is sited a few metres to its west. About 80m south-west of the mansion is a pond filled by a spring-fed stream. In the late C20, the course of the stream was made into an ornamental feature by the creation of cascades and sub-tropical planting, all now, overgrown and in poor condition.

Eighty metres to the north-east of the mansion is a C19 two-storey coach house with a white wooden clock tower and a single-storey stable block. Both are built in red brick with decorative tile hanging above and a tiled roof. The coach house (converted for staff accommodation in the C21) stands on the south side of a gravelled, rectangular, courtyard (c.40m x 20m), with the stable block on its west side and a C21 garden equipment store on its north side. The east-facing

section of the stable block is now a store and the west-facing section a pool house with an adjacent outdoor pool screened by beech hedges to its west.

#### PARKLAND

Parkland on the south, north-east and east of the mansion is managed as rough grass with plantings of mature and young trees. In 1483, Glassenbury and its lands were confiscated by Richard III, but when the Roberts family were reinstated in 1488, Walter Roberts was given permission to 'empark and enclose with pales and fences 600 acres of land at Glassenbury and 1000 acres of wood' (Greenwood). The park is listed by Lambarde in his *Perambulation of Kent* (1570).

#### KITCHEN GARDEN

A brick-walled kitchen garden (c.80m x 80m) comprising two compartments lies 200m to the west of the mansion. It is now incorporated into the grounds of a house and garden in separate, private ownership and is laid to lawn. A kitchen garden is first mentioned in Thomas Roberts's 1714 survey of the Glassenbury estate, but its location is not identified until the 1840 Tithe Map. In 1862 (1st edn OS map) the western section is shown divided into quarters with cross paths and perimeter paths while the eastern section is divided into two by paths. The OS 1st edn map appears to indicate slip gardens around the outside of its walls and on its south side an adjoining field is shown planted as an orchard. Buildings are also shown outside the garden walls on the north-east and south-west corners. In 1882 account books list the building of new greenhouses and a cucumber house, and the planting of fruit trees (Olsen) and the 2nd edn OS map shows a number of glass houses within the garden against the south-west interior wall. These were still present in 1938 but are gone by 2009 (2009 aerial views photographs).

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## Maps

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Philip Symonson, *Map of Kent* 1596.

Drawing of grounds 1714, reproduced in Olsen, p. 55.

Samuel Parker, *A Map of the County of Kent* 1719.

Charles Greenwood, *Map of the County of Kent* 1821.

Estate map 1748 (lost) mentioned in Olsen.

Edward Hasted map 1778

OS draft for Cranbrook parish c.1800

Plan of Glassenbury and the home farm 1810. Reproduced (poor quality photocopy) in Olsen, p. 91.

Tithe map 1840 and apportionment.

OS maps      1st edn 6" OS map 1862

                  2nd edn 6" OS map 1897

                  3rd edn 6" OS map 1907

                  4th edn 6" OS map 1929

OS maps      1st edn 25" OS map 1870 Sheet 70/2

                  2nd edn 25" OS maps 1897 Sheet 70/2

                  3rd edn 25" OS map 1908 Sheet 70/2

                  Revd edn 25" OS map 1938 Sheet 70/2

Modern Mastermap 1:10,000 2007.

Map showing listed buildings within Glassenbury Park boundaries.

## Illustrations

2 photographs of Glassenbury in the 1850s (before renovation) and 1880s (after renovation). Reproduced in Olsen, p. 104.

2 photographs of Glassenbury 1934/ 1930s. Reproduced in Olsen, p. 123

1930s garden photographs. Reproduced in Olsen, p. 121

Baron Nettelbladt, *Lime walk and Jaffa 1820s* (1947). Reproduced in Olsen, p. 100.

Aerial view 1951. Reproduced in Olsen, p. 126.

2 illustrations of Glassenbury House. *Cranbrook Rural District Official Guide* (1960), pp. 74-75.

3 1999 photographs of the house and gardens. Reproduced in Olsen, pp. 130-1

Aerial photograph 2003

## Archival items

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Research by Wendy Rogers  
Description written by Barbara Simms  
Edited by Virginia Hinze  
April 2009



Fig. 1 Boundary map

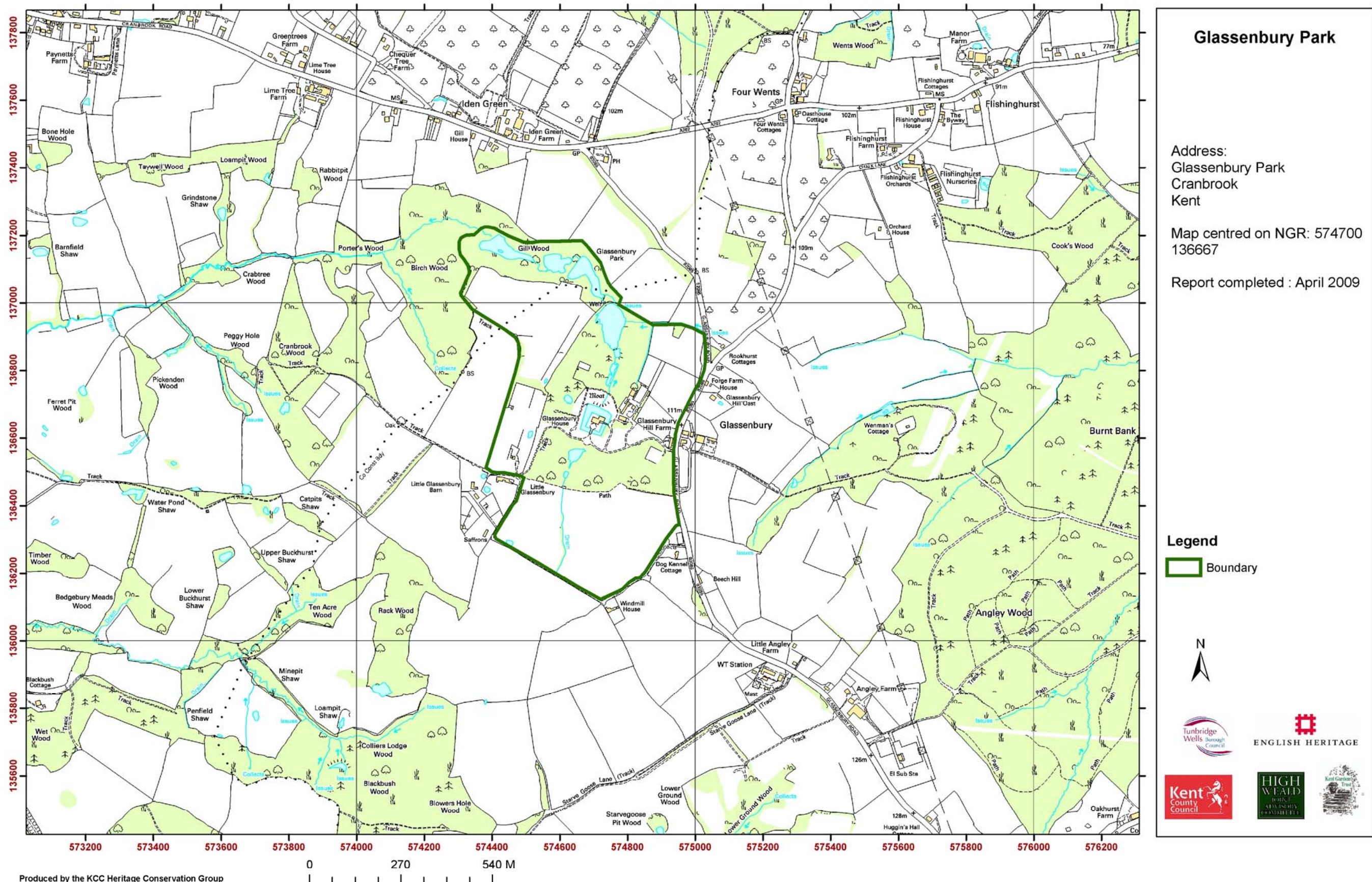
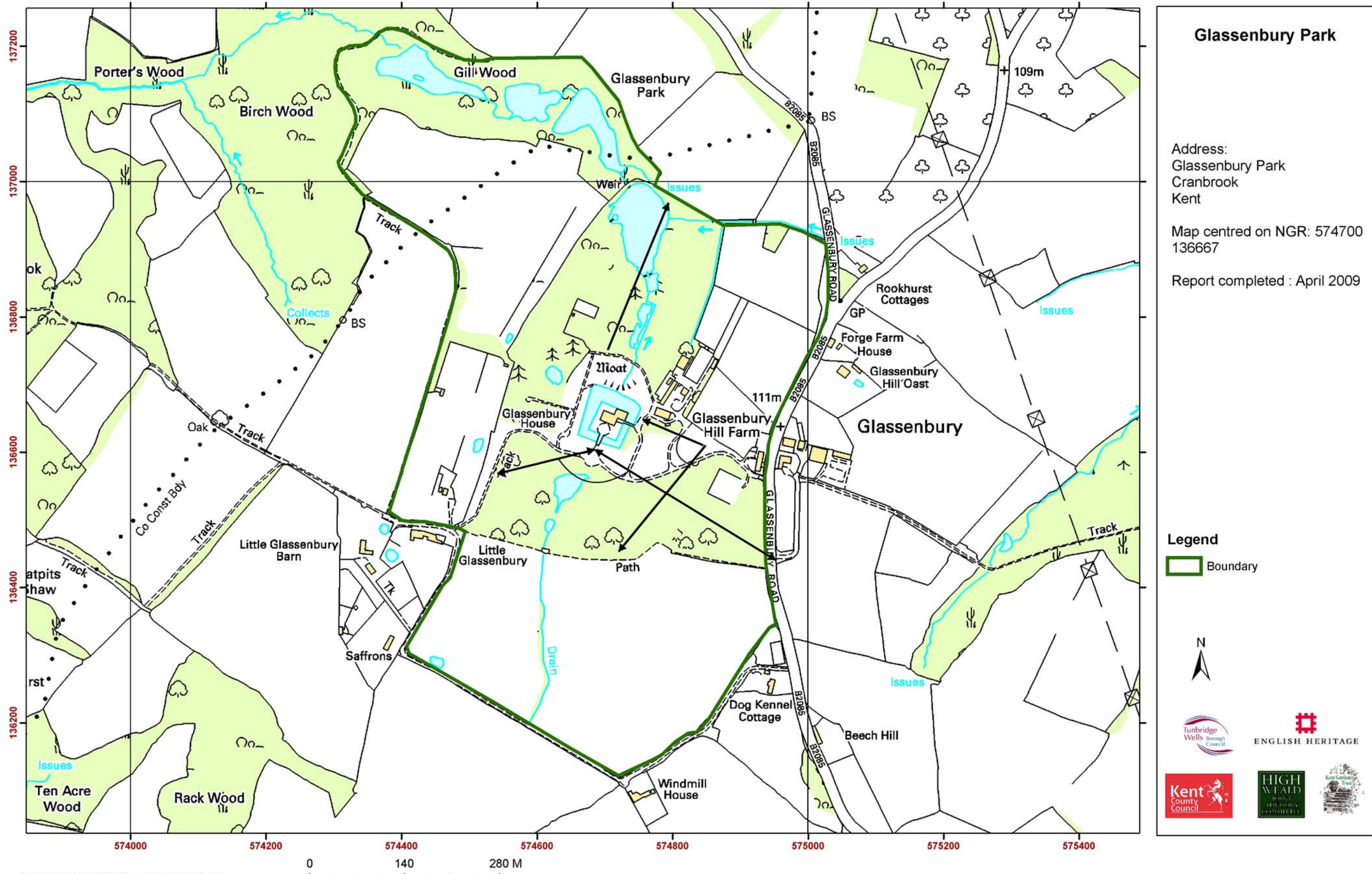




Fig. 2 Key views map



**Glassenbury Park**

Address:  
Glassenbury Park  
Cranbrook  
Kent

Map centred on NGR: 574700  
136667

Report completed : April 2009

**Legend**  
 Boundary

N

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

ENGLISH HERITAGE

Kent County Council

HIGH WEALD

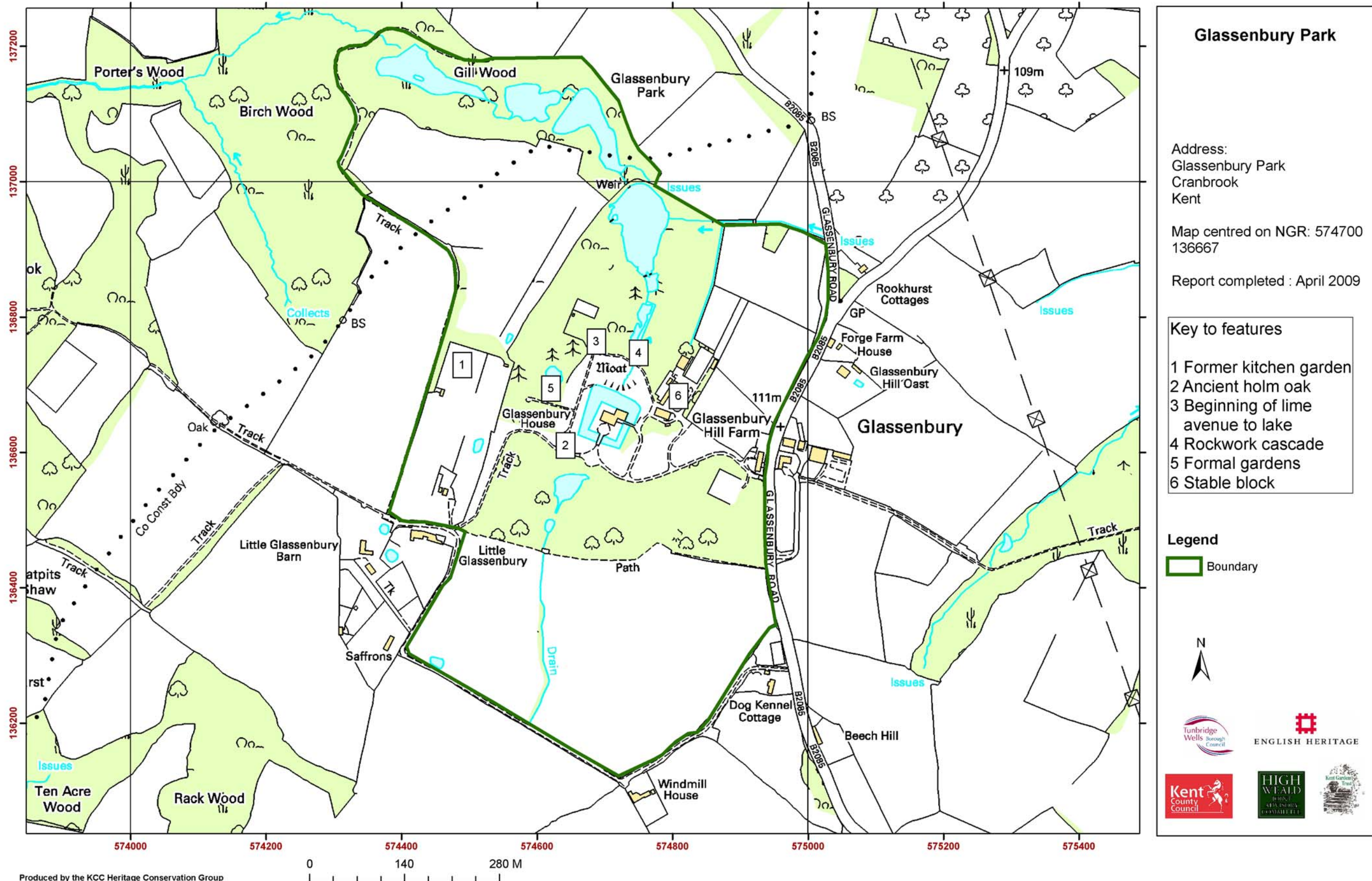
Kent Gardens Trust

Produced by the KCC Heritage Conservation Group

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Fig. 3 Key features map



**Glassenbury Park**

Address:  
Glassenbury Park  
Cranbrook  
Kent

Map centred on NGR: 574700  
136667

Report completed : April 2009

**Key to features**

- 1 Former kitchen garden
- 2 Ancient holm oak
- 3 Beginning of lime avenue to lake
- 4 Rockwork cascade
- 5 Formal gardens
- 6 Stable block

**Legend**

- Boundary

N

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

ENGLISH HERITAGE

Kent County Council

HIGH WEALED

Kent Gardens Trust



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## Fig. 4 Aerial photograph

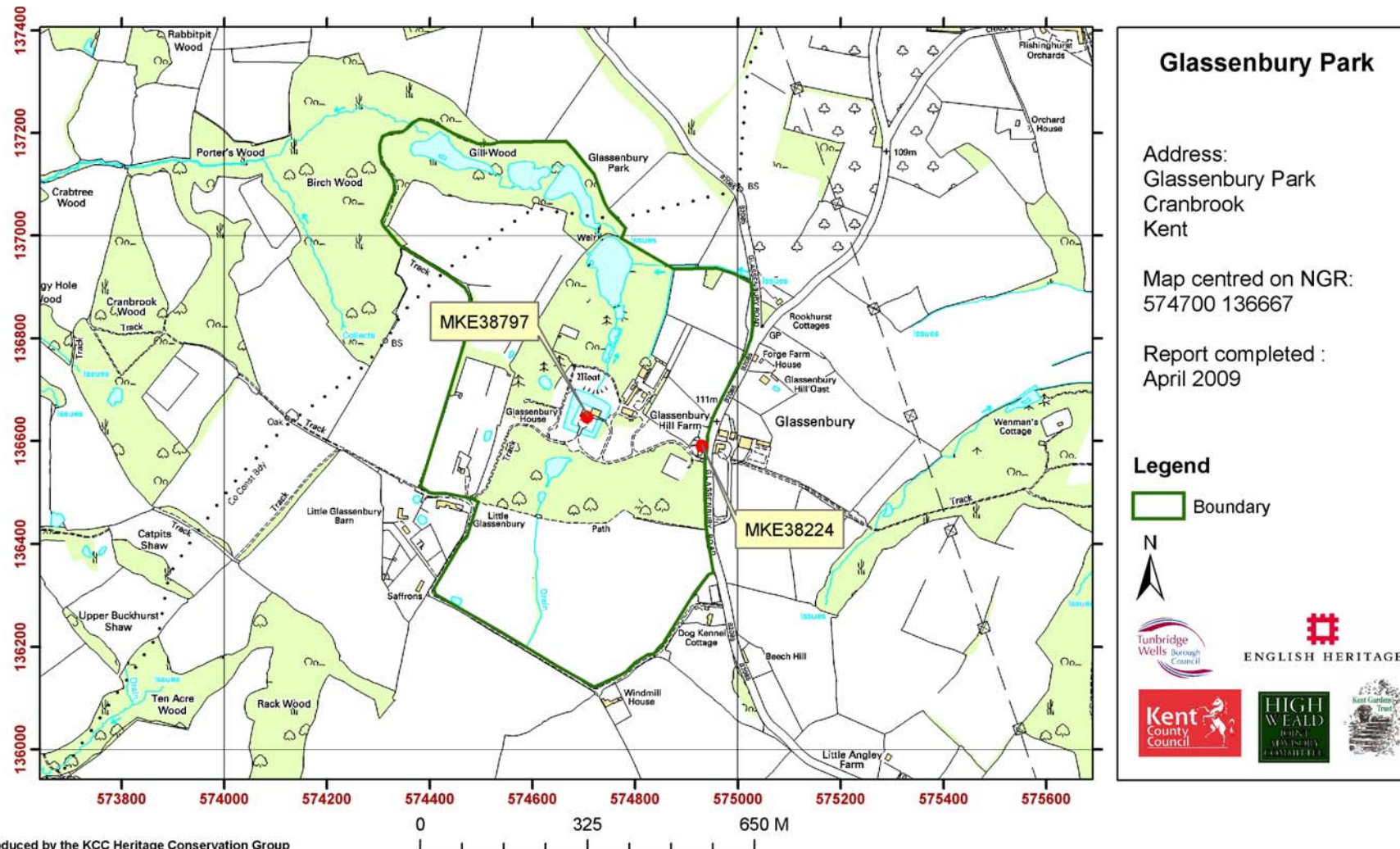


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## Fig. 5 Map of listed buildings at Glassenbury Park



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

**Fig. 6 Listed buildings at Glassenbury Park**

### **Kent Historic Environment Record reference: MKE38797**

CRANBROOK  
(west side) 2/109  
II\*

GLASSENbury ROAD TQ 73 NW  
Glassenbury Park House 27.1.77 -

Country house with moat in landscaped park. Late C15, with front block of circa 1730-40, remodelled in 1877-79 by Anthony Salvia, all for the Roberts family. Main front (south) largely rebuilt after 1951. SOUTH FRONT: Red brick with sand stone quoins, window cills and eaves parapet. Plain tiled roof with gable parapets and kneelers, tall, part projecting gable stacks with oversailing cornices, and banded central stack behind main ridge. Slight central 5 bay projection to facade with quoins supporting very wide open pediment with oculus. 2 bay wings with windows more widely spaced. 2 storeys; symmetrical 9 bay front, glazing bar sashes. Central projecting porch with arched entrance and side openings and half columns flanking doorway. Panelled door. Large irregular wings to rear, mostly 2 storeys with attics, with buttresses and stone-dressed mullioned windows. Interior: Hall with panelling dated 1571. probably moved from elsewhere. 3-flight open well staircase opening of hall to left at rear. Study with salvin panelling and Jacobean columned salvin fireplace. Hasted gives the date c.1473 for the building of the original house ( - ). Surrounded by moat with dressed stone walls and with single span arched bridge with solid parapets to south and secondary bridge to east.

### **Kent Historic Environment Record reference: MKE38224**

CRANBROOK  
(west side) 2/107 -  
II

GLASSENbury ROAD TQ 73 NW  
Glassenbury Cottage -

Farmhouse, later cottage pair, now house. Later C16. Timber-framed and exposed with tall studding, some curved braces and plaster infill. Some brick infill on ground floor. Plain tiled roofs. Tall off-ridge stack to front at right, and 3 gabled dormers. 2 storeys and attics. Irregular fenestration of 4 windows on first floor and 4 on ground floor. Main entrance in C20 addition at left end. Glazed doors to centre and right of front. Interior: Substantial timber frame visible.