

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



## Brenchley Manor, Brenchley



May 2009



# Brenchley Manor

Brenchley, Kent

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## INTRODUCTION

## SITE DESCRIPTION

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: Boundary map.

FIGURE 2: Key views map.

FIGURE 3: Key features map.

FIGURE 4: Aerial photograph.

FIGURE 5: Map of listed buildings at Brenchley Manor.

FIGURE 6: Listed buildings at Brenchley Manor.

## FIGURES ONLY ON CD

FIGURE 7: J. Andrews, W. Dury and W. Herbert, *A Topographical Map of the County of Kent ...* 1769.

FIGURE 8: Edward Hasted map Speldhurst 1778.

FIGURE 9: William Mudge, *An Entirely new and accurate survey...* 1801.

FIGURE 10: Charles Greenwood, *Map of the County of Kent* 1821.

FIGURE 11: Tithe map and apportionment 1842-44.

FIGURE 12: Ordnance Survey 1st edn 6" map (1862).

FIGURE 13: Ordnance Survey 2nd edn 25" map (1897).

FIGURE 14: Ordnance Survey 3rd edn 25" OS map (1908).

FIGURE 15: Ordnance Survey revd edn 25" OS map (1938).

FIGURE 16: William Hodges, 4 black-and-white photographs of 'The Old Parsonage' (1850s-70s).

FIGURE 17: 7 colour photographs of Brenchley Manor 1981/82.

FIGURE 18: Sales particulars. Hampton and Son. Oct 1987.

FIGURE 19: Photographs of Brenchley Manor February 2009.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

With many thanks to the owners for allowing access to the garden and commenting on the text and to the head gardener for sharing his knowledge on a tour of the garden.

## 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

BRENCHLEY MANOR

TUNBRIDGE WELLS

BRENCHLEY

TQ 6762 4209

## **SUMMARY OF THE HISTORIC INTEREST**

Formal garden compartments set in lawns with mature trees laid out from the early C20 around a C16 timber-framed house (with C20 alterations).

## **CHRONOLOGY OF THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT**

Until the late C12, Brenchley (at that time known variously as Braencesli, Braencheslie, Brancheslega, Branchesle and Btaencesle) was within the parish of Eldyrige (later known as Yalding) and probably originated as a clearing in the ancient Wealden oak forest (Barr). It then became an independent parish with its own rectory but was forfeited to the crown in 1526, after which it became the property of Cardinal Wolsey. In 1539, after Wolsey's downfall, Henry VIII gave it to Paul Sydnor for his services as agent to the Court of Spain (Hasted) and he may have built the first house on the site of present Brenchley Manor.

In 1563 the rectory of Brenchley became the property of William Waller of Groombridge. His widow, Elizabeth, inherited it on his death, although did not live in it until her second husband, George Vane, died in 1571. She lived there until 1596, dispensing a 'memorable hospitalitie [which] made her famous and renowned', during which time she refurbished the house internally and added a Renaissance gateway (Oswald). Elizabeth's son by her first marriage inherited the property and it remained in the Waller family until the mid C17 when it was sold to John Courthope of Whiligh whose family retained it until the beginning of the C20.

Maps from 1769 depict the building on the site of the present Brenchley Manor as a parsonage (Andrews, Dury and Herbert; Hasted; Mudge; Greenwood) and the Tithe Map records the property called Parsonage Farm as owned by George Campion Courthope (of the Courthopes of Sprivers). It was occupied by an Edward Monkton, a cattle dealer, who was in residence in 1839 (Pigot). At that time, the 12ha site comprised a parsonage and garden, an oast house, barn and lodge, an orchard and hop garden, a larch plantation and a number of fields. Monkton, and later his family, were still at Parsonage Farm (variously Parsonage, The Parsonage and Parsonage House) in 1861, when his holding had expanded to some 56ha. The 1st edn OS map shows paths laid out in a garden close to the house and the remaining land occupied by farm buildings and orchards.

Until 1912 the Parsonage remained tenanted, first by Charles Storr, a curate, and then George Levett, a farmer (Census data), during which time a conservatory and two greenhouses were built and changes were made to the

garden layout (2nd and 3rd OS maps). The Courthopes then sold the Parsonage to a Mr. C. H. Allfrey, who 'stripped the plaster off the house, revealing the timbers', added a wing to its south end and laid out a new garden. The property had several further owners before it was offered for sale as The Old Parsonage in 1931 with some 10ha of land. It was bought by the Payne family who renamed it Brenchley Manor (*Times* advertisement). They continued the development of the gardens before selling in 1968 with just 3ha of gardens, these including a swimming pool, a cottage, orchards, and 'a gigantic oak' (Hanson; Sales Particulars).

The owners in 1972 were a Richard and Isobel Gardiner-Hill who inherited and maintained Mr Allfrey's framework of garden walks and clipped hedges, herbaceous borders, orchard and kitchen garden, with guidance from the garden designer Rosemary Alexander (Compendium notes). The present owners bought Brenchley Manor in 1989 and have continued to maintain and develop the gardens and grounds with advice from the designer Tim Rees. The property remains in single, private ownership.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

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

Brenchley Manor occupies southward-sloping ground with fine views south and west to the surrounding lanes, farms and orchards of the High Weald's undulating topography. It lies immediately to the north of Brenchley with Paddock Wood 2.5km to its north and Royal Tunbridge Wells some 8km to its south-west. The c.2ha site is bordered to the south-east by Brenchley Road, to the north and north-west by the open landscape of Kent National Golf and Country Club and to the west and south-west by orchards.

### **ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES**

Brenchley Manor is approached from the west side of Brenchley Road through a pair of wrought iron gates (installed 2005) flanked by a clipped yew hedge and a pair of stone lions. A consolidated gravel drive, lined by an avenue of mature chestnut, beech and oak trees, ascends for c.100m in a north-westerly direction between lawns and rhododendron shrubberies with views south to an adjoining orchard and distant wooded hills. From this point, the drive begins a gentle descent to the house whose east side can be glimpsed between the trees. It then turns sharply northwards and passes through an entrance marked by 1.5m high, stone piers with stone cappings from which curved brick walls of similar height and set on a stone base extend east and west to enclose the gardens on the south front. The drive continues on northwards beyond the entrance, offering views over the main ornamental gardens lying on its east side. It then turns north-westwards, skirting a further garden area of lawn with trees on the house's north front to arrive at the main entrance to Brenchley Manor which is at its north-west end and reached through a wrought iron gate leading into a small, brick-paved courtyard.

Beyond the main entrance, the drive continues for c.50m in a south-westerly direction to serve a pair of estate cottages (C19 Cork Cottage and C20 Colt Cottage) which stand some 100m south-west of the house. It then turns south-

east to run 70m around the south front of the house to rejoin the main drive at the entrance to the gardens on the east front.

The present approach to the house survives from that shown on the 1st edn OS map. However, in 1897 the 2nd edn OS map shows a forecourt enclosed on its west end along the north front. This layout is shown on maps until 1938 and was probably implemented during the Payne's ownership (4th edn and revd edn OS maps).

Forty metres north-west of the house is a two-storey, C19 oast house (listed grade II) which was converted to residential use in the late C20. At the same time a swimming pool and a pool house was built in a courtyard adjoining its west front.

### PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Brenchley Manor (listed grade II\*), built in the C16, is a two-storey timber-framed house with a peg-tile roof and brick stacks. It has an asymmetrical three-window north front with the roof half-hipped at each end (listed building description); the first floor is jettied with a moulded fascia. The house was 'thoroughly restored' in 1912-14 when the 'close-studded framing was exposed' and most of the studs were renewed and a north-west wing was added in a style to match the main house. In 1994, a small conservatory was built on the south-west corner of the house.

### GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

Garden enclosures adjoin the house on the south and east fronts and are mainly laid out as lawns, many with mature trees including an ancient oak (known as the 'Domesday' oak) that stands some 15m north-east of the house.

The south front opens onto a raised, random-stone-paved, east-west terrace enclosed on its south by a 1m high, stone block wall. To its south is a c.30m x 50m fully walled enclosure now (2009) laid to lawn with perimeter beds, but until the early 1990s a rose garden (personal communication). It is reached by flights of six stone steps at the terrace's east and west ends while a third, central flight descends from a 1m high, wrought iron gate set in the stone block wall. From a second, 1.5m high, wrought iron gate set in its eastern wall a gravel path runs diagonally in a north-westerly direction across the enclosure to the east end of the terrace. It continues westwards below the terrace, on the south side of the stone block wall, to reach a C21 patio (c.30m x 20m) and wooden pergola laid out around the small conservatory on the south-west corner of the house.

The east front opens onto a walled garden laid to lawn with box-edged perimeter beds and a C21 central knot feature. Set in the east wall, at a 30 degree angle to the front door, a C16 Renaissance archway (listed grade II\*) hung with C20, wrought iron gates frames a vista westwards across the drive to the main ornamental gardens. The round-headed, pedimented, archway is constructed of rustic sandstone and was described as 'Serlian classicism' by Pevsner (listed building description). It has a datestone of 1577 and was probably installed by Elizabeth Vane. It is shown in a series of black-and-white



photographs taken by the local Brenchley photographer, William Hodges, between 1850 and 1870.

The main ornamental gardens lie on the east side of the house, east of the walled enclosure and drive, and are laid out either side of a 100m long grass path which runs axially eastwards from the Renaissance archway. The gardens are in two sections separated by a 3m high, 70m long, yew hedge planted on a stone retaining wall that forms a north-east to south-west cross axis. The hedge was planted from 1912 by Mr Allfrey to enclose a new garden on the side of C18 outbuildings (Oswald). The quadrilateral-shaped section on the west side is laid out on south-sloping ground with 60m long mixed borders each side of the axial grass path framed by lawns studded with trees.

The eastern section of the garden, above the retaining wall, is reached by ten stone steps that ascend from the axial grass path. It is also quadrilateral in shape, brick walled on its north and east sides and yew-hedged on its south. A range of C20 glass houses, cold frames and a fruit cage is built against the north wall. The area was formerly an early C20, kitchen garden, possibly laid out on the site of an C18 orchard (2nd edn OS map; Oswald)).

From the top of the stone steps the length of the axial path to the garden's boundary is designed as a rose walk, a wrought-iron arched pergola running above its easternmost half and terminating in a yew arch. The rose walk forms the east-west axis of a cruciform layout of paths with perimeter paths and borders that divides the garden into four areas. North-east of the rose walk is a rose garden laid out in quarters enclosed by 0.3m high box hedges with two box balls at their corners. To its north-west and south-east are lawns, the latter containing fruit trees surviving from the putative earlier C18 orchard. The largest, south-west, area is also laid to grass, this surrounding a wire-enclosed tennis court and a 'secret' yew-hedged enclosure in the far south-west corner.

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Denise Barr, 'The Shaping of our Parish', *Brenchley and Matfield Revisited* (Brenchley and Matfield Local History Society, 2008).

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Edward Hasted map 1778.

William Mudge, *A New and Accurate Survey of Kent* 1801.

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

Tithe map (Brenchely Parish) and apportionment 1842-44. CKS ref CTR4SA+B

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 maps      1st edn 25" OS map 1870 Sheet 61/7  
                  2nd edn 25" OS map 1897 Sheet 61/7  
                  3rd edn 25" OS map 1908 Sheet 61/7  
                  Revd edn 25" OS map 1938 Sheet 61/7

Modern Mastermap 1:2,500 2007

Map showing listed buildings within Brenchley Manor boundaries

### **Illustrations**

1786 watercolour (private collection).

William Hodges, 4 black-and-white photographs of 'The Old Parsonage' (1850s-70s). Reproduced in *A Victorian pictorial record of Brenchley and Matfield* (Local History Society, 1980s). Plates at CKS.

7 colour photographs 1981/82 (a) kitchen garden and glasshouses (b) 100yr old oak (c) medieval gatepost (d) sculptured yew hedge (e) secret garden (f) herbaceous borders (g) house front

2 aerial photograph of Brenchley Manor 1987/88 (private collection)

Aerial photograph of Brenchley Manor 2003

### **Archival items**

Census data 1841-1901

Electoral registers 1910-85

Kent Compendium notes 1981.

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English Heritage Listed Buildings entries: undated.

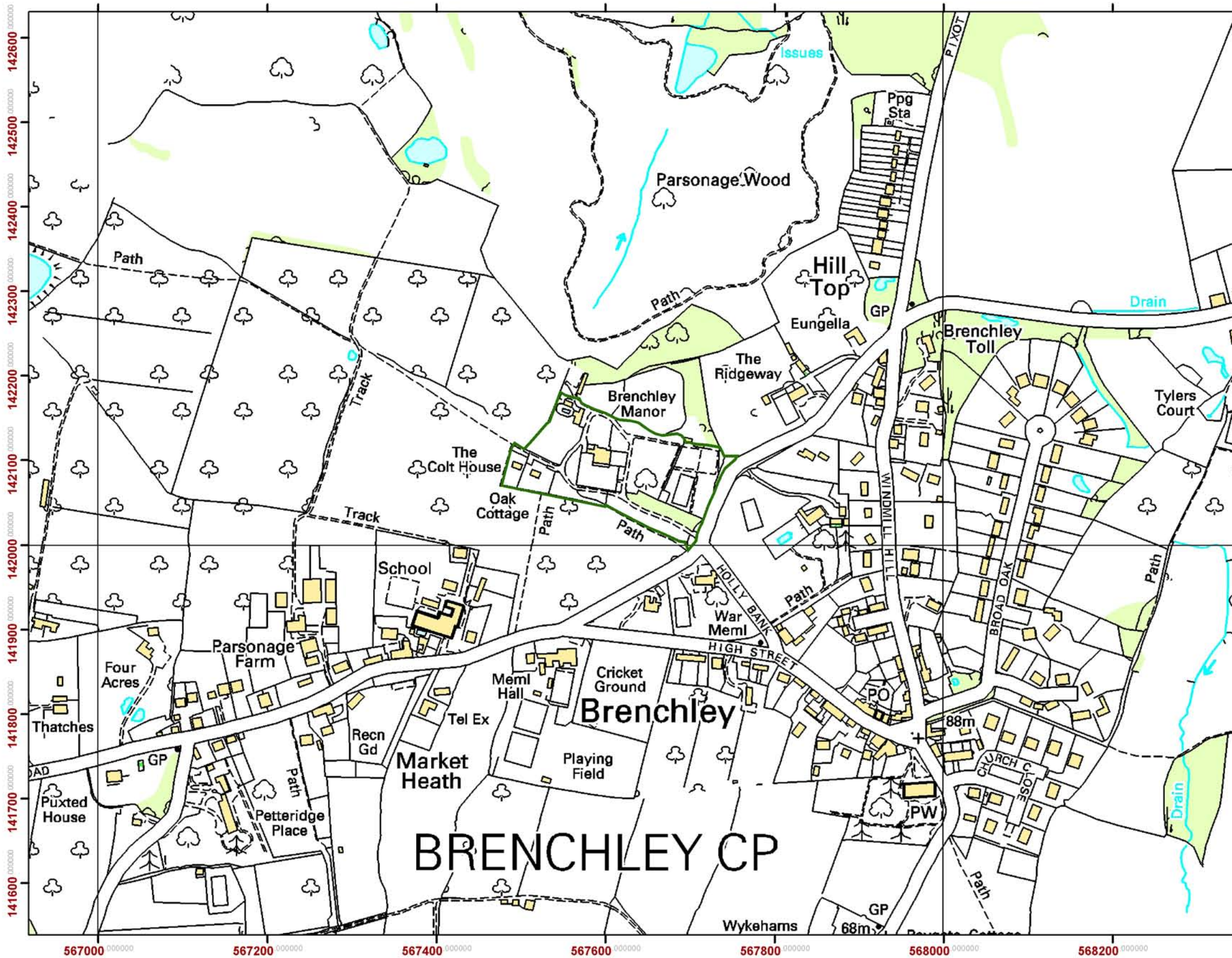
Research by Judith Pursell

Description written by Barbara Simms

Edited by Virginia Hinze

May 2009





## Brenchley Manor

Address:

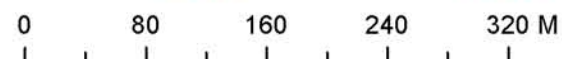
Brenchley Manor  
Brenchley  
Kent

Map centred on NGR: 567625  
142096

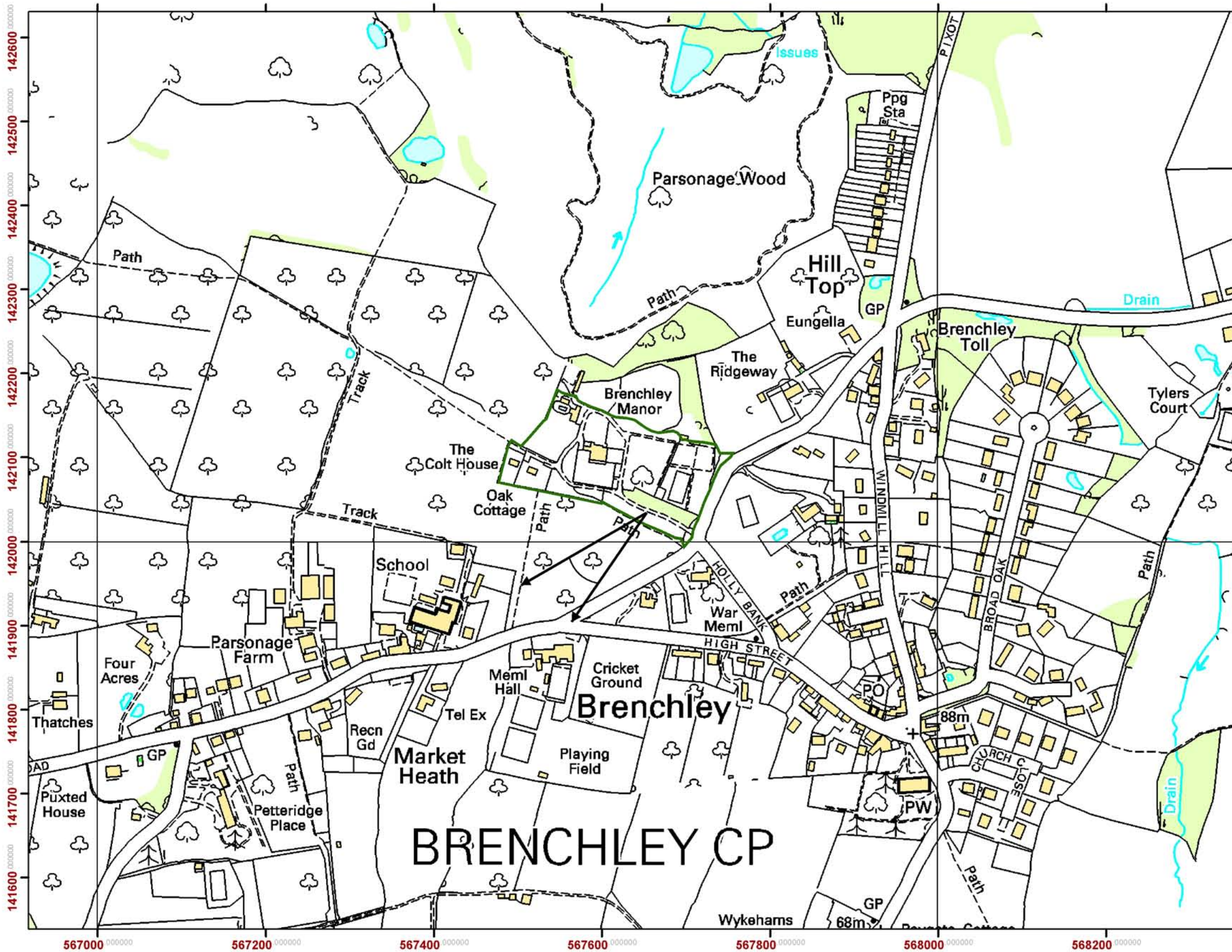
Report completed : May 2009

### Legend

 Boundary







## Brenchley Manor

Address:

Brenchley Manor  
Brenchley  
Kent

Map centred on NGR: 567625  
142096

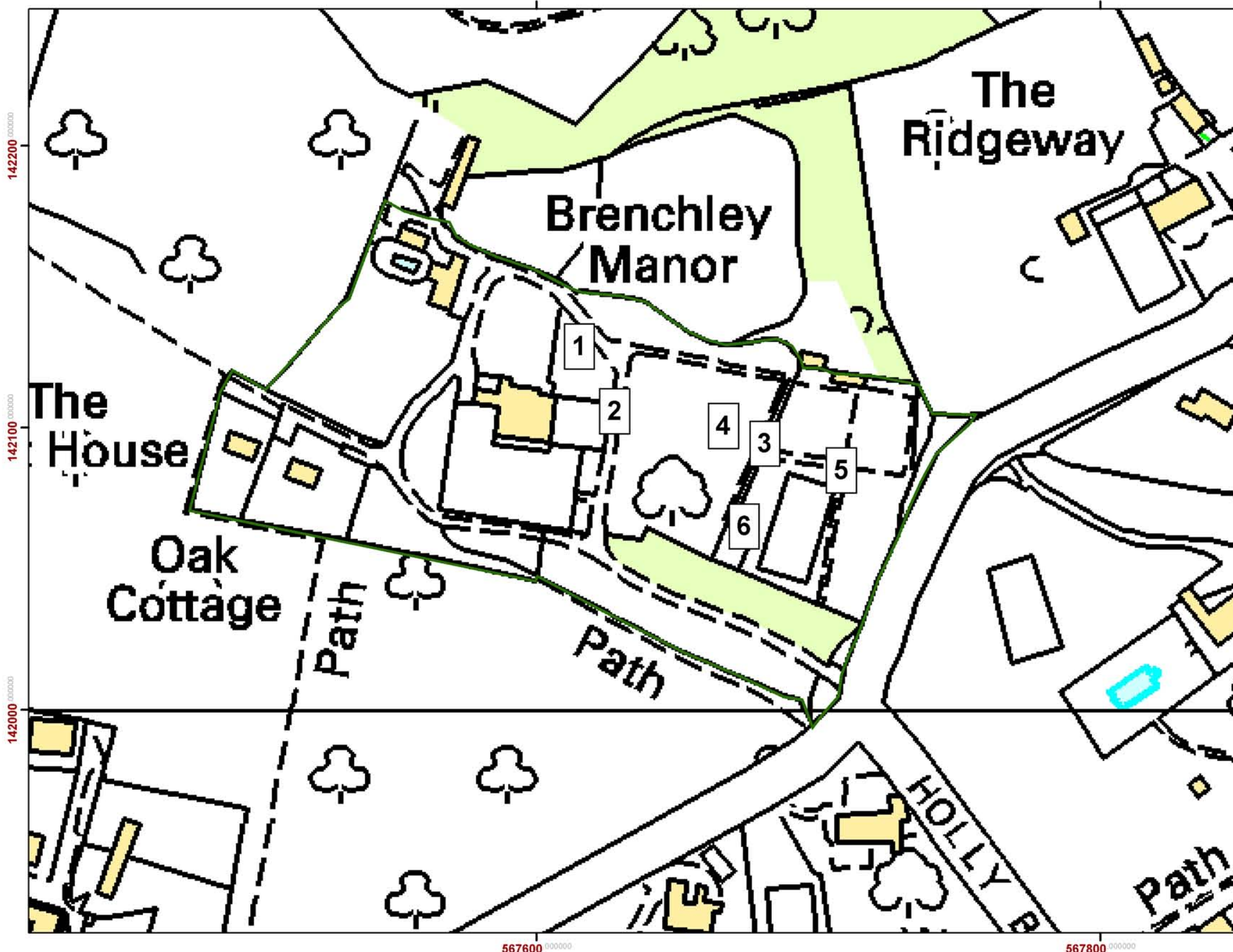
Report completed : May 2009

### Legend

 Boundary







## Brenchley Manor

Address:

Brenchley Manor  
Brenchley  
Kent

Map centred on NGR: 567625  
142096

Report completed : May 2009

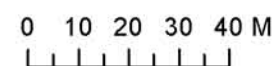
### Key to features:

- 1 Domesday Oak
- 2 16th century archway
- 3 Yew hedge
- 4 Herbaceous borders
- 5 Former kitchen garden
- 6 Secret enclosure



### Legend

 Boundary



Produced by the KCC Heritage Conservation Group

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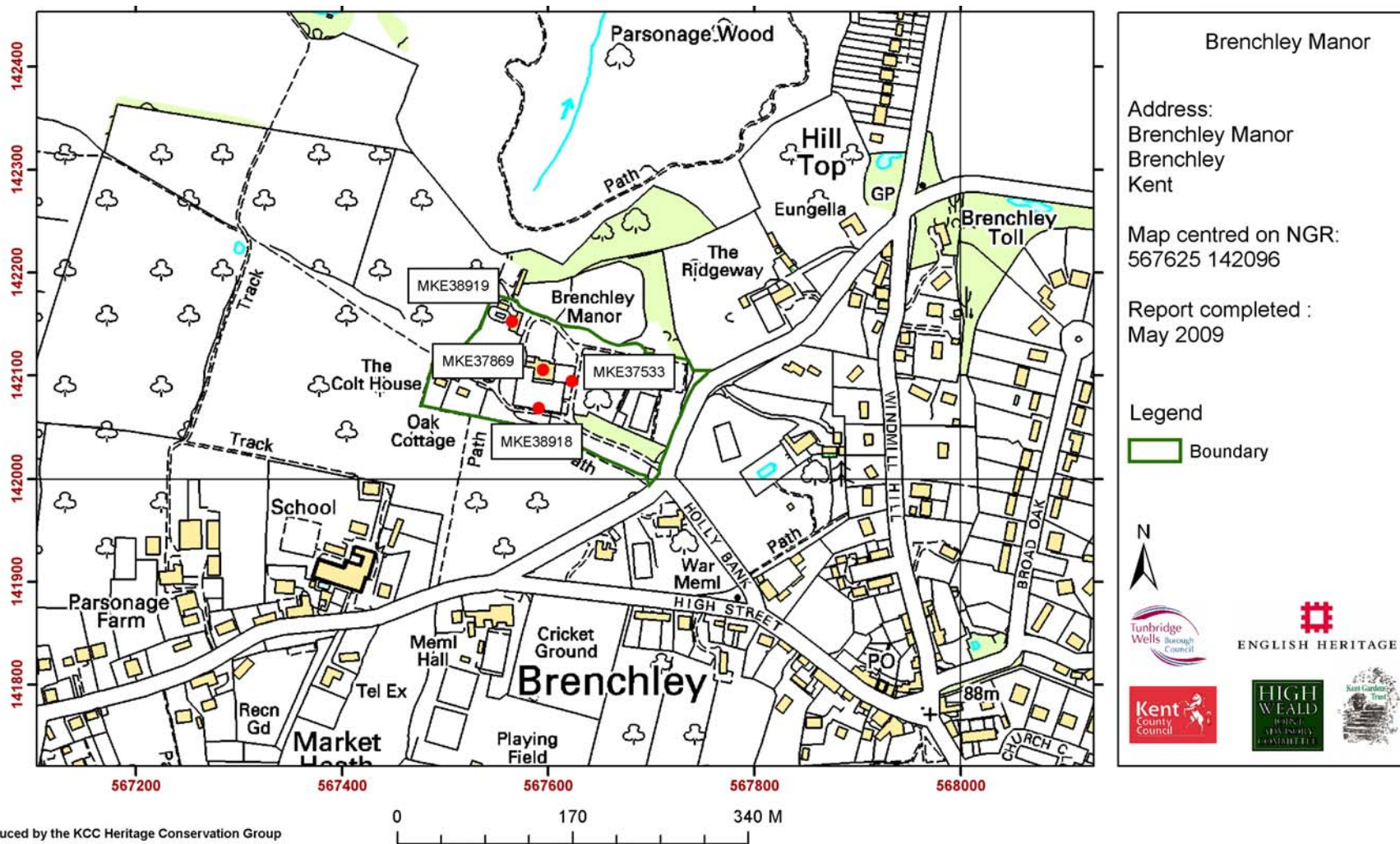
## Fig. 4 Aerial photograph



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

## Fig. 5 Map of listed buildings at Brenchley Manor





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

**Fig. 6 Listed buildings at Brenchley Manor**

### **Kent Historic Environment Record reference: MKE37533**

BRENCHLEY      BRENCHLEY ROAD, BRENCHLEY  
6/39                      Archway about 15m east of Brenchley Manor  
Grade II\*

Archway. 1577 (datestone). Freestone. Rustic Renaissance. Described as "Serlian classicism" by Pevsner, who reads the date as 1592, *West Kent and the Weald* (1976 edn.). Probably erected for Elizabeth Fane, whose coat of arms is carved in the pediment. A round-headed pedimented archway opposite the front door and north of Brenchley Manor. There has been some debate about whether it has been moved from some other location in the grounds of the manor (Oswald). A round-headed arch with a keystone springs from worn impostes, one of which retains a lozenge-carved capital. Flanking the arch sturdy pilasters support an entablature with a pediment, crowned by an idiosyncratic carved ornament, with similar ornaments to left and right of the pediment. The pilasters have deep rusticated bases with lozenge-carved banding, similar banding to the reeded pilasters. The entablature has a frieze similar to a triglyph frieze but with 4 mouldings, with guttae below. Pediment carved with Elizabeth Fane's arms in relief and a date of 1577 (often misread for 1522). The 3 ornaments crowning the archway are unexpectedly large and eccentric. Each one consists of a squat flat-faced baluster, carved with crude scrolls and topped with a depressed ball finial. The archway has a pair of probably early C20 wrought iron gates.

### **Kent Historic Environment Record reference: MKE37869**

BRENCHLEY      BRENCHLEY ROAD, BRENCHLEY  
6/38                      Brenchley Manor (formerly listed as The Old Parsonage) 20.10.54  
Grade II\*

Large house. C16 or earlier origins with substantial alterations and additions of 1912-14 form Mr C.H. Allfrey (Oswald). Close-studded framed construction; peg-tile roof; brick stacks.

Plan: The house faces east. The main range is 3 rooms on plan with an entrance to right of centre, probably originally into a cross passage. High quality hall to the left of the entry, with a rear lateral stack, fine parlour beyond at the east end, also heated from a rear lateral stack. The lower end is a small service room, originally unheated. It is difficult to judge how much of the surviving house, apart from the main range, dates from the C16. Behind the main block further rooms, including service rooms, are housed under a 3 span roof at right angles, the rear completed by a block parallel to the main range. The house was thoroughly restored between 1912 and 1914, when the rear left (north west) wing was added in a style to match the main block and a stair hall was incorporated to the rear of the C16 hall. The alterations matched the style of the original externally and incorporated features imported from elsewhere, obscuring the service rooms to the original house. The roof construction is wholly C20.

Exterior: 2 storeys. Asymmetrical 3 window north front, the roof half-hipped at ends. Most of the chimneyshafts are early C20, the parlour stack is handmade brick with a



staggered shaft. The close-studded framing was exposed in circa 1912 and most of the studs are renewed. The first floor is jettied with a moulded fascia - one of the jetty brackets has a roll-moulding and the left end (south) corner has a triple bracket. The porch, to right of centre, is probably largely early C20, re-using old timbers. It has a flat lead roof with a moulded cornice, the deep eaves carried on dragon beams and curved braces. The outer doorway has moulded jambs and a replaced lintel. The richly-moulded inner doorframe is probably C16 with a Tudor arched head and delicately-carved spandrels. Fine C16 ledged front door with moulded overlapping planks fixed with studs. Windows largely early C20 but incorporating old timbers, some of which may belong to original windows in situ. 3 first floor regularly-spaced 4-light ovolo-moulded mullioned windows, the centre window flanked by smaller 2-light mullioned windows, all glazed with early C20 square leaded panes. Similar transomed ground floor windows to the left of the porch, ground floor window right is 2-light and transomed. Projecting right end stack is probably C20. The left return of the main range is also jettied with similar C20 windows including a 3-light attic window. Beyond the main block the 3-window early C20 wing is also jettied and close-studded with a gable to the front at the left end. The rear (west) elevation of the wing is also jettied with a 2-span roof. The rear right wing is brick with large sash windows and may date from the C19. At the rear right end of the house a single-storey north west wing is built of handmade brick and probably C18 in date.

Interior: The main range preserves very high quality C16 carpentry and panelling. The hall has a ceiling of richly-moulded intersecting beams, a crossbeam marking the hall/passage division, for which there is no longer a partition. Fine rear doorway to the former cross passage with a richly-moulded frame and elaborate stops; richly-moulded doorframe with bar stops from the passage into the lower end room. Moulded stone hall fireplace with a Tudor arched lintel. The inner room parlour is fully panelled with 5 tiers of linenfold crowned with a Renaissance frieze of arabesques and profile heads. There has been some debate about the date (early or late C16) of the linenfold and whether it is in situ (Oswald). The wainscoting is divided into bays by classical pilasters and a panel over the door is dated 1573. The moulded timber cornice abuts the moulded 4-panel ceiling beams rather awkwardly. Fine Tudor arched moulded stone fireplace flanked by Ionic pilasters in the wainscot. The overmantel has a cranked arch, the spandrels filled with lively carvings depicting a man being bitten by a monster on one side and a woman with a club in control of a similar monster on the other. A tier of 6 carved panels above is divided by Ionic pilasters, the moulded panels with lions' heads carved in relief, the centre 2 panels with the arms and initials of Elizabeth Fane who had the Manor as her dower house following the death of her husband in 1571. Her memorial in Brenchley church records that "her memorable hospitalitie made her famous and renowned". Above the carved panels a frieze of arabesques is divided by carved brackets. The lower end room has been sub-divided and has a plain chamfered crossbeam. The C16 house evidently extended further to the rear (south) since a moulded C16 doorframe leads from an extension of the cross passage into what is now the stair hall. This contains an early Georgian style stair, said to have been introduced in the early C20 (Oswald) with an open string, a moulded ramped handrail and replaced balusters. The heavy egg-and-dart cornice in the stair hall is probably early C20. The other rooms mostly have chimneypieces of the early C20 or 1980s. The single-storey rear wing has a probably C18 tie-beam and queen strut roof. The chamber over the hall on the first floor has a moulded stone fireplace surround with a Tudor arched lintel.

Roof: All the roofs except the rear wing parallel to the main range are C20. The rear wing roof was not accessible at time of survey (1988). Extremely high quality interior features of the C16 in the main range make this a house of special interest.

**Kent Historic Environment Record reference: MKE38918**

BRENCHLEY      BRENCHLEY ROAD, BRENCHLEY  
6/40                      Garden walls to the garden east and south of Brenchley Manor  
Grade II

Garden walls. Probably early C20, contemporary with a programme of alterations to the house. Coursed sandstone footings, the upper parts thinner and built of handmade brick, which ramps up to the entrance archway (q.v.) east of the house.

**Kent Historic Environment Record reference: MKE38919**

BRENCHLEY      BRENCHLEY ROAD, BRENCHLEY  
6/41                      Brenchley Manor Oast  
Grade II

Oasthouse converted to a house. Probably late C19; late C20 conversion. Flemish bond brick, the first floor of the stowage weatherboarded.

Plan: Sited north west of Brenchley Manor. The stowage is roofed on a north south axis with 2 kilns at the north, one adjoining the north end, another the west side, both square on plan. Late C20 conservatory added on the west side.

Exterior: 2 storeys. Asymmetrical 7:1 window east front, facing the rear of Brenchley Manor, the one window to the kiln. Roof hipped at left end of stowage; pyramidal roof with a cowl to the kiln with a band of brick cogging below the roof. The stowage has a pair of tall plain doors in the let, a smaller door to the right and small-pane casement windows, one converted from a loft opening. The kiln has one round-headed ground floor window and a 2- light first floor casement.