

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



Hole Park, Rolvenden



February 2009

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With many thanks to the owners of Hole Park for their enthusiasm for the project, for sharing their garden archives and memories, and for commenting on the text.

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 www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk	Kent County Council Heritage Conservation Invicta House County Hall Maidstone ME14 1XX 01622 696918 www.kent.gov.uk
Kent Gardens Trust www.kentgardenstrust.org.uk	High Weald AONB Unit Woodland Enterprise Centre Hastings Road Flimwell East Sussex TN5 7PR 01580 879500 www.highweald.org/

SITE DESCRIPTION

KENT

HOLE PARK

TUNBRIDGE WELLS

ROLVENDEN

TQ 8335 3260

SUMMARY OF THE HISTORIC INTEREST

Formal compartmentalised gardens with wooded valley and walks laid out from the early C20 around an C18 house and set within extensive parkland.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Hole Park, known as 'The Hole' until the mid-C19, is first mentioned in 1278 when it was owned by a Henry de Hole (Bowen). By the early C16, however, it was the property of a 'Mr Rob Gybbon, a wealthy clothier' (Hasted), whose family retained it until the early C19. A new house was built in the C18 (listed building description) and a 1769 painting shows the south front of this set in an unadorned lawn with walled gardens behind it (private collection). A 1779 survey lists only a forecourt, meadows and woods, but by the early C19, orchards, parkland and a woodland walk had been laid out by Silvestra Monypenny (of Gybbon descent) and her husband John Hutton (Adams; The Hole ledger).

In the early C18 the Gybbon family had become joined by marriage with the Monypennys of nearby Maytham Hall and in 1832, on succession to Hole Park, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Monypenny assumed the name Gybbon Monypenny. He enlarged and refashioned the house in Elizabethan style (1838 engraving), laid out ornamental gardens, enlarged the park from 10 to 89ha and planted a double avenue of wych elms through it from the house (1938 Garden Guide) and constructed a walled kitchen garden (Tithe Map). This expenditure ruined him financially and compelled him to mortgage the property to a fellow Member of Parliament, James Morrison, who became possessed of Hole Park on Gybbon Monypenny's death as a pauper in 1854 (Gatty). Morrison's son Frank lived in the house for a few years and in the late 1880s the property was either tenanted or unoccupied and the house and grounds deteriorated (Igglesden). However, by the early C20 Frank restored the house and gardens and advertised the property for sale in 1910 and 1911 with 'a grandly timbered park of about 220 acres' and 'charming pleasure grounds' (1910 Sales Particulars).

Hole Park was purchased in 1911 by a Colonel Arthur Barham, who redesigned and replanted the gardens, creating a valley garden and a series of garden rooms with gates. A loggia and a pergola (the Vineyard) were designed by the architect W. D. Carøe (diary, plans and photographs in private collection). The house was requisitioned by the Army in the Second World War, but then remained unoccupied from 1946 until 1959, when Colonel Barham's grandson David returned the house to its Georgian core. The Hole Park estate of 688ha

remains in the Barham family, which continues to develop the gardens, opening them regularly to the public.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

Hole Park lies within an undulating High Wealden landscape of pastures, woodland and orchards. The house is sited on an exposed plateau 72m above sea level with fine views to the south, west and the east. It is situated approximately 3km north-west of Rolvenden, 8km north-east of Hawkhurst and 32km south-east of Royal Tunbridge Wells.

The c.81ha site is bounded to south and south-west by Benenden Road (B2086), which runs south-east from Hartley to Rolvenden, to the north-west by Stepneyford Lane and to the north and east by pasture and woodlands of the wider Hole Park Estate.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

Hole Park is approached off the north side of the B2086 at its junction with Stepneyford Lane immediately south of a C19 lodge. A rolled gravel drive lined by an avenue of mature horse chestnut trees bears in a north-easterly direction for 700m through parkland to arrive at a forecourt on the south front of the house. The drive passes through a five-bar metal gate and continues in a south-easterly direction for some 250m lined by an avenue of young broad-leaved lime and swamp cypress trees. It then winds southwards for a further 1km between parkland dotted with mature trees and, for the first 500m, with views to Windmill Wood to the east, to reach a second C19 lodge on Benenden Road, designed by Hunt and included in his 1825 publication on cottage design. These approaches to Hole Park, from the south and west, are shown on maps from at least the beginning of the C19 (Adams), although the avenues of trees are not recorded until 1862 (1st edn OS map). They were probably first planted, however, in the late 1830s (1938 Garden Guide) as avenues of wych elm, those on the drive from the west being felled just prior to or during World War Two and replaced by horse chestnut trees in 1935 (personal communication).

The entrance front of Hole Park house enjoys fine views south over a large sunken garden to the parkland and the undulating landscape beyond. On the south side of the forecourt, four stone steps aligned on the central, main front door lead down into the garden which is bounded on its east and west sides by a 1.5m high yew hedge and on its south side by a brick ha-ha (built 2008) that replaced a C19 park railing and bank. The garden is laid to lawn with a central, oval-ended, rectangular lily pool enclosed at each end by a semi-circle of six topiary yews. Standing in the water at either end of the pool are two matching fountains in the form of lead figures. These were commissioned from the sculptor Gilbert Bayes in 1913 (Garden Guide 1938). This garden was known as the Fountain Garden in the first part of the C20, when it was also filled with flower beds enclosed by yew hedges on the north-west and north-east corners (photographs in private collection; *Garden Work* article). At its southern end is a brick ha-ha extended on both sides by iron railings erected in 2008 to enclose

flanking plantations by garden designer Anthony du Gard Pasley (personal communication).

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

Hole Park house (listed grade II) was built c.1720 as a two-storey red-brick building with attics and a hipped tile roof (listed building description). In 1832, reputedly with the involvement of the architect T. R. Hunt, an exponent of 'Picturesque Domestic Architecture', wings were added at each end, together with gables and high chimneys (1937 Garden Guide). These additions were removed in 1959/60 when the C18 façade was also restored. In 1976, a 1926 butlers' pantry located a few metres from the north-east corner of the house was rebuilt as a garden room (photographs in private collection). 1926,

Attached to the north-west corner of the house is a stable block and coach house arranged around a rectangular yard (Tithe Map). In 1910, in addition to the stabling and harnessing facilities on the north, south and east sides of the yard, the entrance building included a 'coachman's cottage of five rooms' (Sales Particulars). The main, west entrance to the yard is through an archway in a two-storey, red-brick building with a clock tower. It has gable ends and tall chimney stacks, similar to those of the earlier Tudor-style house. With the exception of the coach house, the entire stable yard was rebuilt in 1914 (date on the archway; 1913 plans in private collection). The buildings on the north and south sides of the yard are now (2009) used for offices and storage, while the coach house on the east has been converted to a tea room for visitors.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

On the west, east and north fronts of the house are small garden enclosures. On the west front, in the enclosure known as the Millennium Garden, a flagged stone path runs alongside the house. A paved sunken garden containing a small canal with raised perimeter beds is immediately below the path. On the east and north fronts the enclosures are laid to lawn with perimeter stone flag paths and shrub borders. The garden room encloses the east side of the north enclosure and the north side of the enclosure on the east. The lawn on the east front is also enclosed by yew hedges on its south and east sides.

Immediately north of the enclosures, some 10m to the north of the house, is a walled garden, the coach house within the stable block forming its west wall. It is laid to lawn with consolidated gravel perimeter paths and shrub borders with two flower beds cut into the lawn at its east end. On the north wall, a 1.5m high wrought-iron gate hung on brick piers leads to a camellia walk that runs east-west along the outside of the stable block walls. The walled garden (its south wall probably surviving from the walled gardens shown on the 1790 painting) contained a rose garden in the mid-C20 (1938 Garden Guide; 1930s photographs), the 2m high wrought-iron gates in its east wall being designed by Carøe as a memorial to Captain Wilfrid Barham (Arthur Barham's eldest son) who died at Ypres in 1915. The gates are hung on brick piers with stone cappings and ball finials and immediately beyond them three stone steps descend to the informal lawns.

The main, ornamental gardens lie to the north-east and south-east of the house. They are arranged around open, informal lawns with mature trees and are

designed to form garden rooms enclosed by serpentine yew hedges with topiary shapes. Those to the north-east run some 150m from the east end of the walled garden to a sundial garden and an early C18 oval pond (now called the Egg Pond), which reputedly provided ice for a nearby ice-house 100m to its north in Brick Kiln Wood (personal communication). The early C18 cylindrical icehouse survives 'in a ruinous state' (scheduled ancient monument description) below a rectangular concrete casing in Brick Kiln Wood. The garden rooms are linked on their north sides by a yew-hedged walk (Green Allée), from which there are views north down to a valley garden.

The sequence of garden rooms on the south-east side of the lawns start approximately 70m from the house and include the loggia and Vineyard, a swimming pool garden, a sunken garden and a two 50m long herbaceous border designed by Christopher Lloyd (personal communication). *The Eagle Slayer*, a bronze statue exhibited at the 1851 Great Exhibition by the sculptor John Bell, provides a focal point at the end of a yew-hedged walk that links the gardens and encloses them on their south side. The statue was cast by the Coalbrookdale Company Ltd and bought from them in 1902 by Vavasour Earle, who sold it to Colonel Arthur Barham in 1924. It stands on a Portland stone plinth some 1.4m high designed by Carøe. The plinth is in the centre of a circular paving pattern of brick, stone and tiles (letters in private collection).

The south-facing, concrete loggia, with decorative columns at its entrance, has a tiled roof and concrete flag flooring. It forms the focal point of the Vineyard, an enclosure designed by Carøe in 1936 as a sheltered environment in which to grow vines (drawing in private collection), none of which (2009) survive. An inward-curving brick and concrete rendered wall and a wisteria-covered pergola extend from each side of the loggia to form the arms of a semi-circle. At the end of each curved wall there is an entrance arch and a brick pier, on which is hung a wrought iron gate. Each pier is surmounted by a vase. Yew hedges, added in the 1980s, continue the lines of the loggia wall southwards on both sides, enclosing an area some 50m in length. At the southern end of this enclosure, on the site of a 1930s croquet lawn, is a swimming pool with a paved stone surround. To the immediate east of the swimming pool enclosure is a sunken garden and east again a tennis court (on the site of two 1920s grass courts), also enclosed with a yew hedge.

An entranceway from the Camellia Walk on the north side of the walled garden gives access to the valley garden. Here, gardens have been developed along a stream and two pools on land once part of a paddock (Garden Guide 1938). The sequence includes a rockery, a rhododendron dell, a heath garden and a woodland garden, the last of which was extended eastwards into Brick Kiln Wood in 1969, and contains a number of mature oak trees. On the higher north slopes of the valley, a pine walk contains many specimen trees including a *Wellingtonia* planted in 1926. A woodland walk is first shown on an 1829 map (Adams), but most of the gardens in the valley were developed by Arthur Barham (*Garden Work* 1936) from the 1920s. Diaries and photographs (private collection) record his design and planting of the yew hedges and garden enclosures, developed on the site of C19 shrubbery walks (Tithe Map; 1st edn OS map).

PARKLAND

Parkland to the south, east and west of the house is managed as pasture with specimen trees, the remains of the oak, elm, beech, 'Scotch fir' and Spanish chestnut described in 1911 (Sales Particulars). The 'heavily timbered' park also contains two small lakes in woodland 350m south of the house. By 1837 a double avenue of wych elms, planted on axis with the main house, extended for nearly a kilometre south from the current ha-ha to the Benenden Road (1st edn OS map), but were cut down due to disease in the 1940s.

KITCHEN GARDEN

A brick-walled kitchen garden (60m x 45m) lies 250m to the north-west of the house (Tithe Map) and since the 1980s has been used for rearing pheasants. Attached to the outside of the south entrance wall is a walled, semi-circular frame yard which contains a lean-to early C20 glasshouse (restored) with attached potting shed and boiler house, the two latter used for storage and a modern greenhouse. The kitchen garden and frame yard were constructed in 1837 and later maps show the kitchen garden divided into two sections with perimeter paths, with two glasshouses and a building in the frame yard (1st edn OS map). In 1911, the kitchen garden was 'surrounded on three sides by fruit trees' and the frame yard contained a 'three-quarter span sunk vinery, two-division lean-to show house, potting shed and stokehole' (Sales Particulars). Detailed plant lists are included in Colonel Barham's garden writings (private collection)

REFERENCES

Books and articles

Edward Hasted, 'Parishes: Rolvenden', *The History and Topological Survey of the County of Kent* Vol. 7 (1798), pp. 183-200.

Charles Igglesden, *A Saunter Through Kent with Pen and Pencil* (1903).

Tom Wright, *The Gardens of Britain. Kent, East and West Sussex and Surrey* (1978)

Harold Townshend Bowen, *Rolvenden Parish and Hundred* (Rolvenden, 1939).

Richard Gatty, *James Morrison 1789-1857. Portrait of a Merchant Prince*, p. 287 CKS Maidstone ref KB/MOR GAT.

R. S. Spelling, *Rolvenden Reflections*

S. Roaf and S. P. Beaman, *The Ice Houses of Britain* (1990)

Elisabeth Hall, *Historic Gardens in Kent* (Kent County Council, 1995), p. 52

Tony Venison, 'Divided Pleasures', *Country Life* (14 September 1995), pp. 82-87.

Maps

John Greenwood, *Map of Kent, 1821*.

John Adams 'Map of Rolvenden parish including the estates belonging to... situate in the parishes... (1829) (private collection)

Tithe map 1840 and apportionment. CKS ref U1304Y1

1st edn 25" OS map 1870 Sheets 71/14 and 79/2

2nd edn 25" OS map 1895 Sheets 71/14 and 79/2

3rd edn 25" OS map 1906 Sheets 71/14 and 79/2

4th edn 25" OS map 1929 Sheets 71/14 and 79/2
Modern Mastermap 1:10,000
Map showing listed buildings within Hole Park boundaries
Hole Park Estate map 2009

Illustrations

Hole Park in 1790s. Unknown artist (private collection).
Hole Park. The Seat of the Tho. Gybbon Money Penny Esq. M. P. 1838.
Reproduced in Richard Gatty, *James Morrison 1789-1857. Portrait of a Merchant Prince*, p. 287 CKS Maidstone ref KB/MOR GAT
Hole Park in 1890 in R. S. Spelling, *Rolvenden Reflections*
Hole Park in 1965 in R. S. Spelling, *Rolvenden Reflections*
2 photographs of (a) formal enclosed garden and (b) house through mature trees. County Planning Department 1981/2
Hole Park b&w photograph undated
Aerial photograph 2003

Archival items

Indenture 1860 (including map dated 1828/39)
English Heritage Listed Buildings entries undated.
Kent Compendium entry and notes 1996.

Additional archives held at Hole Park

Dated documents (in chronological order)

A Description of certain lands and tenements called the Windmill Farm and the late Major Gibbon Farm in the parish of Rolvenden in the county of Kent belonging to Philip Gibbon esq 1728. John Ward 1728.
Josh Hodgkinson, *A Survey of Lands Tythable to the Hempstead Estate situate in the Parish of Benenden and County of Kent 1779.*
T. R. Hunt, *Half a Dozen Hints on Picturesque Domestic Architecture in a Series of Designs...* (London: Longman, 1825).
Mortgage deed relating to the sale of Hole Park Estate between James Morrison and Thomas Monneypenny/Gibbon dated 1849.
1870 1st edn OS map 1870 (coloured version)
Sales particulars from the agents Rawlence and Squarey dated 1910 & 1911, including maps made by Messrs Geo Trollope and Sons. Also photographs of the house and estate dated 1911.
'Hole Park, Rolvenden Kent. Plan of kitchen garden and outhouses as existing' and 'Plan of Conservatory to East of House' A.S. Frank Rudkin architect January 1913.
Plans for the stable yard 'Hole Park Rolvenden Kent Cottages & Outbuildings' Contract no 2 Drawing nos 26 & 27. Frank Rudkin Architect, 25 John St, Bedford Row, London. April 1913.
W. J. Crittenden, 'Famous British Gardens. Hole Park, Rolvenden, Kent', *Garden Life* (December 1918), pp. 204-5.
Plan for alteration of the garden wall and arch (not built). Edward A. Jackson RIBA. Ashford and Hythe June 1926.
Plan for design of clipped yews 'The Mushroom' Arthur Barham Nov 1926
2 plans for a 'Scented Parlour' Arthur Barham 1928.
Layout and planting plan for the rose garden. Nov 1932.

Notebook by Arthur Saxby Barham (owner from 1912) signed and dated 1934. It states he made the record from old notebooks kept during the years he created the gardens. It includes articles from newspapers about the garden dated 1918 and 1936, photographs and a memo to the army units stationed at Hole Park during World War 2. The record has been kept going with more recent records about the estate by his grandson and great grandson.

'Hole Park. Plan of Pit and Potting Shed Drains' Nov 1935.

'Hole Park Rolvenden. The Vineyard pergola and loggia' W.D. Caroe. Drawing no 2 Sept. 1936.

'The Gardens of Hole Park, Rolvenden', *Garden work for Amateurs* (March 1936), pp. 144-5. Article on the head gardener, his work, staff and tomatoes. *A Description of the Gardens of Hole Park..*, Garden visitor's guide 1938 and 1939.

Album with photographs of the garden from the late 1930s onwards.

Colour aerial view 1973.

Undated documents

Undated ledger of The Hole and estate listing fields etc (as per Tithe map).

Plan 'Iron posts for climbing roses' A.S. Barham undated

Plan 'Rolvenden Hole Park. The Vineyard Pergola and Loggia'. Caroe and Passmore, 3 Gt College St, SW1. Drawing no 3.

List of fruit trees east of kitchen garden. Undated.

'Hole Park Yew Hedges' and 'Plan of tennis courts stop nets' undated.

Card index of plants bought in alphabetical order of plant name with the date, where bought (nursery etc.) and where planted.

2 black-and-white aerial views.

Research by Stella Smith

Description written by Barbara Simms

Edited by Virginia Hinze

February 2009

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

Fig. 1 Boundary map

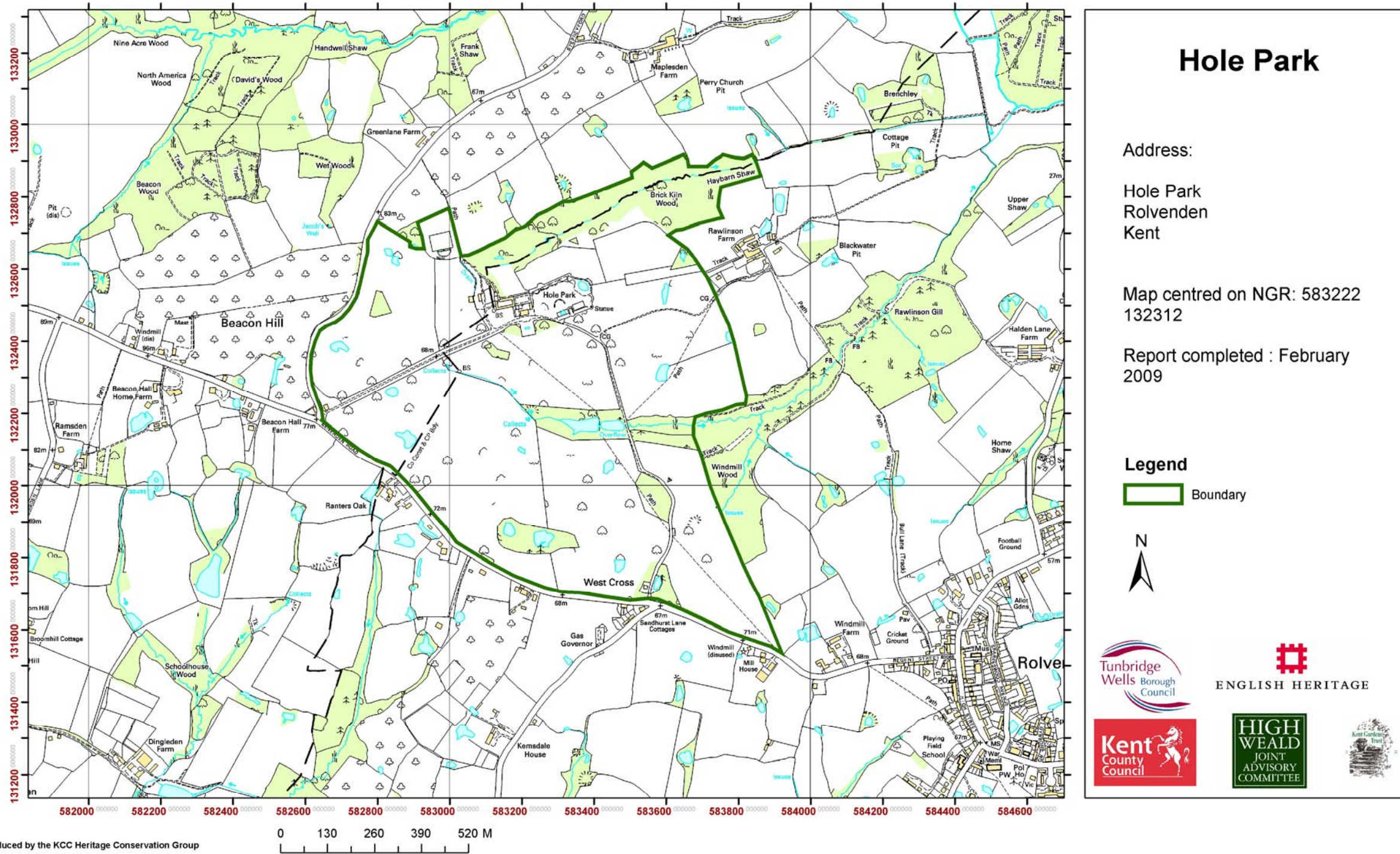
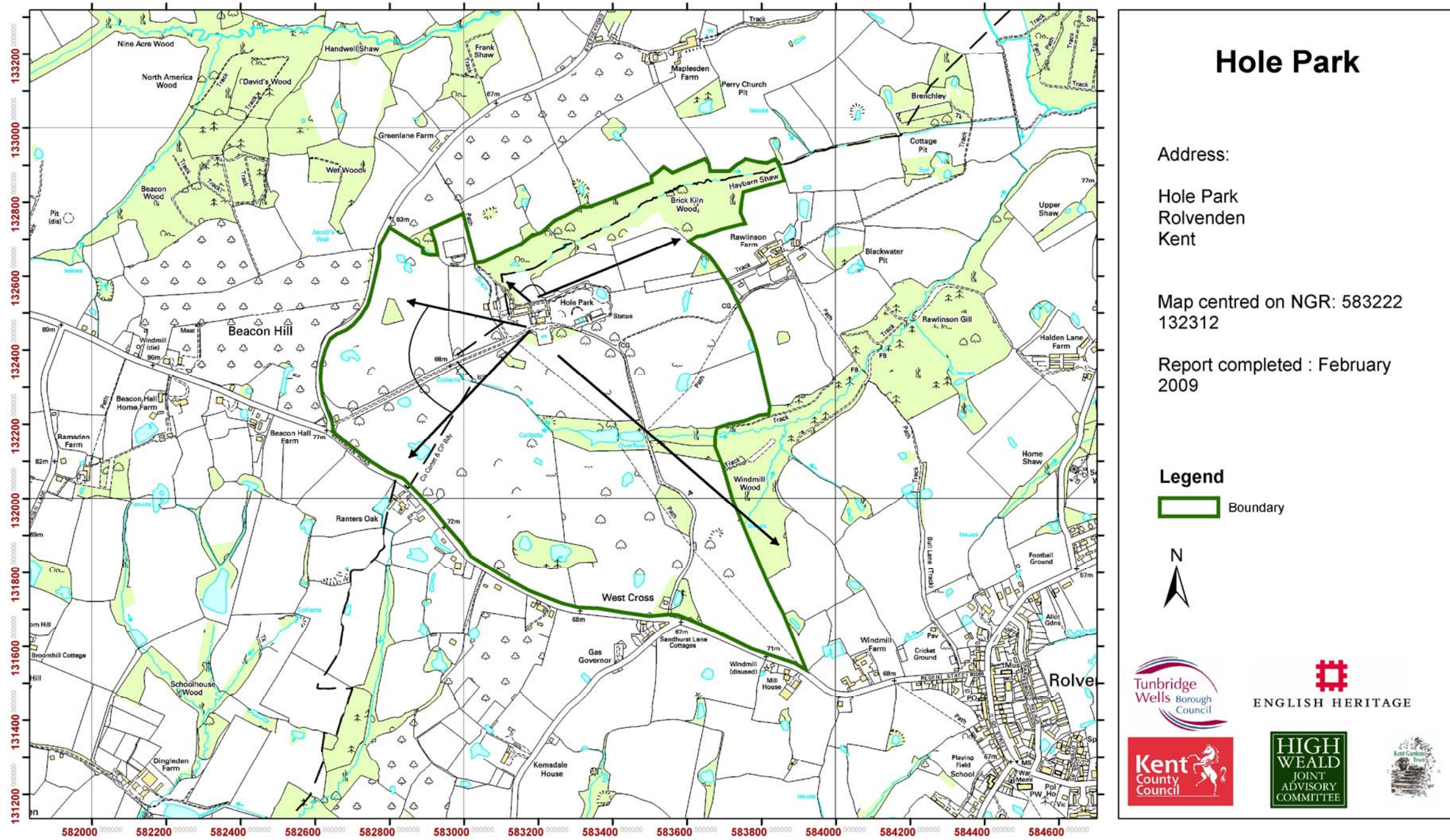


Fig. 2 Key views map

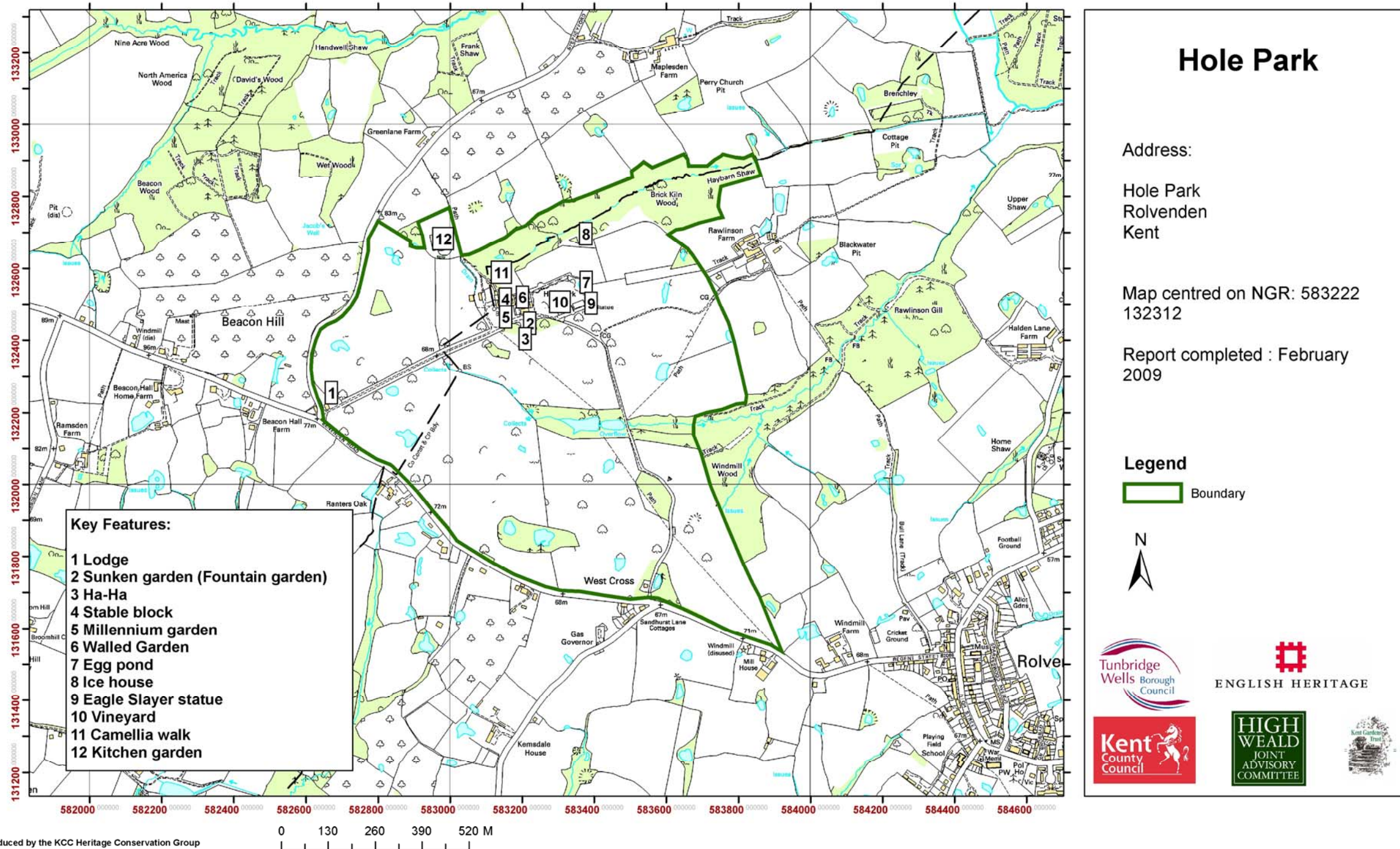


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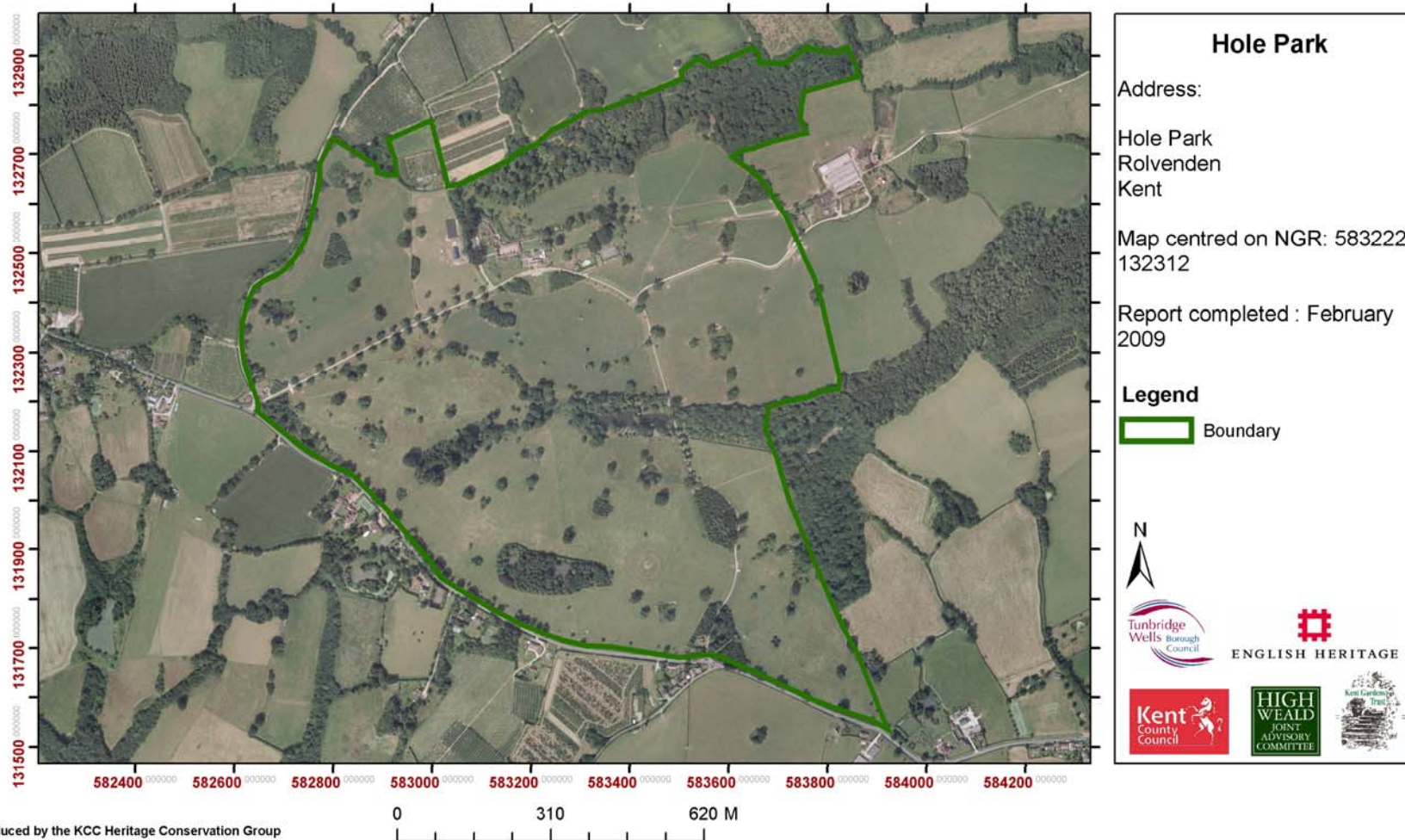
Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2009 review of Tunbridge Wells Borough

Fig. 3 Key features map



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Fig. 4 Aerial photograph

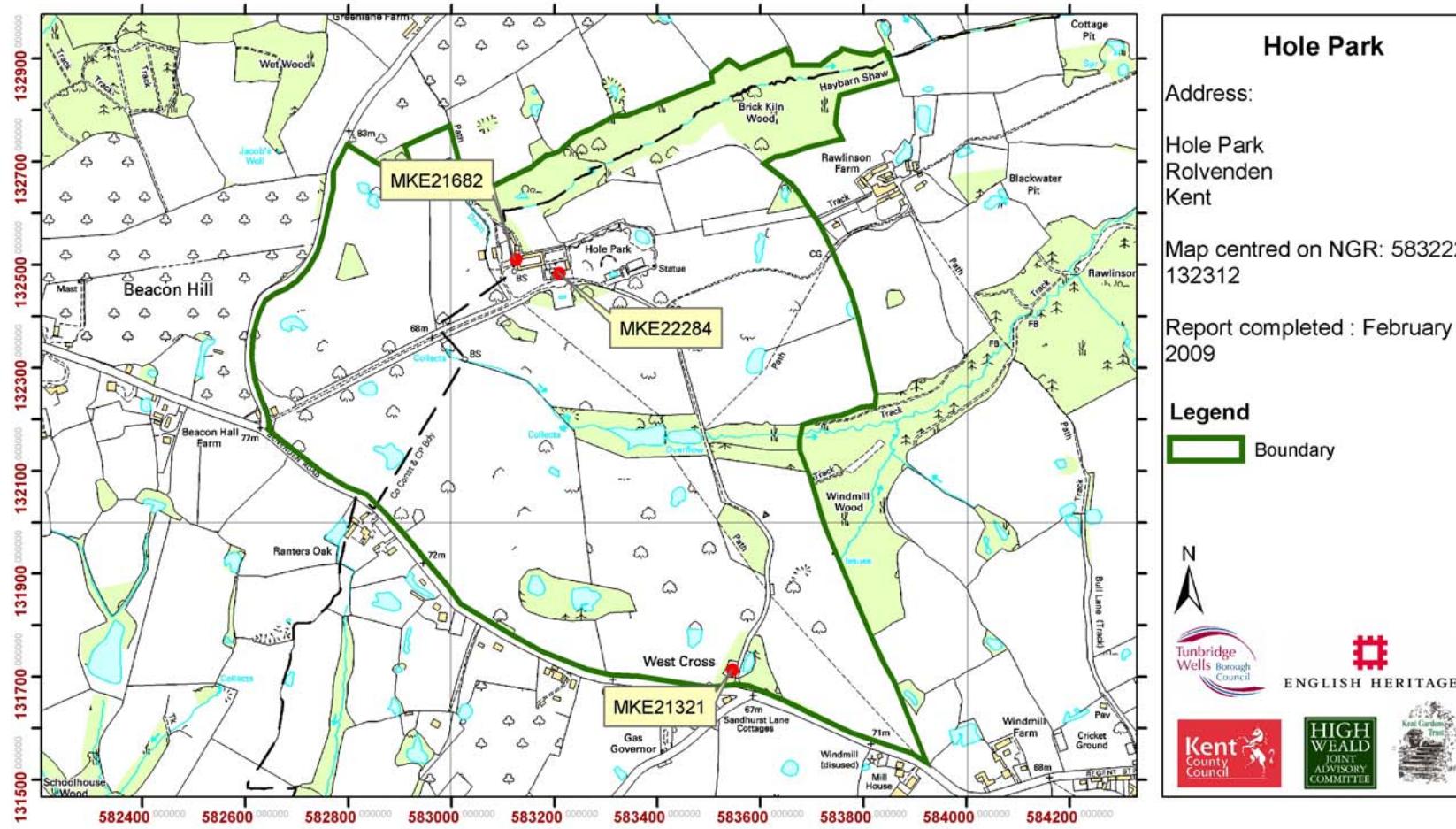


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Fig. 5 Map of listed buildings



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Fig. 6 Listed buildings at Hole Park (from the Kent Historic Environment Record)

Kent Historic Environment Record Reference: MKE21321

ROLVENDEN BENENDEN ROAD 1. 5272
(north side)

South-east Lodge to Hole Park TQ 83 SW 7/266 II
Late C19. One storey and attics red brick. Gable ended with bargeboards, finials and pendants. Clustered chimney stack. Diamond paned mullioned windows and one 3-light ogee-headed lancet window. Porch with fanciful decorated bargeboards and wooden balustrading.

Kent Historic Environment Record Reference: MKE21682

ROLVENDEN BENENDEN ROAD 1. 5272
(north side)

The Garden Cottage at Hole Park TQ 83 SW 7/264 II
GV
Probable timber framed building, C17 or earlier refronted it C18. Ground floor red brick. First floor weatherboarded. Two storeys. Hipped tiled roof with massive brick chimney stack. Two casement windows with diamond panes and mullions.

Kent Historic Environment Record Reference: MKE22284

ROLVENDEN BENENDEN ROAD 1. 5272
(north side)

Hole Park TQ 83 SW 7/263 II
GV
The part remaining is the central C17 and C18 part of Hole Park, the facade of which was restored about 1960. This was the home of the Gybbon Monypenny family. The C19 wings were demolished at this time. Two storeys and attics red brick. Nine window bays in all. Hipped tiled roof with 2 brick stacks and 2 modern dormers. Parapet with stone coping. Brick cornice. Casement windows. The central window bay projects forward and the 2 flanking ones on each side project slightly further than the remaining two. Cross-shaped iron ties. Stringcourse. Modern doorcase in Georgian style with semi-circular enriched pediment, triglyph frieze fluted pilasters and 6 panelled door with the top 2 panels cut away and glazed.