

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



Ladham House, Goudhurst



April 2009

Ladham House

Goudhurst, Kent

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With many thanks to the owners of Ladham House for allowing access to the gardens and commenting on the site description; and to the gardeners for sharing their knowledge of the gardens' development.

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

LADHAM HOUSE

TUNBRIDGE WELLS

GOUDHURST

TQ 7330 3881

SUMMARY OF THE HISTORIC INTEREST

Formal gardens laid out from the mid-C19 around an early C19 mansion and set within extensive parkland with a ha-ha. In the late C19 the gardens were re-designed to accompany an enlarged mansion in Italianate villa style.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Ladham House, in the hundred of Marden, occupies a site that in 1726 was woodland (Laddom Wood) attached to Spread Eagle Farm and leased to Thomas Stennard from the Dean and Chapter of Rochester Cathedral (Spread Eagle Farmery). There were no buildings in this c.13ha woodland until 1769, when a farmhouse named Latten was built at the south-east corner (Andrews, Dury and Herbert). By 1813, the land was leased by a Mr Ralph Oakden and a Mr Richard White, who, under the terms of their lease, had agreed to build a cottage in Ladham Wood, 'now grubbed' (Cathedral Survey). In 1823 the cottage is shown with formally laid out gardens to its south and south-west with a paddock, an orchard and fields to its north-east (The Star and Crown Plan).

In 1831, some 250m north-east of the cottage and on the site of the present Ladham House, Oakden built a new mansion with ornamental gardens (Tithe Map). Ladham House remained in the Oakden family until 1870, during which time the building was substantially enlarged and a new garden was laid out (1st edn OS map). Sales particulars describe a 12ha estate 'with stables, gardens, grounds, orchards, plantations, cottage and miniature park'. The property was occupied briefly by Sir Henry Mather Jackson, a relative of the Oakdens, until it was bought in 1874 by Sir George Jessel, Solicitor-General in Gladstone's government.

By 1895, Sir George and Lady Amelia Jessel had enlarged the mansion in an Italianate style and restyled the gardens, possibly to the designs of the landscape architect William Goldring (1854-1919) (2nd edn OS map; *The Times, Country Life*). The property remained in the Jessel family until 2002, during which time the gardens continued to evolve and, from 1931, to be opened annually under the National Gardens Scheme (*Country Life*). It was bought by the present owners in 2002 and remains in single private ownership. The gardens continue to be open to the public under the National Gardens Scheme.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

Ladham House stands on a small plateau in the High Weald some 70m above sea level. The land slopes gently to the north and north-east giving distant views across the River Beult Valley towards the North Downs. The c.16ha site lies 300m north-east of Goudhurst, 5km north-west of Cranbrook and 13km east of Royal Tunbridge Wells with the A262 (Lamberhurst to Biddenden road) about 400m to its south. The site is bordered to its east by Ladham Road, to its south and north-east by orchards and to its west and north-west by agricultural land.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

Ladham House estate is entered on its east boundary from Ladham Road between a pair of mature beech trees standing on either side of a pair of 3m high, ornate wrought iron gates hung on red brick piers with stone cappings and stone ball finials. Two-metre high walls, also in red brick, extend north and south from the piers, enclosing the grounds from Ladham Road. A gravelled drive curves gently in a north-westerly direction for c.150m between mature evergreen shrubs and trees to arrive at a shallow, oval forecourt on the south-west entrance front. In 1840, the approach drive arrived at the north-east front of the mansion (Tithe Map), but the entrance was changed to the south-west during alterations to the mansion in the 1850/60s. Two hundred and fifty metres south of the main entrance gates a track from the north side of Ladham Road runs for 250m along the property boundary in a north-westerly direction to its junction with a service drive to Ladham House. The tarmacadamed-surfaced service drive continues north-eastwards for a further 150m to the north-east front of the mansion.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Ladham House is a long, rectangular, two-storey, white-rendered building with attics above. The irregular roofs are hipped and gabled and tiled in grey slate. It was built in 1831, probably first as a classical, symmetrical Georgian villa, but by the early 1860s it had been substantially enlarged. This included the addition of a wing with two projecting bays on its north-east front, a single-depth integral service wing on its west end and two projecting bays on the entrance front, which by then had been repositioned on its south-west side (1st edn OS map). By 1895 the service wing had been replaced by a new wing on the west end of the mansion, a conservatory between the two bays on its north-east front (removed by 1906) and an octagonal conservatory on its south-east corner (2nd edn OS map). This last feature is depicted in a photograph of 1935, but was probably dismantled after World War Two.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The gardens on the entrance front of the mansion are laid out on rising ground immediately to the south-west of the forecourt and are reached by five broad, curved, stone steps on axis with the front door. From the top of the steps a grass walk, also axial on the mansion, runs 80m south-west flanked by long, herbaceous borders backed by flowering evergreen shrubs and trees. The border is terminated by a 1.5m high yew hedge exedra enclosing a stone seat. Immediately to the border's east side is an c.0.5ha lawn planted with specimen trees. To its west side is an enclosed rose garden (c.10m x 40m) with perimeter

gravel paths and geometric beds symmetrically arranged around a circular stone pool with a central stone fountain. It is enclosed on its east by the shrubs of the herbaceous border, on its south and west by C19 brick walls and on its north-west side by a C19 loggia (5m from the mansion). The loggia has a red tiled roof supported by round wooden columns and faces south-west across a rectangular lily pool.

Nineteenth-century maps and 1870 sales particulars indicate that the present rose garden was then used as kitchen gardens and orchards and was described as the 'capital kitchen garden with forcing pit, having a warm sunny aspect, fully planted and in good order'. It was shown divided into three sections with perimeter paths and the present circular pool was probably a water tank (1st edn OS map). It had 'grass walks bordered by flower beds [and] a choice collection of roses' and, by 1895, a glasshouse occupied the site of the present lily pool (wall marks its position) (2nd edn OS map). It is likely that the second Sir George Jessel and his second wife, Betty, both enthusiastic gardeners, were responsible for developing these as ornamental gardens from 1929 when they inherited Ladham House (*Country Life*).

The north-east, garden front of the mansion opens onto a raised terrace with extensive views across open lawns with mature trees and rhododendrons to the parkland, pasture, woodland and the Downs beyond. The terrace (c.40m x 25m) is laid to lawn with gravel paths, perimeter borders and clipped shrubs in tubs. It is enclosed on its east and west sides by 1.5m high, square-clipped yew hedges and on its north side by a 0.5m high stone wall with piers and stone capping surmounted by planted urns. Eight stone steps on the central axis of the garden front descend from the terrace to the lawns that surround the mansion to its north, north-east and north-west sides, those to the north being bounded at c.100m distance by a stone ha-ha. This was constructed in the mid-C19 but realigned on its present course at the turn of the century when the gardens on this side of the mansion were extended into the park (3rd and 4th edn OS maps). In 1895, these lawns are shown simply laid out, studded with trees and circular walks (2nd edn OS map) but a more intricate layout of paths and the change in the line of the ha-ha is shown in 1906 (3rd edn OS map). In a 1957 article Christopher Lloyd attributed these changes, together with the creation of vistas and much of the planting, to William Goldring, who he described as 'a celebrated designer of the Edwardian period' (*Country Life*).

A few metres from the mansion, a gap in the yew hedge on the east end of the terrace opens to an avenue of 5 pairs of clipped yews planted at 10m spacings. The avenue follows the downward slope of the lawn for some 50m eastwards to an octagonal pool (replacing a former C20 grassy basin) with a stone surround and a central stone figure some 50m east of the mansion. The pool is now (2009) surrounded by a late C20 0.5m high wrought iron railing. A raised, grassed terrace immediately east of the pond was formerly a late C19 croquet lawn (person communication).

Along the eastern boundary of the site is a 400m long, narrow, woodland walk that runs north-eastwards from Ladham Road entrance. This is the remains of a 1929 woodland garden of 'notable trees and shrubs' (*Country Life*) and was

developed from the 'pretty shady walks, adorned with a great variety of rhododendrons and other shrubs' described in 1870 (Sales Particulars). Within the southern end of the woodland, approximately 80m south-east of the mansion, is a dell, a sunken rockery walk with rugged stone paths and steps with a waterfall and well, all of C19 origin. At the woodland's northern end, 150m north-east of the mansion, is a pond set amongst mature Scots pine, a larch and an oak tree. Before the course of the ha-ha was changed in the C19, this pond (probably an earlier fish pond) was in the park, but it was planted as a bog garden in the C20 (*Country Life*). It has now (2008) been reshaped and replanted.

Twenty metres to the south-west of the mansion is a late C19 two-storey, red brick and tile, stable block and coach house with accommodation above. Until World War Two, a groom, a chauffeur and their families lived in this accommodation (personal communication). The whole stable block has been converted by the present owners to accommodation for family use.

Some 40m to the stable block's north-west is a tennis court enclosed by 2m wire netting. Immediately to its west again is a sunken swimming pool area with a brick built pool house with a tiled roof (built 2008). It is set in terraced landscaped grounds by local garden designer Jo Thompson and includes a jacuzzi on a raised deck set below a pergola and surrounded by clipped box and hornbeam.

PARKLAND

Parkland to the north of the mansion is managed as grazed pasture with many ancient trees and retains the picturesque appearance described in 1870: 'A beautiful miniature park, studded with oaks and other thriving timber in clumps and single trees' (Sales Particulars).

KITCHEN GARDEN

In 1897 Ladham House was advertised with 'two well-stocked kitchen gardens with vineries, potting sheds etc' (*The Times*). These comprised the walled garden developed in the C20 as a rose garden and a second mid-C19 kitchen garden 60m to the south-west of the mansion (1st edn OS map). It occupies ground on the south side of a freestanding, 3m high, red brick, wall with coping. An entrance is located in the centre of the wall with a former boiler house (now the gardeners' room) built against the exterior of the wall a few metres to its west. An Alitex glasshouse is built onto the inside of the wall east of the entrance, replacing a C19 glasshouse. The garden is laid to grass with a few raised beds planted with vegetables.

Until the early C20 this garden was planted as an orchard, as was approximately .05ha of land to its south, and described in 1870 as 'stocked with thriving plum, cherry, pear and apple trees' (Sales Particulars). Most of the land is now (2009) a paddock with only a small orchard surviving on its north-east corner. In 1897 the property was advertised with 'two well-stocked kitchen gardens with vineries, potting sheds etc' (*The Times*).

REFERENCES

Books and articles

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Maps

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Andrews, Dury and Herbert map of Kent 1769.
Hasted map for Goudhurst 1778.
Mudge, William, *A New and Accurate Survey of Kent* 1801.
A Plan of an Estate called the Star and Crown Goudhurst 1823. Medway Archives ref. CCRc P24.
Tithe map 1840
Plan of Ladham House estate from sales particulars 1870

- OS maps 1st edn 6" 1862
 2nd edn 6" 1897
 3rd edn 6" 1907
 4th edn 6" 1929

- OS maps 1st edn 25" 1870 Sheet 62/14
 2nd edn 25" 1895 Sheet 62/14
 3rd edn 25" 1906 Sheet 62/14
 Revd edn 25" 1938 Sheet 62/14

Modern Mastermap 1:2,500

Illustrations

- Rear of Ladham House*. Postcard 1897. Goudhurst and Kilndown History Society
Rear of Ladham House. Postcard 1935. Goudhurst and Kilndown History Society
Photograph of Ladham House 1935. Jessel collection
2 photographs of (a) formal gardens and (b) informal areas of trees and shrubs. County Planning Department 1976
Aerial photograph 2003

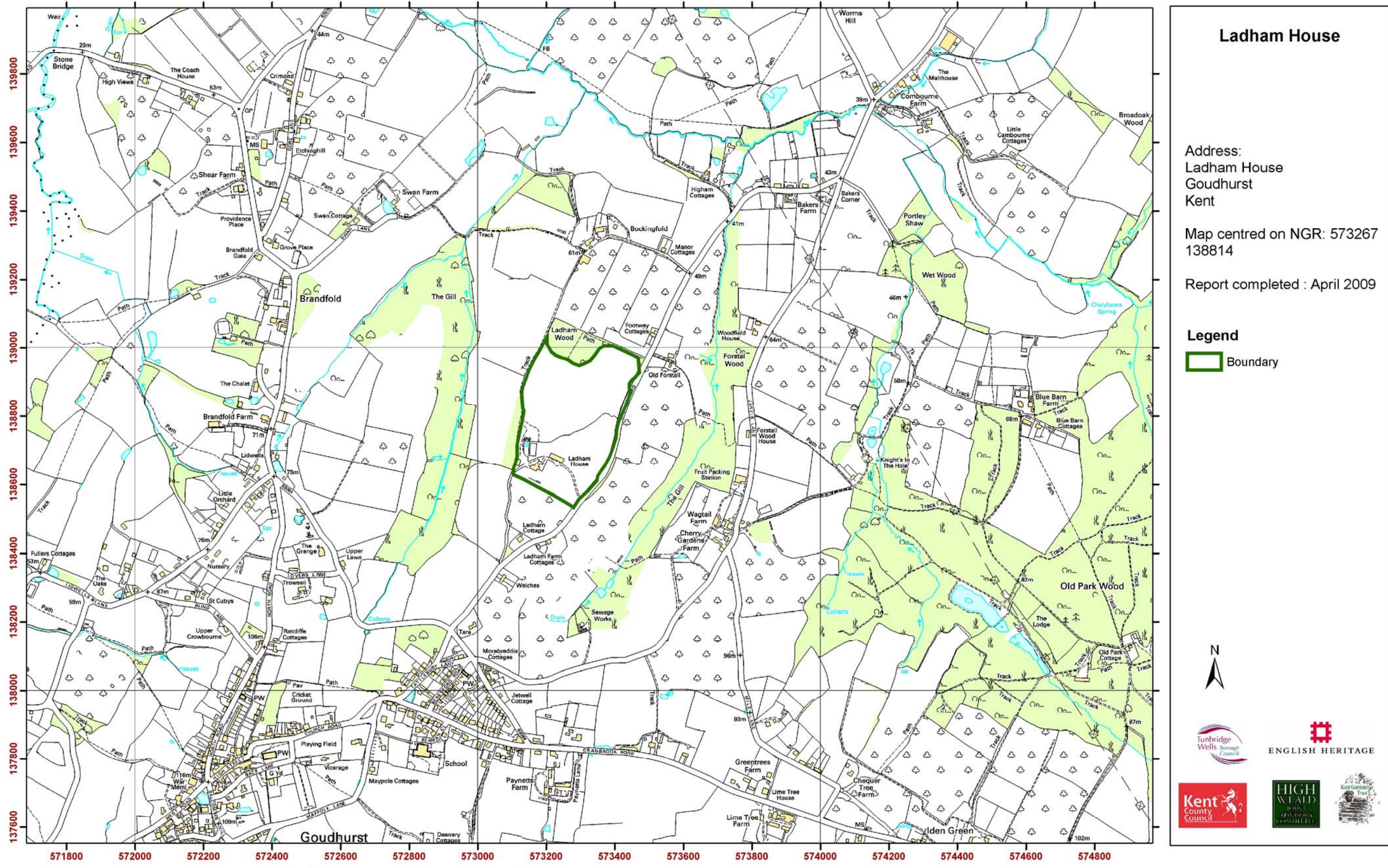
Archival items

- Rochester Cathedral survey re Ralph Oakden lease 1813. Medway Archives ref. DRc/ES2/4 (in JD notes).
Land Tax Records for Goudhurst July 1831. CKS
Ladham House sales particulars 24 May 1870
Notice of auction of Ladham House 9 June 1897, *The Times* (1897)

Kent Compendium notes 1996.

Research by Jane Davidson
Description written by Barbara Simms
Edited by Virginia Hinze
April 2009

Fig. 1 Boundary map



Ladham House

Address:
Ladham House
Goudhurst
Kent

Map centred on NGR: 573267
138814

Report completed : April 2009

Legend

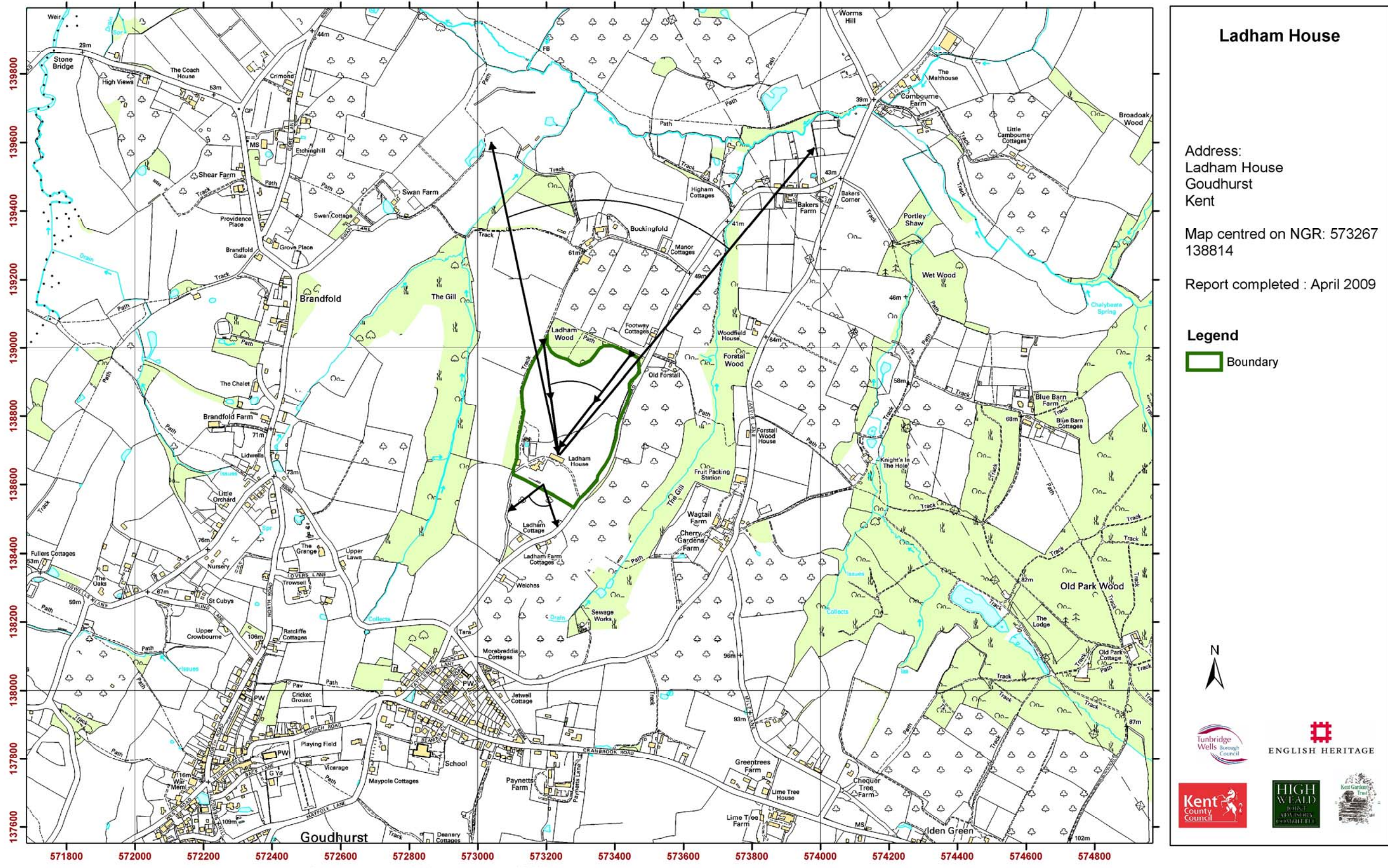
 Boundary

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Fig. 2 Key views map



Ladham House

Address:
Ladham House
Goudhurst
Kent

Map centred on NGR: 573267
138814

Report completed : April 2009

Legend

 Boundary

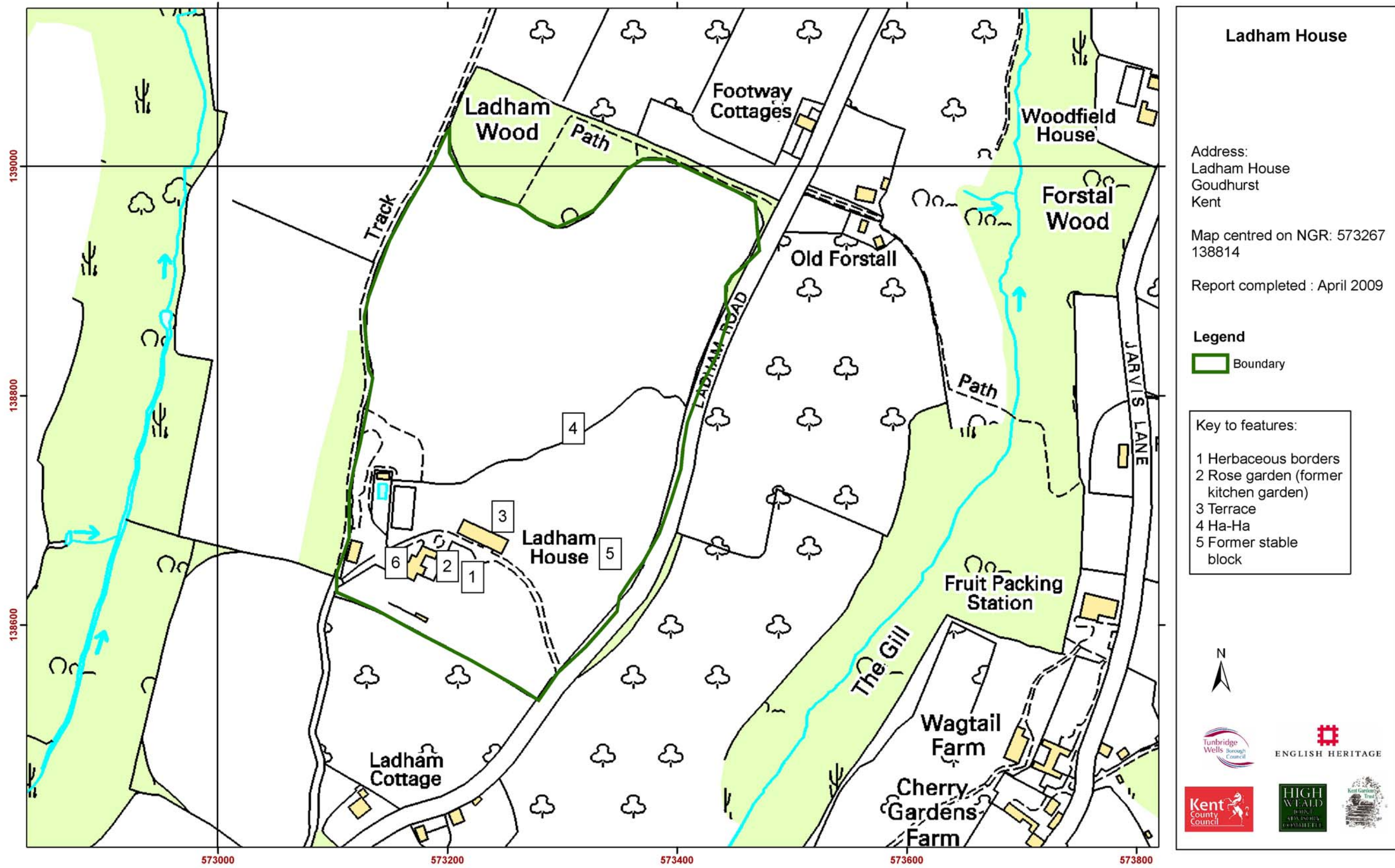







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Fig.3 Key features map



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Fig. 4 Aerial photograph



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