

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



## Salomons, Southborough



April 2009



# Salomons

Southborough, Kent

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With many thanks to Mark Savory, estate manager, and his team for sharing their archives and memories and 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 <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  
TUNBRIDGE WELLS  
SOUTHBOROUGH  
TQ 5684 4157

SALOMONS

## **SUMMARY OF THE HISTORIC INTEREST**

Formal terraced gardens set within informal lawns, with lakes and woodland walks laid out from the mid-C19 to the south and west of an early C19 house (with later additions).

## **CHRONOLOGY OF THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT**

The site of the present Salomons estate was once within the Manor of Southborough (Borough of South), one of four boroughs forming the Manor of Tunbridge that was given to Richard de Fitzgilbert in the C11 in recognition of his part in the Norman Conquest (Hasted). Prior to this, although there is evidence of prehistoric activity around Southborough and use of the land as pasture for pigs, the area was sparsely populated until the mid-C14 (CAA). From the C16, the water from the River Medway and its tributaries was used to power mills for iron smelting and, in the C18, for gunpowder manufacture. From the mid-C18 maps also identify a number of farms, as much of the Medway valley was 'very fertile and good fattening land' (Hasted). These include a Salmon (sometimes Salmons) Farm between Ashurst and Groombridge, which may have been associated with the Levy Salomons family, who owned a property in nearby Frant at that time (Andrews, Dury and Herbert; Hasted; Greenwood).

In 1829, Levy's son, David, a London financier and fighter for Anglo-Jewish emancipation, bought a small country house in Southborough called Broom Hill. He commissioned the architect Decimus Burton, who was already working on the development of the Calverley Estate, Tunbridge Wells, to advise on early alterations (listed building description). The 1840 Tithe Map records the property (Broom Hill Villa) as a holding of some 8ha comprising a house, gardens and pleasure grounds with an orchard, meadow and woods. During the subsequent twenty years Salomons, who was made a baronet in 1869, substantially enlarged the house and landscaped the grounds, and added two lodges and a kitchen garden (1st edn OS map). An 1872 photograph depicts a raised terrace around the house, which was laid out with intricate parterre beds, from which descended lawns richly planted with trees.

In 1873, on Sir David's death, his nephew, David Lionel Salomons, inherited both his property and his title. From then until World War One, David Lionel, a scientist and engineer, continued to enlarge the house and gardens, laid out a new entrance drive and built a lodge. He also added a water tower, workshops, garages and a scientific theatre with a photographic studio, dark rooms and a chemical laboratory. A substantial stable block was built in 1894 and the adjoining kitchen garden was extended to accommodate a new range of glass houses (3rd edn OS map; *Gardeners' Chronicle*).

David Lionel had four daughters and one son, David Reginald, who was killed in 1915 in World War One. In 1925, on her father's death, his last surviving daughter, Vera Bryce Salomons, inherited, although her mother, Lady Julia, remained at Broom Hill until her death (Kelly 1934). In 1938 Vera gave Broom Hill to Kent County Council to be used as a public institution and its name was changed to David Salomons House. The property was requisitioned by the army during World War Two, but from 1948, after the introduction of the National Health Service, it was transferred to the Ministry of Health and used as a convalescent home for women until 1971. In 1975, David Salomons House became the Regional Conference and Training Centre for the South East Thames Regional Health Authority and in the 1980s two accommodation blocks were built in the kitchen garden. The property was renamed Salomons Centre in 1993.

In 1996, Salomons Centre became the property of Canterbury Christ Church College (from 2005, Canterbury Christ Church University). It continues to function as a conference and training centre with a museum open to the public. The property remains in single corporate ownership.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

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

Salomons is set among the undulating landscape of the High Weald and is characterised by its hanging woodlands and rocky outcrops. The house stands back from the road in the northern section of a site that descends steeply from the north to the south-west. There are fine distant views to the south and the west to Birchett's, Speldhurst and Shadwell Woods and the well-timbered grounds of Bentham Hill House estate are about 75m to its north. The 15ha site adjoins residential areas on the western outskirts of Southborough and is approximately 4km north-west of Royal Tunbridge Wells and 6.5km south-west of Tonbridge. The A26 (London to Royal Tunbridge Wells road) is 1.5km due east. The site is bordered to the north by Etherington Hill and the Speldhurst Road, and to the east by Broomhill Road. The boundaries on the west and south are formed, respectively, by Southlands Farm and Mill Farm.

### **ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES**

Salomons is entered from the west side of Broomhill Road, some 100m south-west from its junction with Speldhurst Road, along a tarmac-surfaced drive between a pair of 1.5m high stone piers with stone cappings. A third similar pier on their north side forms a pedestrian entrance. Rusticated stone walls extend from the piers along the property boundary and enclose it from the roads on its northern and eastern sides. On the south side of the drive's entrance is a two-storey lodge with attic (Oak Lodge, listed grade II) designed in Olde English Revival style (listed building description). It is constructed of ashlar with a timber-framed first floor and a tiled roof with a chimney stack displaying the date 1894 with the Salomons family crest (listed building description). The lodge frontage has a hipped weather porch with stone lions on its tiled roof, which is supported by stone columns. There is a single-storey extension on its west end.

From the entrance, the tarmacadum-surfaced drive descends steeply in a westerly direction for approximately 350m, running between lawns studded with mature beech, Scots pine and oak trees and with views south across the valley, to arrive at a forecourt on the east entrance front of the house. Two hundred metres west of the entrance, a fork from the drive's north side serves a stable block then continues in a north-westerly direction for 150m to reach the northern end of the forecourt. The forecourt (c.20m x 35m) is partly enclosed on its north side by a projecting wing of the house and on its south and east sides by low, dressed stone walls. It is now used as a car park. Visitor parking provision (since the 1980s) extends some 200m east from the house along the south side of the main drive.

A second drive, now serving as an exit route from the north side of the forecourt, enters the site at a second lodge (North Lodge) on Speldhurst Road. Built in the mid-C19 also in Olde English Revival style, North Lodge (listed grade II) is a one-and-half-storey building with a timber-framed first floor decorated with a central quatrefoil and a steeply pitched, fish-scale-tiled roof. Its side elevations are partly tile-hung (listed building description). Until the late C19 improvements by David Lionel Salomons, this was the main entrance and approach to the house (Tithe Map; 1st edn OS map).

A third drive, also now serving as an exit route, enters the site 140m south-west of Oak Lodge on Broomhill Road and runs for some 250m in a north-westerly direction to a gap in the east wall of the forecourt. This drive, probably designed as a service drive, was in place by 1862 but a lodge at its entrance has since been demolished.

## PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

When built in the 1820s, the house at Salomons (listed grade II), was a cottage named Broom Hill. It was extended by Decimus Burton (1800-81) in 1829 in an Italianate villa style and enlarged again (architects unknown) during the C19 and early C20 centuries (listed building description).

It is now a house of irregular and complex form, but is mainly constructed in three storeys. It is built with Tunbridge Wells ashlar blocks with a slate roof. The L-shaped east front and the south, garden front both have a stone parapet and balustrade, the balustrade dating from 1854. There are porticos with colonnades on the south and west fronts. A wing on the north end of the building was added by 1897 to house David Lionel Salomons's science theatre and garage block and extended in 1902 and 1913 (date on the building). Some 10m to the east of the house is a C19 red brick building built as electrical workshops in 1882. These have been renovated and continue to be used as workshops by the grounds staff.

Ten metres north-east of the house is a water tower (listed grade II) built in 1876 on an outcrop of Tunbridge Wells rock with caves constructed underneath. The round tower of four storeys is built of stock brick with a band of red brick marking each storey. It has a crenellated parapet, a clock face and arrow-slit windows (listed building description). Water was pumped up to the tower from a local stream by a hydraulic ram (located 250m south-west of the house) and

provided the supply for the house and the estate. Extending eastwards from the tower's east side is a 2m high wall which forms part of the south wall of a kitchen garden. The wall also has a crenellated parapet and arrow slit openings and with imitation towers built into it.

One hundred and fifty metres to the east of the house is a stable block and coach house (listed grade II\*) designed by the architect William Barnsley Hughes and completed in 1894 (Salomons Museum). It is laid out around a stable yard in the style of a miniature French C16 chateau of red brick with stone dressings (listed building description). The entrance is on the south side through a pair of 3m high wrought iron gates. These are hung from a 6m high brick-and-stone arch set centrally in a 3m high brick wall with stone dressings. The two-storey, red brick coach house stands on the north side of the stable yard, flanked on either side with single-storey stables with lofts above, also in red brick. The coach house has been converted to a dining room (Runcie Court) and the stables to offices.

### GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The ornamental gardens lie on the south and west sides of the house and comprise terraced gardens with informal lawns, lakes, shrubberies and woodland walks on steeply descending land. The south and west fronts open onto a broad, stone flag terrace supported by a deep, stone retaining wall. The terrace, with sloping lawns below and from which there are panoramic views over the gardens and to the surrounding countryside, is enclosed by 200mm high rounded stone blocks with regular square stone piers and urn finials. A conservatory has recently been built at the northern end of the west front and serves as a dining room.

From the south front, flights of stone steps (some in need of repair) descend to two, broad, grass terraces, one below the other with shrub borders at the base of their grassy banks. Below the terraces, the lawn then falls steeply to a small lake some 60m south-east of the house. It is spanned by a wooden bridge and is set within a recently planted area of evergreen shrubs and young trees. Seventy metres south-west of the house is a second, larger lake with an island, on which there is an Ionic temple, placed there in 1994. A wooden deck on the lake's east bank stands on the site of a C19 boat house shown on maps until the 1950s.

From the south-west corner of the top, flagged, terrace, a long flight of shallow steps provides direct access to the lake and winding gravel walks around it, one now partly a cinder track. To the south and west of the lake there are further walks through hanging woods on the site boundary. These paths were laid out during Sir David's lifetime and are shown on maps from 1862, later being described as 'the delightful Wood Walk' (*Garden Life*). A few metres to the east of the lake is a level grassed area (25m x 50m), possibly the site of the 'extra tennis court ... with rose beds all around' mentioned in 1906 (3rd edn OS map; *Garden Life*). To the south of this is another grassed area (c.80m x 80m) used for sports activities.

### KITCHEN GARDEN



A C19 kitchen garden (c.120m x 70m) is sited a few metres east of the house and is entered from the drive at North Lodge between a pair of 2m high brick piers (the gates now gone). The garden's brick walls, 2-3m in height, now contain two L-shaped accommodation blocks and a car park, built on levelled ground in, respectively, the western and northern sections. The remaining south-facing, sloping section is laid to lawn with some old fruit trees surviving. A smaller kitchen garden (70m x 70m) is shown on maps from 1862 when it was divided into quarters with perimeter paths and a fountain (1st edn OS map). A large glass house range is shown along the northern wall and in the south-west corner, on the site of the present water tower.

The kitchen garden was extended eastwards when plans for the construction of the stable block were made in 1890 and by 1891 a range of Crompton & Fawkes glass houses had been installed along the north wall (*Gardeners' Chronicle*). A published interview with the head gardener Mr Roberts and his garden notes for 1890/91 describe his horticultural expertise, particularly in fruit growing. The kitchen garden continued in production until at least 1955 when six gardeners were employed and surplus produce was sold (gardener's notes). The glass houses were demolished in the 1980s, but wall marks and shelf supports indicate their position. A dipping pool and parts of the 1891 path layout also survive (*Gardeners' Chronicle*).

## REFERENCES

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Alfred Wilcox, *Garden Life* (10 April 1906).  
Kelly's Directory for Southborough 1934.

### Maps

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

Edward Hasted map of Ashurst 1778.

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

Tithe map and award (Tonbridge Parish) 1840

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

OS maps      1st edn 25" 1868 Sheet 60/7  
                  2nd edn 25" 1898 Sheet 60/7  
                  3rd edn 25" 1909 Sheet 60/7  
                  Revised edn 25" 1936 Sheet 60/7

Modern Mastermap 1:10,000. 2007

Map showing listed buildings within Salomons boundaries 1:5,000

### **Illustrations**

Photograph of view from terrace 1872 (private collection)

Photograph of Crompton & Fawkes glass houses in the kitchen garden, from *Gardeners' Chronicle* (4 April 1891)

Aerial photograph (undated)

Aerial photograph 2003

### **Archival items**

Doug Bennett, Transcription of notes by Broomhill's head gardener Mr Roberts 1890/91 + news cuttings (1987) (private collection).

Plans, specifications etc... for the new stables at Broomhill. Salomons Museum Ref. DSH.M.00293. 52 drawings and documents dated 1891-93.

Head Gardener's notes for 6 gardeners 23 February 1948 - 29 May 1949 (private collection).

Garden sales 10 October 1953-23 April 1955 (private collection).

English Heritage Listed Buildings entries: undated.

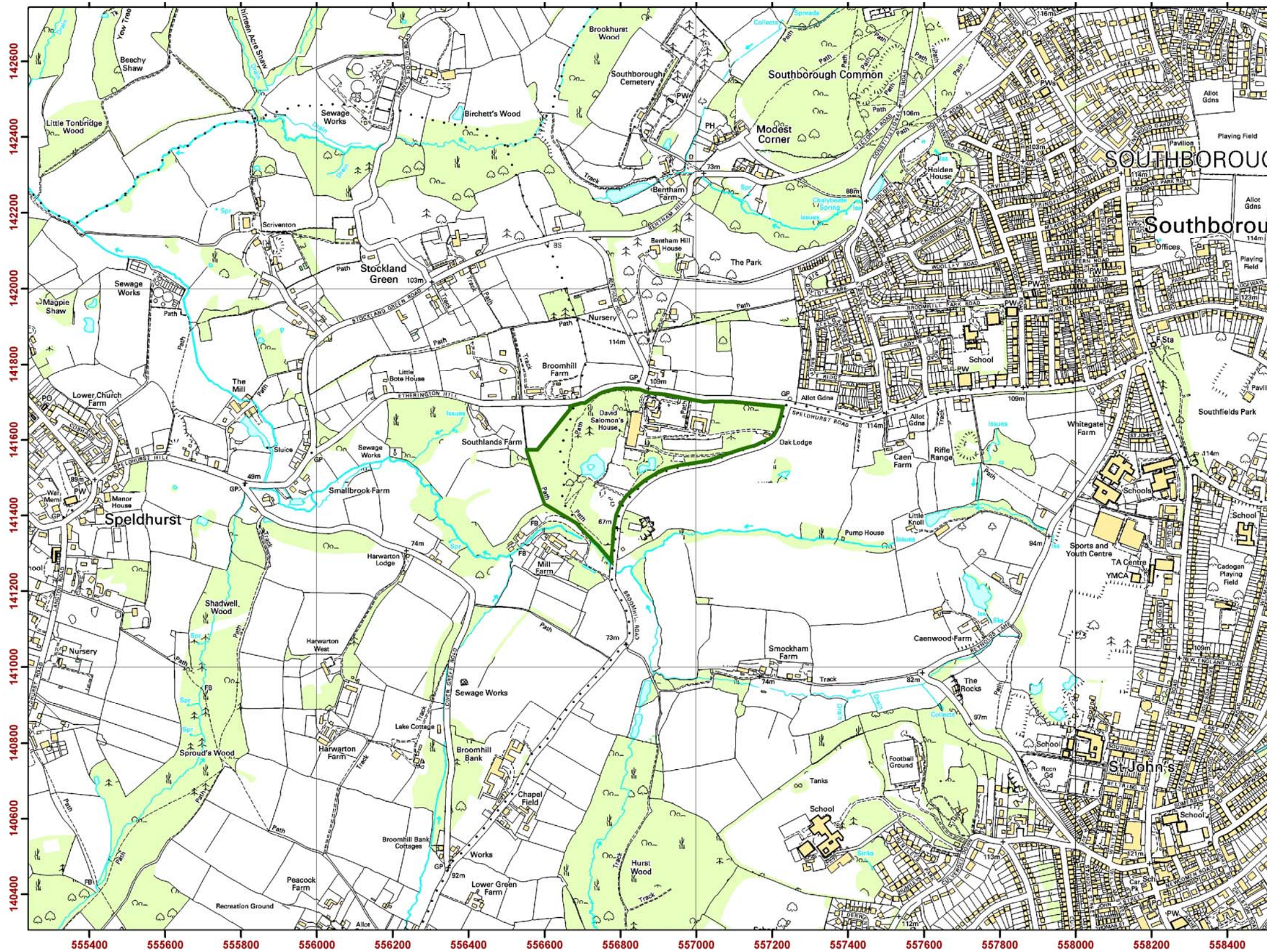
Description written by Barbara Simms

Edited by Virginia Hinze

April 2009

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

Fig. 1 Boundary map



**Salomons**



Address:  
Salomons  
Southborough  
Kent




Map centred on NGR: 556808  
141581

Report completed : April 2009

**Legend**  
 Boundary

N

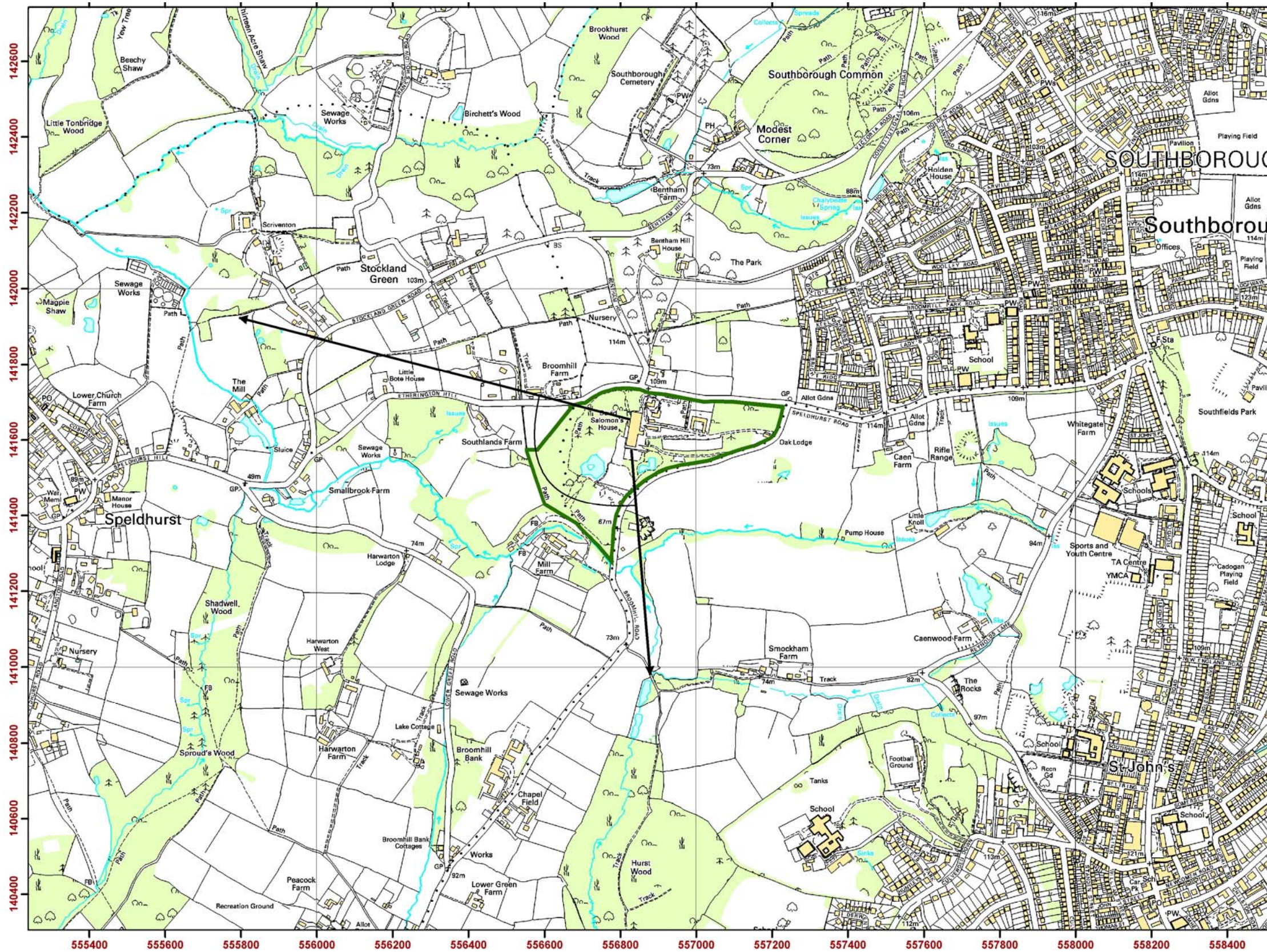



Produced by the KCC Heritage Conservation Group

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Fig. 2 Key views map



**Salomons**



Address:  
Salomons  
Southborough  
Kent




Map centred on NGR: 556808  
141581

Report completed : April 2009

**Legend**  
 Boundary

N

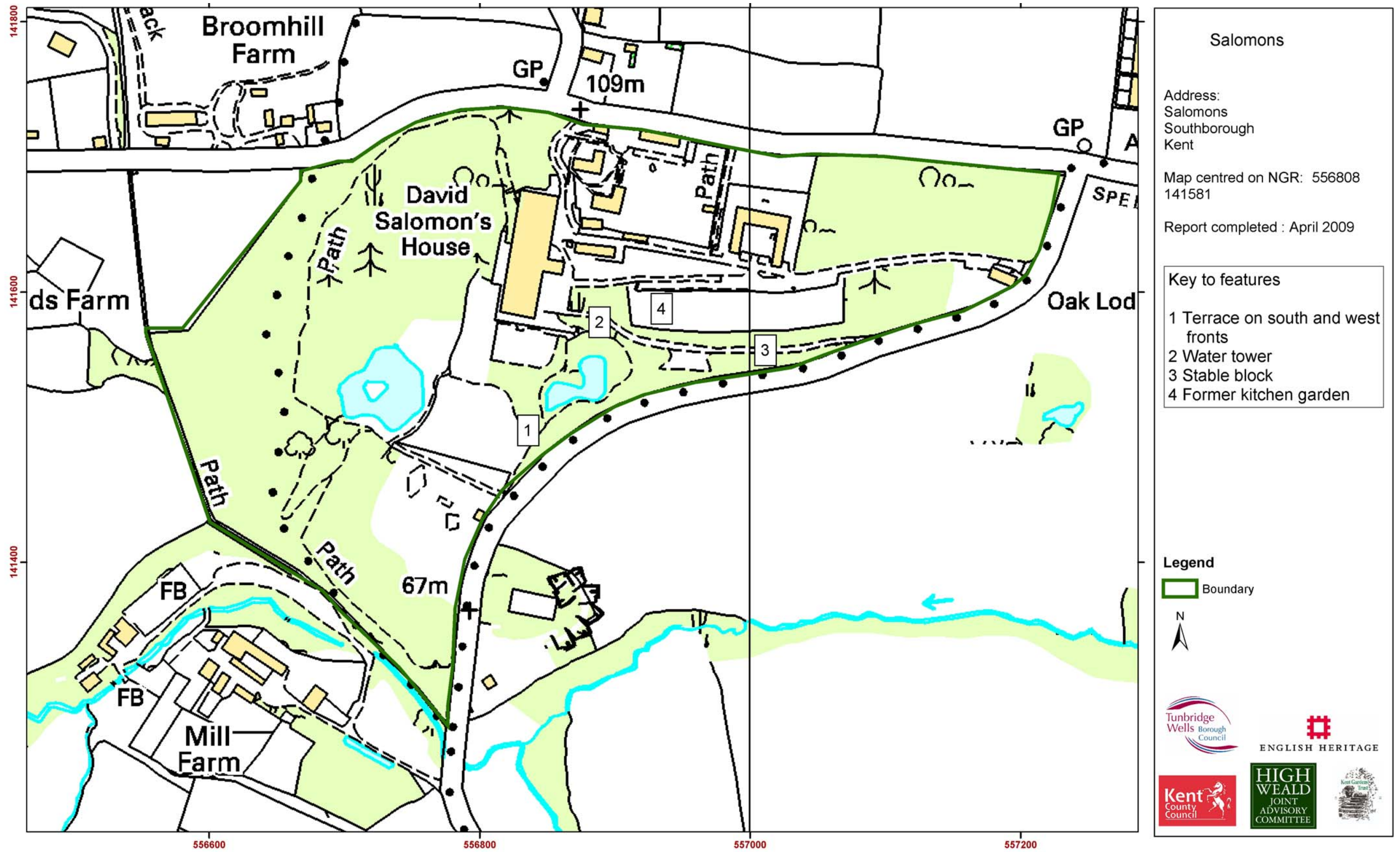



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Fig. 3 Key features map



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## Fig. 4 Aerial photograph

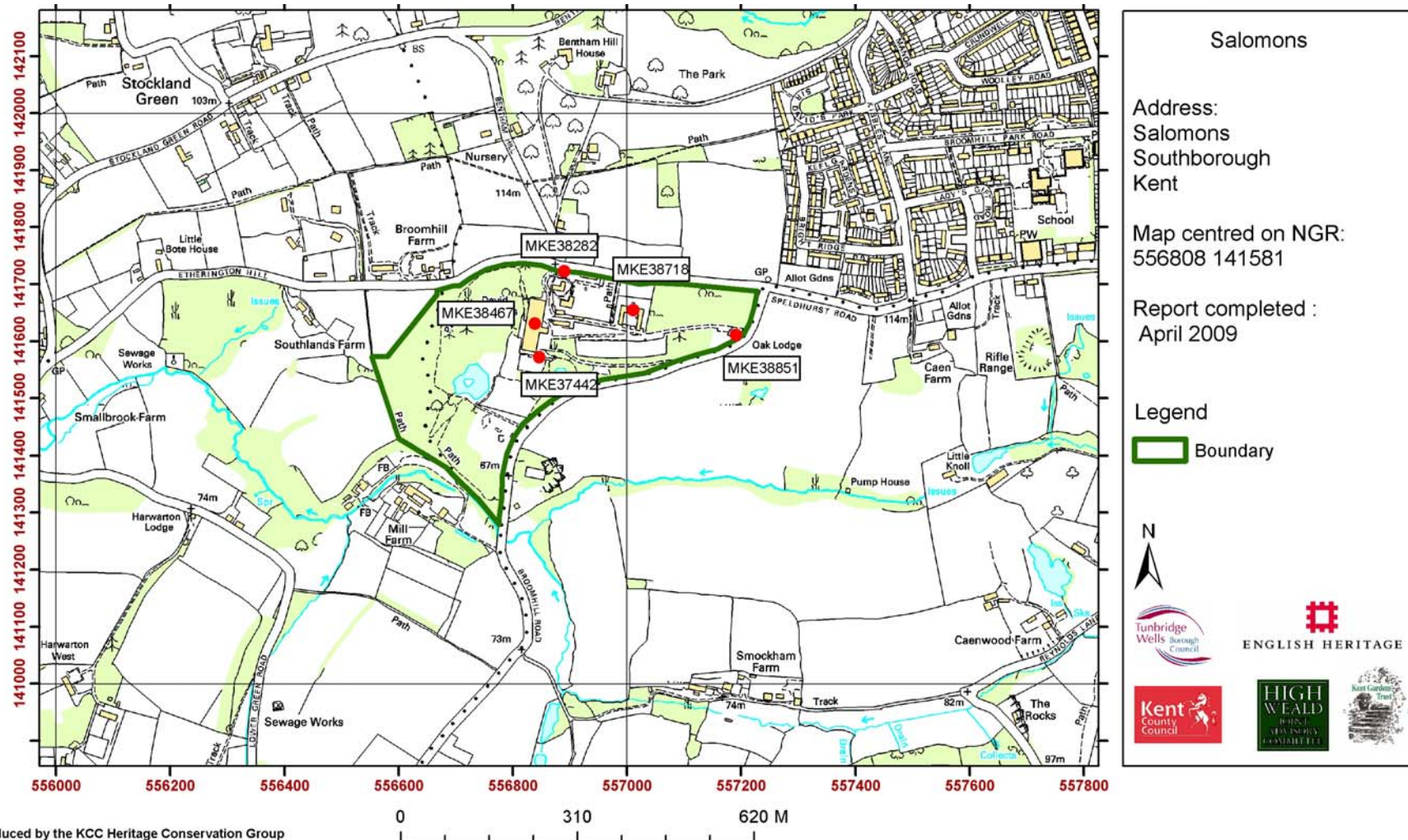


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## Fig. 5 Map of listed buildings at Salomons



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

**Fig. 6 Listed buildings at Salomons**

### **Kent Historic Environment Record reference: MKE37442**

SOUTHBOROUGH (south side) 1/6 (formerly Broomhill House) -	SPELDHURST ROAD Sir David Salomons' house wall and terrace to south	14-3-73 Grade II
------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------

Irregular and complex Italianate house begun in 1820s but with additions until 1913. Cottage originally extended by Decimus Burton, 1829 for Sir David Salomons (1797-1873), the Jewish Merchant Banker, Lord Mayor of London in 1855 and MP for Greenwich. Mainly 3 storeys of Tunbridge Wells ashlar blocks. East front: L-shaped with stone parapet and balustrade. Ground floor has recessed centre to south. Slate roof. Many stone chimney stacks, some pots concealed by semicircular caps like acroteria. Irregular fenestration on two and three storeys with some sashes and some casements. 2 colonnades of Tuscan columns forming balcony on 1st floor. Plain doorcase with rectangular overlight and linenfold panelled door. South front: Garden elevation also of 3 storeys with balustraded parapet, dated 1854. 3 casements with a cast iron balcony to the 2nd floor and balcony at 1st floor level supported by 14 Roman Corinthian columns and pilasters. West front: In similar style but with later additions to the left. 2 cast iron balconies on 2nd floor. Ionic portico. Former library projecting to left with round-headed windows flanked by Roman Corinthian half columns. To left of library is 1913 extension plus the late C19 theatre, white brick with row of 5 octagonal cupolas along ridge of roof. Rusticated terrace wall decorated with urns and a flight of stone steps front the house to the south. Interior: Entrance hall with marble steps and imposing open well staircase with scrolled tread ends and 1 spiral baluster to each tread. Spiral newel post and handrail decorated with carved ivy leaves. Gold Room, formerly sitting room, in Louis XVI style with fine decorated cornices, marble fireplace and decorated built-in cornice. room to left in same style with coved ceiling. These two rooms form the Memento Rooms, displaying objects belonging to Salomons and his son, and are open to the public. His son was an early technologist, among other things powering the house by electricity completely by 1884, including lighting, and holding the world's first motor show in the grounds in 1905. He built the theatre for the demonstration of machinery. It has cast iron columns and the original painted back-cloths together with a permanent stage set in Parliamentary Gothic-style remain. The most important relic is the electric organ, by Welte of Hamburg, in the theatre, the earliest and largest electric organ of its age in the world. It could be played mechanically by the insertion of rolls, a collection of which remains in the house.

### **Kent Historic Environment Record reference: MKE38282**

SOUTHBOROUGH (south side) 1/30 Grade II	SPELDHURST ROAD North Lodge to David Salomons' House -	14-3-73
-----------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------	---------

Mid C19 early Olde English-revival lodge. Ground floor of stone rubble, 1st floor timber-framed with central quatrefoil decoration. Some tile-hanging on side fronts. Steeply pitched fishscale tiled roof, with 2 semi-dormer casements. 1½ storeys; 2-window facade. Central porch with pilasters and cambered doorcase.



**Kent Historic Environment Record reference: MKE38467**

SOUTHBOROUGH                      SPELDHURST ROAD                      14-3-73  
(south side) 1/7                      David Salomons' House, water tower and wall attached to east  
– Grade II

Late C19. Stock brick, with band of red brick marking each storey. Built on outcrop of Tunbridge Wells rock with caves underneath. Round tower of 4 storeys, with smaller staircase turret attached. Crenellated parapet. Clock face and arrow slit windows. Attached to east is wall almost 6 feet high also with crenellated parapet; imitation towers, arrow-slit openings and machicola-tions. Partly encloses walled garden to north.

**Kent Historic Environment Record reference: MKE38718**

SOUTHBOROUGH                      SPELDHURST ROAD                      14-3-74  
(south side) 1/9                      Stables to east of Sir David Salomons' House -  
Grade II\*

Completed 1894, by William Barnsley Hughes. Laid out like a miniature French C16 chateau, in which style they were built. Red brick with stone dressings. Entrance on south side through brick arch, rusticated with stone and flanked by fluted stone Ionic columns. On each side of arch screen wall joined to east and west wings, of which west wing ends (outside screen) in octagonal pavilion with conical slate roof and east wing in square-ended ground floor projection with balustraded parapet over. Inside courtyard corps-de-logis is north wing facing entrance, forming coach house. 2 storeys. Ground floor with 4 round-headed, rusticated archways with double doors and fanlights over. Each flanked by stone giant Ionic pilasters which rise through whole height of building to support large modillion eaves cornice. 1st floor with 2 casement windows between each pair of pilasters, each window having 2 small lights in two tiers with stone transom and mullion. Steeply pitched slate roof crowned by 2 brick stacks with double stone cornices and in centre a stone cupola with clock face at base, pairs of Ionic columns at angles and a some surmounted by a weather-vane. Central portion of north wing flanked by single recessed bays with gables over. On ground floor of each are 2 narrow doorways and between them bay window of 2 storeys of 3 lights. Above are similar rusticated windows while above these are 3-light lunette windows. Tall brick chimney stacks on outer sides of gables. East and west sides of courtyard have lower elevation and contained stables on ground floor with hay-lofts above, as well as tack and harness rooms. Red brick on stone base; 1 storey with loft. At each end in centre of ground floor are rusticated 4-centre arched stone doorways with double doors and segmental fanlight. Centre one flanked by stone columns and slit windows. Between centre and outer doorways are 2 rusticated Venetian windows of same design as centre doorway. Stone cornices and parapets. 5 pedimented dormers above. Slate roof crowned by 5 pointed imitation turrets or finials. Interior: Loose boxes remain in east wing and partly also in west wing. Panelled below dado level, complementary light and darker green tiles above. Similar panelling remains on ceilings of ground floor and also of doors in rooms above coach house. Pegged round-arched braced roof in hay-lofts. Original casements remain in all rooms except room 1st floor north-west corner.

**Kent Historic Environment Record reference: MKE38851**

SOUTHBOROUGH                      BROOMHILL ROAD  
(west side) 1/10                      David Salomon's House - East Lodge -  
Grade II

Cross-gabled roof-plan lodge completed in 1895. Ground-floor ashlar, above timber-framed with roughcast infilling. Tiled roof with central stone stack dated 1894 with Salomon's family crest. Gable to each elevation with stone coping surmounted by lion. Casement windows in window ranges on all sides except north which has 2 window facade, either side of central entrance. Hipped weather porch with stone lions above. Round-headed doorcase. Supporting columns decorated with cherubs heads.