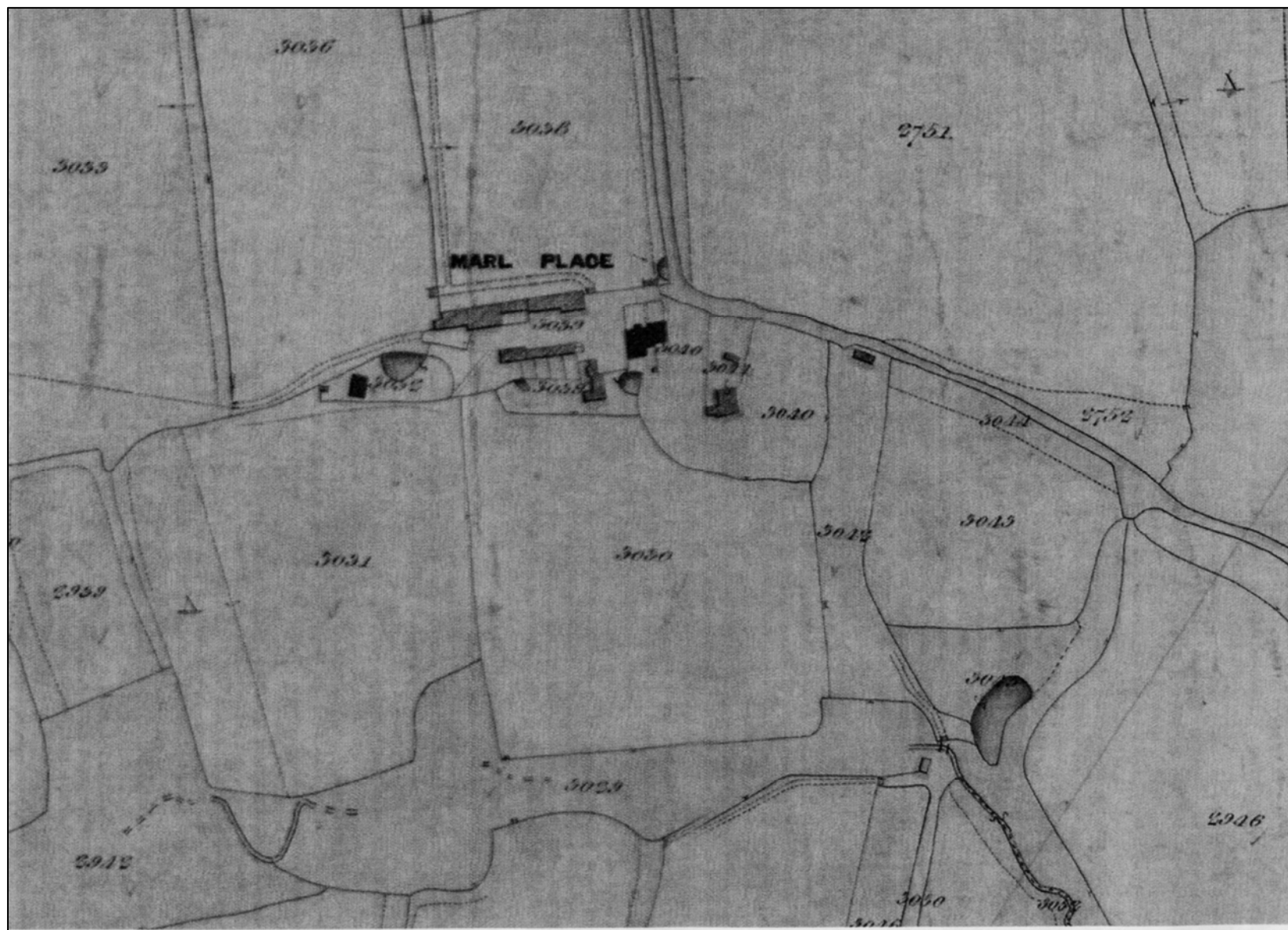


Fig. 7 Edward Hasted, *Map of Kent* (1778)



Fig. 8 Tithe map. Brenchley Parish (1842-44). Centre for Kentish Studies ref. CTR4SA+B



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Fig. 9 Ordnance Survey 1st edn 25" map (1870) Sheet 61/11

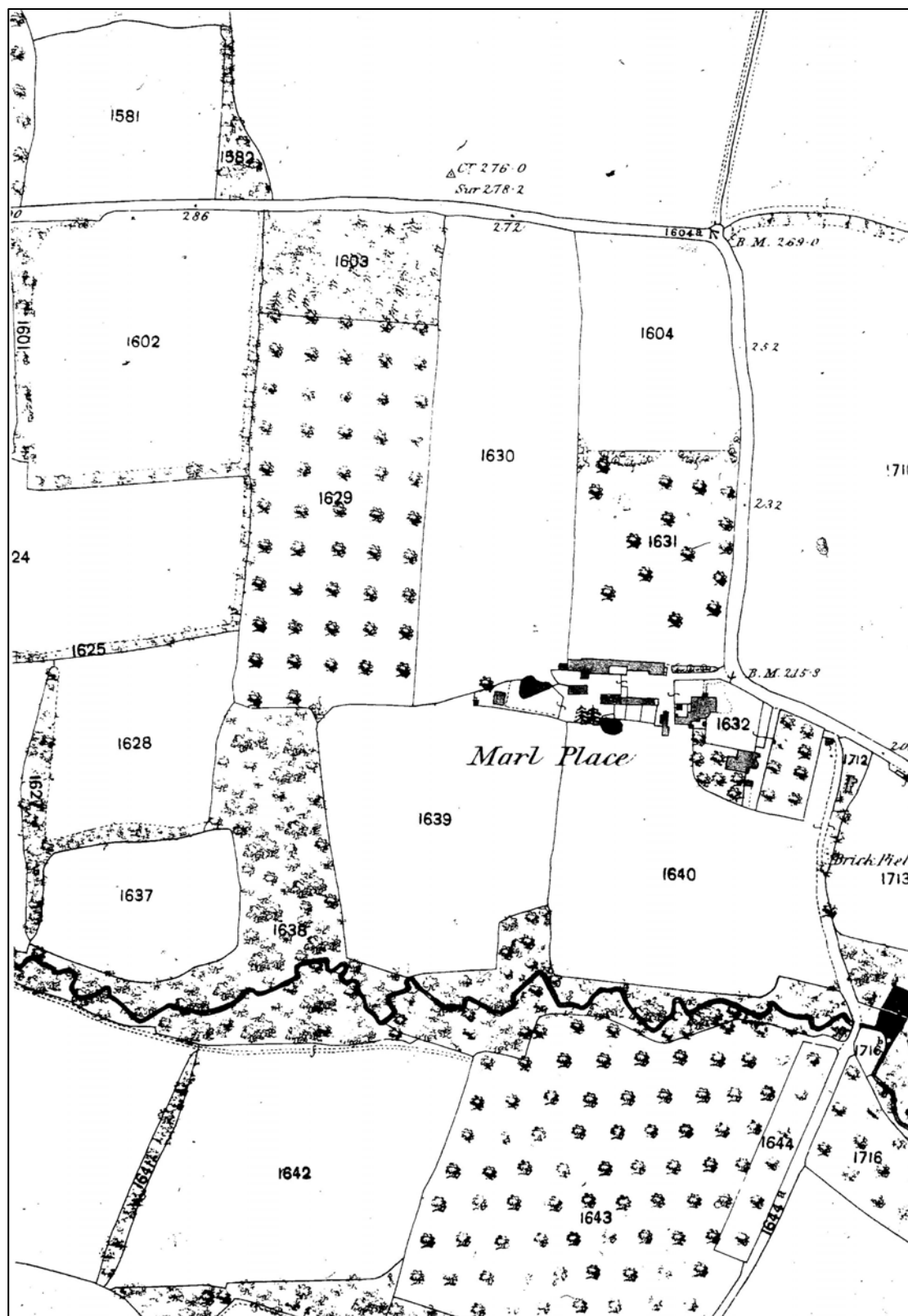


Fig. 10 Ordnance Survey 2nd edn 25" map (1895) Sheet 61/11

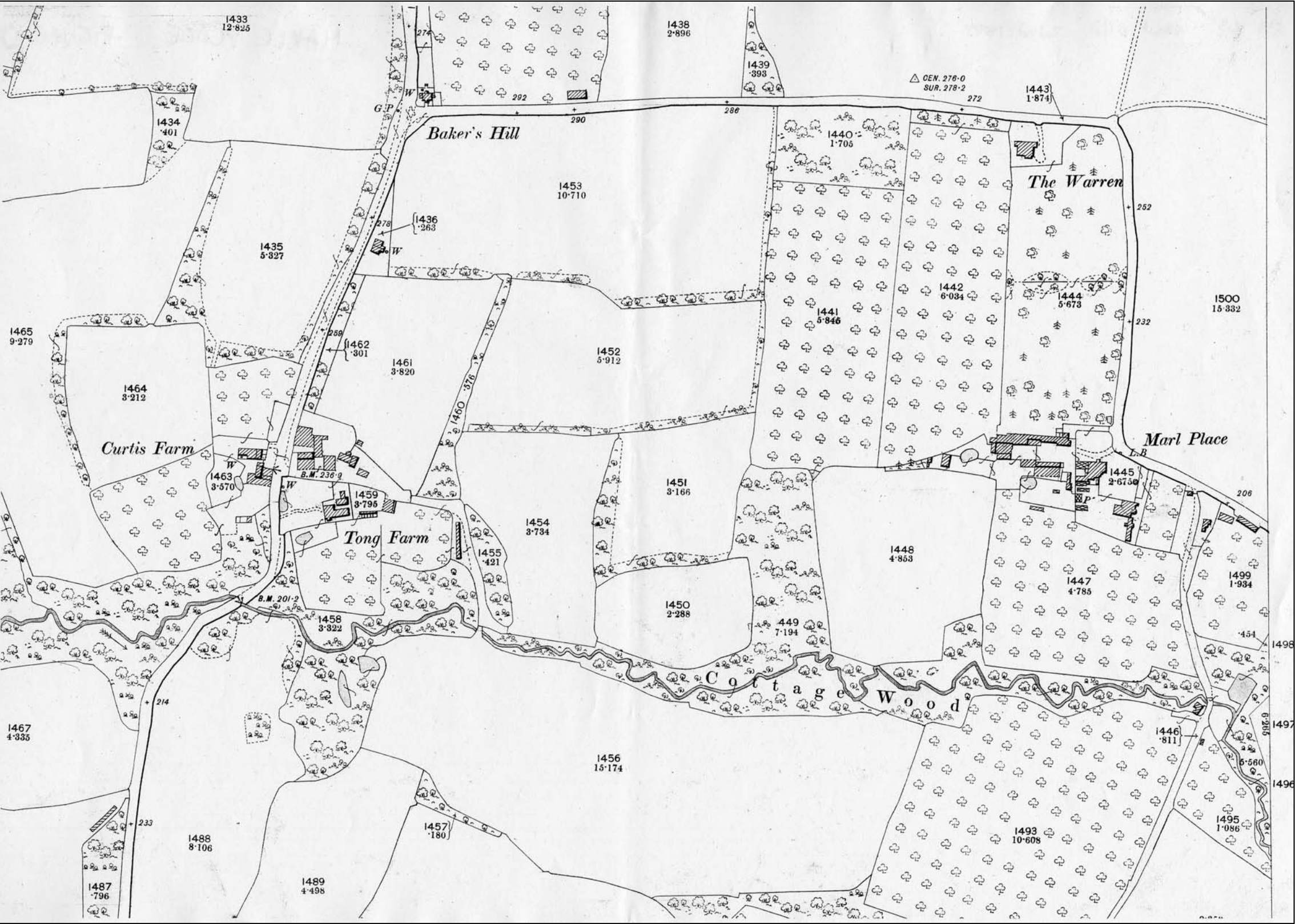


Fig. 11 Ordnance Survey 3rd edn 25" map (1906) Sheet 61/11

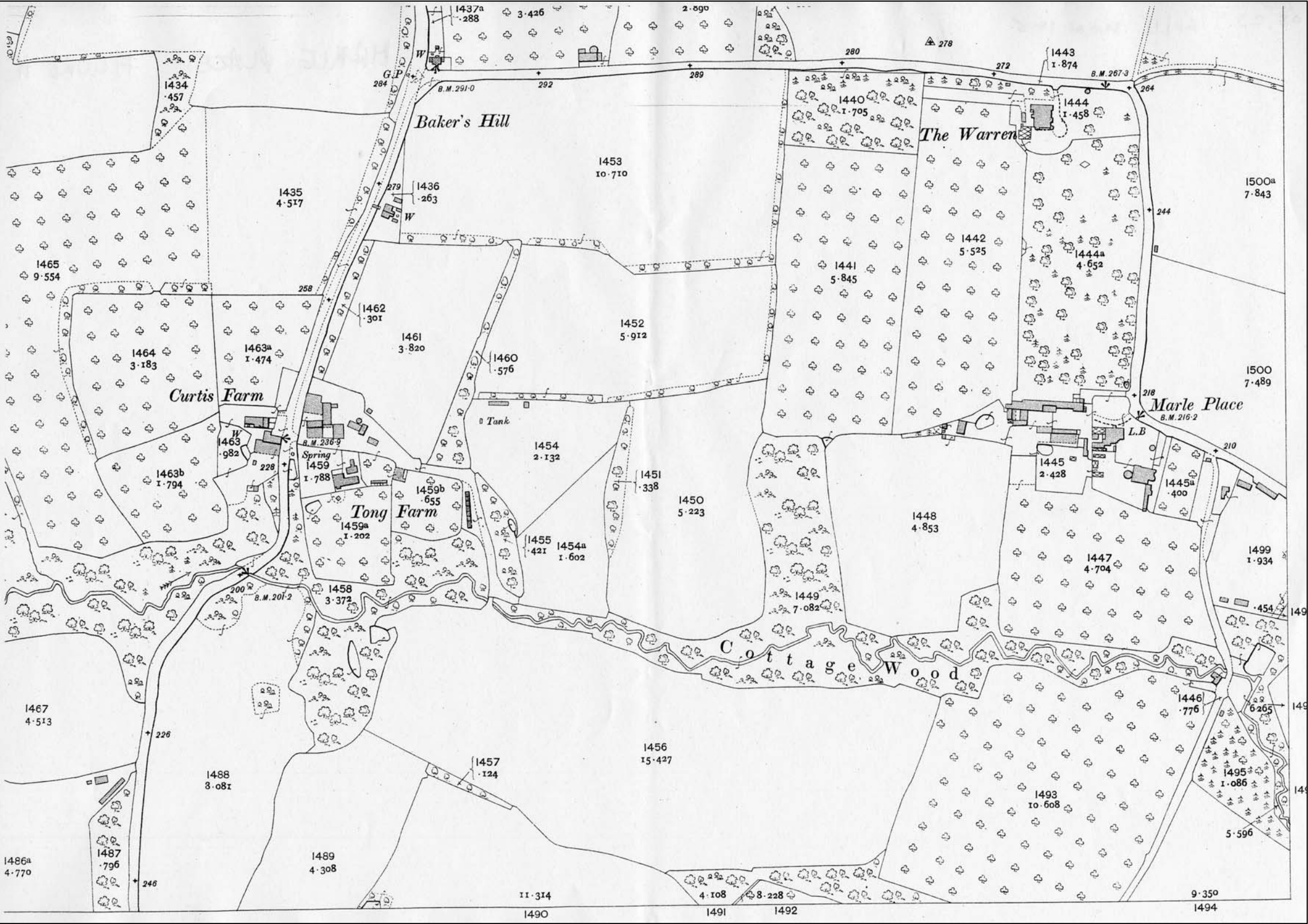


Fig. 12 Ordnance Survey Revised edn 25" map (1938)

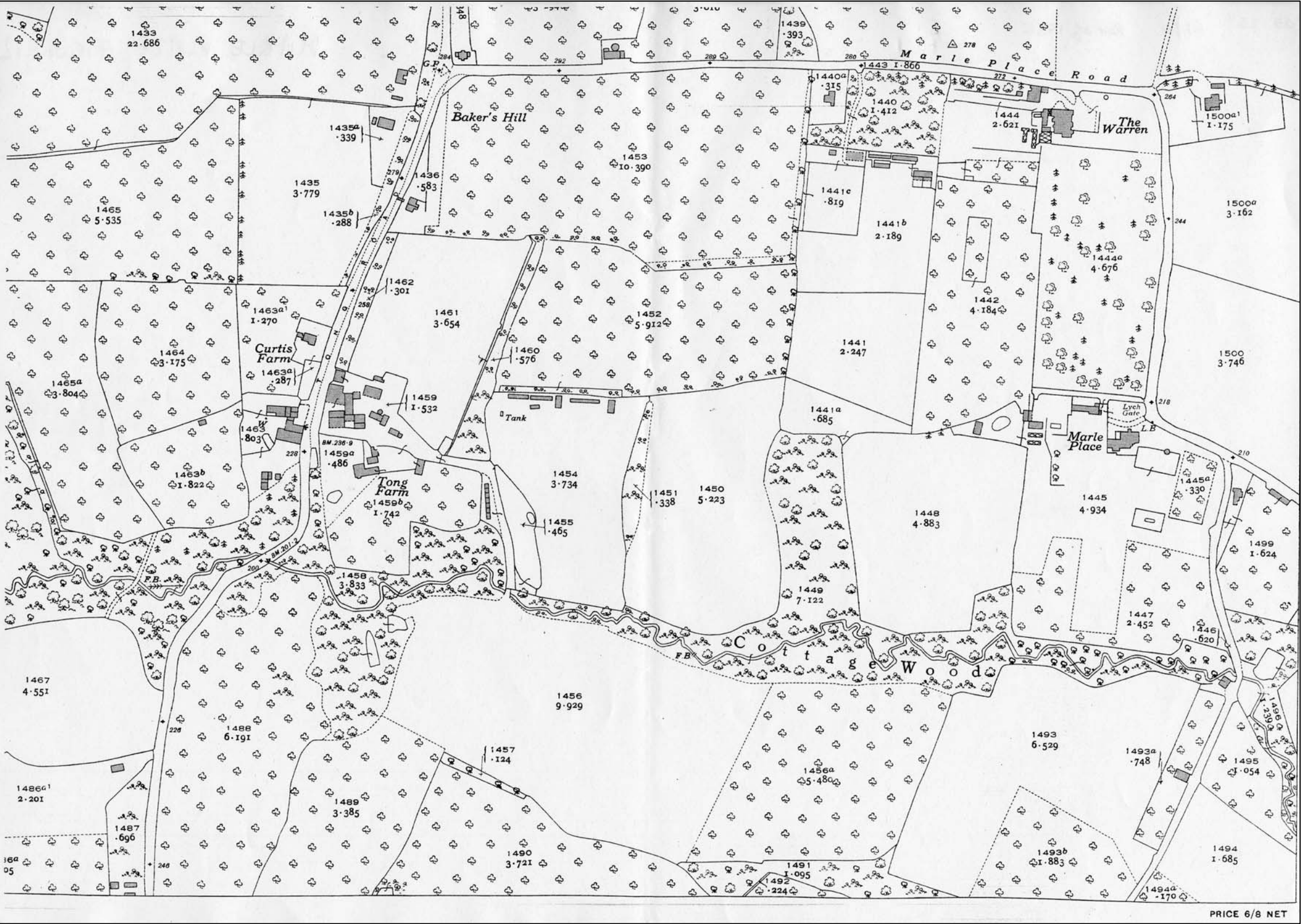


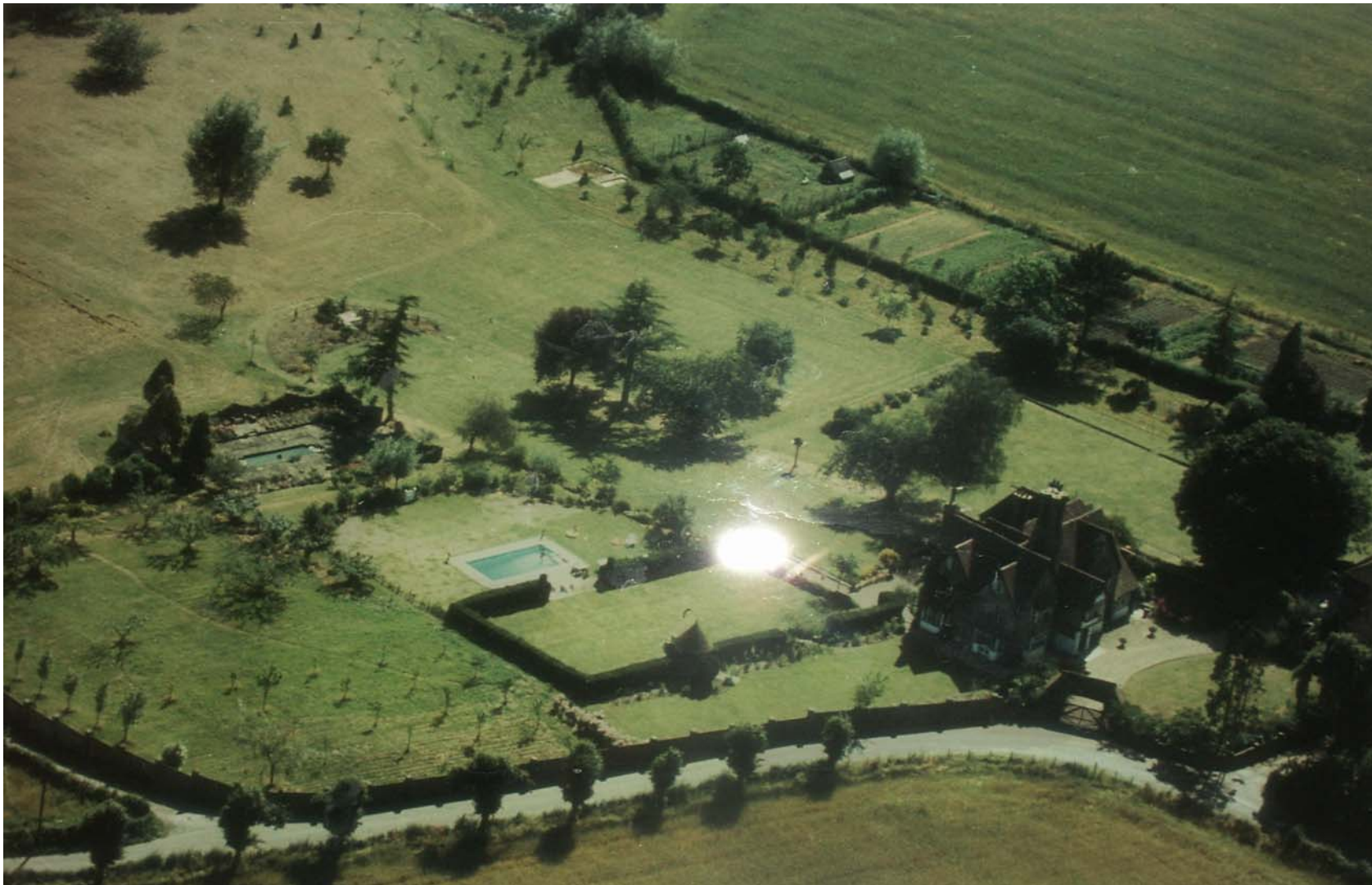
Fig. 13 William Twopenny. Drawing of Marle Place. Late C19 (private collection)



Fig. 14 William Hodges. Photograph of Marle Place. Late C19 (private collection)



Fig. 15 Aerial photograph 1964 (private collection)



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Fig. 16 Aerial photograph 2005 (private collection)



Fig. 17 'Greener Fingers: gardening with nature in mind', *High Weald Anvil* (2006)



16 High Weald Anvil

2006

The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Gardening with nature in mind

Greener fingers

Gardeners have left their mark on the High Weald landscape. Many of the area's inspirational gardens are open to the public: one of these is Marle Place, near Brenchley – owned by artist Lindel Williams.

The gardens at Marle Place were first created in 1890. Lindel has lived there since her parents bought the property in 1949. The garden had been abandoned during wartime and Lindel remembers that some parts had become overgrown: "What we now call the Scented Garden had to be completely re-discovered!" Lindel's mother was a particularly keen gardener who did a lot of planting. "She did a huge amount of research to find the right plants for the right place."

The soil at Marle Place is very difficult to work – solid Weald clay. But it does at least give the garden its name and explains much of its history. "Marl" is the nutrient rich, bluish clay that, in past times, was dug out of the ground and spread to make the fields more fertile – leaving marl pits. The original marl extraction site – still an actual pit when the family moved here – is now a pond. (Lindel admits that the addition of an 'e' on the end of marl is probably her fault, because she once wrongly thought that to be the correct spelling.)

The ground here yielded clay for other uses, too: Next door is a house called Clay Pits adjoining a field called Brick Field. Lindel makes good use of the clay herself even today – when Marle Place runs "Mud, Sticks & Stones" Land Art courses!

There were no borders when the family arrived. Gradually, the heavy clay was enriched for planting and now boasts 4-5 inches of decent topsoil. This was achieved simply by incorporating organic matter, year upon year. Nowadays, Lindel uses hop waste as a soil-enricher. "It's local and makes a good mulch on top of the soil. When we get it, it's probably already about two years old. The only problems are the occasional bits of string and baby hop plants appearing in the borders!" Lindel's tip about mulch: "Put it on to retain moisture after the ground is waterlogged – otherwise rain will not be able to get through it". Marle Place also composts all its garden waste. Lindel is justifiably proud of her giant compost heaps: "You'd practically need climbing ropes to get to the top!"

The Victorian garden's original yew trees – planted seemingly at random – are the basis of

the substantial yew hedges that now define the different "rooms" of the formal garden. Lindel says that she can't think of a better way to describe the garden's structure. "It is like walking through a house and going into different rooms, each with its own character."

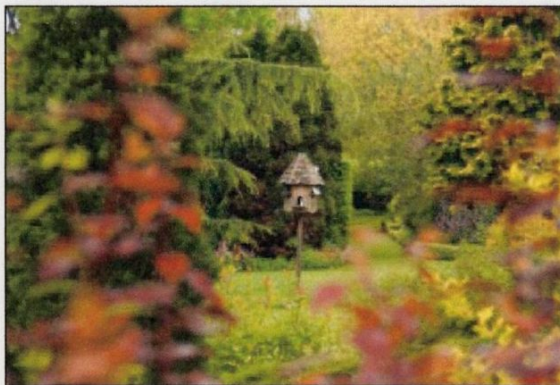
The informal gardens at Marle Place are extensive and, by their very nature, wildlife-friendly. Large, natural areas of grass are left to go to seed and there are woods both ancient and modern. The woodland along the stream is decorated in spring with ancient woodland "indicators" such as Wood Anemone, Yellow Archangel and Early Purple Orchid – of the latter Lindel says: "Masses, with more every year". In addition, Lindel and her family have planted new trees in their thousands. "It's a passion and obsession!"

In recognition of its wildlife-friendliness, Marle Place has won a "Gardening for Wildlife Gold Award" from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council two years running. Lindel explains that the award is not just for large gardens. "Anyone in the Borough can enter." (See below.)

Even in the formal areas, Lindel gardens with wildlife in mind: she emphasises that it's important not to be too 'tidy' as untidiness creates good "lurking areas" for wildlife. She leaves seed heads and cuts hedges at the right time of year – after birds have nested.

Lindel has drawn inspiration from the gardens at Marle Place all her life. She sees gardening as the least static art form. "Every single day, something is different." When designing new areas for the garden, she believes in working with nature, rather than against it. "The lie of the land very much dictates what you can and can't do with it. If you like what you see – for example a low-lying, damp area – then you encourage it and, of course, this instantly creates a new habitat for wildlife in your garden." The Marle Place bog garden is such an area – the gardens are on a slope and this is where water run-off from the gardens and surrounding fields ends up.

Working with nature does, however, have one main drawback: "You have to keep alert and keep on the ball before potential disaster strikes!"



Sally Weasney

Photos:

Far left: Yew archway, Marle Place
Above: Bird box, Marle Place
Left: Early Purple Orchid

Websites

www.marleplace.co.uk
www.sevenwonders.org.uk
www.english-nature.org.uk
www.rspb.org.uk
www.charlottemolesworth.co.uk
See advert on page 15

Every year the Kent Wildlife Trust runs a **Gardening for Wildlife Scheme**, with the aim of encouraging people to garden in a wildlife-friendly manner. Kent Borough Councils are encouraged to sign up to the scheme and the Kent High Weald Project coordinates the scheme on behalf of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. The scheme is open to gardeners, individuals, allotment holders, schools and community groups.

The scheme will be launched on the first day of spring, 20 March and the closing date for entries is 31 May. To receive a free information pack crammed full of tips and an entry form contact Rebekah Bibby at the Kent High Weald Project, Council Offices, High Street, Cranbrook, Kent, TN17 3EN. www.khwp.org Tel: 01580 715918. Email: Rebekah.bibby@KHWP.org or download the fact sheets from www.kentwildlife.org.uk

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Fig. 18 Photographs of Marle Place, December 2008



Above left: The gazebo

Above right: Lily pool in the rose garden

Left: Section of the rock garden

