

Fig. 4 Ordnance Survey 1st edn 6" map (1862)



Fig. 5 Ordnance Survey 2nd edn 6" map (1897)

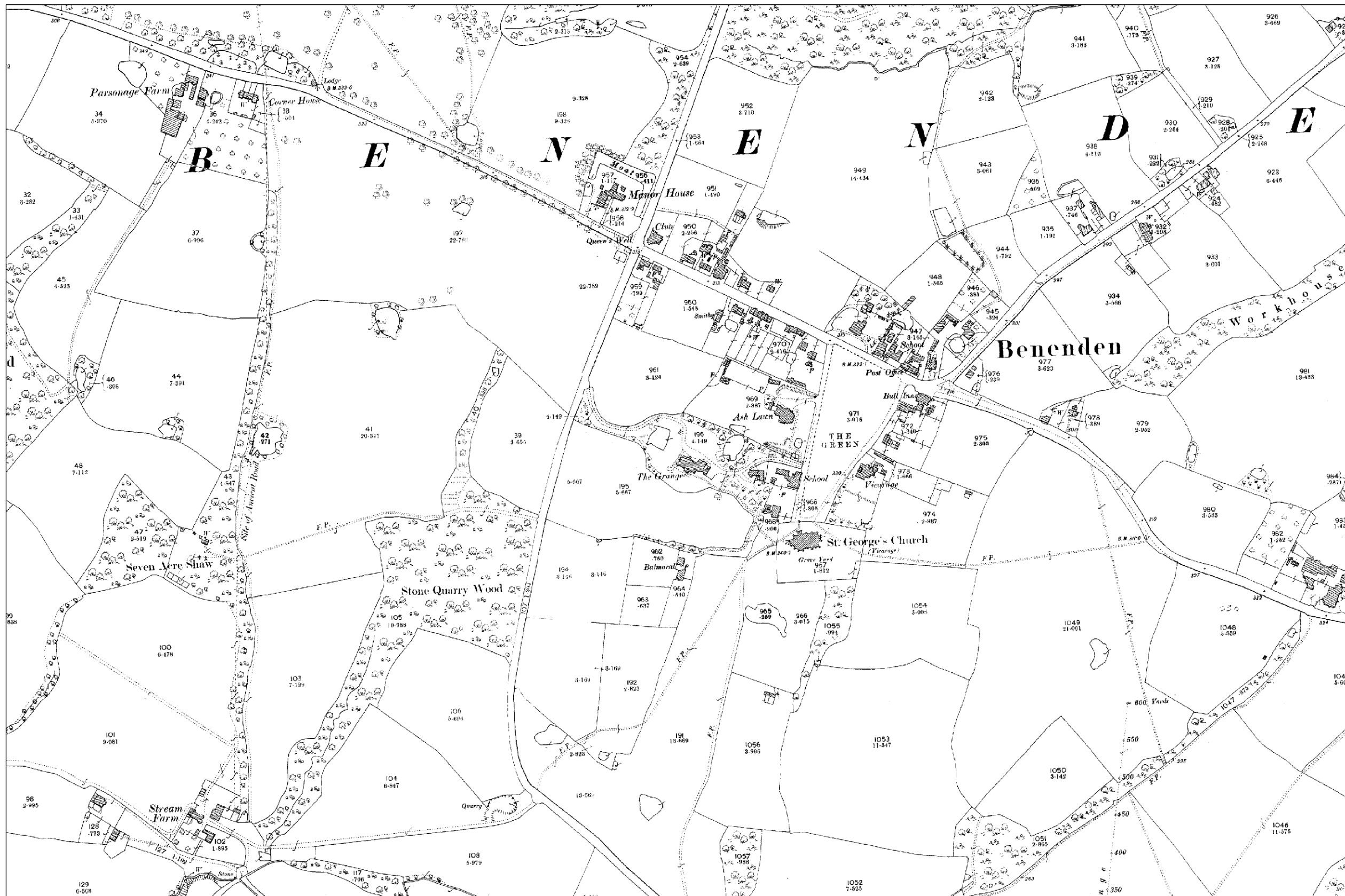


Fig. 6 Ordnance Survey 3rd edn 6" map (1908)

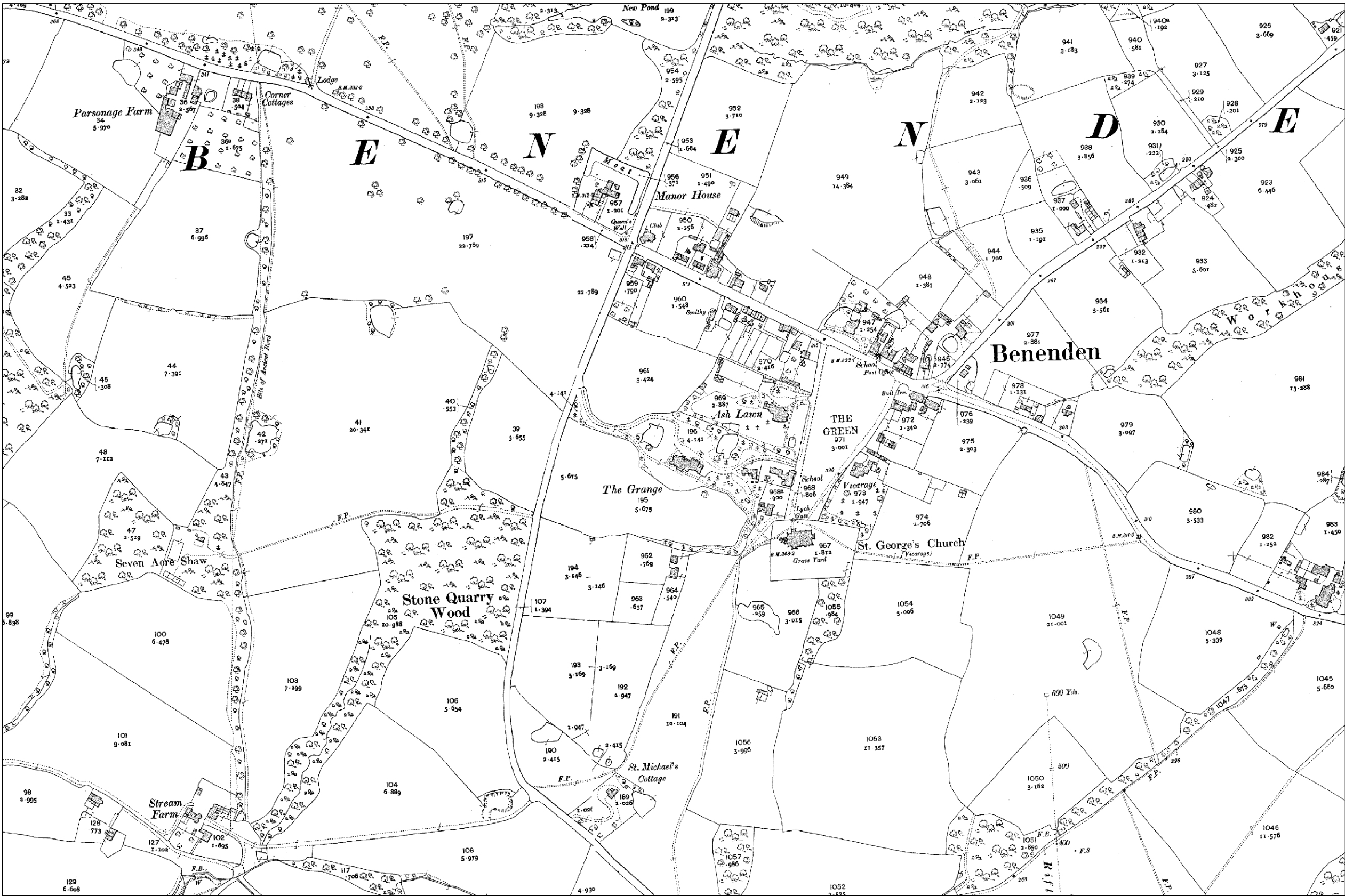


Fig. 7 Ordnance Survey 4th edn 6" map (1929)

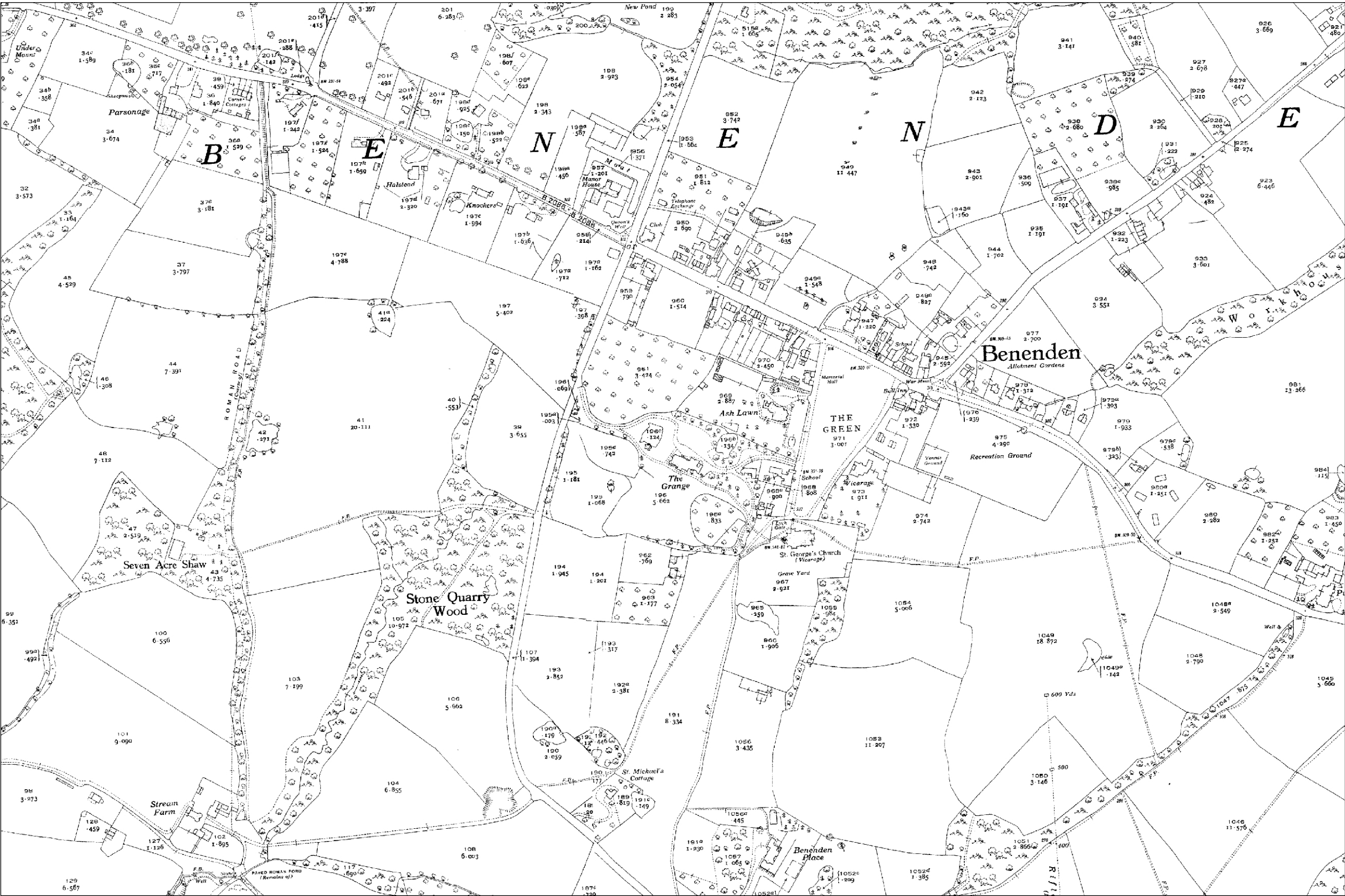


Fig. 8 Postcard of house front 1905. Cranbrook Museum



Fig. 9 Photograph of Collingwood Ingram undated (private collection)

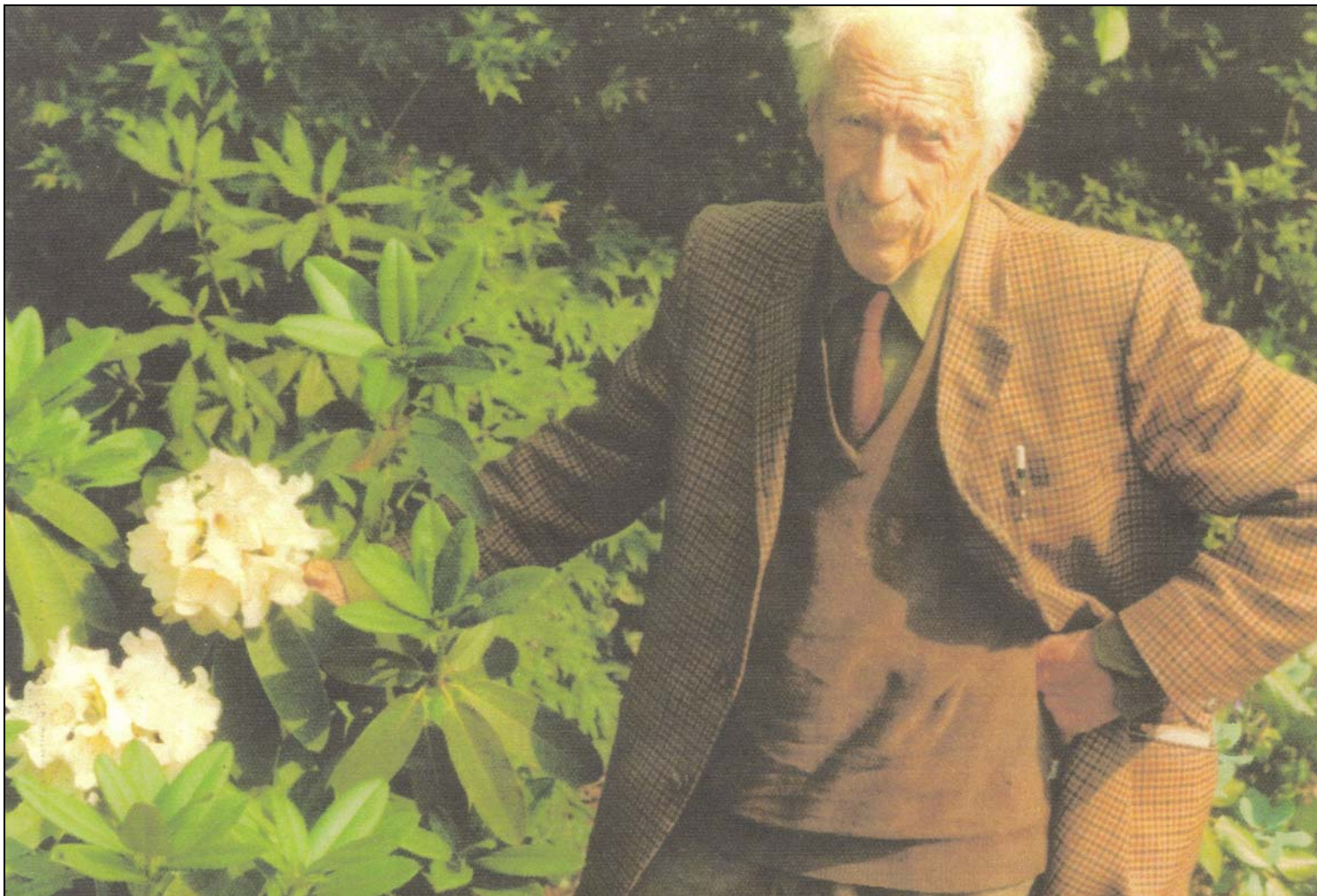


Fig. 10 Tom Wright, *The Gardens of Britain. Kent, East and West Sussex and Surrey* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1978), pp. 49, 50

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achieved for most areas of the gardens. In fact, the achievement with such a limited staff (there used to be five full-time gardeners here) is very commendable.

The Grange

807 326 (Sheet 188) West Kent. Benenden (close to the church). 8 miles W of Tenterden, 7 miles E of Goudhurst. Owner: Captain Collingwood Ingram. Open usually two or three Sunday afternoons in April for the N.C.S. to coincide with the main displays of flowering cherries, magnolias and many other unusual trees and shrubs.

A medium-sized, unusual garden of an informal, woodland and shrubbery type with a large and extraordinary collection of trees and shrubs, of especial interest and fascination to the plantsmen and knowledgeable gardeners, representing a lifetime's collecting and hybridizing by this famous horticulturist. Unfortunately very few plants are labelled.

The large, rather gaunt house was formerly the home of Lord Cranbrook, who built the Grange about 1898 in open farmland, planting some trees around the house for shelter. The magnificent eucalyptus near the house was planted at this time. Captain Collingwood Ingram bought the house in 1919 and found it 'to all intents and purposes without a garden'. He made an immediate start on the first part of the garden on the south-west side of the house, and much of the finest tree planting here dates from the early 1920s. The garden gradually grew in size and interest, and being a passionate and highly energetic traveller, explorer and plant-hunter, Captain Ingram brought back to this garden a steady stream of unusual plants from many countries of the world, some of them new species to cultivation. The visitor should read his book, *A Garden of Memories*,* before, or certainly after, visiting this garden.

The garden lies at about 230 ft above sea level in the high weald. Shelter is provided by an abundance of mature planting, particularly to the north-west and north and very favourable conditions are created in the woodland-type glades created over the last 50 years.

* Collingwood Ingram, *A Garden of Memories*. H.F. & G. Witherby, 1970.

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Soils are of the acidic fertile wealden-clay loams, producing fine growth of many woody plants. Rainfall average over 33 inches.

The style of the garden is essentially very informal. To quote Captain Ingram from *A Garden of Memories*:

'From the outset I kept in mind the realization that in a purely natural landscape there is neither precise symmetry nor any perfectly straight lines – even the sea's horizon is in fact slightly curved! From the start my aim was to reduce to an absolute minimum the unavoidable artificiality of a man-made pleasure garden destined to contain not only native, but mainly exotic, trees and shrubs. To achieve that aim I endeavoured to reproduce as nearly as possible a succession of *sylvan glades* . . . these all had one thing in common, each was designed to terminate at its furthest end in a sharp bend, the purpose being to close every vista in order to intrigue the eye and to make a stranger wonder what new treasures awaited him round the hidden corner.

Fifty years later one can judge the success of these aims and appreciate the sense of the planning. There are, broadly speaking, four main areas to the garden which have differences in quality and planting: the main lawns, shrubberies and tree specimens around the house; the shrubbery and woodland garden; the orchard; and the approach drive area. However, there is such a profusion of plants throughout the garden that without a conducted tour by the owner himself (a fascinating experience) the precise location and description of all the plants would need a book in itself. This account therefore concentrates on some of the more unusual and outstanding groups of plants. The *Eucalyptus* by the house, now over 80 years old, is thought to be of a hybrid of the name *E. × whittinghamensis*. It has survived the many very cold winters of the century. Its height in March 1976 was measured at over 80 ft. The flowering cherry collection – Captain Ingram has had a life-long interest in cherries that began with his visits to Japan 70 years ago. He earned the nickname 'Cherry Ingram' as a result, and is the author of *Ornamental Cherries*,* which has been the standard work on the subject ever since. Most of the cherries at the Grange are now between 30 and 50 years old and some are becoming over-mature. Others have already been grubbed. The longevity of cherries is of great interest to the owner, who has concluded that for general purposes a life span of between 40 and 50 years is about the maximum for many of them. The visitor should look for the following outstanding

* Collingwood Ingram, *Ornamental Cherries*, Country Life, 1948.

hybrids and species, hopefully flowering well in April, provided the bullfinches have not ravaged the buds:

Prunus 'Kanzan'. A number of slightly different forms of this very popular variety are still growing well at Benenden, although many of them are now nearly 50 years old. According to Captain Ingram this variety is not popular in Japan.

Prunus 'Tai Haku'. Captain Ingram's first choice of all single white-flowered ornamental cherries. There are many fine mature trees of this lovely variety still looking very healthy and vigorous.

Prunus serrulata spontanea, 'Japanese Hill Cherry'. A very popular and long-lived variety in Japan, a prototype of most of the hybrid cherries from Japan with single white or pinkish flowers, rich coppery red young foliage and a graceful spreading habit.

Prunus 'Kursar'. Raised at Benenden by Captain Ingram and a fine small tree. It is very early-flowering, in March or early April, flowers rich deep pink with reddish bronze foliage. The autumn colours are good.

The *Malus* collection, ornamental 'crabs'. Another group of flowering trees to attract Collingwood Ingram's attention. There are many unusual species here over 40 years old. On the main lawn is a selected gnarled and very attractive fine-flowering form of the Japanese Crab, the most lovely white-flowered small *Malus floribunda*, a mass of pink-budded, pale flowers in April, followed in autumn by masses of tiny red fruits. There is also a very tall and rare *Malus baccata mandschurica*.

Other unusual trees to be found include tall specimens of *Nothofagus dombeyi* and *N. obliqua* (75 ft) planted in 1920, some exceptionally fine eastern European pears (a spectacular plant of *Pyrus amygdaliformis* with creamy-white flowers in April, and silvery willow-like leaves); many rhododendrons and azaleas, a real 'catchplant' in one of the glades is a large mound of the willow-leaved evergreen azalea, *Rhododendron macrosepalum* 'Linearifolium', long cultivated in Japan; many different magnolias; a good collection of *Berberis*, particularly of the evergreen Asiatic species, and the rare Chilean Holly-leaved Barberry *Berberis ilicifolia*. Spring bulbs abound also, and here again there are unusual forms of hardy cyclamen, especially *C. repandum*; several rich blue *Iris histrioides* hybrids; and groups of *Scilla*, *Narcissus* and *Fritillaria*. There is also a fine collection of *Hepatica*.

Mid-April is usually an ideal time to visit the Grange and if there is a chance to meet Captain Collingwood Ingram and have a conducted tour of the gardens this will indeed be rewarding for those fortunate enough to enjoy this experience. The garden is maintained very effectively, mostly by Captain Ingram and one other gardener.

Fig. 11 Lawrence Smith, 'Cherry Ingram', *British Library Magazine* (1980)

Cherry Ingram

An appreciation
by Lawrence Smith

WHEN I first met Collingwood Ingram he was 93. He met me at Staplehurst Station, in Kent, in his car, put me in the passenger seat and asked me to keep an eye open for lorries. His eyesight was not what it had been, though he still looked exactly like a very old, brilliantly blue-eyed hawk, and he navigated by driving straight down the central white line. I shouted occasionally when I saw a large vehicle coming, but since he was almost deaf by then it didn't do much good. He survived, as he always had done. It was a genuine surprise to hear of his death in May at the age of 100. I thought he would break all British records and go on for at least another decade. It was his wife's death two years earlier at the age of 98 which finally took away his will to go on for ever. As his devoted housekeeper, Mrs Tomsett, said in her laconic Scots way, 'He did so miss shouting at her'.

Not that the shouting was all one way. His deafness made it essential for her to keep her lung power. The last time Victor Harris (the Japanese metalwork specialist in oriental antiquities) and I had lunch with both of them, he at the head and she at the foot of a rather long table, the din between was terrific. 'Perhaps these gentlemen would like some more pudding', she bawled. 'Perhaps they would. Why don't you ask them?' he roared back. Amid the uproar one tended to miss their great liver-and-white setter stealing the food off one's plate.

Rigours of the attic

What brought us there was not those sides of his life which made him a celebrated figure as a horticulturist, countryman, ornithologist and belletrist. These were all mentioned in the obituaries in the national newspapers. It was his collection of Japanese decorative arts, which now forms part of the British Museum's collections. He first went to Japan in 1903 on a bird-watching expedition, and there he began his life-long interest in flowering cherries – he was known as Cherry Ingram to much of the world – and in the Japanese miniature arts such as sword furniture, inro and netsuke which were then so readily collectable in Europe. He kept



For Captain Collingwood Ingram, at 100, a last look at the flowering cherries.

them in beautifully made walnut cabinets with glass lidded drawers which were almost airtight. Interestingly enough for conservationists, the most delicate lacquered pieces survived there the undeniable rigours of the Captain's attic, where the difference in temperature between winter and summer seemed to be some 60 degrees Fahrenheit. A winter visit to that attic without at least two thick sweaters was very dangerous to everybody's health except his own and the two Yorkshire terriers which browsed up there on old copies of the *Illustrated London News*, of which the Ingram family were proprietors. The dogs were moving onto more delicate fare in the form of some fine Japanese woodblock books when Victor managed to rescue them early this year.

The Captain's interests, perfectionism and energy were well demonstrated in his collection. He loved good craftsmanship, but he loved the natural world even more. He collected, therefore, many wonderful inro (lacquered seal-cases) and tsuba (sword-guards) elaborately and naturalistically decorated with birds, flowers, animals, fish and insects.

Most of all he loved lobsters – an interest reflected in weekly expeditions from his house in Benenden to a Hastings lobster-fisherman, with whom he always bargained with his usual cheerful asperity. But the Captain, however outspoken, commanded affection. The lobster man travelled up specially on the Captain's 100th birthday last year to make a particularly juicy offering for his lunch. The finest tsuba in the collection, a showpiece not made for use, is encrusted with a quite remarkable metal sculpture of Captain Ingram's favourite crustacean.

The security of the collection began to

worry him, and early this year he gave most of it to us. A few months later, the remainder followed by bequest. He had willed it to us some 10 years ago as a result of the friendship and persuasion of Douglas Barrett, then Keeper of Oriental Antiquities, on condition that a part of it be always shown. A wall-case in the King Edward VII gallery is being devoted to the Collingwood Ingram Gift and Bequest. Examples of the finest Japanese craftsmanship of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries will always be on view there.

A little bit naughty

It would be nice to record that he drove that car to the end. However, about two years ago the local police, sadly, came to the end of their considerable patience (or perhaps they were just plain scared of him up till then). The noisy mayhem on Benenden's roads (he drove everywhere by then in second gear, considering higher ones unnecessary) had to stop. One day they stopped him and asked him to read the number plate of a car 25 yards away. He failed to locate the car, and his licence was removed. Later that day, without licence, he drove to the police station and laid into them. They kept the licence. He stormed away and drove back. They didn't do anything about it.

So after that Mr or Mrs Tomsett drove him around. But last December, I was met at Staplehurst Station, this time by his family solicitor, and we had talked of the Captain's 100th birthday and his generosity to the British Museum; eventually I asked how he was getting on now he couldn't drive any longer. 'Well . . . ' said the solicitor. 'Actually, I think he's been a little bit naughty about that . . . ' ○

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

Fig. 12 Photographs of The Grange. February 2009



Above Left: View from the drive

Above Right: Surviving Ingram glades

Left: View from the south front