

The Parish of BRENCHLEY

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISATION

REVISION OF KENT HLC (2000)



November 2016

THE REVISION OF THE KENT HLC

FOR

THE BOROUGH

OF

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Summary Report

Parish of Brenchley & Matfield

Dr Nicola R. Bannister ACIFA
Landscape History & Conservation

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The parish summary should be read in conjunction with the Tunbridge Wells Borough Historic Landscape characterisation Report (Section I User Guide and Interpretation; Section II The Gazetteer of HLC Types and Section III the Maps) June 2017.

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The views expressed in this report are entirely the author's own and do not reflect the policies of neither Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Kent County Council nor the High Weald AONB.

PERIOD TABLE

Description	Archaeological Period	From	To
Hunting societies	Upper Palaeolithic	30,000	10,000 BC
Hunter-gather societies	Mesolithic	10,000-8,000	4,000-3,500 BC
The first agriculturalists	Neolithic	3,500	2,100 BC
Beginning of metal working in bronze	Bronze Age	2,100	600 BC
Beginning of metal working in iron	Iron Age	600 BC	AD 43
	Romano-British	AD 43	AD 410
	Anglo-Saxons [or Early Medieval]	AD 410	1066
	Medieval	1066	1540
	Post-medieval	1540	Present

The Archaeological and Historical Periods used in the Sussex HLC & Revised Kent HLC

Key to HLC-Prev	Description	Date	Combined
P1	Late 20th century	AD1945 – present	Post 1900
P2	Early 20th century	AD 1914 – AD 1945	
P3	Early Modern	AD 1800 – AD 1913	19th century
P4	Late Post-medieval	AD 1600 – AD 1799	Post-medieval
P5	Early Post-medieval	AD 1500 – AD 1599	
P6	Medieval	AD 1066 – AD 1499	Medieval
P7	Early-medieval	AD 410 – AD 1065	
P8	Roman	AD 43 – AD 409	
P9	Prehistoric	500,000 BC – AD42	

**Summary Assessment of the Historic Landscape Characterisation
for the parish of Brenchley
Borough of Royal Tunbridge Wells**

1. Introduction

Historic Landscape Characterisation [HLC] is a process by which the landscape of an area is interpreted and mapped by selected historic attributes which contribute to the local historic character. The dominant historic attributes are that of enclosure and settlement. The pattern of fields, the nature of the boundaries, the form and distribution of historic settlement shape the local character and distinctiveness of a given area. The term ‘historic landscapes’ means in this context all landscapes which have been shaped by human interaction. HLC maps character not land use though with finer grained HLCs for some of the historic types reflect the use of the land. It can be likened to a fine water-colour painting which despite using OSMM as its base does result in some ‘blurred’ boundaries between character types at the very detailed field by field level. HLC is a starting point when investigating the historic landscape for any given area, however it is not a substitute for detailed desk-based assessments and field observations.

The Historic Landscape Characterisation for Brenchley forms part of a district wide revision of the Kent HLC (2000). Four parishes in the east of the district have been completed (Goudhurst, Hawkhurst, Cranbrook & Benenden) and the remaining parishes are being undertaken as part of a rolling programme of phased characterisation. As each parish is completed a short analysis is presented. The parishes will then be grouped up to form the district-wide HLC. The sequence of characterisation has been prioritised to provide firstly information on those parishes close to the town of Royal Tunbridge Wells, and secondly to complete the wider countryside of the borough. The centre of the built-up area of the town has been omitted as the priority is to characterise the historic landscape of the rural parts of the borough.

This report sets out a summary of some of the results for the civil parish of Brenchley. A Methods Report [Draft] together with a Gazetteer of Typologies and attributes has been prepared for the end of the first phase of this revision (end of September 2016). The parish of Brenchley together with the following three parishes (Capel, Horsmonden and Frittenden) form the second phase of the Kent HLC (2001) Revision for the Borough of Tunbridge Wells.

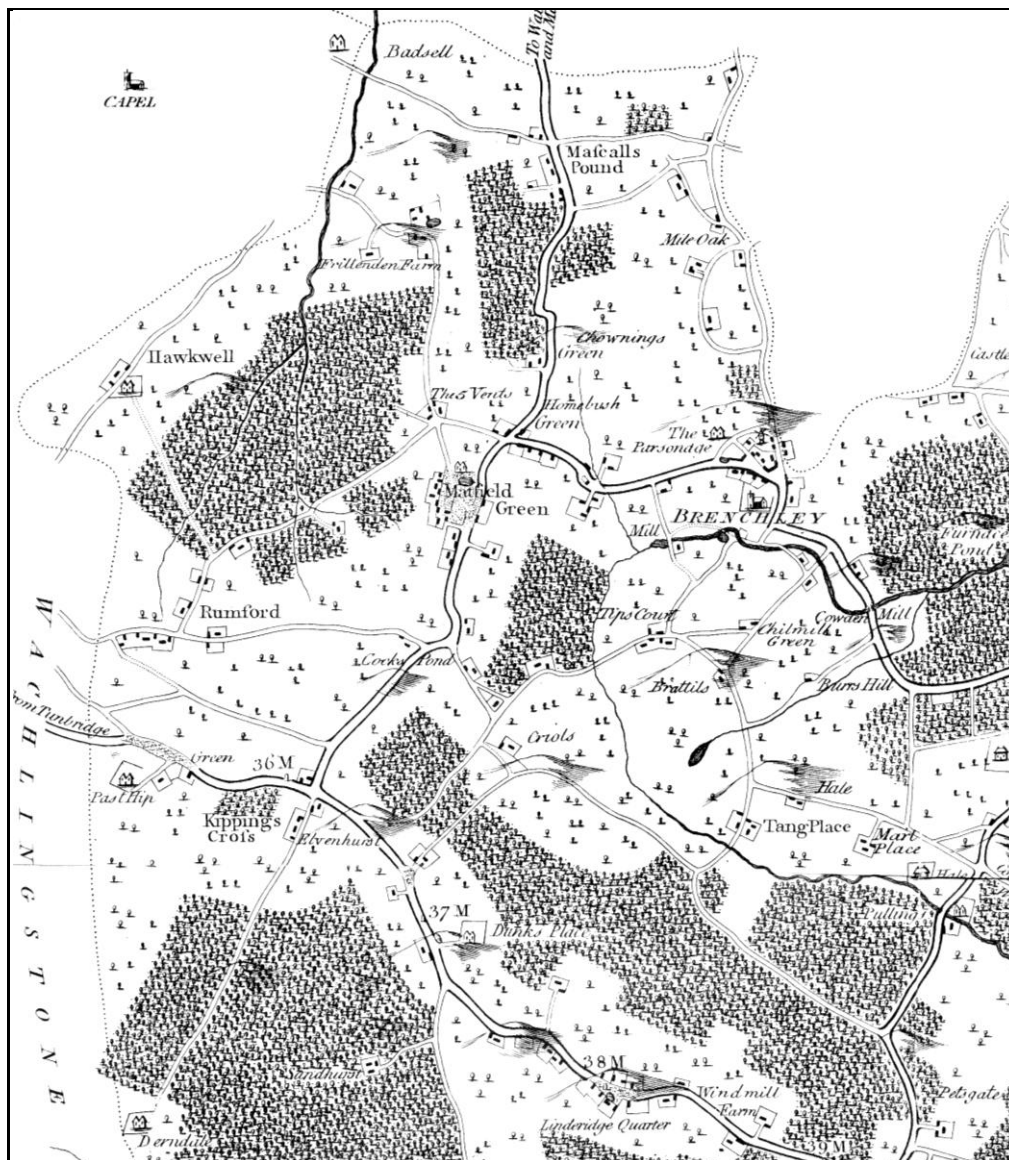
2. Historic context of parish of Brenchley

The civil parish of Brenchley approximately coincides with the historic ecclesiastical parish boundary. The exception being the northern part in the valley of the River Medway which has been formed into the modern parish of Paddock Wood centred on the railway line and station. As Hasted describes in the 18th century, Brenchley is a large parish of being “*upwards of four miles from north to south, and about three in width*” (Hasted 1797 V p281). There are two main centres of settlement that of Brenchley itself and to the west that of Matfield Green, which as its name indicates has grown up around an area of common or green.

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The majority of the civil parish lies within the Hundred of Brenchley and Horsmonden, a hundred which post-dates 1086 and which was called Brenchley only according to Hasted (ibid p280).

The parish is located on the northern edge of the High Weald and comprises gently undulating land with small streams flowing in a general north easterly direction towards the River Teise and the River Medway. The western boundary is marked by the valley of the Tudley Brook and its tributaries. The southern boundary abuts the wooded landscape of Lamberhurst deeper into the High Weald. The eastern boundary with Horsmonden is sinuous and irregular following in part streams, fields and woodland edges.

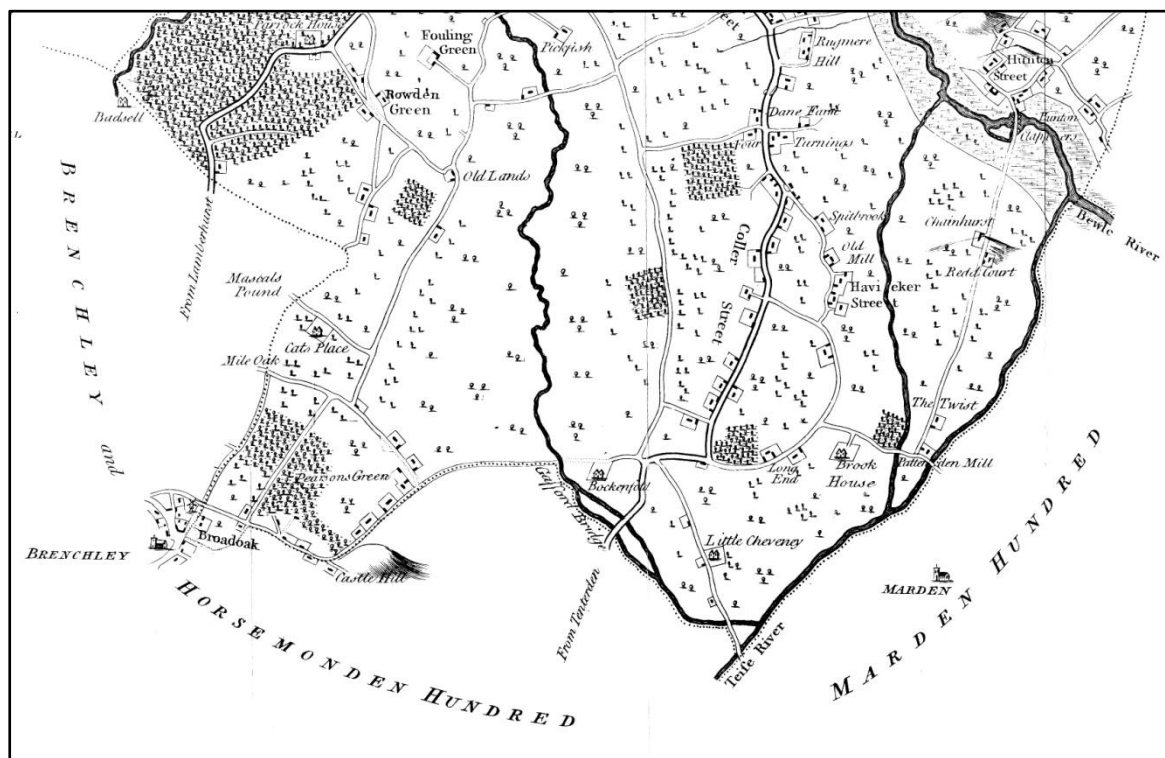


Extract from Hasted Hundred of Brenchley and Horsmonden (1797)

The underlying geology is dominated by Tunbridge Wells Sand formation. To the south around Tong and Coldharbour there are outcrops of Wadhurst Clay. A small outlier also occurs to the north of Brenchley village. Within the Wadhurst Clay are Ironstone outcrops in

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particular to the west of Marl Place. There are post-medieval iron works near Shirrenden on the parish boundary, with Horsmonden and near Matfield.



Extract from Hasted (1797) Hundred of Tywford

Brenchley is located on the edge of Wealden swine pasture area, where it joins with the low meadow lands of the valley of the Medway. The historic settlement pattern together with place-name evidence preserves the wood pasture and wooded landscape origin.

After AD 450 with the coming and settling in Kent of the Saxons the Weald was divided into large 'commons' attached to large agricultural estates in north and east Kent. Kent was carved up to utilise large swathes of the landscape. These estates became the lathes the territories of which spread into the Weald to lay claim to the woodland and grazing pastures. These commons were used for seasonal grazing but were gradually broken up into dens or swine pastures attached to the evolving manors located in the north and east on the demesne and farmed land. Eventually temporary settlements in the dens became permanent farmsteads taking their names from the 'dens' and the settlers enclosed land and laid out fields from the swine pastures in order to cultivate crops and keep stock. The area of Brenchley lay in the large and powerful lathe of Aylesford dominated by manors such as Yalding claiming extensive grazing pastures across this area of higher ground into the Weald. Due to its location on the edge of the Weald the dens and settlement along the drove ways are possibly much earlier in origin than those deeper into the Weald as colonisation spread. The names of Crittenden and Bigginden preserve root origins of folk-names or *ingas* = the settlement belong to the people of? Witney also records that of the 130 dens recorded in pre-Conquest Anglo-Saxon Charters five had names indicating prior habitation one of which was Crittenden alias *Witheringefalodsto-gafol* AD 942 (Witney 1976, p112). Gafol means 'land paying rent'. These two places survive as farmsteads in the northern part of the parish close to the edge of the low lands of the Medway and close to north-south

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routes through Brenchley. Crittenden belonged to the Church of Rochester as part of their large manor of West Malling (Sawyer 1968, no 514). Biggenden was a den belonging to the Manor of Frindsbury also belonging to the Church of Rochester (Sawyer 1968, no 33 & 105).

The Clares of Tonbridge held sway over part of the parish with their over-lordship of the large manor of Yalding on the River Medway. Brenchley itself, together with Parrock, Mascalls, Copt Grove, Criols and Tong were dens which belonged to this manor. Old Tong Farm is located on a ridge of high ground in the south of the parish and takes its name from *OE tang* meaning tongue which describes the north-east south west orientated land form. The topographic alignment of the high ground and valleys provides an underlying 'grain' or pattern to the southern part of the parish. Brenchley itself is located on higher ground and late medieval and early post-medieval hamlets grew up around small greens such as at Matfield.



Extract from Edward Hasted's Map of the Hundred of Brenchley and Horsmonden

Edward Hasted in 1797 describes the landscape of the parish Brenchley as being wooded especially around the edges, with old-fashioned timber farmsteads sited around small forstals and greens, with wide verged and green-swarded bye roads, deep and miry in winter (hasted 1797 V p281). He is describing a medieval landscape which had remained relatively unaltered for centuries. However by the beginning of the 19th century top fruit, orchards and hop grounds were being laid out across the parish. The coming of the railway provided a transport system whereby fresh fruit could be delivered to markets in London and further afield. Large groups of medieval and early post-medieval field systems were swept away as regular-shaped orchards were established.

3. Results of the revised HLC for the parish of Brenchley

Some examples of the digitising of Brenchley parish as part of the wider revised HLC for the borough of Tunbridge Wells are presented in the map extracts on the following pages. The first phase of this project has been completed and is presented in a GIS project for the parishes of Speldhurst, Southborough, Royal Tunbridge Wells and Pembury. Capel has been completed for phase 2 with Horsmonden and Frittenden to be undertaken. Only a brief analysis of the HLC attributes is presented here. The HLC has been split into its main period and type component attributes, but by applying the different style sheets it is possible to show the various attributes for the present day HLC, as well as a conjectured image of what the historic character of the late medieval and early-post-medieval landscape might have looked like.

3.1 The Phase 1 Kent HLC

Map 1 shows the broad HLC type for the Kent Phase 1 for the civil parish of Brenchley. The Kent was one of the earliest HLCs to be undertaken in England and was produced using a very broad-brush approach to characterisation. The broad character areas of Brenchley can clearly be seen. Horticulture dominates the historic character with settlement strung along the roads. Woodland is confined for the most part to the edges of the parish.

3.2 The Revised Kent HLC for Tunbridge Wells Borough – Brenchley

Map 2 shows the broad HLC type for the revised Kent HLC for Tunbridge Wells Borough. The finer-grained approach to the data capture can clearly be seen for example with the scattered settlements across the parish many of which have designed landscapes associated with them indicating a higher level of gentrification of settlement. Larger areas of woodland lie to the edges of the parish but there is a higher incidence of woodland in the centre of the parish highlighting the wooded character of the landscape. The revised HLC highlights the grain of the historic character, especially in the fruit growing and wooded landscape to the south of Brenchley.

3.3. The HLC Types for present day landscape of Brenchley

Map 3 shows the HLC types for Brenchley. Immediately it can be seen that large parts of the parish are dominated by modern field amalgamation in a number of cases clearly associated with a farmstead such as Hononton Farm to the south east of Brenchley village. The loss of so many boundaries is the result of modern farming techniques dating from the mid-C19. Field enlargement coincided with both the development and installation of clay land drains and the laying out of the railway. The main land use change however was the development of orchards, which are such a strong landscape character today. The installation of land drains was easier in larger fields and these new layouts were suitable for the planting up of extensive orchards. The laying out of modern orchards in the early C20 and their subsequent grubbing in the late C20 has resulted in large areas of the parish undergoing significant landscape change since the Late post-medieval period. This can be seen in Map 7. Many of the older orchards are laid out within the existing field patterns, thus preserving the pattern and field boundaries. Historic field systems pre-dating the orchard growing are rare in this parish. Remnants of the assart system lie close to gill woods in the

south and west of the parish, for example at Cold Harbour and Little Dunks Farms or around Cinderhill Wood. South of Matfield Green remnants of a formal planned field pattern survive suggesting enclosure of a much larger green or common. The large golf course to the north of the village of Brenchley occupies one of the dens belonging to the Manor of Yalding held by the Clares of Tonbridge in the medieval period, namely Parsonage Farm, Priory Wood and White Barn.

Modern paddocks are a feature around settlement, together with the larger designed (or laid out) gardens associated with converted farmsteads or larger detached country properties.

Hop growing was an extensive land use and dominated the early 19th century character. These were difficult to identify on the 1940 RAF AP and the limit on time meant that a systematic search of the Tithe map schedules was not undertaken. Thus some of the areas identified as orchards may have been hop gardens.

3.4 The Time-depth and antiquity of the present landscape of Brenchley

Map 4 shows the projected period of origin for each historic character type in the present landscape of Brenchley based on the historic map evidence and understanding of the Kent landscape. Essentially Brenchley is a landscape dominated by Early modern and 20th century historic character under-pinned by the medieval structure of routeways, historic settlement and woodlands. Sixteen years on from the Kent Phase 1 HLC in 2000 has revealed a landscape where extensive areas of orchards have been converted to arable lands. For example in the north of the parish around Paddock Wood or for example to the south in the high ridge of Tong. Early medieval and medieval character is confined to the areas of woodland and associated assart fields with scattered medieval farmsteads.

Elements of that past historic landscape character still may survive within the present landscape, for example some of the field boundaries for the older field systems in the areas of modern field amalgamation or within the golf course. These boundaries are also the remnants of the older parishes, manors, and farmsteads.

3.5 Analysis of different character types

Map 5 shows only the HLC broad type for Enclosures by HLC type for Brenchley. This is an example of how the HLC can be queried in order to assess the different historic character types. The rural landscape is dominated by the patterns of enclosures and it can be seen that Brenchley is dominated by modern field amalgamation and smaller paddocks, the result of the railway, agricultural improvements and changes in cropping regimes in the modern era. The areas of modern field amalgamation occur on the lower ground close to the valley of the Medway where the soils and topography enabled changes and improvements in cultivation techniques to take place. The modern fields are also closely associated with areas of abandoned fruit growing. The assart fields occur as fragmented groups in the southern and western parts of the parish, following the edge of the High Weald. The fragments of formal planned fields can also be seen and they are closely associated with areas of 'green' or common.

Map 6 gives an indication of this where the same polygons have been illustrated by the Boundary type attribute. Immediately the River Medway valley can be identified by the fields bounded by ditches. The boundaries formed of hedges occur across the whole of the parish.

In some cases where modern field amalgamation has taken place the boundaries have been removed altogether leaving just grass balks. In the southern and western parts of Brenchley wooded hedges dominate accentuating the wooded landscape character of this area. In parts these wooded hedges are all that remain of the former woodland that did occur across parts of this area. Wooded hedges are either outgrown hedges (due to lack of management) or wider wooded shaws. The fences are evidence of paddocks, laid out in an older field system and due to the frequency of such enclosures around settlement, fences appear to dominate these areas.

3.6. The conjectured medieval and early post-medieval landscape of Brenchley

Map 7 is a composite map of the present HLC overlain with those polygons where the previous historic character can be identified from the historic mapping. Each time there is a character change as shown by the historic maps (up to 4 changes recorded in the GIS attribute table as Prev1 to Prev 4) this has been captured in the data base. The result is that this map gives an indication of what the landscape may have appeared like c.1500-1600, when much the medieval features would still have been intact.

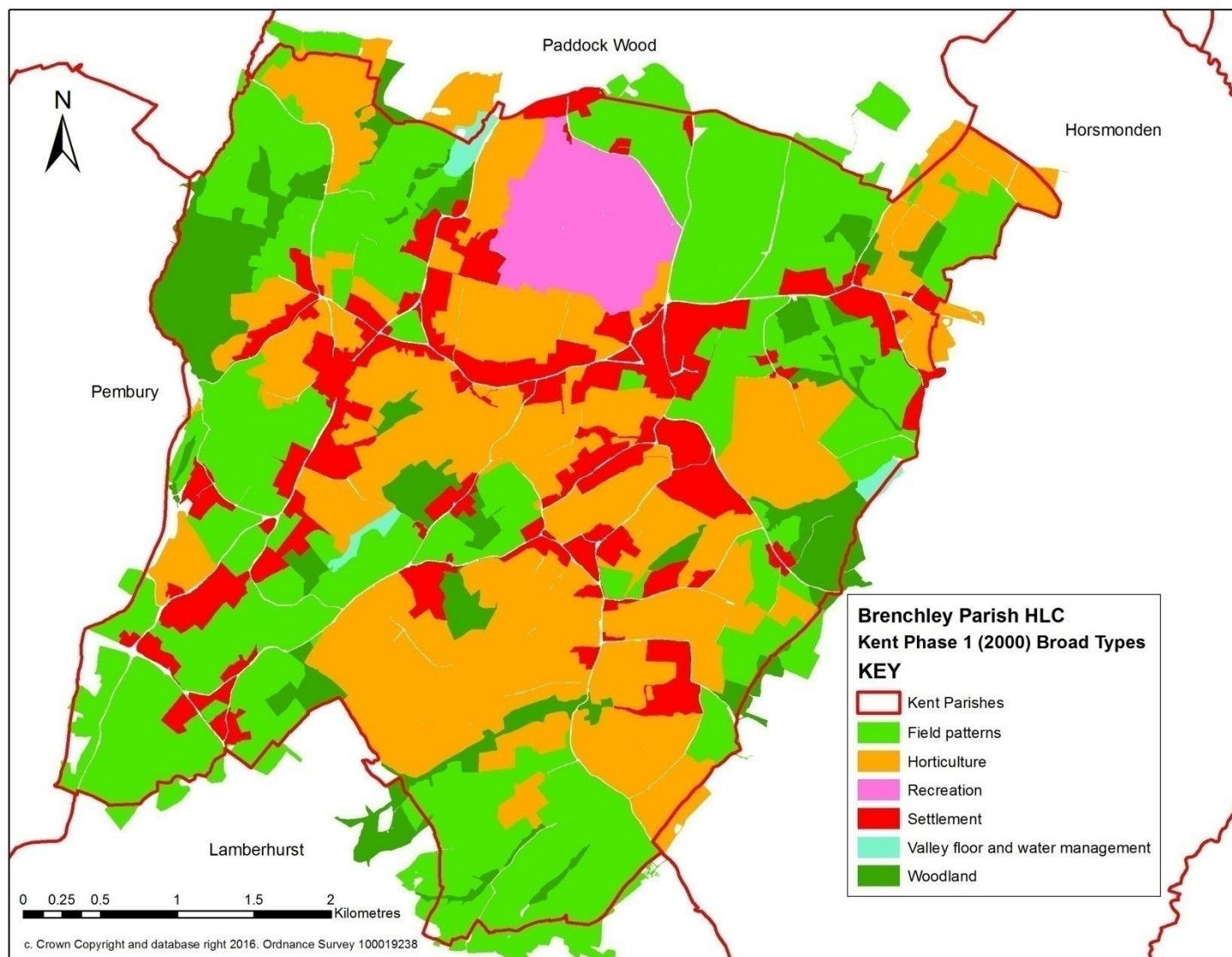
This is the landscape that Hasted describes being wooded, especially around the skirts, giving it a gloomy aspect due to the woods and the numerous spreading oaks. These oaks would have occupied the wooded shaws and hedges of the medieval field pattern which is indicated by the dominance of cohesive (or semi-planned assart fields). A group of co-axial type fields occurred on the higher ground at Tong. Many of the ancient woods and gills have been removed from the middle of the parish and this map shows their extent in the late-medieval and early post-medieval period.

Formal planned fields occur near areas of early settlement or near to areas called 'green' as at Matfield Green, Market Heath and King's Toll. A market was recorded at Brenchley in 1263 (IPM AC IV p312-313). The extent of greens and commons is difficult to assess in the historic mapping suggesting that such of this open ground was enclosed fairly early on in the post-medieval period.

The origins and antiquity of the regular informal fields is difficult to assess, but these fields could date from the early post-medieval due to field re-organisation or may even be medieval in date.

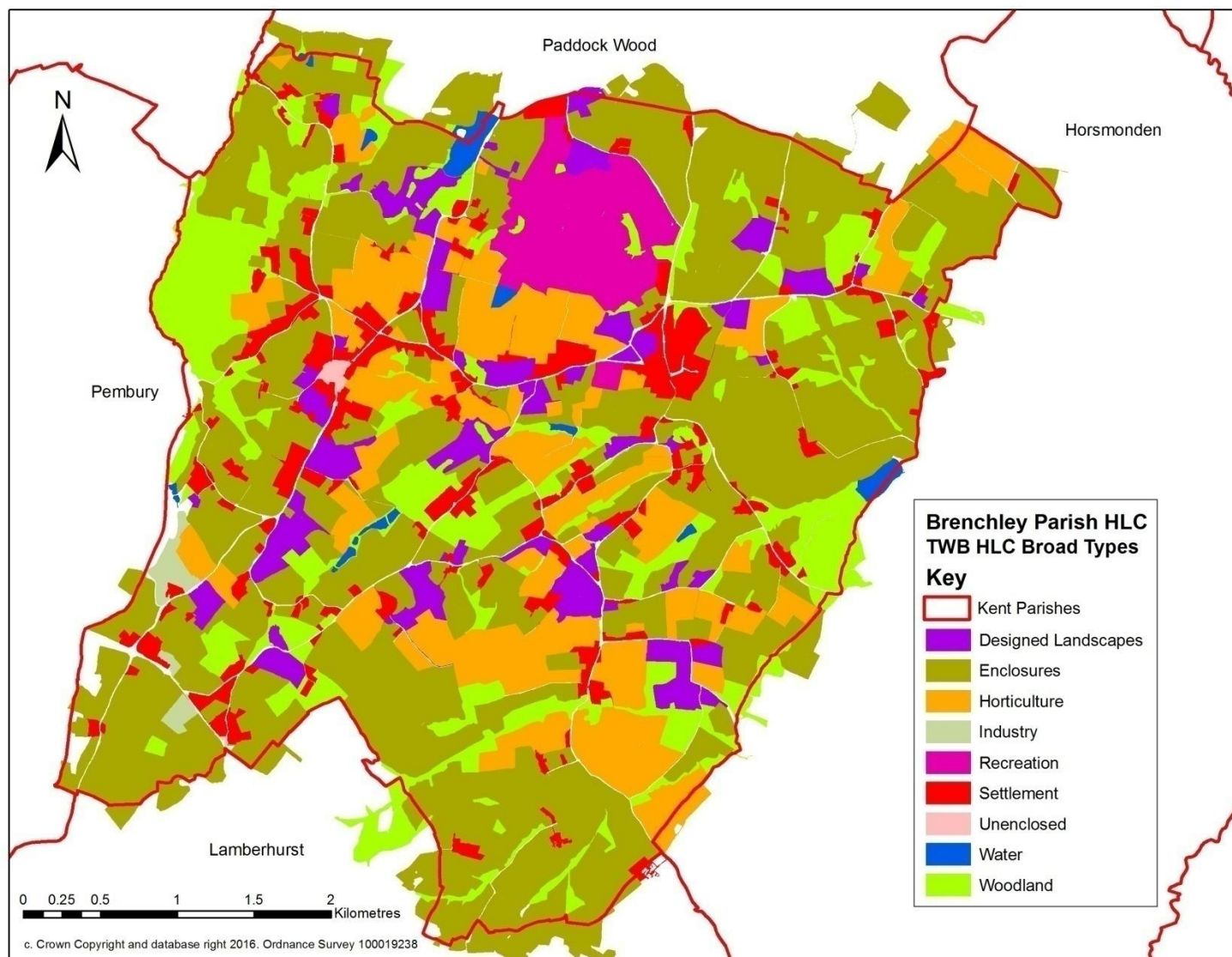
Designed landscapes are rare and occur close to the village or 'town' of Brenchley.

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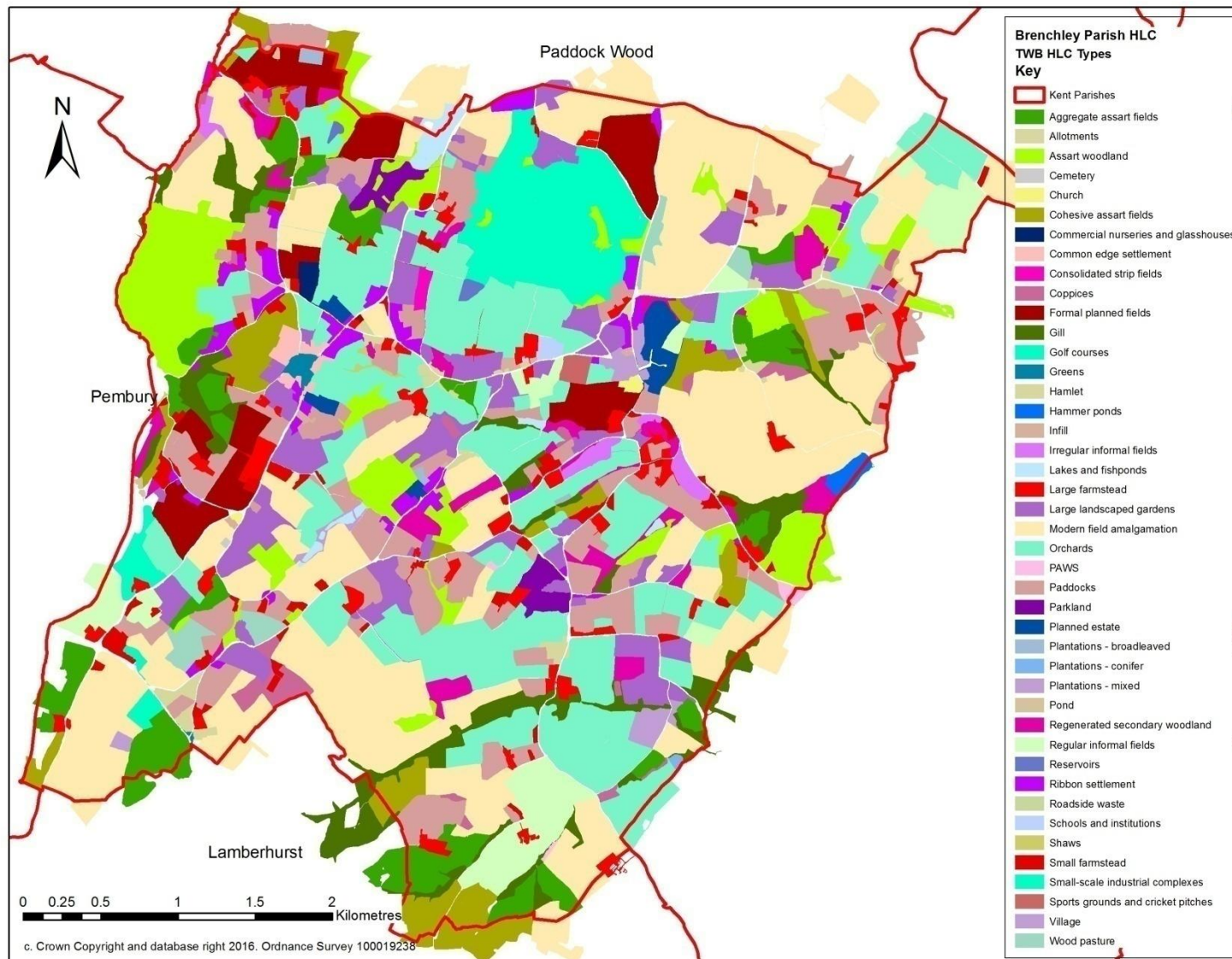
MAP 1

BOROUGH OF ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS
REVISED KENT HLC (2000)
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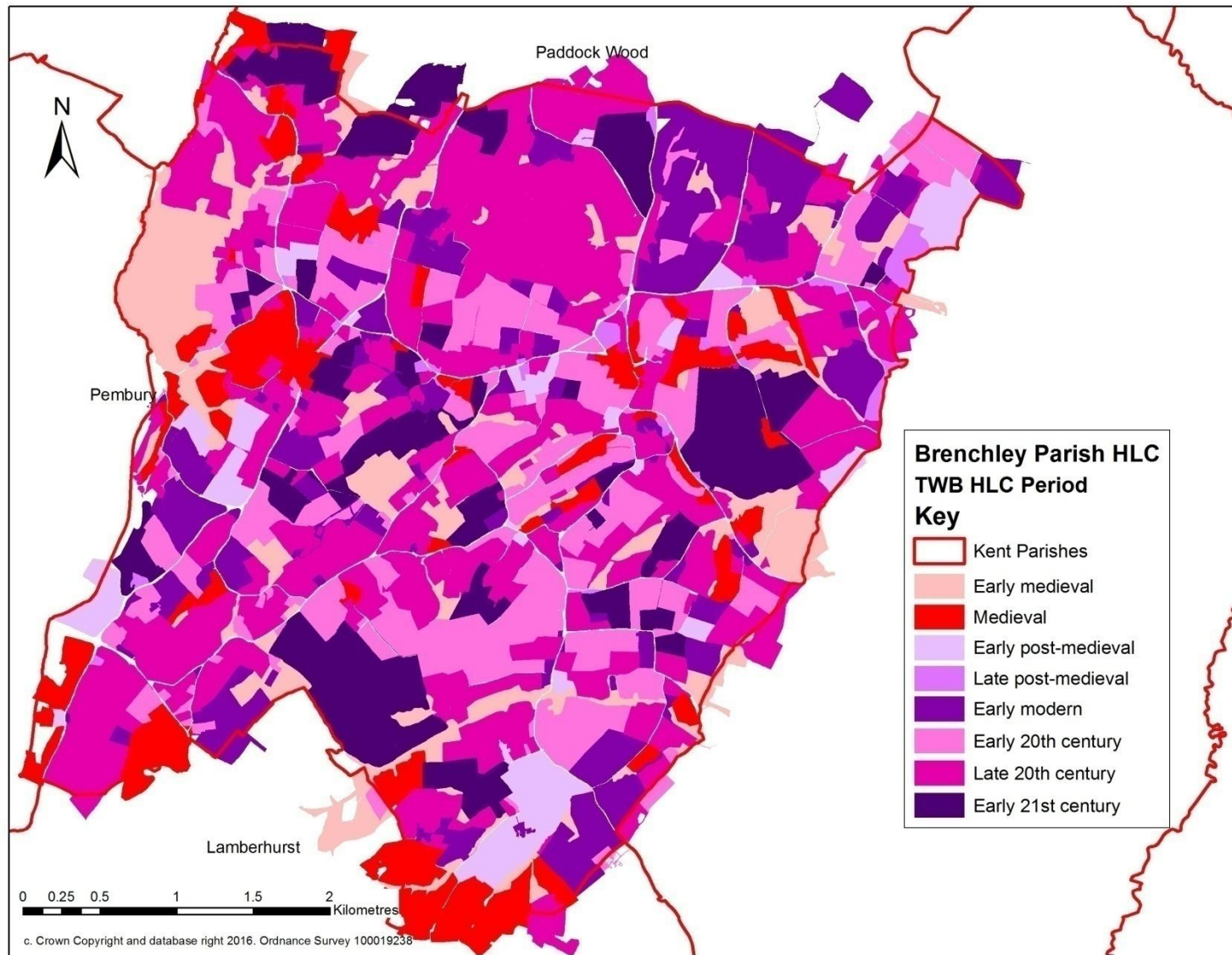
MAP 2

**BOROUGH OF ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS
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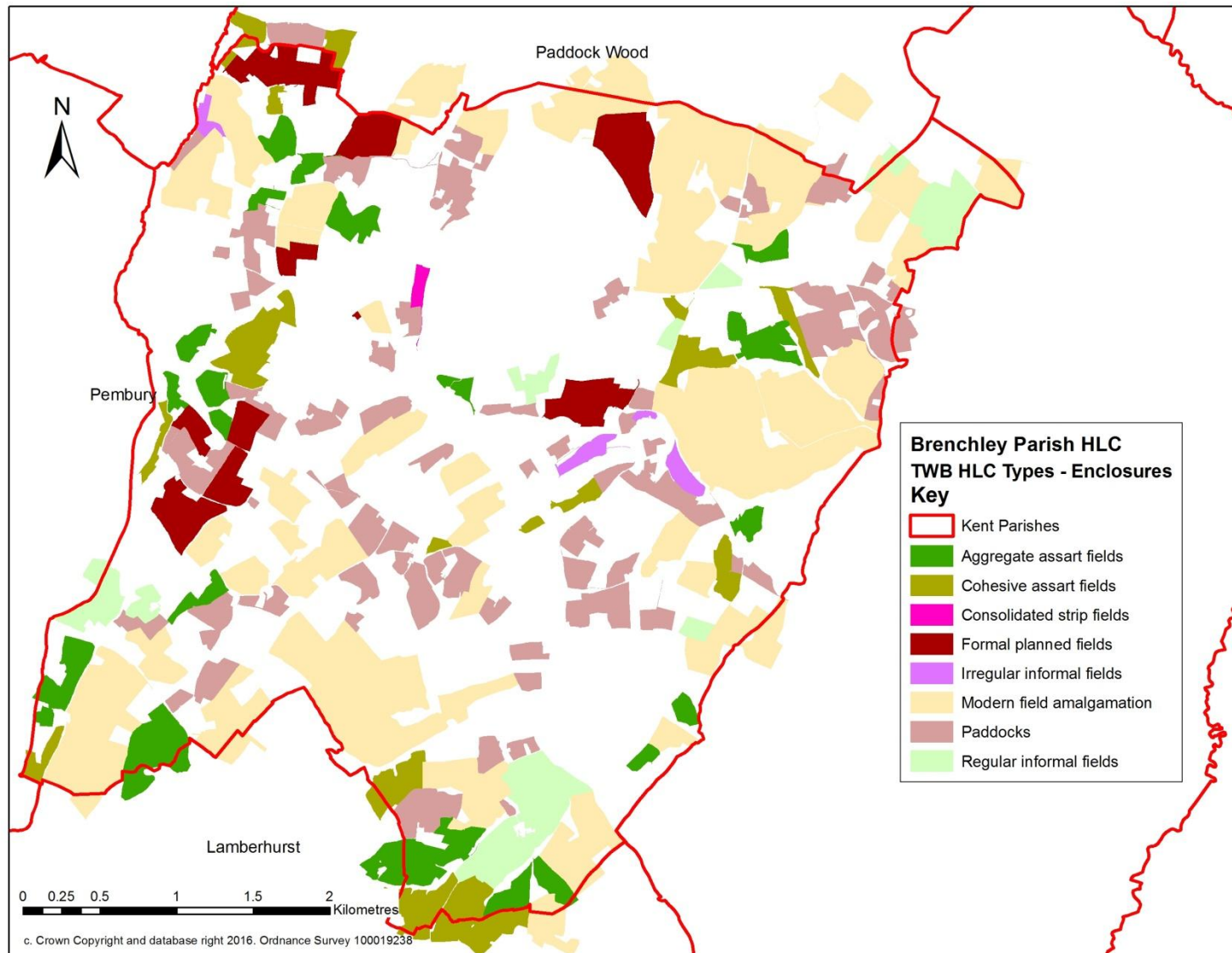
Map 3

BOROUGH OF ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS
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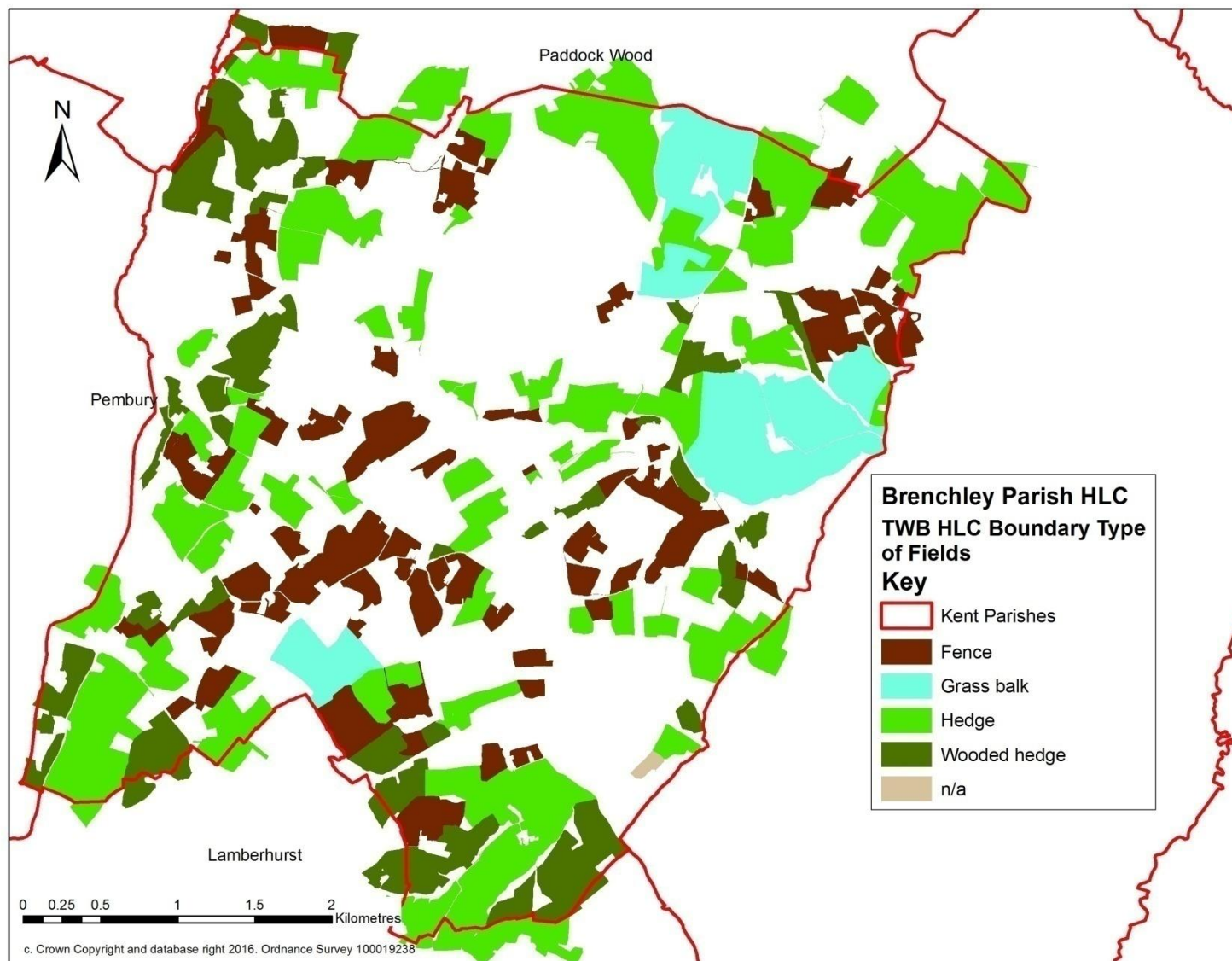
MAP 4

BOROUGH OF ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS
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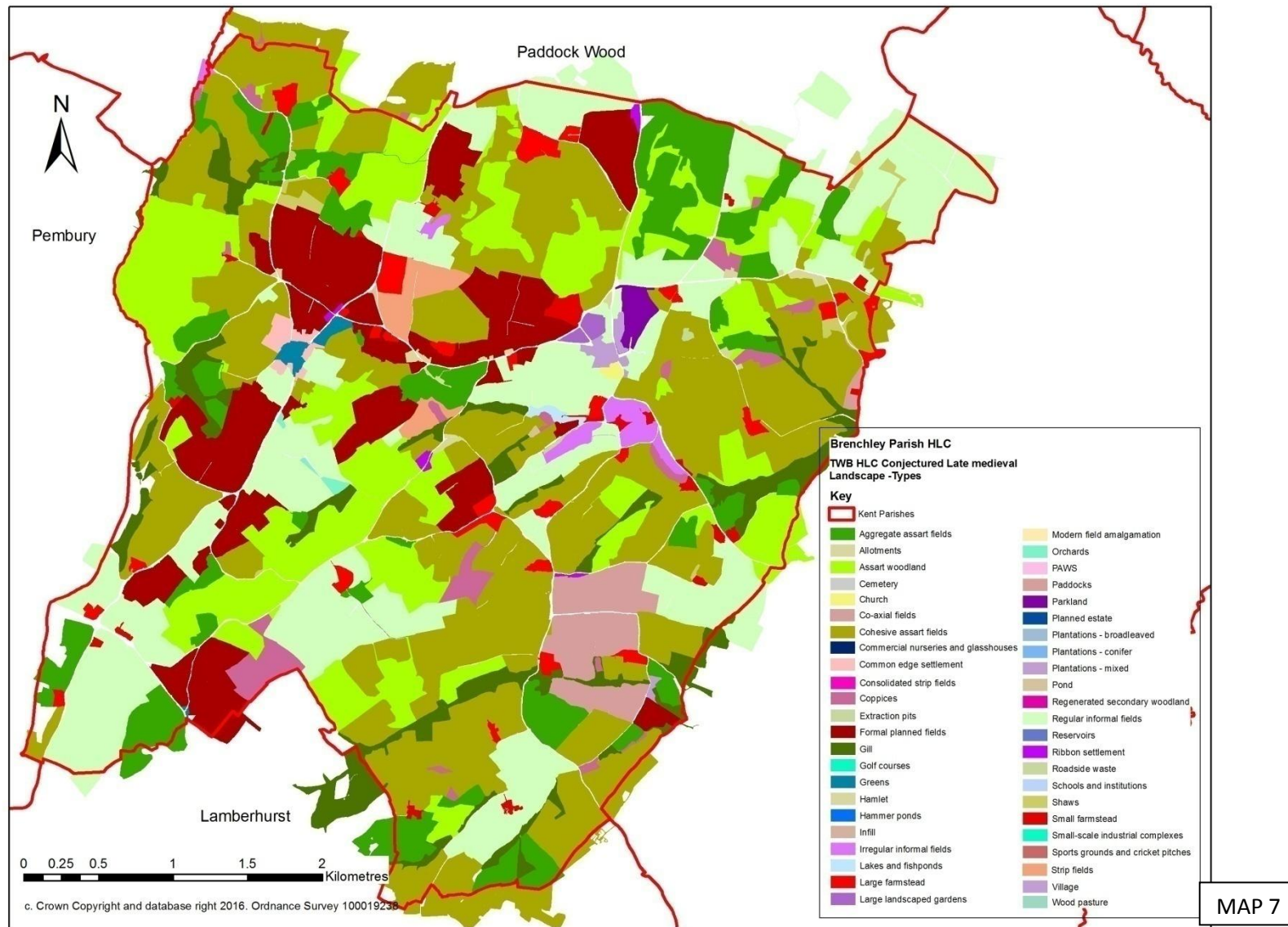
MAP 5

BOROUGH OF ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS
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MAP 6

**BOROUGH OF ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS
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4. Initial Conclusions

This analysis only touches on the potential of HLC to understand the historic character of the landscape and provides the starting point for research for any given area. The HLC reveals that the landscape of Brenchley is essentially a post-medieval character which is under-pinned by the medieval origins in its layout. The historic character of Brenchley reflects both the ancient landscapes (antiquity) and the modern landscapes (time-depth). The changes in the C19 and C20 with the development and then gradual decline in orchards growing are shown across the whole of the parish but the underlying structure of remaining field boundaries, old routeways (lanes and paths) and the dispersed nature of the historic settlement is still present and can be identified here. Brenchley is a parish with considerable recorded medieval history, which in turn can still be identified on the ground through the survival of historic landscape features. The fragmented field patterns which still survive are evidence of how the landscape was farmed in the medieval and early post-medieval periods. The grain of the historic character of Brenchley is still evident today.

Far more research is needed to understand the different process of enclosure in the Weald of Kent, especially in the understanding the medieval settlement and expansion. Further research is needed on the division of land with their farmsteads into yokes, yardlands, sulungs, virgates etc. and interpreting medieval manorial surveys with the actual territories in the landscape.

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