

# The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens for Medway



## Riverside Gardens, Chatham



October 2014



# **Riverside Gardens**

## Chatham, Kent

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## INTRODUCTION

This site description and accompanying dossier have been prepared by the Kent Gardens Trust as part of its wider review of ***The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens***. This part of the review, carried out for Medway Council in 2013 -14, covers sites within the Medway local authority area with the aim to:

a) Review the historic nature, content, current state and significance of the sites currently identified in the ***Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens*** for the Medway local authority area along with others identified by Medway Council. The review has been undertaken using English Heritage's criteria for identifying the significance of local heritage assets to provide a consistent approach. The revised list of sites has the potential to support development of a Local List of historic sites in Medway should the Council wish to progress this in future<sup>1</sup>. The list of sites researched and evaluated in this review would be subject to consultation as part of any Local List development and is therefore not intended to be final.

b) Inform future funding applications for historic spaces by the identification of significance

c) Inform future conservation and/or any development of sites by the identification of the significance of key historic character, features and association including that of setting and viewpoints.

The extent of the area identified represents the current surviving area of the designed landscape, the boundary line generally reflecting the maximum extent of the historic gardens or parkland (although there are exceptions such as where land has been irreversibly lost to development). The boundary line 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.

Medway Council  
Greenspace, Heritage  
& Library Services  
Gun Wharf  
Dock Road  
Chatham  
ME4 4TR  
[www.medway.gov.uk](http://www.medway.gov.uk)

Kent County Council  
Heritage Conservation  
Invicta House  
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Maidstone  
ME14 1XX  
01622 696918  
[www.kent.gov.uk](http://www.kent.gov.uk)

Kent Gardens Trust  
[www.kentgardenstrust.org.uk](http://www.kentgardenstrust.org.uk)

English Heritage  
[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

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<sup>1</sup> English Heritage (2012) 'Good Practice Guide to Local Listing'



## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

**KENT  
CHATHAM**

**RIVERSIDE GARDENS**

**ST MARY'S PARISH**

TQ 5751 1681

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Riverside Gardens are a mid C20 example of public authorities creating open space on the site of former military land – in this case an C18 military wharf (New Gun Wharf) serving the forts of Chatham, the history of which can be traced to C16. Strong documentary and archival evidence supports the past importance of this site which, in addition, is considered to have high potential for below-ground archaeology of a nationally significant nature.

Together with the adjacent Paddock, Town Hall Gardens and the slope of Fort Amherst the Gardens have community value and scenic and landmark significance, allowing public access to the banks of the River Medway and offering extensive views to historic landmarks such as Rochester Cathedral and Castle to the west. Besides providing a public amenity, the gardens provide a direct physical connection to both local and national collective memories of Chatham's vital importance to the United Kingdom's defence up to the mid C20.

## **CHRONOLOGY OF THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT**

Riverside Gardens share their history with that of the Paddock (qv) the former lying to the northwest of the Land Wall (now Globe Lane) and the latter to the south-east. The Land Wall was built as a transport route from Rochester to the dockyard across marshy land and, first recorded in 1633 (possibly in 1588), it also served to dam the marsh from the River Medway. This allowed land reclamation and the building of a tidal pool to drive the Chatham mill. During C18 the need for more military capability hastened this process and the tidal pool was filled in to provide the land for New Gun Wharf in order to bring in supplies and armaments to the expanding system of defensive forts which were being built around the Chatham Dockyard at that time.

In 1819, the White House was built on the eastern edge of New Gun Wharf to provide accommodation and offices for the deputy storekeeper. The first edition OS map (1864) shows a garden (c.80 x 30m) surrounding the house and lying between the C18 building (now Riverside One) to the north and Globe Lane to the south. The map suggests that this was walled with perimeter paths and a formal layout of trees. The garden is not shown on the fourth edition OS map (1929-52).

New Gun Wharf remained in use by the army until 1955, when it was sold with the foreshore to Chatham Council, although the Army continued in occupation

of at least part of it until 1961 during which time it was part of the Atomic Energy Research Establishment. The fourth edition OS map (1929-52) shows numerous storehouses and workshops with cranes at the riverside. A tramway carried goods from here, northwards to the dockyard, for distribution to the forts.

Public access to the river edge became possible after 1955, as a postcard of that date shows, but there were still many buildings on the site. A photograph of the northern end of the gardens in June 1963 shows a public space composed of a few mature trees set in mown grassland with benches and umbrellas for public enjoyment (MALSC). In contrast, the southern part of the site still had buildings and a car park in 1973 (Aerofilm).

During the 1970s work was carried out on the river wall and the Rats Bay Pumping Station was installed, replacing a C19 pumping station off the Brook in Solomons Road. The sewers pass under Riverside Gardens to drain the former marshland and the waters of the Old Bourne or Brook, this stream running northwards from Luton (now a suburb of Chatham 2kms to the south on the edge of the North Downs) to the River Medway.

Since c1983 the buildings around the pumping station have been removed leaving a level grassed area with some car parking. Land from the south-eastern part of the site, adjacent to Globe Lane, was incorporated into the new bus station (Dynamic Bus Facility) which opened in 2011 and the area immediately to the south is now (2013) scheduled for redevelopment.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

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

Riverside Gardens lie directly on the east bank of the River Medway, in the centre of Chatham, south of Dock Road (A231) and the junction with Globe Lane and the Brook. To the east, they are immediately adjacent to the Paddock, separated only by the bus station. The site is roughly triangular in shape, some 200m from north to south and 170m east to west with an area of 1.7 hectares.

The western boundary is formed by the river wall (rebuilt c.1960-70) which extends 200m northwards, topped by a wrought iron tubular post and rail fence, 1m high. At the northernmost point a 10m x 10m indent in the river wall with a steep flight of steps allows access to the water.

From this northernmost point the eastern boundary runs in a south-easterly direction for some 100m, initially past the Command House (grade II listed, C18, formerly the storekeeper's house and now a pub) and then along the frontages of a line of C18 buildings (formerly carpenters' shops and store houses, now housing Medway Council's Community Hub). From this point a stub of the site extends 40m eastwards, abutting the C18 Riverside One building (formerly a store house and now a family and social service centre) on the north side and, for 30m on the east side, Dock Road. South-eastwards from this point the boundary is formed by the broad paved stone path, extending

south for 160m and part of the western side of the bus station which, in turn, separates Riverside Gardens from the Paddock.

The south-western boundary, running some 80m from the southern end of the bus station north-westwards to the River Medway, is largely undefined. It crosses waste ground, a car park and grass in succession and abuts, at the extreme western end, the wall of the Rats Bay Pumping Station.

The boundaries of Riverside Gardens follow those of New Gun Wharf on which the park is laid out. Historically marsh and then mill pond, the reclaimed land is now a roughly level site with some minor undulations along the east-west path, rising gradually to the east where it meets Dock Road. To the north lies St Mary's Church, built on rising ground, to the east the slopes of Fort Amherst and to the west, the river.

The land to the south of the boundary is due to be developed (2013) as part of the Chatham Waterfront scheme while the pumping station, a large red brick building, dominates the river front at this point.

## **ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES**

The site can be entered at any point across open boundaries to the south and to the east opposite the bus station. Further north, on the eastern side abutting the C18 buildings are two specific entrances: one, a tarmac roadway entering to a small car park immediately west of the Riverside One building and another, at the northern-most point of the Gardens, through heavy steel gates closing off a causeway from Gun Wharf (formerly the old dockyard and now Medway Council offices).

## **PRINCIPAL BUILDING**

The White House was built on New Gun Wharf in 1816 and, although not listed, is an important part of the military history of the area. It is a brick built, white painted, building with a slate roof and sash windows. The building appears to have been extended at a later date in similar style. Traditionally occupied by the deputy storekeeper, during the C20 it was used as offices and residential quarters for military personnel before becoming a medical centre and, now re-furnished, it is used for the administration of the bus station.

## **GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS**

Entering Riverside Garden on the east side from the junction of Dock Road, the Brook and Globe Lane, a paved stone path runs 170m westwards to the Rats Bay Pumping Station bisecting the site. The area to the south of this central path is paved for the initial 20m abutting the bus station and then grassed for 20m with a mature yew tree, perhaps remaining from the White House's C19 garden, before reaching the White House itself. Beyond the house, to the west, are three mature horse chestnut trees which survive from within the working area of New Gun Wharf. South of this central path the roughly triangular (100m x 100m x 100m) southern third of Riverside Gardens is grassed over save for a

tarmac car park (50m x 30m), at the far west end near the pumping station. The area to the east and south of this car park is planted with numerous mixed deciduous young trees with some beech hedging round the car park. The central path terminates at the junction of the northern wall of the pumping station and the river's edge.

From the pumping station a broad paved path extends northwards for 200m following the river edge to the site's northernmost point. The whole length of path affords extensive views westwards over the River Medway: to Rochester where the cathedral and castle are clearly visible, to the opposite shore with its industrial estates and northwards to the Historic Dockyard. To the east of this path, mown grass extends to the frontages of the Medway Council Hub buildings (former C18 workshops), forming the eastern boundary of the site. Wrought iron and wooden seats are set in the grass and halfway along the path are three cannons found in the excavations during the rebuilding of the river wall and now mounted on stone plinths in the grass. From here, there are views north-eastwards over the Medway Hub buildings to St Mary's Church and, further to the east, the wooded slopes of Fort Amherst.

At the southern end of the Medway Hub buildings is a small car park (30m x 30m) which is partly hidden by a grass bank of rising ground to its south and east, topped by a 1m cast iron fence and three beech trees. A path from here runs 30m south to meet the central east-west path. This whole area of the site, north of the central path, is planted with groups of mature trees growing in mown grass. In its western half the mature trees are mainly horse chestnut while in the eastern half the trees are of mixed species. These include the three beeches by the car park, the yew beside the White House, an oak, a lime and row of three plane trees immediately outside Riverside One.

The largest horse chestnut has a girth of 3.2m and is perhaps a surviving tree of those marked on the first edition OS map (1864). Map evidence, and their size, suggests that a few of the present trees may be survivors from the earlier garden of the White House although there is no other visible evidence of its existence. They appear to be about the same age as some of the trees in the Paddock which are visible to the east beyond the bus station.

## **REFERENCES**

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Chatham Public Realm Strategy, Centre and Waterfront Development  
Consultation Draft 2007

Gun Wharf Masterplan SPD, Medway Council November 2010

### **Maps**

Mudge, *An Entirely New and Accurate Survey of the County of Kent* (1801)

Tithe map for Chatham, 1842. IR30 30/17/80 (The National Archives)

Ordnance Survey 1st edn. 25" map (1864). Sheet 19/7

Ordnance Survey 2nd edn. 25" map (1897-1900)

Ordnance Survey 3rd edn. 25" map (1907-23)

Ordnance Survey 4<sup>th</sup> edn. 25" map (1929-52)

### **Illustrations**

Buck, S and N Chatham Dockyard, The West Prospect, 1735

Postcards from the Frith Collection, C69052 (1955) and C69144 (1966)

Rats Bay Pumping Station, Image collection, Riverside Chatham (MALSC)

River View, Image collection, Riverside Chatham, 86/2 (MALSC)

Aerial Photograph, Town Hall and Riverside, 1973, Aerofilms 73/145 (MALSC)

Aerial Photograph, the Paddock, 2012(?). KCC Heritage Conservation Group.

Aerial photograph, Fort Amherst, [www.chathamworldheritagesite.org.uk](http://www.chathamworldheritagesite.org.uk)

Globe Lane, c.1905 MacDougall, P. *A Century of Chatham*, p21

### **Archival Material**

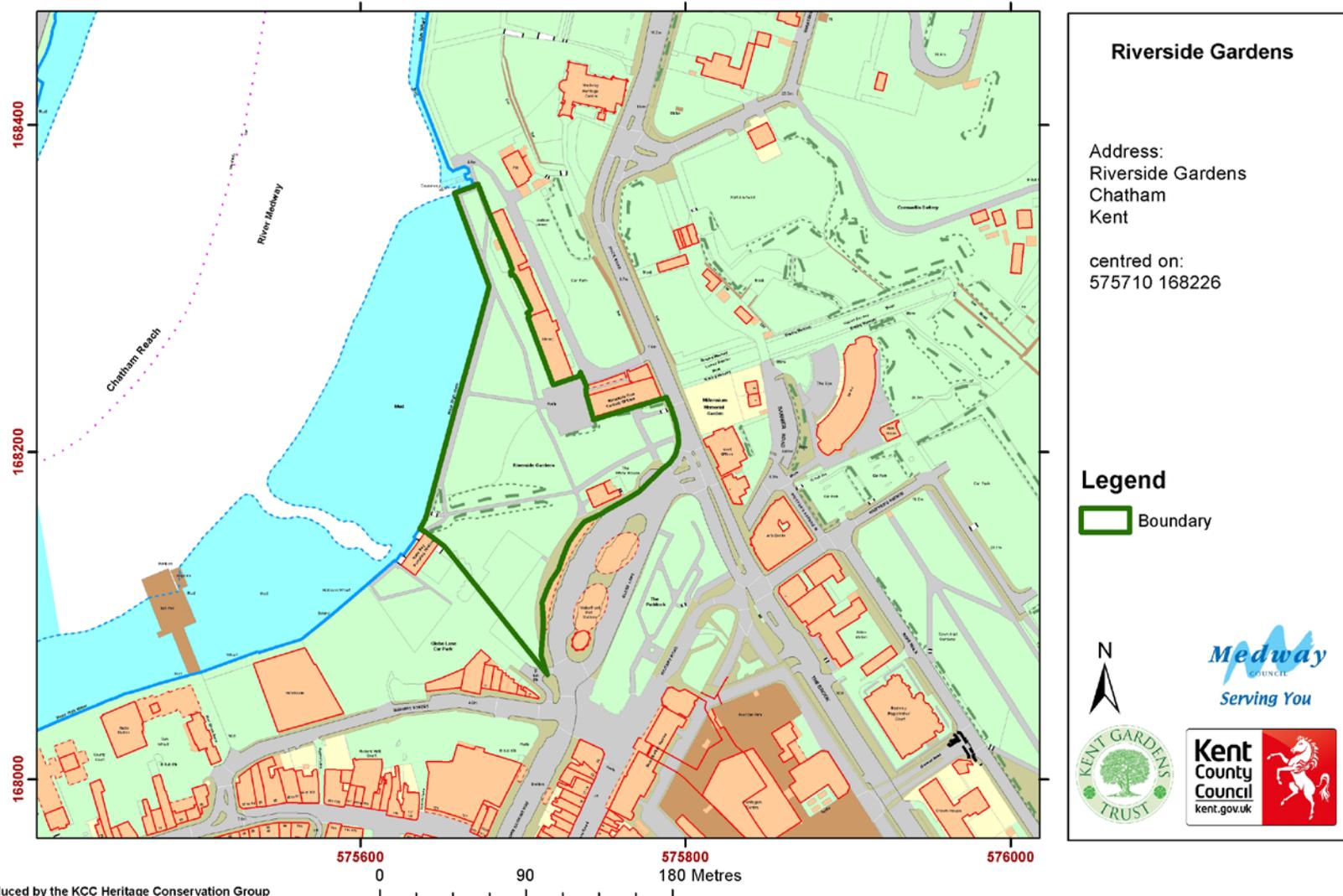
Miscellaneous materials 1973-5 relating to Riverside Gardens and the Paddock  
CEN/GM/2 DE9, file T8 (MALSC)

**Research by Hugh Vaux  
Virginia Hinze (editor)**

**6<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

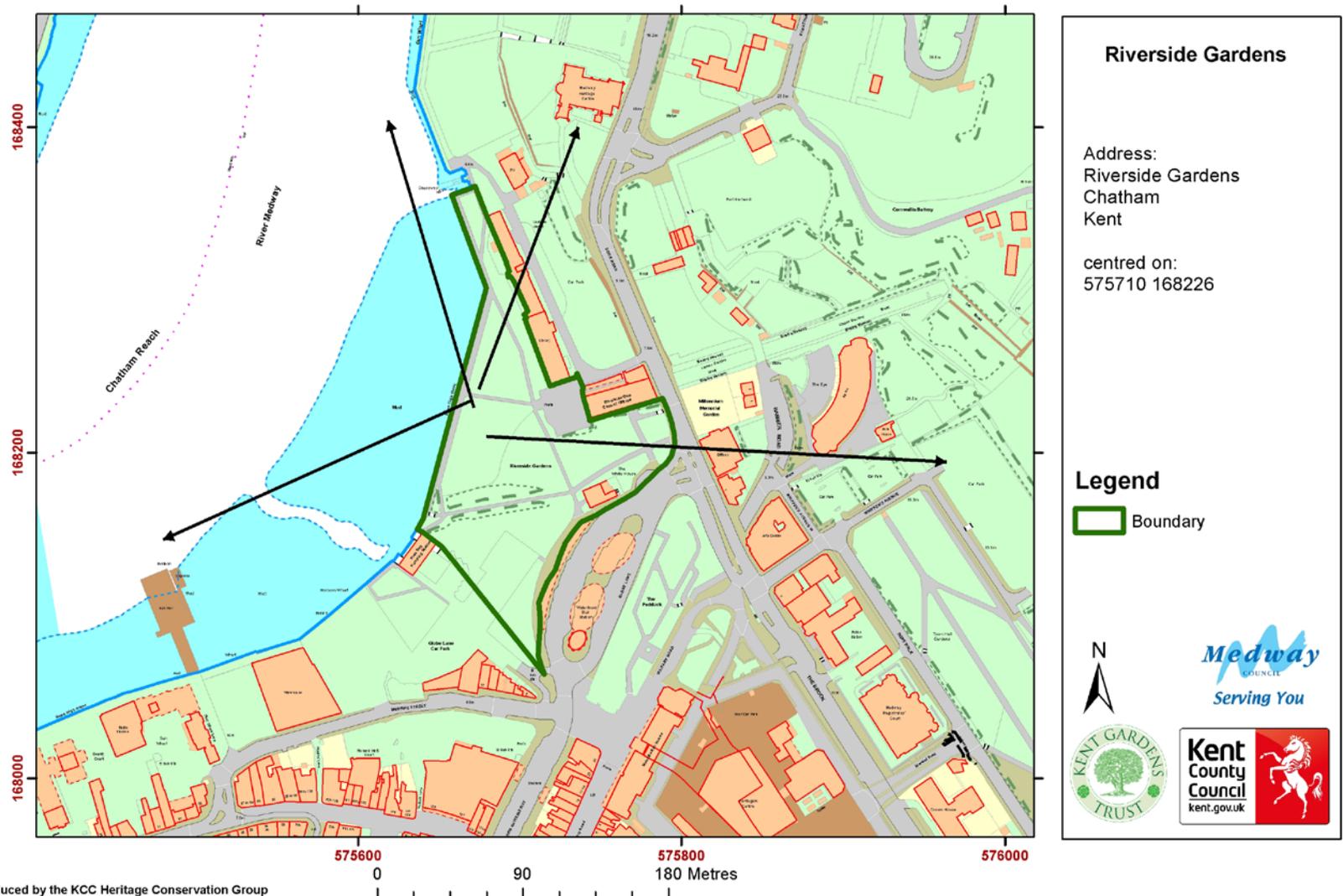
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Fig. 1 Boundary map



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## Fig. 2 Key views map

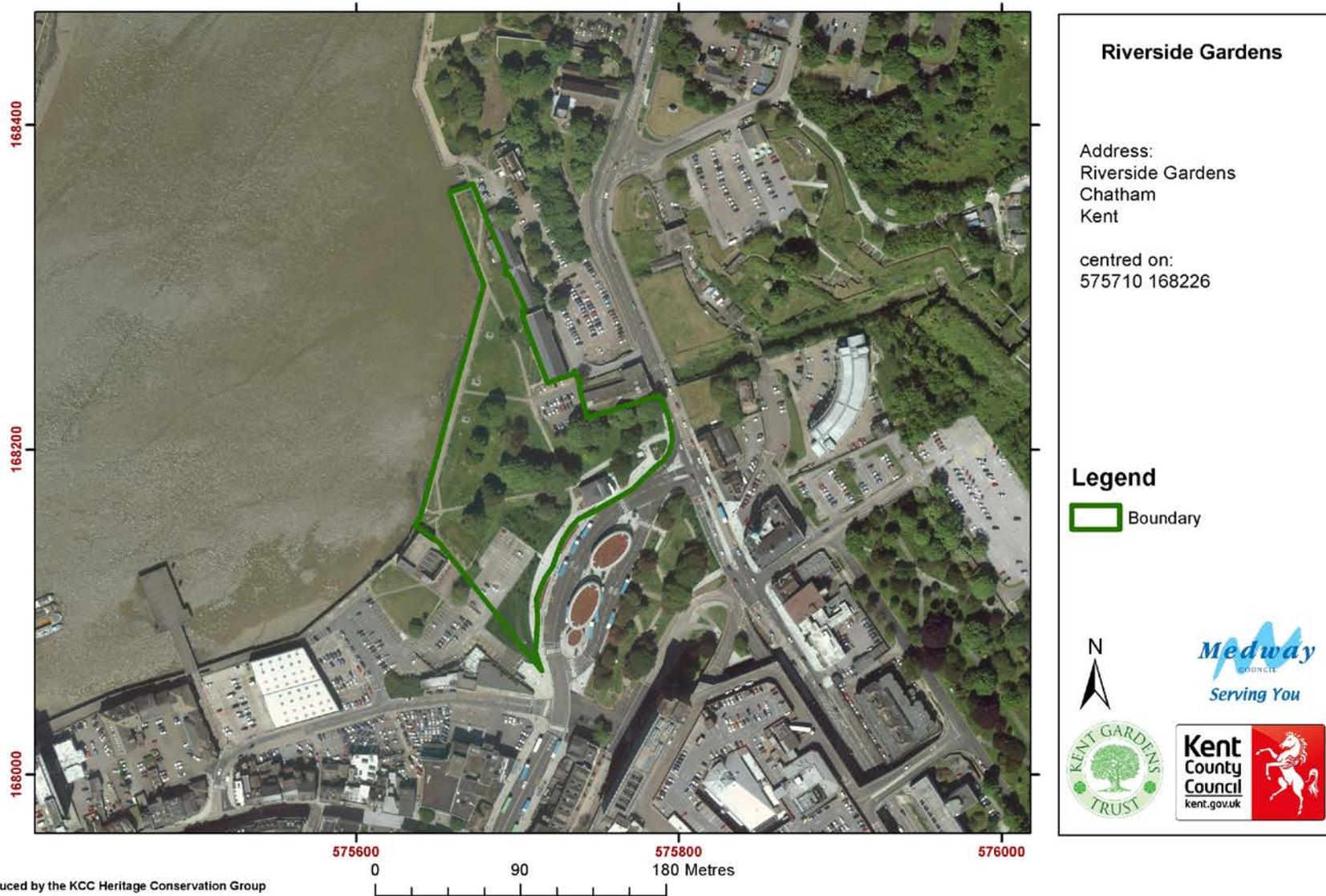


Produced by the KCC Heritage Conservation Group

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## Fig. 3 2012 Aerial photograph

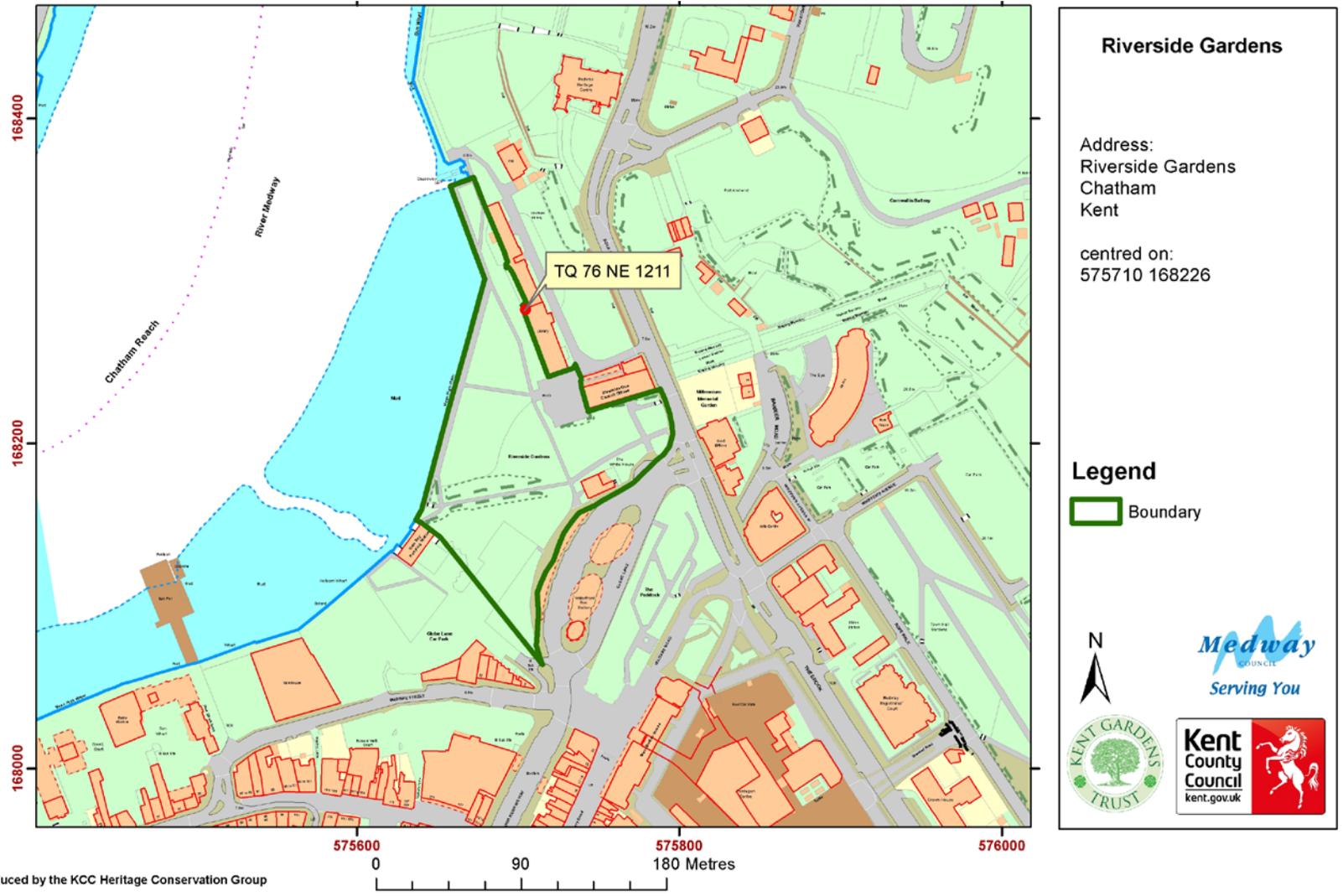


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## Fig. 4 Map of listed buildings



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### Fig. 5 Listed buildings at Riverside Gardens (from the Kent Historic Environment Record)

#### Kent Historic Environment Record Reference: TQ 76 NE 1211

The following text is from the original listed building designation:

CHATHAM

762-1/0/10008

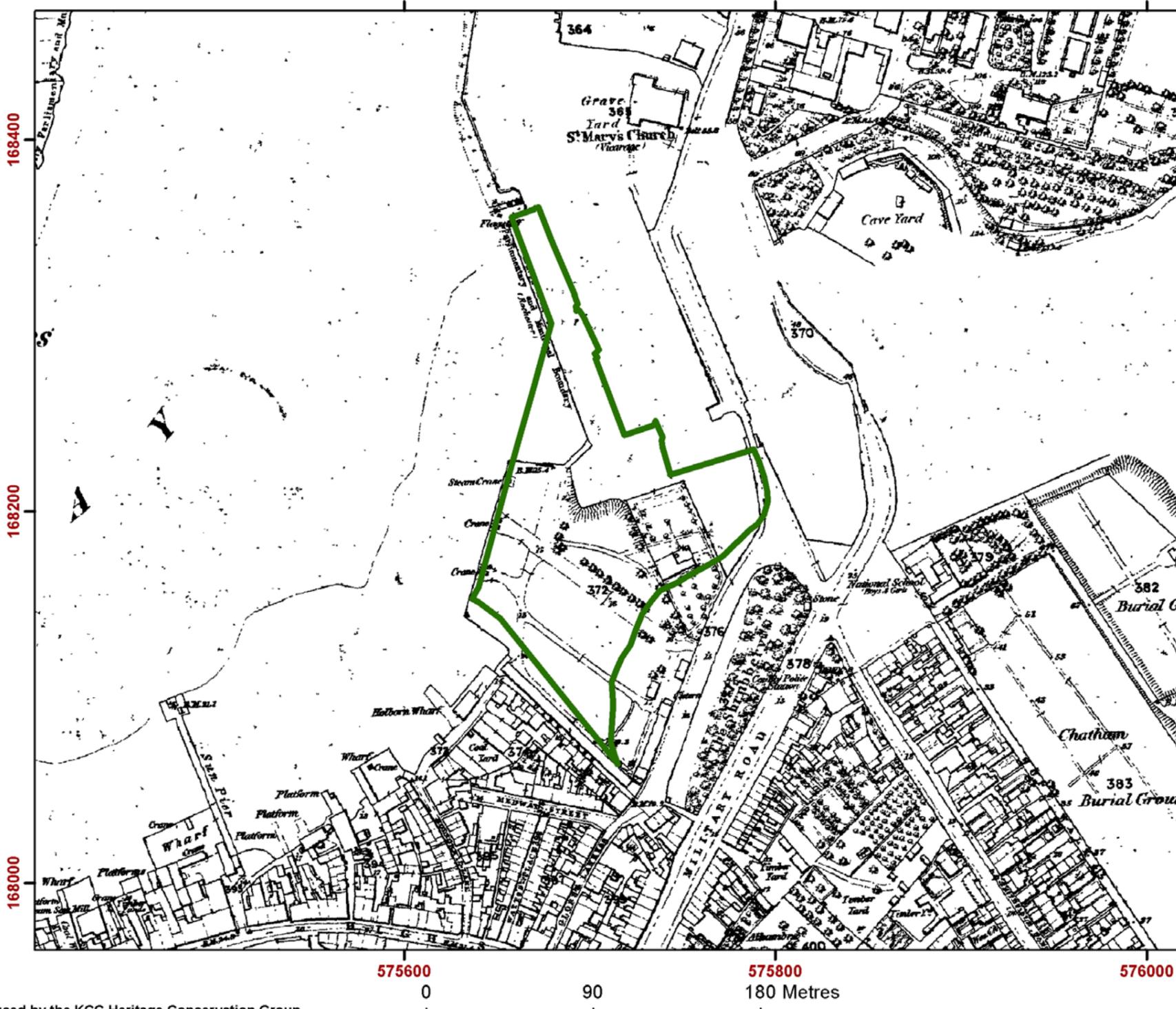
DOCK ROAD 31-AUG-04

Former ordnance store at Chatham Gun Wharf.

Grade II Former ordnance store incorporating carpenter's shop; RAF Association club at time of inspection (2004). 1805 with minor C20 alterations. Supervised by Lt Col D'Arcy, Commanding Officer, Royal Engineers. Yellow brick in Flemish bond with shallow pitch hipped slate roofs, 2 ridge stacks. Single storey range sited parallel to the river Medway. EXTERIOR: EAST elevation (painted) has slightly advanced and central wide coped gable with tall arched opening flanked by 15/15-pane sashes without horns, under gauged brick flat arches. Extending from each side, long wings each with 3 15/15-pane sashes under lintels, then door, then another 3 bays of similar windows. WEST elevation (not painted) is a similar arrangement. Here, the central arch has C20 brick in-filling, but remains readable, and minor C20 additions; single storey, flat-roofed extension to centre of north wing where formerly an external door; additional C20 door to left of this and inserted high windows to left of gable. Most of the original sashes survive throughout the elevations. Southern end abuts the late-C19 former Blacksmith's shop. Northern end has small former boat house, rendered and with narrow flat-roofed link. INTERIOR: North wing has late-C19 inserted chamfered posts with 'T' capitals supporting tie beams. Both sides have C20 internal partitions. Roof structure is original and comprises joggled king-posts trusses with raking struts; common rafters (with evidence of whitewash), ridge board and single purlins. Central gabled range has exposed timber roof structure and C20 inserted chimney massing; both internal wing elevations have tall rounded arches as to exterior; that to south has door with 6-pane overlight and 6/6-pane sash, under boarded door to attic; that to north has 12/12-pane sash and later door under in-filled brick. HISTORY: Built 1805 as an ordnance store for the receipt and issue of all kinds of ordnance from naval ships; this included cannon balls, muskets, gun carriages, clothing, etc. The Chatham Gun Wharf occupied the site of the medieval wharves below the medieval church, and that of the first Royal dockyard in the C16. When in the C17 the dockyard relocated to a larger site further north (the present Chatham Dockyard), the Board of Ordnance appropriated this land for use as the Gun Wharf, an arsenal and dock combined. This building was constructed under the supervision of Lt Col D'Arcy at a cost of £1,477.16s.101/4d (PRO). In 1851, the northern wing was used for 'binding of carriages' and the southern end as a carpenters and wheelers shop.

In 1863, the northern end was in use as a store house, the southern end still a carpenter's shop. Later-C19 descriptions refer to this building as an armoury for the storage and repair of small arms. The northern wing was used as an armoury until the 1950s when the site was decommissioned. In the late-C20, used as a martial arts centre and RAF Association Club. It has strong associations through its date (1805) with a critical period in British naval history, when the infrastructure established in the dockyards, particularly as a result of Anson's reforms from the 1760s, was tested to the limit. The Gun Wharves played a critical role in all this, from Plymouth's role in the supply of the Peninsula campaigns to Portsmouth's key role backed up by Chatham in the blockades of French and occupied ports. Group value with the Grade II Command House (q.v.), Grade II Church of St Mary (q.v.), and the Chatham Lines, a Scheduled Monument. Also strong relationship with the buildings of the Chatham Dockyard to the north. Listed as a remarkably well surviving 1805 ordnance building at Chatham Gun Wharf that has strong group value and that forms an integral component of this historically important site.

Fig. 6 Ordnance Survey 1st edn 25" map (1862-1875)



### Riverside Gardens

Address:  
Riverside Gardens  
Chatham  
Kent

centred on:  
575710 168226

### Legend

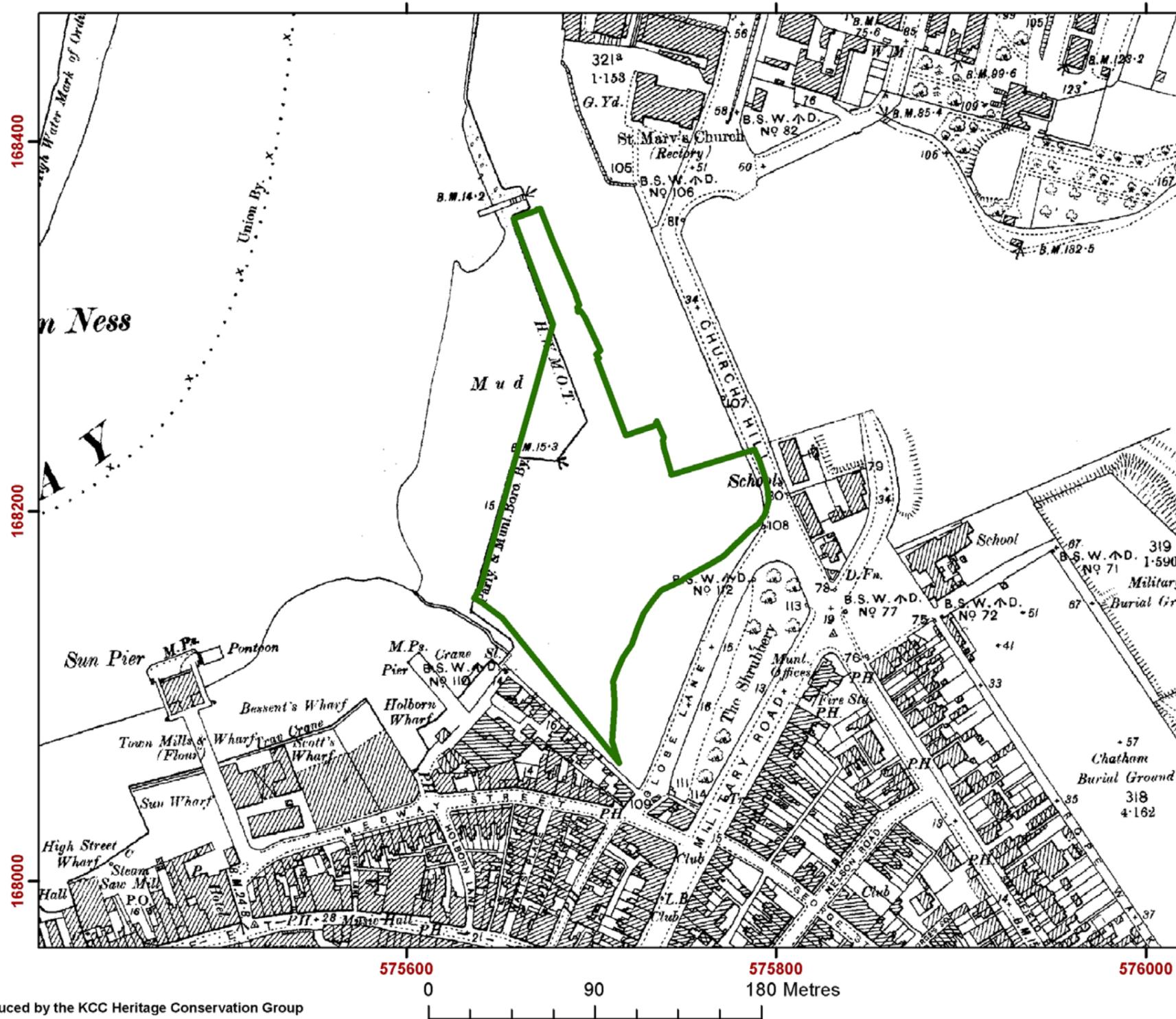
 Boundary



Produced by the KCC Heritage Conservation Group

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Fig. 7 Ordnance Survey 2nd edn 25" map (1897-1900)



**Riverside Gardens**

Address:  
Riverside Gardens  
Chatham  
Kent

centred on:  
575710 168226

**Legend**

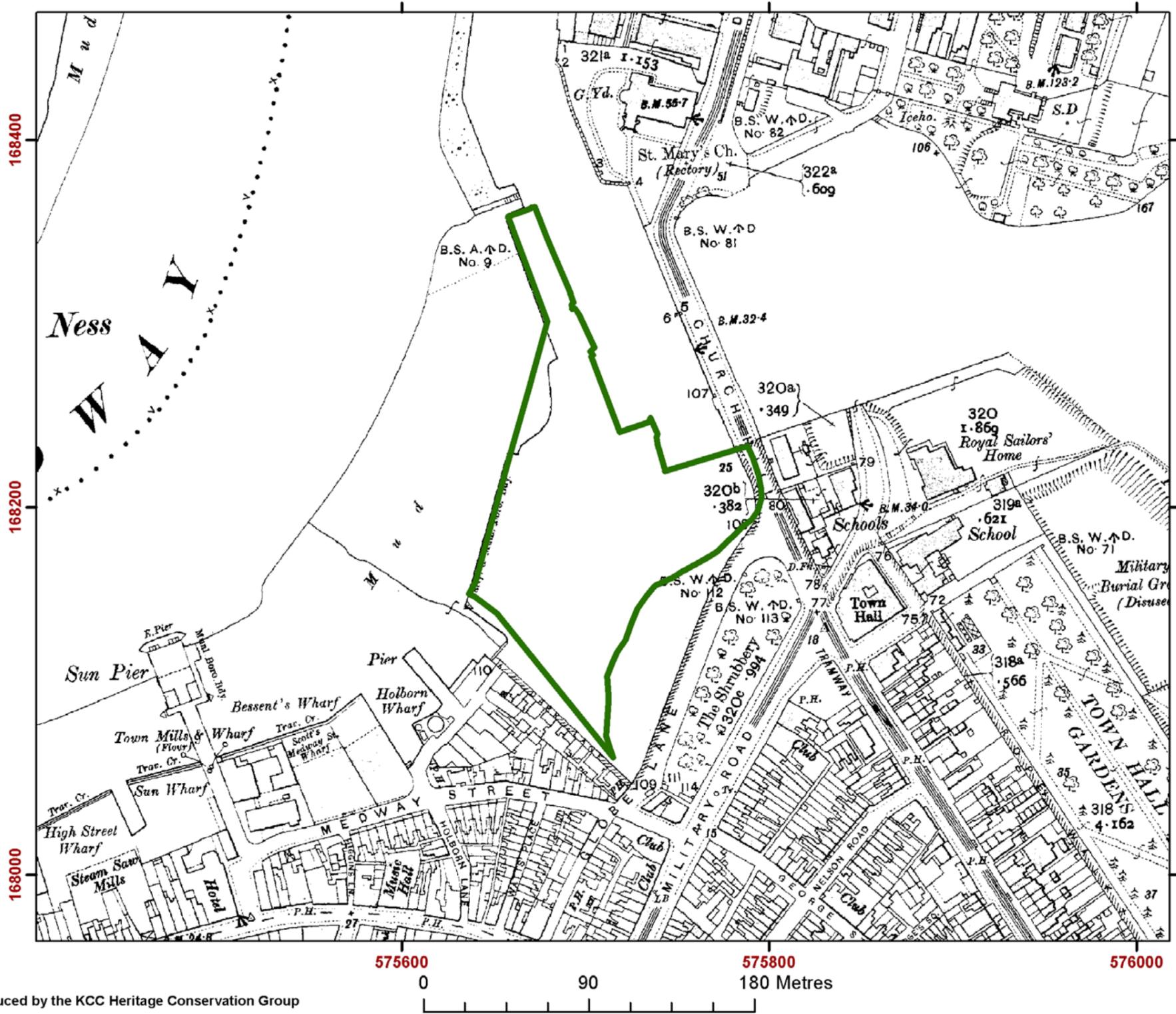
 Boundary



Produced by the KCC Heritage Conservation Group

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Fig. 8 Ordnance Survey 3rd edn 25" map (1907-1923)



**Riverside Gardens**

Address:  
Riverside Gardens  
Chatham  
Kent

centred on:  
575710 168226

**Legend**

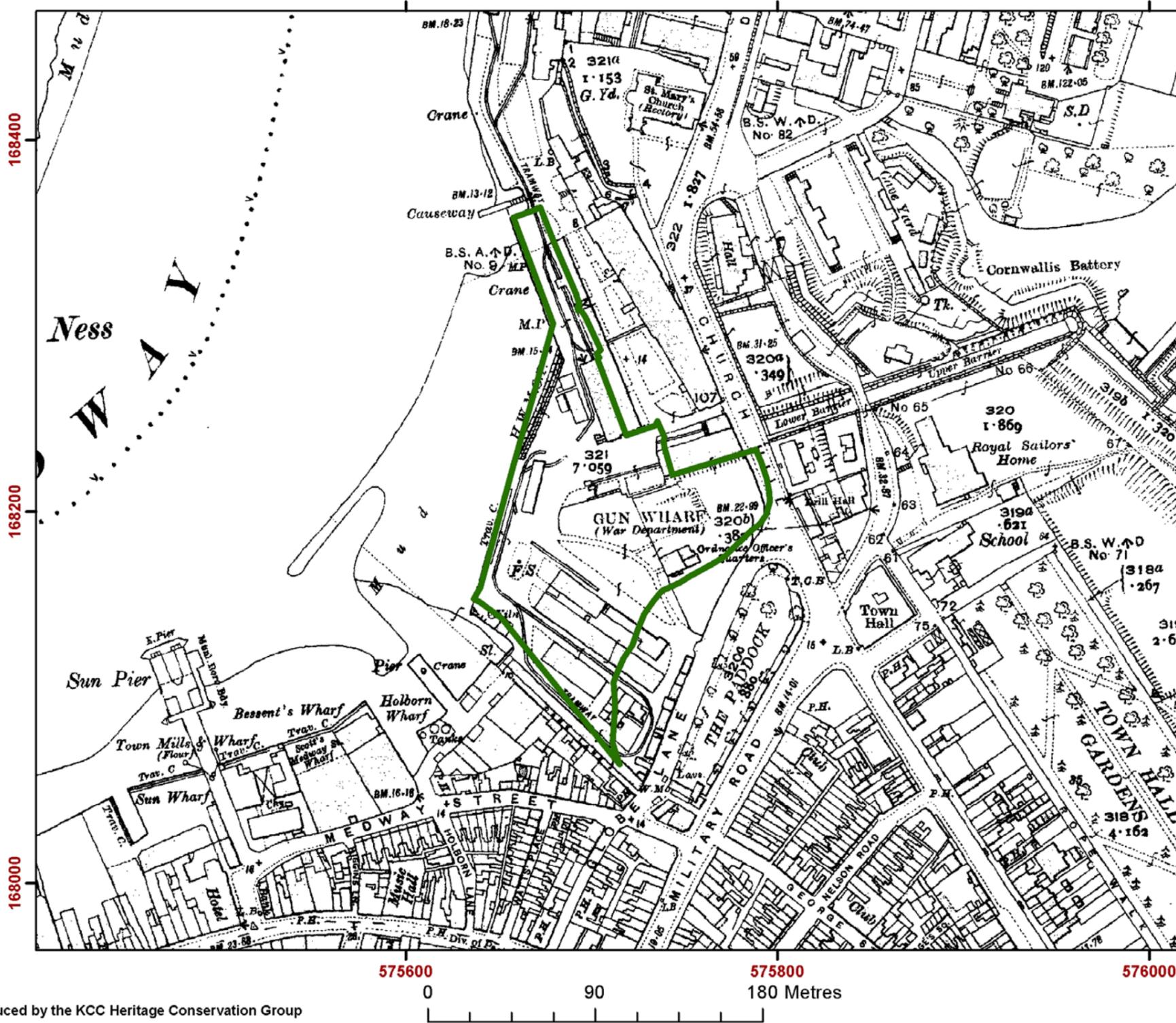
 Boundary



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Fig. 9 Ordnance Survey 4th edn 25" map (1929-1952)



### Riverside Gardens

Address:  
Riverside Gardens  
Chatham  
Kent

centred on:  
575710 168226

### Legend

 Boundary



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**Fig. 10 View of Riverside Gardens, Chatham , 7<sup>th</sup> June 1963.** Image Collection MTC MR 184. By kind permission of MALSC.



**Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2013 review of Medway**

**Fig. 11 View of Riverside Gardens, Chatham , 21<sup>st</sup> May 1964.** Image Collection MTC MR 184. By kind permission of MALSC.



**Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2013 review of Medway**

**Fig. 12 Medway River View (St Mary's Church and former Marine Barracks) 1963/4.** Image Collection MTC MR 184, 86/2. By kind permission of MALSC.



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**Fig. 13 Looking north from the bus station to Rats Bay Pumping Station.**



**Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2013 review of Medway**

**Fig. 14 Looking west from the River Medway to the White House.**

