

The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens for Swale District

Bayford Court, Sittingbourne



April 2023

Bayford Court

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY OF HISTORIC INTEREST

CHRONOLOGY OF THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

SITE DESCRIPTION

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: Boundary map

FIGURE 2: Map of key features

FIGURE 3: Aerial photograph (2016)

FIGURE 4: Content of the Manors of Bayford and Goodmanston, Kent (Christopher Saxton, 1590), British Library UK Online Gallery

FIGURE 5: Detail from Christopher Saxton (1590) map of Bayford moated orchard and Cleke Pond

FIGURE 6: Detail from *A topographical-map, of the county of Kent*, 8 (London: A. Dury; W. Herbert, 1769)

FIGURE 7: Tithe map (c. 1840)

FIGURE 8: Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map (Kent Sheet XIII.13, surveyed 1864)

FIGURE 9: Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25" map (Kent Sheet XIII.13, revised 1896)

FIGURE 10: Ordnance Survey 3rd edition 25" map (Kent Sheet XIII.13, revised 1906)

FIGURE 11: Ordnance Survey 4th edition 25" map (Kent Sheet XIII.13, revised 1932)

FIGURE 12: Aerial photograph (c.1946)

FIGURE 13: View of moat from northern boundary outside of moat facing east, 2022

FIGURE 14: Approach from southwest entrance to moated interior, 2022

FIGURE 15: Grassed area inside moat and front of Bayford Court House from northern boundary, 2022

FIGURE 16: View from northwest corner of moated interior showing temporary buildings on eastern edge, 2022

FIGURE 17: View of northern fenced border of moated interior, 2022

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 Swale Borough Council in 2020 -23, covers sites within the Swale 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 Swale local authority area along with others identified by Swale Borough Council. The review has been undertaken using Historic England'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 Swale should the Council wish to progress this in future¹. 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.

Swale Borough Council
Conservation and Design
Swale House
East Street
Sittingbourne
ME10 3HT
www.swale.gov.uk

Kent County Council
Heritage Conservation
Invicta House
County Hall
Maidstone
ME14 1XX
www.kent.gov.uk

Kent Gardens Trust
www.kentgardenstrust.org.uk

Historic England
www.historicengland.org.uk/

¹ English Heritage (2012) 'Good Practice Guide to Local Listing'

KENT

BAYFORD COURT

SITTINGBOURNE

Centred on 591138 163972

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

EVIDENTIAL

The one acre size and square shape of a moat enclosing a parcel of land suggests that this site is typical as the prestigious residence for an eminent person in the early Middle Ages. A pond feeding the moat with water has a name whose etymology suggests northern connections. This potential Norse influence may indicate an origin prior to the 1066 Norman Conquest. A building (listed grade II) of c.1700 sited just south of the moat replaced a former manor house for the Manor of Bayfield and Goodnestone.

HISTORICAL

The land enclosed by the moat at Bayford has a history dating back to at least the early Middle Ages. Eighteenth and nineteenth century antiquarians suggested that the earthworks at Bayford may have been part of ninth century Danish defences, however this site is unlikely to be the Bayford Castle that is discussed by archaeologists. As part of the Manor of Bayford and Goodnestone, the land was owned by a succession of eminent families until the end of the eighteenth century. The interior of the moated area was planted with fruit trees as an orchard from the early years of fruit cultivation in Kent in the sixteenth century.

AESTHETIC

The almost square enclosure of a flat area within a substantial moat is a distinctive medieval historic landscape relatively rare in Kent. Later development as an orchard close to the manor house means that this land would have been both productive and attractive. Once the manor had become part of a tenanted farm, the role of the moated site was subsumed as part of surrounding orchards. Since the mid-twentieth century, the degraded moat has been surrounded by self-seeded trees and the interior space remains a rough grassed area partly used for informal parking of commercial vehicles.

COMMUNAL

The area to the north-east and east of the site is in use as allotment gardens. The moated enclosure, in the ownership of Swale Borough Council, is currently inaccessible to the public, although local residents remember enjoying the field as a recreational space. New development under way (2023) to the north and west will leave this area as a green space bordered by new housing. As such, the area will have valuable amenity potential.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

Bayford Court has considerable archaeological potential. The site is located between Milton Creek and the Roman road of Watling Street, where a stream fills the moat before running north towards the Creek. Such locations, where the creeks of north Kent reach the historic routeways represented by Watling Street, have often proved to have significant archaeological potential as evidenced locally by the discovery of Roman remains and burials only 150m east of the site. The site is also significant for its more recent history, in particular arising from the post-medieval, and probably earlier, history of the site as a moated site. Building debris including flint and ragstone is known from the site and further archaeological remains probably still exist there.

SUMMARY OF THE HISTORIC INTEREST

The area of land, surrounded on three sides by a substantial moat and facing a building (listed Grade II) from c. 1700, is of significant heritage interest as an example of a moated site. The original date and function of the moated enclosure is not known, with defence, drainage and prestige all possible explanations for such a feature. There has been confusion and speculation attendant to this site in relation to Bayford Castle, a stronghold reputed to have been built locally during the Danish incursions into Kent in AD 892. However, no direct link of the moat with a castle building has been established. There is a history of ownership by eminent families from medieval times until the eighteenth century, but how the land enclosed by the moat was used before the sixteenth century is speculative. In the eighteenth century the land was recorded as the 'moated orchard' and maps show the use of this site as fruit orchard from 1590 until the mid-twentieth century. By 1978, fruit trees had disappeared, and the site became rough grassland surrounded by a margin of apparently self-seeded trees on both sides of the moat.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

An Iron Age coastal trackway was bisected by Milton Creek at Sittingbourne and it is likely that this crossing became known as Babbe's Ford, later corrupted to Babford and finally Bayford. Alternatively, it is possible that the name Bayford derives from the Old Norse word fjörðr(fjord), meaning a coastal inlet, establishing a connection with Norse invaders. Within 200m north-eastwards of Bayford Court, Romano-British finds were made in the 1870s by the antiquarian George Payne.

There has been much speculation as to the supposed site of a 'Bayford Castle' constructed by the Danish army in AD 893. It is identified in English Heritage National Monuments Record TQ 96 SW 42 about 800 m north-east of the moat at grid reference TQ 9141 6438. The *Victoria History of the County of Kent* (1908) comments that Hasted (*History of Kent, ii. 1782*) refers to Bayford Castle in such manner as to suggest that it was at Bayford Court. Earthworks associated with Bayford Court and extending southwards to St Michaels Church were recorded

by the Victorian archaeologist F. C. J. Spurrell in 1885. These have been suggested as a possible contender for this 'Bayford Castle', although some local historians (John Clancy and Alan Abbey) believe that they might have been flood defences.

Historic England records in the official list entries for moated sites, that around 6,000 moated sites are known in England, most of which are thought to have built between about 1250 and 1350. The concentration of moated sites in the east of England reflects the geology of clay soil, which enables ditches to be easily dug and water to be retained within. Bayford's site clearly falls within this description. At these sites, wide ditches partly or completely enclose one or more islands of dry ground on which stood domestic or religious buildings; in some cases the islands were used for horticulture. The majority of moated sites served as prestigious aristocratic and seigneurial residences with the provision of a moat intended as a status symbol rather than practical military defence.

To date, no evidence of building on the island of the moat at Bayford Court has been confirmed. In 1894, the *Comprehensive Gazetteer of England & Wales* recorded the moat and an extant piece of wall presumed to be part of a building, but the location of this wall was not given.

A 1540 Chart of the mouth of the River Thames records Sittingbourne but no 'castle'. There is no mention specifically of the moat in medieval documents and the earliest evidence of its existence dates from an estate map dated 1590 (Christopher Saxton). In addition to a square surrounded on all sides by the moat, the map shows an extension from this feature to the north-east, the termination of which is a curved pond labelled 'Cleke pond'. This pond appears on the 1st Edition OS map of 1862-1875, but on later editions of the Survey is reduced to an area labelled 'mud'. The existence of the pond and adjoining leat to the moat suggests use as fishpond for the inhabitants of Bayford Manor, as was a common practice in the medieval period.

The Middle English (Northern and Scots) word 'cleke' meant 'to grab, or capture' and was used for a large curved hook, or indeed (from the shape) an arm. The angled extension to the moat does perhaps appear in the shape of a hook and the pond itself was curved, but the word being of northern origin would be an anomaly for Kent. Antiquarians record that in 1052 Bayford was possibly held by Godwine, Earl of Wessex and Kent, one of the most powerful noblemen in England under the Danish king Cnut the Great (r.1016 to 1035) as described in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. This possible high-status ownership of Bayford by an individual close to the court of the Norse invaders, in conjunction with the northern name of the Cleke pond, could perhaps suggest an eleventh century origin for the Bayford moated site. If so, this would make it an exceptionally early example of a feature of this type.

Edward Hasted records in *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent* (1799) that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the manors of 'Brayford and Goodneston' are mentioned in connection with Robert de Nottingham (Kings Clerk to Henry III) and his descendants, '*apud castellum*

Suum de Brayford, apud Goodneston'. The question of a castle and the remains of another conjectured 'castle' at nearby Milton has caused much confusion to antiquarians. Local historians Alan Abbey and John Clancy have scrutinised the conflicting information, agreeing that Bayford was likely to be the true site of the 'castle' in the sense of it being a plot of land used for a Knight's Fee. It is this period that is principally associated with the creation of moated sites by medieval knights displaying their status by surrounding a manor house with a moat to resemble the defences of a castle. One acre is a typical area for this kind of site.

In the early fifteenth century ownership passed by marriage to a son of Sir Richard Cheney, Kt., of Shurland Hall at Eastchurch, Sheppey. In about 1443, the Manor of Bayford & Goodnestone transferred to John Lovelace, father of Richard Lovelace who died in 1466 after an eventful life which included participation in an insurrection against King Henry VI led by Jack Cade. The c.1818 *Topographical and Statistical Description of the County of Kent* describes that the parish church contained a brass monument of Sir Richard Lovelace, Marshal of Calais, but that this with many other monuments was lost in a fire in 1762. Manorial records show that much of the Bayford-with-Goodnestone land was rented out, so the extent of residence by these eminent families is uncertain. Whilst some of the Lovelaces resided at Hever, a stone figure of a lady and infant, dating to around 1500, in a recess of the north wall of Sittingbourne St John the Baptist Church, is considered to be a Lovelace in *The Churches of Kent* (1913).

Bayford manor continued in possession of the Lovelace Family until 1568 when it was passed on to Mr Ralph Finch, who sold it in 1590 to Sir William Garrard who hailed from Sittingbourne but rose to the office of Lord Mayor of London (1555). An estate map of 1590 of Goodnestone and Bayford by Christopher Saxton, shows the moated site as a square surrounded by straight ditches. A building just outside this moat on the south-central edge is presumed to be the earlier Bayford Manor house with other functional buildings shown clustered to the south of the main building around a square yard. The **interior** of the moat is shown with three regular rows of five trees, the only such planting shown on the map. Hatching on the map at the southern outside edge of the moat could represent a walled edge to this part of the water feature visible to visitors, a feature common at moated sites to emphasise status.. To the north and north-west 'marsh' is indicated. A 1688 publication '*The English Gardener*' advised 'if your ground be very wet, it will be worth your labour to make some sufficient Drains to draw the water to some Pond or Ditch'. It is possible, therefore, that the moat served to drain an area to provide drier ground for planting.

Large scale fruit growing started in this region of Kent in the sixteenth century. Henry VIII's head fruiterer Richard Harris had established orchards in the area of Teynham and the antiquarian William Lambarde wrote in *A Perambulation of Kent* (1576) of nearby Teynham, 'and this tenham with thirty other parishes lying on each side of this porte way, and extending from Raynham to Blean Wood be the Cherrie gardein, and Apple orcharde of Kent.' As well as being productive, the planting of an orchard adjacent to the manor house would have been an

aesthetically pleasing view from rear of the building. The '*English Gardner*' records (in 1688) a variety of apple as a 'small golding or bayford'. Nowadays this dessert apple *Malus domestica* Borkh has the common name of Golden Pippin. It originated in England and was first recorded in 1629. Although the National Fruit Collection records many other synonyms including 'Bayfordbury Pippin', the connection with either Bayfordbury in Hertfordshire or Bayford at Sittingbourne remains obscure.

The Gerrard family held the manor for some time, as the survey of Milton Manor of 1653 identifies Sir John Garrard, Knight and Baronet, as holding 'the scite of the Manor of Bayford and Goodnestone'. An indenture of 1720 mentioning orchards and gardens associated with Bayford identifies Fay Drake, daughter of John Garrard, who had married into the Drake family, showing that the property had passed into the considerable landholdings of the Drakes of Shardeloes in Buckinghamshire. A map of Kent dated 1769 (A. Dury) appears to show a number of structures within the moated area, two at opposite corners of the western edge and one almost central. 'Local sources' (see Clancy, 2013) have assumed a date of c.1700 for the present Bayford Court (listed Grade II), a building located outside the south eastern edge of the moated site. This building is first shown on a 1791 estate map by T. Yeakill, but details of this, or the fate of any previous buildings either within or without the moated area, are elusive and locally contentious.

The moated area continued to be planted with fruit trees. An indenture document dated 4th July 1776 between William Drake of Shardeloes in the County of Bucks, Esquire, and Thomas Howe of Babchild, Kent mentions 'two pieces or parcels of meadow or pasture land called the Moated Orchard and the Pear Orchard containing together two acres and an half more or less...'. Fruit growing continued as an important industry in this area and the 1818 *Topographical and statistical description of the county of Kent* notes that 'The easy water carriage to the metropolis ... up the Thames, renders the growth of fruit a very profitable article of husbandry...Fruit orchards are considered as the most valuable estates'.

In 1794, William Drake is still recorded as owner of this land, granting his tenant William Murton the deputation as gamekeeper at 'Badford'. At his estate of Shardeloes in Amersham, William Drake had a Palladian mansion built by Robert Adam from 1761 with surrounding landscaping by Nathaniel Richmond and Humphry Repton. Bayford, however, did not benefit from his enthusiasm for the latest landscape fashion and in 1796 and again in 1811, the estate appears for sale in Kentish Gazette advertisements described as 'the valuable farm called Bayford Court'.

By 1840, the Sittingbourne Tithe award schedule records a Mary Blayland as owner/occupier of Bayford Farm. The schedule lists the building as 'Bayford Farm House' and the moat itself and a plot described as the moat orchard are listed separately. The tithe map shows the western half of the southern arm of the moat still water-filled but the south-west corner of the moat is shown with an

additional cut-out section, part of a plot named 'Cistern Marsh'. This was doubtless for farming purposes as the 1897 OS map records a 'sheepwash' on this side of the moat. A small area of approximately 1/4 acre, to the south of the western arm of the moat, is described as 'Bayford Garden', perhaps a kitchen garden for the tenants at the house. Plots to the east and south are also orchards and the tithe map shows the south-eastern corner of the moat infilled forming a crossing to access the adjacent field. 'Cleke Pond' as shown on Saxton's map of 1590, has changed name to 'Clip Pound', but is still a somewhat curved water-filled feature.

From the late 1830s onwards, large areas of Sittingbourne by Crown Quay and Murston, were acquired by George Smeed, who was the local Sittingbourne magnate producing and shipping bricks. By the 1850s, Smeed was recorded as 'Lord of the Manor of Bayford' (Perks, 1981). He owned around 22 square miles of land, used for brick fields, cement works, a gas works and two barge yards, but he was also interested in fruit growing. A report in the East Kent Gazette reporting his death in May 1881 mentions that Smeed 'anticipated the time of auction fruit sales by speculating largely in the purchase of growing fruit for the purpose of sending to market'. From 1873 until 1888, fruit – apples, pears and cherries - from Bayford Orchards were offered at auctions advertised in the East Kent Gazette.

The building south of the moated site has been recorded as 'Bayford Court' from the 1st Edition OS map onwards and GoogleEarth historical aerial photographs indicate that the area continued to be planted with fruit trees until at least 1940, but that by 1960 the orchard had gone. On 30 June 1931, a large area of land in Murston incorporating the Bayford moated site was transferred to the Associated Portland Cement Manufacturers Limited. By this time, both the pond and the southern arm of the moat had been filled in completely leaving the site enclosed by water on only three sides (4th Edition OS map, 1929-1952).

On 23 January 1978, Bayford Court and the moated site including land adjacent to the east, was transferred by Blue Circle Sittingbourne Estates and The London Life Association Limited to the Swale District Council. Since then, the interior of the moated site has remained a rough grassed area, with part of the western side converted to a compound for commercial activity. This latter was dismantled around 2014 and restored to grass.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

Bayford Court (listed grade II) is located on level ground at sea level approximately 0.5m km north-east of the town centre of Sittingbourne. Its site is north of the A2 and the railway line and 100m to the east of Crown Quay Lane which leads to Milton Creek, a waterway off the Swale, navigable at high tide. An area of land of immediately to the north and facing the building is surrounded on three sides by a moat up to 4m wide. Land within 50m to the west and north-west of this site is currently (2023) undergoing redevelopment for housing, whilst to the

east and north-east is a 2 acre area of allotments belonging to the Sittingbourne Allotment Holders and Gardeners Society (SAGS), with a gated vehicle entrance at the north-east outside corner of the moat.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Bayford Court (listed grade II) is a timber-framed house with a plastered front of two storeys, a jettied first floor and a hipped roof. There is little information on its early history, but it is presumed to have been built c.1700. Since at least the nineteenth century it appears to have been used as a farmhouse for the agricultural land of about 15 acres adjacent to the building, which included the moated site.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

Bayford Court stands at the south-eastern corner of the moated enclosure. Straight ditches have enclosed this square of land since at least the 16th Century. It was formerly described as 'moated orchard' in the 1776 indenture of the Tyrwhitt -Drake Manuscripts and used for growing fruit trees right up to the 1940s. The southern moat had been entirely filled in by 1940 (4th Edition OS map, 1929-1952).

Currently (2023), the moat is water-filled but choked with growth of reeds and bank-side vegetation. All parts of the moat, except for a short low-walled section to the north, are screened by self-seeded trees and bushes. This naturalised growth is fenced in by metal railings on the outside of the moat, and wooden closeboard fencing along the interior banks. A wooden ranch-type fence with a large metal gate at each end closes off the open, southern, edge of the site which faces Bayford Court house.

The interior of the moated area measures 5625 m², making this the largest such enclosure in this region of Kent. Currently (2023) this is a rough grassed area, with part of the western side used to park commercial vehicles. On the eastern edge there is a concreted hard standing just inside the eastern gate and two temporary structures and a small kitchen garden extend along the fence.

There are no visible remains of the former Cleke Pond and its leat to the north-east of the site. In this area and extending east there are now allotments which are approached through a gate just outside the north-east corner of the moat.

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- <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-kent/vol6/pp150-163>
- British Library UK Online Gallery

Maps

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st Edition 1862-1875

OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd Edition 1897-1900

OS 25" to 1 mile: 3rd Edition 1907-1923

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st Edition 1929-1952

Sittingbourne Tithe map (1840)

Content of the Manors of Bayford and Goodmanston, Kent (Christopher Saxton, 1590), British Library UK Online Gallery

A Topographical-Map, of the County of Kent, 8 (London: A. Dury, 1769)

Illustrations

Historic aerial views Google Earth, 1940

Archival Items

East Kent Gazette from 1796

Land Registry Deed Packets K476519, K476529

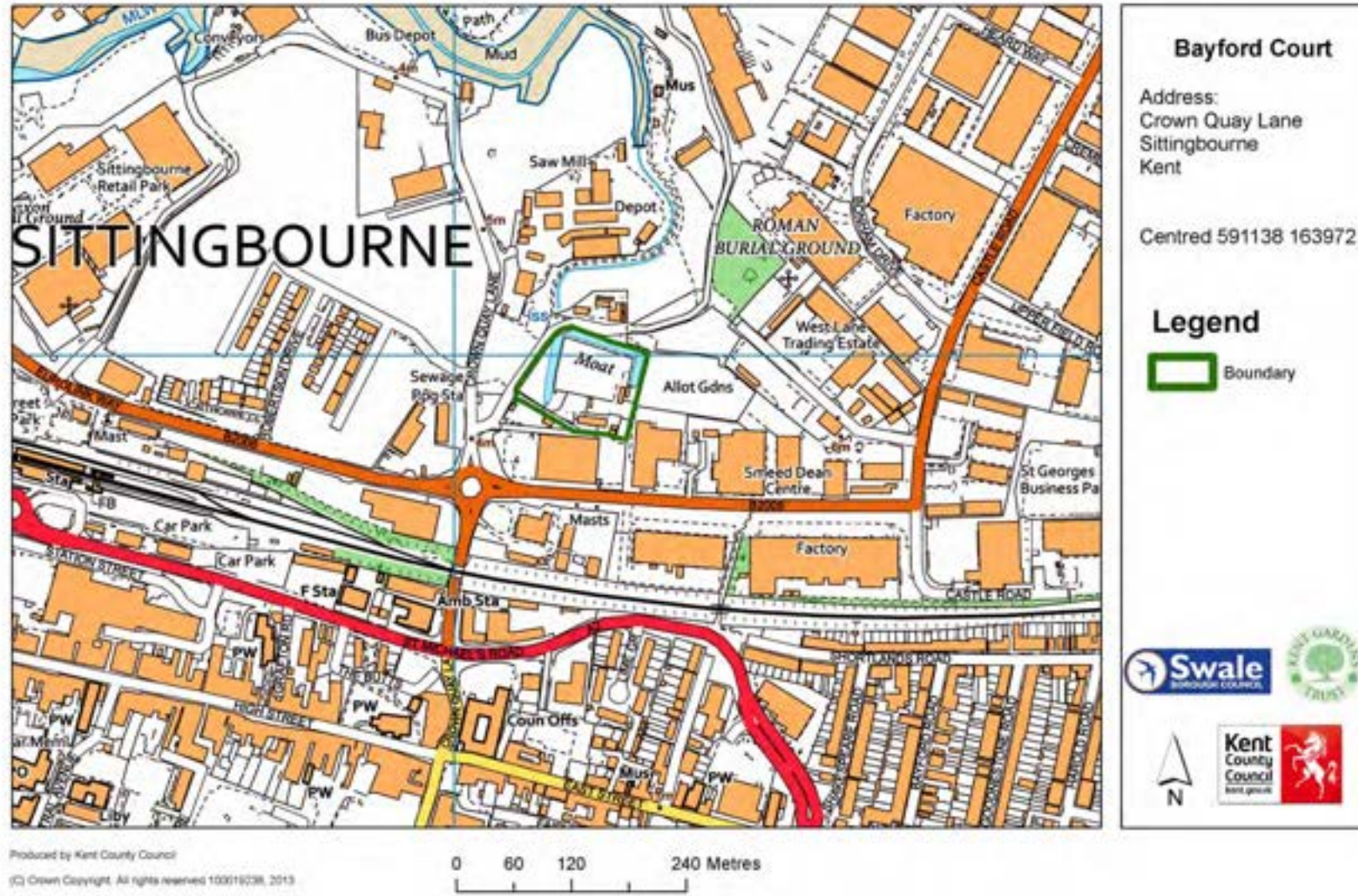
Kent Archives Tyrwhitt -Drake Manuscripts U488/T3, U488/M3

Swale Borough Council Policy & Resources Committee, Minute No. 543(2)/9/84

**Researched and written by Caroline Bowdler
Harriet Jordan (editor)**

Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2020 review of Swale Borough

Fig. 1 Boundary Map



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Fig. 2 Map of key features




Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2020 review of Swale Borough


Fig. 3 Aerial photograph (2016)




Bayford Court
Address:
Crown Quay Lane
Sittingbourne
Kent

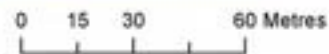
Centred 591138 163972

Legend
 Boundary

Produced by Kent County Council
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Fig. 4 Content of the Manors of Bayford and Goodmanston, Kent (Christopher Saxton, 1590), British Library UK Online Gallery

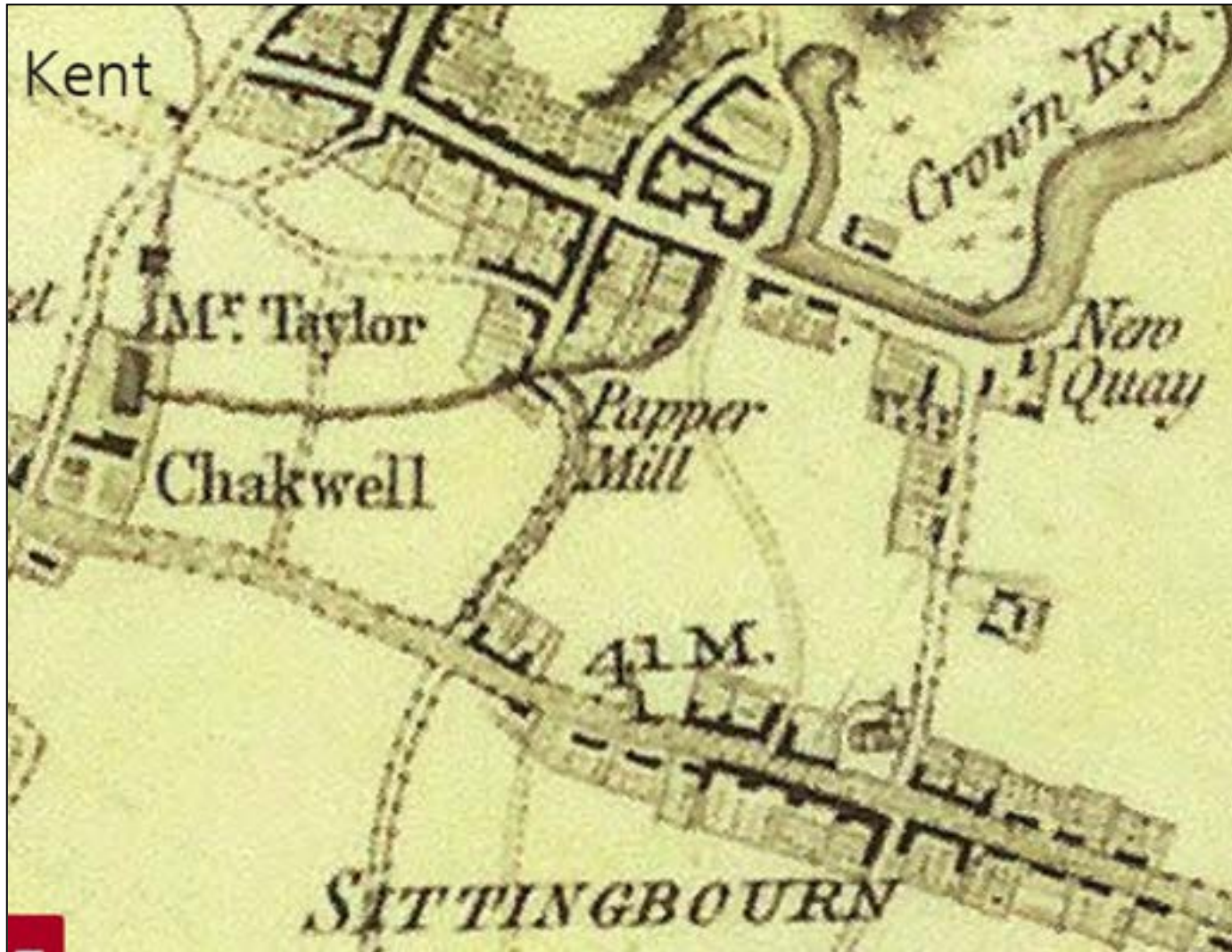


Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2020 review of Swale Borough

Fig. 5 Detail from Christopher Saxton (1590) map of Bayford moated orchard and Cleke Pond

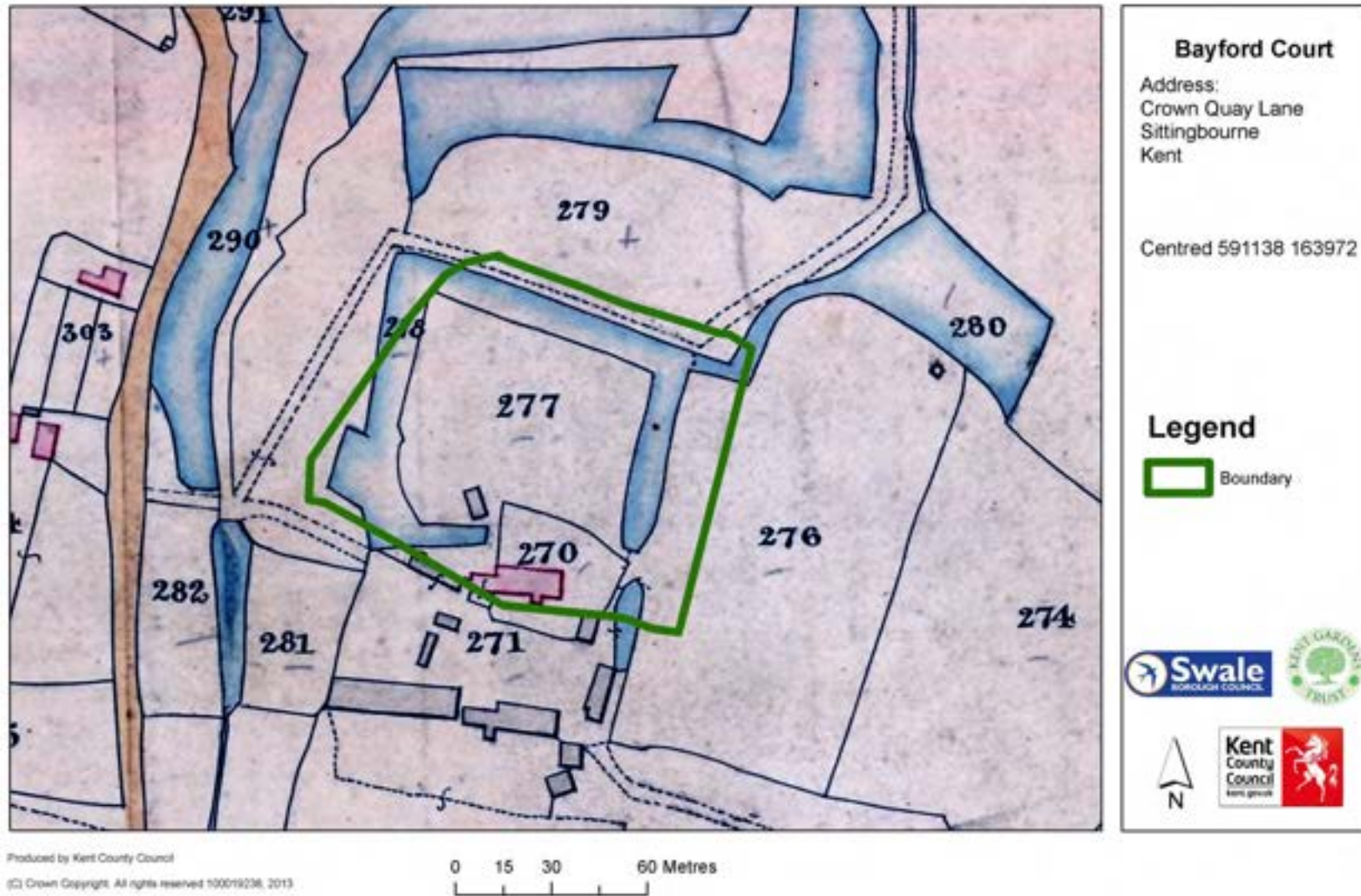


Fig. 6 Detail from *A topographical-map, of the county of Kent*, 8 (London: A. Dury; W. Herbert, 1769)



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Fig. 7 Tithe Map (c1840)



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Fig. 8 1st edition Ordnance Survey 25” map (1862-1875)



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Fig. 9 2nd edition Ordnance Survey 25" map (1897-1900)



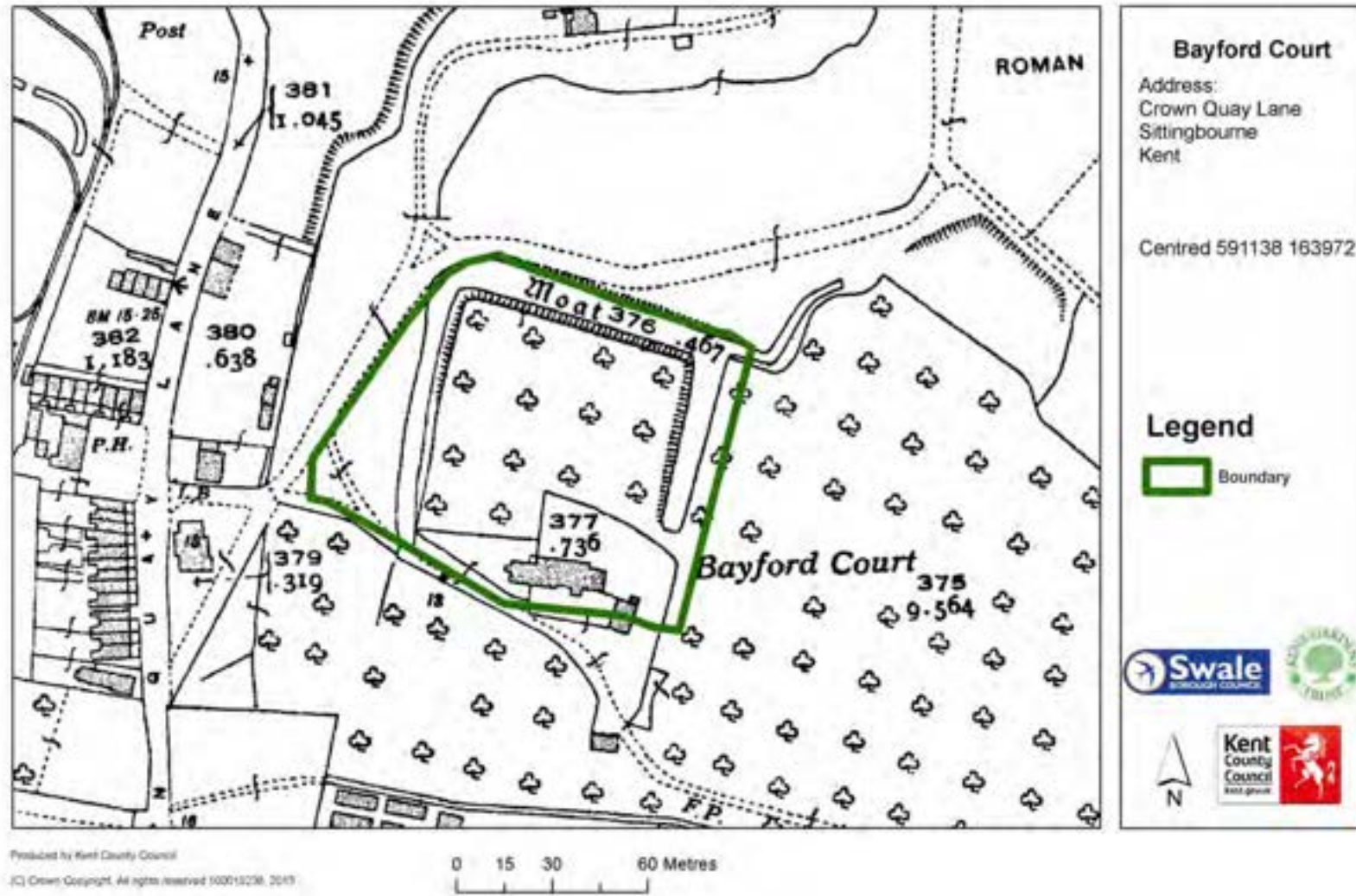
Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2020 review of Swale Borough

Fig. 10 3rd edition Ordnance Survey 25" map (1907-1923)



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Fig. 11 4th edition Ordnance Survey 25” map (1929-1952)



Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2020 review of Swale Borough

Fig. 12 Aerial photograph (1946/7)



Bayford Court
Address:
Crown Quay Lane
Sittingbourne
Kent

Centred 591138 163972

Legend
 Boundary

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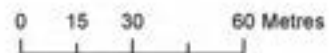


Fig. 13 View of moat from northern boundary outside of moat facing east, 2022



Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2020 review of Swale Borough

Fig. 14 Approach from southwest entrance to moated interior, 2022



Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2020 review of Swale Borough

Fig. 15 Grassed area inside moat and front of Bayford Court House from northern boundary, 2022



Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2020 review of Swale Borough

Fig. 16 View from northwest corner of moated interior showing temporary buildings on eastern edge, 2022



Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2020 review of Swale Borough

Fig. 17 View of northern fenced border of moated interior, 2022

