

The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens for Swale District



King George V Playing Field, Ospringe, Faversham



March 2022

King George V Playing Field

Ospringe, Faversham

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Acknowledgement

The researcher thanks Mr. John Owen, Shepherd Neame Archivist, for his considerable help and advice with access to the Shepherd Neame archive.

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 -22, 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

KING GEORGE V PLAYING FIELD

FAVERSHAM

Centred on 600652 160857

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Evidential

The mid C20 playing field was developed in the meadowland accompanying a private residence built in the mid C18 and considerably enlarged in the C19. The entrance to the Playing Field carries the plaques announcing the site as a King George's Field.

Historical

In the C19, the site of the future Playing Field was in the grounds of Mount Ospringe, home of Lieutenant-General Gerard Gosselin, Deputy Lieutenant of Kent. Following his death in 1859, the property was acquired by Percy Neame who renamed the house, The Mount. Neame laid out a cricket field in the grounds which was the venue for a first-class cricket match in 1876, between Kent and Hampshire.

Percy Neame bought into Faversham's Shepherd Brewery and ultimately bought out the then owner, to create Shepherd Neame. The Brewery remains to this day, 2021, in the hands of the Neame family.

Aesthetic

The Playing Field, intended primarily as an area for sport and active recreation, is divided into two, with the principal Eastern field used for seasonal games, mainly football.

Communal

King George V Playing Field was created as a public amenity and remains open to the public. The sports facilities are used by local groups, and the local community enjoys the site as a public open space, primarily for the children's play area and for dog walking.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

King George V Playing Field is immediately north of Roman Watling Street (now forming London Road) and it is possible that evidence of Roman roadside activities or settlement exist within the boundaries of the site. St Mary's Hospital

(Maison Dieu) also lies only 100m to the south-west of the Playing Field and it is possible that archaeological remains related to the hospital or linked activities extend into the site. The Playing Field may also contain archaeological remains related to the past use of the site as the grounds of The Mount although the most designed parts of the property fall outside its boundaries.

SUMMARY OF THE HISTORIC INTEREST

King George V Playing Field, Faversham was laid out as a playing field in 1938. It forms one of the national set of King George's Fields, established with support from the King George's Fields Foundation as a memorial to King George V.

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CHRONOLOGY OF HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The name Ospringe predates the Roman invasion when the road now known as Watling Street was constructed from Richborough Fort to London along the north Kent coastline. It is likely to have referred to a spring in the area and given its name to an ancient track. John Newman in Pevsner's *Buildings of England North East & East Kent*, mentions Ospringe as one of the settlements along Watling Street of which 'little is known' adding that, in all probability, these settlements served as posting stations and trading centres. Until more recent times, the village was a small separate community principally lying along the south side of the Roman road, today more usually called the A2 or the London Road. The village has now become absorbed by Faversham lying on the northern side of the road.

An undated coloured C18 5 ½ " *to the Mile Plan of the Town of Faversham* as well as the 1755 *Edw. Jacob's coloured Map of Faversham* shows most of the area to the north of the London Road at Ospringe to be hop gardens interspersed with orchards. There is a suggestion of a farm building, perhaps a barn, near where Mount Ospringe house was built shortly after by Mr. Bonnick Lipyeatt. Lipyeatt died in 1789, and the property passed to a daughter, Christian. She married Mr. (later Lt. Gen) Gerald Gosselin in 1791. The black and white draft OS sheet, dated 1797-9, shows all the hops and most of the orchards to have gone. This original, more modest, Mount Ospringe was built close to and facing the road. In the C19, it was considerably enlarged and doubled in size at its rear featuring a grand entrance porch facing east. This allowed for an entrance drive across its new front façade, leading to a yard and outbuildings behind, enclosed, together with the gardens to the west of the house, within a high brick wall. The

surrounding land, including that which now comprises King George V Playing Field, was mainly meadowland. The Tithe awards of 1837 for Faversham (not Ospringe) name the then owner as Gerard Gosselin (1769-1859). A Lieutenant-General, Deputy Lieutenant of Kent as well as a magistrate, Mr. Gosselin's house was not identified in those records by name, but the Tithe Map shows his irregular shaped area of land amounted to around 10 acres. This was about half of the triangular area of land occupying the north side of Watling Street, bounded to the north-west by Ospringe Road and to the east with Hangman's Lane, later renamed St. Ann's Road. The gardens of the house ran alongside the London Road west of the house, not quite to the junction with the Ospringe Road where a small strip of land was owned by another. By the time of Gosselin's death in 1859, the London, Chatham & Dover railway had arrived (OS 1st Ed), running parallel to the main road thus cutting off the top triangle of the land. This area later became a housing development (the OS 2nd Ed). Mount Ospringe and its remaining land was then rented by Percy Beale Neame, the son of a nearby farmer, following his marriage in 1866. In 1864, Neame had bought into the Faversham brewing company subsequently known as Shepherd Neame, finally buying out Mr. Shepherd in 1877. He bought the house he was renting in 1867. He renamed it 'The Mount' and lived there with his wife until his death in 1913. Over those years he bought up the remaining pockets of land he did not own within the boundaries of the railway, Ospringe Road and the London Road. It was during his ownership that a cricket field was established. This became the home ground of the Faversham Cricket Club in the late C19, with a first-class cricket match being played there in 1876, between Kent and Hampshire. The original cricket ground was on the easternmost part of the land, next to St. Ann's Road. Most of this area, in the next century, became the Mountfield housing development, only a narrow strip being retained along the eastern boundary of what is now King George's Field.

During the 1914-1918 War, the widowed Mrs. Neame remarried. With the house standing empty, it was used as a VAD hospital. The pasture fields were let to a butcher until 1918, when *The National Children's Home* bought the building and associated land and set up a residence at the Mount to house 97 Serbian refugee children. After they departed in August 1921, the building continued in operation as a NCH branch home. This closed in the early 1930s when the building was briefly rented out as offices of public bodies. In 1933, the NCH sold the land along St. Ann's Road to local developers for building the Mountfield Estate, and the house, gardens and remaining land was sold to the Faversham Council.

In 1936, King George V died and Sir Percy Vincent, the then Lord Mayor of London, formed a committee to determine a memorial that was not solely based on the idea of a statue. They arrived the same year at the concept of funding and erecting a single statue in London and setting up the King George's Fields Foundation. The aim of the Foundation was to promote and assist, throughout

the whole country, the establishment of playing fields for the use and enjoyment of the people. Each playing field would be called 'King George's Field' and be distinguished by heraldic panels or other appropriate tablet, medallion or inscription commemorative of the late King, to a design approved by the Administrative Council. Money was to be raised locally to buy the land, with a grant made by the Foundation. After purchase, the land was passed to the National Playing Fields Association, (now known as Fields in Trust) to "preserve and safeguard the land for the public benefit". The late King had been the first President of the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) from its founding in 1925 and incorporated it by Royal Charter in 1932.

According to a copy of a typed Declaration dated 8th February 1938, the Borough of Faversham had acquired the Recreation Ground to be known henceforth as King George's Field, under the terms of a Conveyance dated 11th September 1935, between the Trustees of the National Children's Home & Orphanage and the Borough of Faversham. The Field was to be preserved in perpetuity as a memorial to King George V under the provisions of the King George's Field Foundation. Following the Charities Act of 1993, a 2001 letter addressed to the Council confirmed that King George's Field, Faversham, had been added to the Central Register of Charities.

Work on the Mountfield housing development plots started just before the Second World War broke out, but was paused for the duration and only completed afterwards. During the war all the still vacant plots were used as allotments with additional ones laid out on the land around the edge of the newly assigned playing field. The owners of the development land confirmed in a 1940 Tenancy agreement with Faversham Borough Council, this use for the duration of the war.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

The Playing Field lies along the north side of the A2 London Road. The site stretches from the boundary of the Mountfield housing estate to the east, skirting the Mount property and its neighbouring business site beside the junction of the A2, to the Ospringe Road. The road forms the north-eastern boundary as far as the railway bridge over the road, with the railway line forming the northern boundary along the embankment. The Mount, now divided into apartments, shares its entrance drive with the Playing Field. The house (listed grade II) and outbuildings of The Mount, together with its associated gardens, are within the Ospringe Conservation Area to the south of the London Road, the adjacent grounds of King George V Playing Field are situated in the Faversham Conservation area.

The site occupies about 3.2 hectares (7.9 acres).

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

There is vehicular access to the playing field, directly from the A2, c 25m to the east of The Mount. This access is c 25m east of the original property entrance with its curved brick walls on either side close to the front of the house which are part of the C19 boundary wall along the pavement. The curved walls were adapted, probably in the late 1930s, to incorporate a taller pillar on each side to accommodate a now slightly weathered stone plaque. These feature an ornamental GR, heraldic Unicorn and Shield with KING GEORGE'S FIELD written below. This original entrance is today (2021) pedestrianised with two wooden bollards to block access. The now asphalt vehicle entrance drive follows the line of the southern boundary (defined by a mixture of wall, fence and hedge) to join the original C19 driveway and sweeps round immediately in front of the east façade of the house and its entrance porch and continues north, past the building and its outbuildings, now with an electronic, high wooden gate giving access to private parking within its grounds. The public drive finishes just beyond, beside a small single story brick built football pavilion where there are parking spaces. On the edge of the drive there is a low metal rail fence in front of the house on either side of the porch, close to the house walls, partly covered with hedging on the north (right-hand side) section.

A stepped and graded pedestrian entrance off Ospringe Road, near its junction with the A2, provides alternative access. There are also two informal access points, one in the north-east corner of the Field, with a path along the metal railway fence leading to St. Ann's Road and the other cut through the fenced hedge close to the south-east corner by the A2.

GROUNDS

The grounds, extending to about 3.2 ha, are divided into two. The principal Eastern field, beside the drive is used for seasonal team games, mainly football. Aerial photographs, taken sporadically from 1940 until quite recently, show parch marks suggesting that the smaller north-west area behind The Mount originally had two hard courts suitable for tennis or netball. These have been converted into an all-weather AstroTurf pitch, surrounded by high metal fencing, for children's football. The remaining area is laid to grass and includes a metal fenced children's play area with fixed equipment. There is flood-lighting installed between these two areas.

Trees have been planted informally along the boundaries of the park, particularly beside the roads and railway. Some of the specimens pre-date the site's establishment as a public park although none are of pre C19 date.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES OTHER FEATURES OF INTEREST

The only building on the site is a pavilion used by a football group, erected post 1960. This stands immediately to the north of the parking spaces at a 45° angle to the drive.

REFERENCES:

Books, articles

The Buildings of England, Edited by Nikolaus Pevsner NORTH EAST AND EAST Kent, John Newman 1969 Edition p 21

Maps

C18 coloured Plan of Faversham's Hop Gardens (Shepherd Neame Archive)

Edw. Jacob's coloured map of Faversham Map 1755 (Shepherd Neame Archive)

Draft OS sheet, dated 1797-9 (Shepherd Neame Archive)

Tithe Map c1840

Ordnance Survey maps:

1st ed. OS 25" map 1862-1875

2nd ed. OS 25" map 1897-1900

3rd ed. OS 25" map 1907-1923

OS 6" map of Kent XXXIV.SW (Revised 1938, Published 1946)

Illustrations

KCC Aerial photographs 1946 and 2008

Google Earth Aerial photographs 1940 – 2019

Selection of photographs taken in 2021

Archival Items

Faversham Tithe Award Schedule, Signed 1839 (Kent Archaeological Society)

Research and description by Peta Hodges

Harriet Jordan (editor)

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Fig. 1 Boundary map



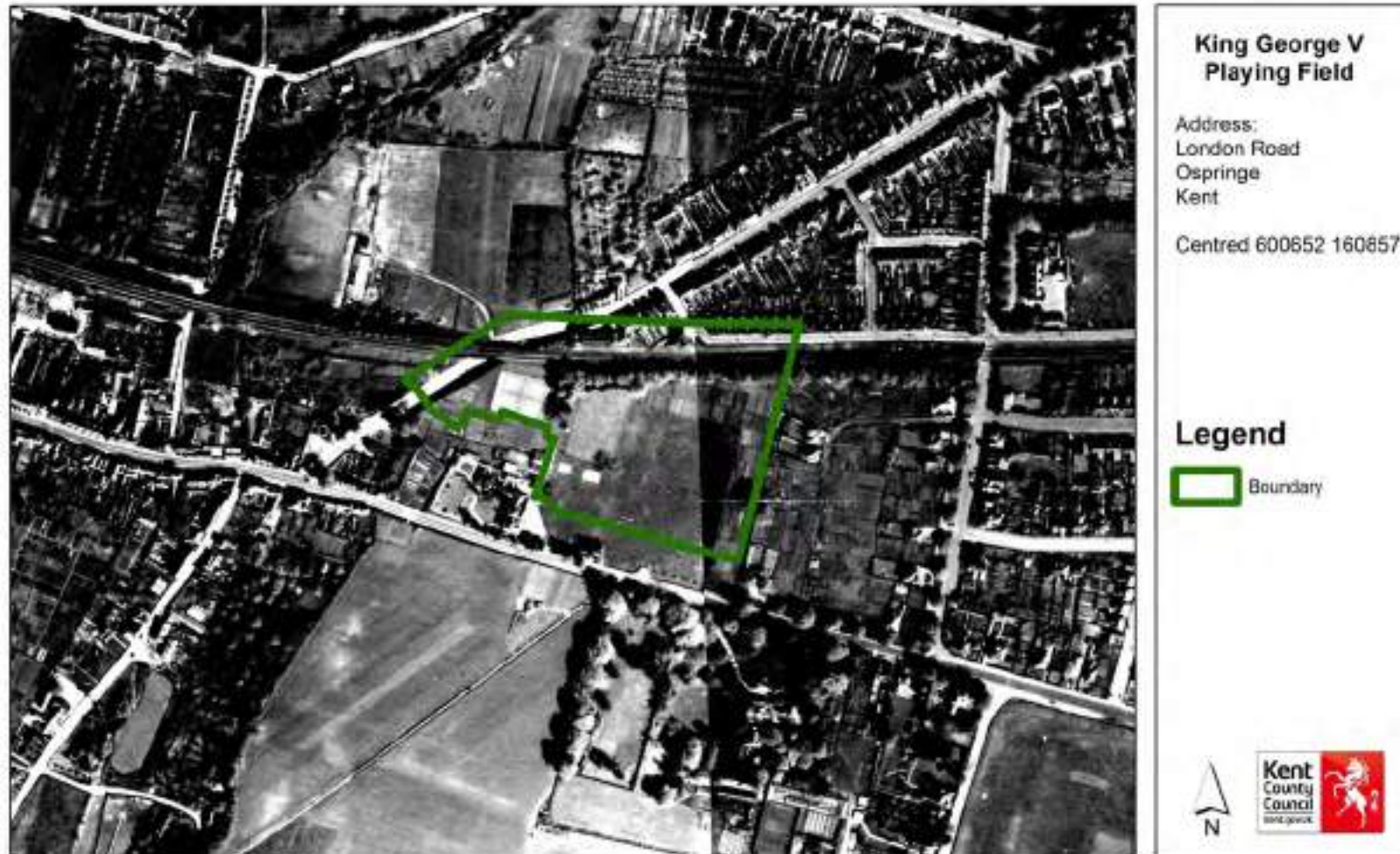
Produced by Kent County Council

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0 40 80 160 Metres

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Fig. 2 Aerial photograph (1946/1947)



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0 40 80 160 Metres

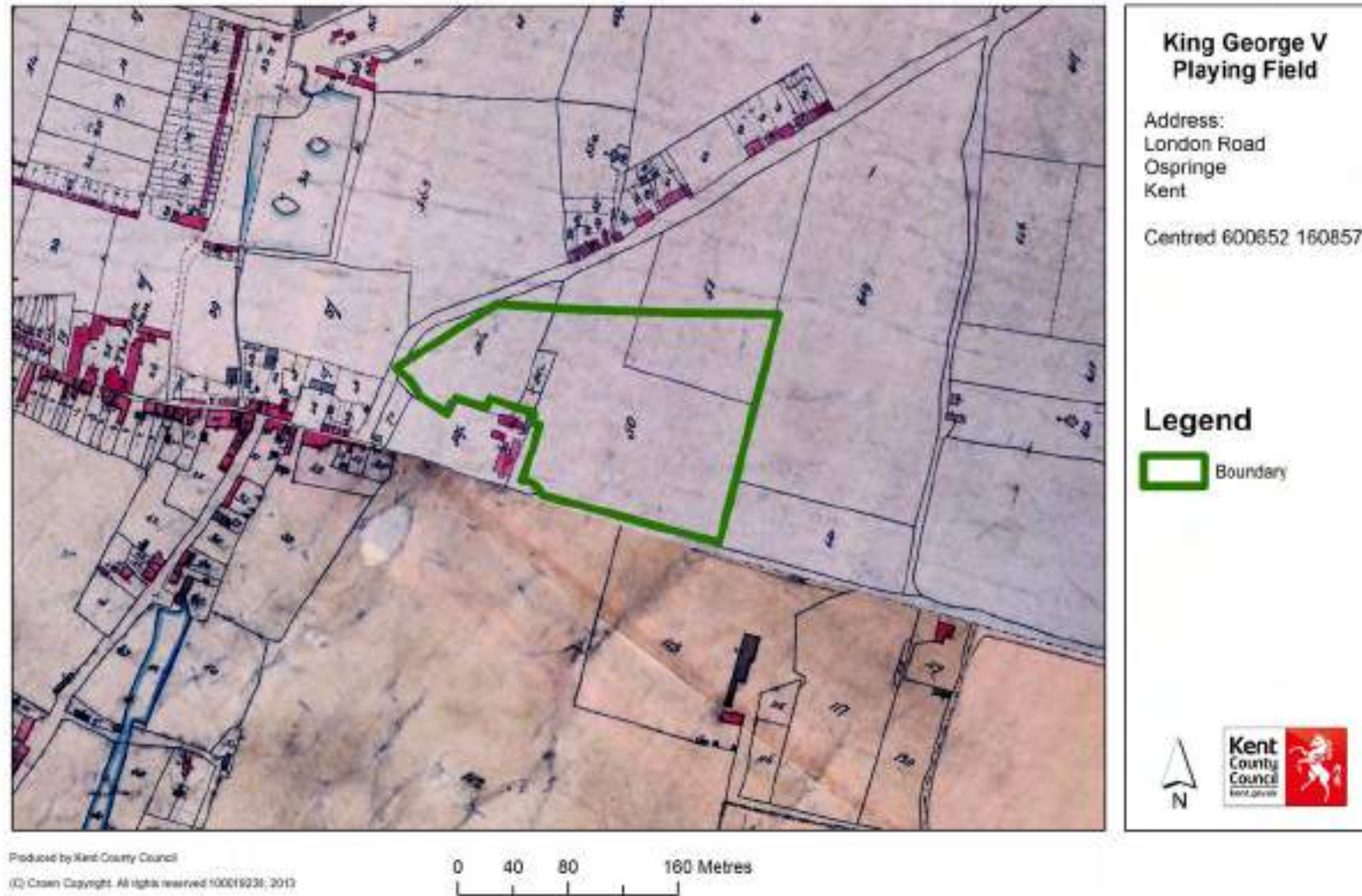
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Fig. 3 Aerial photograph (2016)



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Fig. 4 Tithe Map (1840)



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Fig. 5 Ordnance Survey field drawing 1797-1799 (Shepherd Neame Archive)



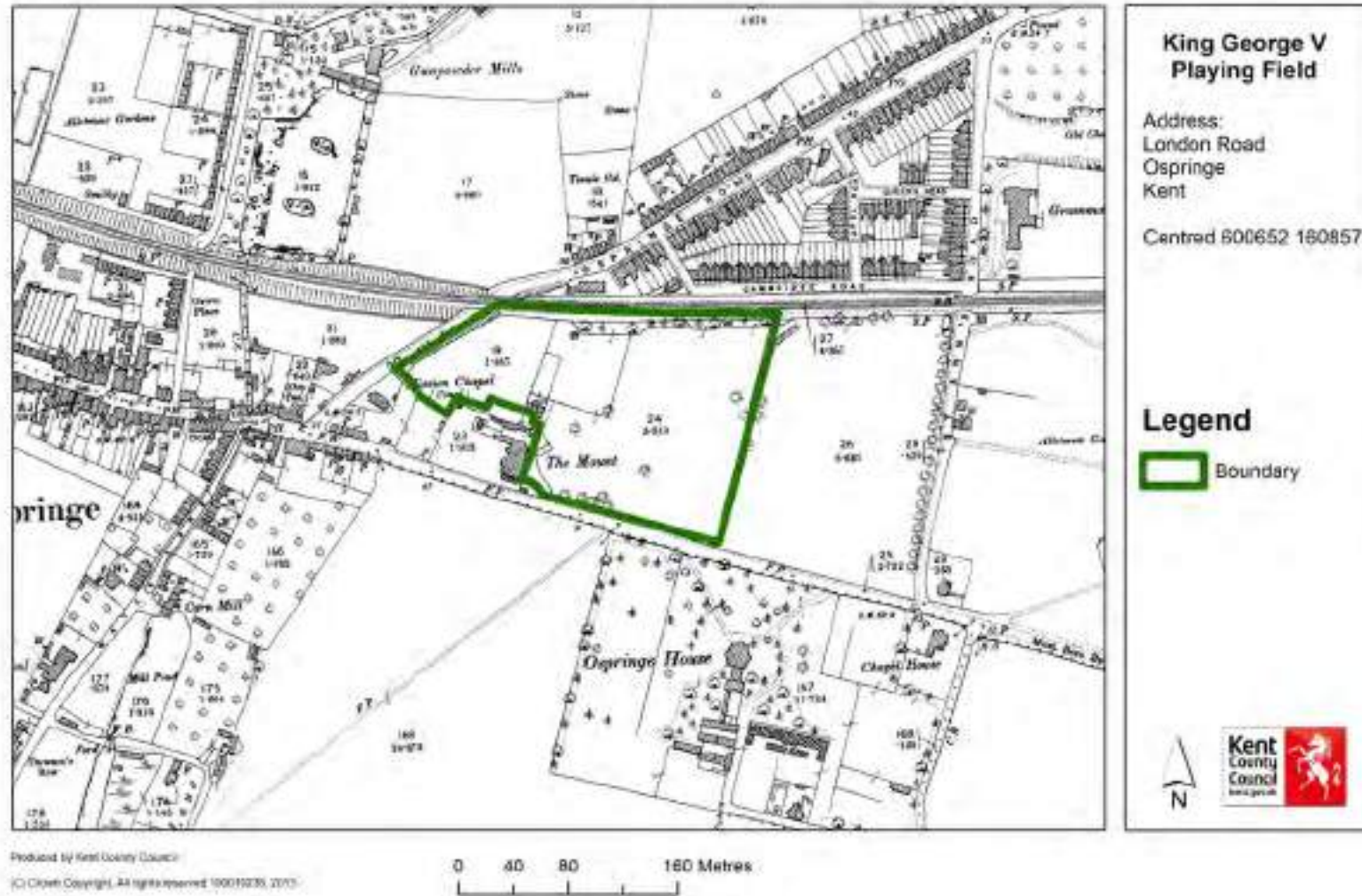
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Fig. 6 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25 inch map (1862-1875)



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Fig. 7 Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25 inch map (1897-1900)



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Fig. 8 Ordnance Survey 3rd edition 25 inch map (1907-1923)

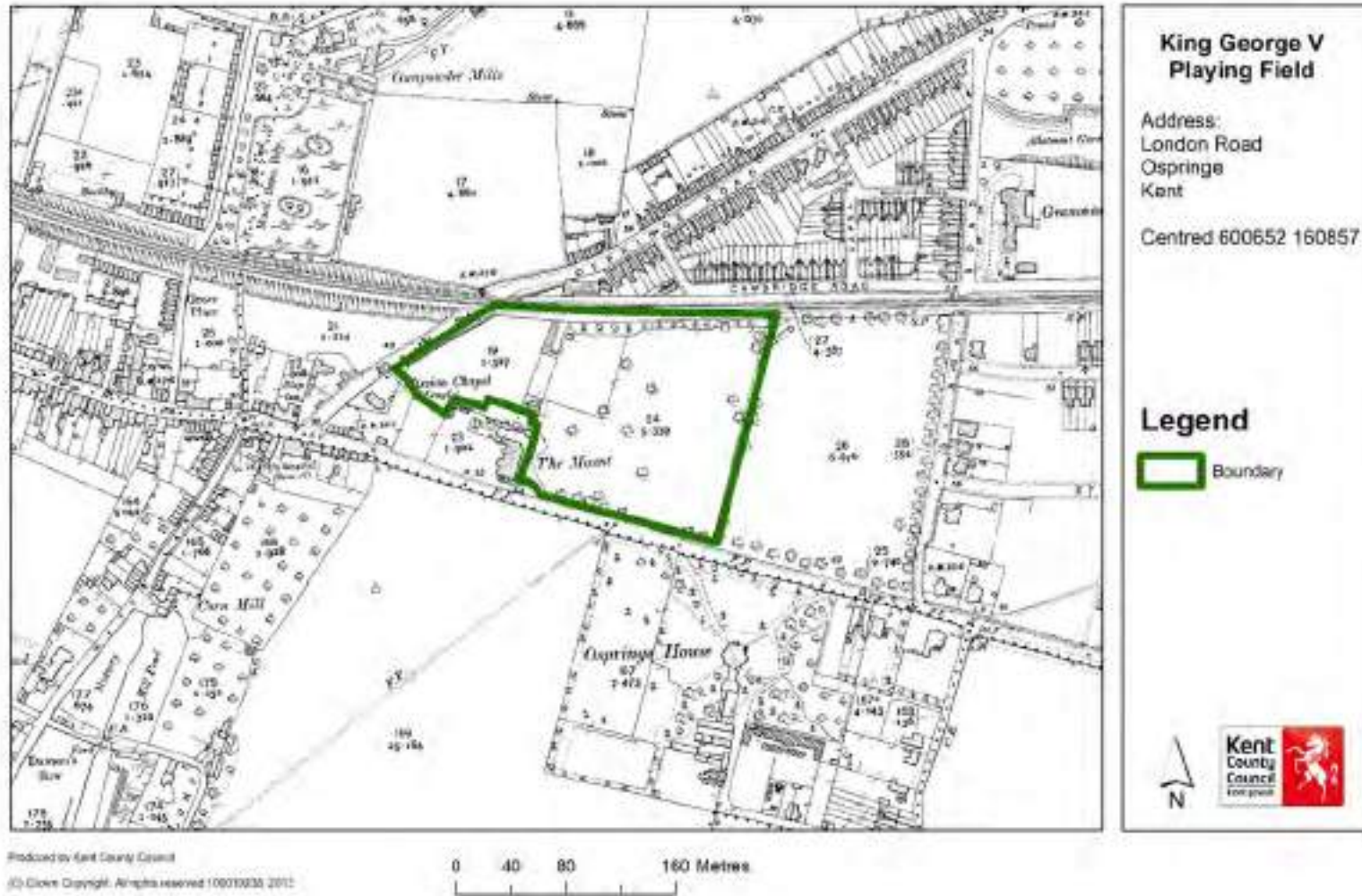


Fig. 9 18th century coloured plan of Faversham's hop gardens (Shepherd Neame Archive)



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Fig. 10 Edw. Jacob's coloured map of Faversham Map 1755 (Shepherd Neame Archive)



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Fig. 11 Ordnance Survey field drawing 1797-1799 (Shepherd Neame Archive)



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Fig. 12 Photograph pedestrian entrance (2021)



Fig. 13 King George V plaque (2021)



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Fig. 14 The driveway beside The Mount (frontage, 2021)



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Fig. 15 The driveway passing The Mount (vehicle access, 2021)



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Fig. 16 The football pavilion (2021)



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Fig. 17 Ospringe Road access (2021)



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Fig. 18 Path to St. Ann's Road (2021)



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Fig. 19 Exit to the A2 (2021)



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Fig. 20 Main Field looking east (2021)



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Fig. 21 Astro-turf football pitch (2022)



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Fig. 22 Children's play area (2021)



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Fig. 23 Railing at top of embankment (2021)



Fig. 24 Trees and shrubs along the railway embankment (2021)



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Fig. 25 Planting along Mountfield boundary (2021)

