The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens for Sevenoaks District



Parkgate House, Sevenoaks

Sevenoaks District Council

Kent Gardens Trust

English Heritage

Supported by

Kent County Council

November 2012

Parkgate House

Sevenoaks, Kent

INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SITE DESCRIPTION

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: Boundary map.

FIGURE 2: Aerial photograph.

FIGURE 3: Map of listed buildings at Parkgate House.

FIGURE 4: Listed buildings at Parkgate House.

FIGURES ONLY ON CD

FIGURE 5: J.Andrews, A.Drury and W.Herbert, *A Topographical Map of the County of Kent in Twenty Five Sheets (1769)*

FIGURE 6: Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent* (1778–99).

FIGURE 7: Estate Map (1802)

FIGURE 8: Tithe map (1840)

FIGURE 9: Ordnance Survey 1st edn 25” map (1862-1875)

FIGURE 10: Ordnance Survey 2nd edn 25” map (1897-1900)

FIGURE 11: Ordnance Survey 3rd edn 25” map (1907-1923)

FIGURE 12: Ordnance Survey 4th edn 25” map (1929-1952)

FIGURE 13: 1946 aerial photograph

FIGURE 14: Photograph of Parkgate House (1920)

FIGURE 15: Photograph of herbaceous border (2012)

FIGURE 16: Photograph of the summer house (2012)

FIGURE 17: Photograph of the pergola (2012)

FIGURE 18: Photograph of special trees (2012)

FIGURE 19: Photograph of the swimming pool (2012)

FIGURE 20: Photograph of the south facing front (2012)

FIGURE 21: Photograph of the wall behind border (2012)

FIGURE 22: Photograph of the view towards the nuttery (2012)

FIGURE 23: Photograph of the north facing border (2012)

FIGURE 24: Modern Ordnance Survey map (2012)

INTRODUCTION

This site dossier and description has been prepared as part of the **Review of The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens for Sevenoaks District 2011 - 2013.** This site is one of many sites that have been researched, visited and written about across the District and as a consequence has been included in the revised list of Historic Parks and Gardens covered by the District Council's Planning Policies. The list is not conclusive and further gardens may be added over time as research continues or information comes to light

The research was carried out by volunteers of the Kent Gardens Trust with support and training from the project consultant Virginia Hinze. The project was supported by English Heritage and Kent County Council.

The extent of the area identified represents the remains of the designed landscape and does not necessarily cover all remaining elements or the historical extent of landscape changes and 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.

Development Services
Sevenoaks District Council
Council Offices
Argyle Road
Sevenoaks
TN13 1HG
01732 227000
http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/

Kent County Council
Heritage Conservation
Invicta House
County Hall
Maidstone
ME14 1XX
01622 696918
www.kent.gov.uk

Kent Gardens Trust
www.kentgardenstrust.org.uk

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Age, rarity, survival: The site exhibits some residual features of the mid C20 layout when it was the home of Constance Spry and provides a contemporary setting for the C18 grade II listed house,
The site contains surviving ancient trees which are a feature of the site's setting adjacent to Lullingstone Park and which, together with her own planting, were incorporated into Spry's garden layout.

Evidential value: The gardens have surviving archival material – descriptions and illustrations - in Spry's published works and in those of other writers such as Vita Sackville West and Graham Stuart Thomas, especially in respect of her unique old rose collection.

Historic association*:* Evidence from Spry's association with house and garden, contemporary with World War II, shows that Parkgate House and its gardens were a resource in the war years as practical providers of flowers and vegetables for use in collaborative London floristry and culinary enterprises. Students at the nearby Swanley Horticultural College (qv) were taught by Spry and came to help with the landscaping and nursery work

Social and communal value: The connection of Parkgate House with Constance Spry is significant in that it is the surviving physical identity which encapsulates her significance as a teacher, plantswoman and designer and deserves to be better known

SITE DESCRIPTION

KENT PARKGATE HOUSE
SEVENOAKS
CROCKENHILL PARISH

TQ5301664385

SUMMARY OF HISTORIC INTEREST

A garden of ornamental planting, nuttery, woodland and paddock associated with an early C18 house and from 1934 to 1946 the country home and plant nursery of Constance Spry (1886-1960), the internationally-known plantswoman, teacher and floral art designer.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Lullingstone, in the Hundred of Axstane, is described in the Domesday survey as being part of the 'vast estate' of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux. Between the Norman period and the C18 account of Hasted, the manor and accompanying lands changed hands several times, but by 1522 Lullingstone House and its detached gatehouses were built and manorial records (1545) indicate a park boundary (Pittman).

Maps from 1596 (Symondson) onwards indicate Park Gate was, as its name suggests, outside the park, providing access to it and to a drive, c2.5km long, running directly to Lullingtone House. The house at Park Gate is thought to date from the early C18 (Pittman and Gravett) and is thus contemporary with the re-modelling of Lullingstone House, (thereafter Lullingstone Castle) and church by Sir Percyvall Hart, the last member of the Hart family before the inheritance passed to the Dykes. Most of the estate records were lost in enemy action in World War 2, but a surviving map of 1802 indicates a Parkgate Farm with main house, outbuildings, surrounding garden, orchards and arable land. It is not known whether the farm remained part of the wider Lullingstone estate at this time, but records (Kelly's Directory) from 1855 indicate a series of occupiers who worked the farm and surrounding land continuously through until the 1930's. The Tithe records are skeletal (both map and award schedule) but seem to indicate that other members of the Hart Dyke family had the ownership of parts of the estate outside the Park. In the 1930's, the continuance of the estate was compromised by the levying of death duties, with the result that much of the estate outside the park together with a large part of the park itself had to be sold. By 1934 Parkgate Farm is described as a derelict fruit farm (Shepherd) and as such, was bought by Constance and Harry Spry who proceeded to run it as a farm and plant nursery through the war years until 1947.

In the years after 1934 the grounds at Parkgate were converted to ornamental gardens and a nursery with two large greenhouses (removed c.1982) with 0.8 ha of cutting garden for growing flowers and plants to supply Mrs Spry's business. During the war years (pers comm), she is said to have secured the

help of neighbouring gardeners with their gardens to help her meet her floristry needs (by growing delphiniums) and to have employed a total of seven gardeners, full or part time. With assistance from Walter Trower, her gardener of thirty years, and students from Swanley Horticultural College (where Spry was an occasional lecturer) a major programme of landscaping was undertaken. A cobbled yard to the front of the house was replaced with lawns and an herbaceous border, backed by a small orchard. At the bottom of the old cherry orchard Constance Spry planted a collection of old roses that earned the admiration of the internationally-known rose expert Graham Stuart Thomas when he visited Parkgate in 1945. Constance Spry was in the forefront of the select group of old rose enthusiasts that included the gardener and writer Vita Sackville-West and the plant collector/owner of 'Nymans' Garden, Leonard Messel and had many rare specimens in her collection, gathered from England, Ireland, France, Tunisia and the USA. These included varieties lost to cultivation on the Continent during the war. Prior to her leaving Parkgate in 1946, when these were removed to Winkfield Place, Berkshire, Stuart Thomas was commissioned to propagate the collection.

Parkgate House and farm was bought by the Philips family in 1948 and remained with them until 1961. It was then bought by the Cottrells and while house and surrounding garden remained intact, the wider farmland and orchards were sold separately. Parkgate House was put back on the market in 1965, but was not purchased by the current owners until 1968. In 1999 there was further subdivision of the grounds and the conversion and sale of the Parkgate Oasts as a separate dwelling.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM AND SETTING

Parkgate House lies 8.5 km north of the centre of Sevenoaks and 2 km southeast of the village of Crockenhill (within which parish it lies). It is reached via country lanes leading south from the B258 at Crockenhill. The c. 1.4 ha. site consists of the ornamental gardens of Parkgate House and mixed woodland. It is set within arable farmland lying to the west, north and east and bounded by field hedges to north and east, the approach road to the south and mixed woodland to the west. Parkgate House occupies a south easterly facing site on the chalk plateau of the North Downs from where the land slopes down to the valley of the River Darent, the site running alongside the Lullingstone Country Park to the east. The site is affected by the noise of close major roads, the M25 motorway passing within hearing distance 0.2 km away to the west and the A 225 Sevenoaks to Dartford Road c. 2 km to the east.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

Parkgate House is approached from the west along a minor, east/west road, Parkgate Road, running from a minor north/south road leading north to Crockenhill. The road, which terminates c. 100m further east at the entrance to the golf course in Lullingstone Park, led formerly to the west driveway of Lullingstone Castle, being its main approach route in the C18. The entrance to

Parkgate House is from the north side of the road and is marked by brick pillars to either side with double wrought iron gates. The gates open into an entrance forecourt (c. 15m by 15m), gravel surfaced and with a stone path bordering the northern side. The forecourt is bounded to the south (road) side by a 2m high brick wall possibly erected by the Sprys and to the west by C19 brick-built oast houses (listed Grade II,). The forecourt is bounded to the north by a high (c. 2.5m) brick wall abutting the house. Access to the west-facing entrance front of the house is through a gate in this north wall on to a stone-paved terrace to the west of the house. A stone-paved pathway skirting the south front of the house from the north east corner of the forecourt leads to the rear entrance. A low brick wall borders the forecourt to the east, marking the edge of the ornamental gardens to the south of the house.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Parkgate House (listed Grade II) dates largely from the first half of the C18. The two-storied building with attics above is constructed of red brick and surmounted with a hipped tile roof with wooden eaves. The main entrance door with a flat hood over lies to the west side. This doorway was repositioned from the south side of the house in the 1930's. At the northwest corner and to the north of the C18 house is a wing of lower elevation with a tile hung first floor, the western portion c1800. The eastern portion of the rear wing probably dates from the 1930's

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The garden enclosures lie to the south, east and north of the house and are mainly laid out as lawns with a number of specimen trees and herbaceous borders near to the house.

The garden to the south east of the house is approached from the forecourt by a stone pathway along the south side of the house. It is predominantly laid to lawn with two large specimen copper beech trees (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Purpurea') c. 10m south of the house front. This is the area described as being converted from a cobbled yard by Constance Spry; an herbaceous border (see photographs from *Constance Spry's Garden Notebook* p38 and p39) bounds the area to the north, backed by c. 30m long C19 brick and flint wall. At the south-easterly corner of this border is a small plantation of mature deciduous trees, mainly limes (*Tilia petiolaris)*. A conifer hedge and a number of deciduous trees mark the (southern) boundary with the road.

Immediately to the east side of the house is an irregularly-shaped stone paved courtyard c. 9m by 13.5m, enclosed by brick and flint walls to the south and east and fencing to the north. This provides access to the rear entrance of the house and to a stone paved terrace along the north side. To the east of this courtyard is a swimming pool enclosure (constructed late 1950's/early 1960's*)* c 30m by 14m, approached from the terrace, bounded by walls to the south and hedging to north, west and east; an apple orchard was on this site during Constance Spry's time.

To the east of the swimming pool a narrow section of garden (mainly grass) links the southern garden to the more extensive garden to the north (rear) of the site. The ornamental garden to the north of the house is reached from the stone-paved terrace extending along the north façade of the house. The northern and eastern boundaries are marked by mixed native hedging (hawthorn, holly, elder and damson). A mature yew hedge 35 m long intersects the garden to the north c. 65 metres from the house, forming the northern boundary of the lawned area. Beyond this a paddock occupies the northern portion of the garden that was under cultivation as a nursery in Spry's time. To the east ,in the area of the former apple orchard, are a small number of fruit trees replanted in the late C20. A small wooden summerhouse (1980's) planted with roses is sited to the southern end of this section c 30m northeast of the house; a small greenhouse is sited to the east of this on the edge of the grounds. A garden shed is sited in the north eastern area of the garden (now paddock), on the base of one of the greenhouses erected by Constance Spry and removed c. 1982. An arched wrought iron pergola c. 15m long runs from a point c 10m north west of the summerhouse on a north/south axis.aligned on this site (path visible in 1946 aerial photograph). The structure, believed to be Victorian (pers comm), is probably that used by Constance Spry to create a clematis garden along a grass path between two borders (*Constance Spry's Garden Notebook*, p 161). A group of trees, including Holm oak (*Quercus ilex)* and Gingko (planted in the late C20) separates the former orchard in the southern section of this area from the main, lawned, area of the garden.

From the area of the main lawn on the north front a c.50m long grass path with mixed borders on each side (a feature dating from Constance Spry's time, 1946 aerial photograph) runs north eastwards from the north side of the house to the former orchard. Island beds containing mixed planting lie along the southern edge of the lawns, which extend to the yew hedge forming the northern boundary. Close to this hedge are four specimen trees planted in 1980/81: a blue cedar (*Cedrus Atlantica glauca)* in the centre, purple maple (*Acer purpurea*) and copper beech (*Fagus sylvatica purpurea*) to the east and liquidambar (*Liquidambar styraciflua)* to the western margin. The lawned area is bounded to the west by a double line of hazel, separating this area from a third area, under cultivation in Spry's time but now (2012) somewhat overgrown with numerous shrubs and small trees, these also forming the western boundary. This nuttery is a partial survival of the planting of *Corylus* mentioned by Spry (*The Garden Notebook* p 143, Pittman tree surveys), originally more extensive. The 1946 aerial photograph shows a long axial planting in this position to the north-west of the house, extending as far as the northern boundary.

North west of Parkgate House and west of the gardens (and excluded from the area defined as of historic interest) an area c.1.2ha in extent, of late C20 mixed woodland, planted as a noise barrier, contains the probable site of Spry's rose garden (gone by 1947) and Philadelphus Walk (photograph, *The Garden Notebook*, p135 "Approach to the old rose garden through an old cherry orchard").

REFERENCES

Books and Articles

E. Hasted, The *History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent:* vol3 (1797) pp 539-552.
E.Coxhead*, Constance Spry: A Biography* WM Luscombe, 1975
C.Spry, *Constance Spry's Garden Notebook* Temple Press 1940
S.Shepherd, *The Surprising Life of Constance Spry* Macmillan 2010
G.Stuart Thomas, *The Rose Book- Old Shrub Roses* Frances Lincoln 2004
S. Pittman, *Lullingstone Park: The Evolution of a Medieval Deer Park* Meresborough Books 1983

Periodicals, Journals and Proceedings

Crockenhill Parish Tree Survey, 1982, 1992, 2002,2012, S Pittman
K. Gravett and S. Pittman, *Parkgate House Survey* 1999 (unpublished)
F.R.J. Pateham, *Geological History of the Darent and Holmesdale Valleys* 1984

Illustrations

Aerial photograph RAF 1946
Aerial photograph 2008 (Kent County Council)

Maps

J Andrew, A Dury and W Herbert*, A Topographical Map of the County of Kent 1769*
E.Hasted, *Map of Kent (1797)*
Tithe Map for Lullingstone 1840 (Kent History and Library Centre)
Estate Map 1802 (Lullingstone Castle Archive)
Sale Map 1961 CKS ref. V1540 E46
Ordnance Survey 1st edn.25" map (1862-75)
Ordnance Survey 2nd edn.25" map (1897-1900)
Ordnance Survey 3rd edn.25" map (1907-23)
Ordnance Survey 4th edn.25" map (1920-52)
Geological map: OS 3rd edn. 25" map
Modern Mastermap 1:2500 2007

Archival Items

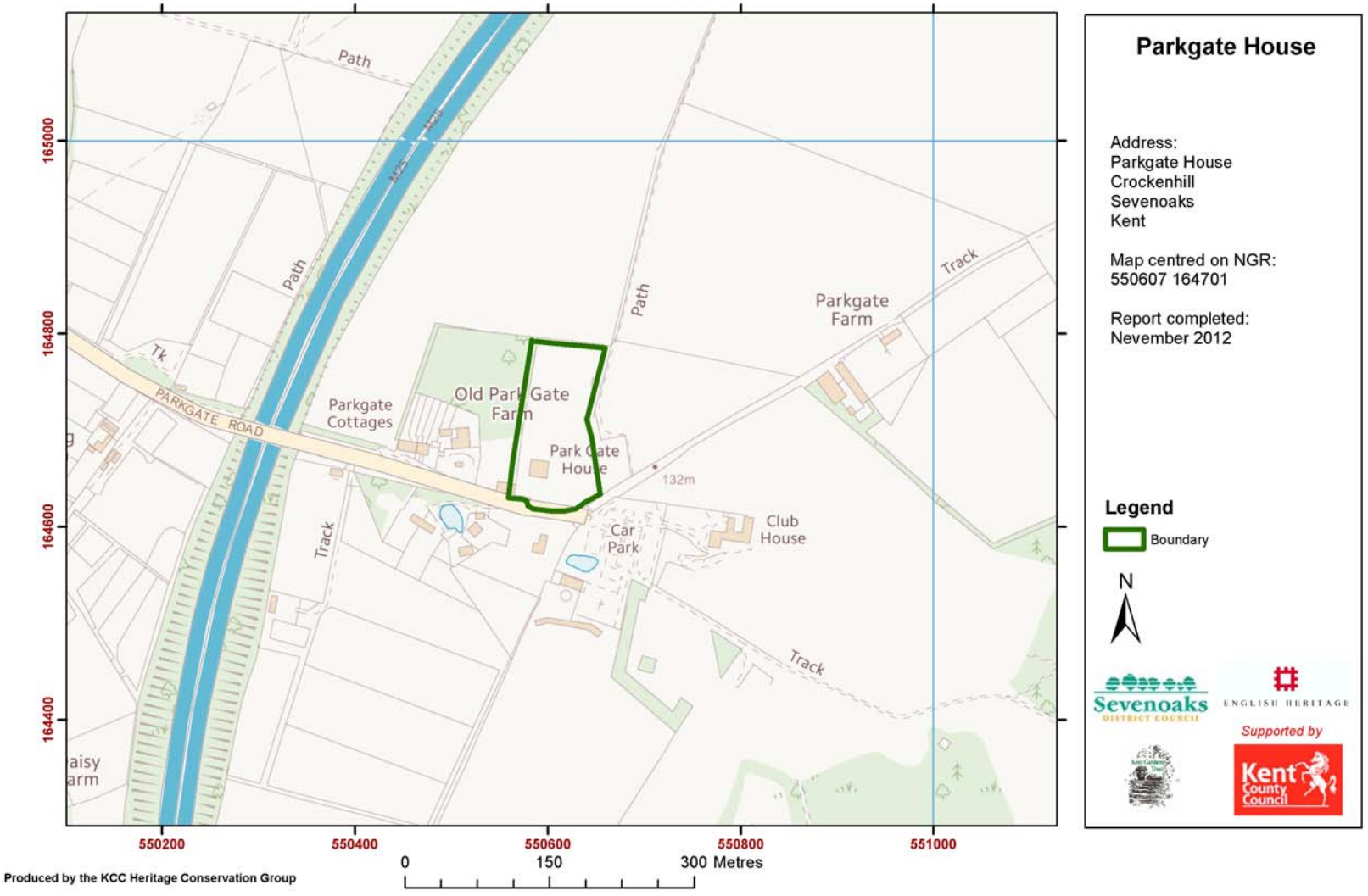
Kelly's directory 1855-1938
ElectoralRolls 1946-1964
Sale Particulars, Curtis and Henson 1961, CKS ref.V1540 E46l

Research by Janet Mayfield and Susan Roome

Virginia Hinze (editor)

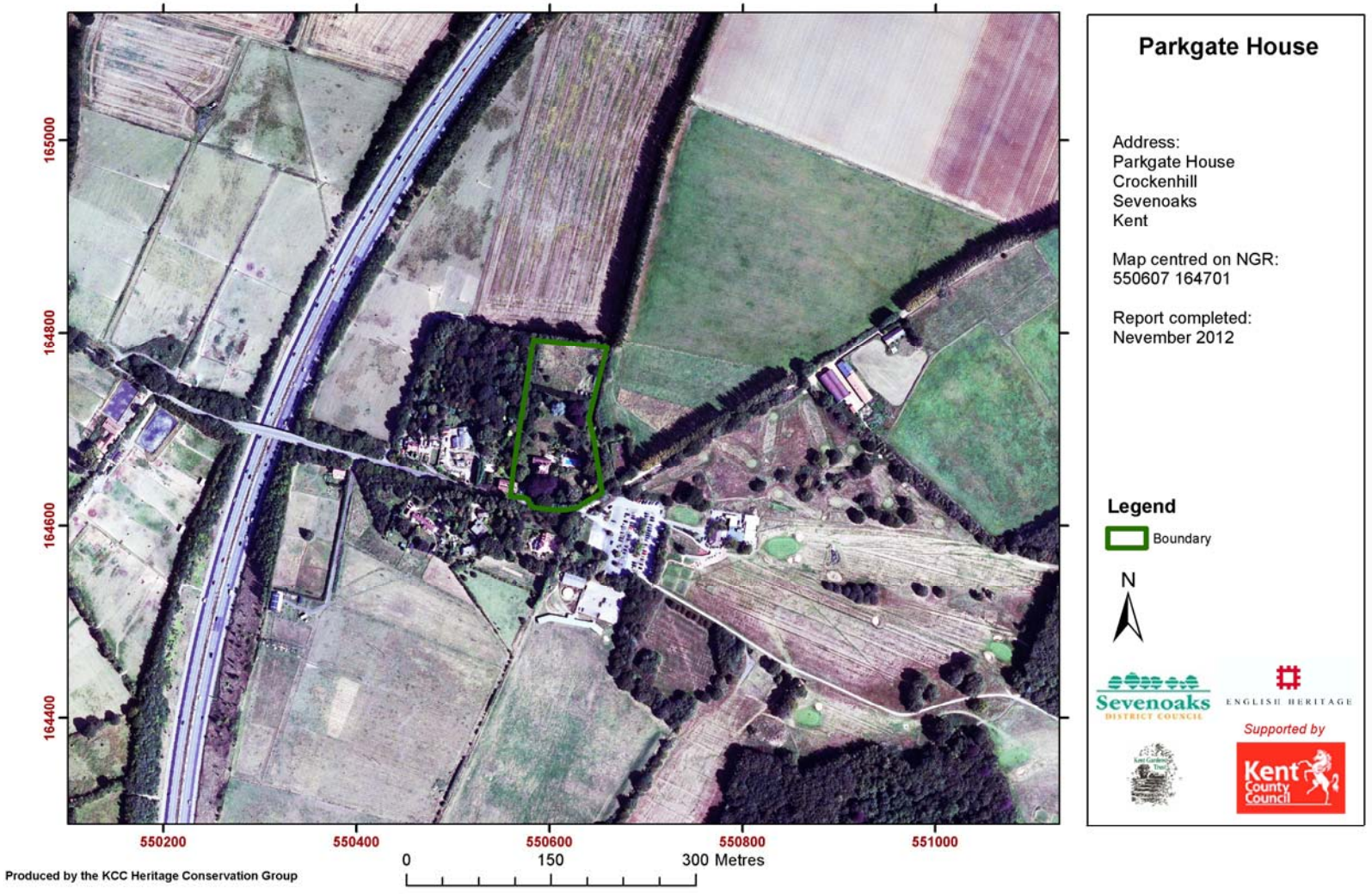
Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens 2011 - 2013 review of Sevenoaks District

Fig. 1 Boundary map



Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens 2011 - 2013 review of Sevenoaks District

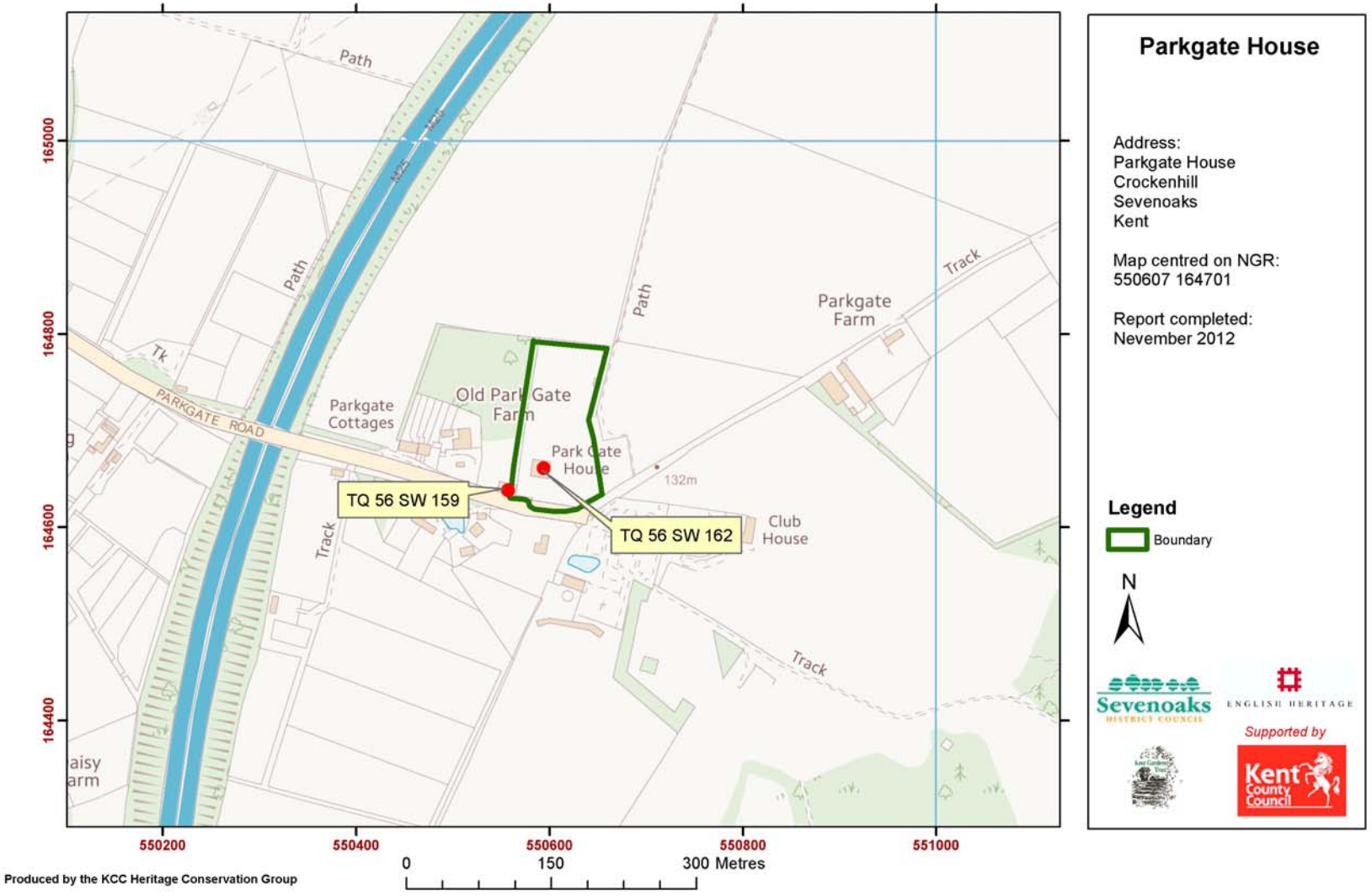
Fig. 2 Aerial photograph (2008)



This map is based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (C) Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. 100019238. 2007

Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens 2011 - 2013 review of Sevenoaks District

Fig. 3 Listed buildings at Parkgate House



This map is based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (C) Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. 100019238. 2007

Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens 2011 - 2013 review of Sevenoaks District

Fig. 4 Listed buildings at Parkgate House (from the Kent Historic Environment Record)

Kent Historic Environment Record Reference: TQ 56 SW 159

The following text is from the original listed building designation:
TQ 56 SW CROCKENHILL PARKGATE ROAD
Lullingstone
994/5/72 Parkgate House
(formerly listed as
1.8.52 Parkgate Farmhouse)
GV II
C18. Two storeys and attics red brick. Hipped tiled roof with wooden eaves cornice. Three windows and two dormers facing south, 2 windows facing west. Sashes with glazing bars intact. Doorcase in the west front with flat hood over. At the north-west corner is a small wing of lower elevation and one window with a tile hung first floor. .
Listing NGR: TQ5301664385

Kent Historic Environment Record Reference: TQ 56 SW 162

The following text is from the original listed building designation:
TQ 56 SW CROCKENHILL PARKGATE ROAD
Lullingstone
994/5/74 Oasthouses in 2 parallel
ranges at Parkgate House 25.3.81 (formerly listed as
Oasthouses in 2 parallel
ranges at Old Park Gate Farm)
GV II
Early C19. One storey brick building of 2 parallel ranges with weatherboarded gables having 2 square oasts with pyramidal tiled roofs retaining cowls and fantails.
Listing NGR: TQ5301664385