The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens for Medway



Rainham Recreation Ground, Rainham

January 2015

Rainham Recreation Ground

Rainham, 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[1]. 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

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

English Heritage
www.english-heritage.org.uk

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

LOCATION

KENT **RAINHAM RECREATION GROUND**
MEDWAY
RAINHAM

Centred on 582150 166200

District: Medway; Parish: Rainham

Rainham Recreation Ground lies 200 m east of Rainham railway station.

BRIEF HISTORY

Rainham Recreation Ground dates from 1890, originally designated as commemorating Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee of 1887, with a plaque to that effect on the gate.

Until 1888 sport had been played at nearby Berengrove Park but this was private land belonging to Berengrove House owned by the Walter family. During the second half of the C19 locals had been allowed to wander into Berengrove Park which had woodland and ponds. The Walter family had allowed local events to take place in the park.

Pressure for recreational grounds increased in the latter half of the C19 and Rainham football club amalgamated with the cricket club, thus creating a need for a permanent venue.

In 1888 Lord Hothfield who owned much of Rainham presented the village with a seven acre field in celebration of Queen Victoria's Jubilee. The land had previously been agricultural land used by Mr Prentis, a tenant farmer.

A committee had been set up in 1887 by the Parish Council to find a suitable venue. Lord Hothfield had given the Parish Council the option of a 21 year lease on the land or the right to purchase the land directly from Mr Prentis.

After some difficulties with the said Mr Prentis, the matter was solved by Marshall Harvey an accountant who set up a company on behalf of the parish council. Twenty-one acres were purchased by this company; seven were then given to the parish council and the rest sold.

The ground was then overseen by a group of trustees headed by the local vicar. The deeds gave the parish the seven acres in perpetuity, to be fenced off and vested in the trustees' name. The parish council proposed that the ground should be used for general recreation but the cricket club was reserved one acre of ground at the Scott Avenue end of the field while the football club used the other end. According to a report in the East Kent Gazette, dated November 1890, turfing was completed in the early part of 1890.

The recreation ground, as it appears on the 1897 OS map, has the current carpark and land to the north as allotment gardens. By the 1907 OS map the land to the north is now housing but the carpark area is still allotments and remains so until the 1929 – 1952 4th edition OS map.

A water pipe was installed in 1904 to enable the watering of the cricket square. A wooden structure was built on the Wakely Road side of the ground with a central open space for the storage of equipment. This structure remained on the ground until a purpose-built pavilion was constructed in the 1980s. In 1923 the Cricket club moved away to Berengrove Park but the football club played at Rainham until the 1980s.

Today (2014) the ground exists for general recreation with a children's play area, small climbing wall, basketball net and an adjacent carpark. The toilets and pavilion seem to be closed.

DESCRIPTION

The rectangular recreation ground of c2.7ha is surrounded by mature trees on the perimeter and a footpath runs around the edge of the grassed area. Another footpath crosses the land diagonally from the NE, at the junction of Scott Avenue and Wakely Road, skirts around the enclosed playground for small children, and exits at the SW corner alongside the carpark. The whole is surrounded by a fence. Along Scott Avenue and Wakely Road are the remnants of Victorian wrought iron fencing. The railway line runs along the SW edge of the recreation ground. Separating the recreation ground from the railway property is chain-link fencing.

The children's play area in the SW quarter of the ground is c2162 sq m and is well equipped with swings, slides, roundabouts and climbing frames. There are picnic benches within this area. The whole is surrounded by C20 wrought iron railings in keeping with the perimeter fence. A football pitch is marked out on the ground; there is also a climbing wall and a basketball net.

LISTING STATUS

Rainham Recreation Ground is not registered as a park and garden by English Heritage; there is no entry in *Parks and Gardens UK* database nor has it been included in the Kent Gardens Trust *Compendium*. There are no listed buildings on the site.

CONCLUSION

Rainham Recreation Ground is one of Medway's many municipal, public open spaces laid out to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. Its minimal history is well documented; clearly it has played an important part as a recreational area, as health and sport increased in social awareness from the Victorian period.

The site is valued as a local amenity, particularly for those with children and dogs.

However, although of some significance as typical of such spaces in terms of its 120 year history and commemorative status, Rainham is a purely functional recreational space without any significant designed features and therefore does not constitute a designed landscape. No further investigation is therefore recommended at this stage.

REFERENCES

Books, articles and websites

The founding of Rainham Recreation Ground, Rainham History Society
http://www.rainham-history.co.uk/articleslist/22-rainham-a-century-ago-by-freddie-cooper
Cricket Club history.

Maps

1st edition OS 1862-1875
2nd edition OS 1897-1900
3rd edition OS 1907-1923
4th edition OS 1929-1952

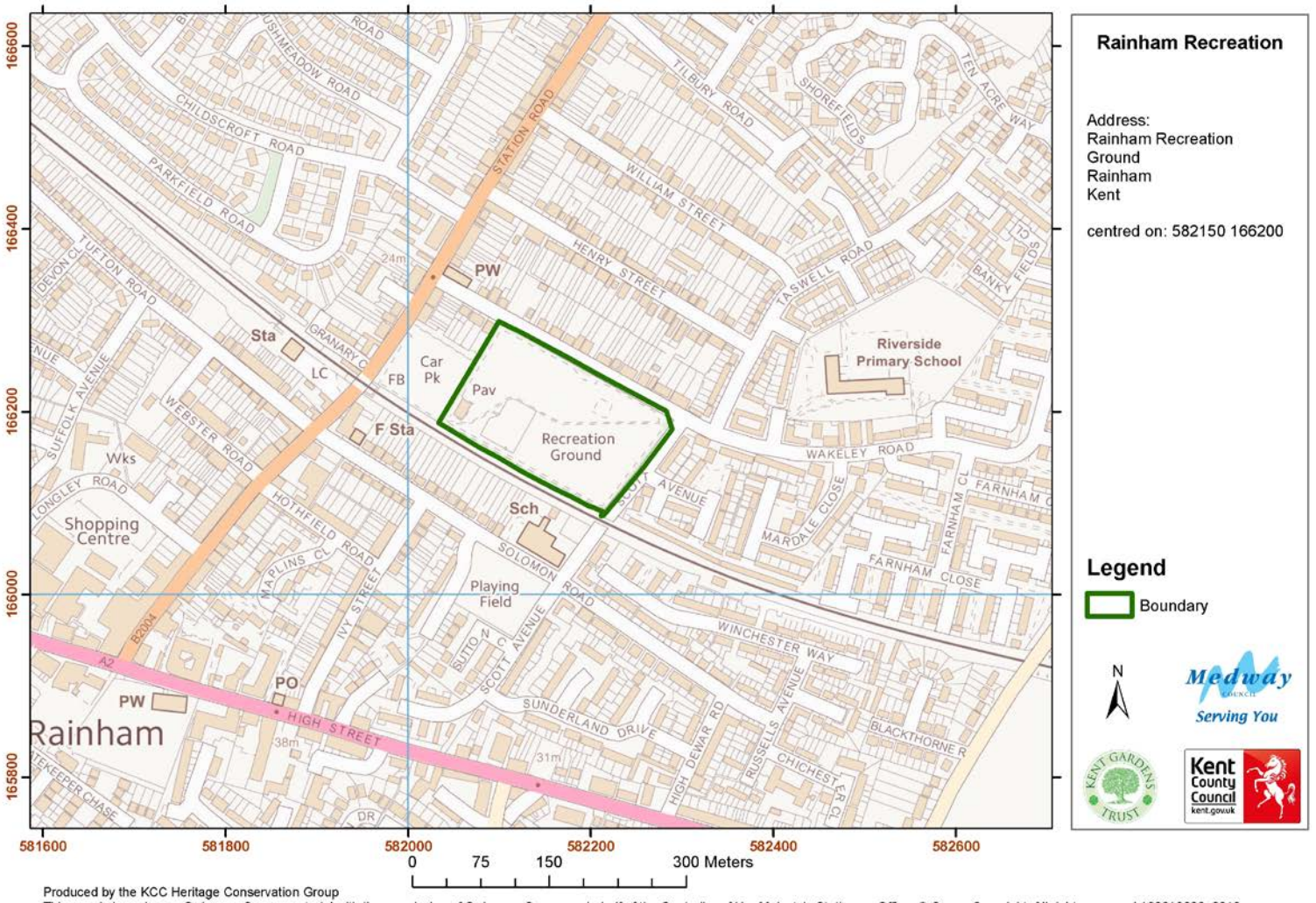
Illustrations

Rainham Recreation Ground 1900s, Rainham history Society

Research by Barbara Piper 2014
Virginia Hinze (editor)

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Fig. 1 Boundary map



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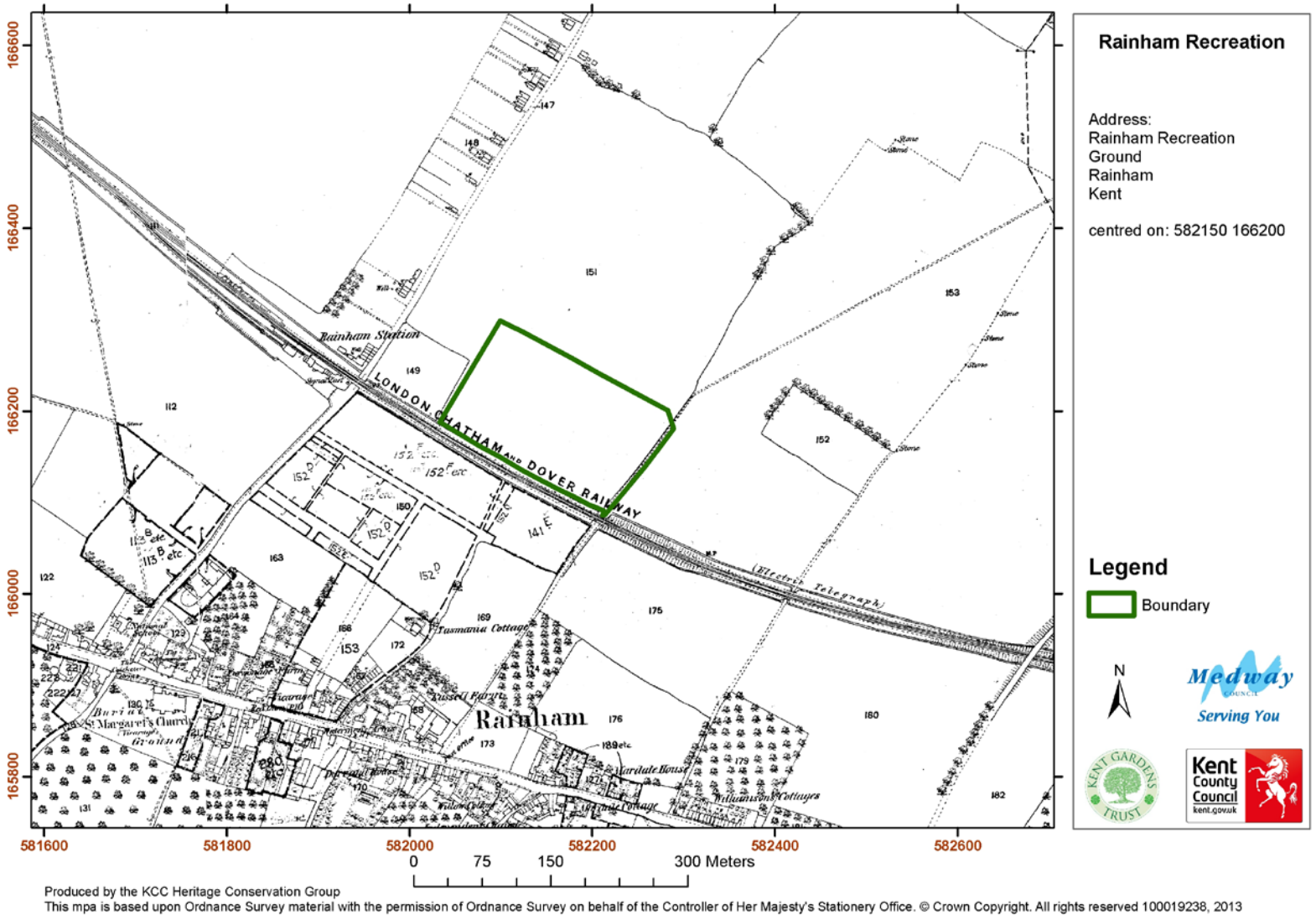
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Fig. 2 Aerial photograph (2012)



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Fig. 3 1st edition 25" Ordnance Survey map (1862-1875)

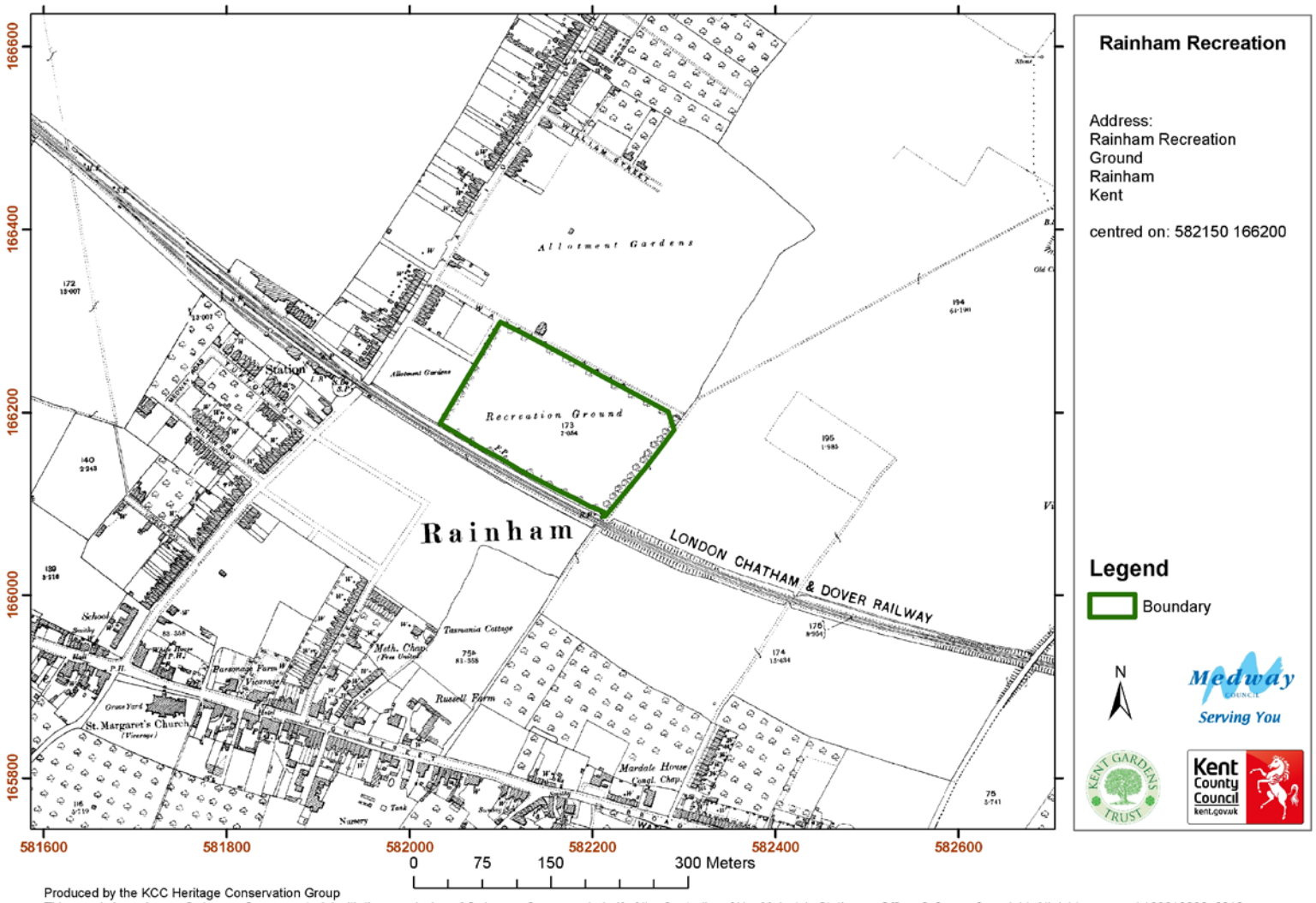


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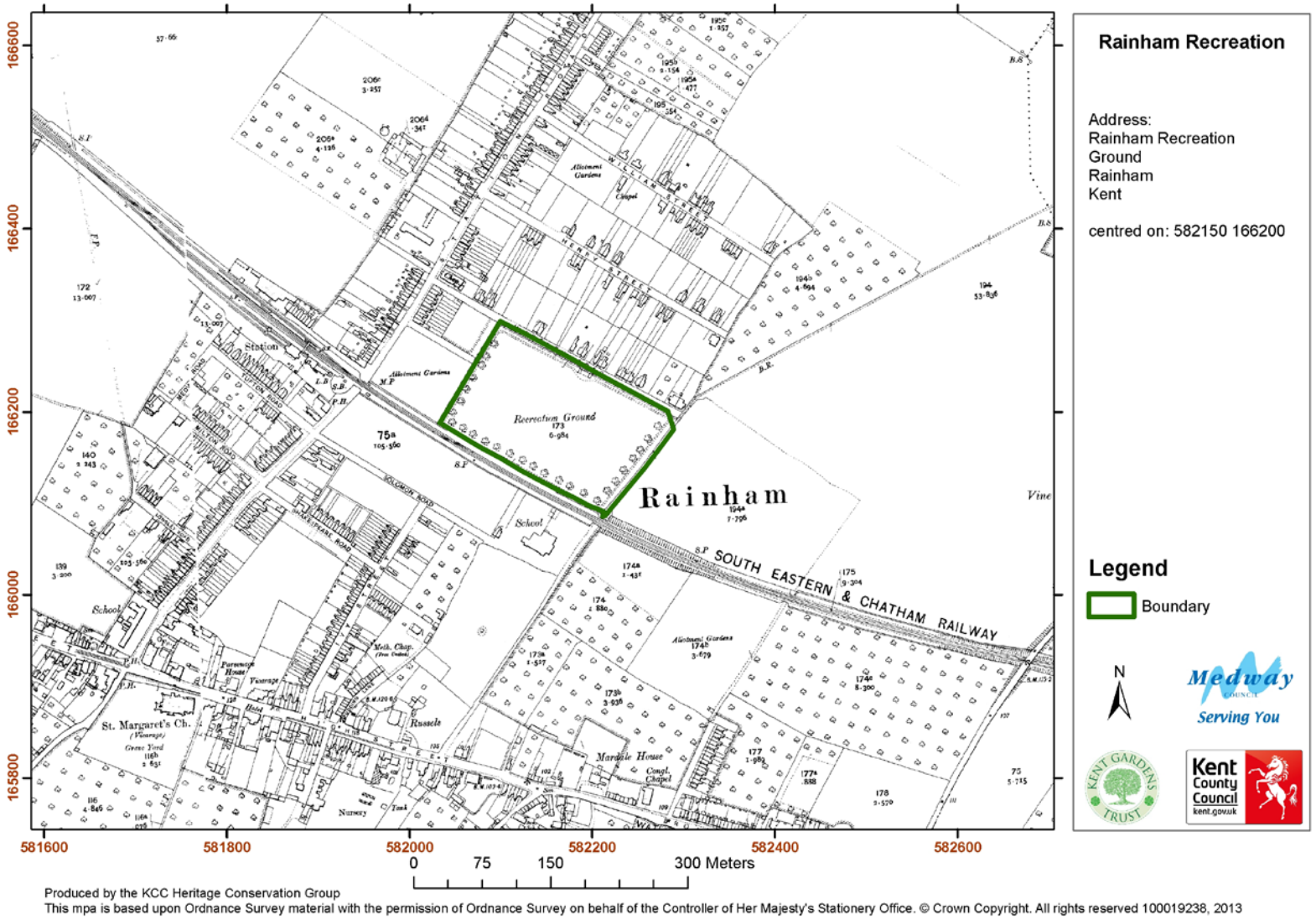
Fig. 4 2nd edition 25" Ordnance Survey map (1997-1900)



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Fig. 5 3rd edition 25" Ordnance Survey map (1907-1923)



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Fig. 6 4th edition 25" Ordnance Survey map (1929-1952)



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Fig. 7 Photographs of Rainham Recreation Ground 2015









