The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens for Medway



War Memorial Gardens, Rochester

March 2015

War Memorial Gardens

Rochester, 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*'

KENT **WAR MEMORIAL GARDENS**

MEDWAY

LOCATION

NGR: 574327 168525

Parish: Rochester

LOCATION

Rochester Cathedral High Street Rochester Kent ME1 1JY

The War Memorial Garden is in the centre of Rochester to the south-western side of the High Street and to the north of Rochester Cathedral

HISTORY

The War Memorial Garden was laid out in the years after the First World War. A photograph in the Couchman Collection dated 1922 shows a newly erected memorial bedecked with flowers (DE402 4 61.jpg). No definite date for the laying out of the garden has been established. The ground it occupies is part of a "scheduled monument" described as 'open areas within Roman Saxon and Mediaeval town'. At least part of the site seems to be over the mediaeval monks' cemetery. There is no record of any archaeological exploration of the area.
The wall at the rear of the garden was constructed after the Second World War.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM AND SETTING

A small rectangular space (26m X 28m) opening off of Rochester High Street. The north east boundary is the High Street; the north eastern boundary is the shop at No. 76 and the remains of an ancient wall; the south western boundary is the path north of the cathedral running to the Deanery gate; to the south east is the wall of No. 80. The ground rises approximately one metre along the axis of the path running up to the war memorial. There are views from the whole area to the northern façade of the cathedral and to Gundulph's tower and the Deanery Gate. The garden is undistinguished with mown grass, stone paths and a few beds of annuals and roses.

ENTRANCES and APPROACHES

The garden is normally entered by a short flight of steps from the High Street but can also be entered from the path to the north of the cathedral.

STRUCTURES

The garden is dominated by a 4m high stone cross which is the main war memorial for Medway and the focus for the town's Remembrance Day parade. To the south west of this is a brick wall and ornamental wrought iron gate which were erected after the Second World War. There are two commemorative plaques on this wall.

LISTING STATUS

There are no Listed Buildings on the site. However, the garden is part of a Scheduled Monument (list entry number 1003602)

CONCLUSION

The area of the War Memorial garden is of high importance for its social value to the city of Rochester as a memorial and for its archaeological associations. The garden itself is insignificant but opens up an excellent view of the Cathedral from the centre of the town. In the absence of an historic designed landscape falling within requisite English Heritage criteria, a full review has not been completed.

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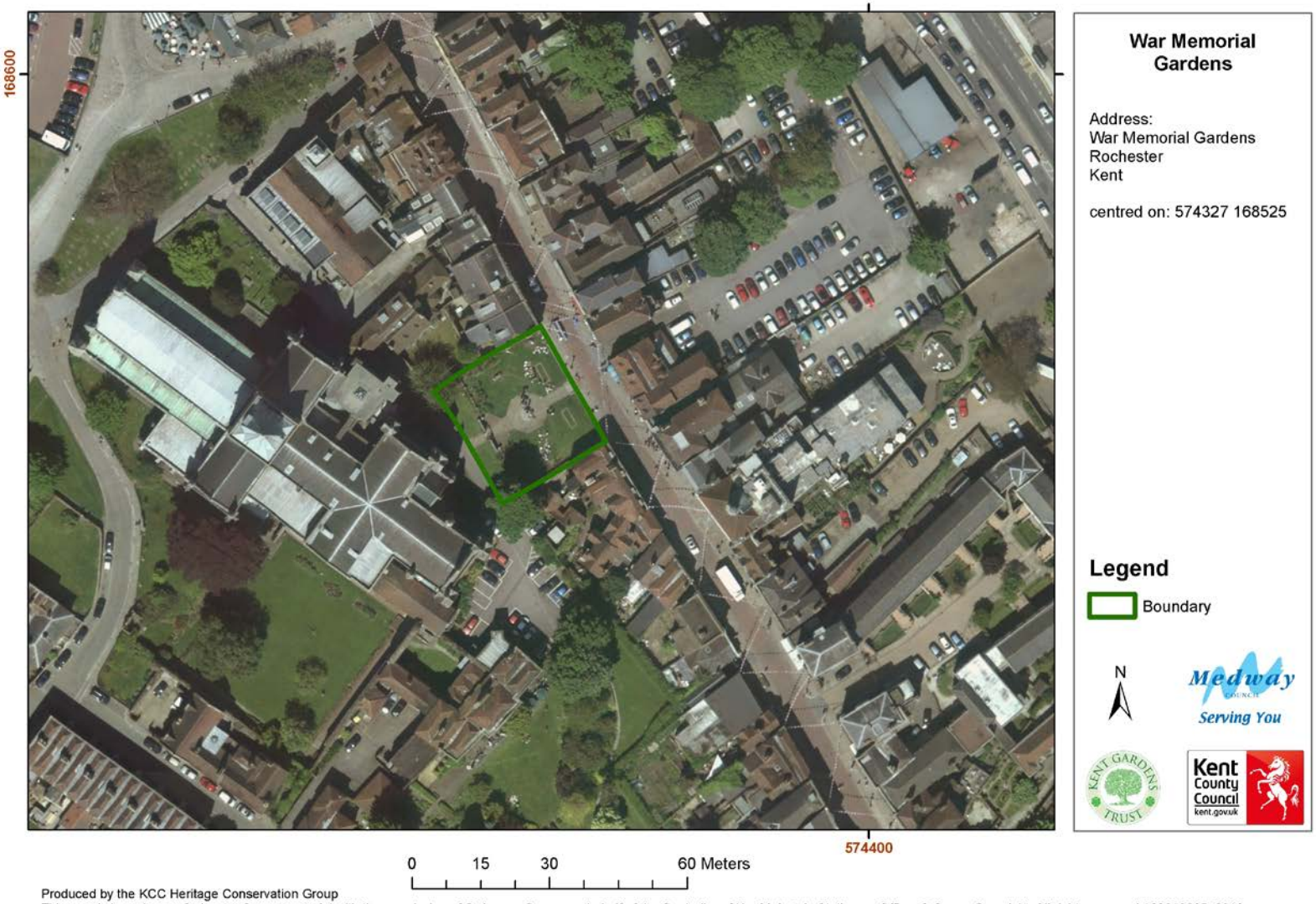
Fig. 1 Boundary map



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Fig. 2 Aerial photograph (2012)



Produced by the KCC Heritage Conservation Group

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Fig. 3 Photograph of the base of the central cross



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Fig. 4 Photograph looking west from the cross to the Cathedral



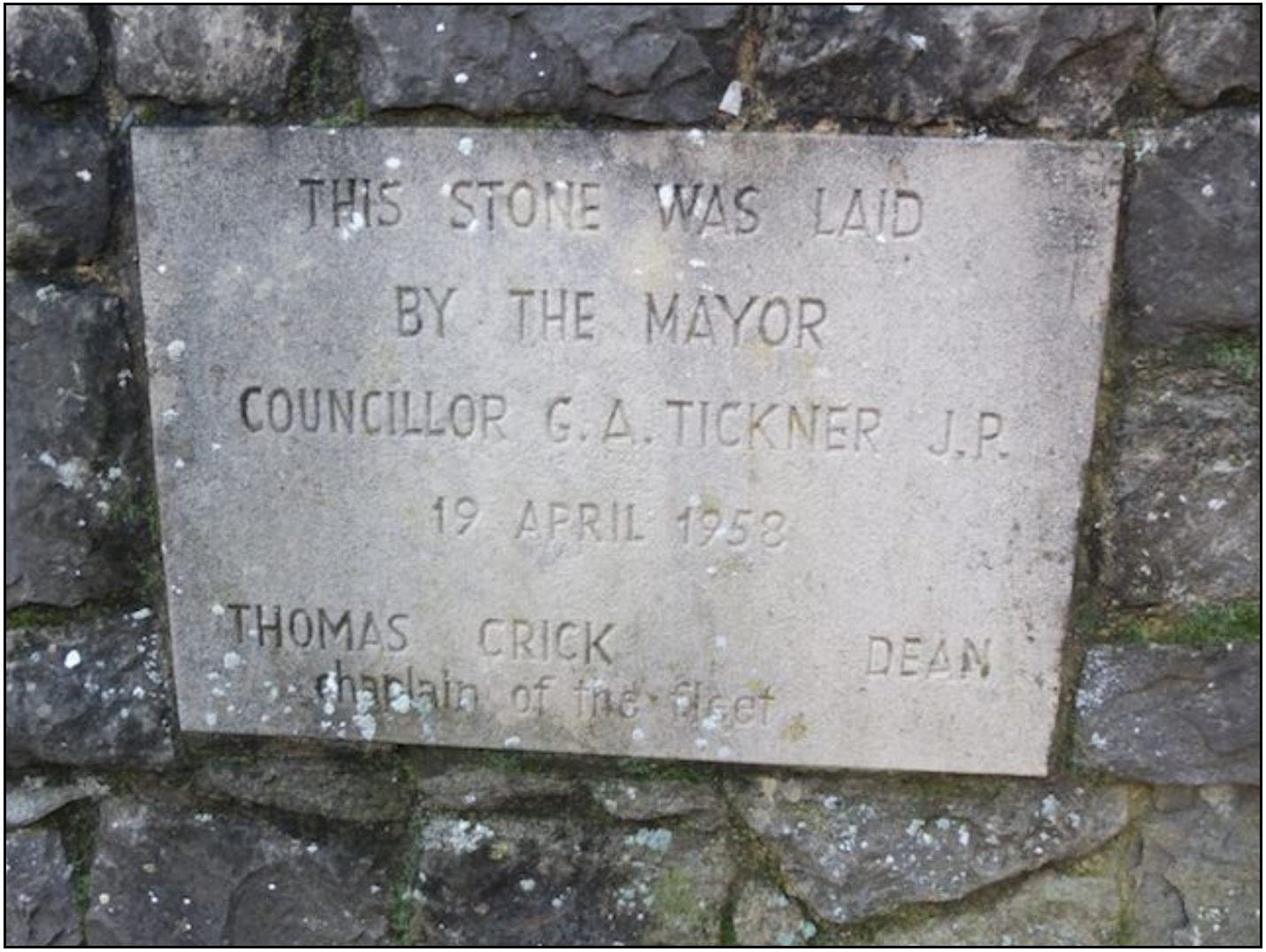
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Fig. 5 Photograph looking south-west through the gate from the garden to the cathedral precincts



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

Fig. 6 Photograph of commemoration plaque in the wall to the north-west of Cathedral gate



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Fig. 7 Photograph of the cross looking north into the High Street



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Fig. 8 Photograph of Hydrangeas along the outside of the wall to the south of the gate into the Cathedral Precinct

