# The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens for Swale District




## East Hall, Murston

August 2023

# East Hall

Murston, Kent

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION**

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE & ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL**

**SUMMARY OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE**

**CHRONOLOGY OF THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT**

**SITE DESCRIPTION**

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1: Boundary Map

Figure 2: Aerial Photograph 2016

Figure 3: 1840 Tithe Map of Sittingbourne

Figure 4: Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" Map (1862-1875)

Figure 5: Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25" Map (1897-1900)

Figure 6: Ordnance Survey 3rd edition Map (1907-1923)

Figure 7: Ordnance Survey 4th edition Map (1929-1952)

Figure 8: East Hall from the south

Figure 9: Entrance to East Hall from Meeres Court Lane

Figure 10: The garden from the south

Figure 11: The garden from the south showing the house

Figure 12: View of the farmyard taken from the south-east

Figure 13: The farmyard from the south-east showing the garden wall

Figure 14: Allotment gardens north-west of East Hall

## 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 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.


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** **EAST HALL, MURSTON**

**SITTINGBOURNE**

**Centred on 592524 164250**

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

### SUMMARY

A walled garden adjoining East Hall (listed Grade II). The walls (18th or early 19th century) are intact on three sides but the southern wall has been demolished. A doorway with a pointed arch survives in the north wall.

### EVIDENTIAL

The timber frame house has medieval origins. The history of the estate goes back to the Norman Conquest and has been owned by several prominent local families. The farm comprising marsh, arable land and orchards was typical of the area much of which by the 19th century was given over to industrial use. The house and its garden demonstrate the prosperous life-style of farming families in the area and their connection with local industries.

### HISTORICAL

In the medieval and early modern periods, the East Hall estate was held by important Kent families including the St. Leger and Eveas families. During the 19th and early 20th centuries the property was owned by the Smeed family who were significant local industrialists.

### AESTHETIC

Nothing remains of the 19th century pleasure grounds, but the open space forms a pleasant contrast to the mainly built-up surroundings.

The area on the east side of the house which was formerly enclosed on three sides by wall has been described as a pleasure ground (listing description) and remains an open space. On the north side of the garden wall is an open area adjoining the farmyard (also listed Grade II) which contains several listed buildings. The land on the west side of the house is now used as allotment gardens. These open spaces are surrounded to the south by housing.

### COMMUNAL

The house, garden, open space and derelict farm-yard are the surviving remnants of a farm which functioned from the medieval period until the 20th century. A footpath follows the line of the garden boundary and leads to the open

space round a balancing pond created for drainage when the area was converted to residential use. The path seems to be well used by walkers.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

East Hall Farm and the gardens to the east are among the few areas in the vicinity to have escaped large-scale extraction. The area has produced several archaeological discoveries, however, including a large Romano-British century c. 150m to the south-west and prehistoric remains c. 200m to the south-east. Further archaeological remains could survive within the undisturbed deposits at East Hall Farm. Archaeological remains on the site are also likely to derive from the historic use of East Hall Farm itself which occupies the site of a probable medieval manor and incudes medieval structures.

## SUMMARY OF THE HISTORIC INTEREST

The remnants of a farm complex dating to the 18th or early 19th century including the pleasure ground of East Hall enclosed by walls on two sides now uncultivated open grass. Adjoining the garden on the north side is an area of open grassland bounded to the west by a wall beyond which is the former farmyard the whole being a remarkable survival in such a built-up area of an 18th and 19th century farm complex.

## CHRONOLOGY OF THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

One of three manors in Murston, East Hall was owned by the de la Pine family in the 14th century and later by the St Legers of Ulcombe (Hasted). It was subsequently bought by John Eveas who died in 1488 and whose brass memorial with that of his wife can be seen in All Saints Church Murston having been moved there when the original church was rebuilt in 1873-4. In 1797 Hasted recorded that the manor belonged to Richard Seath.

The 1840 Tithe apportionment shows the East Hall estate, which then comprised 189 acres of agricultural land, orchards and garden, was owned and occupied by Thomas White. After White's death in 1859 his widow Harriet continued to farm the estate and grow fruit until she died in 1892. Her son sold the property to local businessman George Smeed of Murston Manor who had started a brickfield business in Murston in 1846. On his marriage to the daughter of another local entrepreneur he set up the Smeed Dean company which owned brickworks, cement works and a number of freight barges (Bryan Clarke, A History of Murston, Amberley Publishing 2011).

Hasted attests to the fertility of the land around Murston but by the last quarter of the 19th century East Hall must have been adversely affected by the increasing industrial activity nearby. A gas works was built close by the fumes from which were so bad that rather than repair the church it was decided to build a new one about half a mile to the south.

From the C20 onwards, Kelly's Handbook shows that East Hall was occupied by the company bailiff or by tenants. By 1950 the property seems to have been divided as two families are recorded in the electoral Roll as living there.
The 4th edition Ordnance Survey map (1929-1952) shows the area surrounding East Hall to be orchards growing, according to a long term resident (pers. comm. March 2023), cherries, pears and apples as well as soft fruit.

Smeed Dean & Co was bought by Blue Circle Industries in the early 21st century and the land sold off for housing.

## SITE DESCRIPTION

## LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

East Hall is located in Murston, a village which is now a suburb of Sittingbourne, about 1.6 km north-east of the town centre and south of Milton Creek an offshoot of the River Swale.

Murston was originally an area of marshes, creeks and river inlets which when drained became fertile soil for agriculture and especially for fruit growing. The tithe apportionment of 1840 describes the farm at East Hall as comprising marsh, arable land and orchards. Until the 1950s when the area was developed for housing it was planted with orchards of apples, pears and cherries. Today houses cover much of the original farmland to the south of the Hall.

A footpath (Meeres Court Lane) runs along the southern boundary of East Hall and its garden. The boundary wall on the east side of the garden still survives. The area to the north of the walled garden which used to be the service area for the farmyard is now open grass bounded to the north by scrub and trees.

A housing estate abuts East Hall and the walled garden to the east of the property. The land to the north-east of the Hall has since 2005 been used as allotment gardens.

East Hall is approached from the south along East Hall Lane which in the 1st edition OS map (1862-1875) is shown as a tree lined avenue and appears to have been the principal driveway to the property. A gravelled area at the end of the lane is enclosed to the south by a wooden close boarded fence with a central gate leading to a small entrance area directly in front of the house. A footpath continues south-east along the line of the drove way shown in the tithe map and early OS map.

## PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

East Hall is a substantial timber frame house (listed grade II) dating from the 15th or 16th century to which a brick wing was added on the south elevation in the 19th century. An animal shed and granary building in the farmyard which lies to the north of the Hall are also listed grade II.

## GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The garden which lies on the south-east side of the Hall forms an approximate rectangle measuring about 525 metres west to east by 27 metres north to south enclosed on three sides by a 2.4 metres high brick wall which dates from the late C18 or early C19. Set within the north wall is a doorway with a pointed arch. The wall on the south side has been demolished and the boundary consists of fallen trees and bushes. Within the walls is an area of roughly mown grass.

## REFERENCES

### Books, articles


Hasted, Edward, Parish: Murston*The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent: Volume 6* (1800) pp. 143-150

Newman, John, Pevsner Architectural Guides; Kent North-East and East (2013) p. 463

Kelly's Directory for Murston (1855-1938)

Clarke, Bryan, A History of Murston (2011)

Twist, Sydney James, Murston Village and Parish: a history (1981)


### Maps


Andrews 1769

William Mudge, An entirely New and Accurate Survey of the County of Kent (1801)

OS 1st edition (1862-1875)

OS 2nd edition ((1897-1900)

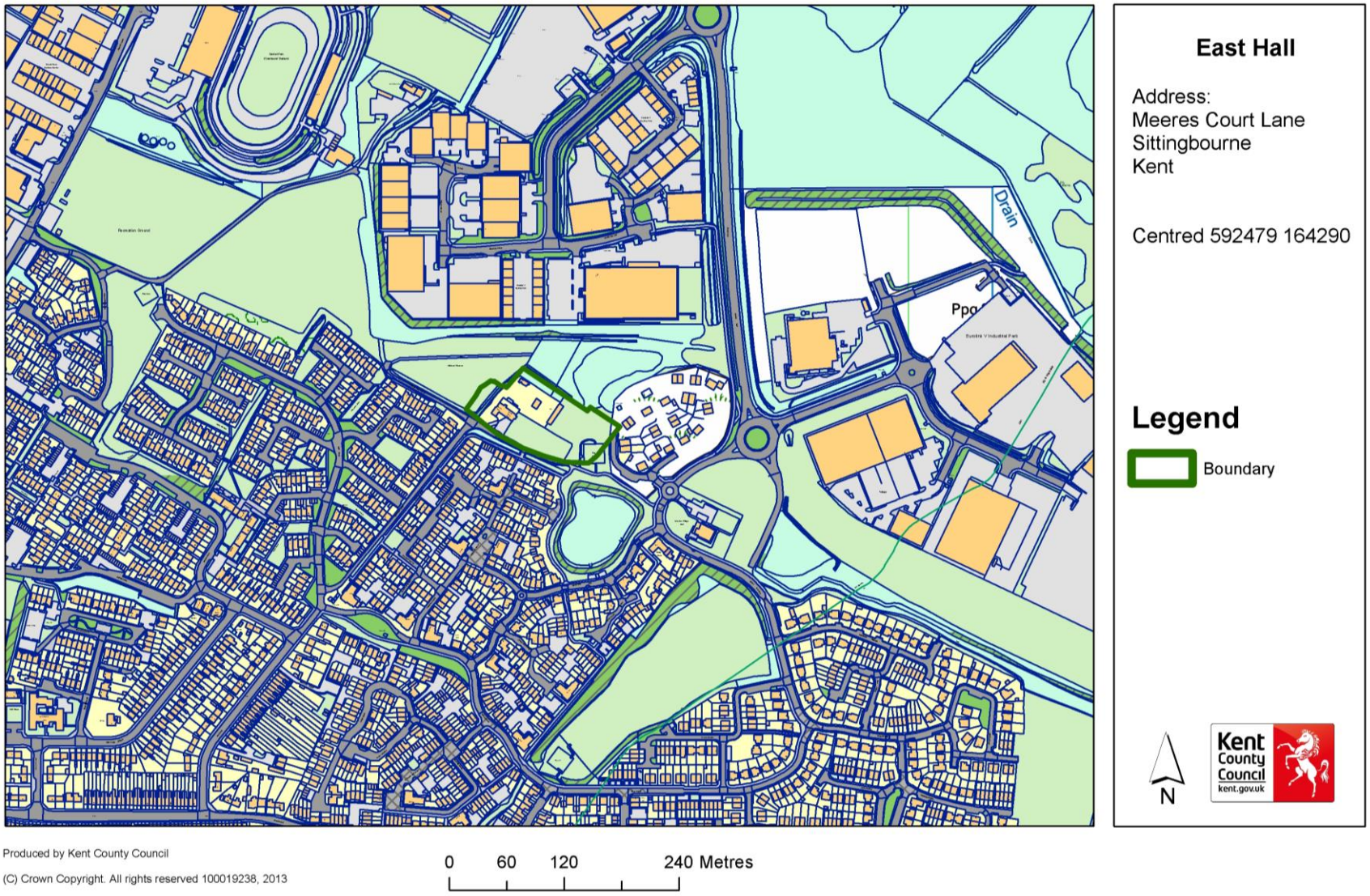
OS 3rd edition (1907-1923)

OS 4th edition (1929-1952)

Tithe map c.1840

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**Fig. 1 Boundary map**



## Fig. 2 Aerial Photograph (2016)



**East Hall**

Address:
Meeres Court Lane
Sittingbourne
Kent

Centred 592479 164290

**Legend**

Boundary

N

Kent County Council kent.gov.uk

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0 60 120 240 Metres

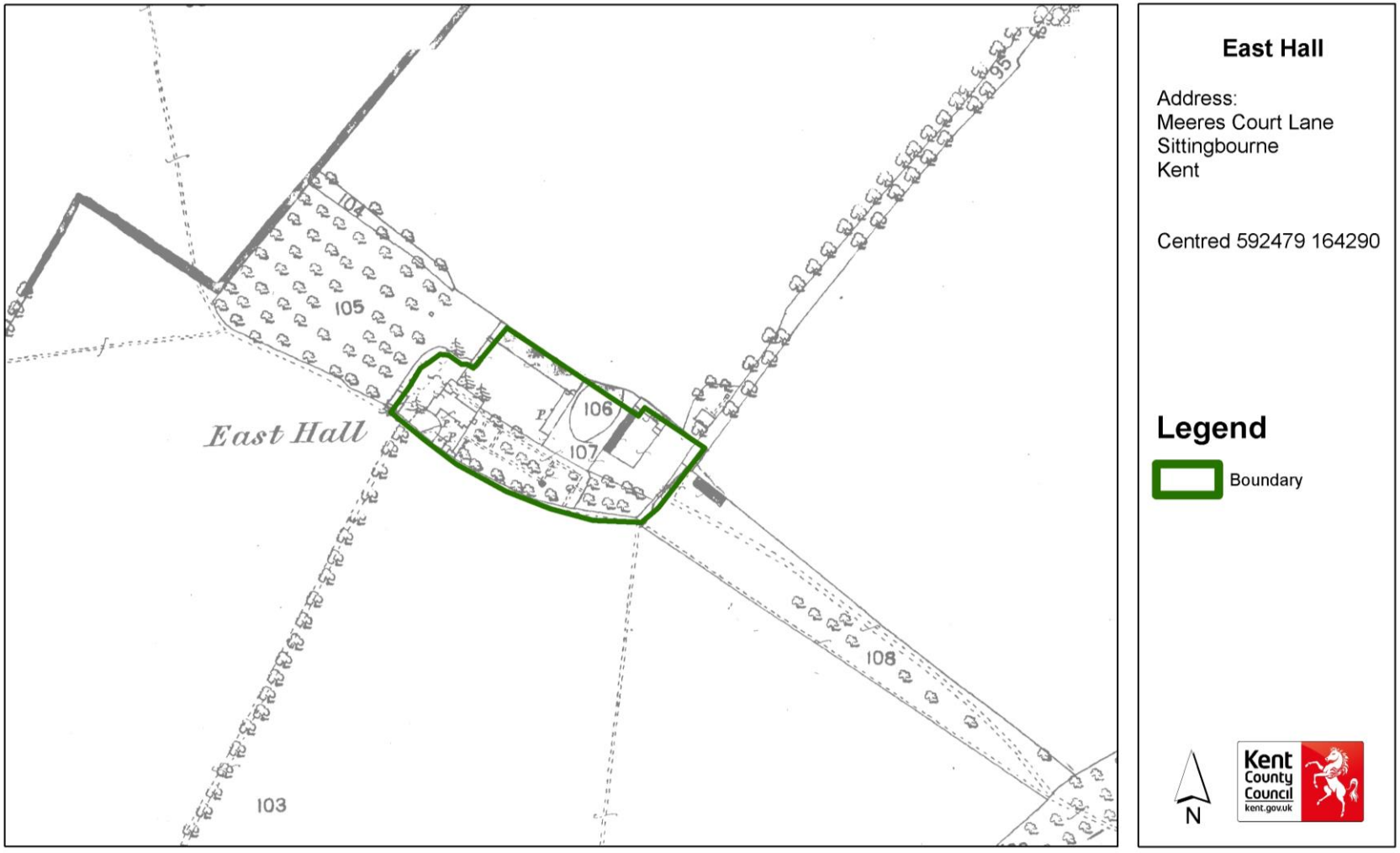
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**Fig. 3 Tithe Map (1840)**



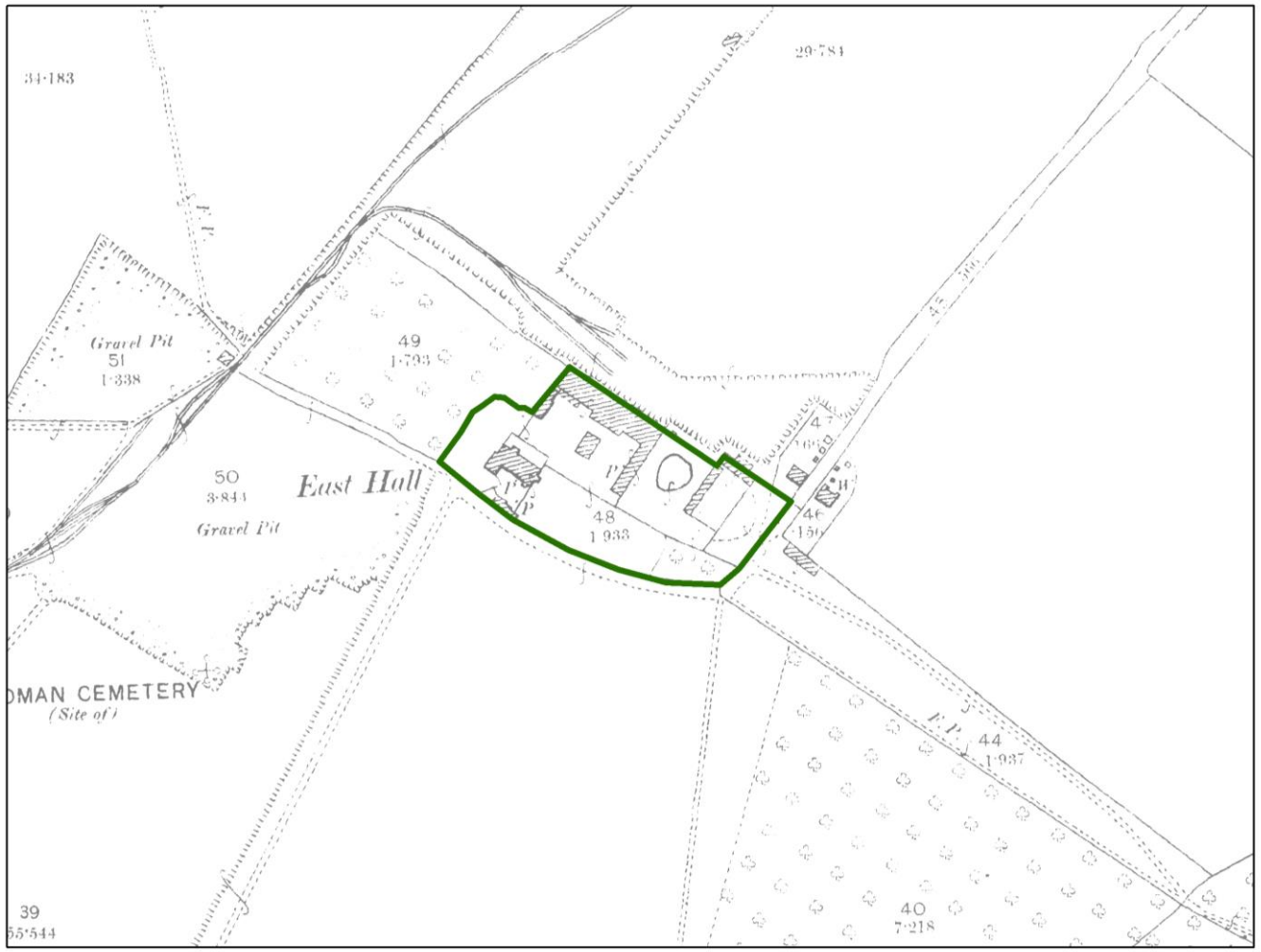
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**Fig. 4 1st Edition Ordnance Survey 25" map (1862-1875)**



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**Fig. 5 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey 25" map (1897-1900)**




**East Hall**

Address:
Meeres Court Lane
Sittingbourne
Kent

Centred 592479 164290

**Legend**

Boundary

N

Kent County Council kent.gov.uk

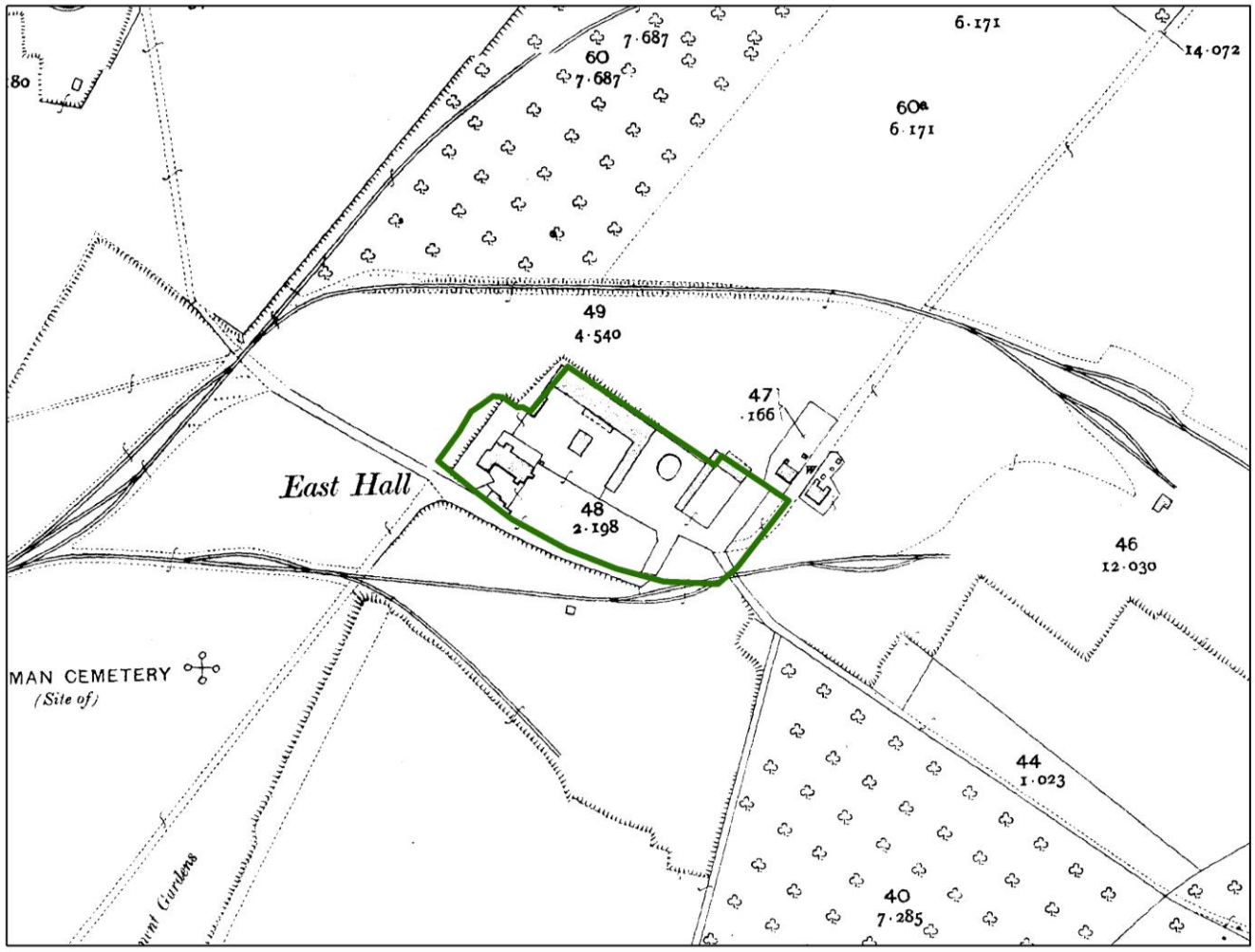
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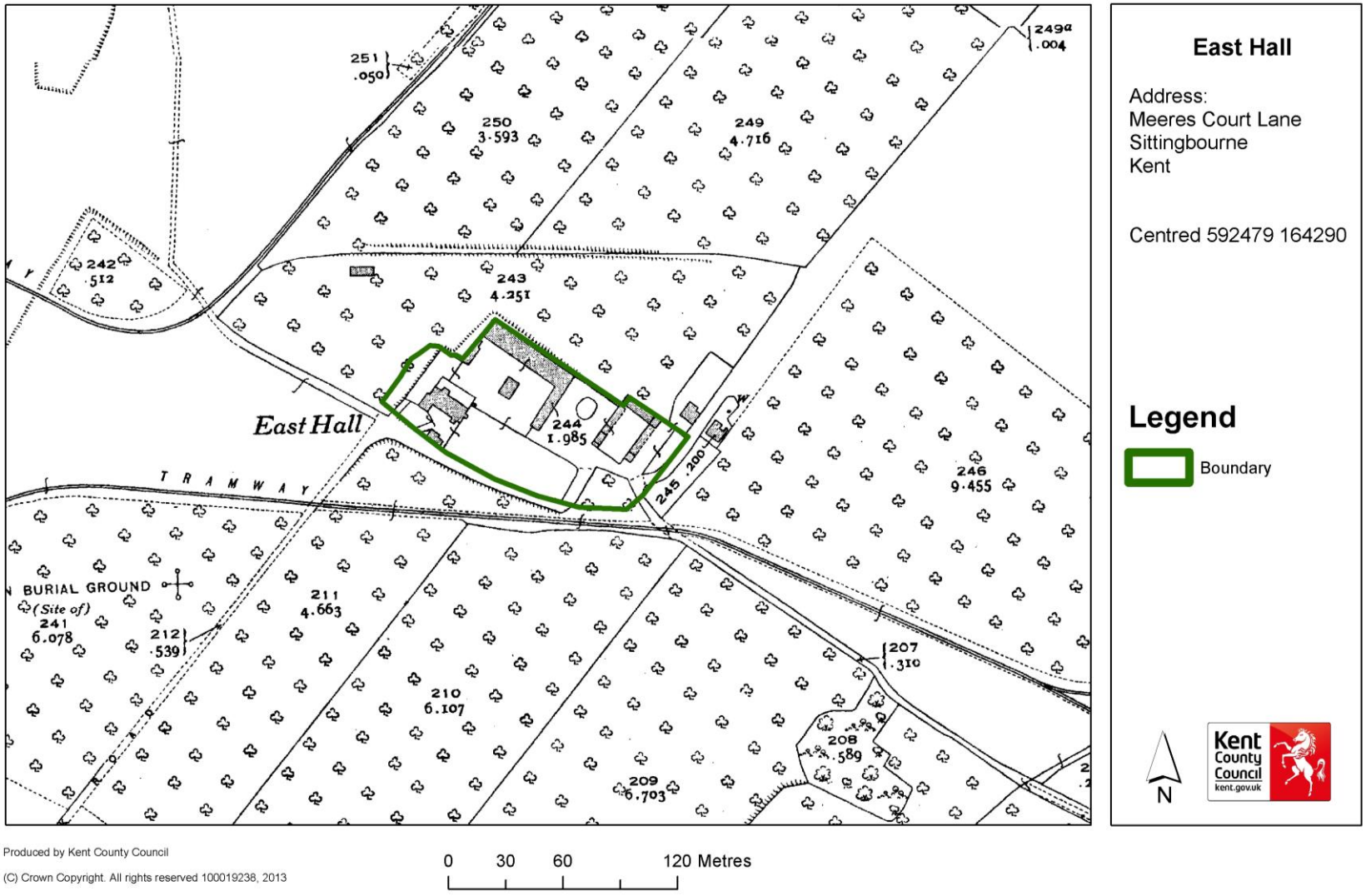
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**Fig. 6 3rd Edition Ordnance Survey 25" map (1907-1923)**



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**Fig. 7 4th Edition Ordnance Survey 25" map (1929-1952)**



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**Fig. 8 East Hall from the south**



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**Fig. 9 Entrance to East Hall from Meeres Court Lane**



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**Fig. 10 The garden from the south**



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**Fig. 11 The garden from the south showing the house**



**Fig. 12 View of the farmyard taken from the south-east**



**Fig. 13 The farmyard from the south-east showing the garden wall**



**Fig. 14 Allotment gardens north-west of East Hall**

