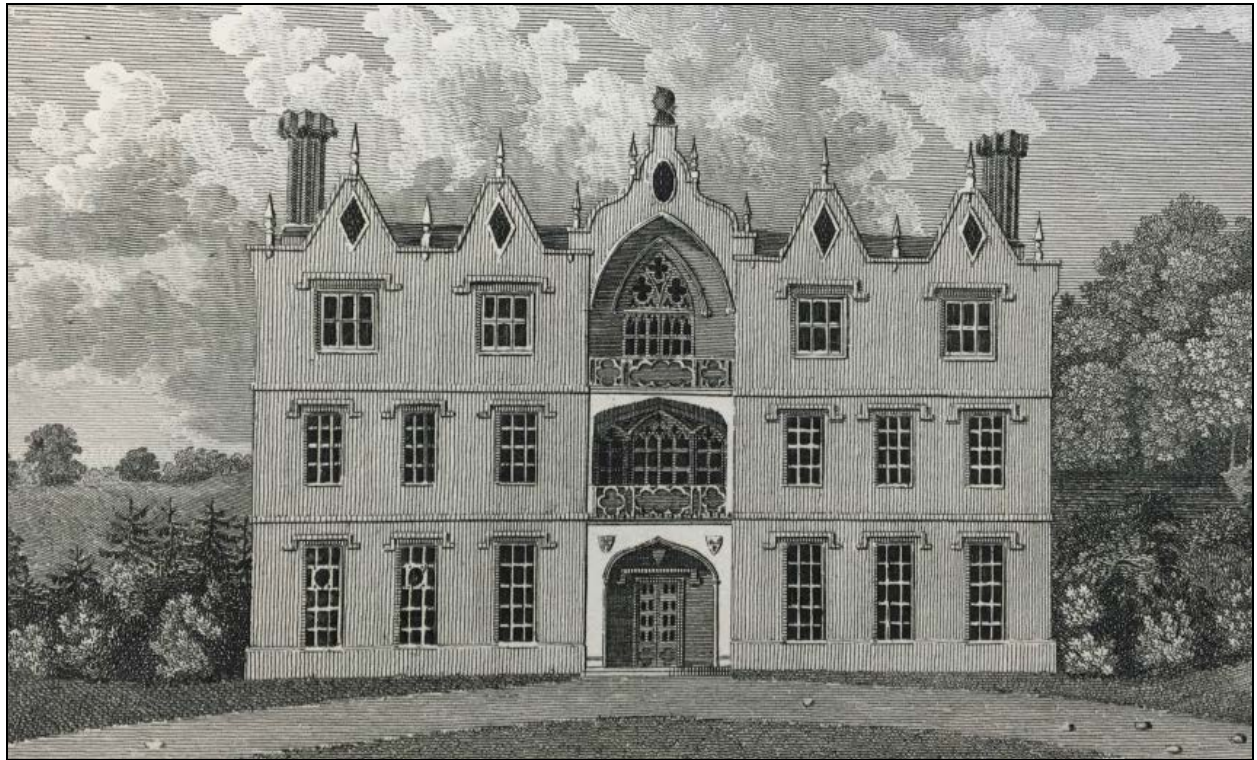


The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens for Dover



Denton Court Park



July 2016

Denton Court Park

Dover, 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 was carried out for Dover District Council (DDC) from 2015-2017 and covers sites within the Dover local authority area. The reports detail the historic nature, content, current state and significance of the sites currently identified in the ***Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens*** for the Dover local authority area along with others identified by DDC.

Dover District Heritage Strategy.

The Dover District Heritage Strategy 2013 (DDHS) seeks to ensure that heritage plays a clear role in shaping any future regeneration, development and management decisions. To achieve this aim the DDHS contains a series of recommendations intended to promote and enhance the protection and enjoyment of the Districts heritage assets. A heritage asset is defined as a “building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)”¹.

The review carried out by the Kent Gardens Trust supports the following DDHS recommendations:

- *Recommendation 9: Systems should be put in place to ensure that historic environment information and advice is readily accessible to local communities to help them shape the places in which they live.*
- *Recommendation 14: a Local List of Heritage Assets should be developed...gardens identified within the Kent Gardens Compendium and any enhancement of the Compendium should be included in the Local List.*
- *Recommendation 23: Opportunities should be sought and support given to local communities, groups and individuals in researching their past, develop projects with them that identify, enhance understanding of the Districts heritage assets and involve them in condition assessment, monitoring, management, promotion and interpretation of the assets:*

How was the review carried out?

The review has been undertaken using Historic England’s criteria for identifying the significance of local heritage assets to provide a consistent approach². A template for the reports was developed by DDC, building on the experience of previous work by the Kent Gardens Trust. The heritage values of the historic

¹ National Planning Policy Framework 2012

² Historic England “Conservation Principles: Policy and Guidance” 2008

park or garden subject to the report are defined within the Statement of Significance.

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.

How will the reports be used?

- a) The revised list of sites has the potential to support development of a Local List³ of Heritage Assets in Dover, should the Council progress with the recommendation in the DDHS in the future. 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) In response to recommendation 9 of the DDHS, the reports will be made publically available both on the DDC website and to the Historic Environment Record held by Kent County Council.
- c) The reports will help to inform future funding applications for historic spaces by the identification of significance.
- d) The review will help to inform future policy making, conservation and/or any development of sites, and contribute to the understanding, and where possible enjoyment, of these heritage assets by the identification of the significance of key historic character, features and association including that of setting and viewpoints.

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.

Dover District Council
White Cliffs Business Park
Dover
CT16 3PJ
www.dover.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

³ Historic England "Local Heritage Listing": Historic England Advice Note 7 2016

**KENT
DOVER**

DENTON COURT PARK

TR 218 462

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

EVIDENTIAL

Denton Court parkland has been relatively unchanged over several centuries. Denton Court is a Grade II* listed house dating from the 16th to 19th centuries, and the estate includes two lodges, a C19 stone balustrade, walled kitchen garden and the C13 parish church.

There are traces of a sunken lane and old chalk pits within the park. The park retains several mature trees.

HISTORICAL

The garden of the house was laid out from the end of the C19 and contains at least a dozen fine trees none of which have a preservation order. The C13 parish church is adjacent to the house.

There are associations with Samuel Egerton Brydges (a noted local eccentric), Thomas Barham and possibly Jane Austen. Several of The Ingoldsby Legends written by Barham involve Tappington Manor, just outside the confines of the park.

AESTHETIC

The Park forms an attractive landscape typical of the North Downs in East Kent. The house is particularly well sited at the foot of the valley.

COMMUNAL

There are eight Right of Way footpaths crossing the park giving access to the church and providing good views of the whole setting.

SUMMARY OF HISTORIC INTEREST

Denton Court and its extensive surrounding parkland form a very attractive landscape. The parkland may well be relatively unchanged over several centuries. The property has associations with a number of interesting historical figures

CHRONOLOGY OF THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The manor of Denton was owned by Sir John Boys in the early C17. He was Attorney General at the time of the early Stuart kings. His house forms the original framework of the current house which was substantially rebuilt in the Gothick manner by Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges in the late C18/very early in the C19. Brydges was a poet, bibliographer, printer, M.P. for Maidstone, and a noted Kentish eccentric. He became obsessed by trying to assert his claim to the Duchy of Chandos and brought 26 unsuccessful actions before the House of Lords to try to prove it. (See P. Bretton, *Bygone Kent*, June 1982 p.326).

Brydges was acquainted with many of the literary figures of his time notably Jane Austen. One of Cassandra Austen's letter records Jane as talking about one of Brydges novels. It is quite possible that Jane Austen visited Denton as she came to stay several times with her brother at nearby Goodnestone Park.

The estate was bought by the Willats family at some time after 1820. There is a monument in the church to the last of the direct line of the Willats family, Ruperta, who died in 1959. The house and estate passed on to the present owners, who were indirectly related, at some time after this date.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

Denton Court lies to the south of the village of Denton which is approximately 16km southeast of Canterbury and 18km north-west of Dover. The park is a diamond shaped area with the long axis running in a roughly north-south direction. The maximum dimensions are 1.1km wide and 2km long making an area of approximately 405 hectares (1003 acres).

The main house and its garden and the parish church and its churchyard lie in the northernmost part of the park.

The Canterbury Road (A260) runs the length of the western side of the park. To the northeast lies Denton Lane. The southeast boundary is defined by Wooton Lane and a short (400m) footpath north of the village of Selstead There is modern post and wire fencing and some mixed hedging round most of the periphery.

The park occupies a long dry valley and its surrounding hillsides. The axis of the valley sloping gently upwards from the north in a south-southeasterly direction,

with the sides of the valley gradually increasing in height. The park lies entirely in the lea slope of the North Downs and is typical of similar dry valleys in this chalkland area of East Kent. The most fertile part seems to be the flatter area around the house and church.

There are views back to the house from the park and also to the more distant sides of the valley.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

A lodge stands on the Canterbury Road at the southern end of Denton village. This front lodge is currently (2016) under repair. It is a brick and tile hung building with leaded windows dating from the later C19. It is not listed. The entrance gates are of white painted wood of a 19C design hung from short brick pillars. From this northern tip of the park, a drive curves in a southeasterly direction to the house. The lodge was in place by the early C19, a drive leading from it across the park to a substantial area for carriages below the south porch (See print from early C19 [DEN 22XX KHLC]) As part of the alterations carried out by the Willats family post 1820, the entrance drive was moved to the north front of the house.

On the Canterbury Road 1400 m south of the Court stands Keeper's Lodge (listed grade II). It dates from the mid-C19 although it has more recent additions (see Kent County Council Monument Report, HER Number TR 24 NW 115). Older OS maps show a short drive leading into the park. There is no indication that this led to the house either on the maps or on the ground.

There are eight right of way footpaths through the park. The longest of these runs from the northern lodge to the church and then along the foot of the valley to the southernmost point of the park. Another footpath running east-west from Wotton is a sunken road and presumably quite ancient but no record of this has been found.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

Denton Court is a substantial country house (listed grade II*). The garden wing was either rebuilt or remodelled from a C17 house of the Boys family, by Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges between 1792 and 1810. The south façade boasted a recessed entrance portal the whole height of the house and a row of ogival finials along the length of the roof [DEN 2 KHLC].

The two side pavilions are part of the extensive additions and alterations made to the house by the Willats family during the C19, as are the offices and entrance hall to the north. (For a full description of the house see the Kent County Council Monument Report, HER Number TR 24 NW 106).

The parish church of St Mary Magdalene (listed grade II*) stands surrounded by its churchyard within the Court gardens approximately 70m to the west of the house. It is a simple flint building dating from the C13 consisting of a west tower, nave and chancel. The east end was rebuilt in 1909. (For a full description of the

church see the Kent County Council Monument Report, HER Number TR 24 NW 148).

GARDENS OF DENTON COURT

The garden is approximately 3 hectares in area. It comprises a rough square on a north-south axis with the house at its centre, the sides of the square measuring approximately 160m. Projecting southeast from this core into the park is an extensive projection of pleasure grounds. This arrangement dates from the mid C19 when the entrance front was moved from the south to the north front so allowing the development of the garden on this side.

The southern edge of the garden is marked by a stone balustrade (probably dating from the latter part of the C19) on a ramp beyond which lies a ditch partly stone faced on the garden aspect.

To the west of the house is a rough lawn with a few trees separating house from church. A black and white image in a postcard in the KCC archive (DEN 6 KHLC No date but certainly before 1914) shows a topiary garden lying to the west of the house. Very little trace of the topiary remains.

To the south of the house is the main formal area of the garden with a narrow border against the house, a grassed area surrounding several box hedge enclosed decorative beds.

The southeastern area of the garden contains some very substantial mature trees including beeches (copper and green) and Scots pines.

KITCHEN GARDEN

Projecting northeast from the central square of gardens is an area of pleasure grounds containing outbuildings including a gardener's cottage and the walled kitchen gardens. Steps and gate, probably from the later part of the C19, lead up from the ornamental garden to the kitchen garden. This takes the form of a brick walled rectangle approximately 100m x 50m. It does not appear in the 1st edition of the 25" OS map (1862-1875) but is present by the 2nd edition (1897-1900) It is currently (2016) largely mown grass.

CHURCHYARD

The churchyard of St Mary Magdalene is contiguous with the garden of Denton Court without any separating fence. It comprises an approximately 0.5ha area southwest of the Court, surrounding the church and dominated by trees. It contains a number of monuments and many gravestones, the most substantial being the mid-Victorian monument to William Willats (listed grade II) some 5m to the west of the church.

PARK

The park surrounds the house, stretching along the line of the valley to the south. The southwestern section is occupied by Denton Wood, a substantial area of woodland forming a triangle pointing to the south with a base 300m wide and a height of 1000m (designated as Ancient Woodland). There are other areas of more recent woodland scattered over the park, particularly an enclosure for pheasant rearing 600m to the south-east of the Court. The thin chalk soil over most of the park is not ideal for arable farming although maize is grown in front of Denton Wood. Some areas over towards Wotton have been harrowed and prepared with silage. Recently (early C21), areas to the south of the house have been sown with wild flower mixtures. Depressions in the ground to the north of Denton Wood and in the north east corner of the park are described as chalk pits on the old OS maps. There are no obvious specimen trees in the parkland and there does not seem to have been any attempt to create an enclosed deer park, as evidenced by the tithe map or early OS maps.

REFERENCES

Books, articles

Bretton, P *Bygone Kent* June 1982 p. 326

Maps

Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" to 1 mile map (1862-1875)

Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25" to 1 mile map (1897-1900)

Ordnance Survey 3rd edition 25" to 1 mile map (1907-1923)

Ordnance Survey 4th edition 25" to 1 mile map (1929-1952)

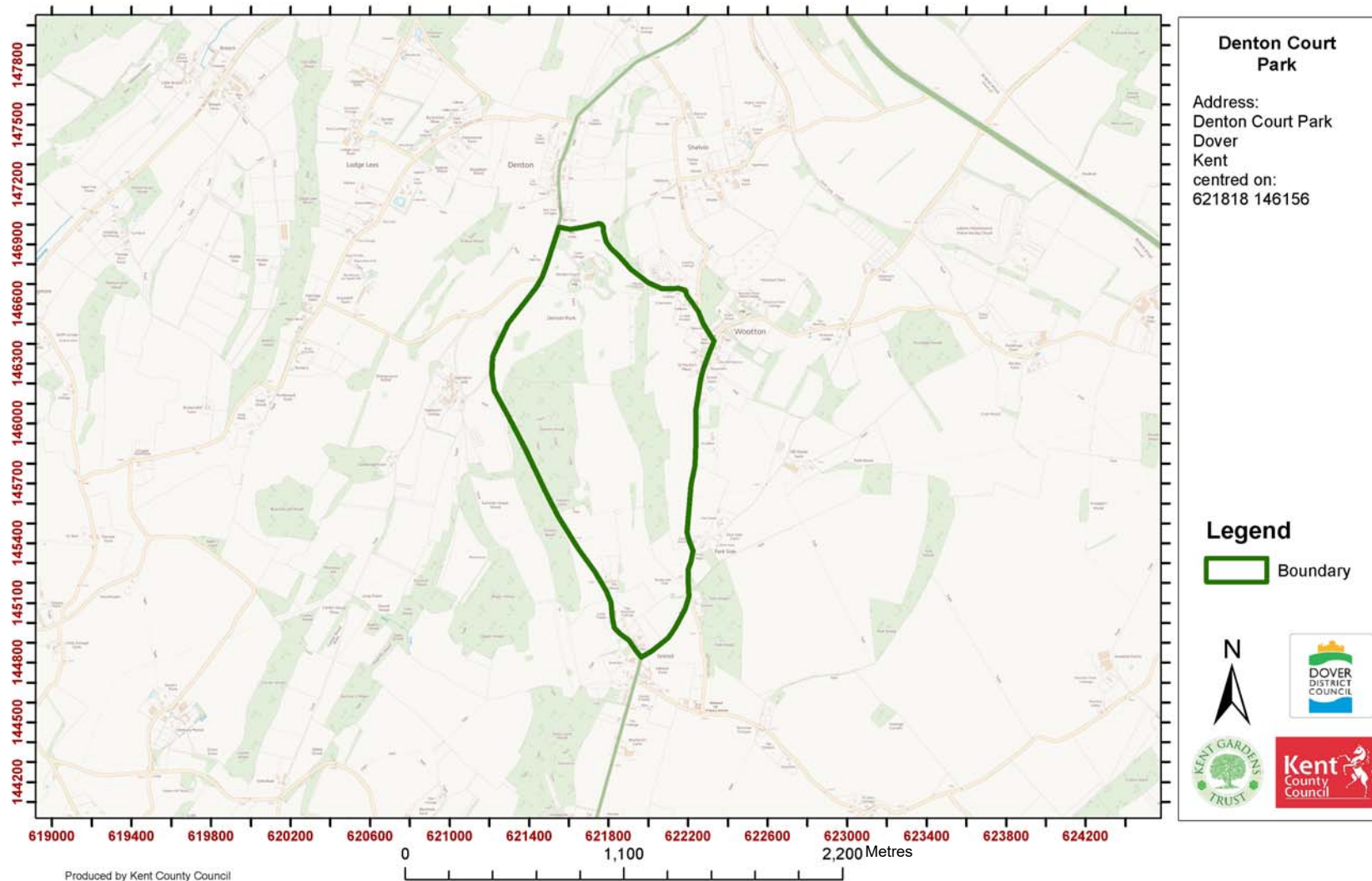
Ordnance Survey 6" to 1 mile map (1858-1873) revised 1896 & revised 1905 pub 1908

Research and written by Paul Lewis

Edited by Harriet Jordan

Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2015-2017 review of Dover District

Fig. 1 Boundary map



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Fig. 2 Aerial photograph (2012)



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Fig. 3 Denton Court South Elevation (1800)



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Fig. 4 Tithe Map

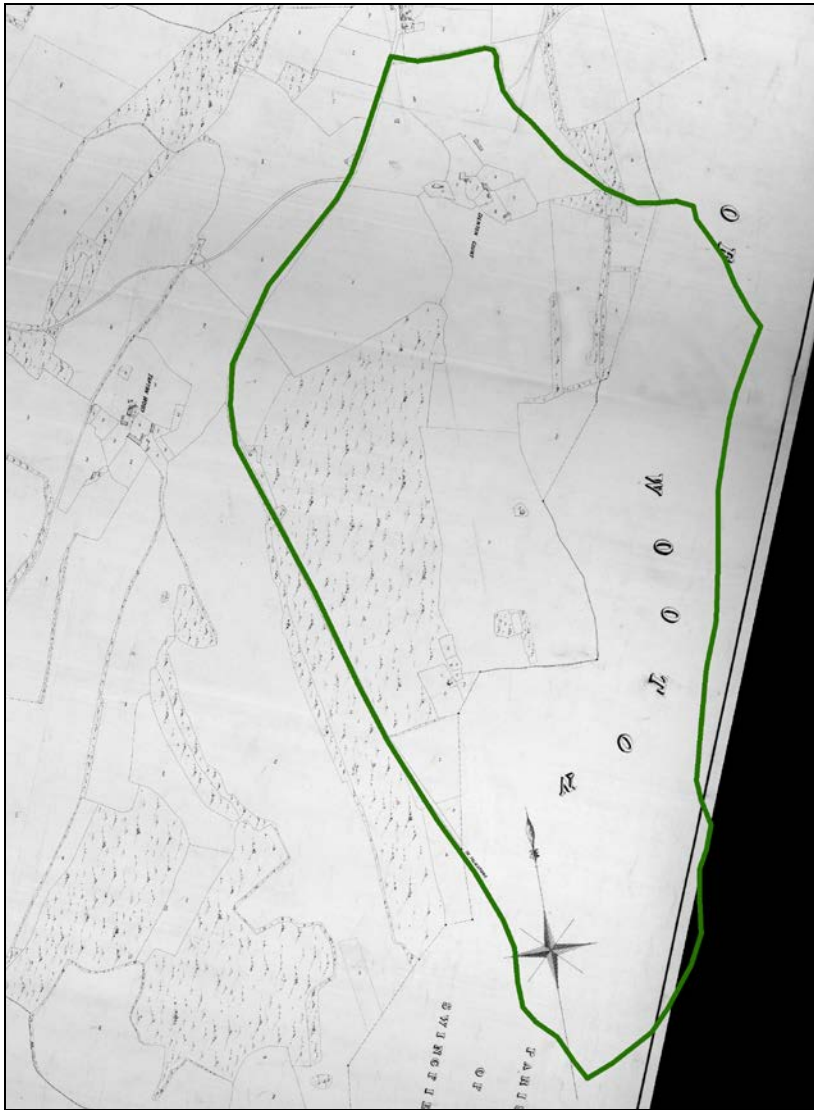
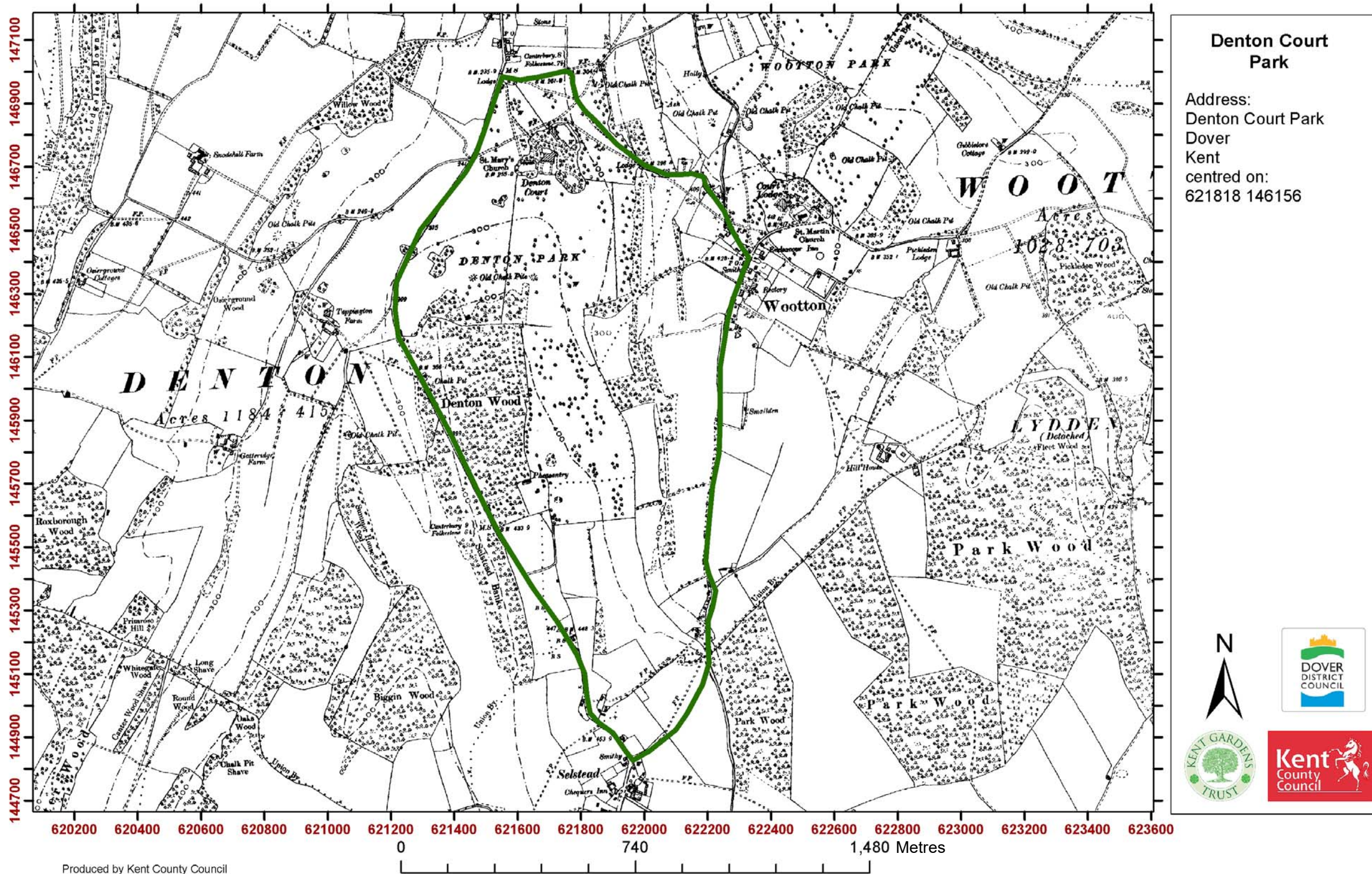


Fig. 6 Ordnance Survey 2nd edn 25" map (1897-1900)

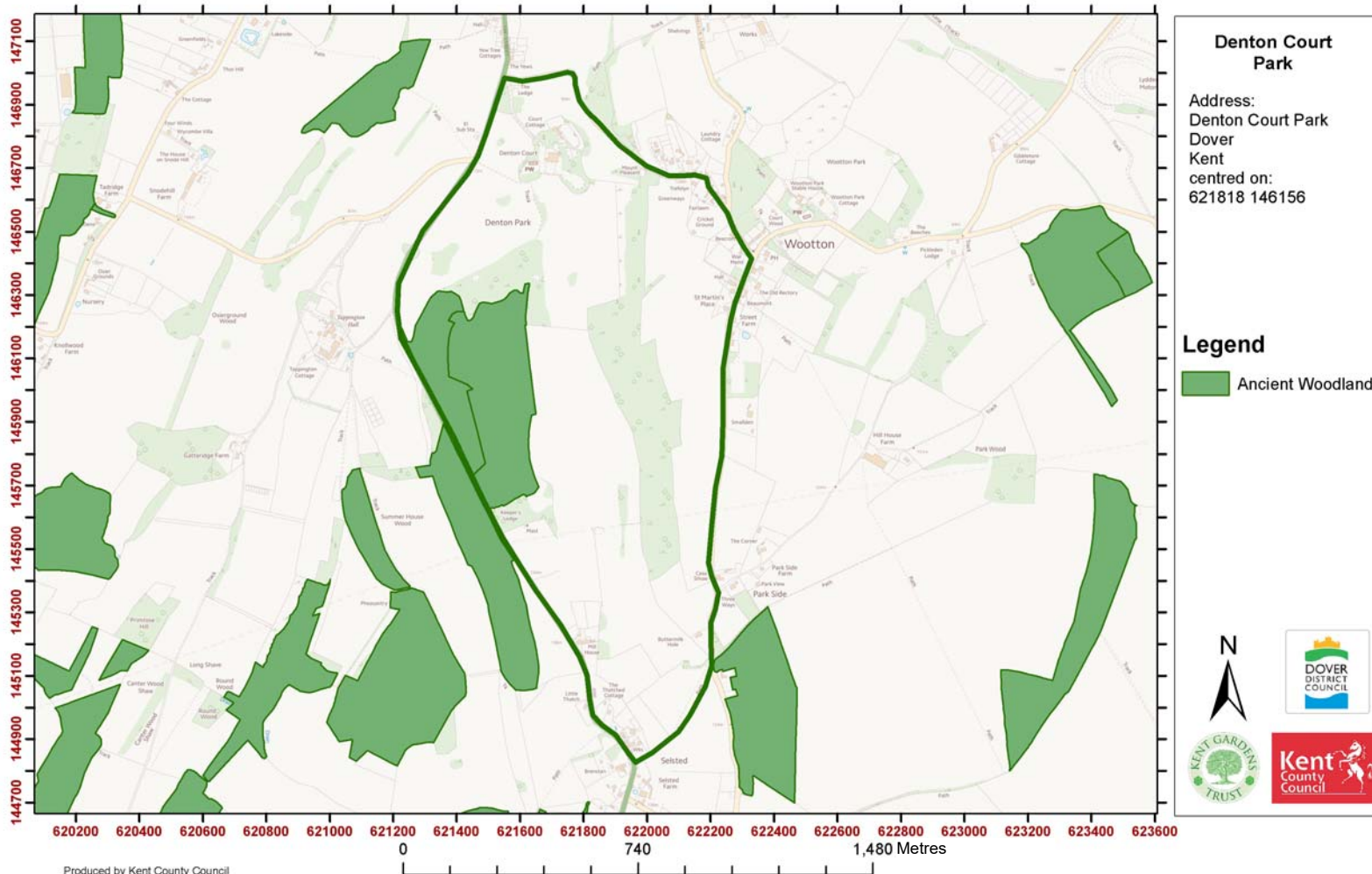


Denton Court Park

Address:
Denton Court Park
Dover
Kent
centred on:
621818 146156

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Fig. 9 Map of ancient woodland



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Fig. 10 Denton Court parkland coloured print



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Fig. 11 Interior of the walled kitchen garden (2016)



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Fig. 12 Lodge house to the south-west of the park (2016)



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Fig. 13 Ornamental area to the east of the house (2016)



Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2015-2017 review of Dover District

Fig. 14 South front of Denton Court (2016)



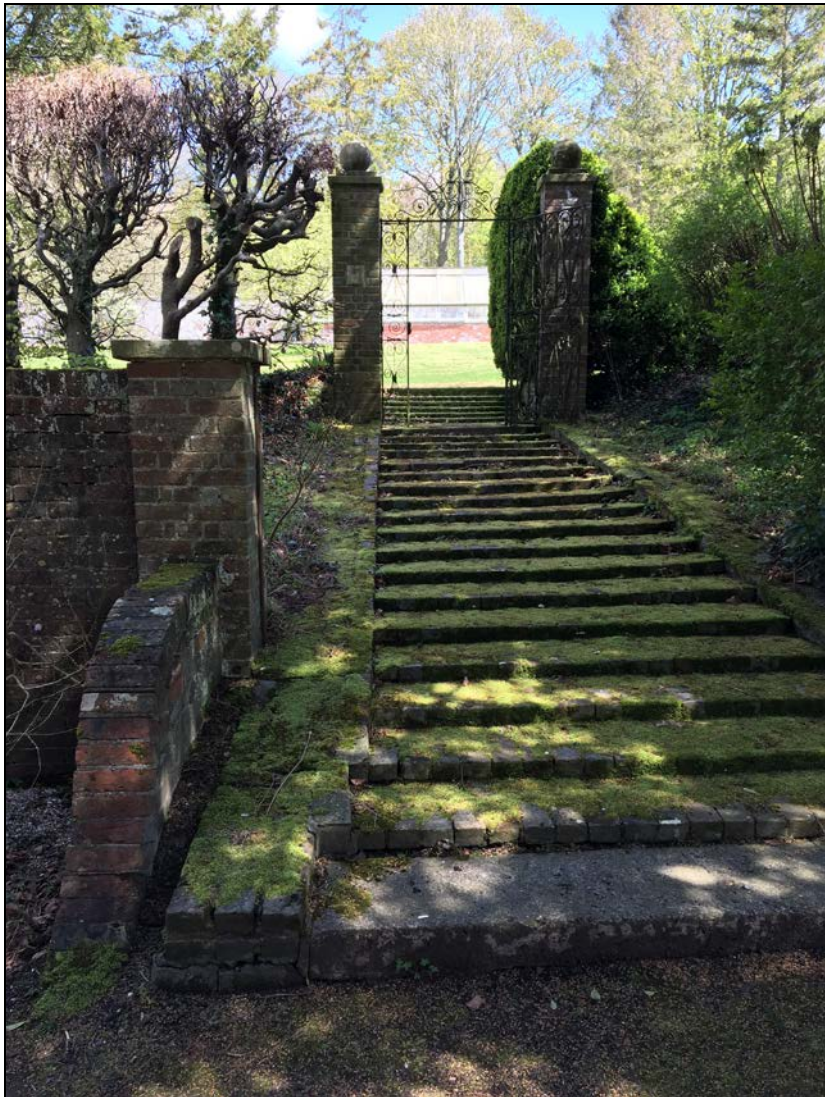
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Fig. 15 St Mary Magdalen Church (2016)



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Fig. 16 Steps up to the kitchen garden (2016)



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Fig. 17 Stone balustrade to the south of the garden (2016)



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Fig. 18 West aspect of the house (2016)

