

# The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens for Dover



## Wootton Court Parkland



October 2017



# **Wootton Court Parkland**

Wootton, Dover, Kent

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The authors would like to thank Jane Hodges of Wootton Park Stables and Annex, Bruce Laughland of Wootton Park House and Jo Munden of Court Lodge, Wootton, daughter of Eric Lovelock

## 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)”<sup>1</sup>.

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 approach<sup>2</sup>. 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

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<sup>1</sup> National Planning Policy Framework 2012

<sup>2</sup> 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 List<sup>3</sup> 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](http://www.dover.gov.uk)

Kent County Council  
Heritage Conservation  
Invicta House  
County Hall  
Maidstone  
ME14 1XX  
[www.kent.gov.uk](http://www.kent.gov.uk)

Kent Gardens Trust  
[www.kentgardenstrust.org.uk](http://www.kentgardenstrust.org.uk)

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<sup>3</sup> Historic England “Local Heritage Listing”: Historic England Advice Note 7 2016



**KENT  
WOOTTON  
DOVER**

**WOOTTON COURT PARKLAND**

**TR 2254 4685**

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **EVIDENTIAL**

Wootton Court mansion, built in 1785, was demolished in the 1950s however the main structure of the landscape including pleasure ground, park and kitchen garden survives, with the converted stables and coach house at its focus today (2017). As a result, the site broadly reflects the ideals in fashion for designed landscape of the late Georgian period.

Modifications to the approach drives accompanied alterations to the house made in the 1870s, and historic maps chart the continuous evolution of tree planting in the pleasure grounds and park. The site includes examples of mature specimen trees, together with sections of chestnut avenues.

### **HISTORICAL**

Woditon (Wootton) was first recorded in 687, and the first Wootton Court building in 1210. The surrounding estate, much of Wootton Village, subsequently passed through numerous families including the Digges family of Barham and the Brydges of Gloucestershire.

The landscape gains interest from having presumably been developed as the setting to a substantially new residence, built to the designs of the architect John Plaw, author of a series of pattern books on rural architecture.

### **AESTHETIC**

Wootton Court parkland formed the selected setting for a new late Georgian country house, a period of high importance in terms of English landscape design. The mansion was built on an elevated site from which far reaching views of the surrounding countryside are punctuated with mature trees.

### **COMMUNAL**

The parkland continues to afford the landscaped setting for the remaining residences at the focus of the site. Although in private ownership, scenic views into and across the parkland are provided from public roads and footpaths.

## **SUMMARY OF HISTORIC INTEREST**

The surviving pleasure ground area, parkland and kitchen garden of the now demolished Wootton Court. The mansion was built in 1785 to the designs of the architect, John Plaw, and it has been suggested that the surrounding grounds were landscaped at this time. The undulating landscape surrounding the remaining buildings still features specimen trees and far reaching views. The kitchen garden wall survives mostly intact.

## **CHRONOLOGY OF THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT**

A charter dating from 687AD names Wootton village as UUDETUN. Granted by Cenulf, King of Mercia to Archbishop Aethelhard and Church of Christ in Canterbury, the first known tenant was Alan Wootton in 1170.

By 1210, John Guestling was the tenant and he probably built the original Woditon Court building, parts of which remained within later houses.

During the reign of Henry III, in about 1236, the resident at Woditon Court, now Ivo de Woditon, changed his name to Wootton. His descendants lived there until 1460. It then passed to the Harfield family until 1547 when it was left to Leonard Digges of Barham together with the advowson of the church. Leonard was a highly intelligent mathematician, scientist and inventor. His son Thomas was an even greater mathematician and civil engineer and designed the Outer Harbour at Dover for Queen Elizabeth I. After the Digges family ceased ownership, Wootton Court passed to Thomas Arundel of Cornwall in 1573 who shortly afterwards sold it to Richard Vincent. On Vincent's death, his will stipulated that the estate should be sold and so it came into the family of John Coppen in 1606.

When John Coppen died in 1630 he divided the ownership between Wootton Court and the advowson of the church. In 1638 though, the inheritance was reunited after the death of one brother. In 1701, another John died without heirs and left Wootton Court to his sisters thereby splitting the estate once again. The last surviving and unmarried sister, Dorothy, left her half to John Brydges, a descendant of Sir John Brydges of Sudeley, Gloucestershire.

After a complicated sequence of inheritance, the owner, through his wife, became the Rev. Edward Tymewell, who adopted the name Brydges (1781). After his marriage he built, in 1785, a new grand residence designed by the architect John Plaw (1745-1820) on the north-west side of the old building leaving the old building at the rear. It is suggested that at the same time he landscaped the surrounding land (c 240ha) (Lovelock/Welch). Plaw is largely remembered as the author of three successful pattern books which took as their subjects rural architecture, and included *Ferme Ornee or Rural Improvements*. *A Series of Domestic and Ornamental Designs, suited to Parks, Plantations, Rides, Walks, Rivers, Farms, &c.*, 1795.

When Tymewell died in 1807, the inheritance reverted once again to another branch of the Brydges family who continued ownership until 1867. Lady Isabella, the widow of Sir John William Head Brydges, is shown as in residence on the

1841 census and in 1851, after Lady Isabella's death, a John William Brydges is recorded on the census. By this time, ownership of the estate had been fragmented because of another series of complicated inheritances some of which involved ancient gavelkind rights, so that when Isabella died in 1850, George Joseph Murray, a JP, paid a total of £35,000 to several owners or mortgagers. The ownership had been subject to at least one court case in 1848, in Maidstone Court.

On the 1871 census, a William Johnstone, a vicar, was the tenant. In November that year, an auction of contents was advertised in *The Times*, which included furniture, china, a library of books, art objects and greenhouse plants. On the 1881 census, Murray, who had been born in Edinburgh, had taken up residence together with his wife, five children, mother-in-law and ten servants. In separate houses nearby lived the coachman, gardener and gamekeeper. In 1876, Murray had embarked on some house improvements replacing the stucco exterior with a more durable flint and brick finish and changing the position of the entrance. He also built a gardeners cottage (now known as Court Lodge and grade II listed) at the entrance to the walled garden on the opposite side of Wootton Lane to the main house and a laundry on Shelvin Lane (now known as Laundry Cottage).

In 1881, a sales notice was published in *The Times* describing it as a property for 'a gentleman of influence and taste'. This was followed in 1882 by an auction dividing the estate into sixteen lots. The 'noble family mansion' was described as standing in the midst of 'a handsomely timbered park of 667 acres', 275 acres of which were attached to the mansion itself. The particulars went on further to describe the 'exceedingly pretty' pleasure grounds as being four and a half acres in size, and then set out the details of the walled kitchen garden which contained a peach house, vineries and forcing pits.

The auction was not successful as only two estate properties; Ivy Cottage and Yew Tree Cottage on Denton Lane were sold. The family were obviously intent on moving such that by the time of the 1891 census they were living in London and Wootton Court was occupied by the family of a J A Oliver. From 1894, it was leased to a Herbert George Underhill who set up a preparatory school in the house. By the time of the 1911 census his widow Edith was the head of school with twenty boarders and nine members of staff living in. After a few years acting headteacher, Henry Robert Yates, with his son-in-law and co-headmaster, took over the running of the school. From military records we know that in 1916 Thomas Ramsey Stoney was the headteacher but was killed in the WWI conflict in 1917. Thomas Underhill volunteered to serve in the war in 1915 (died 1916) and gave his address as Wootton Court although his mother Edith (d 1952) was living in Romney Marsh.

In July 1920, another auction was held, again in sixteen lots, totalling 600 acres of land and estate properties. The descriptions are much the same but with no indication of who the owner was. It also is not apparent who, if anybody, bought the estate. The 1934 *Kelly's Directory* shows Yates living at Wootton Court although he had actually bought and occupied the gardener's cottage as his private residence in 1923. At the outbreak of war in 1939, Yates evacuated the

school and the house was commandeered as an Army Headquarters, a prisoner of war camp and displaced persons camp in succession.

In 1952, the new owners were builders Raymond and Ronald Butler. They decided to demolish the main house at Wootton Court rather than repair it. However, the stables were converted into two separate dwellings. Other buildings, which belonged to the estate, are also now (2016) in private hands, as is the surrounding land, which is now (early C21) predominantly farmland.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

### **LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING**

Wootton village is approximately 9.5km north of Folkestone and 14.5km south-east of Canterbury in Dover Borough. It is less than 1.5km east of the Canterbury Road (A260) and just over 1.5km west of the Dover Road (A2).

The region is a hilly and sparsely populated countryside of small villages or hamlets surrounded by farmland. The loam soil lies on chalk containing flints, which can be seen in the fabric of many buildings including the Wootton parish church of St Martin.

The area occupied by the Wootton Court estate has fluctuated over time, at its greatest known extent, in the late C18, being c 269ha. centred on Wootton parish and covering land and property in several adjoining parishes including Denton, Barham, Swingfield and Lydden.

Until its fragmentation in the early C20, the estate extended to both sides of Wootton Lane. This is now a public road, but was formerly a private rough track at the centre of the estate. North of Wootton Lane are the remaining pleasure grounds that once closely surrounded the mansion house. The area, just over 1.5ha in extent, is divided between the two dwellings converted from the stables and coach house. Beyond, some parkland trees survive in pasture but most of the former parkland, contained approximately between Shelvin Lane to the west, Shelvin Farm Road to the north, Clints Lane to the east and Wootton Lane to the south, is now arable fields.

An advertisement in *The Times* in May 1881, described the mansion as being 'placed on an eminence in a nobly timbered park, commanding grand views over a finely undulating and well-wooded country with Canterbury Cathedral in the distance on the one side and the Thanet coast on the other'. These views have now gone. It also mentions the presence of an extensive rookery.

The parkland continues south of Wootton Lane covering approximately 1.5ha. This contains, some 175m south of the mansion house site, the walled kitchen garden approximately 80m square.

## **ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES**

A private track branches north off Wootton Lane 75m east of the parish church and leads north-westwards passing west of Wootton Cottage (late C20) before dividing to serve Stable House annex, formerly the engine house (erected c1900), to the east and the residences that now occupy the stable courtyard to the west. The track largely respects the route to the stable courtyard first shown on the 2nd ed OS (1897-1900).

The main approach drive, which led through the park to Wootton Court mansion, is no longer in evidence. This drive left the junction of Shelvin Park Road and Clints Lane at the north east corner of the park, and continued south-west across open ground on a gentle incline towards the mansion, passing through a small wood (still extant), before continuing south to the entrance, north-west, front of the house. Its line can be seen on the first three OS maps (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> eds, 1862-1923) but is no longer marked on the 4<sup>th</sup> ed (1929-1952). By the 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. OS (1897-1900), the entrance front had been moved to the north-east façade and the approach is shown as joining a loop of drive below this front.

Traces of the C18 approach to the mansion from the south-east survive, together with part of the avenue of chestnut trees that lined the route. The route was still extant in 2005 (Lovelock/Welch) but is now (2016) largely overgrown. The drive left Wootton Lane at the same point as the present entrance to the stable courtyard and mansion site, then curved north-eastwards to lead north along the east side of the pleasure grounds, east of the service buildings. From here it circled the house to the north to arrive at the north-west front, before continuing due west to meet Shelvin Lane (tithe map). The approach was re-aligned in the late 1870s to meet a new loop of drive below the new entrance on the north-east side of the house (3<sup>rd</sup> ed OS).

The approach to the kitchen garden is accessed through the garden of the former gardeners cottage approximately 175m west of the current (2016) entrance to the residences of the Wootton Court stable courtyard.

## **PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES**

Wootton Court mansion was demolished in 1952 and its site is now a field. An illustration dating from after the late C18 rebuilding of the mansion (Hasted c 1793) shows the front south-west elevation framed by large trees overlooking an area of grass with grazing sheep.

The parish church of St Martin (listed grade II\*) dates from 12<sup>th</sup> century and stands approximately 75m south-east of the mansion site. This flint and brick built church, with a west tower, has wall plaques to Sir John Brydges of Wootton Court. Its surrounding churchyard contains a group of three headstones (listed grade II) of C18 date. The churchyard is separated from Wootton Lane by a flint and brick wall and from the grounds behind to the north, by a fence and an area of woodland.

To the east of the mansion site stand the former stable block and coach house (built pre 1882; Lovelock/Welch), now two extended residences – Wootton Park House and Wootton Park Stable House. This complex encloses an area of the former cobbled stableyard. A building, previously an engine house, c 25m further east, has been converted to a private residence, Stable Annex. and a new house, Wootton Park Cottage, has been built (late C20) on the site of a series of small buildings (tithe map; 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> eds OS), c 75m south-east of the stable block.

## **GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS**

Surrounding the site of the former Wootton Court mansion to the west, north and east, and now in part forming the gardens of the converted former stables and coach house, is an area of pleasure grounds. To the east of Wootton Park Stable House is a length of mature yew hedging. A notable yew arch that framed the porch to the south-east entrance to the mansion house (Lovelock/Welch) has gone though, as have the rhododendrons which once studded the lawns (sales particulars 1920). The present gardens have been created during the later C20/early C21. The area of gardens still respects the pleasure ground boundary with the parkland (currently, early C21, marked by low fences) as indicated on the 1<sup>st</sup> ed OS, and many mature trees survive within them, such as oaks, horse chestnut, beech, yew, poplar and a plane tree. By the late C19, the mansion was surrounded by 1.82ha of pleasure grounds (sales particulars 1882). These were described in an advertisement in *The Times*, in May 1881, as ‘pleasingly laid out but inexpensive to keep up....filled with specimen trees and shrubs of the rarest description’ while the sales particulars of 1882 refer to them as ‘exceedingly pretty’.

Along the north side of Wootton Lane is a band of predominantly native, trees and shrubs including rhododendrons.

## **PARK**

The main body of the 26.7ha park as here defined, lies to the north and east of the mansion house site and associated buildings, with an additional c 19ha area stretching south of Wootton Lane. Beyond the simple boundary fences which define this area, numerous mature specimen parkland trees survive in the landscape of surrounding fields, including oaks and horse chestnut, together with overgrown hedges of native species, visible from the high point of the mansion site. The park is now divided into fields and used as grazing land or arable. The sequence of historic maps shows the gradual planting up of the park. The 1<sup>st</sup> ed OS (1862-1875) illustrates the land north-east of the mansion site as clear of trees apart from belts dividing a large field previously shown without such division, and marked as ‘Park’, on the tithe map (c 1840). By the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> eds (1897-1923) and 4<sup>th</sup> ed OS (1929-1952), many trees had been planted. It is unclear to what extent Rev E Tymewell Brydges, in the late C18, developed the parkland around his new house. The tithe map (c 1840) and 1<sup>st</sup> ed OS (1862-1875), both show belts of trees dividing fields, while later editions show a more

informal arrangement in the landscape. An advertisement in *The Times* in 1881, states that the land had been cleared to create views from the house with lines of cover for 'woodcock and pheasants' while the 1882 auction particulars refer to 'a handsomely timbered park of 667 acres', 275 acres forming the home park.

75m to the north-west of the mansion site is a paddock, marking the site of the early C20 school cricket pitch (4<sup>th</sup> ed OS, 1929-1952) carved out of the surrounding parkland.

On the south side of Wootton Lane are a number of mature trees standing either in groups or singly (trees here are covered by tree preservation orders; Dover District Council No 11 1982). Species include yew, holly, ash, rowan and laurel together with horse chestnut, Scots pine, sycamore and oak. There are also specimens of wild cherry, holm oak, London plane and Brewers spruce. On the 4<sup>th</sup> ed OS map, about half of this area was the school playing field and clear of trees. Prior to this, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> eds OS, specimen trees appear, including a group of spruce. The 1<sup>st</sup> ed OS shows two paths crossing the land from Wootton Lane south of the mansion house site, one leading to the rear of the Endeavour Inn on Wootton Lane (C17, listed grade II), previously part of the estate, and the other to a belt of trees south of the kitchen garden. According to the sales particulars of 1882 and 1920, the estate area remained at about 267ha to include many smaller farms and cottages beyond the Wootton parish boundary into Barham, Denton, Lydden and Swingfield.

## **KITCHEN GARDEN**

The kitchen garden lies c 175m south of the mansion house site, from which it is separated by Wootton Lane. A number of mature chestnut trees survive from an avenue which linked the garden to the lane at a point c140m west of the mansion site.

Here on Wootton Lane, some 155m to the north-west of the walled enclosure, stands Court Lodge. This was built as the Gardener's Cottage in the mid C19 by the then owner, George Joseph Murray, JP. During the school's occupation of the main house in the early/mid C20, it served as the sanitorium. It is now (2016), along with the kitchen garden, in separate private ownership.

The enclosing brick wall of the kitchen garden survives substantially intact and the garden remains in productive use (2016). In the north-west side of the garden, amongst piles of rubble and defunct boilers and pipework, are the foundations of various constructions. The tithe map, c 1840, marks nothing within the walled area. Buildings are shown, however, within the walls in the north-west side, on all four editions of the OS (1862 to 1952), their number increasing with each edition. The sales particulars of 1882 describe a peach house, vineries and forcing pits. A brick built apple store in the western corner of the garden, also shown on the OS mapping, collapsed in recent years (early C21). In the eastern corner of the garden is a drain, possibly indicated by a small mark just visible on the 1st ed OS.

## REFERENCES

E Lovelock (2005) *A Brief History of Wootton Court*, ed by C Welch, Wootton Historical Society

### ***Maps***

Tithe Map 25" to 1 Mile: c1840 Wootton, Barham and Denton parishes  
Ordnance Survey maps 25" to 1 Mile: Wootton, Barham & Denton parishes –  
Kent County Council.

1<sup>st</sup> edition published 1862-1875

2<sup>nd</sup> edition published 1897-1900

3<sup>rd</sup> edition published 1907-1923

4<sup>th</sup> edition published 1929-1952

### ***Archival documents***

Census records for Wootton 1841-1911 - Ancestry

The Times online – Kent County Libraries subscription

Wootton Court Mansion 1793 from E Hasted, *History of Kent*, Dover Borough Council

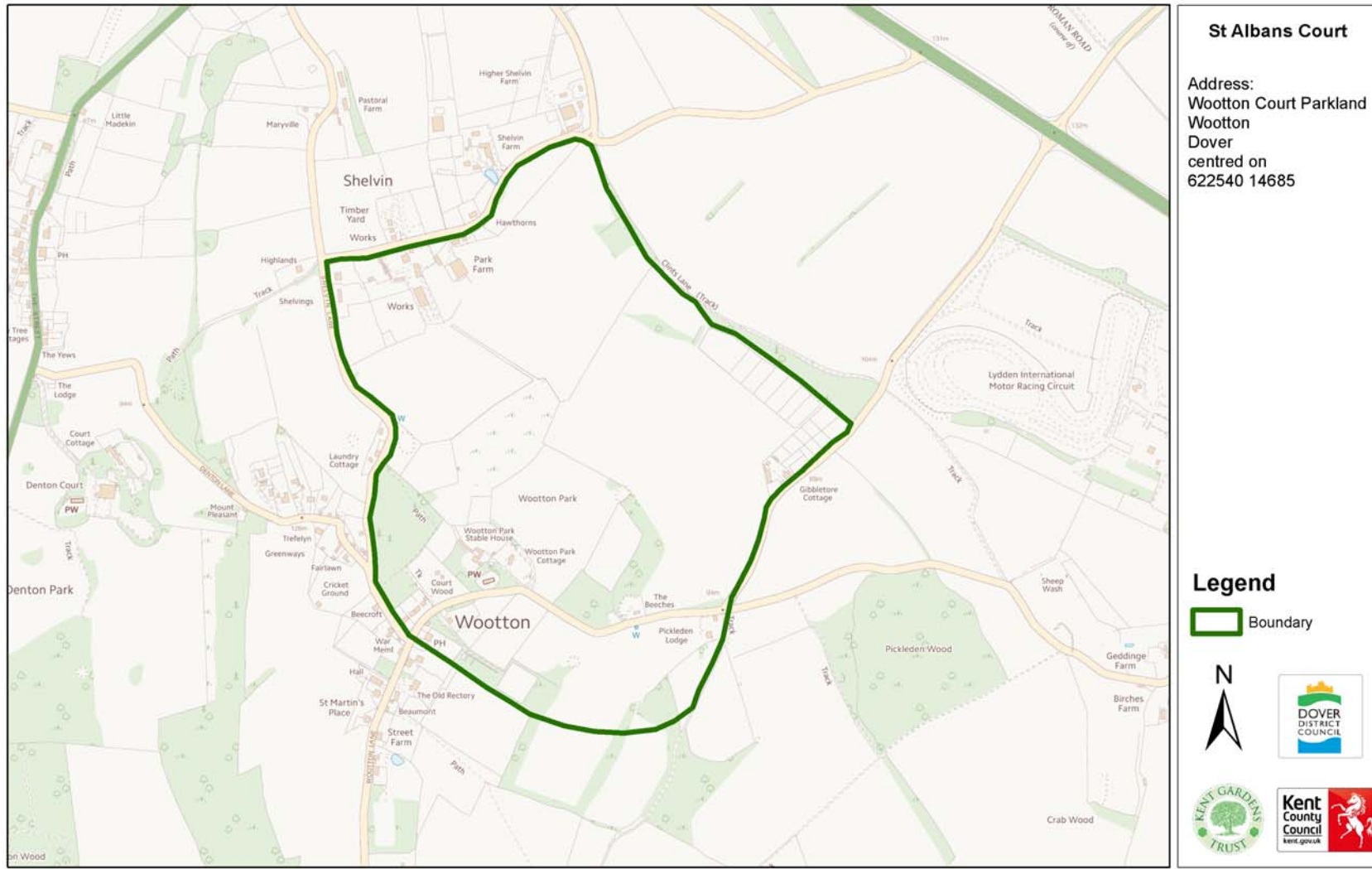
Tree preservation schedule – Dover District Council No.11. 1982 courtesy Jo Munden

Conservation area map – Dover District Council 20/07/2016

**Researched and written by Jane Davidson  
Harriet Jordan (editor)**

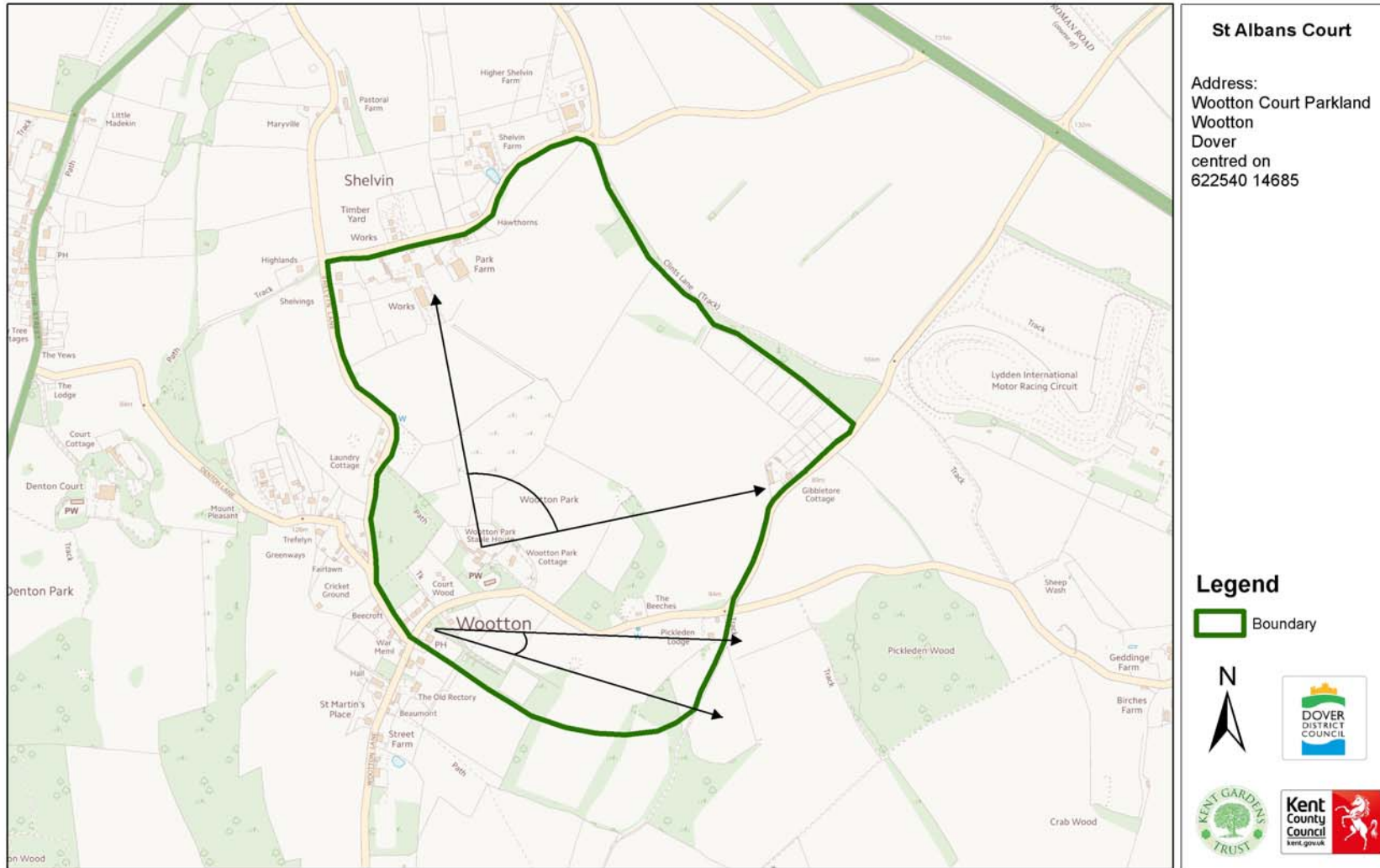
# Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2015-2017 review of Dover District

## Fig. 1 Boundary map



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

## Fig. 2 Key views map



### St Albans Court

Address:  
Wootton Court Parkland  
Wootton  
Dover  
centred on  
622540 14685

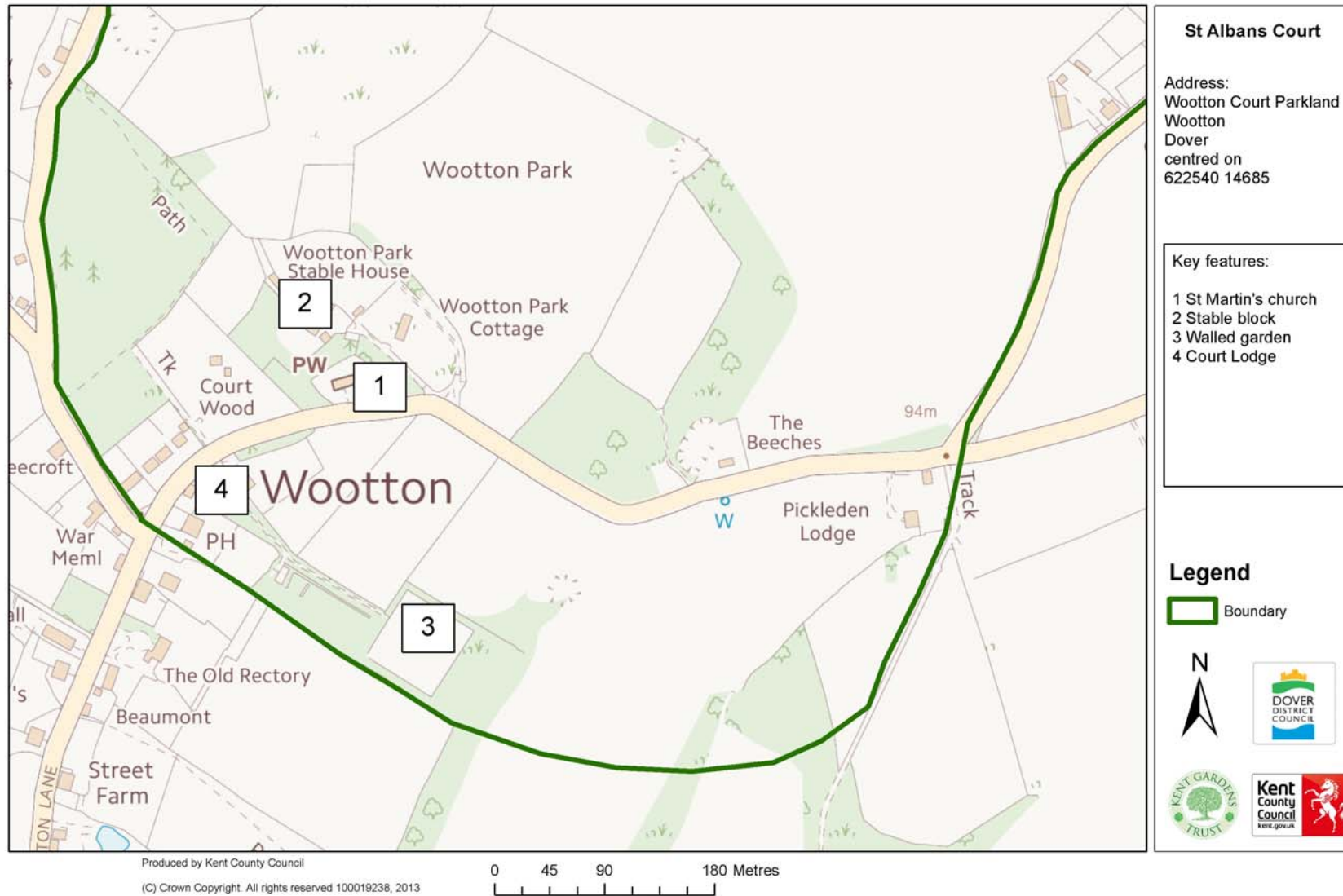
### Legend

 Boundary



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

## Fig. 3 Map of key features



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

## Fig. 4 Aerial photograph (2012)



Produced by Kent County Council

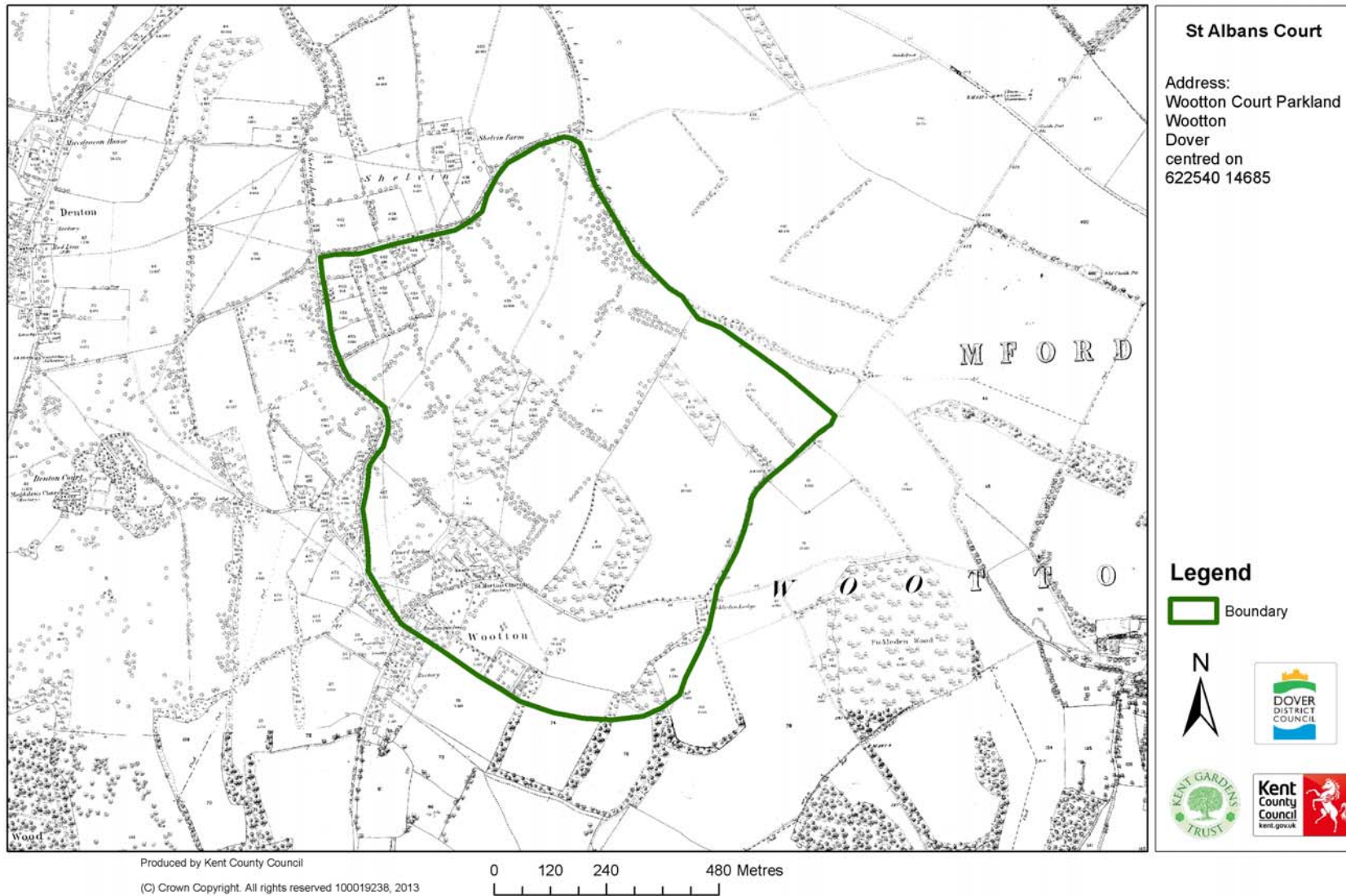
(C) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved 100019238, 2013

0 120 240 480 Metres



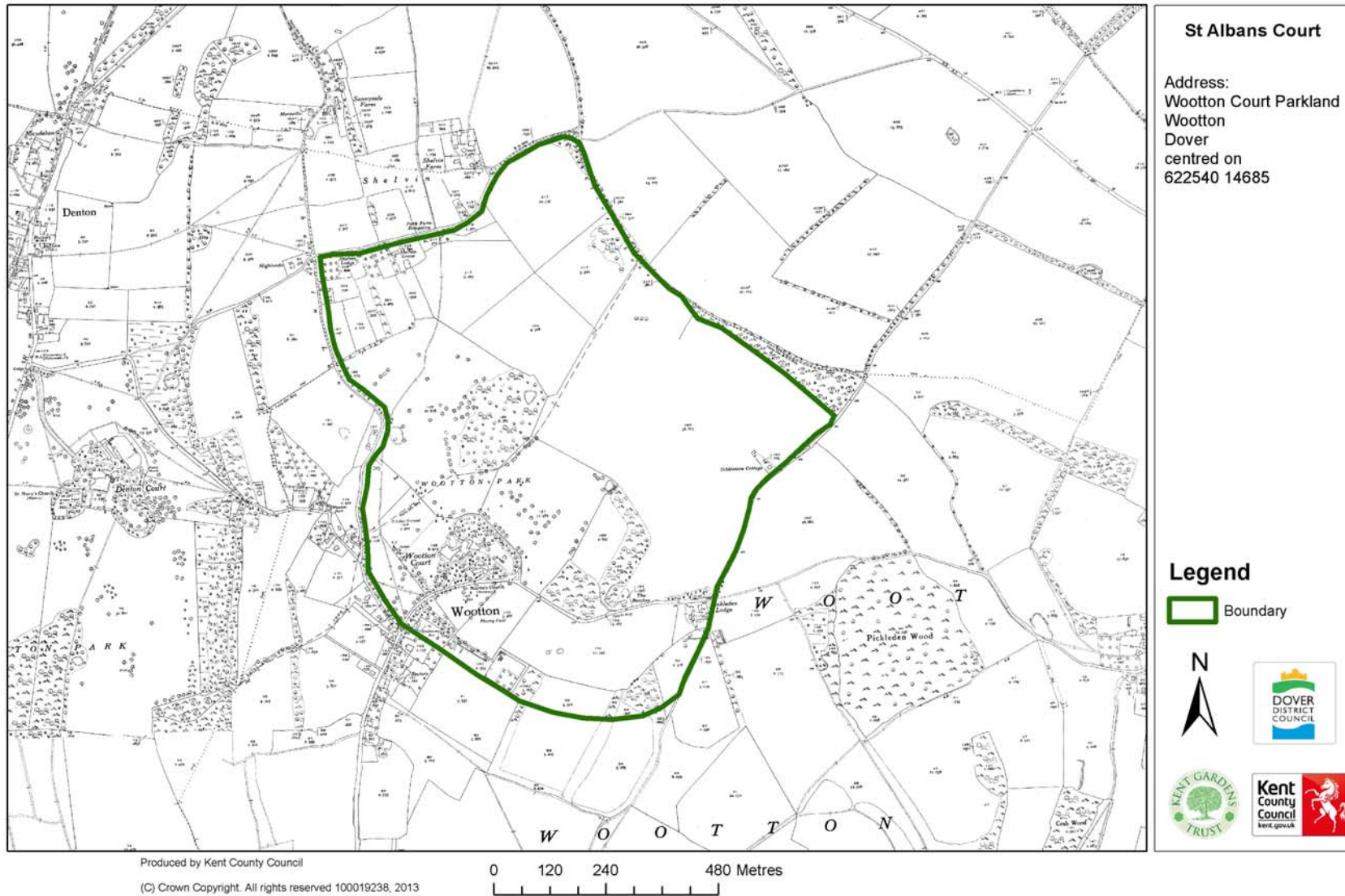
# Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2015-2017 review of Dover District

## Fig. 5 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map (1862-1875)



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

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



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Fig. 7 Wootton Court Mansion, 1793



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

**Fig. 8 Remains of a driveway**

