

The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens for Swale District

Radfield House, Sittingbourne



October 2023

Radfield House

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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 Swale Borough Council in 2020-24, 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 future¹. 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
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Swale House
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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'

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With thanks to G. H. Dean & Co Ltd, the owners of Radfield House and farm, for their assistance in allowing access to the grounds and their records.

KENT

RADFIELD HOUSE

SITTINGBOURNE

Centred on 594000 162840

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

EVIDENTIAL

A C16 listed grade II dwelling, surrounded by C20 redundant farm buildings, with evidence that a section of the house fronting the A2 road was a C15 'wealden hall'. The house was extended to the rear in phases during late C18/early C19. Records of previous owners are found in Hasted and Sittingbourne Heritage Museum. Archaeological investigations have provided evidence of Romano-British occupation in this area.

HISTORICAL

A privately owned farm dating from the C16 until it was sold to G H Dean & Co early C20. An early C19 walled garden survives to the west of the house, although currently (2023) overgrown.

COMMUNAL

A public footpath lies alongside the eastern boundary of the farmyard allows the public to view the C16 listed grade II dwelling, which is also visible from the adjacent A2 Watling Street.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

Radfield House has considerable archaeological potential. The site is located immediately adjacent to Roman Watling Street which is an advantageous position for the discovery of archaeological remains. Indeed, since at least 1893 and possibly earlier, numerous Iron Age and Roman discoveries have been made in and around Radfield House. Several phases of excavation have discovered Iron Age artefacts as well as occupation features from the 1st to 3rd centuries AD that include building materials and roof tile, a ditch, pit and numerous cremation burials. The evidence suggests both occupation and burial was taking place around Radfield House through much of the Roman period and perhaps earlier.

SUMMARY OF THE HISTORIC INTEREST

A C16 listed grade II former farmhouse with evidence that a section of the dwelling could be a C15 'wealden hall'. An early C19 walled garden lies to the west of the house and various redundant C20 agricultural buildings are located south of the house and walled garden. Many archaeological investigations have

been carried out in this immediate area and have provided evidence of Romano-British occupation with large collection of pottery from the 1st to 3rd centuries. Iron Age and Medieval coins together with Medieval pottery have also been found.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Radfield is a small hamlet in the parish of Bapchild, which lies along Watling Street (A2), approximately 1.5km to the east of the centre of the village in a detached portion of the parish. Its ancient name was Rodefelde which equates to rod field meaning clearing field. This relates to the time when the land to the south of Watling Street was covered in forest which over time was cleared to be replaced by orchards still seen today.

Hasted traced the ownership of the land back to the 12C when a chapel dedicated to St Mary was founded by the roadside. In the reign of Henry II (1154-1189) Radfield belonged to Adam de Tanges who gave the moiety of it to the Brethren of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem. In 1190 Gumerius de Neapoli, Prior of the Hospital, granted their land in Kent to Turstan de Bakechilde together with the whole service of their tenants who resided there.

One of the earliest references to the ownership of Radfield House can be found in the Chantry Certificates held in the National Archives at Kew, (ref E301/28), where it notes, in 1548, after the Dissolution of the Chapel in Radfield the farm and site of one tenement and chapel with barn, garden and with 18 acres of arable land in tenure or occupation of William Hasted. Hasted mentions that the estate eventually passed to the Thornhill family and in 1711, Richard Thornhill passed the estate to Jacob Sawbridge of London whose great grandson Samuel Elias Sawbridge was entitled to it at the end of C18.

The Times recorded on 8 July 1799 that Radfield Farm was for sale by auction on 1 July 1799 at 12 o'clock being one of eight lots being sold at Messrs the famous London coffee house, by order of the devisees of the late John Sawbridge and the Rev. Wanley Sawbridge. Radfield Farm was described as 169 acres let to Mr Lake at £136. The adjacent farm to the east, Claxfield Farm, was also for sale together with the nearby Manor of Newnham and Champion Farm, all of which were in the ownership of the Sawbridges.

The family name of Lake can be traced back in Bapchild to the mid-1600s when a Richard Lake was charged for having 6 hearths on Lady Day in 1664, one of the largest properties in Bapchild at that time.

A plan was produced in 1816 by James Gouge of Sittingbourne for John Lake which recorded his estate of 273 acres in Bapchild and in the adjacent parish of Tonge, suggesting that John had bought a significant proportion of the former Sawbridges land including Radfield Farm. The tithe map and apportionment for Bapchild produced in 1835 records that John Lake owned and occupied 156 acres in the parish including *Road Field House & Garden* along with several nearby cottages which formed the hamlet of Radfield. The Lake family at this time owned a significant proportion of the land in Bapchild and in the neighbouring parishes of Tonge and Rodmersham amounting to almost 1000

acres. John was the largest land owner of over 540 acres. His brother, William Lake, died in 1835 and the tithe map records that his wife was living at Wood Street House adjoining Radfield Farm. William and his wife Ann had 14 children, two sons, Charles and George, inheriting significant lands from their father.

In St. Laurence's churchyard in Bapchild lies the grave of Sarah Wildish Lake. John's first wife who died in 1811 just after the death of her first child. The grave also records that Ann John's second wife, died in 1815 with her eldest daughter, Elizabeth, and two infants predeceasing her. Also recorded is that three sons and four daughters survived after Ann's death. John married his third wife, Mary Chittenden, in 1821.

The 1841 census records that John Lake and his wife Mary were the only Lakes living in Bapchild but the census did not record in which house they lived. John died in 1844 but his wife continued to live in Radfield, with the 1851 census recording Mary as Land Proprietor with three servants, her maid, cook and groom, although Mary died later that year. In recognition of John Lake's life the family arranged for a tablet to be erected in St. Laurence Church recording that he had been a Bapchild churchwarden for 50 years and had "*devoted a powerful intellect to the service of the public and to the provision for his family*".

The 1861 census provides more information as the occupiers of Radfield House are recorded as Thomas Browning, farm bailiff, his wife Mary, their three children, a servant and four men who worked on the farm and lodged in the house. Widowed Elizabeth Lake occupied Radfield House in 1871 together with her brother Christopher Prebble, also widowed, along with three live-in servants a cook, a housemaid and general servant. Elizabeth was living on her investment income and in 1817 had married William Lake who was the eldest son of Ann Lake John's second wife. William died in 1849.

At the time of the 1881 census Thomas Gillow lived at Radfield House with his wife Julia, three children and a domestic servant. Thomas was a farmer of 250 acres employing seven men and three boys. It is unlikely that Thomas owned Radfield House and farm as in each subsequent census between 1891 and 1911 Thomas and his family are farming on a different farm in the surrounding area. Walter Daniel Wood, farmer, lived at Radfield House in 1891 at the time of the census, together with his wife Janet, family and two servants. Following the death of Walter in 1896 Janet moved to Chekes Court in nearby Tonge.

William Noble occupied Radfield House in 1901 together with his wife Mary, his son Francis which the census of that year records was a surgeon and physician practicing from home. His unmarried daughter, Leonora, and two servants also resided at the house. This the first instance of a non-farming family living at Radfield House: William Noble had retired as Paymaster in Chief in the Royal Navy. In May 1903 the Times announces that Messrs Cobb are to sell Radfield Farm by auction which *comprises an old-fashioned residence, bailiff's house, five cottages, oasthouse and ample agricultural buildings and 201a Or 27p of fertile orchard, fruit, hop, arable and pasture land, portions having eligible frontages to the London Road, available for building purposes*".

A farming family had returned to Radfield House at the time of the 1911 census. William Stewart Wood, his wife Jessie, their two young children, a nurse and cook lived in this twelve-room house. William was the second son of Walter Daniel Wood and had lived in this house with his parents twenty years previously. William died in March 1921 and by the time of the census, three months later, Jessie had moved to Thanet as a boarder with her two youngest children.

George Philpott, the Radfield farm bailiff, his wife and son were at the time of the 1911 and 1921 census living nearby. George continued as farm bailiff following the death of William Stewart Wood. John Clancy in his book *Historic Buildings and Grand Houses of Sittingbourne* states that G. H. Dean & Co had bought the farm by 1922 and their bailiff lived in the house.

The Times records in January 1926 the birth of a son to Edith Birch at Radfield House, her husband Edmund J Birch being a retired Commander in the Royal Navy. Two years later the family emigrated to USA.

The electoral roll for 1930 records that Frederick Mayne and his wife were resident at Radfield House. Five years later the Turvey family were in residence, and at the time of the 1939 Register Edward and Elizabeth Turvey were living at Radfield House with three of their six children, John, Isobel and Eva. Edward, (christened and married as Samuel Edward Turvey), and his son worked as Engineers at the local paper mill. The Turvey family continued to live at Radfield Farm although by the 1972 electoral roll Edward was not recorded, presumably having died. In 1975, Elizabeth Turvey died and Eva married Archibald A Taylor and they continued to live there until their deaths, Archibald in 1999 and Eva in 2010. Since 2010 the house has remained unoccupied.

In February 2022, G H Dean & Co Ltd applied for planning permission to convert Radfield House into two separate residential units and to replace the various agricultural buildings with nine residential units with access from Dully Road to the west. This application has been recommended and is currently (2023) progressing through the planning process.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

Radfield House lies on the south side of the A2 Watling Street in the hamlet of Radfield, approximately 0.7km east of Bapchild. Sittingbourne lies 5km to the west and Faversham 8.5km to the east. The Swale estuary lies to the north and the site is set on gently rising ground above the marshes at approximately 15m OD with the house at 18m OD. The site slopes gently downwards from south to north, the landscape being relatively open with long range views, especially to the north.

The house, walled garden and redundant farm buildings occupy an area of approximately 1.5ha (four acres) and are surrounded by agricultural land to the north, south and west. To the east are former agricultural dwellings and an oasthouse all now in private occupation, together with large warehouses and a distribution depot.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The main entrance to Radfield House is off the A2 Watling Street through a gap in the railings adjacent to the footpath, the opening being formed with ornate brick piers, the gate now missing (2023). The rear of the property can be accessed via the unmetalled road immediately to the east which also provides access to private dwellings along the east side of the access road, which formally housed the farm bailiff and agricultural workers. This access is a public right of way, PROW ZR196, and also provides the main entrance to the farm buildings and further agricultural property south of the site.

A private access drive along the south side of the site extends westwards 250m to Dully Road,

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Radfield House (listed grade II) is of C16 date with C18 alterations (listed building description]. The building is timber framed and clad with painted brick and plaster, with a plain tiled roof. An archaeological assessment carried out 2020 (Oliver Chapman MCI0B IHBC) suggested that there was evidence that the section fronting the A2 was C15 a lassi wealden hall. Three brick-built phases extended the property to the rear during late C18/early C19.

Currently (2023) all openings have been boarded up to prevent further vandalism. Two brick outhouses are located at the rear of the property in a poor state of repair, one without a roof. A former conservatory existed on the east side of the house but has now been removed.

Redundant farm buildings cover the majority of the site to the south and west of the house and extend for 80m east/west by 60m towards the southern boundary. Immediately to the south of the house are three buildings forming a typical farmyard around a yard with the northern side open. Earlier OS maps show this arrangement occurred at least as far back the 1st edition in the late C19, although at this time the farmyard was enclosed with a wall or fence along its northern side. Adjacent to the south-east corner of the farmyard is a former granary built early C20, more recently used for offices.

To the west of the farmyard are two large agricultural buildings constructed from concrete portal frames clad with corrugated asbestos sheeting. The easterly building is approximately 20x60m erected mid C20 with a smaller building 15x60m on its western edge. The smaller building was erected in two stages, the southern half mid C20 extended northwards post 1990.

GARDENS

The gardens adjacent to the north side of Radfield House extend 10m to the narrow pavement alongside the A2 Watling Street. The boundary is marked by railings which sit on cast iron copings on a brickwork footing. The main posts are

cast iron with backstays and cast-iron finials; the standards are cast iron with fleur-de-lis heads which recent photos suggest the heads have been painted white. Ornate brick piers flank the entrance from the road where a wooden gate stood (now missing). A narrow paved path leads from the front door to the former gate. The railings extend for approximately 30m along the back of the footpath and return alongside the entrance to the farmyard for approximately 6m where the brick footing is heightened to form a boundary wall which extends southwards for approximately 20m to line up with the rear of the house.

Tree stumps alongside the railings are all that remain of the trees thought to be Scots Pines which are evident on various photos taken between early 1900s and 2010. A Robinia/False Acacia, which has been heavily pruned, has survived in the north-west corner of this section of the garden together with a Portuguese Laurel in the south-west corner against the house.

The western boundary of this garden also forms the 2.4m high boundary wall of the walled garden to the west of the house. Access to the walled garden is gained through an opening flanked with brick piers with York stone cappings with arched brickwork over the opening which includes a timber frame suggesting a gate, now missing.

The walled garden extends 40m westwards adjacent to the A2 road and 30m to the south. All the walls are constructed in Flemish bond with brick on edge copings. The 2.9m high western wall, higher than the other walls, contains a bricked up former opening flanked with brick piers with York stone cappings. The lower half of this wall is thicker on the western side with the upper portion containing half brick piers at regular intervals. The 2.0m high southern wall also has half brick piers on the southern side every 3metres.

As Radfield House has been empty for at least 10 years the walled garden is overgrown. Tree stumps remain alongside the 2.4m high north boundary wall, the only evidence of many trees growing in the walled garden shown on an aerial photograph taken in 1990. A 1946 aerial photograph shows the walled garden divided by two east/west paths with rows of vegetation at the western end of the garden. A survey of the estate of John Lake carried out by James Gouge of Sittingbourne in 1816 shows the gardens were in existence at that date.

The land to the west of the walled garden and farm buildings is uncultivated. The 1990 aerial photograph shows the area (approximately 60x50m) subdivided into four equal 30x25m plots. This subdivision is still evident, sections of post and wire fence, gates and the occasional beech tree mark the former plot boundaries. The 1946 aerial photograph confirms this subdivision occurred after this date. This photograph and the 4th edition OS map (1929-52) note a structure in the south-east corner, now under the agricultural buildings. This structure appears to have been a tennis court with a small building adjacent to the south-east corner which is referred to during archaeological investigations carried out in the 1970s by the Sittingbourne and Swale Research Group. The report of this investigation also mentioned that a small weatherboarded house known as Sandpit Cottage was located in a depression adjacent to the A2 road in the north-west corner of

the site, the house being demolished in 1968. The field at the time of the investigation was used for grazing a small flock of sheep.

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Maps

James Gouge, *A Plan of an Estate Situate in Bapchild and Tonge belonging John Lake* 1816 (Kent History and Library Centre U47/55/P75)

Tithe Map of Bapchild, 1835 (Kent History and Library Centre)

Ordnance Survey 25 to 1 scale 1st edition (1862-1875)

Ordnance Survey 25 to 1 scale 2nd edition (1897-1900)

Ordnance Survey 25 to 1 scale 3rd edition (1907-1923)

Ordnance Survey 25 to 1 scale 4th edition (1929-1952)

Ordnance Survey modern Map

Illustrations

Various aerial photographs 1946-2008, Kent Historic Environment Record

Archival Items

Chantry Certificates National Archives E301/28

Tithe Apportionments for Parish of Bapchild, 26 April 1835, Kent Archaeological Society

UK Census 1841-1921 and 1939 Register

Electoral Rolls 1930-1972 Kent Library and History Centre

British Newspaper Archive

Find a Grave website

Times Digital website

Familysearch website

Free BMD website

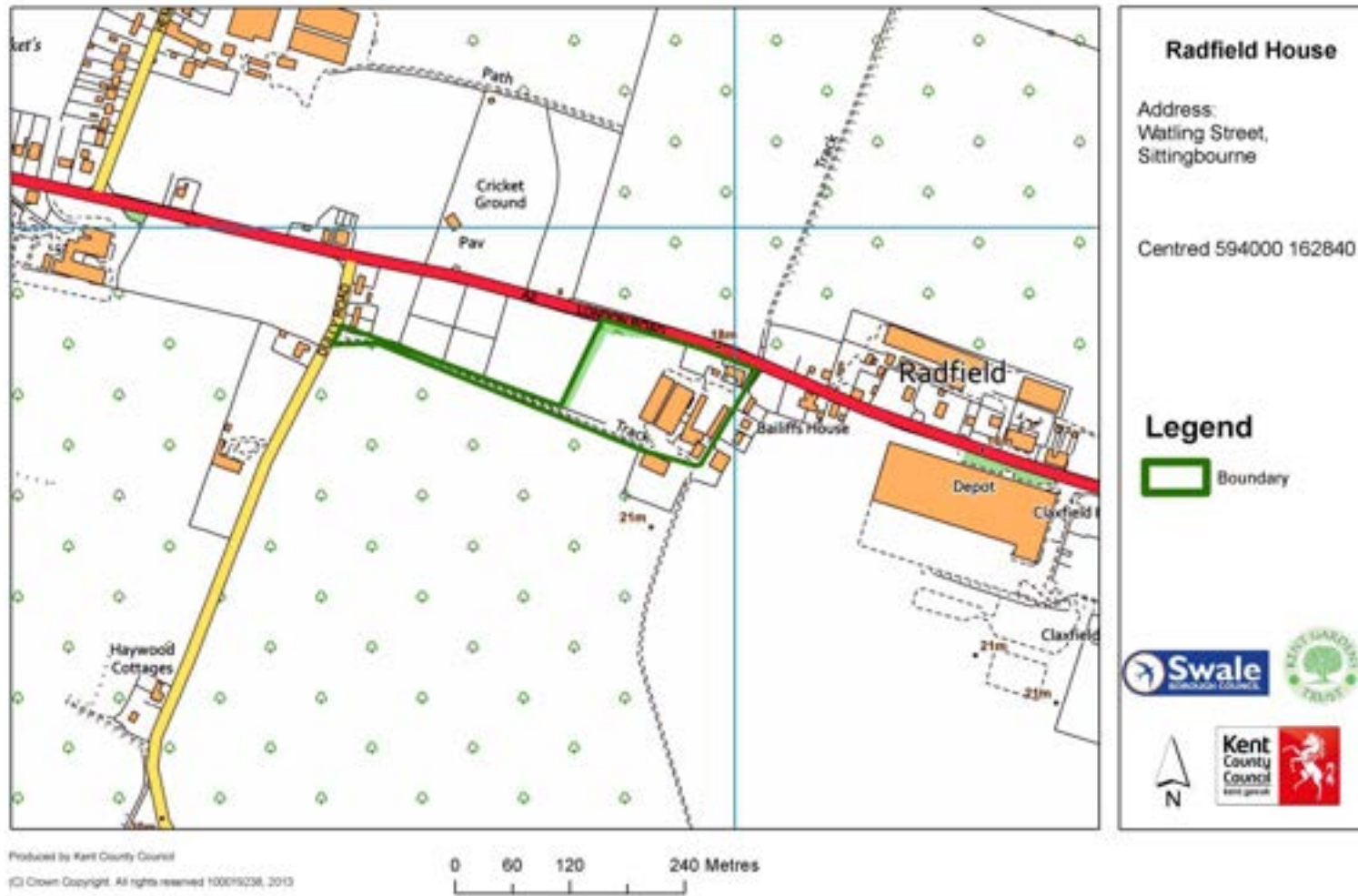
Historic Environment Record Reference TQ 96 SW 29

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Fig. 1 Boundary Map



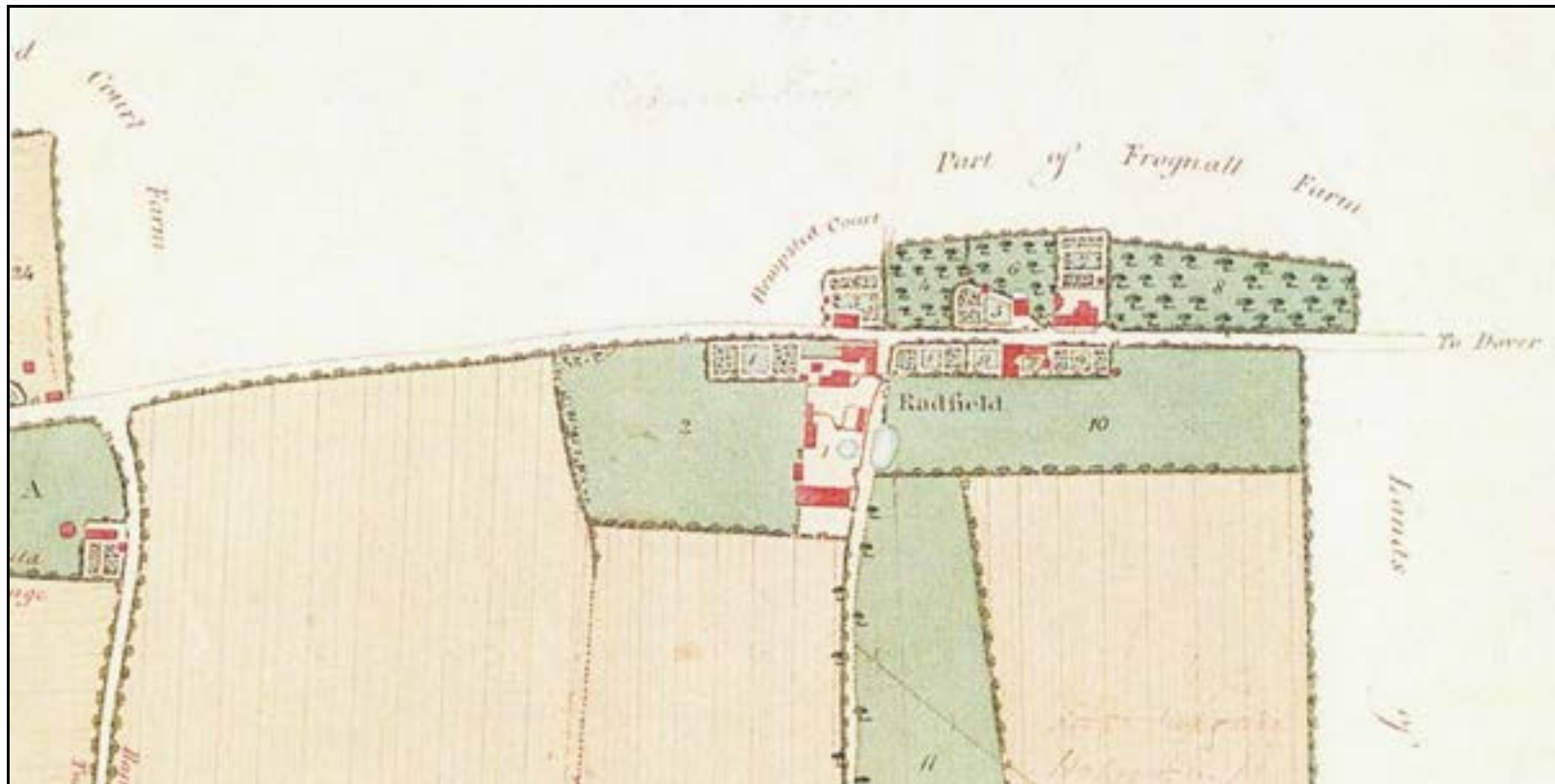
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Fig. 2 Aerial photograph (2016)



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Fig. 3 Part Plan of an Estate belonging to John Lake 1816 (Courtesy of Kent History and Library Centre)



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Fig. 4 Tithe Map of the Parish of Bapchild (1845)



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Fig. 5 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" Map (1862-1872)



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Fig. 6 Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25” Map (1897-1900)



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Fig. 7 Ordnance Survey 3rd edition Map (1907-1923)



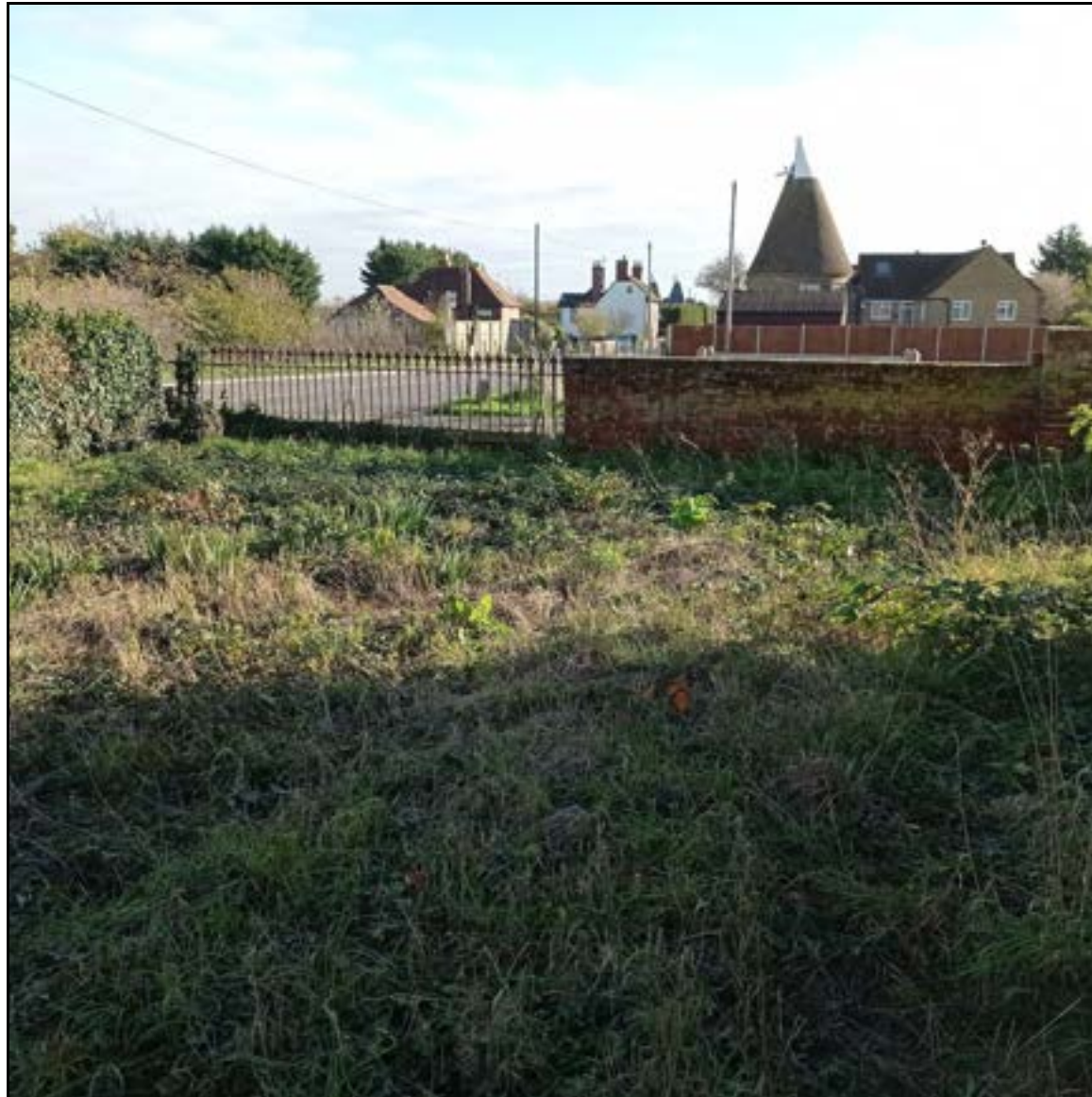
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Fig. 8 Radfield House North Elevation 2023



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Fig. 9 Radfield House front garden looking east 2023



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Fig. 10 Radfield House walled garden looking east 2022



Fig. 11 Radfield House exterior of walled garden looking north-east 2022



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Fig. 12 Radfield House looking west 2022

