

MOUNTSFIELD PARK
Hither Green
London
SE6

London Borough of Lewisham

Archaeological impact assessment

April 2005



MUSEUM OF LONDON

Archaeology Service

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Summary (Non-Technical)

This report presents the results of desk-based assessment work carried out by the Museum of London Archaeology Service on the site of Mountsfield Park, Lewisham London, SE6. The report was commissioned by Land Use Consultants.

There has been no archaeological work on or in the vicinity of the site. Evidence of past landuse has been derived from documentary and cartographic resources. It is probable that the north-east corner of the park lay in the vicinity of the 'lost' medieval village of Rombergh. Thereafter the site has largely been open pasture. Mountsfield House was built there in the 1840s and, since 1905, it has been a park.

The principal impact of the proposed works will involve the construction of a new pavilion which could include toilets, changing rooms, café, park ranger station, bowls club, storage space and a room for hire.

This new facility is likely to be placed over the site of Mountsfield House. It is recommended that any ground investigations be monitored by an archaeologist.

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	4
1.1	Site location	4
1.2	Site status	4
1.3	Origin and scope of the report	4
1.4	Aims and objectives	6
1.5	Methodology	7
1.6	Proposed development summary	7
2	Planning and legislative framework	8
2.1	Planning policy guidance (PPG16)	8
2.2	Archaeology and planning in Lewisham	9
3	Background: archaeological and historical	11
3.1	Introduction	11
3.2	Geology and topography	11
3.3	Archaeological and historical summary	12
3.3.1	<i>Prehistoric</i>	12
3.3.2	<i>Roman</i>	12
3.3.3	<i>Medieval</i>	12
3.3.4	<i>Post-medieval–modern</i>	13
4	Archaeological potential	25
4.1	Factors determining archaeological potential	25
4.1.1	<i>Natural geology</i>	25
4.1.2	<i>Present land use</i>	25
4.1.3	<i>Earlier (post-medieval–modern) buildings</i>	25
4.1.4	<i>Depth of archaeological deposit</i>	25
4.2	Archaeological potential	25

4.2.1	<i>Prehistoric</i>	26
4.2.2	<i>Roman</i>	26
4.2.3	<i>Medieval</i>	26
4.2.4	<i>Post-medieval–modern</i>	26
4.3	Research objectives	26
5	Impact of proposals	27
6	Conclusions and recommendations	27
7	Acknowledgements.	27
8	Bibliography	28
8.1	Site specific	28
8.2	General	28
Fig 1	Site location.	5
Fig 2	Detail from the Parish of Lewisham Tithe Map, 1843 (originally drawn with south at the top). (LLSL)	16
Fig 3	Detail from the Ordnance Survey map, 1867, with field system superimposed (LLSL)	17
Fig 4	Detail from the Ordnance Survey map of 1894, showing Mountsfield House. (LLSL).	20
Fig 5	View of the store / stables in 1969. (LMA 69.5.HB.5773)	21
Fig 6	View of the store / stables in 1969. (LMA 69.5.HB.5772)	21
Fig 7	Mountsfield Park, the rose garden in July 1905. (LMA 3168)	22
Fig 8	Mountsfield Park, parkland on the left with the rose garden on the right, July 1905. (LMA 3165)	22
Fig 9	Mountsfield Park, conveniences, June 1911. (LMA 3472c)	23
Fig 10	Mountsfield Park, the bandstand in November 1914. (LMA 7893c)	23
Fig 11	The development of Mountsfield Park.	24

1 Introduction

1.1 Site location

Mountsfield Park lies south-east of Lewisham town centre. It is bounded on the west by houses fronting on to Laleham Road, to the south by houses fronting on to Brownhill Road, on the east by Stainton Road and to the north by George Lane and houses fronting on to Davenport Road. The centre of the park lies at Ordnance Survey National Grid reference 538445 173953. Within this report the area is known as ‘the site’ (Fig 1).

1.2 Site status

This document has been prepared in support of an application for planning consent.

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments or Listed Buildings within or near to, the site. The site is not a registered historic park or garden or registered battlefield, as defined by English Heritage. The site does not lie within an Archaeological Priority Zone (APZ), or a Conservation Area, as defined by the Borough of Lewisham. The nearest APZ, centred on the historic core of Lewisham town, lies to the west of Laleham Road. There have been no archaeological excavations within the site, or in the near vicinity.

1.3 Origin and scope of the report

This report has been commissioned from the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) by Land Use Consultants. It has been requested in advance of possible redevelopment of the site (see sections 1.6 and 5) and may be required in relation to the planning process in order that the local authority can formulate appropriate responses in the light of any identified archaeological resource.

The desk-based assessment (*Archaeological Assessment*) has been carried out in accordance with the model brief published by the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service, and in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 2001).

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Note: within the limitations imposed by dealing with historical material and maps, the information in this document is, to the best knowledge of the author and MoLAS, correct at the time of writing. Further archaeological investigation, more information about the nature of the present buildings, and/or more detailed proposals for redevelopment may require changes to all or parts of the document.

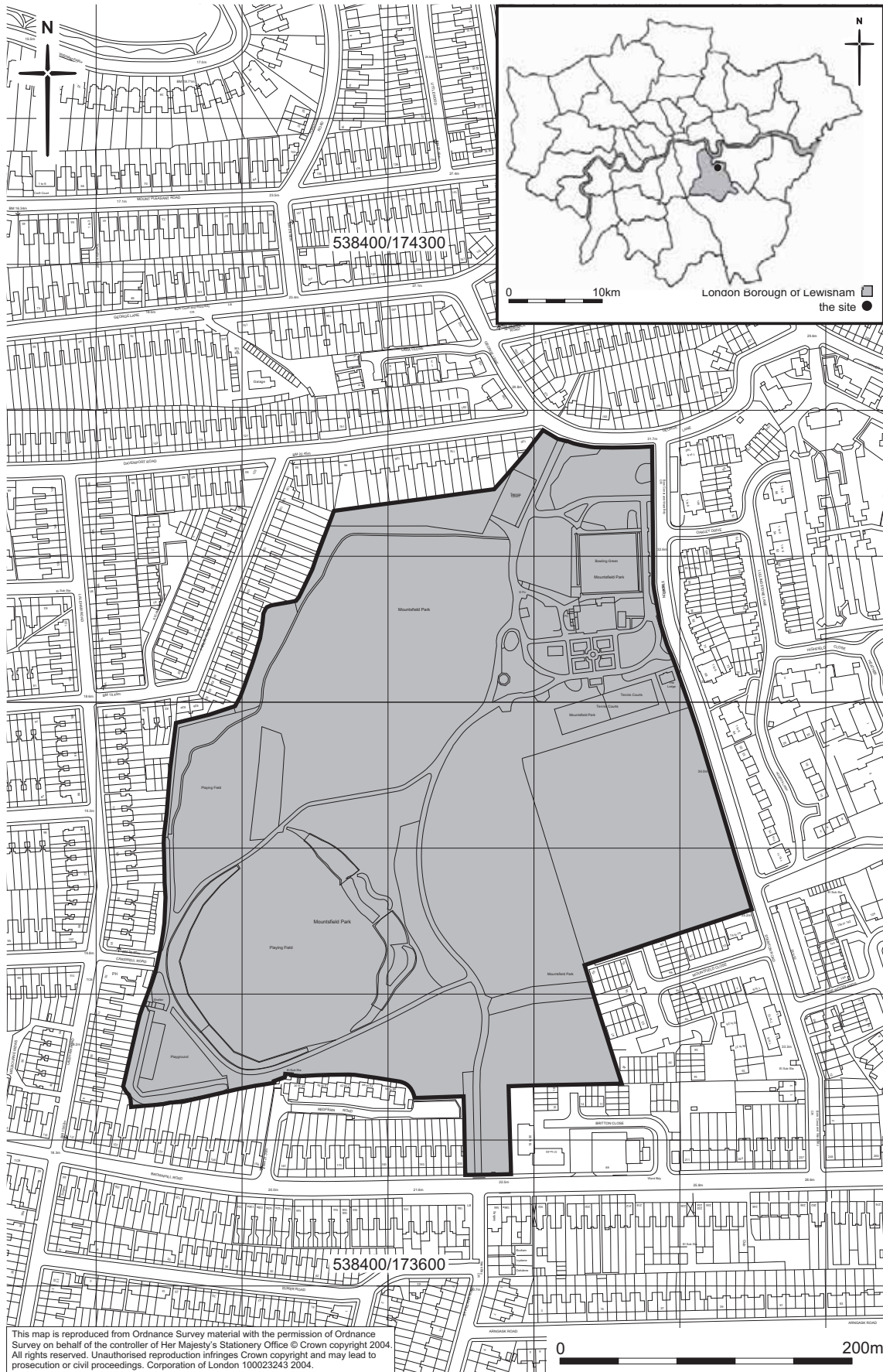


Fig 1 Site location

1.4 Aims and objectives

A desk-based assessment (*Archaeological assessment*) as defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 2001) will

determine, as far as is reasonably possible from existing records, the nature of the archaeological resource within a specified area. It will be undertaken using appropriate methods and practices which satisfy the stated aims of the project, and which comply with the Code of Conduct, Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology, and other relevant by-laws of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

A desk-based assessment represents

a programme of assessment of the known or potential archaeological resource within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. It consists of a collation of existing written, graphic, photographic and electronic information in order to identify the likely character, extent, quality and worth of the known or potential archaeological resource in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate.

The purpose of desk-based assessment is to

- gain information about the known or potential archaeological resource within a given area or site (including its presence or absence, character and extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and relative quality of the potential archaeological resource) in order to make an assessment of its merit in context, leading to one or more of the following:
- the formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource
- the formulation of a strategy for further investigation, whether or not intrusive, where the character and value of the resource is not sufficiently defined to permit a mitigation strategy or other response to be devised
- the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research

In addition, the client has stressed that the following specific tasks be addressed:

- To determine the precise footprint of the Mountsfield Estate and its gardens.
- To gain information on the style and age of the old Estate.
- To provide information on the layout of the old gardens, and in particular the rose garden and entrance planting.
- To determine the original field boundaries that form part of the Mountsfield Estate.
- To determine if evidence exists of earlier activity on the site.

The client requires an end product defined as:

- A report documenting the methodology used and findings, these should be illustrated using maps and images as well as data.

The submission of a desk-based assessment to accompany a planning application also conforms to the intent of paragraph 7 (under ‘The role of public authorities and planners’) of the *Code of good practice* established by the Cultural Heritage Committee of the Council of Europe (CHCE 2000), which states that ‘before taking decisions affecting the archaeological heritage, planners should obtain adequate information and advice, applying non-destructive methods of investigation wherever possible’; and also with the intent of paragraph 1 (under ‘The role of architects and developers’) which states that ‘the purpose [of assessment] will be not only to establish if it is necessary to dig but also to build a picture of [the site’s] morphology and its potential.’

1.5 Methodology

The assessment has been carried out in accordance with the MoLAS *Method Statement* (Nielsen October 2003) as well as guidance from the London Borough of Lewisham, the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service, the Institute of Field Archaeologists and the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers. In summary, the work has involved

- identifying the client’s objectives
- identifying the sources available for consultation (standard published works and cartographic sources, and archive resources viz the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record, local authority/GLAAS, MoLAS archive)
- assembling, consulting and examining these sources
- consulting specialists within MoLAS as appropriate

The degree to which archaeological deposits actually survive on the site will depend on previous land use, so an assessment is made of the destructive effect of the previous and present activity and/or buildings, from the study of available plan information, ground investigation reports, or similar.

In order that the appropriate archaeological response(s) can be identified, consideration is given to the need for further assessment and/or field evaluation work to identify and locate surviving deposits on the site.

1.6 Proposed development summary

The proposed development at the site comprises a new pavilion, though full constructional details are, at present, unknown. For further details see section 5.

2 Planning and legislative framework

2.1 Planning policy guidance (PPG16)

The then Department of the Environment published its *Archaeology and planning: a consultative document*, Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG 16), in November 1990. This set out the Secretary of State's policy on archaeological remains on land, and provided recommendations many of which have been integrated into local development plans. The key points in PPG16 can be summarised as follows:

Archaeological remains should be seen as a finite and non-renewable resource, and in many cases highly fragile and vulnerable to damage and destruction. Appropriate management is therefore essential to ensure that they survive in good condition. In particular, care must be taken to ensure that archaeological remains are not needlessly or thoughtlessly destroyed. They can contain irreplaceable information about our past and the potential for an increase in future knowledge. They are part of our sense of national identity and are valuable both for their own sake and for their role in education, leisure and tourism.

Where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by a proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation.

The key to informed and reasonable planning decisions is for consideration to be given early, before formal planning applications are made, to the question of whether archaeological remains are known to exist on a site where development is planned and the implications for the development proposal.

When important remains are known to exist, or when archaeologists have good reason to believe that important remains exist, developers will be able to help by preparing sympathetic designs using, for example, foundations which avoid disturbing the remains altogether or minimise damage by raising ground levels under a proposed new structure, or by careful siting of landscaped or open areas. There are techniques available for sealing archaeological remains underneath buildings or landscaping, thus securing their preservation for the future even though they remain inaccessible for the time being.

If physical preservation *in situ* is not feasible, an archaeological excavation for the purposes of 'preservation by record' may be an acceptable alternative. From an archaeological point of view, this should be regarded as a second-best option. Agreements should also provide for the subsequent publication of the results of any excavation programme.

Decisions by planning authorities on whether to preserve archaeological remains *in situ*, in the face of proposed development, have to be taken on merit, taking account of development plan policies and all other material considerations – including the importance of the remains – and weighing these against the need for development.

Planning authorities, when they propose to allow development which is damaging to archaeological remains, must ensure that the developer has satisfactorily provided for excavation and recording, either through voluntary agreement with the archaeologists or, in the absence of agreement, by imposing an appropriate condition on the planning permission.

PPG16 itself forms part of an emerging European framework which recognises the importance of the archaeological and historic heritage in consideration of development proposals. This has recently been formulated in the *Code of good practice on archaeological heritage in urban development policies* established by the Cultural Heritage Committee of the Council of Europe, and adopted at the 15th plenary session in Strasbourg on 8–10 March 2000 (CC-PAT [99] 18 rev 3). As stated at the beginning of that document however, ‘a balance must be struck between the desire to conserve the past and the need to renew for the future’.

2.2 Archaeology and planning in Lewisham

The London Borough of Lewisham’s *Unitary Development Plan* (UDP) was adopted in 1996. The Revised Deposit Draft Unitary Development Plan was placed on second deposit in August 2001 and has been adopted as Council policy, prior to its formal adoption.

The policies set out in this document determine the position of archaeology as a material consideration in the planning process and incorporate recommendations from the Department of the Environment’s *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG 16). The factors which underpin the Council’s policy are detailed as follows:

The Council wishes to protect its archaeological heritage and to ensure that any important remains are preserved and in suitable cases effectively managed as an educational, recreational tourist resource. Archaeological remains are a community asset and they provide a valuable picture of the history and development of the local area as well as London as a whole. They are a finite and fragile resource, vulnerable to modern development. The Council endorses the DoE’s DETR’s advice as set out in PPG 16 (1990), and that of English Heritage (*Development Plan Policies for Archaeology* 1992) upon which this Policy has been based. The requirements of this Policy generally come into force when extensive redevelopment is proposed involving excavation or foundation work which may disturb or expose relatively undisturbed remains below the level of current building development. Schedule 3 ‘Areas of Archaeological Priority’ explains the significance of the various designated Areas of Archaeological Priority, and gives an indication of the type and age of archaeological remains that might be discovered

Specific policy statements are as follows:

POLICY URB20 (exBLT.ENV20): ARCHAEOLOGY The Council will promote the conservation, protection and enhancement of the Borough’s archaeological heritage, and its interpretation and presentation to the public by:

- (a) requiring applicants to have properly assessed and planned for the archaeological implications where development proposals may affect the archaeological heritage of a site. This may involve preliminary archaeological site evaluations before proposals are determined;
- (b) advising where planning applications should be accompanied by an evaluation within Archaeological Priority Areas as shown on the Proposals Map. This should

- be commissioned by the applicants from a professionally qualified archaeological organisation or archaeological consultant;
- (c) encouraging early co-operation between landowners, developers and archaeological organisations, in accordance with the principles of the British Archaeologists and Developers Liaison Group Code of Practice, and by attaching appropriate conditions to planning consents, and/or negotiating appropriate agreements under S106;
 - (d) encouraging suitable development design, land use and management to safeguard archaeological sites and seeking to ensure that the most important archaeological remains and their settings are permanently preserved in situ with public access and display where possible and that where appropriate they are given statutory protection;
 - (e) In the case of sites of archaeological significance or potential where permanent preservation in situ is not justified, provision shall be made for an appropriate level of archaeological investigation and recording which should be undertaken by a recognised archaeological organisation before development begins. Such provision shall also include the subsequent publication of the results of the excavation;
 - (f) seeking to ensure their preservation or record in consultation with the developer In the event of significant remains unexpectedly coming to light during construction; and
 - (g) in the event of the Scheduling of any Ancient Monuments and Sites of National Importance, to ensure ensuring their protection and preservation in accordance with DoE Government regulation, and to refuse planning permission which adversely affects their sites or settings.

The Council has designated 21 Archaeological Priority Areas in the borough (see Schedule 3 of the Unitary Development Plan). The present site does not does not lie within any of these Areas.

3 Background: archaeological and historical

3.1 Introduction

The time-scales used in this report are as follows.

Palaeolithic	<i>c</i> 450,000–12,000 BC
Mesolithic	<i>c</i> 12,000–4000 BC
Neolithic	<i>c</i> 4000–2000 BC
Bronze Age	<i>c</i> 2000–600 BC
Iron Age	<i>c</i> 600 BC–AD 43
Roman	AD 43–410
Medieval	AD 410– <i>c</i> 1500
Post-medieval–modern	<i>c</i> 1500–present

3.2 Geology and topography

London occupies part of the Thames Basin, a broad syncline of chalk filled in the centre with sands and clays. Above the ‘bed-rock’ lie the fluvial deposits of the River Thames arranged in flights or gravel terraces. These terraces represent the remains of former floodplains of the river.

A section recorded in a well bore within the grounds of Hither Green Hospital to the west has provided a geological sequence, though without datum heights (Smith 1997,72). The Cretaceous chalk lay at 73m below the surface. This was overlain by Eocene layers including Thanet Sands, Woolwich Beds and Blackheath Beds with London Clay of the Tertiary period at the surface. Any overlying Quaternary gravels there may have been, have long since eroded away. The depth of any overlying silt horizon is thus likely to be shallow.

The section records a surface comprising 7.3m of “red clay” which can be interpreted as ‘weathered’ London Clay overlying a further 5.5m of clean ‘blue’ London Clay. Excavation in 1923 revealed unstable clays in the south-western corner of the site (Everitt 1991,28).

The highest point within the site lies at its south-east corner, at 31.7m OD. The natural slope runs down to the west and south; the north-west corner lies at 22m OD whilst the junction of Laleham Road and Brownhill road, just beyond the south-west corner of the site, lies at 18m OD.

This escarpment on the west was formed by the Ravensbourne valley, which cut through the terrain of south-east London. The river itself, 1 kilometre to the west of the site, lies within a fairly broad band of flood plain gravels (locally known as the Ravensbourne Gravels) that is likely to be Mid to Late Devensian in date, from about 15,000 years ago.

The eastern side of the site lies on the edge of an elevated plateau. Historical sources refer to the area as heavily wooded but progressive deforestation continued up to the 19th century. The resultant open ground largely comprised a poor acidic clay soil, unsuitable for cultivation but good for pasture and field systems have developed since at least medieval times. This higher well-drained ground was an obvious area for development in recent times.

3.3 Archaeological and historical summary

There has been no archaeological work within the site or on the higher ground in its vicinity. 500 metres to the south-west there was an evaluation at Plassy Road and another within the grounds of Lewisham Hospital 750 metres to the north-west. Both revealed traces of prehistoric activity as well as remains from the post-medieval period.

3.3.1 Prehistoric

There are no known prehistoric remains in the immediate vicinity of the site. The geological nature of the site indicates that there certainly would be no Palaeolithic remains. Further erosional processes may also have removed any Mesolithic and later prehistoric remains had there been any.

Isolated flint artefacts have been found in the Ravensbourne flood plain to the west. At the base of the Ravensbourne Gravels, prehistoric animal bones were uncovered just south of the site in 1907 (Duncan 1908.9f.). However, these and prehistoric flint implements also discovered deep within the gravels farther north (SMR 070028, 070053 etc) are likely to have been washed down from higher upstream. Only two stray flints have been found 1 and 2km north-west of the site (SMR 070389, 070042) and there is, as yet, no direct evidence for prehistoric settlement within this area.

About one kilometre to the south-south-west, prehistoric bones and horn cores were found at the base of the river terrace gravels. Some of these exhibited traces of butchery though it is likely that they had washed down along the river bed (Griffin 1908,9-10).

3.3.2 Roman

There are no known Roman remains in the vicinity of the site. Isolated sherds of Roman pottery have been found in Lewisham High Street and to the rear of Lewisham Station (on the Tesco's site). A branch of the Roman Watling Street ran north-south about 1.5km to the west whilst another was situated near Blackheath 3km to the north.

3.3.3 Medieval

Since the 10th century, 'greater' Lewisham, including the site, lay within lands held by the Abbey of St Peter at Ghent (Belgium) until the reign of Henry V. The Alien Priory of Lewisham, the residence of the agent of the Bishop, belonged to the Abbey and later became known as Priory Farm. The Priory was of the Benedictine Order and

was non-conventional in nature, *i.e.* it was not enclosed, but comprised of a complex of buildings. It was first referred to in 1332 and survived until the 17th century. The Priory is thought to have been located to the south-west of the site, in the vicinity of Ringstead Road, but its exact position remains uncertain (Coulter 1994; GLSMR 070077).

The Domesday Book of 1086 describes the Lewisham lands:

The ABBOT of Ghent holds LEWISHAM of the king, and held it of King Edward, and then, as now, it as assessed at 2 sulungs. There is land for 14 ploughs. In demesne are 2 ploughs; and 50 villans with 9 bordars have 17 ploughs. There are 3 slaves, and 11 mills with the rent from the peasants render £8.12s. From the profits of the market, 40s. There are 30 acres of meadow. From the woodland, 50 pigs as pannage. The whole manor T[empus] R[ex] E[dwardus]. (Williams & Martin 2002,32)

The roadway along the valley floor to the west, now Lewisham High Street and Rushey Green, was of at least medieval origin and determined the linear development of Lewisham and Catford. The higher ground to the east lay beyond this settlement pattern though small farmsteads may have been situated above the floodplain.

The name 'Hither Green' is a late toponym (Duncan 1963,23). 'Further Green' lay to the east and gave its name to what is now Verdant Lane. The green itself was situated just to the north-east of the site and appears to have a much older origin.

The Manor of Romborough is mentioned in a document of 1311 though a settlement or hamlet called Romborough (with many variant spellings) is known from a number of sources from the 13th and 14th centuries. The most useful geographical indicator is '... the road which leads from the Church of Lewisham towards Rumbergh ...' in a mid 14th-century account. The church will have been St. Mary's, still standing after an 18th century rebuild. The lane, now defined as Hither Green Lane, was indeed known as Rumbelowe Lane until the mid 18th century. Another document of 1511 mentions Romborowe Forest which is a clear indication of the wooded nature of the area. The centre of the hamlet is therefore defined as the area of the 'green', which can be located in the vicinity of the gates into Hither Green Hospital on George Lane (Duncan 1963,21-23; Smith 1997,4-5).

The dominant family in the area was known as de Rombergh. There are no references to the family or the settlement itself after 1349. This date strongly suggests that the hamlet and its inhabitants disappeared during the Black Death, which devastated the area in that year (Smith 1997,5). The site may well have survived as a 'deserted medieval village' and there was clearly a memory of the place name for many years.

3.3.4 *Post-medieval-modern*

Following the disappearance of Romborough, the area will have reverted to agricultural use. It was dominated by larger farms by the 18th century when the land itself was still open. Many of the farmhouses developed into country houses and new ones were built from the early 19th century.

3.3.4.1 The fields

The bulk of the area passed from church to royal ownership and by the 16th century was being parcelled out to local magnates. The area of Mountsfield Park covered open fields (Fig. 3) that were exclusively used for pasture. Only those of the Priory Farm to the south-west were arable and reflected the better soil on the lower ground. The following discussion is largely based on Smith (1997, Chapter 5) and cartographic evidence.

To the north-west of the site, a small field known variously as Three Acres, Doctors Field and Bridgehouse Close is the oldest identifiable field having belonged to the Bridge House Estate since at least 1358. On a map of Bridge House lands in Lewisham dated 1592 it is shown in isolation some way away from their other lands in the area. Other than the shape of the field and the inscription 'in the possession of the widow Violet', nothing else of relevance is depicted.

Within and on the west of the site, there was a large field, perhaps originally of some 32 acres, known as Clangors. This is likely to have stretched from Rushey Green in the valley almost to the ridge of the higher ground. By the 16th century, it had been divided and a map of 1612 shows two fields marked Little Clangor and Great Clangor, still however in royal ownership. By the 18th century, when it had passed into the ownership of Lord Dartmouth, it had been further divided and one small subdivision, Clangor Hill, lay within the south-western part of the site.

Fields immediately to the south-west of the park area were part of Priory Farm, and by the time of the 1843 Tithe survey, belonged to John Bowden (Fig. 2, no.2034, 2035).

The central part of what became Mountsfield Park was dominated by College Field, acquired at the foundation of the Trinity College (or Hospital) in Greenwich in 1614. This land was the subject of a dispute between the College and Sir Nicholas Stoddard, the major lessee in the area, although a settlement in favour of the College was eventually reached. It is clear that this field was once much larger and extended farther south to include Clangor Hill, when it was known as Little Riddons, as well as to the north-east (north of the present George Lane). The northernmost part of the field defined on the 1843 Tithe map (Fig 2, no.1580) as well as the 1867 OS map (Fig 3) was originally known as Croft, or Lower Four Acres.

Sir Nicholas Stoddard's farm lay to the east of the site, but originally included a field known variously as 'Clayes' and later as 'Nine Acres' (Fig 2, no.1581). The Stoddard Estate was sold and divided up in 1809 and the Nine Acres field eventually passed to John Castendieck, a merchant from Lewisham. It is clear however, that the northern part of this field still belonged to Trinity College and was perhaps leased by Castendieck.

To the south was a field (Fig 2, no.2049) known as Ratcliffe Hall, as it had once belonged to the larger Ratcliffe estate farther to the east. The south-east part of the site straddled two fields once known as Nook Field (Fig 2, no 2047) and Little Guney Hill (Fig 2, no 2048). After the Inclosure Act of 1810, these lands passed to the Earl of St Germans, in whose hands they remained until the late 19th century.

3.3.4.2 Encroachment and development.

Although, as we have seen, Hither Green Lane was of medieval origin, lateral connections such as George Lane did not appear until the later 18th century, though there may have been a trackway between fields earlier. By the early 19th century, larger houses were appearing on the ridge along Hither Green Lane and at the base of the slope on the east side of Rushey Green.

It was not until the coming of the railway to Catford Bridge in 1857 that the development of the area was accelerated. In the late 19th century, streets were built radiating eastwards from Rushey Green on land which had previously been fields, or the grounds of larger houses. The southern edge of the site was clearly defined by the construction of Brownhill Road in 1883. This presaged the development of the bulk of the St Germain's estate by Cameron Corbett to the south of it.

Hither Green, as a settlement, took off with the constitution of a parish in 1888 and the construction of St Swithun's church started in 1892, but not completed until 1905 (Judge 1973; Smith 1997,48-9). The estates to the east of the site were sold in 1892 and a fever hospital was opened there - amid much local opposition - in 1897. This was first known as the Park Hospital, later as Hither Green Hospital (Smith 1997,54-55). The eastern 'boundary' of Hither Green was defined by the South Eastern Railway Co. lines to Chislehurst and Dartford, built in 1865-66. There was a junction of the two lines but only with the expanding 'settlement' was it transformed into a station in 1895 (Smith 1997,38).

The new urban landscape was largely complete by the end of the 19th century and included a small part of the present site. Seven houses fronting the south side of George Lane were built in the late 19th century on Trinity Hospital land. These were damaged by bombing during the war and demolished.

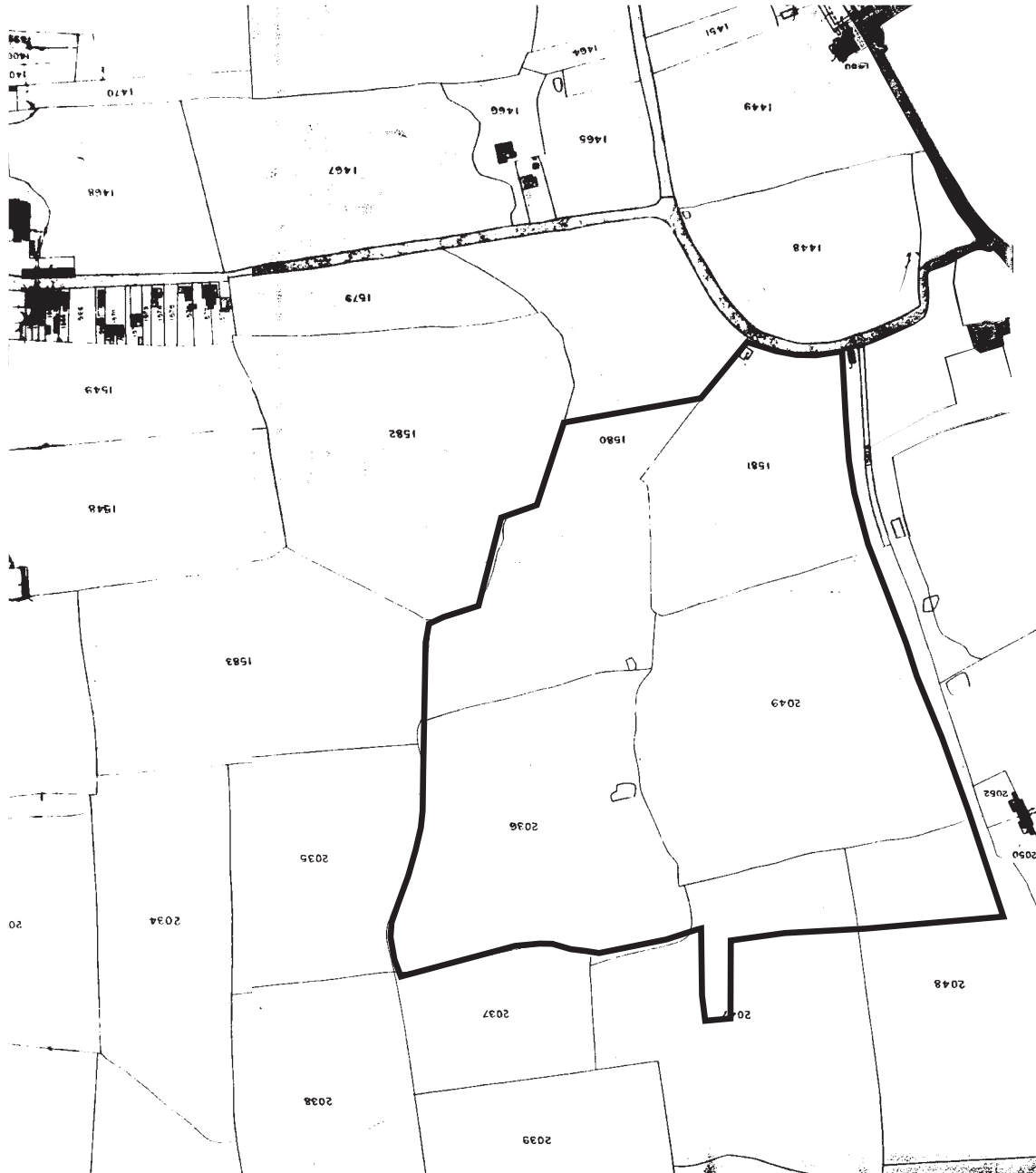


Fig 2 Detail from the Parish of Lewisham Tithe Map, 1843 (originally drawn with south at the top). (LLSL)

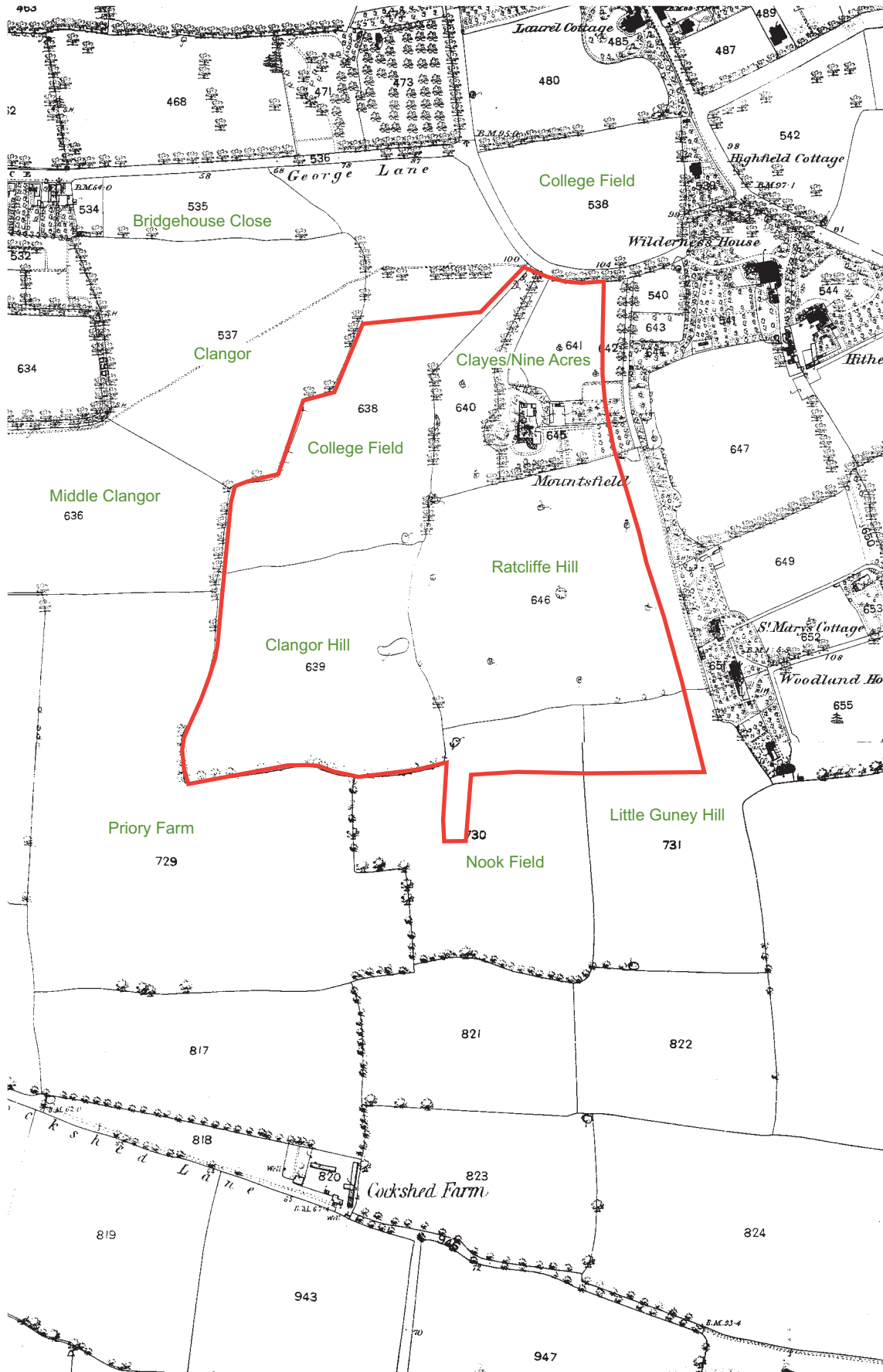


Fig 3 Detail from the Ordnance Survey map, 1867, with field system superimposed (LLSL)

3.3.4.3 Mountsfield House

Returning to the 1840s, it seems that Nine Acres field was bought from Castenstieck by Henry Stainton (1774-1851) sometime between 1844 and 1846. Stainton had a house in London but mostly lived at Springfield House on Rushey Green. In his will, dated 12th October 1846 (TNA PROB 11/2144), he refers to 'the house at Hither Green lately erected by me', which would be Mountsfield House. It has been suggested that the house was built as a wedding present for his eldest son Henry Tibbatts Stainton (1822-1892). HT Stainton married Jane Isabel Dunn (1819-1898) in Sheffield on 28th May 1846 and they are recorded as living in Mountsfield House from 1847 onwards. Stainton junior was one of the most distinguished entomologists of the 19th century and one of Hither Green's most famous citizens (DNB 2005; West 1983).

There is very little information regarding the house itself, there are no known illustrations of it or even descriptions of its construction or appearance. There is no mention of its construction in local newspapers or national magazines such *The Gentleman's Magazine*, *Illustrated London News* or the more specialised *The Builder*. Some details, however, can be gleaned from its appearance on 19th century maps. It had a west-facing frontage on to an entrance drive that led through a narrow strip of land (probably purchased from Trinity College) off George Lane. The drive led south where it bifurcated into a circular carriage turning circle on the west – on to which the house fronted - and another, service drive, that led round to the east side of the house. The only trace of any formal gardens, seen on the 1867 and 1894 OS maps (Figs 3, 4), appears to be the western side of the house. To the rear, east, were buildings and beyond, what appears to be undeveloped woodland and, along the southern border were open lands, then a paved or walled area that may have had kitchen gardens and, in the south-east corner, an orchard.

3.3.4.4 Mountsfield Park

It is not certain who lived in the house after the death of Mrs Jane Stainton in 1898. The development of Mountsfield Park can be traced through the Minutes of Lewisham Borough Council, and summarised in Smith (1997,58-9). The Minutes for 23.9.1903 noted that they had thought of, or tried to, purchase the Stainton estate a few years previously.

In 1903 they were successful. Their intention was to create a park with adjacent land, using the house as an industrial school, although the latter idea was soon dropped.

On 8.6.1904 and 20.7.1904, the Council discussed means of access into the intended park from Brownhill Road to the south. This was to be by extending a new road on the east side (later known as Stainton Road).

It had originally been proposed that Mountsfield House could be adapted into a library but a '... report of the Borough surveyor that the structural condition of the existing building is most unsatisfactory and unsuitable for adaptation ...' (Council Minutes 21.12.1904). The Minutes for 12.04.1905 stated that it was '... now being demolished ...'. Its clearly unsatisfactory state suggests that the house may not have been of any

architectural or stylistic interest and this may account for its absence in contemporary records. Nevertheless, it appears that the northern wing of the main house, said to have housed either Stainton's museum or a billiard room, and its south-east corner were retained as offices and a refreshment room (Front Cover) but demolished in 1981. The stable block to the east of the house was also retained, but damaged by fire in 1969 (Figs 5, 6) and subsequently demolished. The 'conveniences' for park users were almost certainly housed in a remnant of the complex as well (Fig 9).

It appears that a formal garden, a quartered plot with circular bed in the centre, was laid out on the south side of the former house. The Front Cover shows this garden in c.1905 looking north-west with the remnants of the house to the left and the old stables to the right. Other views, dated July 1905, show this garden looking south-west (Fig 7) and looking north with the park on its left (Fig 8).

The park originally consisted of the Mounstfield estate, as defined on the 1867 OS map (Fig 3), together with open land to the east that had been acquired by the London County Council. It seems probable that the original Ratcliffe Hall fields to the south was also incorporated at the time, but by then a large tract of this had been purchased by the London School Board. By 1914, a bandstand (Fig. 10) had been built to the south-west of the house. Other amenities followed after the First World War; a tennis court was laid out to the north-west and a bowling green to the north-east of the former house.

The present boundaries of the park have been arrived at through a series of enlargements (Fig 11). The pattern of the original fields, and land acquisition, can to some extent be seen within the pathways and tree lines within the present park. A small area in the south-west corner of the park had been occupied by Catford Southend amateur football club before the 1st World War. During the war however, part of this ground had been let out to allotment holders. In 1923 the ground was taken over by Charlton football club who undertook extensive enlargements. Although this area was on lower ground, the work excavation involving the excavation and redistribution of 44,000 tons of earth resulting in one of the greatest alterations of the natural topography on the site. In the event, the club returned to Charlton in the summer of 1924. The old Catford club then returned but the grounds were closed in January 1927 and only a little terracing is still visible. (Everitt 1991,20-31). During the Second World War, the group of terraced houses in the north-east corner of the site were bombed and after their demolition, this small area was also added to the park. The last major addition to the park was the final incorporation of the school grounds in the south-east in 1994.

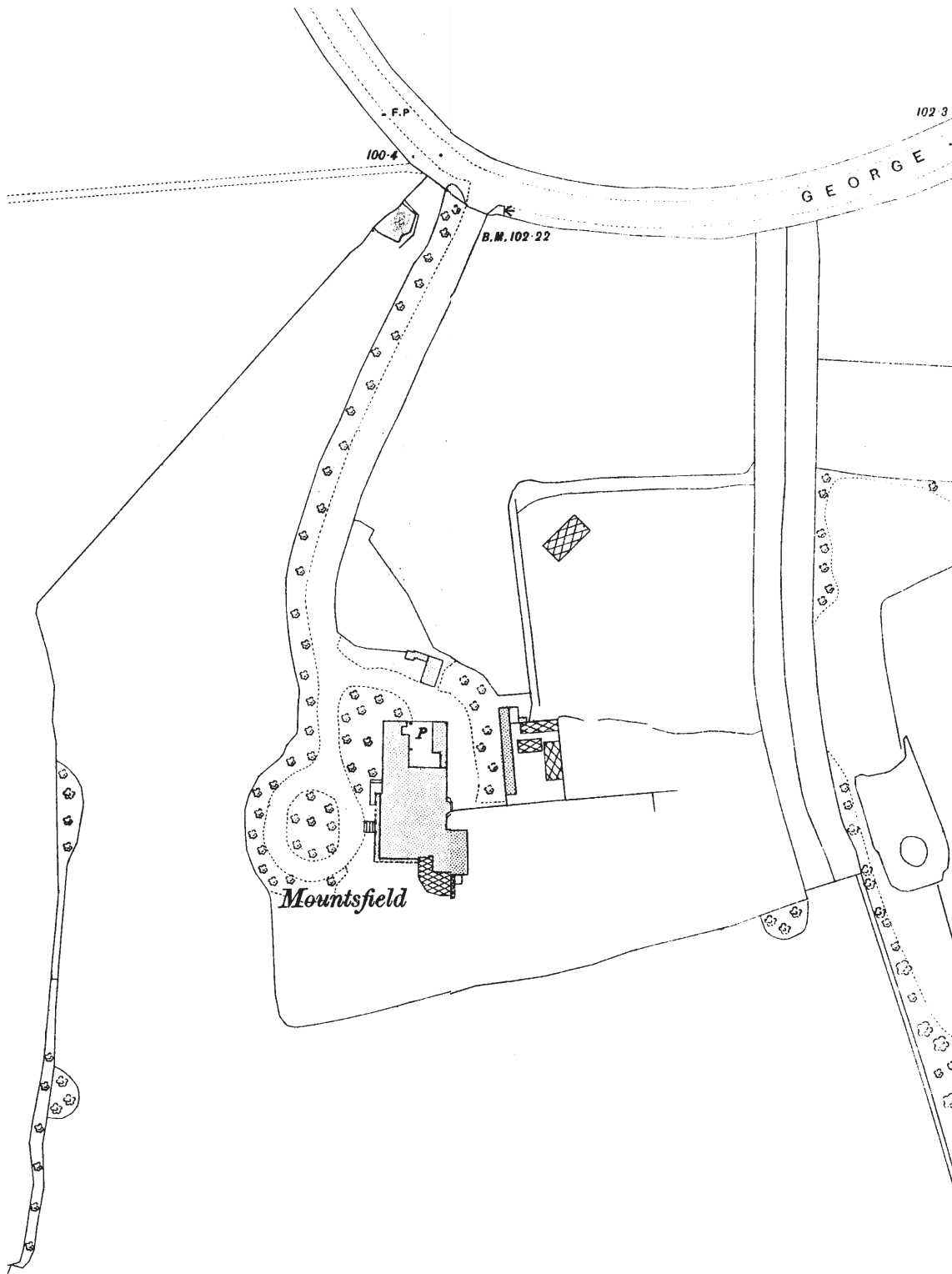


Fig 4 Detail from the Ordnance Survey map of 1894, showing Mountsfield House.
(LLSL)

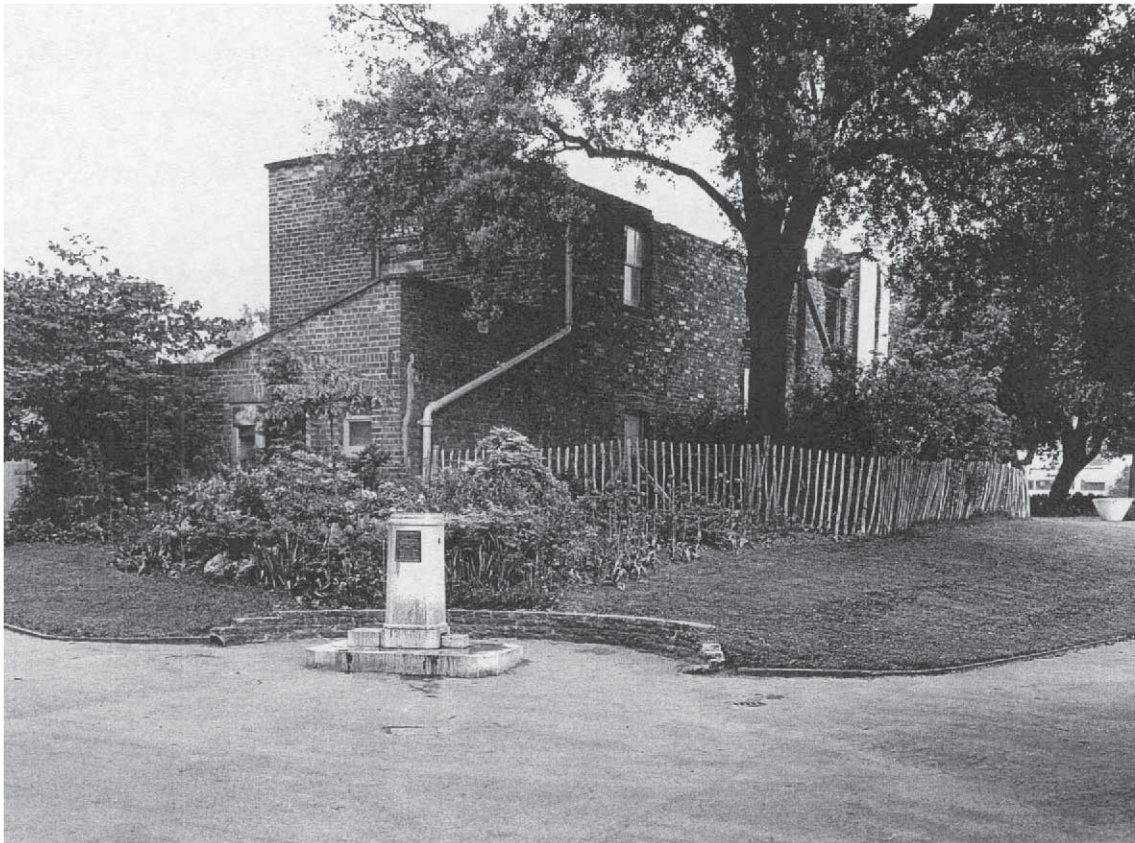


Fig 5 View of the store/stables in 1969. (LMA 69.5.HB.5773)

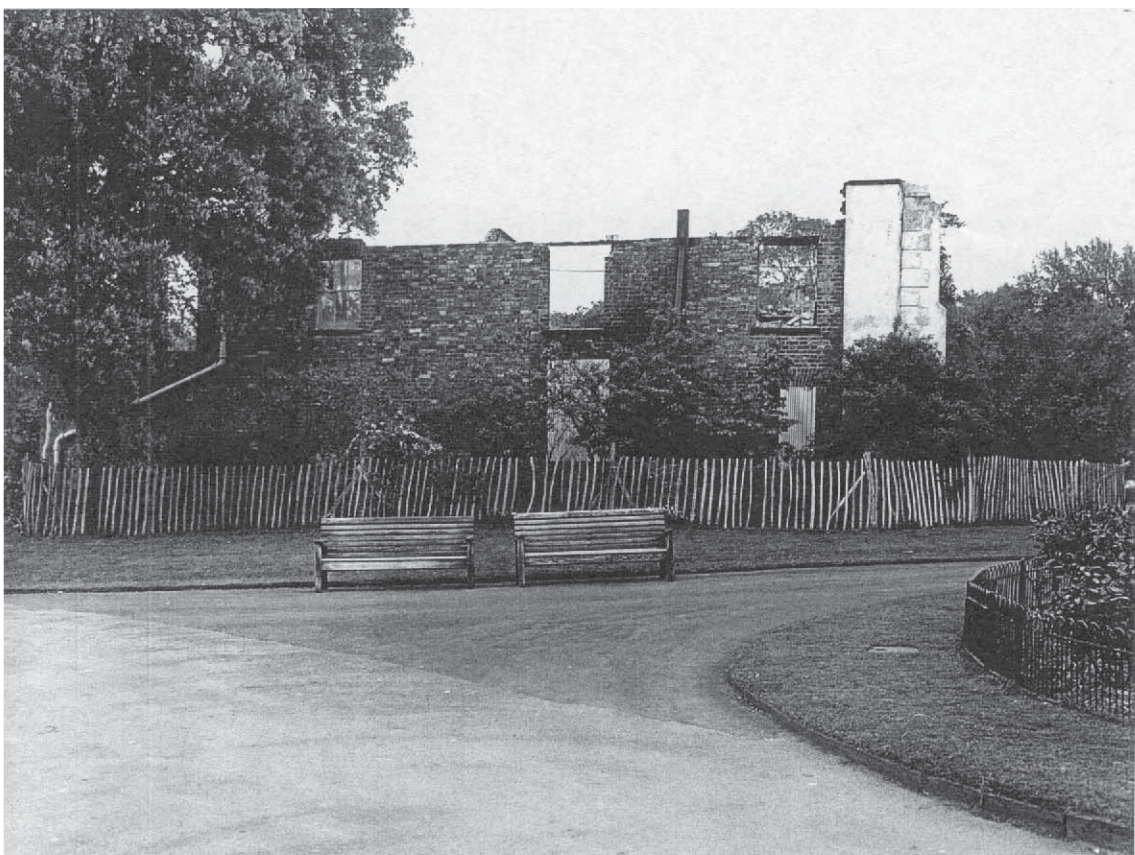


Fig 6 View of the store/stables in 1969. (LMA 69.5.HB.5772)

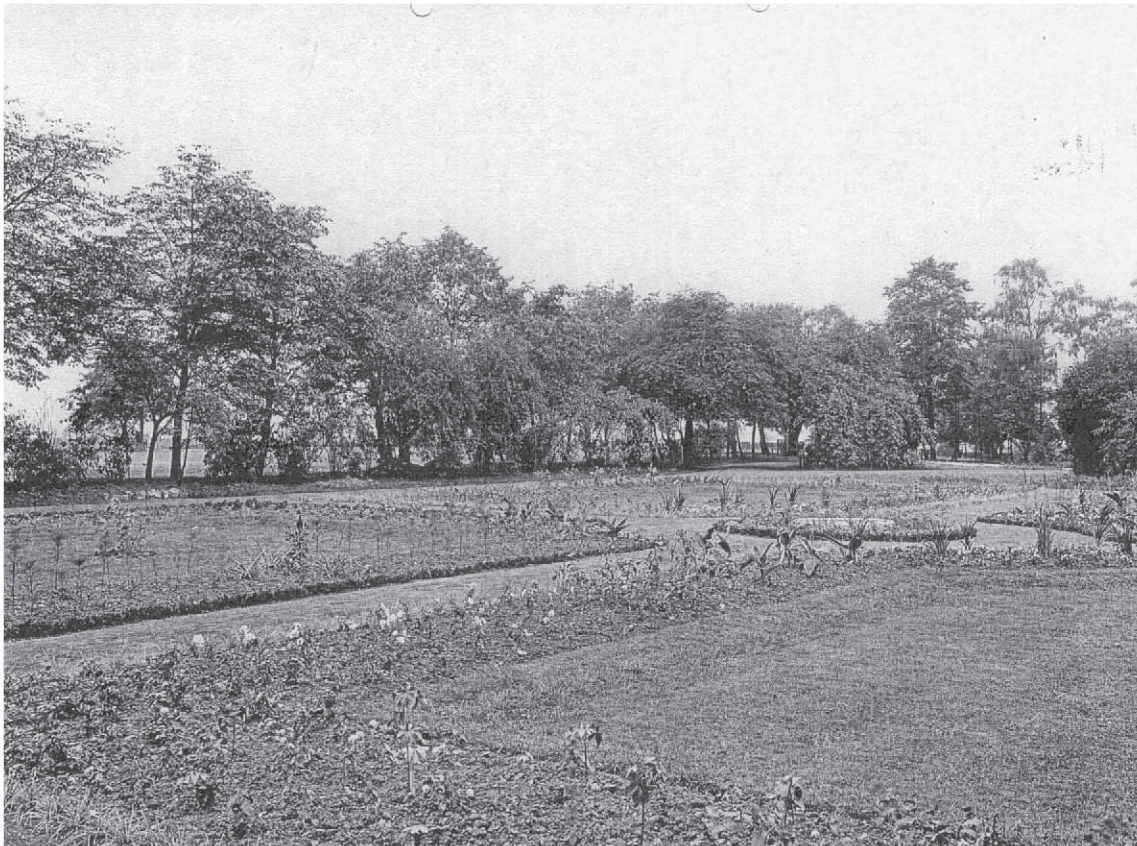


Fig 7 Mountsfield Park, the rose garden in July 1905. (LMA 3168)

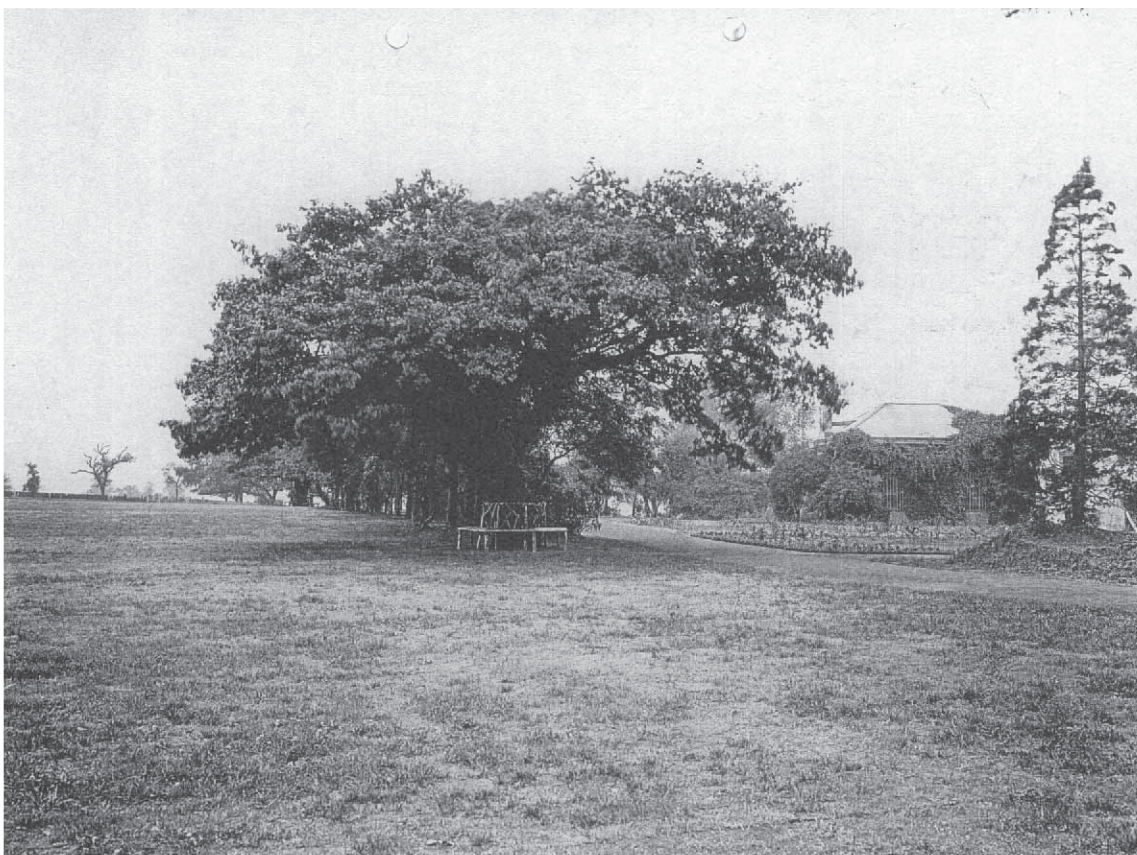


Fig 8 Mountsfield Park, parkland on the left with the rose garden to the right, July 1905. (LMA 3165)



Fig 9 Mountsfield Park, conveniences, June 1911. (LMA 3472c)



Fig 10 Mountsfield Park, the bandstand in November 1914. (LMA 7893c)

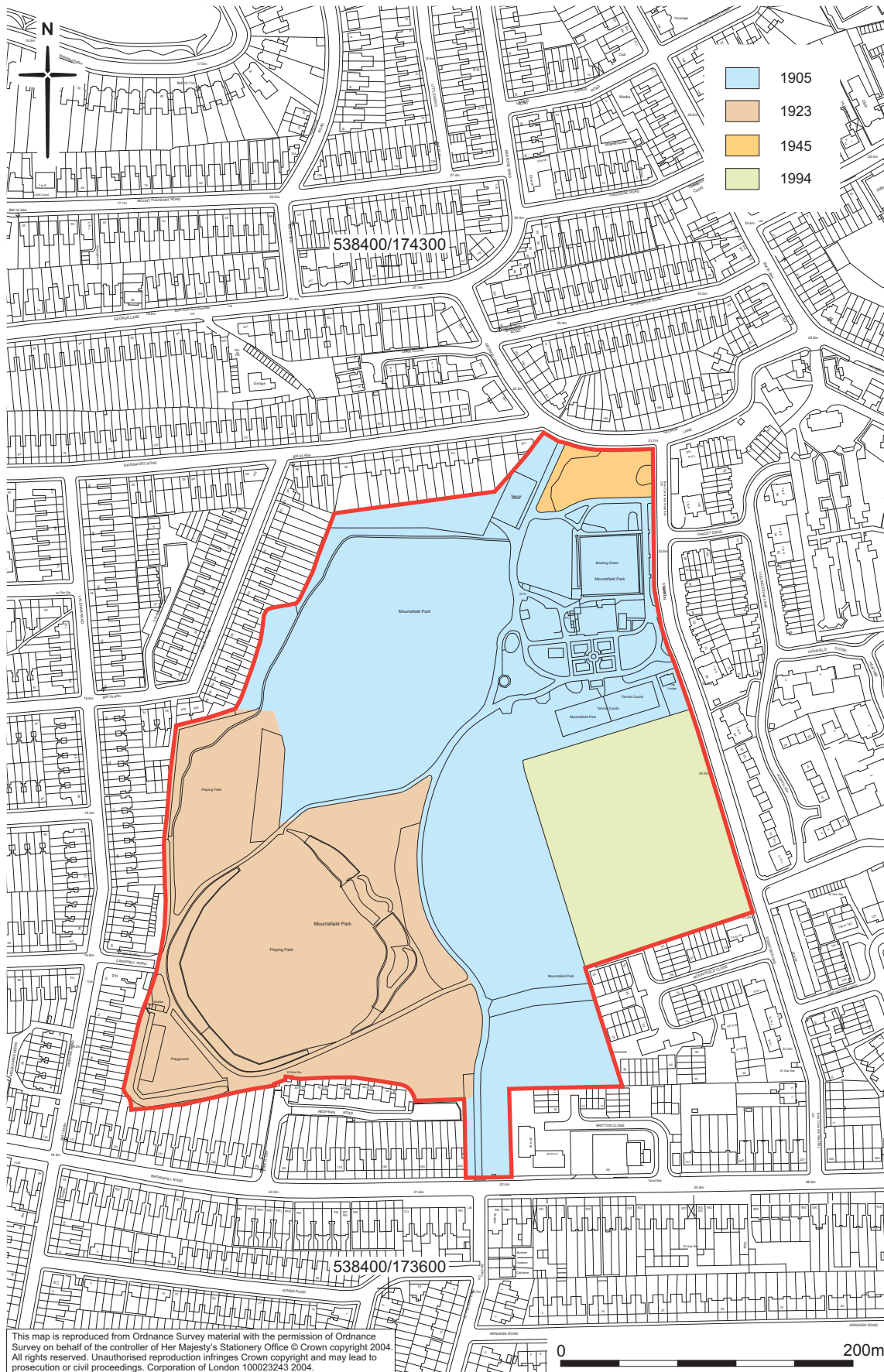


Fig 11 The development of Mountsfield Park

4 Archaeological potential

4.1 Factors determining archaeological potential

4.1.1 Natural geology

The site lies on the London Clay, though no absolute levels are known at present. See section 3.2 for a description of the underlying geology.

4.1.2 Present land use

The park was established in 1905 and Mountsfield House was demolished. The park was subsequently enlarged with the acquisition of adjacent lands throughout the 20th century. It is not thought that there has been any severe truncation of the ground surface in the park except to the south-west where a football field was laid out. Here, it was recorded that '44,000 tons of earth had to be dug out and raked into position to form new banking' (Everitt 1991,27)

The site is currently open ground. The present ground surface varies considerably with its surface ranging from 31m OD in the north-east to 19m OD in the south-west.

4.1.3 Earlier (post-medieval–modern) buildings

The north-east corner of the present site lies over the remains of Mountsfield House built in about 1846 and demolished in 1905. There is no cartographic evidence for earlier structures on the site.

There are no surviving records of cellaring or foundations associated with Mountsfield House. Their impact on any archaeological remains is therefore not known.

A row of seven houses fronting George Lane in the north-east corner of the park was demolished after bomb damage. It is probable that foundations, and possibly cellars, survive below ground level.

Building remains and deposits predating the mid 19th century should be treated as part of the archaeological record.

4.1.4 Depth of archaeological deposit

There is no present information concerning the depths of made and natural stratigraphy. The underlying geology comprises an exposed London Clay and it is unlikely that any pedogenic covering will be deep.

4.2 Archaeological potential

The nature of possible archaeological survival in the area of the proposed development is summarised here, though our knowledge is limited by the absence of

geological and archaeological work in the area. It is unlikely that the ground in the north-east part of the site has been reduced by any great extent. Buildings in the north-east corner, facing George Lane, were damaged by bombing during the war.

4.2.1 Prehistoric

No prehistoric material has been found on the higher ground over the Ravensbourne Valley, though it is possible that early communities took advantage of the terrain in one form or another. Any prehistoric material is not likely to be earlier than Neolithic. The potential for such deposits is low. If present they would be of likely local significance.

4.2.2 Roman

Archaeological remains from the Roman period are particularly scarce in this area, being mostly confined to the lower ground to the west. The potential for such deposits is therefore very low. It is unlikely that *in situ* Roman remains would be recovered from the Park. It is likely that any remains would be of local significance.

4.2.3 Medieval

Documentary sources suggest that the medieval hamlet known as Romborough lies in the vicinity of the site; probably at its north-eastern tip. There is therefore a low potential for remains of this period in this area. Any such remains would clearly be of local significance.

4.2.4 Post-medieval–modern

Buried foundations, and possibly cellars, of Mountsfield House and its ancillary buildings are likely to survive in the north-east part of the site. It is possible that evidence of the former gardens, such as bedding trenches may survive in undisturbed areas.

4.3 Research objectives

Although any excavation research objectives for sites are normally listed in more detail in *Project designs* compiled at a later stage – often after archaeological field evaluation has taken place – some outline suggestions can usefully be made during the initial *Impact assessment*. In the case of this site, the most significant themes can be outlined as follows.

The refinement in our geological understanding of the area.

What is the earliest archaeological evidence at the site?

Are there any medieval or early post medieval remains that may be associated with the lost village of Romborough in the north-east of the site?

Can the plan of Mountsfield House, its ancillary buildings and gardens, be reconstructed from archaeological remains?

5 Impact of proposals

The proposed works involve the creation of a new pavilion complex. This will include toilets, changing rooms, a café, a park ranger's station, a bowls club, storage space and a room for hire. Four options have been discussed (Groundwork Thames 2003, 26-29). The options are all situated in the vicinity or directly over the former Mountsfield House housed within one or more structures. At present, it is thought that a courtyard-based development to the north of the rose gardens may be adopted

Because a final decision on the structural options is yet to be made, there are no constructional details yet available. However, there may be archaeological implications in sub surface works. The provision of basements for example, would certainly have an impact on buried remains. Foundations themselves would also be an issue, whether trenched or piled. Pre-construction obstruction removal would have an impact, particularly if involving the removal of foundations of the former Mountsfield House. Finally, any impact from drains or other services, temporary works or any ground clearance or levelling will need to be considered.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

The site does not lie in an archaeological priority zone or other statutory protected site.

This *Archaeological Assessment* has shown that the site lies in an area of limited archaeological potential, though two major elements must be considered; the possible presence of medieval remains to the north-east of the site and the known presence of the 19th century Mountsfield House. It is uncertain what impact has been made on any buried remains by previous 20th century ground works. Furthermore, the exact impact of the proposed development on any buried remains is still to be defined.

It is recommended that any necessary geotechnical pits that are excavated for engineering purposes should be closely monitored by a competent archaeological organisation. This will enable an appropriate mitigation strategy to be formulated.

7 Acknowledgements.

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