

Football Grounds Frenzy

Kent



A brief guide to the Football Grounds of Kent & South East London by Mike Floate



Kent & South-East London

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▼ The main stand evolved over the years from the formation of the club in 1946 with good use being made of found materials. By the mid 1980s when Dave West took the photo above the corrugated iron had seen better days but the overall effect was of an amazing structure that had evolved not been designed.

► Spectators on the entrance side by the turnstile had a simple covered terrace with steps made from railway sleepers up until the 1980s when it was removed for safety reasons. A replacement has since been built using goalposts for support.

► The roof of the stand had been removed around 1990 and a replacement has since been ornamented by white barge boards on the side to give a simple but clean line still full of character. Somehow the old corrugated iron still survives, held together by layers of paint.

Crockenhill FC



► Alma Swanley were formed in the 1970s taking their name from a pub and sharing the St Mary Recreation ground with the long-established Swanley Town. A simple cover was provided but was of little use when a crowd of over 2000 saw Alma draw 2-2 with Windsor & Eton in the FA Vase Quarter Final tie in 1981. The ground was enclosed by erecting a white tarpaulin before each game.

▼ The club ran a successful local lottery and were able to build their own ground over the by-pass in Crockenhill. Planning constraints in the Green Belt restrain development and use to the present but a covered stand was built on the roadside. In the photo below it is seen in derelict condition after Alma and later tenants Furness had both folded.

► The ground was bought and renovated and has new tenants as Orpington FC make use of the facilities which other than floodlighting are of Kent League standard.

Alma Swanley FC / Orpington FC



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► Starting off as Heathside FC the club added Darenth when they moved into the former works ground of the Horton Kirby Paper Mill. The old wooden clubhouse by the entrance survived until the club folded in 1995 but was later burnt down. A simple seated stand was built by the club with raked seating and provided a good view out over one of the county's more delightful football grounds.

▼ The ground is now owned by the local community and the stand remains as a shelter.

► The main structure was too good for local vandals who managed to reduce the stand to the sorry state as seen in xxxx.

Darenth Heathside FC



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◀ Sutton Athletic hosted the full Maidstone United first team in the West Kent Shield in 198* as the Stones had neglected to withdraw their reserves from the competition. A good crowd watched the visitors win by six goals in their last season as a non-League club.

▼◀ Another good crowd turned up to see Sutton Athletic go on to win promotion to the Kent County League Premier Division in 2010. This was the penultimate match played on the pitch furthest away from the changing rooms which had always been the first team pitch.

▼ Over the summer of 2010 dugouts were built and the first team now play on the closer pitch, which is much better for fans and players alike, although it is now difficult to get the local church into the background of photos.

Sutton Athletic FC



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▼ Corinthian is a family club, owned and run by the Billings family at their farm in Fawkham. The club were elevated to the Southern League in 1985 and all four sons played for the club before they dropped down to the Kent League in 1991. Spectators on the first team pitch have a simple covered stand behind the goal which boasts old cinema seats with the changing rooms and a seating area in a former house in the adjacent corner.

► The facilities elsewhere were second to none in the 1980s and are still regarded as excellent. At a time when others in the area struggled to erect floodlights Gay Dawn Farm's second pitch was floodlit and had a simple cover alongside the changing rooms.

◀ Today the changing rooms are much improved on the second pitch but the banked seating is without cover but is still a better facility than many other grounds in the county.

Corinthian FC





► Dartford's Watling Street ground was a superb example of a classic non-League ground which also hosted League football through tenants Maidstone United, but the association between the clubs caused the club to lose its traditional home. The main stand was of a good size, in the right place on the halfway line and offered an excellent elevated view to all.

▼ Viewed from the back row of the stand the Watling Street end had been an earth bank until the early 80s, but by xxxx had been terraced.

▼ The far side of the ground was a typical covered terrace with all of the atmosphere within which is being lost with modern stadia. The view and access was good, with banter between fans generated across a fence dividing home and away support.

Dartford FC



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► After many years ground-sharing Dartford gained the support of the town council and the new Princes Park was built, albeit meaning the loss of the home ground of Kent County League club Halls FC. Community facilities were incorporated and the ground built to the highest ecological specification including sedum roofs and solar panels.

▼ The construction phase of any ground opens up unique photo opportunities and the image below through the north west corner shows the covered terrace and the end of the seated area.

◀ Excellent as the ground is the main stand falls very much short in comparison to the old stand at Watling Street. The low level seating may be intimate but does not give the excellent view of the old stand.

Dartford FC



► The Lowfield Road ground became home to Tunnel Sports in the late 1960s and by 1970 the club changed their name to Dartford Amateurs to reflect their new surroundings. The end of the amateur / professional divide soon saw them change the name again to Dartford Glentworth, taking the name of the veterans club who own the ground. A large scaffolding stand was built for their Kent League matches.

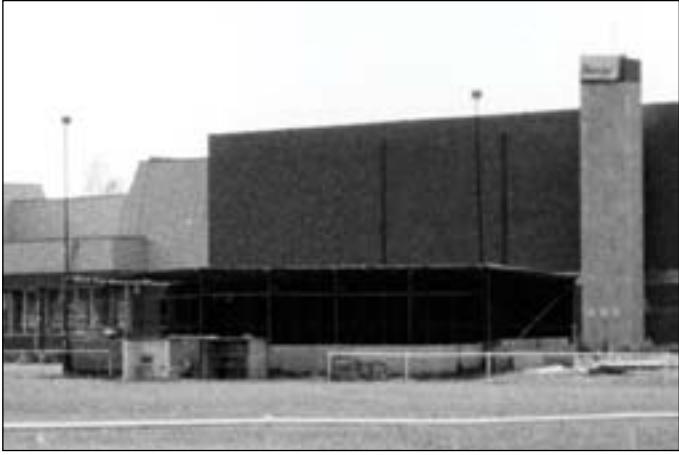
►▼ One of my first grounds pphotos is undoubtedly also one of my worst but shows a much smaller stand on the swimming pool side in 1988, seven years after the club folded.

▼ Borough United played at the ground until an attempt by Tesco in xxxx to use the land for an access road to a new superstore saw them turned off and later disband. By this time the floodlight poles were without lamps and only basic dugouts remained with no evidence of the old stands now visible.

Dartford Glentworth FC/ Borough United FC



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► In common with many other old mental institutions Dartford Hospital had a football ground and good facilities. The pitch was railed, albeit at a very low height, and the banks were more enclosures than for viewing. Two buildings stood either side of the half way line offering spectator and player accomodation.
◀ With the construction of housing on the hospital site the old ground was retained as an open space along with much of the railing remaining and the banks. Winter visitors will be fascinated by the remains of the buildings although photos do not do them justice.

Darent Hospital FC

▼ The Empire Paper Mill ground in Greenhithe was maintained to the highest standard and featured a steep path leading down from the dressing rooms. The structure below is said to have been dugouts but by 2004 it was difficult to tell due to the attention of local vandals.

Empire FC





► The loss of their former home with the construction of the new Dartford ground left Halls to use other grounds but they seem to have settled on a good location at Stone Rec. The facilities are close to the pitch and a natural bank topped with trees makes for a delightful venue.

Halls FC

► Fleet Leisure have the club have the use of three pitches but the wide open spaces make photography difficult, although seeing the players moving the dugouts like a sedan is worth waiting for at the end of a game.

Fleet Leisure FC

▼ Fleetdown are slowly developing an excellent facility with three pitches on two levels as well as a good clubhouse and changing room block. Built on reclaimed land, the ground is open and photographic opportunities are few.

Fleetdown FC



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► Recently NK Aces joined Guru Nanak in using the old Henley's Sports Ground but recently a fire meant both had to look for alternative venues. Both clubs did well to my mind as this ground may have facilities but is open and lacking character.

NK Aces FC/ Guru Nanak FC

▼ For a number of years a new Sikh temple has been under construction on the site of the old Milton Barracks in Gravesend. The pitch of the adjacent primary school was once the barracks football ground with a stand and hosted large crowds. The backdrop in this photo is surely unique in this country?

► Initially the club laid out a railed pitch alongside the road but have recently turned it to run towards the temple. A start was made on building dugouts but the club had fallen foul of planning regulations. The changing rooms are the former military gymnasium and are an intriguing counterpoint to the new temple.

Guru Nanak FC



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Gravesend & Northfleet FC



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► Few local League grounds make it into this book but Shorne's ground is a proper enclosed ground with a great feel. The wooden dressing room building has a covered area from which to watch. Other clubs could learn from this facility.

Shorne FC

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Lanes End FC

▼ NK Aces (the NK stands for North Kent) found a good home at Istead Rise where the village rec has a good pitch with a shallow bank from which to watch.

NK Aces FC



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Bly Spartans FC



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The Garrison Ground



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► The small Gordon Road stand can be seen opposite the original main stand on this programme from 1949.
▲ A larger roof was built over the main stand in the 1950s, covering the paddock in front.
► At the Rainham end was a superb end terrace featuring a barrel roof
▼ The club had rebuilt three sides by the time the panorama below was taken in 2008.

Gillingham FC



► The loss of their former home with the construction of the new Dartford ground left Halls to use other grounds but they seem to have settled on a good location at Stone Rec. The facilities are close to the pitch and a natural bank topped with trees makes for a delightful venue.

Lordswood FC

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Hollands & Blair FC

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Bredhurst Juniors FC



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◀ Chatham Dockyard once had its own football ground, complete with a barrel-roofed stand.

*** DockyardGround

► The Medway towns are home to the Royal Engineers, former winners of the FA Cup. In the early years matches were played on open ground but in recent times a sportsground on *** hosted the regiment's sporting fixtures. Sadly the pavilion in this photo has since been demolished.

Royal Engineers

▼ Another military sports ground is found nearby at the United Services Ground. A cinder track surrounds a rugby pitch and although there is no evidence that football has ever been played here the superb old stand is just too good not to include. The pitch has been used by Gillingham FC for training sessions so with a very flimsy link to football can be included.

United Services Ground





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Sittingbourne FC



► For the first years at their current ground Sittingbourne had a simple scaffold stand but it has since been replaced by the original temporary stand from Central Park. It is good to see such a good stand back in use again having lain in pieces behind the stadium for many years.

◀ At the turnstile end there is a basic cover from which the stand side can be seen. The view may not be great but thought and effort have gone into making the most of available materials to create a gathering point behind the goal.

▼ On the northern side are twin covers, again home-made, situated either side of the dugouts. Home fans tend to gather here generating a good atmosphere.

Sittingbourne FC





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Teynham & Lynsted FC

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Bredhurst Juniors FC



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► Now home to both Wooodstock Park and Woodstock Sports, previously known as Norton Sport, this is a delightful rural venue just outside Sittingbourne. The presence of mature trees around the ground makes for a great feel as well as good photographs. The changing rooms and other facilities are on the side of the pitch illstrated left.

◀ In each direction the trees help to create interesting photos. This is taken looking towards the corner in the first photo.

▼ Behind the goal at the southern end at the time of my visit a stand was being developed. Given its size and location the fact that it is not a permanent sturture does not matter, and a good view can be had from the upper seats.

Wodstock Park FC



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Swale FC

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Borden Village FC

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St Nicholas FC



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Bredhurst Juniors FC

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Sheerness East FC

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Shepway United FC



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Sheppey United FC



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Faversham Town FC



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Bretts Sports FC

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University of Kent FC



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Canterbury City FC





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Chartham Sports FC

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Whitstable Town FC



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Herne Bay FC



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Herne Bay FC



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Margate FC



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Ramsgate FC



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The St Luke's Ground

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Dumpton Park

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Broadstairs FC



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Woodnesborough FC

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Staplehurst Monarchs FC

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Royal Marines (Deal) FC

Deal Town Rangers





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Deal FC



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Betteshanger Miners Welfare FC



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Snowdown Colliery Welfare FC



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Chislet Miners Welfare FC

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Tilmanstone Miners Welfare FC





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Dover FC

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Folkestone Invicta FC



Kent & South-East London

46



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Hythe Town FC



47

► New Romney's Maud Pavilion is a throwback to the post war years and is well worth a visit. The increased demands for space in changing rooms has meant that the sides have extensions built on them but the central area still has a tea bar and a timeless atmosphere.

New Romney FC

◀ Prior to moving to Reachfields the original Hythe Town played at South Road with this austere changing room block offering some cover to a small number of fans from the balcony.

Hythe Town FC

▼ The old changing rooms at South Road were eventually demolished and a modern pavilion was provided for football and cricket. The angle the building was constructed at took the corner of the closest pitch so Saga Sports are obliged to sue the far pitch away from the facilities.

Saga Sports FC



Kent & South-East London



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Lydd Town FC





► Headcorn FC are tucked away out of the town on Grigg Lane but is well worth finding as the ground is both railed and enclosed. Briefly members of the Kent County League this ground may not have any cover but is a real hidden gem.

Headcorn FC

► This is a pleasant town-centre ground but the photo does flatter to deceive. The changing room block has a covered area on the pitch side for spectator use which extends all round suggesting that catering for football was not the primary intention.

Tenterden Town FC

▼ Wittersham is on the border of Kent and Sussex and the ground .

Wittersham & Iden FC



Kent & South-East London

50



► The loss of their former home with the construction of the new Dartford ground left Halls to use other grounds but they seem to have settled on a good location at Stone Rec. The facilities are close to the pitch and a natural bank topped with trees makes for a delightful venue.

Bromley Green FC

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Kennington FC

▼ Fleetdown are slowly developing an excellent facility with three pitches on two levels as well as a good clubhouse and changing room block. Built on reclaimed land, the ground is open and photographic opportunities are few.

Knatchbull FC



51



◀ Ashford's early history has been thoroughly researched by Phil Paine. One ground which remains almost unaltered is the New Town Green, home of Ashford *** in ****. A photo of the green with a goal showing that the pitch ran away to the left has the same arched water tower as seen above.

► Essella Park was home to Ashford Town from 1931 to 1987. There were two stands providing seated accommodation, neither of which were worthy of adding *grand* to describe them.

▼ Bob Lilliman visited the ground in 1972 and his historic images clearly show how the ground fitted closely into a triangle of houses. The end below was known as the Town End and was nine feet lower than the Willesborough End. There was terracing to three sides with the uncovered side terrace rising in height away from the Town End.

Ashford Town FC



► Ashford Town moved to Homelands Stadium in Kingsnorth, to the south of the town, in 1989. At this time many clubs who had new grounds built used Atcost, a company best known for farm buildings. While it cannot be argued that good facilities were provided within the main stand with bars and boxes looking out onto the pitch the actual seats for the main stand were not that high, rising from ground level. I am not a fan of their work.

◀ Both ends of the ground have covers over the most shallow of terraces. It is in this aspect of the ground that the builders really showed their lack of understanding of what football fans need on which to gather, watch a game and generate an atmosphere. Steeper steps closer to the action make all the difference

▼ The old club folded in 2010 and at the time of writing the new Ashford United look forward to their Kent Invicta League fixtures having taken over the ground. Here fans gather on the open flat standing on the far side of the ground.

Ashford United FC





◀ Maidstone United developed their London Road ground over the years into an excellent ground with good facilities for spectators and a feel all of its own. On the eastern side was a main stand with a smaller, older wooden stand offset to one side.

► In front of the smaller stand was a steep terrace, although in later years a brick built block was constructed in front which made photography difficult. The picket fence in the photo below is characteristic of grounds from the 40s to the 80s.

▼ On the far side, beyond the cinder track which eventually hosted greyhound meetings, was an excellent covered terrace. As with other structures at the time there were many stanchions in the way but the sightlines and atmosphere within such a cover makes a mockery of what is provided by some ground designers since the trend to develop new grounds started in the 1980s.

Maidstone United FC



► Following the demise of the old club Maidstone Invicta were formed, later changing their name to Maidstone United. In 1993 the club were elected into the Kent County League and played their home fixtures on the former training pitch behind the warehouses which had been built on their old ground

◀ The pitch was railed and had dugouts but no cover. Changing rooms and a tea bar were to be found by the entrance. The ground felt like an established venue and a visit was worthwhile. The club stopped using the ground when they were promoted to the Kent League in 2001. The ground remains as open land.

▼ A location for a new ground close to the centre of town was found at James Whatman Way. The club are at the time of writing finalising plans to develop the ground with a stand and two covered terraces. The site is alongside the river Medway and promises to be a fine addition to Kent's list of grounds and a worthy home for the club after years playing elsewhere.

Maidstone United FC





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Kent Police FC

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Bearsted FC

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APM Contrast FC



Kent & South-East London

56



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Larkfield & New Hythe Wanderers FC

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Malgo FC

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Pembury FC

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Hawkenbury FC

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Hawkhurst FC



Kent & South-East London



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Gravesend & Northfleet FC





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Tunbridge Wells FC



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Hildenborough FC

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Tonbridge Invicta FC

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Crockham Hill FC





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Platt United FC

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Staplehurst Monarchs FC

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Snodland FC



Kent & South-East London

64

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Gravesend & Northfleet FC



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Chipstead FC

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Borough Green FC



Kent & South-East London

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Oxford United FC

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Westerham FC



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Halstead FC



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Eynsford FC

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Shoreham FC



Kent & South-East London

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AW London FC



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Palace Guard FC

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Biggin Hill FC





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Holmesdale FC



Kent & South-East London

70

► Scrubs Farm Sports Ground....

Old Bromleains FC

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Farnborough OBGuild FC

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Edenstone FC



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Bromley FC



Kent & South-East London

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Met Police (Hayes) FC

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Wickham Park FC

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West Wickham FC



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Coney Hall FC



Kent & South-East London

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AFCMottingham

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Chislehurst FC

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Orpington FC





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Beckenham FC



Kent & South-East London

76

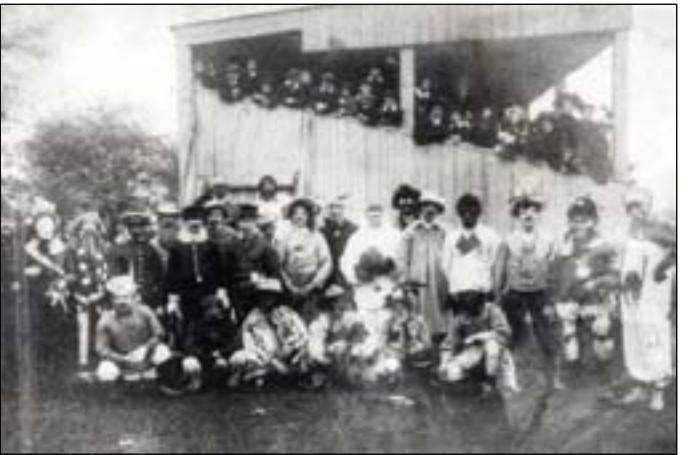
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Crystal Palace Stadium



77





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Cray Wanderers FC



Kent & South-East London

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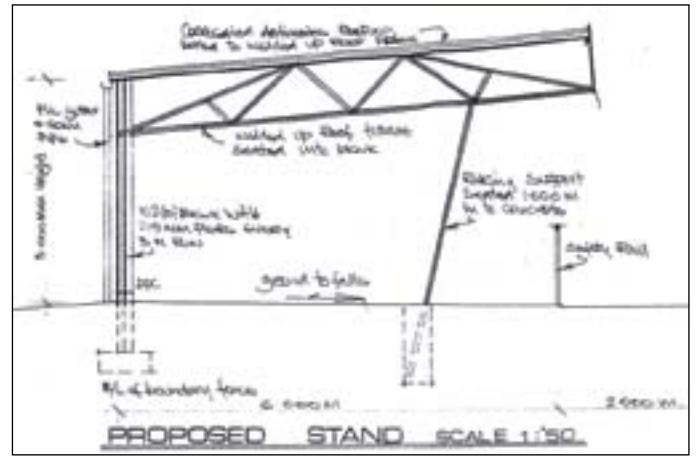
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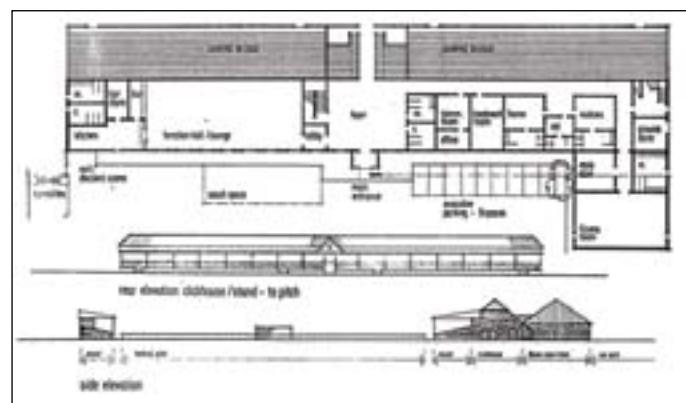
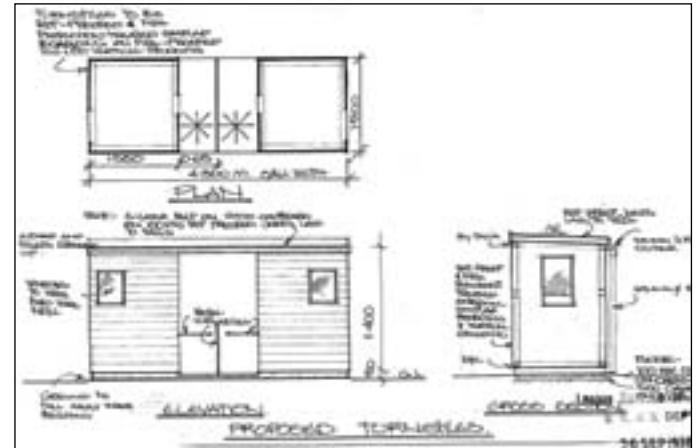


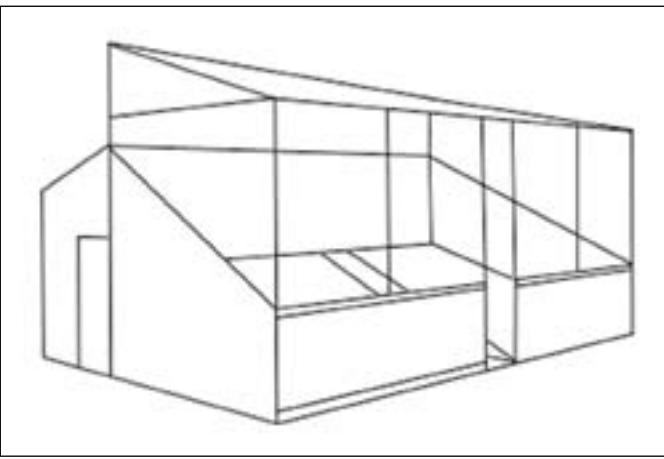
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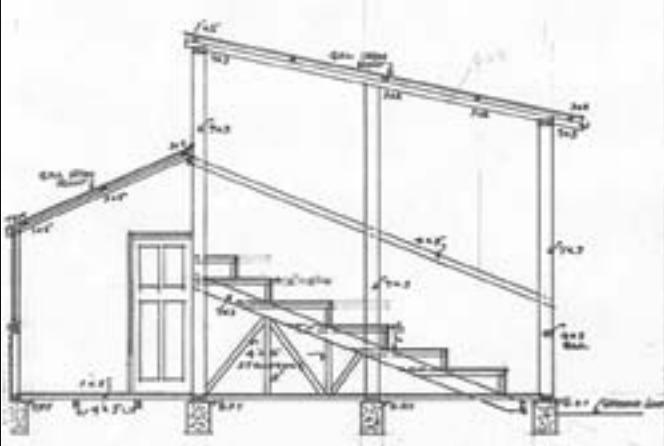


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Perrycobow FC



Kent & South-East London

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Bexley FC

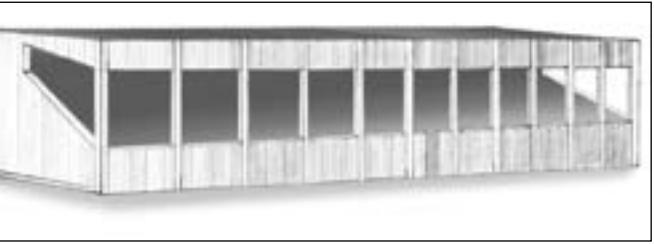
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Bexley Borough FC



Kent & South-East London





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Bexleyheath & Welling FC



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Welling United FC





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VCD AFC



Kent & South-East London



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Phoenix Sports FC



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Belvedere FC



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Erith Town FC

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Seven Acres FC



Kent & South-East London



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Slade Green FC



Kent & South-East London

92



93





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BICC FC

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Callenders Athletic FC

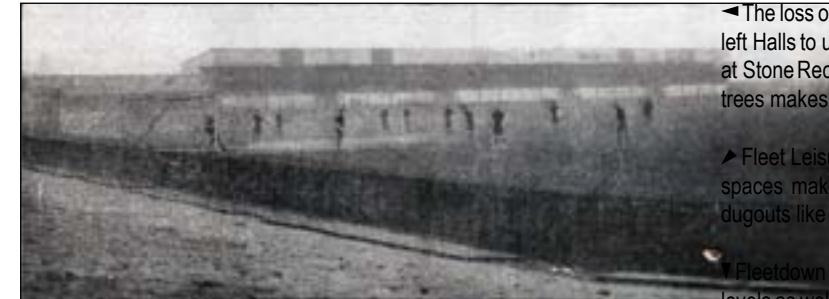
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Bostal Heath FC



Kent & South-East London

94



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Woolwich Arsenal FC





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Woolwich Stadium

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Old Addeyans FC

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City of London School



Kent & South-East London

96

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Meridian FC/ Bridon Ropes FC

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Tudor Sports FC



97



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Thames Poly FC



Kent & South-East London





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Eltham Town FC



Kent & South-East London



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Old Roan FC

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Metrogas FC





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Cray Valley PM FC

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Eltham Palace FC

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Samuel Montague Youth Club FC



Kent & South-East London

102

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Elms FC

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Lewisham Borough FC



103

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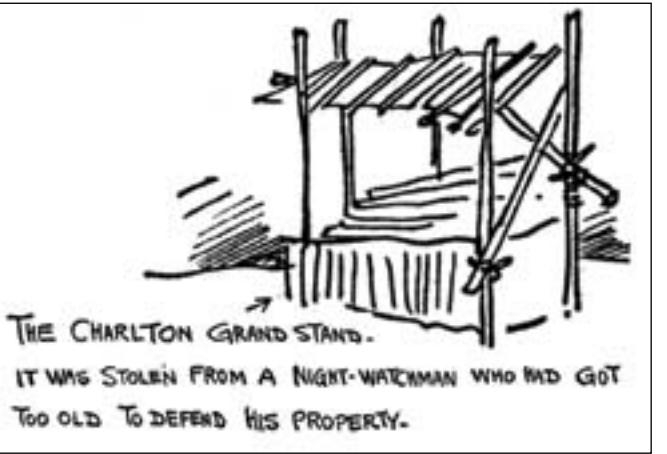
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Catford Southend FC



Kent & South-East London

104



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Kent & South-East London

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Platt United FC

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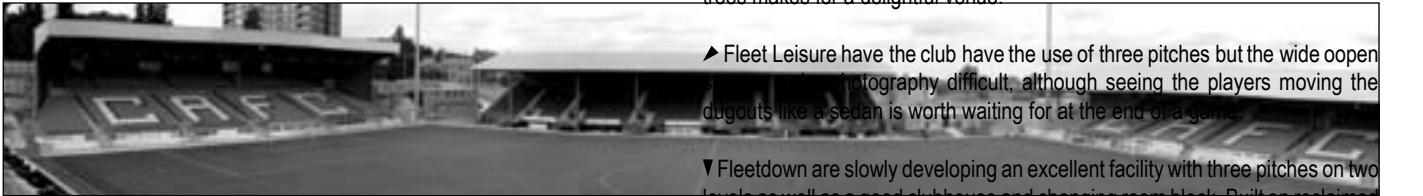
Catford Velodrome





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Kent & South-East London



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Millwall FC