



The non-League Football Grounds of Kent

Mike Floate



The Non-League Football Grounds of...

Volume 1: Kent

20th Anniversary
Colour Limited Edition

By Mike Floate

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Introduction...

This first volume covers my home county with a rich variety of football grounds. I have set out to record photographically the main feature of each ground and describe the rest of the facilities, praising where praise is due and pointing out faults where appropriate. Each page features a sketch map to enable the first-time visitor to - hopefully - find each ground with the minimum of fuss. Although it is hoped that mistakes have not crept into maps or text I would appreciate any comments or suggestions as to how the series should develop or a second printing of the current volume be improved.

Newlands Printing & Photographic Services...

In recent years many photographers have combined an interest in football with expertise through the lens to photograph non-League football. It is sadly the case that there are limited openings for the use of such photographs with appropriate remuneration - as most non-League photographers are hobby photographers, and even national magazines covering the Non-League scene use their pictures without paying reproduction fees. Having cut my teeth editing the programme for Crockenhill FC I have decided to give anyone the opportunity to produce a book for a limited outlay, and with a genuine prospect of emerging with a reasonable return for their efforts.

The print run on this book is just 100 - many less than other printers would consider producing. There are obviously compromises to be made along the way: for example ideally I would like to bind the book better and improve the reproduction of photographs, but have decided that the benefits of printing and binding the book myself outweigh the disadvantages. The second book to be published in this format will be a retrospective look through my own photographic archives, in a volume titled 'Mike Floate - Non League Photographer'. This will be followed a volume covering the outstanding work of the photographers' photographer - Dennis Nicholson. Just who is featured in the fourth book depends on who gets in touch first, and if anyone can provide photos, maps and descriptions of every ground in another county we could be talking business.

Mike Floate, Crockenhill, August 1995

Crockenhill FC Club Shop & Museum

When visiting Wested Meadow call in to our club shop for...

Match day programmes, old programmes, ground photos, framed prints, videos, scarves, sweaters, club enamel badges, and much more.

opening soon - our club museum tracing the history of our club since 1946, and of Crockenhill Utd before the war...

for further details 'phone 01322 668275

Introduction 20 Years On...

Little did I know what I was starting twenty years ago, the friends I would meet through these books and the way the series of books would develop and expand. I had been unhappy at the unwillingness of publishers to assist with the expenses of their photographers. Along with others being listed as Staff Photographer in the Non League Directory was great but didn't go anywhere towards paying for the cost of film and processing. My intention was to sell enough books to pay for my own PC and also to be far more philanthropic with others in producing their books than my experiences of other publishers.

I was soon contacted by Peter Miles and Colin Peel and further books were published in the following year. The sharp-eyed reader will recall seeing David Bauckham's first photos of dugouts and other football ground ephemera at the back of his volume covering Sussex which I was delighted to be able to include as I loved the quirky nature of these images. The rest is history, with my intention being to publish a new book every summer being achieved most years.

The promised action photo books never materialised, and a book of historical photos and maps of Kent's lost and re-developed grounds is still being researched twenty years after I first started. This will appear eventually, with my archive having many absolutely amazing images along with maps of most grounds. I am delaying publication as I still hold out hope of finding photos of Shorts Sports and a couple of other grounds.

In this 20th anniversary reprint of the first book I have aimed to keep everything as close to the original as possible but some alterations have been made to spelling and punctuation, minor changes have been made to the text and one short paragraph removed. Please note that a generic 'phone number is used not club numbers to avoid confusion.

Looking back at the photos included in this book it is clear that Kent has lost some great stands and grounds. In their place sadly has come too many bland and characterless grounds, and also far too many of what I term portable seating units. These metal structures enable clubs to satisfy ground grading requirements but are an awful place from which to watch a game, being too low and with limited legroom. They are also a standard design and few clubs have the pride to personalise their unit, a far cry from the individual home-built grounds of the past and a trend I for one dislike.

I also note the innocence of middle age in that I thought I'd visited every Kent ground. I soon realised my mistake and spent the next fifteen years visiting many more and the Football Grounds Frenzy Kent had almost 100 grounds in Kent even without including those inside the London boundary. On a personal note I still enjoy visits to Crockenhill although nowadays I no longer run a shop and museum but direct visitors to the amazing clubhouse with its walls covered in footballing memorabilia, the start of which was with items from the old museum. A visit or revisit should still be planned.



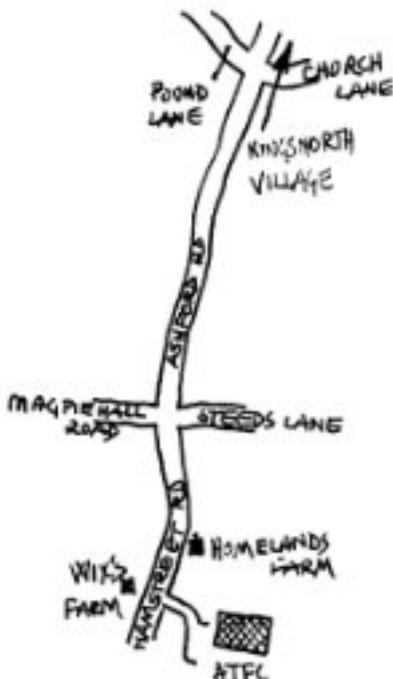
Ashford Town FC

Ground Address: Ashford Road, Kingsnorth, Ashford, Kent TN26 2HY

Telephone Number: 01233 634125* Nearest Station: Ashford 4 miles by bus

Ground description: Ashford sold the unattractive Essella Park, and following a ground-share at Folkestone, moved to a purpose-built ground four miles out of the town in 1989. As one who dislikes the modern kit-built Atcost-style in most cases (Wycombe Wanderers being the exception) I can honestly say that Ashford Town's ground is for me the worst example of just how badly wrong things can go.

The car park is reached by following a rough track a short way, both of which would probably have been tarmaced had sufficient funds been available. An unfavourable impression is already formed. The stand and facilities are good, but the rest of the ground is flat, with just one truly horrible small cover at one end. The ground is more rural than Crookhill's yet has none of the attractions of a true rural ground. A ground-hopper's worst dream is surely to be condemned to watch games at just Ashford and Canterbury's grounds for eternity.



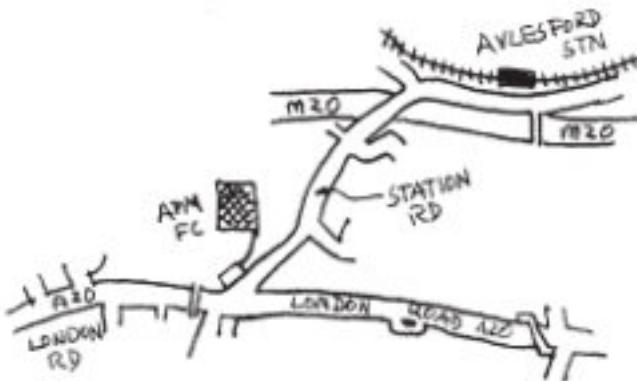


Aylesford Paper Mills FC

Ground Address: Cobdown, Station Road, Ditton, Maidstone, Kent

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Aylesford 1/4 mile

Ground description: Although the current club is listed as having been formed in 1974, an earlier team of the same name was once a powerful force in Kent Amateur Football. The ground at Cobdown is a museum piece recalling how football was staged in less demanding times. The impressive stand is located at one side of a large sports ground, some distance from changing and clubhouse facilities. The corrugated iron structure is somewhat similar to the old ground in Canterbury featured elsewhere but of course retains its seating. It is not clear whether once there were facilities underneath, but the view is undoubtedly the best of any Kent County League club. The pitch is only separated from the crowd by ropes elsewhere. It is unlikely that development will be allowed to spoil the character of the ground, but in time this may limit the ambitions of the club.





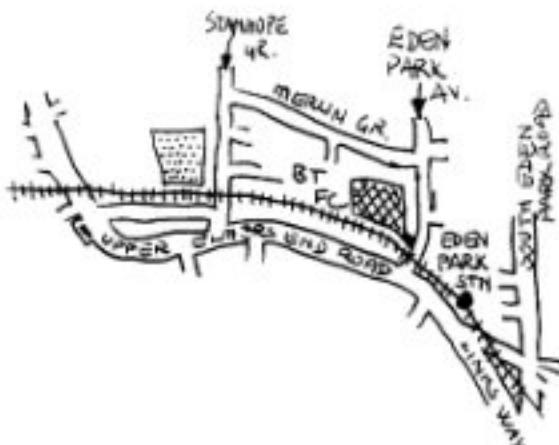
Beckenham Town FC

Ground Address: Eden Park Avenue, Beckenham, Kent

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Eden Park 1/4 mile

Ground description: The reformed Beckenham Town moved to the current ground in the early 1980s from the old Stanhope Grove ground of the former club. In its first incarnation it is believed that the club had a small stand, but the site is now built upon. The remaining unenclosed pitch was used by the current club in the Spartan League

The club now have two pitches and a small floodlit five - a - side area, with the first team pitch being enclosed by a railing but without any terracing. The small stand is adequate for their purposes, and is quite photogenic. The wooden club-house pre-dates the arrival of the club, and is an interesting structure with exposed beams.



The club have a reputation for being among the most friendly in the Kent League.



Canterbury City FC

Ground Address: Kingsmead Stadium, Kingsmead Road, Canterbury, Kent

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Canterbury E 1 mile W 0.5 mile

Ground description: Canterbury City have the misfortune of both playing in a city which has little interest in football and in a stadium which has become increasingly dedicated to its second function, dog racing. Being an evening activity the development of enclosed covered restaurants and bars has occurred, which offer little in the way of good places for watching football. The stand was turned into a restaurant in recent years, and now a few sorry rows of seats just about under the cover of the roof serve as an unsatisfactory fulfilment of ground-grading requirements.

During Crockenhill's recent visit to the ground our Vice-Chairman, Brian Perfect, grew unhappy with the view across the dog track from in front of the stand, and set off to try to find a better view. The earth banks at either end gave some height, but the distance from the pitch was too great. (The cover at the east end is in fact a tractor shed). The best view was to be found on the far side on an earth bank, but five foot high advertising hoardings meant that Brian felt as if he was watching from outside the ground! He had in fact stumbled upon the site of another stand, which was demolished on the promise of the former Romford stand being rebuilt in its place. Apparently this historic structure lay in pieces for mans years before going for scrap without ever being rebuilt.

The club are hoping that their landlords, the local Council, will keep to their current plan of relocating the stadium in the near future. If current problems with the dog section continue it is likely that the club will be rewarded with a purpose-built football stadium. Finally, the club run a good shop - make yourself known as they are a friendly bunch.

The map showing the location of Canterbury City FC appears later.



Chatham Town FC

Ground Address: Maidstone Road, Chatham, Kent

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Chatham 1 mile

Ground description: Chatham's ground is due to undergo development soon, and should the plans come to fruition a good ground would be considerably improved. As with any progress there is always something which is lost and I for one regret the loss of the old entrance which was replaced by a smart brick-built block in recent years. The old weather-board structure was a reflection of Kentish architectural style in a way that no other ground managed, but had become completely rotten. Inside the ground the terrace ahead of the visitor is due to become the focal point of the club with changing rooms and clubhouse having a seated stand on top. Such a stand would be unique in the county being behind a goal. At present there is a concrete terrace with a bike shed behind. The present main stand is on the south side and runs almost the full length of the pitch. It



is of interest because of the division into sections each with its own gate. The clubhouse, changing rooms and officials' seating are on the opposite side, and behind the other goal is a low terrace.

(The maps showing the location of Chatham Town appears later.)



Corinthian FC

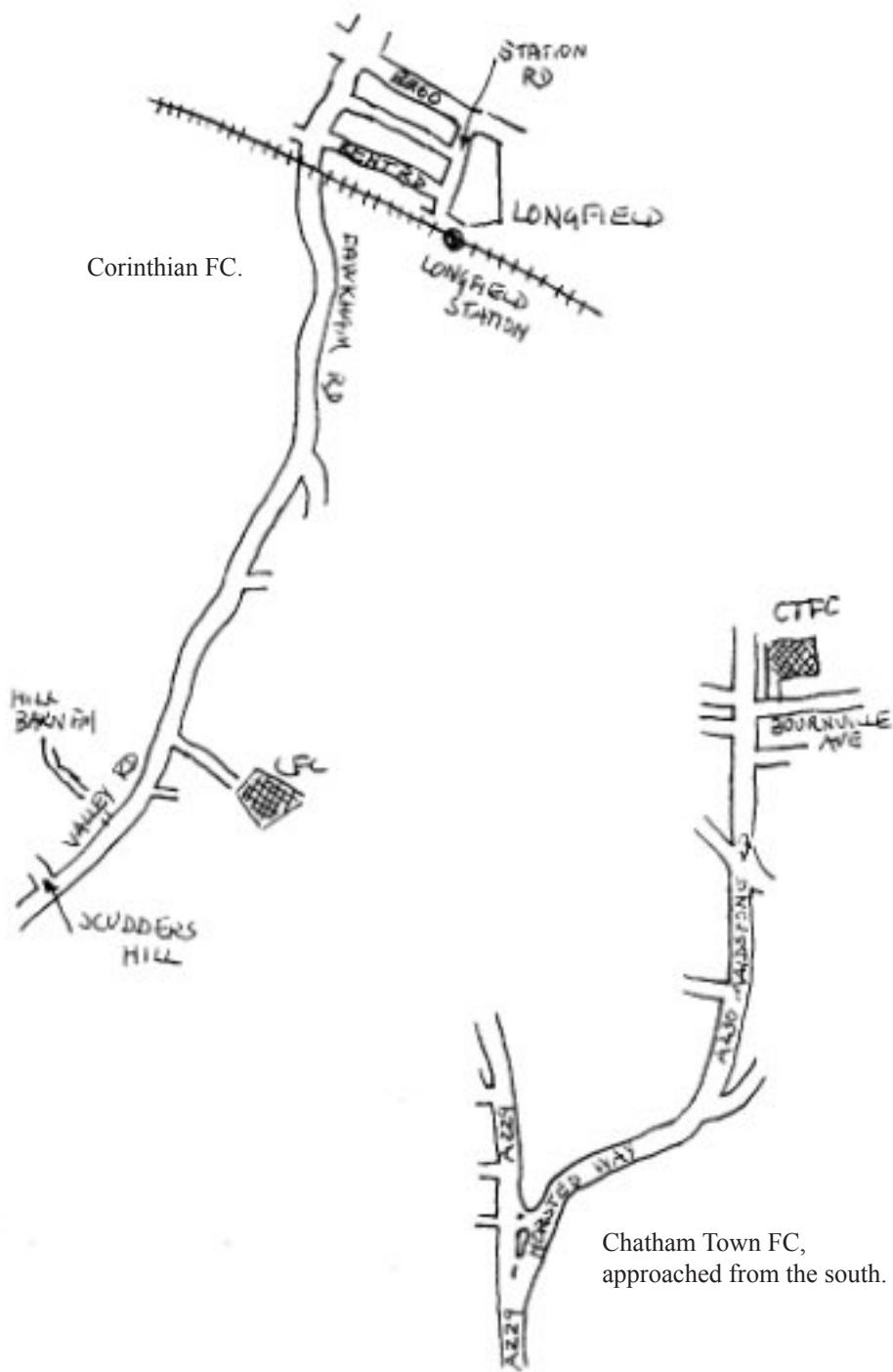
Ground Address: Gay Dawn, Valley Road, Fawkham, Kent DA3 7HB

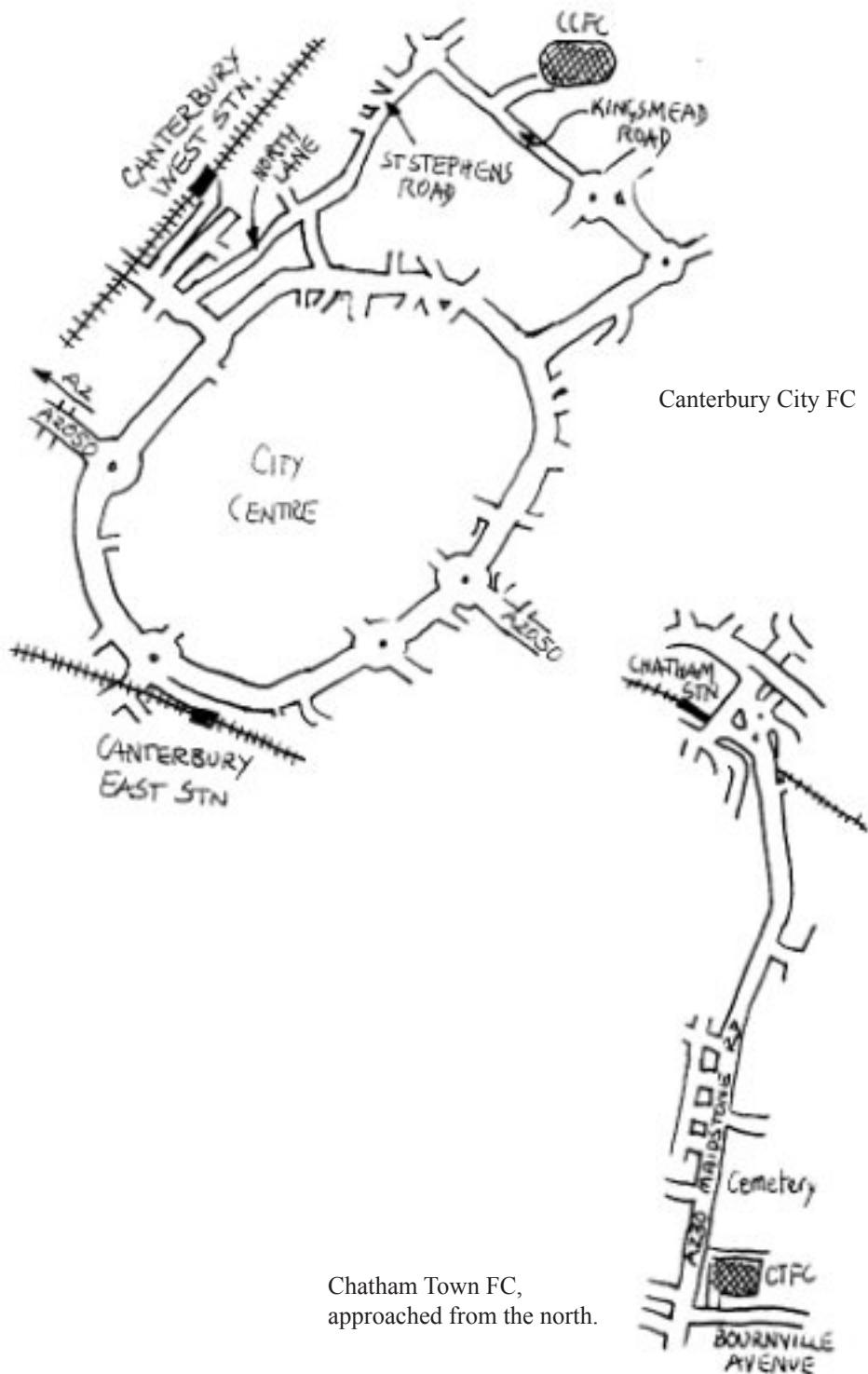
Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Longfield, 1.5 miles

Ground description: Corinthian's ground is surely unique in being part of a working farm, with grain silos behind one goal. The facilities here are unrivalled, forming a private Sports Club and include a golf course and indoor gym provision. The club bar is of the highest standard, and offers excellent snacks and refreshments. The pitch is superbly maintained, and matches are usually open, exciting affairs. The changing rooms and Committee seating are located in a former house at one corner of the ground and remind one of Tonbridge's old Angel ground. The clubhouse end is covered and includes seating. The club also have a floodlit reserve pitch which has its own small seated stand.

*The map showing
the location of
Corinthian
appears later.*









Cray Wanderers FC

Ground Address: Oxford Road, Sidcup, Kent

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Sidcup - 2 miles

Ground description: Cray have a ground of considerable character, on a slope with an earth bank behind the top goal providing an excellent view. A low stand runs alongside the pitch and includes a covered terrace area. The stand is of interest construction having started in 1973

when Cray moved to the ground, but not finally finished until 1993.

A small building by the turnstile houses the changing rooms and an excellent tea bar. The outlook from the ground is remarkably rural, considering the suburban location.

When visiting the Wands look out for sellers of their excellent historical fanzine 'Cray Chatter'.



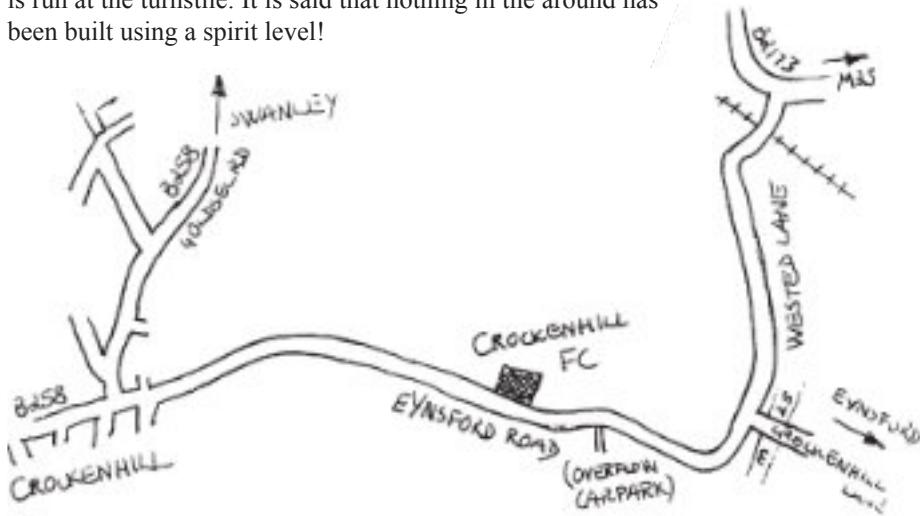


Crockenhill FC

Ground Address: Wested Meadow, Eynsford Road, Crockenhill, Swanley, Kent

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Swanley - 2 miles

Ground description: Crockenhill's Wested Meadow is a small and pleasant ground, just under a mile from the village up along narrow lane. It is best not to walk to the ground unless unavoidable. The superb Victorian turnstile - surely one of the narrowest in the country - leads to a small, home-built stand which dates from the early days of the club. The Crocks have recently completed a simple concrete terrace beyond which will one day be covered. Behind the stand is the clubhouse, open before and during matches with a good teabar serving teas and snacks. The ground has low earth banks on two sides and has superb views on a clear day to the hills of Essex. A small club shop and museum is run at the turnstile. It is said that nothing in the around has been built using a spirit level!





Darent Heathside FC

Ground Address: Horton Road, South Darent, Dartford, Kent

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Station: Farningham Road - 1 mile

Ground description: Darent Heathside FC ran as part of a rural sports club, with tennis and bowls sections. At the end of the 1994/5 season the club did not re-apply for membership of the Kent League. At the time of writing it is not clear what will become of the ground, but it is highly likely that senior football will return to the ground in the future: the ground therefore has not quite acquired 'defunct' status. The clubhouse and changing rooms are to be found close by the entrance in a wooden building, which also houses a teabar. The pitch is fully-railed, with a concrete path along one side. The simple brick stand is alongside the clubhouse. There is much unused land around the pitch.





Deal Town FC

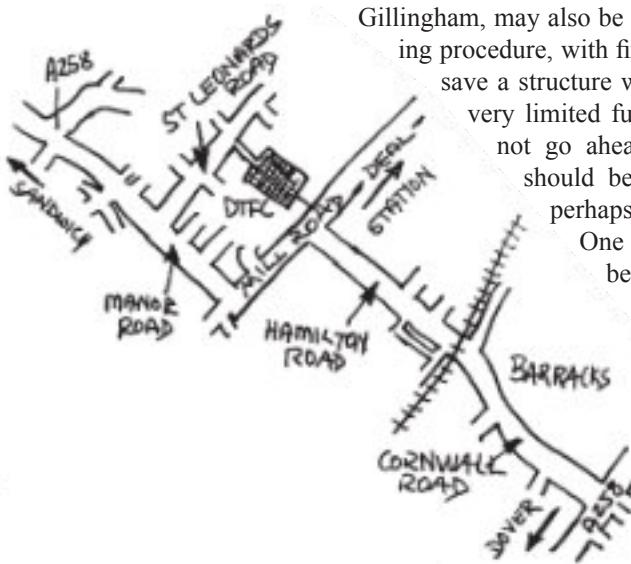
Ground Address: The Charles Sports Ground, Mill Road, Deal, Kent

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Deal 0.5 mile

Ground description: Deal's ground has been under threat and it has seemed likely in recent years that a superb ground could be lost. It would appear that problems are being resolved, and that a new lease will enable the club to plan for developments which have held the club back - especially in replacing the present floodlights, which are well worth a closer look. The old wooden stand, similar to Margate's and the old stand at

Gillingham, may also be the subject of a listed building procedure, with fire-proofing work planned to save a structure which had seemed to have a very limited future. Should the renovation not go ahead I believe that the stand should be preserved in some way - perhaps at an Open Air Museum.

One end has concrete terracing behind, with the biggest jump in height per step ever. The changing rooms are in the corner nearby, and there is a simple cover along the second side.



A small club shop is run from a shed by the changing rooms, and visitors are made very welcome.



Dover Athletic FC

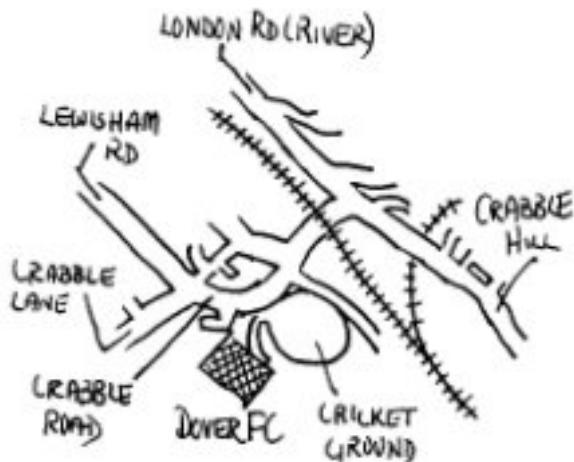
Ground Address: Crabble Athletic Ground, Lewisham Road, River, Dover

Telephone Number: 01234 654321

Nearest Mainline Station: Dover Priory then bus or local trains - Kearsney 1.5 miles

Ground description: Dover's ground is set into the side of a hill on the outskirts of the town. The pedestrian approach to the ground takes the visitor past the county cricket ground, and up to turnstiles uniquely set below the level of the playing surface. A small stand has recently been built on the south side of the pitch, above the entrance to the ground. The clubhouse and shop are to be found by turning to one's right at the entrance. Both ends of the ground are good covered terraces, and the main grandstand and club hospitality rooms are situated on the other side of the ground. The ground offers spectators many good vantage points, but photographers find the shade from the hill something of an inconvenience.

A good traditional football ground, unspoilt by excellent modern facilities.





Erith & Belvedere FC

Ground Address: Park View, Lower Road, Belvedere, Kent DA17 613F

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Belvedere 100 yards

Ground description: Park View is included in this book (despite being one of those due to be featured in the forthcoming South London edition) because Dartford play Kent League football here. A ground with a long history, it is frustratingly difficult to photograph - either to show it for the amazing dump that it is, or to adequately feature the wooden stand which should make an interesting photograph from some angle. Ash banks at one end and under the dilapidated cover on the far side give poor viewing

opportunities. A very shallow terrace is at the other end. The former high status of the club can be seen by the abandoned turnstiles on the far side, from days when supporters walked to the ground. Indeed, the footpath leading from the road to the corner entrance offers the one attractive view of the ground. Make sure that the inside of the stand is seen, as this part of the ground does have some character, and houses a bar and teabar.





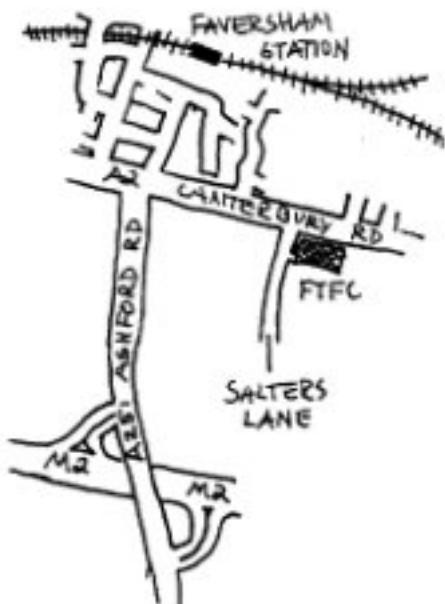
Faversham Town FC

Ground Address: Salters Lane, Faversham, Kent

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Faversham 1 mile

Ground description: Faversham's ground is entered through a car park a short way up Salters Lane from the A2. In the distant past it is thought that the pitch extended into the current car park, although there is no evidence to support this theory. Entry is gained be-

hind one goal, with a small home-built covered terrace to the right. Just round from the corner flag are the changing rooms, with a small seated area for officials in front. The position means it is rare for the kind offer to be taken up. The somewhat decrepit clubhouse is further along this side, past which a footpath leads away to the road. Behind the other goal is a small second pitch at right angles to the first. A simple concrete cover fills the second side, and has a good tea bar at the entrance end. Some seating enables this terrace to be called a stand, but is hardly grand. A good, but simple ground.





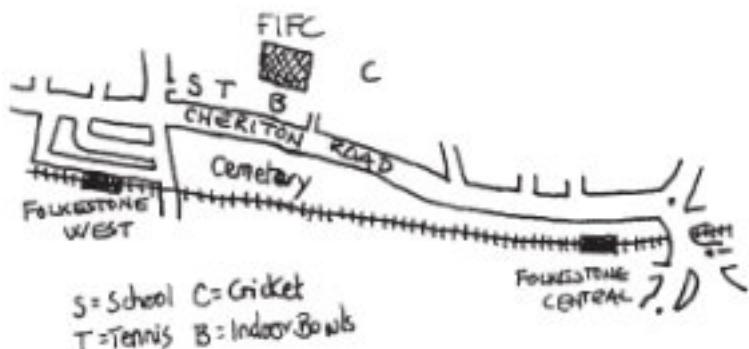
Folkestone Invicta FC

Ground Address: Cheriton Road, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 5JU

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Folkestone Central / West

Ground description: Folkestone Invicta's ground is a must for anyone who appreciates the atmosphere of a proper football ground. A large stand (sadly unimpressively low) occupies one side, replacing an older stand which burnt down in the 1970s. The other three sides all feature traditional multi-stepped concrete terraces. The second side is also covered, the roof coming off the back wall of the indoor bowls club. The ground occupies a high position and offers excellent views inland, and could therefore be photographed from the downs by use of a long telephoto lens. The local council obviously understand the worth of the ground as they charge their tenants - it is said - a considerable five-figure sum for the pleasure of using the facility.

* The club also run a good club shop. *



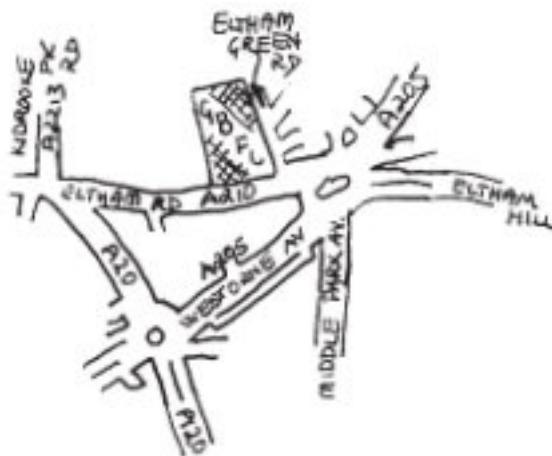


Furness FC

Ground Address: Green Court Road, Crockenhill, Swanley, Kent

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Swanley 1 mile

Ground description: Take a coat as this ground is always cold, standing on the top of the first hill out of London. The ground was developed - allegedly with scant regard for planning permission - by Alma Swanley in the early 1980s; look out for evidence in the form of the small concrete terrace, where the first attempt at providing covered accommodation was erected. The entrance is to the left of the clubhouse at the back of the large carpark. The bar and teabar are within this building, entered down the players' cage. The



small stand is inconveniently located way on the far side of the ground, but offers a good view of South London. The rest of the ground is flat, with concrete slabs along the other side. The exposed position and featureless layout makes this ground somewhat lacking in atmosphere.

If walking from the station use the footpath by the railway, by turning right by the ticket-office entrance.



Gravesend & Northfleet FC

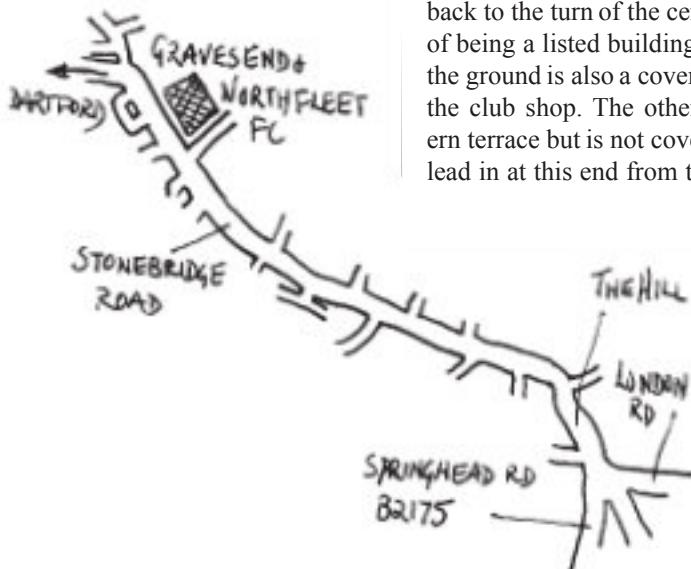
Ground Address: Stonebridge Road, Northfleet, Kent

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Northfleet 0.5 mile

Ground description: Stonebridge Road is the Jewel in the Crown of Kent's football grounds, and there are few better grounds in the entire country. An impressive turnstile block leads to the rear of a covered end terrace. The clubhouse is to one's right at this entrance. The terrace is a traditional Kop end, but has seen better days. The main stand

is a unique and historic wooden structure dating back to the turn of the century, and is deserving of being a listed building. The opposite side of the ground is also a covered terrace, and houses the club shop. The other end is a more modern terrace but is not covered. Further turnstiles lead in at this end from the car park. There are

good teabars on both sides of the ground.



The special atmosphere is crowned by some very witty fans.



Greenwich Borough FC

Ground Address: Harrow Meadow, Eltham Green Road, Eltham, SE9

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Eltham / Kidbrooke 1 mile

Ground description: Harrow Meadow is two grounds for the price of one - the current Kent League pitch, and the floodlit pitch beyond, which is no longer within the ground grading requirements due to the distance from the changing rooms. The club may regret the decision to locate the lights on this pitch in the late 1970s, but the continued use of the other pitch for cricket gave no option. The club now have sole use of the ground, and it is intended to move the lights and build a stand in the near future, when a longer lease

has been negotiated. For the moment the floodlit pitch has an interesting defunct air about it. The clubhouse is also awaiting renovation, but includes an excellent tea bar. The only seating is in a small temporary stand - a club applying to the Kent League would not be accepted with such a stand; there is no terracing.



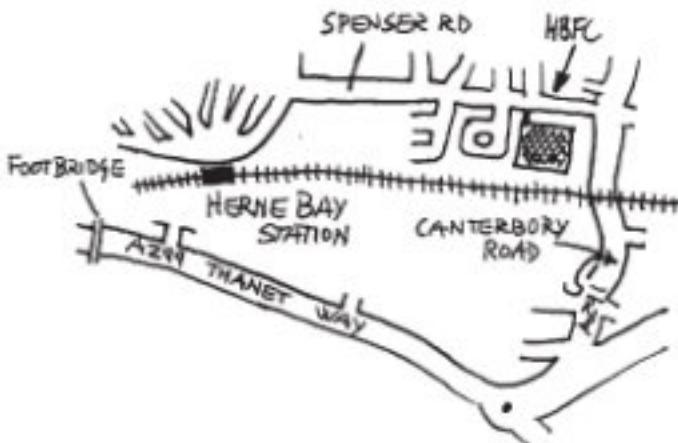


Herne Bay FC

Ground Address: Winch's Field, Stanley Gardens, Herne Bay, Kent

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Herne Bay 0.5 mile

Ground description: Herne Bay's proudest claim is of having cover on all four sides, with the North side boasting two covered areas. Situated in the shadow of the embankment of the Kent Coast railway, the ground gives additional enjoyment to trainspotting groundhoppers. The cover at either end gives a good traditional feel, with an excellent high view available for those who like it. A small seated stand is found on the railway side, with the other side featuring the changing rooms, with small seated cover attached, the club-house and a new small stand.



An ambitious club who have developed thoroughly appropriate facilities, giving a great atmosphere for the visiting 'hopper.'

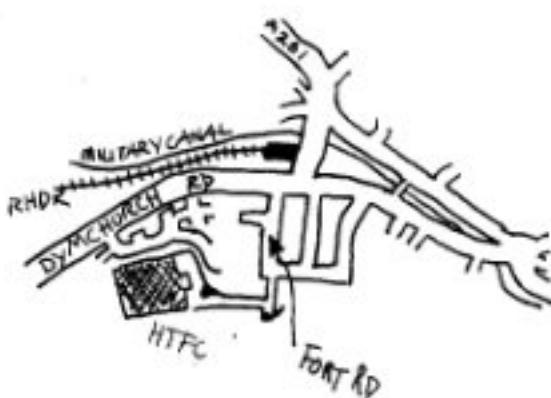


Hythe United FC

Ground Address: Fort Road, Hythe, Kent

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Sandling 1.5 miles

Ground description: Reachfields is the former home of the now-defunct Hythe Town, an example to any club who are content to hand over the reins to an individual who seems able to buy anything he wants. The old club went bust having attracted the cream of Kent's talent for a few short years, during which time the ground underwent considerable development. The double-deck stand may be unique in the county in terms of the view offered, but is offensive to the eye of most groundhoppers in both design and gaudy paintwork. The rest of the ground is pleasant enough, with good terraced cover behind one goal and along the second side. Trainspotting groundhoppers will of course be aware of the nearby terminus of the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch railway, a delightful 15 inch gauge line. When arriving by car trust the map, and enter the ground along an unmade road.



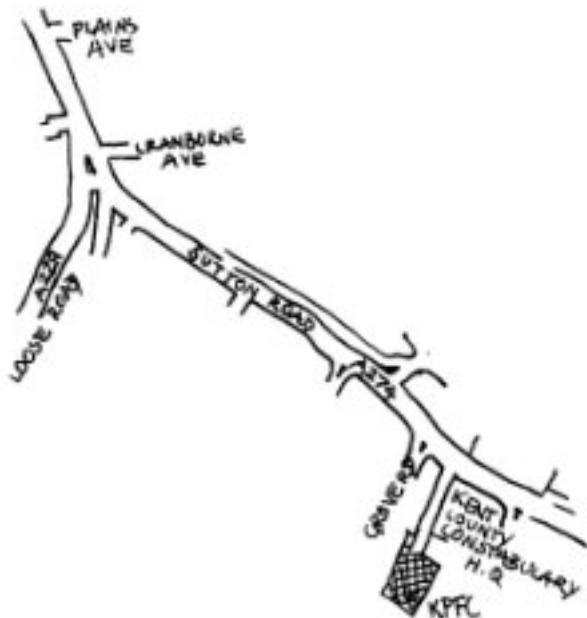


Kent Police FC

Ground Address: Police HQ, Sutton Road, Maidstone

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Maidstone E & W 1.5 miles

Ground description: The ground-grading requirements of the Kent League are rapidly catching up with Kent Police, and changes to shift arrangements makes team selection difficult. During every season it seems that the club will not be around for the next - but deserve credit for carrying on in difficult times. No-one can doubt the quality of the pitch, which is part of a large sports ground and is looked after by a proper groundsman. It is fenced in by a removable wire fence which allows the cricket pitch to be used in summer, and rugby to be watched when a player goes down injured. The small stand is adequate, but there is no terracing on the ground from which to watch. The changing room and tea bar are by the entrance to the ground.





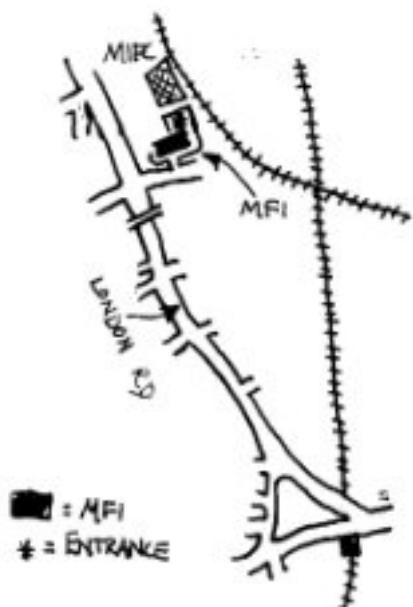
Maidstone Invicta FC

Ground Address: The Athletic Ground, London Road, Maidstone, Kent

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Maidstone E / Barracks 0.5 mile

Ground description: With the demise of Maidstone United and Dartford in 1992, the

rump of the old county town club returned to its former base in London Road, albeit only to park their cars. Entry to the Invicta's ground is through the rear car park of the MFI furniture warehouse which covers the site of the former ground, the pitch being adjacent to the former stadium. A wire fence encloses the ground, which is railed and floodlit. Two small buildings house changing rooms and a teabar, and there are a few seats between the two dugouts. Space around the pitch is severely limited, and it is said that the club will find that Kent League ground grading requirements would limit the progress the club can make back up the pyramid at this ground.





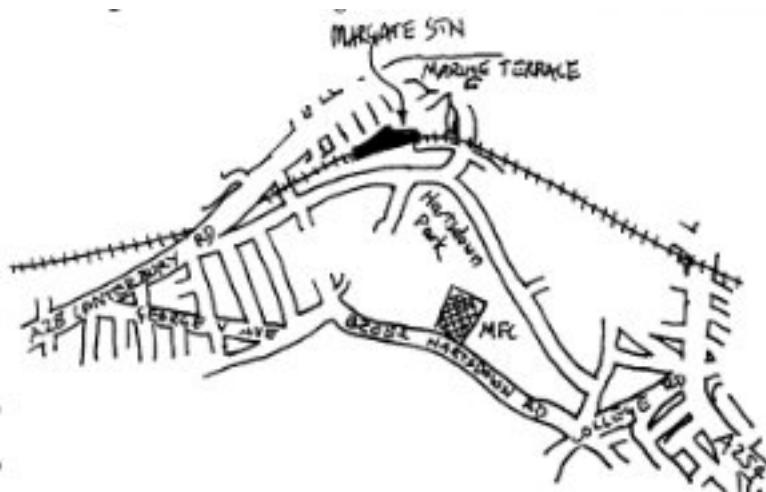
Margate FC

Ground Address: Hartsdown Park, Hartsdown Road, Margate CT9 5QZ

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Margate 0.5 mile

Ground description: Margate have a ground to be proud of, with excellent facilities as would be expected at a traditional Southern League ground. It is an interesting ground to wander around, with many photographic opportunities. Both ends are good covered terraces, with club facilities at the main entrance end. The main stand is small but of great interest. The design is similar to that at Deal Town but has kept up with modern seating requirements.

It is sited somewhat below the playing surface, and appears to have sunk between the terraces on either side - very difficult to photograph.





Ramsgate FC

Ground Address: Southwood Stadium, Prices Road, Ramsgate

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Ramsgate 3/4 mile

Ground description: After the war the pitch was turned through 90 degrees, giving a thin training area to one side. The entrance now is to one corner, and the run-down facility reflects the shabby conditions elsewhere at this ground. The feeling is that this should be a ground of character, but somehow doesn't have any. Both ends are terraced, but at a distance from the pitch. The stand reflects past ambition but has seen better days. The old changing rooms underneath are not used as they were subject to flooding. Windows at both ends are boarded up, and it is not known what function they served. The clubhouse is by the gate.



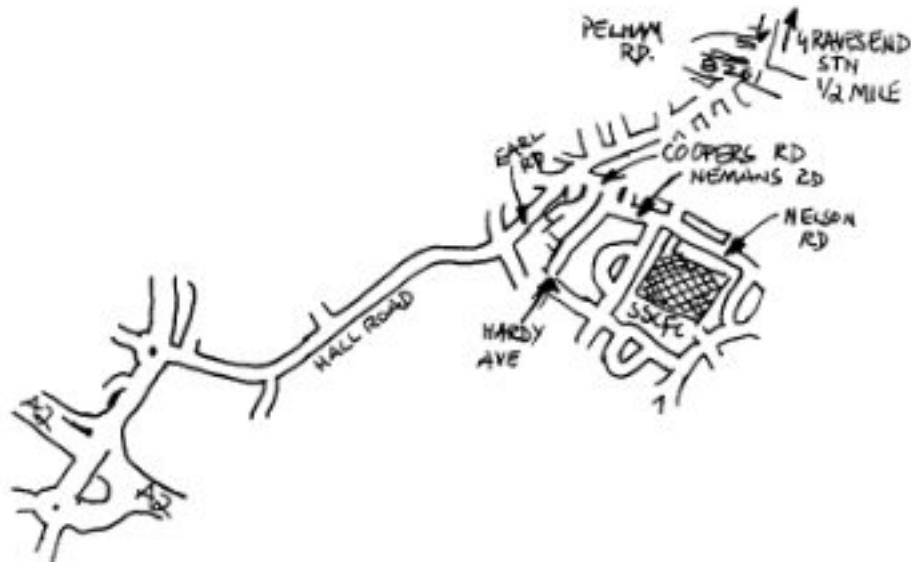


Scott Sports FC

Ground Address: Nelson Road, Northfleet, Kent

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Gravesend

Ground description: Scott Sports do not have an amazing ground, in common with many other Kent County League clubs, but are an excellent club who are deserving of visiting support. A programme is usually issued, but if necessary telephone hard-working club secretary Bob Taylor first, mentioning this book. The ground is at present a large multi-sport area with only a roped-off pitch, but it is said that a way will be found to give the football team a properly enclosed and equipped ground in the future. Take care when looking for the ground - it is notoriously hard to locate.





Sevenoaks Town FC

Ground Address: Greatness Park, Seal Road, Sevenoaks

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Bat & Ball

Ground description: Although Sevenoaks play Kent County League football in a public park on an unenclosed pitch the club are well worth visiting. Given the restriction of having a cricket square beside one touchline, the club have done well to establish a railed barrier on the other side and at both ends, to give a 'real' feel to the ground. This is further enhanced by the hill which rises alone one side and at one end. It is said that it was supposed to be developed as a ski slope, but now offers an interesting high vantage point from which to watch at least part of a game. The small cover is a token gesture, and do not be fooled the floodlights in the photograph - they are on just one side and are for training only. A further handicap to the club should they have ambitions to climb the pyramid is the changing room complex, which is at a distance from the first team pitch. It does, however, house a good tea bar, something not always found at grounds in this league. Visitors will be interested to see the historic method of collecting admission - by someone walking round with a box.





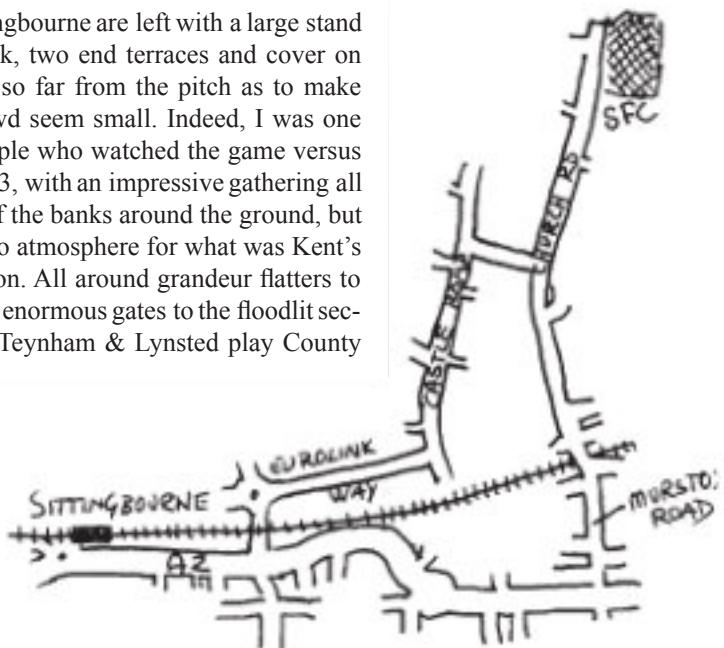
Sittingbourne FC

Ground Address: Central Park, Eurolink, Sittingbourne, Kent ME 10 3SB

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Sittingbourne 2 miles

Ground description: Sittingbourne's ground would be impressive had circumstances not put the very survival of the club at risk. The vision of a 40,000 all-seater stadium now looks somewhat daft as Sittingbourne are left with a large stand outside a dogtrack, two end terraces and cover on the far side - all so far from the pitch as to make even a large crowd seem small. Indeed, I was one of over 3000 people who watched the game versus Gravesend in 1993, with an impressive gathering all around the side of the banks around the ground, but with absolutely no atmosphere for what was Kent's game of the season. All around grandeur flatters to deceive, from the enormous gates to the floodlit second pitch where Teynham & Lynsted play County League football in front of the temporary stand seen in the photo above.

*Give me the Bull
Ground any day.*





Slade Green FC

Ground Address: The Small Glen, Moat Road, Slade Green

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Slade Green 0.5 mile

Ground description: Slade Green is not the easiest of clubs to find - take care when turning off the A206, as it is easy to miss the turning. The entrance to the ground is a short way from the junction of Moat Road and Hazel Road - park in the ground rather than in the lane. There is an excellent view of the ground from the car park, with the Erith marshes lending a surprisingly rural aspect to a suburban club. All of the facilities are down the

slope from the pay-gate, behind the stand and covered terrace. A bar offers the usual facilities and there is also a good teabar within the same building. The ground is railed and with a concrete path all round. Regular visitors will be aware of the continued development undertaken by the club over the years - a credit to the club, and an example to other small clubs.



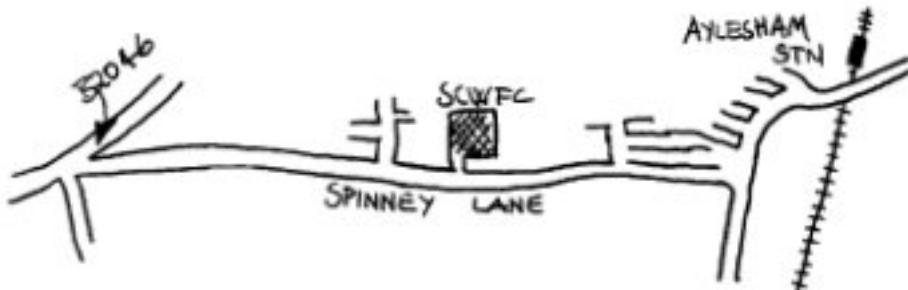


Snowdown Colliery Welfare FC

Ground Address: Spinney Lane, Aylesham, Canterbury, Kent

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Aylesham 1 mile

Ground description: This ground is a bleak reminder that East Kent once had a coal industry, with all the expected features - including a proper football ground. The ground once boasted a good wooden stand, but this was torn down following the fire at Bradford. Sources close to the club suggest that it is intended to build a new stand at some time, finances permitting. At present a few seats are available in front of the wooden changing rooms, in the form of scaffold planks. Either side of the old stand are terraced enclosures, which offer a better view of the action. Elsewhere, the pitch is enclosed by a concrete wall, but with only rough standing for spectators behind. Rudimentary flood-lighting adds to the slightly unreal atmosphere of the ground - the feeling is of a defunct club, but hopefully better times will return in the near future.



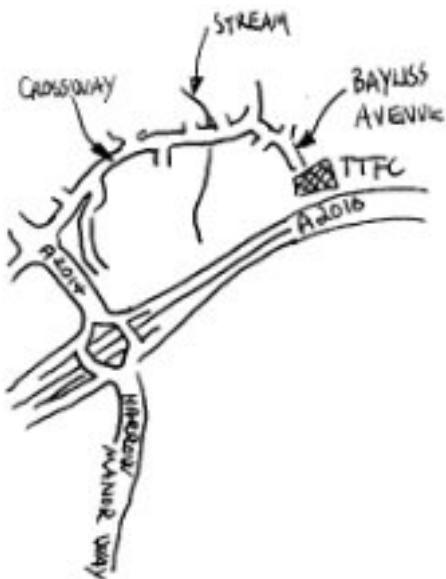


Thamesmead Town FC

Ground Address: Bayliss Avenue, Thamesmead, London

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Abbey Wood 1.5 miles

Ground description: Thamesmead is a newly-developed residential area, and has a football ground to match. There can be no complaining about the facilities - club-house, floodlights, second pitch, but the spectator came a poor second when consideration was given to the design of the ground. From the car park the ground is to be found by walking to the left of the club-house, across a footpath. The pitches are uniquely enclosed by what can only be described as tennis court fencing, and there is a very open feeling to the ground as a result. Spectators are limited to watching from the east side, which has two small stands, one reserved for the use of Club Officials. As a focal part of the community running many junior teams the club has done very well and are now an established force in the Kent League. It is hoped that ground development will follow.





Tonbridge AFC

Ground Address: Longmead Stadium, Darenth Avenue, Tonbridge, Kent

Telephone Number: 01234 654321

Nearest Station: Tonbridge 1.2 miles

Ground description: Tonbridge boasts probably the best atmosphere and most passionate support at any ground in Kent. Parking is easy in the large car park, and a warm welcome awaits visitors when Assistant Secretary Steve Wardhaugh is on the gate. Immediately inside the ground is the clubhouse, in front of which the club intend to build a superb new stand, with seating for 300 above the dressing rooms. In front will be a covered terrace for 500 fans. The opposite side has the historic cover removed from the club's former Angel ground, in which a seated area resounds to the sound of drumming feet at exciting moments in a match. Both ends have simple sleeper terracing and there is a good club shop at the south end.



In my opinion, Kent's club of the future.



Tunbridge Wells FC

Ground Address: Culverden Stadium, Culverden Down, Tunbridge Wells

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Tunbridge Wells 1 mile

Ground description: This ground is a pleasant surprise, with plenty of indefinable character. The entrance creates a good impression, with a proper turnstile block, nicely painted. This leads to the top of a good terrace behind one goal, which curves attractively around one corner. It is important, however, to be careful as the terrace is very slippery when wet. Beside the turnstile is an excellent club shop, which opens at half time. Also at this end is the clubhouse and tea bar. Along the east side is the main stand including a covered terrace (rare in football as stands do not normally face west, and therefore into the sun). There is not much height to either facility and so the view is not great. The opposite side and other end are both flat with concrete paths. The ground drops away sharply to the north, so a large net is needed to stop wayward shots.

A ground to be walked around and enjoyed to the full well before the game. Many opportunities for good photos.





Whitstable Town FC

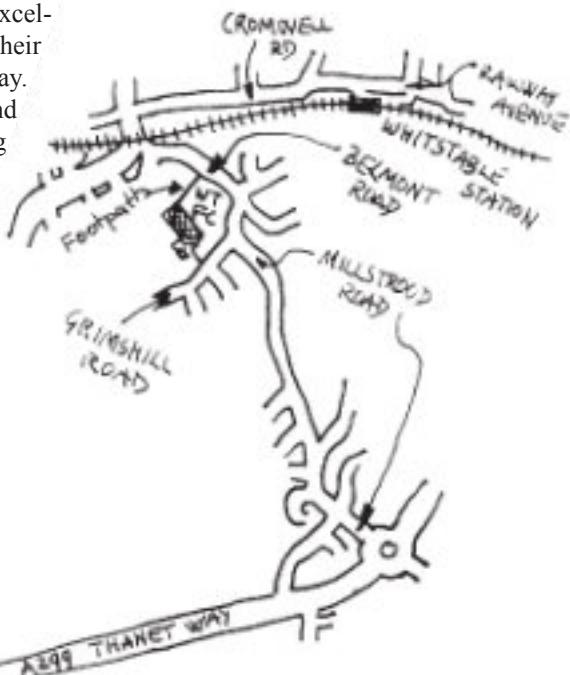
Ground Address: Belmont Road, Belmont, Whitstable, Kent

Telephone Number: 01234 654321 Nearest Station: Whitstable 0.5 mile

Ground description: Belmont Road is perhaps the best example of a ground exactly suited to its club's position - the ideal County-standard ground. The ground has two entrances, one in Belmont Road, the other through the car park in Grimshill Road. The main stand is situated beside the car park entrance, and gives a very good view to those who like to sit. Either side of the stand is concrete standing, with the eastern end being uncovered and unterraced. The opposite end is a covered terrace, and most home fans choose to watch from this excellent vantage point even when their team is attacking the other way.

A good tea bar is to be found by the second turnstile, along with a club shop in its own shed. Don't be shy, have a look inside - they are very friendly. The clubhouse is beside the corner flag, and another building houses changing rooms and gives cover to visiting officials.

Well worth a visit.



Gone But Not Forgotten

Football Historian Dave Twydell has been producing an excellent series on the former homes of many clubs and has included a number of Kent's grounds. Clubs covered have been Ashford, Sittingbourne, Tonbridge and Canterbury City / Bretts Sports. Further details and an informative newsletter can be obtained from 12 The Furrows, Harefield, Middlesex.

Watling Street, the former home of Dartford is featured below.

My thanks are due to Dave for the advice given in the production of this book.

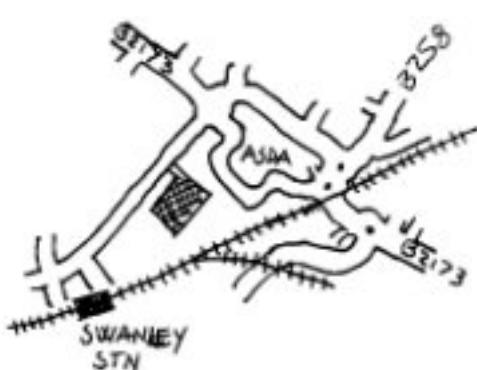




Alma Swanley FC / Swanley Town FC

Ground Address: St Mary's Road, Swanley Nearest Station: Swanley

Ground description: The casual visitor to Swanley (should such a misguided person exist) would not imagine that the Recreation Ground had once witnessed an FA Vase quarter-final, with over 1000 people seeing an amazing comeback by Alma Swanley to earn a replay against Windsor & Eton in 1981. The ground at this time looked somewhat different, with the building behind not having its present brick fascia, and with a simple cover coming off by the halfway line. The pitch was roped off not railed, and the ground was enclosed a white tarpaulin, which had to be rolled up after each game.

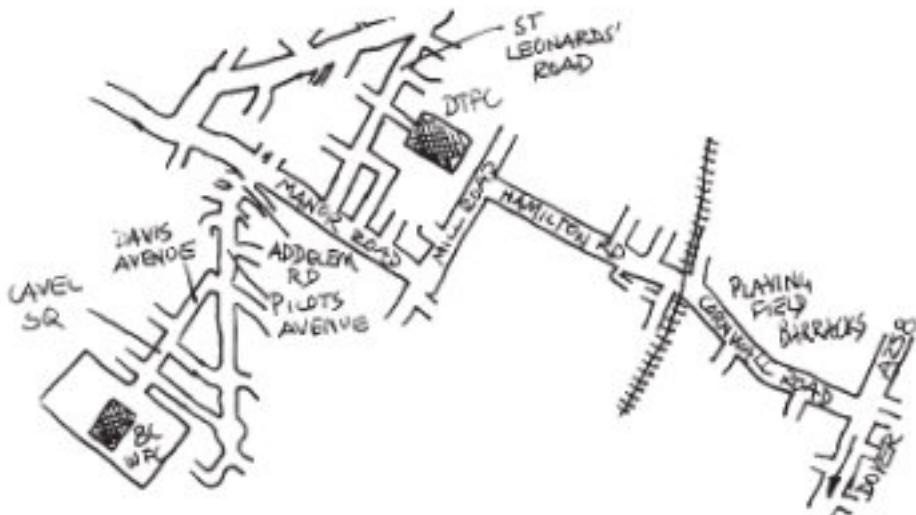


Ambitious Alma moved to their own ground in the nearby village of Crockenhill soon after, but it was too far away and too bleak to attract support. Swanley Town slowly declined although there were plans for the developing of an athletics stadium with Isthmian League facilities in the early 1980s, but these did not come to fruition. Swanley is big enough to support a club playing a high standard of football, but this now seems an unlikely prospect.



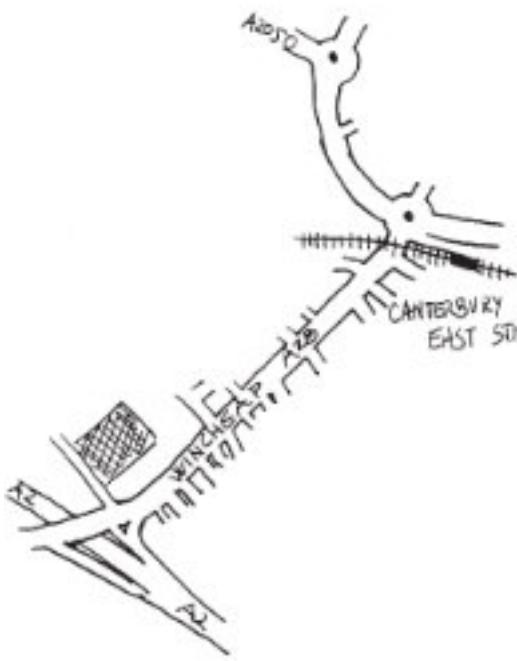
Betteshanger Colliery Welfare FC

Ground description: When visiting Deal Town it is easy to call into this ground on the way home. Some of the people involved at Deal once watched matches at Bettleshanger and are only too happy to recall the old ground. The only remains are a small section of cover at one end, which is rapidly being enclosed as a shed. The former stand is long-since gone and a large terrace once stood near to the entrance to the ground. It is hard to imagine FA Cup ties in front of large crowds being played here in the 1950s.





Bretts Sports FC & Canterbury City FC



Ground description: This ground is a 'must' for any serious groundhopper. Twice home to teams playing in the Kent League, the ground is still used by the Bretts company as part of a multi-sport works ground, but no care is taken over the remains of the football spectator facilities. A good-sized stand sits by the centre-line, similar in style to that at Aylesford Paper Mills, but with no interior seating any more. Indeed, in summer it is hard to see the stand as mature trees have grown in front of it since it last held spectators. To either side was once terracing, to one side well overgrown by shrubs, but the other is still accessible although its roof has long-since been removed.

Further details about the ground are to be found in Dave Twydell's 'Gone but not Forgotten' books.

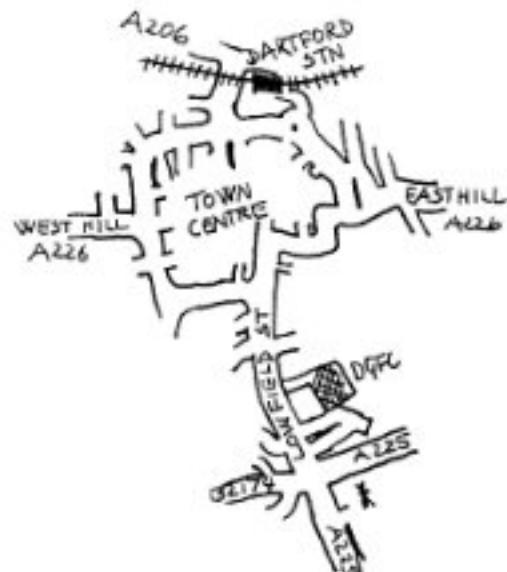


Dartford Glentworth FC

Ground Address: Lowfield Street, Dartford Nearest Station: Dartford 0.75 mile

Ground description: This ground continues to be used for football, with Kent County League club Borough Utd currently using the facilities. In the early 1980s Dartford Glentworth left the Kent League, having played FA Vase matches here prior to their demise. They had installed simple floodlights, the pitch was fully railed and a simple shelter stood at the half-way line.

Previously known as Dartford Amateurs, and before that Tunnel Sports, this club had previously played Kent Amateur League football for many years near their base near the Blackwall Tunnel. They originally moved to Dartford to share at Watling Street, but despite ambitious plans announced in the local press soon left to play at Lowfield Street. Prior to their demise in 1981 Dartford Glentworth played in the Kent League. The ground is still much as it was then, but the cover did not survive the 1980's.



Gravesend United FC

Ground Address:

Central Avenue,
Gravesend

Nearest Station:
Gravesend 0.7 mile

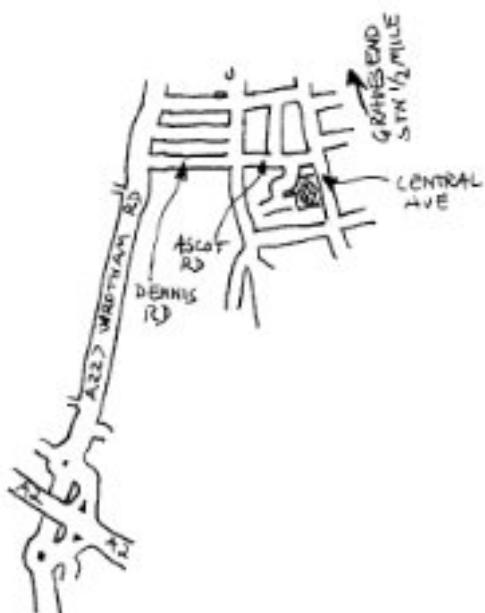
Ground description: This is only half of an old around, but as a reminder that Gravesend one boasted two top teams is of great interest.

The club were early members of the Southern League and actually beat Spurs at home in the year they first won the FA Cup. Earlier grounds ex-

isted at Overchiffe and on the site of the present Girls Grammar School, but it was at Central Avenue that the club played its last game before amalgamating with the by then more senior Northfleet Utd.

Some Gravesend players did not make the move, and played for top amateur club Thameside Amateurs at nearby Thong Lane (the ground is now covered by housing). Gravesend Rugby Club used Central Avenue after the war, and half of the pitch was turned over to housing in the late 1970s. Look for the site of the old stand.

With thanks to Richard Ralph for the old map and information about the ground.

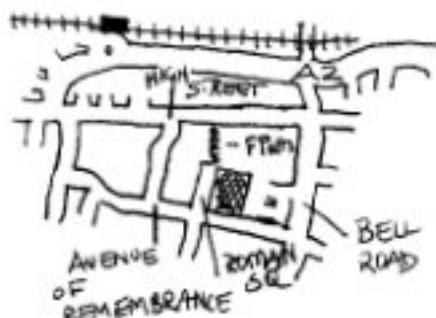




Sittingbourne FC

Nearest Station: Sittingbourne 0.25 mile

Ground description: The Bull Ground was once a superb example of a good, old-fashioned town centre ground. It was a pleasure to walk around the shops, then cut up the path beside the Bull pub and see the floodlights and stand ahead. The ground may have seen better days, and the concrete terracing was not used to its full potential, while the stand had suffered over the years. Put simply, the ground had enormous character and that indefinable atmosphere which no amount of money can design into a facility. It is ironic that in the time it has taken the club to spend approaching ten million pounds, and still not build the ground of their dreams, the recession has ensured that the skeleton of their old ground remains. Within weeks of the sale the stand was demolished, and terraces flattened. The perimeter walls remain, and the old main gates and turnstiles look much as they did years ago. Looking over the wall it is possible to see where the terraces stood, and grass still grows on the pitch. The former social club still operates here and one corner, and is used for meetings of the Kent Counts League. As no retail use seems to exist for the ground, perhaps someone should cut the grass and play football at the ground again.



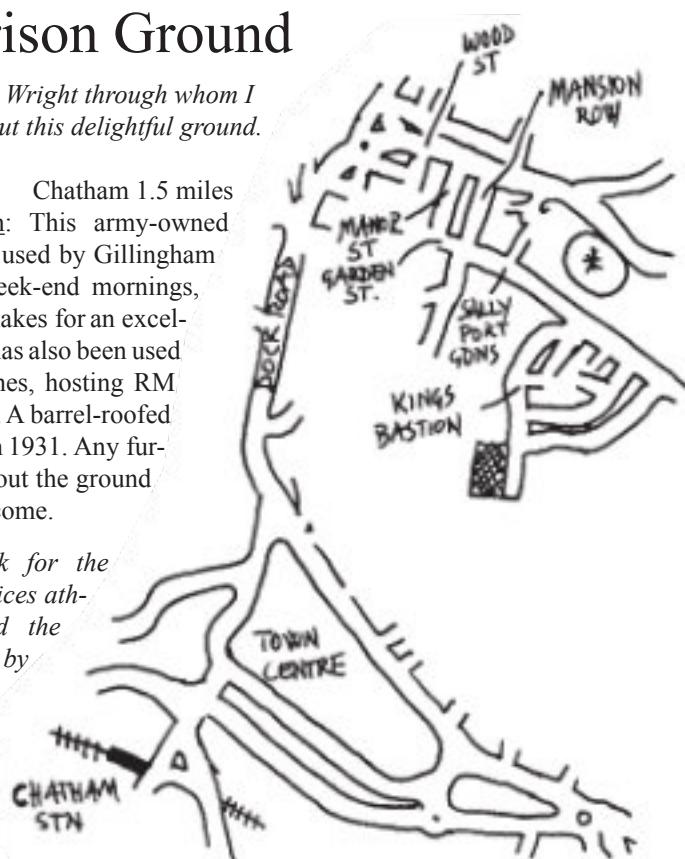


The Garrison Ground

My thanks to James Wright through whom I first got to hear about this delightful ground.

Nearest Station: Chatham 1.5 miles
Ground description: This army-owned ground is regularly used by Gillingham Youth teams on week-end mornings, and a good crowd makes for an excellent atmosphere. It has also been used by the Royal Marines, hosting RM Chatham's matches. A barrel-roofed stand was opened in 1931. Any further information about the ground would be most welcome.

When visiting look for the nearby United Services athletics stadium and the Great Lines area by the war memorial, where Chatham once played.



Two more Kent County League grounds: Greenways (top) and New Romney (bottom). Although many clubs in the League are working hard to improve their facilities with the hope of being promoted into the Kent League, the grounds of most clubs are basic.



The Non-League Football Grounds of...

Volume 1: Kent

By Mike Floate

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Mike Floate, Crockenhill 2015



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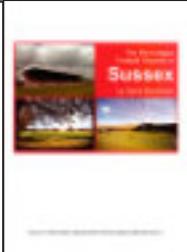
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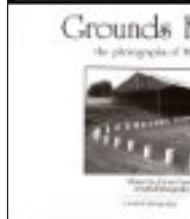
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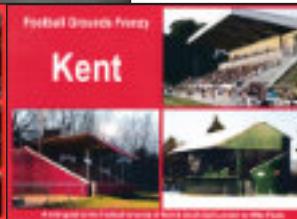
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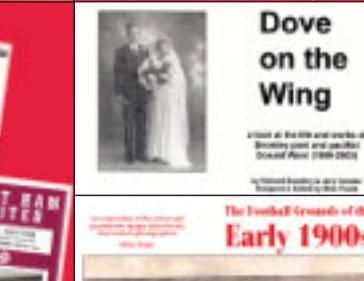
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