

A Short History of the Goan Playing Field

Where is the playing field?

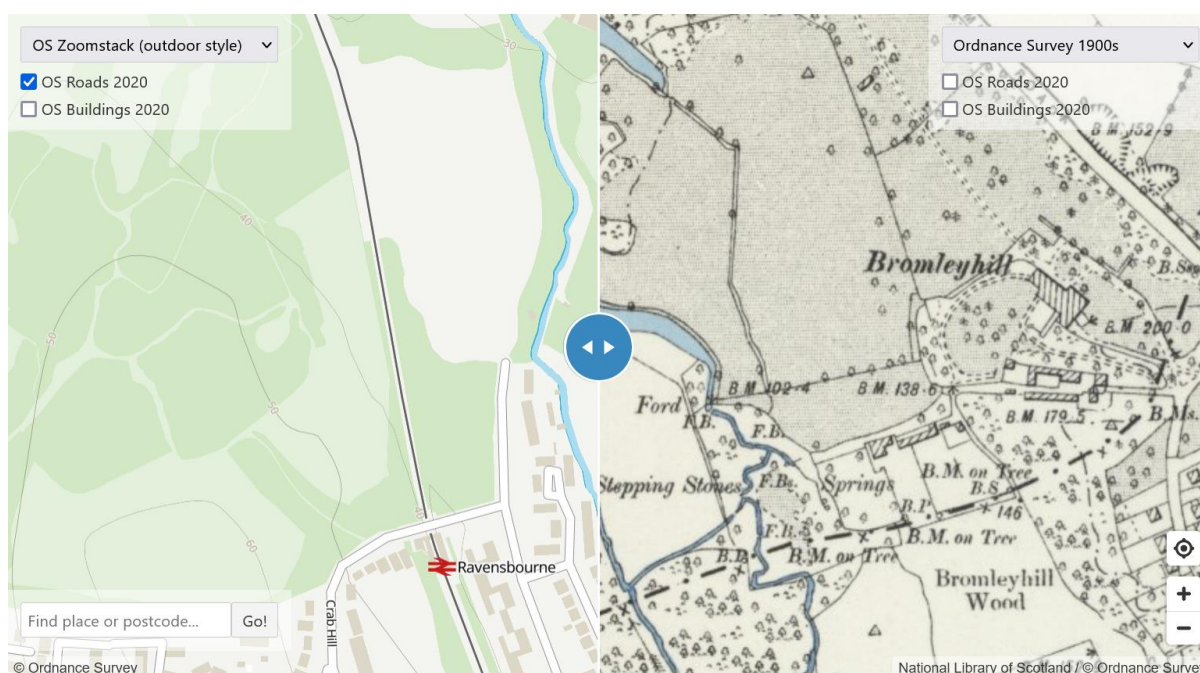
It is just to the east at the end of Ravensbourne Avenue in the Borough of Lewisham



The Property Register states: -

The land has the benefit of a right of way across the ford shown on the said plan and along a strip of land 30 feet wide leading from the said ford to Warren Avenue as mentioned in the Deed dated 28 January 1921 referred to in the Charges Register.

The ford is no longer shown on the modern plan and one would think that the ford must be somewhere near the bridge over the existing river. However, a historic map clearly shows the ford marked near what was to become the footpath running alongside Millwall Training Ground:-



Above: 'Ford' can be seen to the right and below the blue circle. Nearby, a fence line with trees is the line of the current footpath next to Millwall Training Ground

Other unusual features of the land shown in the plan above are first, the irregular boundary near the river where the property extends just to the west of the river and secondly, the land as shown does not include the whole of the driveway exit towards Ravensbourne Avenue and as such the current gates appear to be on another parcel of land.

Ownership over the years

The earliest specific records show that the playing field was purchased by The Times Publishing Company Ltd in 1921 and the area is still sometimes known as The Times Sports Ground.

At some point in time, ownership was transferred to the Goan Association which also used it as a sportsground (and for noisy parties according to RVR records, which annoyed neighbours!). Possibly, or not, related to the noisy parties, the clubhouse was destroyed by fire in September 1998.



The clubhouse which the aerial view shows in the northwest corner of the field (but, as you look at it, at about 2 o'clock)

Soon after that, the Association sold the land (making a fortune) and our next record, in 2004, shows that the owners were now three gentlemen living in Beckenham.

On the 1st of February, 2018, the land was purchased by Ravensbourne Rivers Limited ('RR') for £23 M. This company is a subsidiary of Imperial Corporate Capital Limited ('ICC').

The next section is a bit long. Summary: complicated and strange changes to shareholdings.

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On 8 May, 2018, RR had the following share capital: -

Ordinary shares: - 416 (nominal value £8.32 M)

Preference shares: - 996 (nominal value £19.92 M)

At this date, all the ordinary shares were held by ICC whilst approximately 100 shareholders held all the preference shares in various amounts. Judging by the names of these other shareholders, they appear, mainly, to be from the Far East.

In May 2019, the Register of Companies threatened to strike off RR, but this was rescinded shortly afterwards. The reasons around this are unknown.

On 31st July 2021 the Telegraph newspaper ran an item about ICC. Bromley Library card holders can access this item via <http://infoweb.newsbank.com/signin/LondonBoroughofBromley> . Log in, navigate to ‘Telegraph text version’, select 31 July 2021 and look for article titled “Mini-bond firm bought protected land for £23m”.

On the 8th September 2021, shareholdings changed and ICC transferred all its ordinary share capital in RR to Rimal Al Sahra Marketing Management although no information about this organisation is available. On the same date, all the preference shareholders transferred their preference shares to Rimal as well.

There were changes to directors at this time.

On 30 November, 2021, all these changes to share holdings were substantially reversed (it appears – we have not checked all the preference shareholders but they appear to be mainly the same, although ICC did end up with 15 preference shares itself, which it did not have before). This was recorded in a formal Companies House document dated 8th June 2022.

It is not at all clear why these changes occurred, less than 3 months apart.

What about potential development

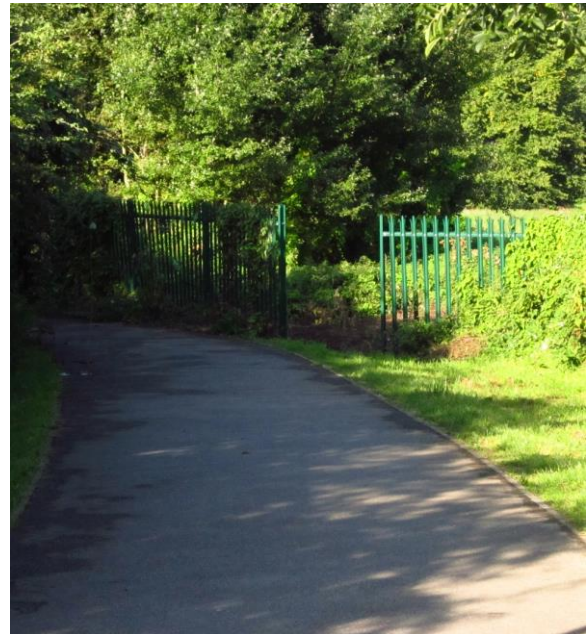
ICC first started touting the sportsground as a development site as early as November 2017, according to the web [archive](#).

By June 2019 (see [web archive](#)) development plans were looking pretty posh – see picture below



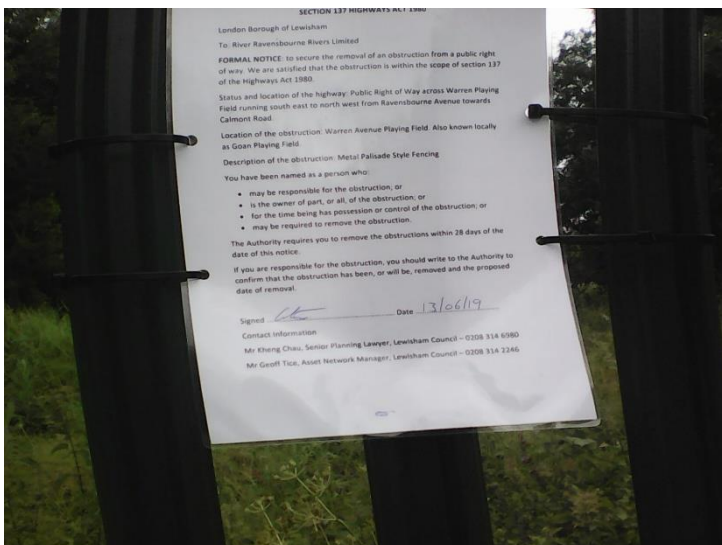
Their [current website](#) states that the site is in a ‘design phase’ and has been ‘sold’. Given shareholdings, ‘sold’ appears to mean that preference shareholders have invested in RR.

About the fence and footpath



Above: closed and reopened footpath

In summer 2017, the footpath across the field was blocked off, either by the new owners or the old ones preparatory to sale



We were able to provide Lewisham with evidence that the footpath had been used without encumbrance for more than 20 years and as such had become a legal footpath. In June 2019, LBL publishes its official demand to reopen the footpath, which to the credit of the owners was done quickly.

However, when the footpath was reopened, it was on a slightly different, but fortunately better, alignment. This is great, but unfortunately realigning a footpath

requires a legal process and at the present time this is under consideration by Lewisham.

What's with bulldozing the field to clear all the vegetation?

All the vegetation was first cleared in September 2018 and again in autumn 2022 this was repeated. This is an appalling act of ecological vandalism. Why was it done? We can only speculate. However, Lewisham have confirmed that they have not received any planning application whilst we are pressing our Lewisham Councillors to see if future ecological vandalism can be prevented.

The land is 'Metropolitan Open Land' which means it is very hard to develop and secondly it is on the flood plain which again makes development difficult.

