

Senior Football in Ramsgate 1886 - 1914

Ramsgate has had senior football teams within the town since at least the late-1800s; early teams included Ramsgate Town from about 1886, Ramsgate Rovers and St George's, for whom match reports and records exist from 1897.

Perhaps surprisingly the first football success associated with Thanet appears to have been courtesy of Thanet Wanderers, better known today for playing the 15-a-side code. The oldest and principal competition in Kent at the dawn of organised football was the County Badge Competition, which was in existence from the 1885/86 season to 1887/88, with Chatham United (twice) and the famous (Royal) Arsenal proud holders of this trophy. The Kent Senior Cup was initiated in 1888/89, again Chatham being the inaugural holders. The following season Thanet Wanderers reached the final of the Senior Cup, having beaten both 2nd Battalion Rifle Brigade and Folkestone 4-1 in the opening rounds, followed by a 3-2 win over South Eastern Rangers (at that time east Kent's premier club) in the semi-final. In the final however, they lost 3-0 to the Royal Arsenal.

Although the Kent FA formed the original Kent League in 1894/95, and the Thames and Medway Combination (the present day Kent League) was formed in 1896, league football did not extend into East Kent at this time, and the matches being played at a number of grounds around Thanet, including Southwood, were either 'friendlies' or cup matches.



Ramsgate Town 1898

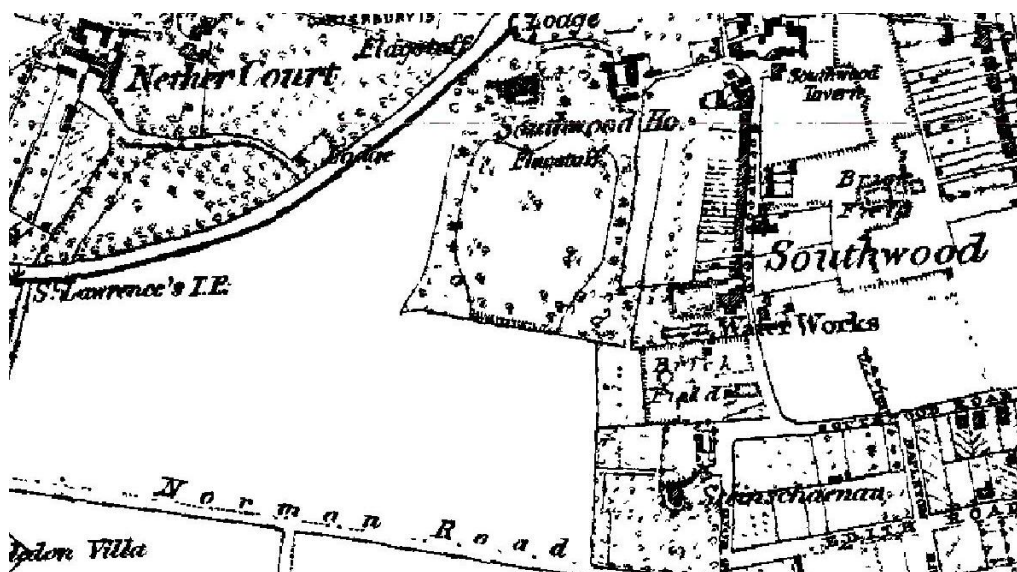
Back Row (Left to Right): McNally, Williams, Larkins, Barneth, Langley. Middle Row: Perkins, Matthews, Johnson, Todd, Monte Fisher, March. Front Row: B Baker, H Henson

In the 1897/98 season Margate beat St George's 2-1 on 11th December in the 2nd Round of the Kent Junior Cup in front of over 500 people, but St George's got their revenge the following season when they knocked Margate out in the 4th Round with a 3-2 win on 18th February 1899. Margate knocked St George's out again the following season on 6th January 1900, again in the 4th Round, with a 2-1 win.



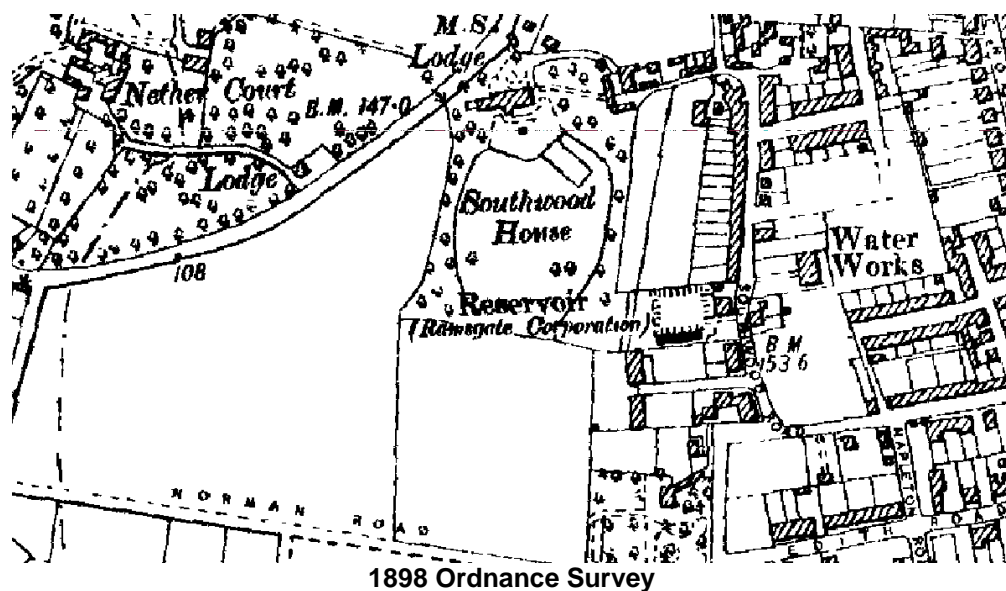
Ramsgate Town A Team 1898/99

The Weigall family gave part of the land at Southwood House over to cricket and football pitches near the end of the 19th century, the road to the ground running across an area shown as a brick field on the 1877 Ordnance Survey.



1877 Ordnance Survey

The road was made up to improve access and in 1898 several buildings are shown beyond the end of the road in a small enclosure separated from the main field behind. It is believed that these buildings were probably erected for agricultural purposes but were later used in connection with the football ground, and remain today at the entrance – much altered and improved.



1898 Ordnance Survey

By the turn of the century Ramsgate Town was established as the principal team on the Channel side of the island and joined the East Kent League, playing Dover Star in their first match. There were obviously Ramsgate derbies between Town, St George and Grenville up to the outbreak of the First World War, while Margate restricted themselves to friendlies and cup games until 1911, when they finally joined the East Kent League.

In the 1900/01 season Margate drew 0-0 with Ramsgate Town on 8th December in the 2nd Round of the Kent Junior Cup, but won the replay in Ramsgate the following week 1-0. In the next Round they defeated St George's 4-1 at home on 9th February.



Ramsgate Town 1900/01

Margate didn't meet any of the Ramsgate teams in the Kent Junior Cup in 1901/02, although they did beat Ashford Park Rovers 2-1 in the final on 1st March at Southwood.

In the following season one of Town's players made the local news off the field, when in February 1903 William Henson was killed in an explosion. Henson, pictured 2nd from left in the middle row of the 1900/01 team photo (above), was a 20 year old bricklayer at the time and well known about the town for his footballing exploits with Ramsgate.

TERRIBLE TRAGEDY AT RAMSGATE.

FOOTBALL PLAYER KILLED.

House Wrecked by an Explosion

MAN AND WOMAN FOUND WITH
THEIR THROATS CUT.

MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR.

Ramsgate was thrilled with horror in the earlier hours of this morning with the story of an appalling and unique tragedy—involving the death of a promising young workman named William Henson, terrible injuries to his father and mother, and the partial destruction of a dwelling-house, by an as yet unexplained explosion. Some mystery shrouds the horror, but the main facts seem to be as follows:—

The final breakdown of his parents' marriage at Christmas 1902 saw Henson, his mother and their lodger move out of their house in Avenue Road to stay with friends in the Plains of Waterloo. Henson's father, Samuel, tracked them down and turned up making death threats, which resulted in a police officer being posted outside the house. Samuel Henson then went to Derby seeking work but returned on 23rd February to find that William had rented a house in Flora Road and lived there with his mother and the lodger.



Rear of 14 Flora Road

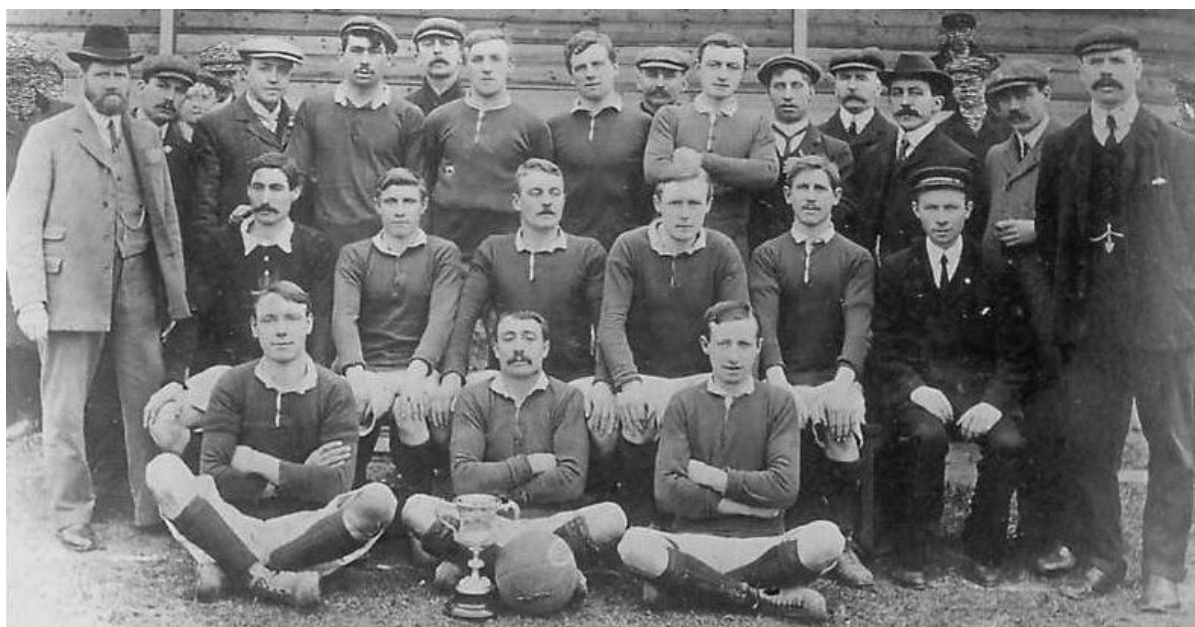
From the trial at Maidstone Assizes it was found that Samuel Henson dropped a lit match into a bag containing a bomb whilst in the kitchen of the house with William and his mother. William grabbed the bag and ran towards the garden but the bomb detonated as he ran through the scullery, killing him and destroying the bedroom above where the lodger was. When the police arrived a few minutes later the lodger was clinging to the drainpipe and Samuel Henson and his wife both had knife wounds to their throats, caused by Samuel after William ran out with the bomb. It took the jury only 12 minutes to decide his guilt but the death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment following receipt of a petition for clemency on the grounds of insanity.

By 1903/04 Town was a force in the League, finishing 3rd just 3 points behind Herne Bay, although they lost to Margate 2-0 in the 2nd Round of the Kent Junior Cup at their Northdown Corner ground.

	Pl'd	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Herne Bay	12	9	0	3	34	12	18
Folkestone Excelsior	12	8	2	2	21	10	18
Ramsgate Town	12	7	1	4	31	22	15

In 1905/06 Ramsgate Town were knocked out of the Kent Senior Cup in the 1st Round 1-0 at Margate on 30th September, but the Channel side of the island had its revenge when St George's beat Margate in the final of the Margate & District Charity Cup 2-1 on the 7th April.

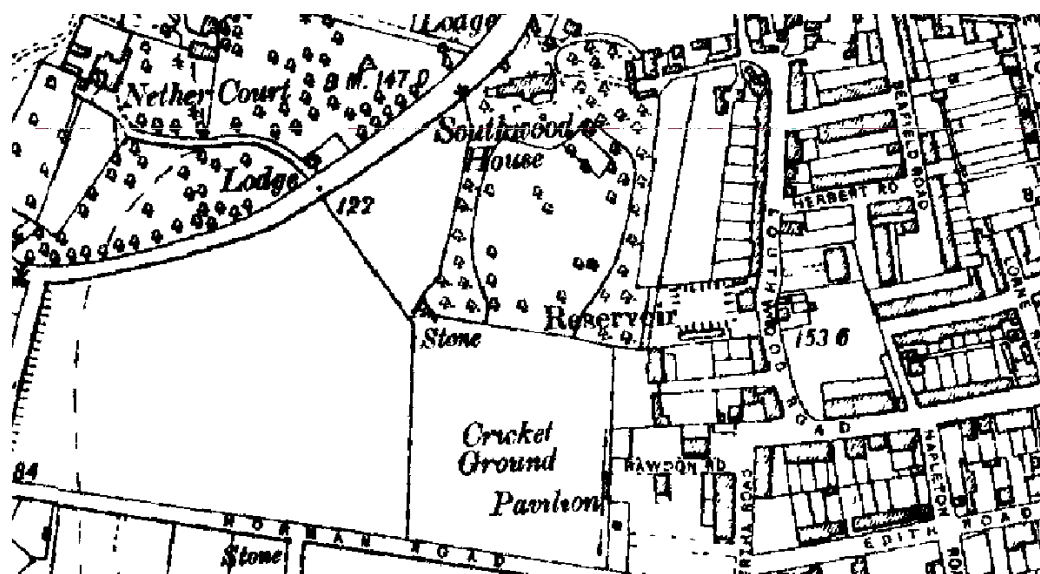
On 20th October 1906 Ramsgate Town lost 2-1 at Margate in the 1st Round of the Kent Amateur Cup, but on 9th November 1907 Town knocked Margate out of the FA Amateur Cup with a 6-1 win in the 3rd Qualifying Round at Northdown Corner.



Ramsgate Town 1906/07

Team (no order): Stevenson, Hawkes (Captain), Vincent, Laming, March (seated at front with cup & ball), Debling, A.Martin, Boulden, Henson (seated in middle row, third from left), Brooks, Money, Larkin, Dixon and Stevenson.

The 1908 Ordnance Survey confirms the sports uses at Southwood, noting a cricket ground and pavilion (the latter being sited at the end of what is now Clarence Road), with dressing rooms being built/converted from buildings near the entrance in 1912. The development of houses along the access road to the sports ground, now called Prices Avenue, as well as development in other roads surrounding the ground still being some years off.



1908 Ordnance Survey

On 3rd March 1909 season the Kent FA held a meeting and decided to introduce two new divisions to the Kent League, East and West, the original 2nd section having ceased in 1896/97.



Ramsgate Grenville 1909/10

Ramsgate Town joined Division 2 Eastern for the 1909/10 season along with Ashford Railway Works, Deal Cinque Ports, Dover, Faversham, Folkestone Gas, Folkestone Town, Herne Bay, Royal Irish Rifles, 3rd Worcestershire Regiment and Whitstable, and finished 8th (Pl'd 20, W 4, D 6, L 10, F 35, A 56, Pts 14).

Town again knocked Margate out of the FA Amateur Cup in the 3rd Qualifying Round, this time on 6th November with a 4-2 win at Northdown Corner. Town beat them again two weeks later at home 5-0 in Thanet & District League Division 1, although in the return League fixture on 29th January Margate won 4-1.

Records also show that at Easter 1910 Ramsgate St George played a friendly match against the then champions of the Surrey Amateur League, Carshalton FC.

In the 1910/11 season Ramsgate Town finished 7th in the Kent League. On 29th October 1910 the Town beat Margate 3-0 in the 1st Qualifying Round of the Kent Senior Cup at Northdown Corner, although they lost there 2-1 in the Thanet & District League on 3rd December. Town won the return fixture 4-0 on 18th February.



Ramsgate Grenville 1910/11

In the 1911/12 season Margate joined Ramsgate Town in the Kent League Division 2 (Eastern Section), with the first Kent League Thanet Derby going to Town when they beat Margate 3-1 at Northdown Corner on 16th December. Town drew with them there 0-0 two weeks later in the Thanet & District League. On 6th January 1912 Town drew 3-3 with Margate at home in the Margate & District Charity Cup quarter final, with Town winning the replay at Margate 3-1 on 8th February 2-1.

Town also drew 3-3 at home to Margate in the Kent League on 20th January, and beat them 3-1 at home in the Thanet & District League on 10th February. The result of this match was later declared void and was replayed on 30th April, with Town winning 6-0. The most successful pre-war season for Town finishing 3rd in the Kent League and winning the Thanet & District League.



Ramsgate Town 1911/12

In 1912/13 Town were beating Margate 4-3 in the Thanet & District League at home on 26th October when the game was abandoned after 82 minutes due to bad light. On the 16th November Town knocked Margate out of the Kent Senior Cup in the 2nd Qualifying Round with a 1-0 win at the Hall-by-the-Sea pitch. Two weeks later Town lost at home 2-1 in the 2nd Qualifying Round of the Kent Amateur Cup.

On the 21st December Town won at Margate 2-0 in the Kent League, but in the return fixture at Ramsgate on 18th January Margate won 1-0. On 15th February Town again won at Margate, 5-0 in the Thanet & District League, also winning the return fixture in Ramsgate 1-0 on the 19th April. The previous season's strong showing in the Kent League was not repeated however, with Town finishing in 6th place.

The 1913/14 season saw Town end up in 8th place in the Kent League. On 20th September 1913 Town drew 0-0 with Margate at home in the 1st Qualifying Round of the Kent Senior Cup, but Margate won the replay on the 2nd October 2-1.

On 1st November Town won 3-0 at Margate in the 1st QR of the FA Amateur Cup and on 29th November Town beat Margate at home 3-0 in the Kent League. Margate beat Town at the Hall-by-the-Sea 1-0 in the Thanet & District League on 20th December, and 4-0 in the Kent League on 18th January.

There was a Ramsgate derby, between Town and St George, on 24th January 1914.





Town's home fixture in the Thanet & District League against Margate was a 3-1 win on 23rd April, while Margate beat St George's 1-0 in the final of the Margate & District Charity Cup on 25th April.

Ramsgate Grenville had been a strong local side in the early years of the 20th century, but had to disband later as they couldn't find a ground, with many of their players joining Town's second team.

And then football was interrupted – by the outbreak of The Great War.