

## 5.3 Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Gillingham (1851-1945)

### 5.3.1 Historical Summary

This period represents one of rapid growth of Gillingham as a regional manufacturing centre and by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it had become a '...thriving, rapidly improving Place' (Shaw 1973, 23). Although the town experienced some commercial and industrial growth during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the arrival of the railway in 1856 stimulated development on a larger scale as it enabled the town to process the agricultural products from the surrounding countryside and deliver them to a much wider market (in particular the London market) than the surrounding towns, such as Shaftesbury, where transport links were not so good. Although the railway stimulated industrial growth, this does not seem to have promoted greater population growth. The population of the town was remarkably stable during this period at between 3,300 and 3,600, peaking in 1911. A slight fall after that time may be explained by World War I rather than internal economic recession. The population of the parish remained stable or slightly increasing after 1921 at around 3,350 inhabitants.

The new commercial and industrial developments were to the south of the town and focused around the railway station (Figure 20). A bacon factory (Oake, Woods and Company) had already been established in this area, immediately prior to the opening of the railway. Soon after the railway opened a cattle and stock market was established near the station. This market thrived at the expense of one at Shaftesbury. By 1895 there was also a large cheese market next to the station, in a hall capable of accommodating 700 people. The market was held every alternate Monday, and on the same day two cattle auctions were con-

ducted. The calf market in particular gained a good reputation; it was generally very fully attended, and was said to be the second largest in Britain (Kelly's Directory 1895). A weekly market was also held on Fridays (Wilson 1870). A large dairy depot for manufacturing cheese and supplying milk for the London market was established on Station Road by 1889 (Kelly's Directory 1889). Eden Shute's butter factory was built in New Road in 1892.

The Gillingham Pottery, Brick and Tile Company was established in 1865. Bricks, tiles, drain-pipes and terracotta ware were manufactured on the site which included several kilns, an extensive clay pit and a railway locomotive which worked a narrow gauge line between the clay pit and the pottery itself (Young 1971). Station Road also had a substantial saw mill and corn mill. In 1889 there were three flour mills in Gillingham (Kelly's Directory 1889). Some glove manufacture continued through the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Page 1908, 329).

The bank had reopened in 1855 following a brief closure during the agricultural depression and expanded further in 1874. However, not all aspects of the town's economy were thriving; the silk mills closed in 1875 and the butter factory moved to Yeovil in 1937.

Civic improvements also typified the later 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Gillingham Town Council was formed in 1895 and an organised fire-fighting force was established in the same year. In the same year it was agreed that a fire station should be built on land adjoining the grammar school. The station was completed in 1897 at a cost of £161 (Anon 1992). In 1873 the Free School was re-built on its present site and reconstituted as a Grammar School in 1876. Girls were admitted in 1906 in a sepa-



Figure 20: Gillingham Station.



Figure 21: Rear view of late 19<sup>th</sup> century suburban villas at Cold Harbour, Wyke Road.

rate building on Station Road (now the Masonic Hall) and in 1916 to the main school. An infant school for poor children was also established in 1876. Two new Board Schools were built in 1875, one in Newbury for 317 pupils and one in Wyke for 80 children (Kelly's Directory 1889). At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Newbury House was the location of a day and boarding school for young ladies.

Many of the churches and chapels were rebuilt or enlarged in this period. The Primitive Methodists built a new chapel in Queen Street in 1876 (now Churchbury House) and a new large Wesleyan Methodist Church was built on the east side of Town Bridge on the High Street in 1877 (Shaw 1973, 24-5). The original Baptist Chapel was rebuilt in 1858-9 and then a new larger chapel was built adjacent in 1892. A large Temperance Hall was built in the late 1850s in Newbury by Edward Neave. A war memorial was erected in the grounds of the Vicarage in about 1920. It was built in the style of a Somerset market cross with a square base of two steps, octagonal shaft and crocketed head and pinnacles.

### 5.3.2 Town Layout

Changes to the layout of Gillingham during this period were concentrated in the area of the newly constructed railway, although suburban expansion continued in many parts of the town. The railway was constructed across the south side of Newbury and the station built immediately south of the historic suburb with a new access, Station Road, connecting it to the main road. The cattle market, bacon factory, cheese factory, corn mill and saw mill were soon constructed along Station Road. To the south of the railway, the recently improved turnpike road from Madjeston to Newbury (New Road) was diverted to the east and the large brickworks were developed. The suburb of Newbury itself expanded, particularly at the eastern end around the junction with New Road.

The establishment of the Grammar School on



Figure 22: View of St Mary's Church and raised churchyard.

the north side of Newbury was also a significant addition to the town. This also had the effect of cutting the lane between Newbury and Bay; a former forest edge route.

To the west of the town centre, the suburban development along Wyke Road at Cold Harbour expanded with the construction of suburban villas and inter-war housing (Figure 21). Two new cemeteries were established on Rolls Bridge Lane (renamed Cemetery Road). Edwardian and inter-war suburban housing was a feature of the southern part of Peacemarsh, Ham Common and Wyke.

### 5.3.3 Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Town Plan Components

The main plan components of eighteenth and nineteenth century town are shown on Figure 22 and are listed below.

1. *St Mary's Parish Church.* The main body of the church was re-built in 1838-9. The west tower, originally within the body of the nave, was re-built some 20ft further west and considerably altered in 1908-9, designed by C E Ponting, and the south chapel and vestries in 1921, designed by Caroe. The church walls are largely in ashlar and coursed squared rubble with ashlar dressings (Figure 23). The roofs are in slate and lead (RCHME 1972, 27; Newman & Pevsner 1972, 214-5).
2. *Town Plots.* There was little significant change to the layout of the town plots during the later 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is likely, however, that the town expanded to the north and east, infilling vacant plots on Gas House Lane a terrace of Victorian houses was built on the south side of Turners Lane.
3. *The Square.* There was little discernable change to The Square during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.
4. *St Martin's Square.* There was little discern-



Figure 23: Newbury House, Newbury.

able change to St Martin's Square during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

5. *Town Mill*. The silk mills were closed in 1875, although the milling of corn continued throughout the period.

6. *Newbury*. Newbury continued to expand during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, particularly in the region of New Road which had been diverted to the east following the construction of the railway. This expansion included Victorian and Edwardian terraces at Lawrence Cottages, Harwood Cottages, Station Road, Railway Terrace and Victoria Road. Suburban villas were built at New Road, Station Road, Hardings Lane and the east end of Newbury, close to Lodden Bridge. Larger ornamental villas were built at Newbury House in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 23) and inter-war suburban housing was built at Addison Terrace, New Road, Hardings Lane and Victoria Road. Commercial and civic developments such as a Gillingham Police Station and Fire Station were built on School Road. There was also a Wesleyan Methodist Chapel (Figure 25), Baptist Chapel and Sunday School, Bank, smithies and hotels along High Street and Newbury.

7. *Chantry Fields and Farm*. There was little discernable change to this area during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

8. *Wyke*. The Matthews brewery expanded considerably during this period. A school was built opposite the brewery on Wyke Road (Figure 26). There were also a small number of suburban villas built between Wyke House and Pound Lane.

9. *Ham Common*. The main element of expansion at Ham Common during this period was the construction of inter-war suburban housing along Shaftesbury Road to the east of Kingscourt Road, as well as some suburban villas along Kingscourt Road itself.

10. *Peacemarsh*. Peacemarsh expanded at its southern end by way of Edwardian terraced housing at Lodbourne Terrace and Waverland Terrace, as well as inter-war suburban housing along the north side of Waverling Lane East.

11. *Bay*. There was little discernable change to this settlement during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

12. *Lodbourne Green*. The two annual fairs continued at Lodbourne Green during the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, although poorly attended. The Trinity Monday fair was still held for cattle in 1895 and the other on September 12<sup>th</sup> was for pleasure only by that time (Kelly's Directory 1895). The Gillingham Agricultural Society formed in 1860

and put on an annual agricultural show in the town until 1952 (then the Gillingham and Shaftesbury Show). From 1908 this was held in Hardings Lane, Newbury. Prior to that, it was likely to have been held at or near the cattle market site in Station Road. This show may well have led to the final demise of the annual cattle fair at Lodbourne Green.

13. *Town Burgages*. A new vicarage (Rawson Court) was built in 1883, designed by E Swinfen Harris. It is in a niche on the north side of this building that a fine fragment of 9<sup>th</sup> century cross shaft was re-used (Newman & Pevsner 1972, 215).

14. *Lodbourne*. A short terrace of inter-war suburban housing was developed at the eastern end of this suburb, close to Bay Bridge.

15. *Cold Harbour*. This area continued to expand along Wyke Road in a westerly direction, firstly with the construction of Victorian and Edwardian Suburban Villas and later with inter-war detached housing.

16. *Rolls Bridge and Tomlins Lane*. This area expanded significantly during the inter-war period with the construction of suburban housing on Orchard Lane and Tomlins Lane filling in the gaps between the cottages on Rolls Bridge and Tomlins Lanes.

17. *Park Farm*. There was little significant change to this area during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

18. *Waverling Lane*. A group of a dozen inter-war suburban houses replaced a small group of cottages on the south side of Waverling Lane during this period.

19. *Wyke Brewery*. Matthews and Co. Brewery at Wyke continued to expand during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to become an important regional brewer in the first half of the twentieth century, producing well known brews such as H.B.A. and bottling international brands such as Guinness for local distribution.

20. *Malthouse Farm, Bay*. There was little discernable change to the malthouse during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

21. *The Railway*. The Salisbury and Yeovil Railway opened Gillingham Station on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1859, extending the West of England mainline to Yeovil and then Exeter a year later. The construction resulted in the diversion of New Road to the east and the construction of Station Road linking the new station to Newbury. The original station building survives, with painted brick walls and slate roofs on more than one level with gables facing the railway. Some station

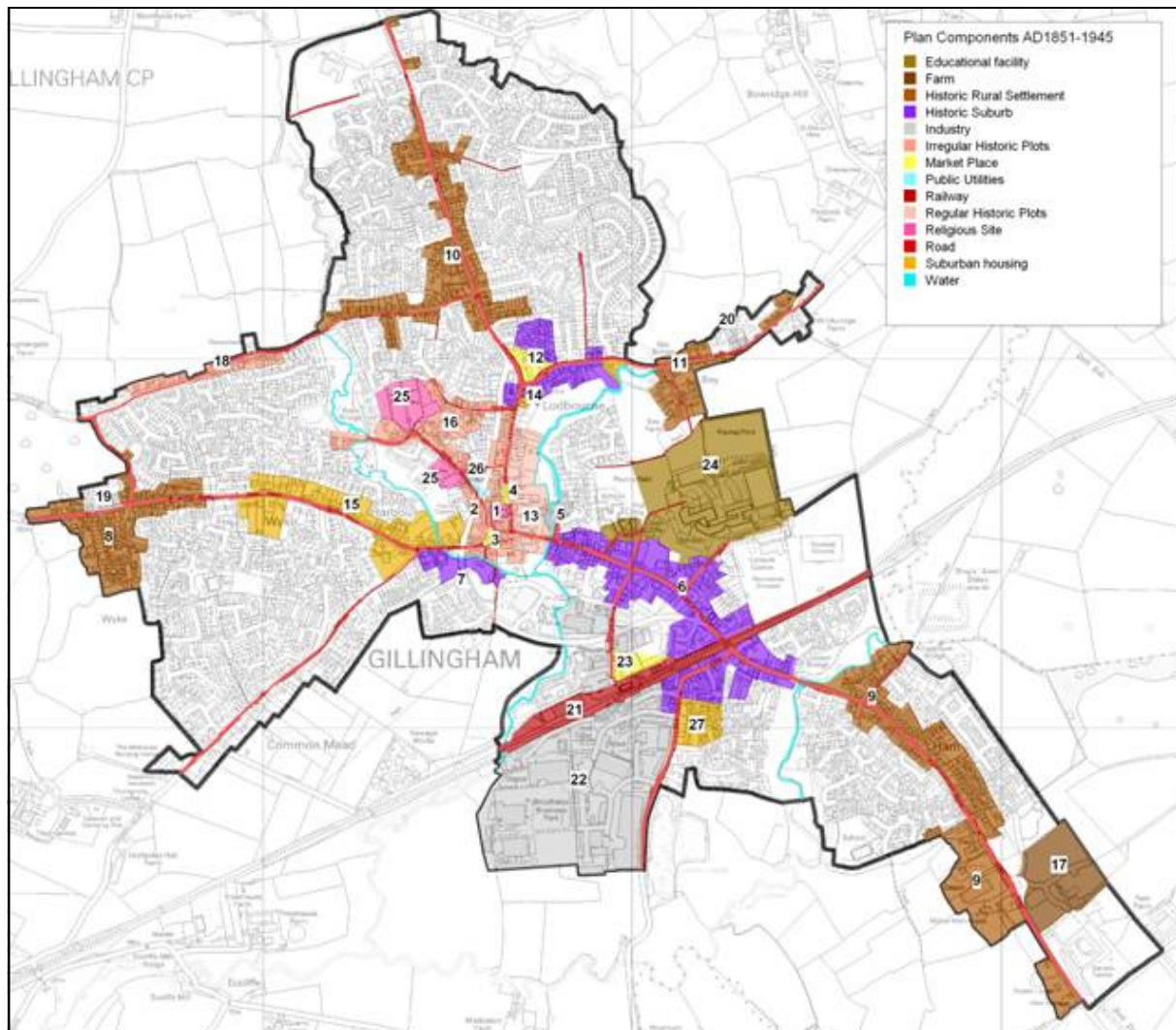


Figure 24: Gillingham Late 19th to early 20th century Town Plan Components.

furniture survives such as a canopy with original iron work, dry stone boundary walls and picket fences. Other original buildings including goods sheds have been lost.

**22. Brickfields and Station Road Industrial Area.** A large industrial area developed both to the north of Gillingham Station at Station Road and to the south at Brickfields on New Road. This development occurred shortly after, and was stimulated by, the arrival of the railway. Gillingham Pottery Brick and Tile Company started in 1865 on a large green field site south of Gillingham Station and west of New Road. The company manufactured extruded wire-cut bricks, tiles, drainpipes and terracotta ware on the site which comprised a large clay pit in the south linked to the pottery works at the north end of the site by a narrow gauge railway. Both large 'Suffolk' type and Hoffman kilns were used, but the latter became disused by the 1930s. The works were steam powered until 1937, when they were converted to electric power. The digging, preparing and moulding of

the clay became fully mechanised after 1937 (Young 1971). The Brickfields site on New Road continued in production throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and much of the town of Gillingham is built from bricks produced at this site. Industrial activity to the north of the station, on Station Road, included a Bacon Factory, Cheese Factory, Butter Factory, Saw Mill and Corn Mill.

**23. Gillingham Cattle Market (Figure 27).** A cattle and stock market was established soon after the opening of the station, adjacent to it and on the east side of Station Road. A market-house had been opened by 1895 with a large hall capable of accommodating 700 people. This hall was also used for public entertainment. The cattle market was held every other Monday, along with two cattle auctions. The calf market here was reputed to be the second largest in Britain (Kelly's Directory 1895). Gillingham market thrived at the expense of the one at Shaftesbury which was not on a railway line. Nevertheless, Gillingham

market closed in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, its business being taken up by Sturminster Newton.

24. *Gillingham Grammar School*. In 1873, the Free School was re-built on its present site, north of Newbury on School Road. It was re-constituted as a Grammar School in 1876. In 1916 girls were admitted to the main school. The school became a comprehensive in 1959.

25. *Gillingham Cemeteries*. Two large cemeteries were built on Rolls Bridge Road (after named Cemetery Road) during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first was established in 1862 and is now a Garden of Remembrance. The other was established in 1895 (Figure 28) and a cemetery caretaker appointed who resided in the Cemetery Lodge.

26. *Gillingham Gas Works*. The Gillingham Gas and Coke Company had been formed in 1837. The gas works were constructed on Rolls Bridge Lane in (later Gas House Lane and now Cemetery Road). Originally a single gas holder was provided. A second was built in the 1890s.

27. *Lodden Meads Housing Estate*. A new housing estate was established during the inter-war period on the east side of New Road, opposite the Brickworks. These houses at Addison Terrace were the precursor to a modern estate constructed during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.



Figure 25: View of the Wesleyan Church, High Street, Newbury.



Figure 26: The Old School House, Wyke Road, Wyke.



Figure 27: London House, Station Road. Site of the former cattle market.



Figure 28: Gillingham Cemetery, Cemetery Road.