

From Village to Suburb: Caversham 1840 to 1911

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SUMMARY

The transformation of villages into suburbs in the 19th century was not a phenomenon limited to areas bordering industrial towns; burgeoning country towns such as Banbury also spread out into neighbouring rural communities, as did Reading, the chief town of Berkshire. Although it was an Oxfordshire village, Caversham was inevitably affected by developments in Reading Borough, only a mile away across the Thames. Caversham's population increased six-fold in 70 years as dwellings to house incomers attracted by new job opportunities in Reading spilled out into the surrounding parishes. This article looks at the development of Caversham and the building of streets of terraces, suburban villas, schools, churches and commercial premises. It examines the process of development by institutions and individuals, the architects and styles of new building, and the creation of socially distinct areas within the emerging suburb. Caversham's size and its public health problems led to it becoming a local sanitary authority in its own right in 1891, and in 1894 it became an urban district. Dependent on Reading for employment and for amenities such as water and education, at the end of the 19th century it became the object of the borough's 'earth hunger', and despite determined opposition from its local politicians and inhabitants, Caversham was incorporated into the Borough of Reading in 1911.

In a welter of sentimental clichés, Snare's directory of 1842 described Caversham as 'a spot that we never visited without pleasure, nor quitted without regret'; a scene 'artists love to paint, and poets to look upon'.¹ Sixty years later a Reading councillor called the village a threat to the public health of the borough. Between these dates Caversham had grown from a substantial Oxfordshire village with a population of 1,642 to a populous suburb of the county town of Berkshire. When it was incorporated into Reading Borough in 1911, its population was 9,785 housed in 1,997 dwellings, most built after the early 1860s.² This article will discuss where, how and why its expansion happened, its impact on the existing and the growing community, and its effects on the landscape.

Throughout the second half of the 19th century Caversham was the fastest growing parish in South Oxfordshire (Fig. 1); only Rotherfield Greys, whose population doubled between 1841 and 1901, could claim a similar, though less spectacular rise. Most of Rotherfield's growth was on the western boundary of Henley-on-Thames, of which it became a suburb, as Caversham became to Reading. Large population increases transforming villages into suburbs were experienced by other communities bordering prosperous county towns. Between 1841 and 1901 Earley, on Reading's eastern boundary, grew even more than Caversham, from 471 to 10,196; Clewer, by Windsor, from 3,975 to 10,298. Neithrop and Grimsbury, villages within Banbury parish but outside the borough, grew from 3,505 to 13,026 while the population within the borough stagnated.³ The factor common to all these urban communities was a strong and growing economy which attracted newcomers to the town and its immediate hinterland.

¹ *Snare's Reading Directory, 1842* (Reading Local Studies Library).

² *Census of England and Wales 1911*, vol. vi (HMSO 1913).

³ *V.C.H. Berks.* ii, 236-43 (Table of Population); B. Trinder, *Victorian Banbury* (1982), 195, Table 2.

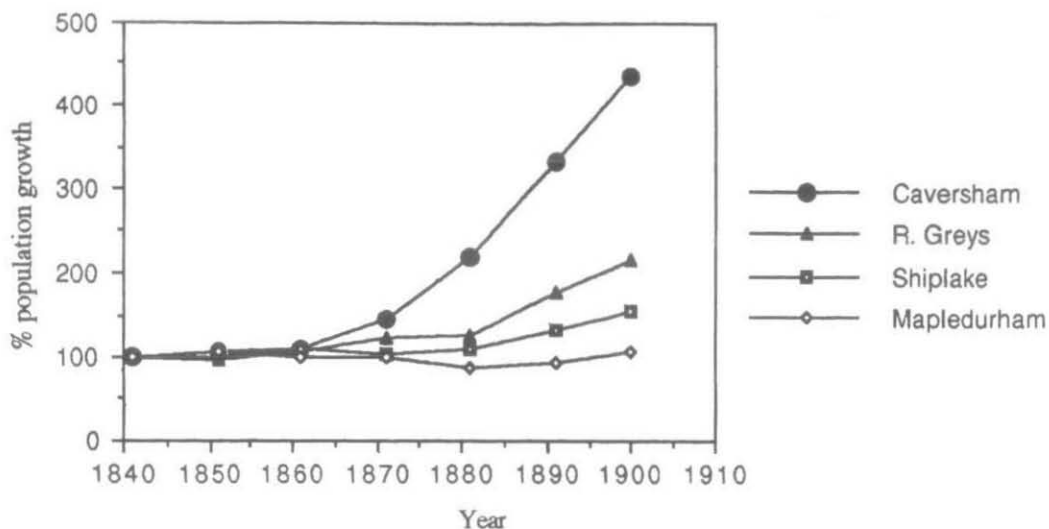


Fig. 1. Population growth in four South Oxfordshire parishes 1841-1901.

CAVERSHAM IN THE 1840s

Snare's description referred to Thames-side Caversham, the largest and economically most diverse of several communities in a parish which stretched for 4 miles north of the river (Fig. 2). Caversham village, clustered near the bridge, and Lower Caversham, connected to the larger settlement by Gosbrook Lane,⁴ together contained over half of the population in 1841. Caversham village already had proto-urban characteristics: a range of food and clothing shops, some professional services including a solicitor, and three substantial inns, two of them on or near the bridge. Another public house, the Prince of Wales, was at the heart of a small group of cottages at the road junction called Little End, a few hundred yards north of the main street. About half the adult males in Caversham village were engaged in a trade or craft according to the 1851 census.

Lower Caversham, despite having a few craftsmen, a public house and a shop, was a rural community, most of its adult males in 1851 being agricultural labourers. There was a working mill by the Thames employing a few labourers.⁵ The presence of two railway workers hardly affected its traditional character. In this it resembled the other settlements the largest of which, Emmer Green, housed about 240 people. Here too the majority of wage-earners were agricultural labourers, but there was also a small brickfield which employed about half a dozen men. At the southern edge of Emmer Green was Caversham Park, set in an elegant landscape, the imposing home of newcomer William Crawshay, ironmaster, whose wealth derived from his factories in Wales. By contrast William Vanderstegen, the owner of Cane End, a Georgian house in the north of the parish, came from a long-established local family. Cane End and the two other northerly hamlets of Kidmore End and Gallowstree Common were home to about 320 people. They were

⁴ In 1891 Gosbrook Lane from Prospect Street to George Street was renamed Gosbrook Street and from George Street eastwards Gosbrook Road.

⁵ Census enumerators' returns: Caversham 1851 (P.R.O., H.O. 107/1725).



Fig. 2. Settlements in Caversham parish c. 1840.

completely rural communities, most of the inhabitants being agricultural labourers with a scattering of associated craftsmen such as wheelwrights and blacksmiths, a few workers in wood and the inevitable public house in each hamlet. In addition there were small groups of houses dotted along the roads, paths and tracks which criss-crossed the parish, and round the greens, Chalkhouse, Farthingworth and Tokers, as well as some substantial farmhouses surrounded by fields long since enclosed.⁶ With the possible exception of Caversham village, then, the whole parish in the mid 19th century was predominantly an agricultural community.

This is further emphasised by the evidence of the tithe map (Fig. 3). The alluvial soils near the river supported meadow and arable fields in equal measure with beds of osiers in the

⁶ Caversham tithe map and award 1844 (Berkshire Record Office [henceforth B.R.O.] D/P162/26).

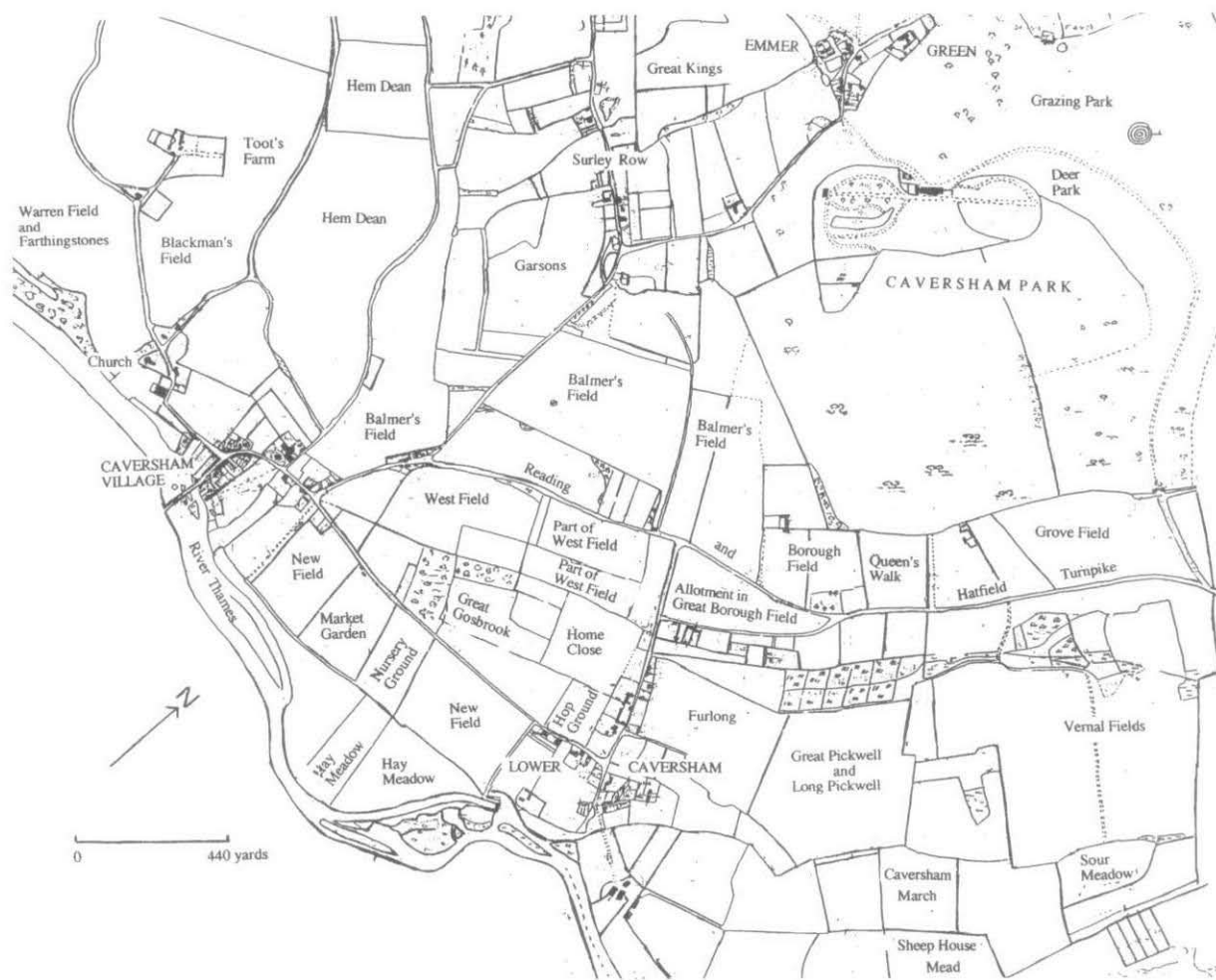


Fig. 3. Thames-side Caversham from the tithe map of 1844 (B.R.O., D/P162/26).

eyotts and on the wetter clay areas; further north where the chalk and gravels resulted in higher ground, arable predominated with smaller areas of meadow and pasture, especially at Emmer Green. Woodland, much of it beech, was a prominent feature of the landscape; the largest, 167 a., was Withey Coppice on the extreme northern boundary. The woods were valuable resources, many kept in hand by the landowner.

Most of the parish was enclosed before the 19th century; enclosure of the remaining open-field arable, meadow and pasture, almost all in the south-west of the parish, was completed in 1834. Some field names were retained after enclosure and later commemorated in street names: Balmers, Hemdean, Warren and Great West Field. The process was completed with the enclosure of the commons, Cane End Common and Gallowstree Common round the northern hamlets, and Emmer Green and Grove Commons and a few others in 1865.

In 1844 three major landowners, George Dew whose property lay in the centre of the parish, William Henry Vanderstegen who dominated the north and William Crawshay whose acres lay mainly in the park surrounding his mansion, together owned nearly a third of the parish. Another four estates comprised nearly a quarter. By contrast there were many owner-occupiers of a single shop, house or cottage and garden, especially in Gallowstree Common and Caversham village.⁷

Over the next 60 years, and especially after the 1860s, the communities in the north of the parish had very different experiences from those of the south. In 1865 the enclosure of the large commons, Cane End (67 a.) and Gallowstree (87 a.), allowed William Henry Vanderstegen to consolidate his estate across a swathe of northern Caversham, while the cottagers' allocation of a few perches of garden hardly compensated for their lost rights of common. Otherwise, except for the building of a parish church and school at Kidmore End in 1854 to serve the newly-created parish of St. John the Baptist, the hamlets north of Emmer Green, where the population scarcely increased at all and with barely 100 houses in 1901, had hardly changed by the end of the century.⁸

HOUSE BUILDING IN THAMES-SIDE CAVERSHAM AFTER 1851

By contrast, change was constant in Thames-side Caversham. The population here doubled in the 20 years after 1861 and doubled again by 1901. Houses, schools, churches and other public buildings to accommodate and service the expanding population completely changed the landscape within a mile or so of the river: in 1861 there were 362 houses in Caversham, rising to 709 in 1881. By the end of the century in the truncated parish of St. Peter alone - together with St. John's, Lower Caversham and St. Barnabas, Emmer Green, the parishes recently carved out of it - there were 1,466 houses. In 1911 in Caversham Urban District (approximately the same area) the building boom had resulted in a total of 1,997 dwelling houses, a block of flats, 105 shops and 12 inns or public houses.⁹

House building before the 1860s

Charting the process of this housing development in Caversham is not easy since deeds are not available and few sale catalogues have survived. The tithe map and successive editions

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ St. John the Baptist, Kidmore End consisted of the northern part of St. Peter's parish, Caversham, together with parts of Eye and Dunsden and Shiplake parishes.

⁹ *Census of England and Wales 1861* (1862); *1881* (1883); *1901* (1903); *1911* (1913). The figures for 1861 and 1881 are for the whole of the ecclesiastical parish of St. Peter.

of Ordnance Survey maps indicate that plots of differing sizes were built over in stages, though they provide only a very approximate dating of the process. In the interval between the making of the tithe map in 1844 and the OS contoured edition published 20 years later, a few suburban villas sprang up, mostly on the higher ground.¹⁰ Balmore House, said in 1861 to have been 'lately erected by the proprietor', was a substantial property set in 25 a. of arable, pasture and ornamental grounds.¹¹ Hillside, Camden Villa and Ardmillan, villas on the Henley Road, were more modest. Two of the three may have been designed in 1853 by John Billing, then Surveyor of the Borough of Reading and a notable architect.¹² Caversham Lodge on Gosbrook Lane was probably in existence in 1851; the census of 1851 records a house called The Lodge near to Lower Caversham occupied by Thomas Gill, a captain in the Royal Navy. Amersham Hall was built as a private school in 1860 to house an establishment brought from Amersham, Bucks.¹³

Caversham Place Park and the Gosbrook Street area c. 1861-97

Development certainly speeded up soon after Amersham Hall was completed; the housing stock of the parish almost doubled in the 20 years between 1861 and the publication of the 1st edition OS 25-inch map (surveyed in 1877). Two areas were developed during this



Fig. 4. Caversham Place Park (OS map 25-inch 1st edn. 1881).

¹⁰ OS 6-inch hachured edition 1864-5 (B.R.O., D/Ex 326/3).

¹¹ Balmore House Estate sale catalogue 1861 (Reading Local Studies Library). There are no reference numbers for sale catalogues in this library.

¹² S.M. Gold, *A Biographical Dictionary of Architects at Reading* (privately published 1999), 14.

¹³ *Ibid.*; L. North, 'Two fine schools', *Reading Chronicle*, 22 June 1978.



Fig. 5. The development of the Gosbrook Street 'triangle' (OS map 25-inch 1st edn. 1881).

period, diametrically different both in house types and density and intended for occupants coming from contrasting social classes. One was a small, very select and spacious middle-class residential area, Caversham Place Park. An estate of only two roads with plots of at least half an acre was laid out on part of Balmer's Field immediately north of Amersham Hall, one of which was later to be called Derby Road (Fig. 4); Reading architects J. Omer Cooper and Son designed three pairs of suburban villas here in 1876.¹⁴ Significantly, this was on high

¹⁴ Gold, *op. cit.* note 12, p. 46.

ground removed from the bustle of the main street and the riverside; it would attract those looking for and able to afford privacy, a spacious environment and a pleasant outlook.

The other, which undoubtedly accounted for the majority of new housing before 1881, was a dense development of almost 40 properties to the acre: Short, North and South Streets were laid out in the triangle bounded by Prospect Street on the west, Gosbrook Lane (later Gosbrook Street) on the south and on the east a new road, aptly called New Road (renamed Westfield Road in 1891). The land was partly owned by Blackall Simonds of the Reading brewing and banking firm who lived at The Rectory, Caversham, but evidence as to the identity of the developer is not available (Fig. 5). Census returns indicate that as early as 1871 the north side of Gosbrook Street was built up from the Clifton Arms eastwards, the 23 cottages of Clifton Terrace ending at Eastern Villa.¹⁵ On the south side was a nonconformist chapel which opened in 1866 on land donated by Mr. Richard Talbot; it became the British School when the grander Caversham Free Church at the junction of Prospect Street and Gosbrook Street replaced it in 1877 (Fig. 6). In 1871 there was a short terrace in South Street but the other streets within the triangle were empty and even by 1877 in Short Street and North Street only a few terraces had been built, less than 30 houses in total. In Prospect Street the gap between the few properties built before 1844 at the bottom and those at Little End at the top was partially filled by two terraces, one of cottages and the other of houses producing by 1877 a mixture of shops and private dwellings. However the triangle filled



Fig. 6. Caversham Free Church, designed by Alfred Waterhouse (1877).

¹⁵ Census enumerators' returns: Caversham 1871 (P.R.O., RG 10/1427).



Fig. 7. Terrace houses in Short Street.

rapidly; by 1881 the census indicates that there were more than 30 houses in South Street alone plus a Co-operative Store, while North and Short Streets were nearly complete (Fig. 7). The west side of Westfield Road was completely developed as a long terrace climbing up the hill, ending at a distinctive group of small villas at the top.¹⁶ By 1897 at the latest not only was the whole area solidly built up, but as an OS map of this date shows, housing had spread to the opposite side of Westfield Road. The choice of this area for early development is significant; it gave workers and their families easy access to the shops on the main street and to the bridge leading to Reading's railways and growing industries. Most of it was on rising ground, clear of the threat of floods which occasionally affected areas closer to the river.

Housing development in Lower Caversham in the 1880s and 1890s

Although it lay on this lower ground, by the late 1880s housing development had begun to fill the green gap between Caversham village and Lower Caversham and to spread from Gosbrook Road towards the Thames; from here it was possible to walk to work in Reading. There was already a small terrace in Mill Lane (Mill Road in 1891) by 1877 and another of 12 cottages on the east side of what would become Piggotts Road. By the 1890s more houses had been constructed in Mill Road and new streets, Champion's Road and Coldicutt Street, had been laid out and partially built up (Fig. 8). In 1889 the ubiquitous William Wing drew up plans for 4 cottages in Coldicutt Street for J. Bennett,¹⁷ perhaps Joseph Bennett, a grocer in Gosbrook Road. Seventy terraced houses were strung along the south side of Gosbrook Road, including 3 shops – a grocer's, a baker's and a butcher's. The two longest new roads

¹⁶ Census enumerators' returns: Caversham 1881 (P.R.O., RG 11/1489).

¹⁷ Gold, *op. cit.* note 12, p. 215.

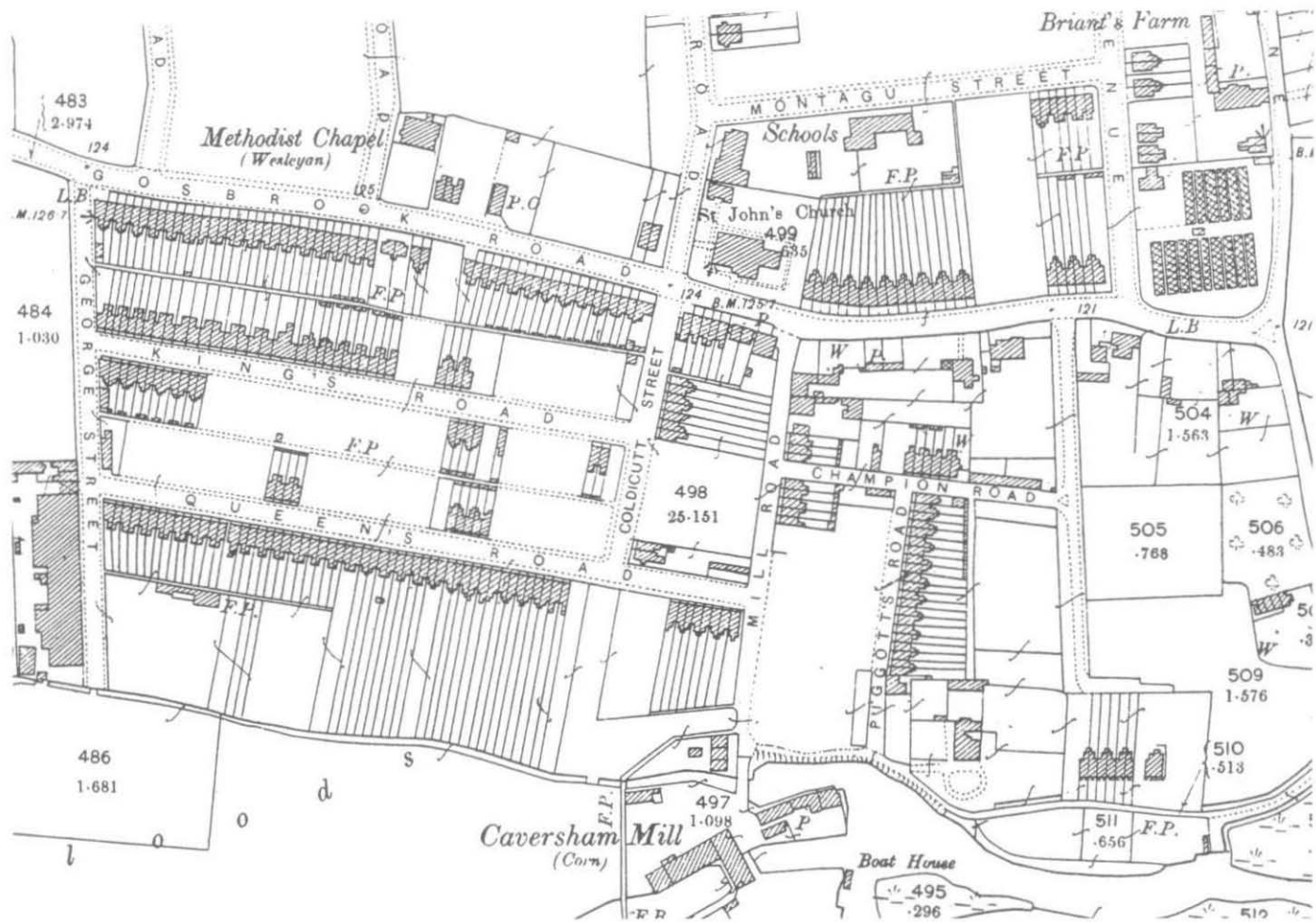


Fig. 8. Lower Caversham in 1897 (OS map 25-inch 2nd edn. 1897).

in this area, Queen's Road and King's Road were almost complete by 1891, Queen's with 56 houses occupied, 5 unoccupied and 6 under construction and King's with 34 occupied and 13 awaiting tenants. The 1891 census showed a total of 1,348 people occupying 309 houses in Lower Caversham south of Gosbrook Road.¹⁸

Plans for building in this area submitted to the Caversham Local Board of Health in 1891-2 give the impression of small-scale developments. No proposal was for more than a few buildings: 7 houses and 2 cottages, both in Gosbrook Road, 2 cottages in King's and Queen's Roads, one house in Queen's Road. The account book of William Wing shows that in 1888 he was responsible for the design of several properties in Queen's Road: a house for a Mr. G. Allaway, 2 cottages for W.J. Lovegrove (a painter and paperhanger of Weldale Street, Reading), 3 cottages for Mr. S. Glanfield and an undefined number of cottages for a Mr. Chapman.¹⁹

House building in the Hemdean Road area in the 1880s

The expansion of Caversham village into the fields to the north, away from the river, came later than the development of the Prospect Street 'triangle'. The area between Prospect Street west towards Hemdean Road, still open fields in 1877, had produced the terraces of cottages and a few villas of Chester Street and Oxford Street by 1897 (Fig. 9). Between 1883 and 1887 William Wing was given three commissions for several cottages in Chester Street and 6 in Oxford Street by Mr. David D. Bulpitt. Mr. Bulpitt, who described himself as a carpenter in the 1891 census returns, was recorded in Kelly's 1903 *Directory of Oxfordshire* as 'builder & sanitary inspector to Caversham U.D.C., [of] 1, Chester Street'; he still owned 6 houses in Oxford Street in 1911.²⁰ Terraces of small villas and cottages straggled in a discontinuous ribbon development along two roads covering the edges of the open field of



Fig. 9. The development of Chester and Oxford Streets by 1897 (OS map 25-inch 2nd edn. 1897).

¹⁸ Census enumerators' returns: Caversham 1891 (P.R.O., RG 12/1158).

¹⁹ Gold, *op. cit.* note 12, p. 215.

²⁰ *Ibid.*; Caversham U.D.C. Rate Book 1911 (B.R.O., UD/CV/FR/4/20).

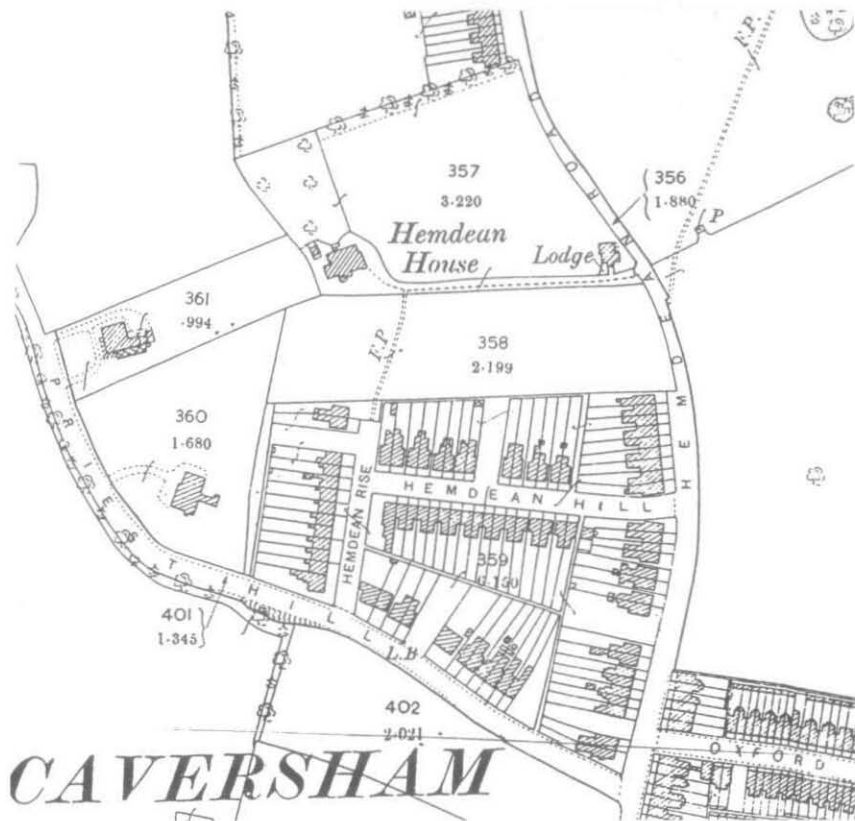


Fig. 10. Hemdean Hill and Priest Hill in 1897 (OS map 25-inch 2nd edn. 1897).

Hemdean by the time of the 1891 census. These were Hemdean Road, formerly Hemdean or Bottom Lane, and Priest Hill, formerly called Priest Lane. William Wing was at work here too designing 4 houses for G.R. Brown, a builder of Hemdean Road in 1888. Development of this area continued in the 1890s with Wing as the most prolific architect, especially of villas for owner-occupation. Other roads began to encroach on the field itself; the Reading architect partnership of Brown and Albury designed a house on Hemdean Hill for the artist, Charles Havell, in 1884 (Fig. 10). However the grounds of Balmore Hall and Hemdean House were still green areas along Hemdean Road in 1913 and the cemetery there, laid out for the Burial Board of the Caversham Board of Health in 1884-5, inevitably by William Wing, provided another public open space.²¹

²¹ Gold, *op. cit.* note 12, pp. 31, 214-15; OS map 1900. Gold gives the name of the client as Mr. J. Brown but the Stevens Directory of 1888 calls him Geo. R. Brown of Hillside, Hemdean Road.

Caversham Place Park 1879-98

Caversham Place Park continued to grow, though the available space could accommodate only a few villas and gardens of the size deemed suitable for this superior development. In 1879 Burford House in Derby Road was designed for Revd. T.C. Page by Cooper Son and Millar. The 1881 census records him as the Baptist minister of the new church on Prospect/Gosbrook Streets. In 1891 a Mr. Goodenough and a Mr. W.G. Millar (undoubtedly the architect and co-founder of the People's Investment Company) submitted plans for a house each on the estate, and a Mr. Luke for two houses; Mr. F. Goodenough is recorded as living in Strathmore and Mr. William Millar at Galt, both in Derby Road, and Mr. Alexander Luke at Elmwood in Grosvenor Road in a directory of 1894.²² The last plot on the south side of Derby Road was filled in 1898 by a pair of semi-detached villas, dated in decorative brick in the gable, but their developers have not been traced. It has been assumed that most plans for building elsewhere in Caversham were submitted as business ventures by builders or by the owners of the land. In Caversham Place Park it seems that in a significant number of cases the house was for private occupation.

The development of the Briant's Farm Estate 1890-1911

In the last two decades of the century more secure dating of some of the expansion and some clues as to the process can be gleaned from sources not available for the earlier period: sale catalogues for a few properties and the minuting of house plans submitted to Caversham Local Board of Health (formed in 1891) and the later Urban District Council (formed in 1894). Developments on opposite sides of Star Road illustrate this point. The east side of Star Road in Lower Caversham was undeveloped in 1844; in 1881 this was occupied by four pairs of semi-detached houses but there is no available evidence as to date or developer.²³ By contrast on the opposite side of the road was Bryant's [*sic*] Farm, in 1844 the homestead of a 50-a. farm owned and run by William Bryant (Fig. 11). The farmhouse and buildings still appear on the 1881 OS map though the farmhouse was occupied by a farrier. In 1890 'an eligible freehold building estate known as Briant's Farm' of about 48 a. was sold by the executors of the late George Russell Butler as 'ripe for development', which had already begun. A field called the Hop Ground had been sold and Montagu Street laid out on it. St. John's Church and School were built by 1888 as was an adjoining terrace on Gosbrook Road.²⁴ The 1891 census shows the farmhouse occupied by a farm labourer, Charles King, and his family and the farm buildings still appear on the 1897 OS map but as a smithy.

The estate was purchased by the People's Investment Company which had been founded in 1888 by a group of Reading architects and business men 'to act as property developers, deal in land and buildings, [and] grant mortgages'²⁵ but the Company did not carry out all the development. Instead, as was the case in other parishes in and on the borders of expanding country towns,²⁶ most of the houses were built in small units by different individuals. Building began on the Briant's Farm Estate soon after January 1891 when

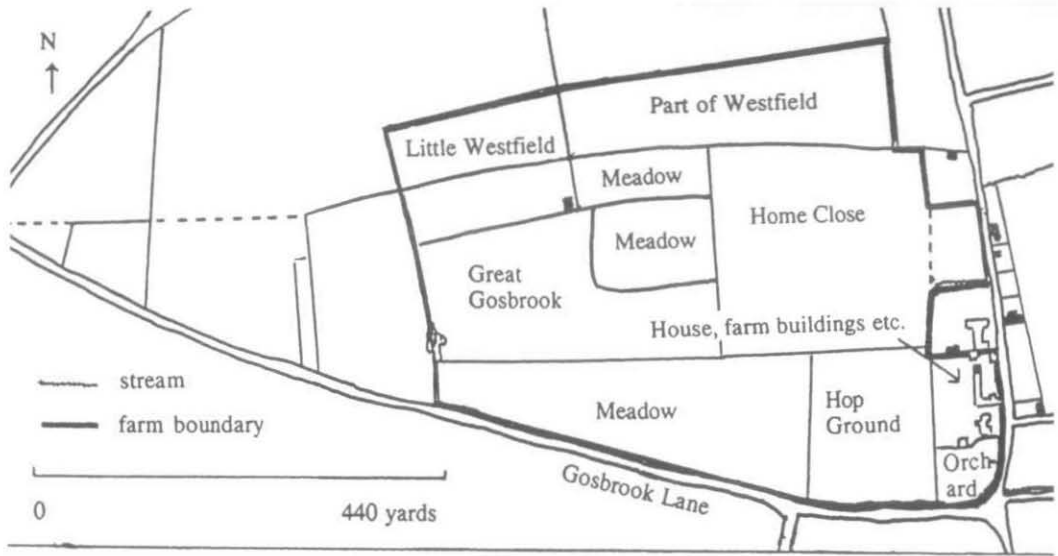
²² Gold, *op. cit.* note 12, p. 46; Caversham Local Board of Health minutes 1891-4, 27 Jan. 1891 (B.R.O., UD/CV/CA/1/1); Stevens, *Directory of Reading* (1894).

²³ Caversham title map; OS map 25-inch 1st edn. 1881 (Reading Local Studies Library).

²⁴ Briant's Farm sale catalogue (Reading Local Studies Library); Gold, *op. cit.* note 12, pp. 196-7.

²⁵ The leading directors were the architects William Galt Millar and Joseph Morris. It was wound up in 1914 and its property sold in the 1920s. See H. Godwin Arnold and S.M. Gold, 'Morris of Reading: a family of architects', *Trans. of Ancient Monuments Soc.* 33 (1989), 90; sale catalogue of Company property c. 1920-9 (Reading Local Studies Library).

²⁶ See S.T. Blake, 'The Physical Expansion of the Borough of Reading' (Reading Univ. unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, 1976) for the experience of Reading, and B. Trinder, *Victorian Banbury*, 99-102 for Banbury.



Briant's Farm 1844 (Caversham Tithe Map 1844)
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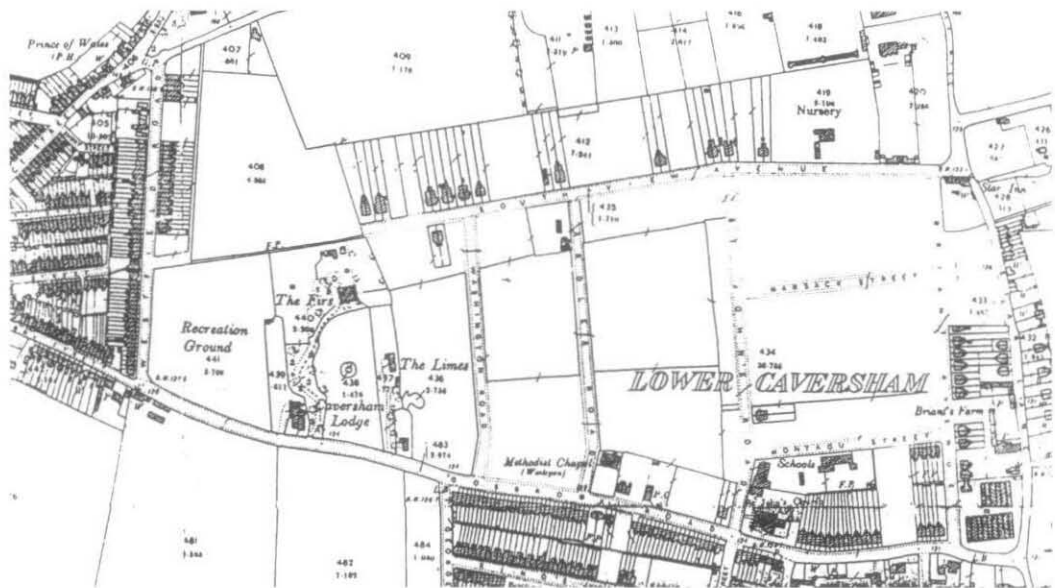


Fig. 11. Briant's Farm in 1844 and 1897 (tithe map and OS map 25-inch 2nd edn. 1897).

Messrs. Butcher and Prout submitted plans for houses to the Caversham Local Board of Health. In the following few years various developers requested permission to build: a Mr. H. Pritchett 22 cottages in January 1892 and in September 1894 a Mr. Stockwell 2 cottages in St. John's Road. A Mr. L. Bushey and Mr. Brewerton submitted plans for houses in South View Avenue in 1894.²⁷ A Mr. M.G. Stockwell also built 2 houses in Montagu Street in 1895-6, designed by William Wing. It is not clear who these developers were or what relationship they had with the People's Investment Company, though there was a George Stockwell, significantly a builder, living in Gosbrook Road in 1903 and owning 4 houses there in 1911.²⁸ The Company itself did develop some of the estate; it put forward proposals to the Local Board of Health for a new road, Ardler Road, in March 1891. One of its directors, William Galt Millar, designed 15 houses in South View Avenue and 19 in Gosbrook Road between 1900 and 1903 and another architect and founder-director, Joseph Morris, designed Gosbrook Road Methodist schoolroom (1891), a terrace of 8 houses in Star Road (1897) and Ardler Road Wesleyan Chapel (1898).²⁹ When Caversham was absorbed into Reading, houses and cottages in terraces of varying lengths and more prestigious villas were aligned along the streets, and a laundry occupied the former Home Close. Though the Company still had some undeveloped land, notably in Ardler Road, it also owned 28 houses in Briant's Avenue, Pretoria Terrace in Gosbrook Road and villas in Southview Avenue as well as properties in Grosvenor Road and Donkin Hill, outside the Briant's Farm Estate.³⁰

The development of the Westfield Estate 1895-1911

The development of the area to the east of Westfield Road was different from that of previous developments in Caversham in that it had one developer and one patron (Fig. 12). Plans were put to the first meeting of Caversham Urban District Council in January 1895 by

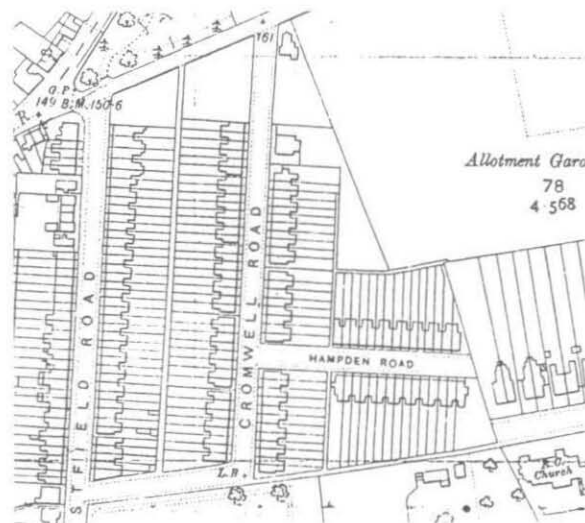


Fig. 12. The 'Westfield Building Estate' (OS map 25-inch 3rd edn. 1914).

²⁷ Caversham Local Board of Health minutes 1891-4, Jan. 1892 (B.R.O., UD/CV/CA1/1 and 4 Sept. 1894 (B.R.O., UD/CV/CA1/2); S. Gold, *op. cit.* note 12, p. 215.

²⁸ *Kelly's Directory of Oxfordshire* (1903), 68; Caversham Rate Book 1911.

²⁹ Caversham Local Board of Health minutes 1891-4; Gold, *op. cit.* note 12, pp. 112-13 and 121-2.

³⁰ Caversham Rate Book 1911; OS map 25-inch 3rd edn. 1914 (Reading Local Studies Library).

Messrs. Haslam and Son to build 112 houses on the 'Westfield Building Estate' for Mr. E. West, presumably Mr. Ebenezer West, the former head of Amersham Hall School. The firm, headed in the 1890s by Dryland Haslam senior and junior, had enjoyed a long association with Caversham and with Mr. West for whom James Haslam, father of Dryland senior, had designed Amersham Hall. In 1911 Cromwell Road and Hampden Road which made up this estate had 80 and 32 houses respectively; the Haslam family owned all but 28 of these. James Higgs owned 26 and Revd. W.H. Cleaver of Derby Road the remaining 2.³¹ The choice of street names may be significant in that Ebenezer West was a firm nonconformist.

Noticeably free from any development was Caversham Park, its lawns and gardens secure within its lodges. The well-loved Mrs. Isabella Crawshay died in 1885; her obituary in the *Reading Mercury* praised her 'unselfishness, her unbounded liberality ... and her kindness of heart; to every good work in the neighbourhood her purse was always open'. The estate and other property passed to her grandson, William Thomas Crawshay. He and his wife were in their early forties in 1891 and remained childless; after his death in 1918 the estate was sold.³²

POPULATION GROWTH IN 19TH-CENTURY CAVERSHAM

In-migration: the effect of Reading

The rapid physical expansion of Victorian Caversham was needed to house the growing population, itself the result of in-migration. Analysis of the 1881 census returns shows that 83% of 164 heads of household in the newly developed areas of Caversham village were not born in the parish. Though birthplace is an imperfect guide to migration patterns, the sheer scale of non-native Caversham inhabitants in 1881 is surely telling. About 30% of the incomers were born in Reading or within a radius of about 5 miles, but more than 40% came from much further away including the West Country, the Midlands and London. Caversham attracted migrants mainly because of its proximity to Reading, whose transition from a market and route town to a significant industrial and transport centre was accompanied by a four-fold growth in its population, from 9,421 in 1801 to 42,056 in 1881 and another rise to 72,217 by 1901.³³ Housing for this huge influx had already reached the borough boundary by the 1860s after which building began on and over the borders of neighbouring parishes. Most notable was Newtown in Reading and Earley, a purpose-built working-class estate on the borough's eastern boundary.³⁴ By the 1870s suburban villas were being built a little further out into Earley parish and housing was spreading along the roads into Tilehurst to the west. With no physical obstacles to prevent it, Reading's expansion south of the Thames accelerated in all directions; Caversham's growth, though across a major river and in a different county, was simply part of the same process.

Reading was at most a mile away across Caversham Bridge and barely half a mile across the Clappers, a footbridge at Lower Caversham. Two major employers, the railway and Huntley and Palmers' biscuit factory, lay on the northern edge of the town, making access from Caversham almost as easy as that from Reading itself. Though wages were not high,

³¹ Caversham U.D.C. minutes, 1 Jan. 1895 (B.R.O., UD/CV/CA1/2); Gold, *op. cit.* note 12, pp. 82-3; Caversham Rate Book 1911.

³² The estate was sold in 1920. The house was occupied in 1922 by the Oratory School and in 1941 became the BBC Monitoring Centre. Much of the estate was built up as Caversham Park Village in the mid 1960s, housing about 5,000 people in 1,500 dwellings. Caversham Park Village became part of Reading Borough in 1977.

³³ In 1901 Reading included part of Earley and Tilehurst, incorporated into the borough in 1887.

³⁴ Blake, *op. cit.* note 26.

there were good opportunities for employment, especially for farm labourers during the agricultural depression of the later 19th century, and for women, and for all types of building craftsmen. Auctioneers of building land in Caversham emphasised the attraction of its riverside areas for potential Reading workers: 'the situation of the estate [Briant's Farm] renders it eligible for development, being about $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile walk from the centre of the important and rapidly growing town of Reading. It is about a quarter of an hour's walk from Messrs. Huntley and Palmers' [biscuit] factory, the Reading Iron Works, the Railway Stations etc'.³⁵

This advertisement neatly encapsulates the main employers of Caversham 'commuters' in the late Victorian period: the 1891 census records at least 83 at the biscuit factory (including the manager, who lived in the select area of St. Peter's Hill), 70 on the railways and 22 at the iron and tin-plate works.³⁶ In addition there were Caversham men at Reading Gasworks and Waterworks and the caretaker of the new Reading Museum lived in the village. A survey carried out in 1908 by the borough as part of its campaign to absorb Caversham revealed that of 2,063 householders interviewed, nearly half were employed or had business in Reading.³⁷

Moreover, though over-rapid and uncontrolled development produced public health problems for the more congested streets in its low-lying areas, Caversham provided a more pleasant environment than the even more overcrowded borough across the river, especially for the professional and independent middle classes. All contemporaries emphasised its elevated position, its southerly aspect and its attractive landscape making it a healthy and agreeable place to live, besides being within easy access of urban facilities and with good rail connections to London and the rest of the country. (It is perhaps significant that expensive properties, such as the Balmore House Estate in 1865, were auctioned in the capital.) The owners of Reading's biggest brewery, Simonds, had already moved to Caversham as early as 1844, and Huntley (of the biscuit-making partnership) by 1851; they were joined later by the Haslam family and by a surgeon, George May, later to be the first Chairman of the Urban District Council. Other Reading businessmen moved too, leaving apprentices and journeymen to live over the shop in the town. Retired army and naval personnel from further afield and ladies living on modest private incomes found homes in Caversham. No fewer than three large boarding and day schools were located there: Caversham House Academy for boys was a fugitive from Reading; Ebenezer West's nonconformist boys' grammar school moved from Chenies, Buckinghamshire to Amersham Hall; Hemdean House School for girls was begun in Caversham.³⁸

THE SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY OF LATE 19TH-CENTURY CAVERSHAM

All the evidence points to the emergence of small, socially distinct zones in Caversham well before the end of the century (Fig. 13). Caversham Place Park and the high ground near the church were middle-class residential areas (A on Fig. 13), their character confirmed by the evidence of the census returns and a rate book of 1911.³⁹ The majority of rateable values in Grosvenor and Derby Roads ranged from £20 to £69 with 7 properties from £60 to £136. In 1881 these houses were home to the families of a retired naval captain, an estate agent, an

³⁵ Sale catalogue, Briant's Farm 1890 (Reading Local Studies Library).

³⁶ Census enumerators' returns: Caversham 1891 (P.R.O., RG 12/1158).

³⁷ A. Alexander, *Borough Government and Politics: Reading 1835-1985* (1985), 116.

³⁸ Tithe award; census enumerators' returns 1851-91. Francis and Matilda Knighton, father and daughter, ran Caversham Academy and Hemdean House School.

³⁹ Caversham Rate Book 1911.

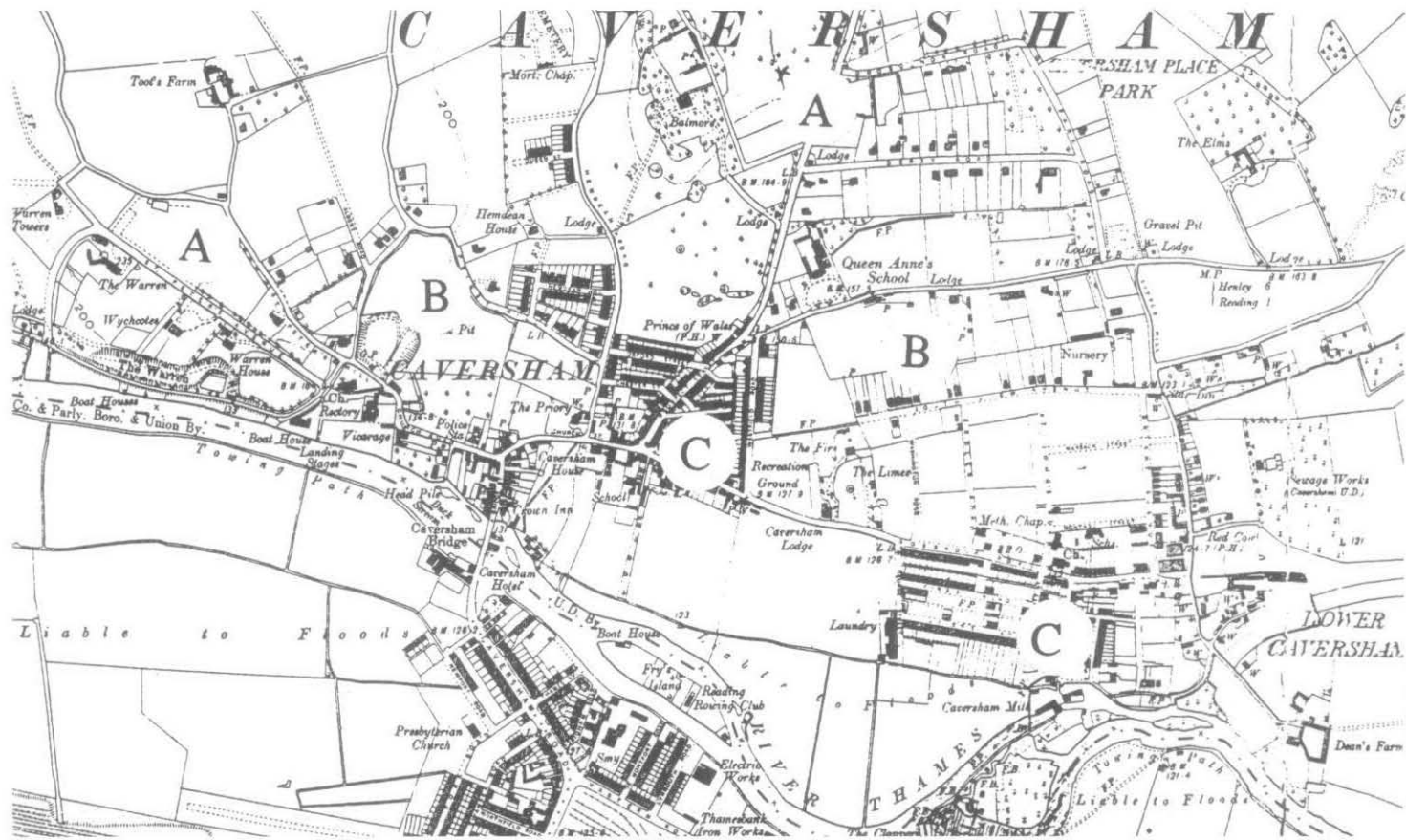


Fig. 13. The social geography of Caversham, c. 1900.

engineer, an outfitter with a shop in Broad Street, Reading, a wine merchant and 3 people of independent means. All had servants. There was also a Baptist minister who did not. Their villas had names suggestive of status: Shannon House, Lansdown Villa, Burford House, Broadlands. When Overdale in Derby Road was sold in 1928, it was described as having drawing, dining, morning and billiard rooms, kitchen, a maid's W.C. and bedroom plus 5 other bedrooms and a bathroom (Fig. 14). Its neighbour, Oakfield, was even grander with 8 bedrooms, a butler's pantry, a cleaning room and a back lobby.⁴⁰ All had spacious gardens, most of at least half an acre; the 1914 OS map marks only 38 properties on an estate of nearly 30 a. Here as elsewhere at this period, several semi-detached houses were cleverly built with facades and common curving driveways suggesting to visitors that they were approaching more superior detached residences. Significantly, too, Derby and Grosvenor Roads remained private carriageways with entrances closed by gates. Peppard Road and Henley Road which bordered the estate to the east and south respectively were similar in character with large suburban villas occupied by professionals, people of independent means and retired naval personnel.

On the west of Caversham village the area round the church was just as exclusive; rateable values started at £20 but most were above £30 and a few were over £112. The Rectory, the former manor house, was home in 1891 to Henry Simonds, of the Reading brewing firm; he employed 9 indoor servants including a ladies' maid and a page. At Warren House lived the estate agent, surveyor and auctioneer, Dryland Haslam whose neighbours in the Warren included professionals and families with unearned income. All had several servants. Two Reading estate agents advertised a range of properties in Caversham for sale and rent in 1890 and 1891; sadly in no case was a name or precise location given. Among them was a



Fig. 14. Detached villa: 7 Derby Road.

⁴⁰ Sale catalogue 1928 (Reading Local Studies Library).

detached residence close to the Thames with 8 bedrooms and another on high ground with 5, both at rents of 5 guineas a week. Stress was laid on the beautiful views, good water and gas supply and easy access to Reading station. A detached house 'standing high' could be bought for £1,000.⁴¹ Though there were isolated, superior villas such as Caversham Lodge on lower ground, OS maps suggest that the houses advertised would have been situated either near the church and in or near Caversham Place Park.

Caversham also had some less exclusive middle-class enclaves (B on Fig. 13). Some were on the higher ground, streets such as Priest Hill where only a few villas had been constructed before the 1891 census but were built up by 1911; over 75% of rateable values were between £20 and £30 with one at £48 and another at £72. In 1891 in South View, Priest Hill 5 villas were occupied by people of independent means and a Reading grocer, all with two domestic servants. The west end of South View Avenue though on lower ground was also built for the same social class; as a cul-de-sac this part of the street enjoyed some seclusion. Two villas here, next door to one they already owned, were bought at auction by the People's Investment Company in 1894. With frontages of 25 feet, gardens 250 feet long, 5 bedrooms, bathroom, large kitchen and piped water from Reading Water Supply they each commanded a rent of £25 a year with rateable values of £32. A similar property was offered at the same time on Hemdean Hill and 2 smaller ones on Priest Hill.⁴² Like Caversham Place Park and the Warren, these streets had no public houses or shops. In the early 20th century the development of Caversham Heights was along similar lines.⁴³



Fig. 15. Terrace on east side of Cromwell Road.

⁴¹ Mr. Wm. R. Nicholas's register of properties 1890 and Messrs. J. Omer Cooper & Sons' property list 1891 (Reading Local Studies Library, R/JV).

⁴² Sale catalogues for Hemdean Hill, 3 and 4 Priest Hill and South View Avenue, 1894 (Reading Local Studies Library).

⁴³ Caversham Heights, on high ground to the north-west, was 'pegged out' by William Wing in 1898 (Gold, *op. cit.* note 12, p. 216).

In 1891 lower middle-class and artisan families of clerks, engineers and telegraphists occupied houses in Hemdean Road; some had 3 bedrooms, 2 reception rooms, kitchen and scullery, mostly with rateable values in 1911 of between £12 and £15.⁴⁴ Here and in the adjacent area of Chester Street and Oxford Street small villas were built near to cheaper, smaller houses, often called cottages and rated at only £8 or £9. The latter were home to railwaymen, workers in Reading biscuit and tin factories and building tradesmen. Mixed areas of housing could also be found on the Briant's Farm Estate where Ardler Road (rateable values £9) and Washington Road (rateable values £11) both led to the more select South View Avenue. Many terraces built towards the latter end of the century, whether termed cottages or villas, consisted of bay-windowed houses, with tiny railed gardens at the front; on the secluded estate of Cromwell and Hampden Road, where rateable values were either £10 10s. or £11 10s., this was the uniform house design (Fig. 15).

There were two areas which could be described as working-class where the majority of the inhabitants were workers in Reading enterprises as well as some tradesmen who provided for the everyday needs of the growing community (C on Fig. 13). These were Lower Caversham south of Gosbrook Road and the triangle bounded by New Road, Gosbrook Street and Prospect Street. Terraces of cottages, varying in size, were the norm, rated at £8 to £10. Numbers 24 and 26 North Street, brick and slate cottages, consisted of a passage, front sitting room, kitchen, scullery and larder with 3 bedrooms (24) and 2 bedrooms (26) respectively (Fig. 16). A terrace of 8 cottages in St. John's Road each had a front forecourt 'with dwarf brick walls & iron railings', a bay window to the front sitting room and five more rooms plus a small wash house, coals and W.C. Rents were 6s. a week in 1914.⁴⁵ Detailed plans by Joseph Morris for 6 cottages in Gosbrook Road for the People's Investment Company show a very similar design (Fig. 17).⁴⁶ In this, as in other similar streets, were the small shops, public houses and church schools typically found in working-class areas.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF VICTORIAN CAVERSHAM

Architects

The enormous potential for profit from housing development in Caversham attracted architects and builders, mainly from Reading; much, possibly most, of the private and public building appears from the available evidence to have been carried out by local firms of architects and builders. Some architects with offices in the borough built themselves houses in the growing suburb. The Haslam family has already been mentioned. Also prominent was William Wing, by 1888 Surveyor to Caversham Rural Sanitary Authority and continuing to act in the same capacity to the Urban District Council. Two Reading architects particularly active in Caversham were associated with the People's Investment Company, William Galt Millar and Joseph Morris. The great Victorian architect, Alfred Waterhouse, had also settled in the Reading area, living at Foxhill on the Whiteknights Estate in Earley; his two projects in Caversham, both for Ebenezer West, were the Free Church in Gosbrook Road (later known as the West Memorial Hall) in 1865-6 and its successor in Prospect Street built in 1876-7.⁴⁷ Though he designed several grand villas in the Reading area, his only domestic

⁴⁴ Sale catalogue for 46 & 48 Hemdean Road 1919 (Reading Local Studies Library); Caversham Rate Book 1911.

⁴⁵ Sale catalogues 1933 and 1914 (Reading Local Studies Library).

⁴⁶ I owe this photocopy from Reading Borough Drainage Records to the late Mr. Godwin Arnold. I have not been able to trace the originals which may now be among uncatalogued records in the Berkshire Record Office.

⁴⁷ W.H. Hockin, *Early History of Caversham Free Church* (1932).



Fig. 16. Cottages in North Street.

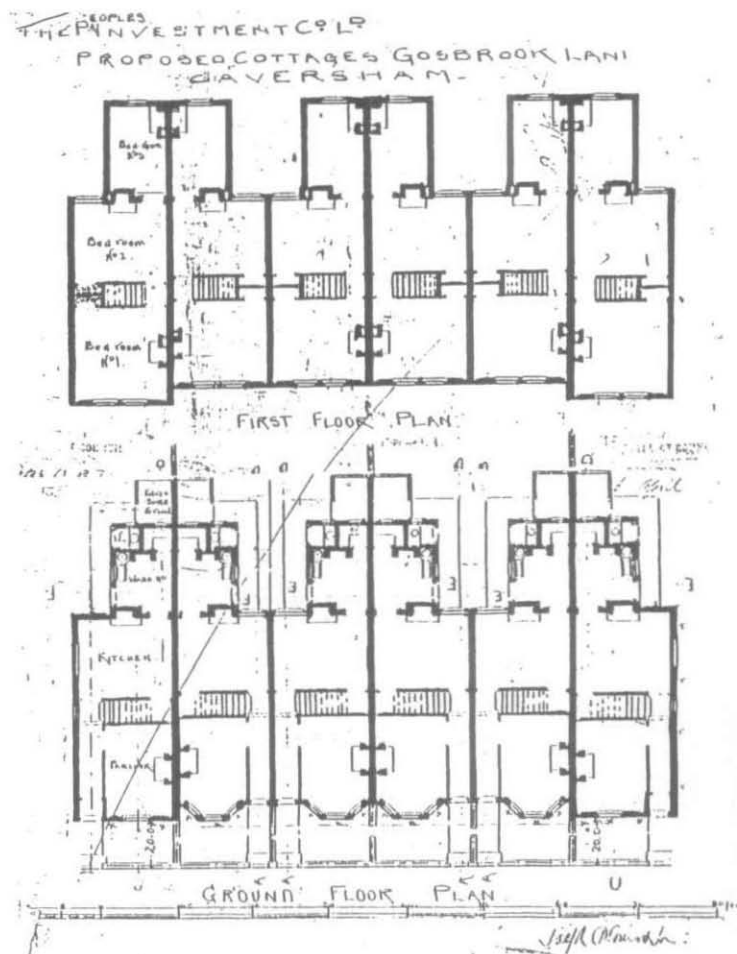


Fig. 17. Joseph Morris's design for cottages in Gosbrook Lane (later Gosbrook Road) for the People's Investment Company, 1897.

buildings in Caversham were 2 cottages at Amersham Hall, also for Ebenezer West. Reading builders known to have submitted winning tenders for Caversham houses include Orton and Child (Amersham Hall School, 1860), Sheppard (6 cottages, 1860), and Kimberley (house in St. Peter's Avenue, 1880). In 1879 tenders were submitted by a range of Reading tradesmen for Burford House in Derby Road for Revd. Page: George Higgs, a bricklayer and slater, J.H. Margrett, bellhanger and smith, and W.C. Moffatt, plumber and painter. The total cost of all their work was in excess of £1,100.⁴⁸ Comparatively few houses have been matched with their architects and none with practitioners outside the immediate area but since commissions for such important public works as the Public Library were awarded to local men, it seems unlikely that they would have been routinely ousted by outsiders in more mundane housing projects.⁴⁹

Developers and builders

From the layout, the uniformity of plots within streets and the similar or identical rateable values, it seems in several cases that an area must have been laid out at one time: this is demonstrable in such diverse developments as Caversham Place Park, North Street, Cromwell Road and Briant's Avenue among others. Unfortunately no evidence has been found to indicate who was responsible for the layout,⁵⁰ and since almost all house building was carried out piecemeal, property developers were numerous and many difficult to locate. Some were undoubtedly local men, a few of whom have been identified as builders usually operating on a small scale. Mention has already been made of David D. Bulpitt for whom houses were built in Chester and Oxford Streets; others were Mr. S. Bristow, Mr. G. Stockwell and Mr. Brewerton (of Emmer Green brickworks) who submitted plans for 2 houses in Coldicutt Street, St. John's Road and South View Avenue respectively in 1891 and 1894.⁵¹ They could not have had access to large amounts of capital but could have made sufficient profit to invest in future projects by doing much of the work themselves and selling the completed buildings. The fact that Bulpitt spread his investments over several years suggests that he was unable to contemplate anything more ambitious. The 1911 rate book indicates that most of the houses in Caversham, as would be expected at this period, were rented, and from owners with less than 10 properties, often with only 2 or 3. Even in Caversham Place Park, only a third of the houses were owner-occupied. This would suggest that though some building was for the developer's residence, the majority was speculative building for investment and income.

Large-scale developments were very unusual. The People's Investment Company, founded by architects and surveyors specifically to buy and develop land, was a major developer though even it did not carry out all the building on its Briant's Farm Estate and owned only 46 properties in Caversham in 1911. One of its founders, Joseph Morris, is known to have had a concern for 'better accommodation for the poor',⁵² though investment in property for profit seems the more likely reason for the Company's activities. The Haslam

⁴⁸ *Builder*, xviii (1860), 404, 696; xxxviii (1880), 145; xxxvii (1879), 699. Confirmation of the Reading location is from directories. Burford House is given in the 1881 census as the residence of Revd Thomas Collin Page, Baptist minister.

⁴⁹ The architect of the Library, W.G. Lewton, was living in Caversham at the time (Gold, *op. cit.* note 12, p. 105). No place of residence of architects is given in Local Board of Health and Urban District Council minutes; this has been ascertained from other local records so it is possible that outsiders existed but have not been traced.

⁵⁰ An exception is Caversham Heights (see note 43). This area, still incompletely developed in 1911, has not been discussed in this article.

⁵¹ Caversham Local Board of Health minutes, Apr. 1891, Aug. 1894 and Aug. 1891.

⁵² Gold, *op. cit.* note 12, p. 118.



Fig. 18. Semi-detached villas: 9-11 South View Avenue. Red brick with diamond-patterned gables in cream. Architects: W.G. Millar & S. Cox, 1902.



Fig. 19. 15-21 Washington Road. Red brick with cream edgings and diamond patterns.

family owned by far the largest number of houses in Caversham in 1911, with a total of 75 properties on the Westfield Estate and adjacent roads. The family firm had submitted the plans for the development of the estate in 1894 for Ebenezer West, long retired from Amersham Hall. Since he died the following year when development was barely begun, it is possible that Messrs. Haslam took it over and completed it.

Building materials in Caversham houses

Whatever the status of the houses, all were brick-built. Reading brickworks, especially Colliers, manufactured very high quality red and grey-faced bricks, and terracotta for mouldings and finials, all of which were used to produce the characteristic patterned-brick houses of the Reading area.⁵³ Caversham was no exception though its buildings do not have quite the exuberance to be found on some facades within the borough. The majority of the houses are of red brick with creams or greys used to create patterns. Some streets display different colours and styles of decoration on neighbouring or nearby houses, dictated by the preferences of architect or client: in South View Avenue one pair of red-brick semi-detached villas (numbers 1 and 3) has bands of greys, while another (numbers 9 and 11) has diaper designs in cream on the gables and red finials along the length of the roof (Fig. 18). Red brick with a more extensive use of cream to define windows and doorways is a feature of a terrace on the west side of Washington Road, whereas on the grey-brick houses opposite, reds perform a similar role (Fig. 19). Decoration was continued on to the end wall of a few end-of-terrace houses, such as one in Short Street which has a series of chequered bands.

Most ecclesiastical buildings were brick built: Waterhouse predictably used red and grey brick for his Free Church in Gosbrook Street, described as a Gothic building with 'a high



Fig. 20. Methodist Chapel, Ardler Road, designed by Joseph Morris.



Fig. 21. St. John's Church, Gosbrook Road, designed by E.W. Warren.

⁵³ J.A. Wight, *Patterns in Brick: the making and use of brick in Reading* (exhibition catalogue, Reading 1977).

roof banded in tiles of different textures' (Fig. 6);⁵⁴ Morris preferred cream stone windows for his red-brick Methodist Chapel in Ardler Road (Fig. 20). E.W. Warren uniquely in Caversham returned to the more traditional flint and Bath stone for St. John the Baptist Church in Gosbrook Road (Fig. 21).

THE CONSEQUENCES OF EXPANSION

As well as work outside the growing suburb, expansion brought increased job and commercial opportunities within the village; successive censuses show increasing numbers of Caversham men and women as craftsmen, building workers, suppliers of foodstuffs and domestic servants. The large population was also able to support a wide range of retail shops concentrated in Bridge Street, Church Street and Prospect Street which by the 1880s resembled the centre of a small town. By 1881 traditional craftsmen such as shoemakers, farriers, bakers and butchers were joined by florists, a photographer and a Co-operative Store, the first 'chain store', in Prospect Street. Smith's *Reading Directory of 1888* described the newly built 'Police Station and Sessions House' with accommodation for an inspector and a constable plus two cells. The same directory in 1901 referred to a retail draper and shoeshop, several newsagents, stationers and a 'toilet saloon'. The development of the Thames for recreation attracted hotels, boat proprietors and a provider of 'dinners, school treats, steam launch parties, picnics etc'. To cater for the spiritual needs of the large population of Lower Caversham a new parish, complete with church and school, was carved out of the remains of the ancient parish of St. Peter in 1888 (St. John in Kidmore End having been formed from it in 1854); a Methodist Chapel followed in 1898 and a Roman Catholic Church 4 years later. In 1906-7 a Public Library was built in the main street to a design by a Caversham architect, William G. Lewton, on land donated by Mr. Bullivant Williams. In 1911 there was even an Electric Theatre. Most telling in view of the increased population was the necessity to lay out a cemetery in Hemdean Road in 1884-5.

Population and housing increase did much to ensure that the cemetery was needed. In the 1870s, public health problems in Caversham occupied the greater part of the minutes of the Henley Rural Sanitary Authority and the reports of Dr. Child, its Medical Officer of Health. In 1876 he was concerned about the 'new houses [which] are springing up in all directions' when the authority had no byelaws to control development. By February 1877 he was complaining that 'this place is getting continually worse ... as it is in fact an outskirts of the town of Reading, exactly the same errors are being committed there as in the case of the suburbs of other towns - as for instance Oxford'. Among the problems he reported were overflowing cesspits and soil 'sodden with filth' in Clifton Terrace where the occupants kept large numbers of pigs and poultry. Water was supplied from pumps or wells in close proximity. In such situations, outbreaks of typhoid were inevitable and frequent.⁵⁵ By 1891 Caversham's needs were so different from those of the Henley Union and Sanitary District that it became a local authority in its own right, first a Local Board of Health in 1891 and then an Urban District Council after the Local Government Act of 1894.⁵⁶

As a local board of health it took over responsibilities for public health and town planning; additionally in 1895 as an urban district it supervised the cemetery. The achievements of

⁵⁴ H.G. Arnold, *Victorian Architecture in Reading* (1976), 1.

⁵⁵ Henley Poor Law Board of Guardians was declared a R.S.A. as a result of the Public Health Act 1872. Its records are in the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies (Minutes 1872-9 Henley R.D.C. I/i/1, pp. 208 ff).

⁵⁶ Records of Caversham Local Board of Health (1891-7) and Urban District Council (1895 onwards) are in the Berkshire Record Office.

both organisations were significant: important streets were renamed and fitted with enamelled iron name plates for easier recognition by postmen and others, some were supplied with kerbs and a few gas lamps, gravelled and kept in reasonable repair. Using their powers to control new street layout and house building, they insisted on wide roads, conformity with building regulations and adequate distance between cesspits and water supplies.⁵⁷ Critical reports from the Medical Officer of Health and Inspector of Nuisances resulted in orders to owners of properties to improve sewage disposal and provide good water supplies.

Caversham's problem was that, despite several attempts to buy land from Mr. Crawshay for the purpose, it did not have its own sewerage works until expansion was very well advanced. Suggestions in 1893 that Reading should take Caversham's sewage were rejected by the borough which was spending a huge proportion of its rate income on its plant at Whitley. Caversham acquired a drainage scheme and sewerage works in 1896 but Alexander suggests it was 'under some strain from the increased population' within 10 years. Nor could Caversham supply piped water; whenever a supply was condemned, the owner was ordered to connect the house to Reading Water Supply. Even the gas for the street lamps and the houses came from the other side of the river. Caversham was to all intents and purposes a suburb of Reading by the early 20th century if not before, and, as a Reading alderman said in 1908, 'Caversham has the resources of a village and the requirements of a town'. We have seen that many of its inhabitants worked in the borough; they also found entertainment in its theatres and clubs and some of their children attended one of its Board schools just over the bridge. In 1903 an electric tram ran from the south side of Caversham Bridge into Reading, drawing the two communities closer together. Even members of the Urban District Council, half of whom worked in Reading, seemed to assume that the two authorities would amalgamate.⁵⁸

The borough had already in 1887 absorbed the built up areas of two parishes on its borders, Earley and Tilehurst, and was suffering from 'earth hunger' again by 1908. Reading argued that it was anomalous to have separate local government authorities within such a small geographical area, and that it already provided education, water and on occasions a fire service used by some Caversham residents and could provide others such as police and hospitals more effectively than the distant Oxfordshire County Council. Bitter and protracted opposition from Caversham U.D.C. and Oxfordshire ended in 1911 when a bill confirming the incorporation passed both the Commons and the Lords. Reading undertook to widen or reconstruct Caversham Bridge, which it did in 1926, and to build a replacement footbridge for the Clappers, a promise which ended in the much grander Reading Bridge in 1923. The Crawshay Estate remained in Oxfordshire, some of it to enter the borough in 1977. For the rest, as with villages on the borders of other towns such as Oxford and Banbury, Caversham became an integrated suburb rather than a suburban village.

By 1911 in the part of Caversham transferred to Reading much of the landscape depicted in the tithe map had disappeared, though the basic structure of the old streets and lanes remained, Caversham Street (renamed Church Street), Church Road, Gosbrook Street and Prospect Street. Hemdean Road and Priest Hill Road followed the lines of ancient tracks. Some of the new roads, notably Westfield Road, South View Avenue and Briant's Avenue followed field boundaries as did the back lane to Piggotts Road, thus preserving some

⁵⁷ Minutes of Caversham L.B.H. 1894-7 (B.R.O., UD/CV/CA1/1); minutes of Caversham U.D.C. 1895-1911 (B.R.O., UD/CV/CA1/2-9) *passim*.

⁵⁸ Alexander, *op. cit.* note 37, pp. 91, 106. The account of Caversham's incorporation into Reading is based on Alexander, pp. 107-9, 114-24.



Fig. 22. Caversham in 1914 (OS map 6-inch 3rd edn. 1914).

skeletal remains of the ancient landscape. Street names – Westfield Road, Hemdean Road and Balmore Drive – recalled former fields; others such as Mill Road were reminders of topographical features. Donkin Hill was named for George Donkin who had owned 330 a. in the area in 1844 and Briant's Avenue for the former owner of Briant's Farm. These few reminders were small sops to the memory of a largely lost rural environment. However the end of its short, independent existence did not rob Caversham of its identity entirely. Although part of the borough for almost a century, and very obviously one of its increasingly built up suburbs, it has retained something of a village atmosphere which makes it, despite its traffic problems, a place to visit still with some pleasure.

The Society is grateful to the Greening Lamborn Trust for a grant towards the publication of this paper.