



VCH Oxfordshire Texts in Progress

Caversham

Landscape, Settlement, and Buildings

Until its dissolution in the late 19th and early 20th century Caversham was the largest parish in Binfield hundred, sited on the northern bank of the Thames across from Reading, and stretching (like its neighbours) into the Chiltern Hills.¹ From the mid 19th century its southern part became a densely settled suburb of Reading, transforming its character; long before then, however, settlement was already concentrated on the flatter land towards the river, particularly at Lower Caversham in the south-east and in Caversham 'village' next to Caversham bridge, a major river crossing established in the Middle Ages. The hillier centre and north contained half a dozen scattered hamlets including Emmer Green, Kidmore End, and Cane End, a pattern reflected in the parish's division into several tithings including East Thorpe, West Thorpe, and 'above down' or 'above the town'. Caversham's lords, many of them national figures, maintained a manor house in the south-east, at first near the river and later in Caversham Park, where buildings were developed on a lavish scale by the 18th century. Subsequent demographic change prompted the parish's disintegration, the northern part being separated in the 1890s to create Kidmore End civil parish, and the rest broken up in 1911 when most was absorbed into Reading.

LANDSCAPE. SETTLEMENT, AND BUILDINGS

Parish Boundaries

From the Thames the ancient parish extended more than 5 miles into the Chiltern Hills, and in 1878 measured 4,879 a.,² making it the largest Oxfordshire parish south of Thame and the county's thirteenth largest overall.³ Its boundaries presumably derived at least in part from those of the 20-hide Caversham estate established by 1066, whose 11th- or 12th-century lords almost certainly founded the later parish church.⁴ The southern boundary followed that of the shire along the mid-stream of the Thames, taking in several islands,⁵

¹ This account was written in 2017--18 and revised in 2019.

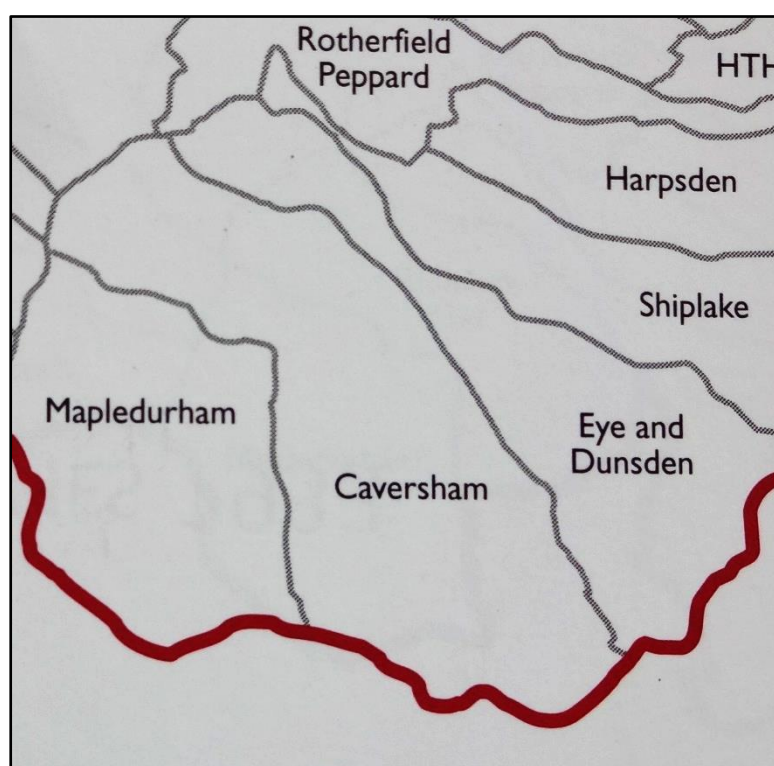
² *OS Area Bk* (1878); cf. TNA, tithe award (estimating 4,771 a. in 1845). For boundaries, TNA, tithe map; *SOAG Bulletin* 52 (1997), 23, 24--9.

³ *VCH Oxon.* II, 213--24.

⁴ Below, landownership; relig. hist. The 11th-century estate apparently also included much of Shiplake, however (below, Shiplake, landownership).

⁵ *Cal. Close* 1227--31, 499; OHC, QSB/25; TNA, tithe map.

while the western boundary mainly followed field and woodland boundaries. Some stretches there are marked by hedged banks. The northern boundary ran across fields and along the embanked northern edge of Withy Copse, turning south near the Iron-Age hillfort in Castle Grove (in Checkendon). From there the eastern boundary followed a woodland bank to Gallowstree Common (partly in Eye and Dunsden), running down Reade's Lane to a point south-west of Bishoplands Farm, then following field and woodland boundaries and cutting across fields and Thames-side grassland back to the river. The boundaries of the parish's internal tithings cannot be reconstructed in detail, part of their lands lying intermixed in the southern open fields.⁶ Broadly, however, Caversham tithing was centred on Caversham bridge, with the two 'thorpes' to the east and west, and 'above town' tithing to the north, including the area around Chalkhouse green.⁷



The parish of Caversham c.1850. Source: K. Tiller and G. Darkes (eds.), *An Historical Atlas of Oxfordshire* (ORS 67, 2010)

Modern boundary changes reduced the parish's size and ultimately led to its abolition. In 1894 some 2,475 a. north of Emmer Green was removed to create Kidmore End parish (called Kidmore until 1902), much of the area having already been separated for ecclesiastical purposes in 1853. The rest of Caversham parish (2,404 a.) was abolished in 1911, when a densely built up area covering 1,467 a. was taken into Reading borough, and its still rural south-eastern part (937 a.) was transferred to Eye and Dunsden.⁸ A housing estate built in that area in the 1960s (Caversham Park Village) was transferred from Eye and

⁶ TNA, LR 2/189, ff. 52--63v., mentioning (f. 52v.) the '[mere]stones of East Thorpe'.

⁷ Below (settlement).

⁸ *Census*, 1891--1921; Youngs, *Admin. Units*, I, 394, 400; below, relig. hist. (district churches).

Dunsden to Reading in 1977.⁹ The predominantly rural Kidmore End civil parish gained 13 a. from Eye and Dunsden in 1912 and a further 178 a. in 1952, partly offset by 114 a. transferred to the newly created parish of Sonning Common.¹⁰ In 1977 small built-up areas in the south of Kidmore End were also absorbed into Reading,¹¹ and in 1991 the remainder covered c.2,472 a. (1,001 ha.).¹²

Landscape

The parish climbs gradually and unevenly from south-east to north-west, its lowest point lying by the Thames at c.37 m., and its highest at Kempwood (125 m.) in the far north-west. Riverside alluvium and silt provided extensive meadow and pasture (now mainly destroyed by modern gravel extraction), while gravels and chalk immediately to the north supported the parish's main open fields, enclosed in the early 19th century and now almost entirely developed for housing.¹³ Further east, a medieval deer park (now Caversham Park) was enclosed from more extensive waste probably in the early 13th century.¹⁴ The parish's central and northern parts comprise high plateaux capped with sands and gravels, bisected by narrow dry chalk valleys such as Hemdean Bottom.¹⁵ There small fields, closes, and scattered commons occupied the flatter areas, with woodland (at least by the 18th century) restricted mainly to the far north and to small pockets on the steeper slopes.¹⁶ Early streams near the river are commemorated in names such as Gosbrook and Westbrook (the latter mentioned in 1392),¹⁷ though water further north came from ponds and wells,¹⁸ and from the 1950s from a Reading Corporation reservoir and water tower serving the Emmer Green area.¹⁹ From the same period large-scale gravel extraction transformed the area immediately north of the river, extending as far as Sonning Eye in Eye and Dunsden.²⁰ In the 1980s--90s local businessman David Sherriff and Sport England turned the abandoned pits into a major

⁹ Local Govt Boundary Commissn Rep. 145 (1976); Berks. and Oxon. Areas Order (1977); below (settlement).

¹⁰ *Census*, 1921 and 1961.

¹¹ Local Govt Boundary Commissn Rep. 145 (1976); *Emmer Green Past and Present: From Estate Hamlet to Village to Suburb* (Emmer Green Residents' Assn, 2001), 44.

¹² *Census*, 1991. For minor changes the following year, South Oxon. Parishes Order (1992).

¹³ OS Map 1:25000, sheet 171 (1999 edn); Geol. Surv. Map 1:50000 (solid and drift), sheet 268 (2000 edn); Berks RO, enclo. award and map (1834); below, econ. hist. (agric. landscape).

¹⁴ Below, econ. hist. (medieval).

¹⁵ Geol. Surv. Map 1:50000 (solid and drift), sheet 268 (2000 edn).

¹⁶ Jefferys, *Oxon. Map* (1767).

¹⁷ M.T. Pearman, 'Historical Notices of Caversham', *OAS Trans* 32 (1894), 4.

¹⁸ TNA, tithe award and map; J. Dils (ed.), *Rural Life in South Oxfordshire 1841--1891: Cane End, Kidmore End, Gallowstree Common* (1994), 1, 4; *Emmer Green Past and Present*, 12--13; NHLE, nos. 1052181, 1059507; below (settlement).

¹⁹ Reading Corporation water committee papers, Reading Central Library; Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. d. 535 (typescript notes on the history of Emmer Green by D.M. Robinson, 1966).

²⁰ OS Maps (various edns); below, econ. hist.

water-sports facility which eventually incorporated two marinas with a total of 500 berths, an Olympic-sized rowing lake, sailing and water-skiing clubs, and a 70-a. nature reserve.²¹



The parish's mixed landscape, bisected by Hemdean Bottom

Communications

Roads, Bridges, and Ferries

Several roads radiate north from Caversham bridge,²² the most important running north-east towards Henley and north-west towards Oxford. The Henley road (the modern A4155), turnpiked in 1768, links Reading with Marlow (Bucks.) and Hatfield (Herts.), and included a branch crossing the Thames at Sonning.²³ The Oxford road (the modern A4074) passes through Caversham Heights and Cane End, then on through Exlade Street to join the road to

²¹ Caversham Bridge (Mar. 1991); www.davidsherriff.co.uk/portfolio_page/the-redgrave-pinsent-rowing-lake.

²² OS Map 1:25000, sheet 171 (1999 edn).

²³ VCH Oxon. XVI, 4--6; Oxon. Atlas, pp. 50--1.

Wallingford. Both routes are of medieval origin,²⁴ the Henley road broadly continuing the line of the Tuddingway.²⁵ A third (probably also medieval) road, partly preserved in the modern Prospect and Peppard Roads, passed west of Caversham Park, branching at Emmer Green to run north-westwards to Kidmore End and Rotherfield Peppard, and north-eastwards to Binfield Heath, Harpsden, and Henley.²⁶ Long-established minor routes (several of them altered at enclosure in the 19th century) linked hamlets and farmsteads in the centre and north of the parish, and connected them with the larger settlements in the south.²⁷ During the 20th century the dense infill of the parish's southern part created numerous new streets and access roads and partially obliterated others, although the most important largely preserved the line of pre-existing routes. The road from Caversham to Emmer Green was made more direct in 1949 by the construction of Buckingham Drive, leaving a stretch of the earlier Peppard Road as a residential back lane.²⁸

Caversham bridge itself was so called by the 13th century, and may have been that described in the 1170s--80s as the 'new bridge of Reading';²⁹ if so, it perhaps replaced an earlier bridge or causeway.³⁰ Its span lay partly in the fee of the abbot of Reading and partly in that of the lord of Caversham,³¹ and though it was badly damaged by floods in 1240,³² it was described as a 'great bridge' in 1314.³³ Further disrepair was reported during the 15th century³⁴ and in 1552,³⁵ although Leland (writing c.1540) merely reported a 'great main bridge' of timber with some stone foundations.³⁶ Repairs during the Middle Ages may have been partly funded by offerings at a bridge chapel established by the early 13th century,³⁷ but responsibility otherwise remained with the lords of Reading and Caversham, assisted by Notley abbey for the small section where the chapel was located.³⁸ In 1638 the king granted

²⁴ Above, vol. overview.

²⁵ Below, Mapledurham, landscape etc. (communications).

²⁶ Jefferys, *Oxon. Map* (1767); OHC, C17:49 (129) (Harpsden estate map, 1586). For minor rerouting c.1770: TNA, C 202/158/22.

²⁷ Davis, *Oxon. Map* (1797); OHC, QSD/D/A/books 14--15; W. Wing, 'Lecture on Old Caversham' (1894), copy in Caversham Library (available online); Dils, *Rural Life in South Oxfordshire*, 3; SOAG *Bulletin* 49 (1993), 32--3.

²⁸ *Emmer Green Past and Present*, 67.

²⁹ *PN Berks.* I, 177--8 (showing that it sometimes continued to be called Reading bridge); B.R. Kemp (ed.), *Reading Abbey Cartularies* (Camden 4th ser. 31 and 33, 1986--7), II, 115.

³⁰ For a possible earlier ford, Wing, 'Lecture on Old Caversham'; Grundy, *Saxon Oxon.* 104 and n. (based on the argument that the Chiltern ridgeway led to Caversham bridge).

³¹ OHC, QSB/25.

³² B.R. Kemp (ed.), *Reading Abbey Records: A New Miscellany* (Berks. Rec. Soc. 25, 2018), p. 39.

³³ *Cal. Close* 1313--18, 137; cf. *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, IV, 344.

³⁴ P. Rixon, 'The Town of Reading, c.1200--c.1542' (Oxford Univ. D.Phil. thesis, 1998), 25--6.

³⁵ TNA, E 315/122, ff. 134--5.

³⁶ Leland, *Itin.* ed. Toulmin Smith, I, 111.

³⁷ Below, relig. hist.

³⁸ *Cal. Pat.* 1558--60, 283; TNA, E 315/122, ff. 134--5.

Reading corporation a toll on carts and laden horses to help with repair of its half of the bridge.³⁹

In 1642--4, during the Civil War, the bridge's Reading end was replaced with a wooden drawbridge to help fortify the town.⁴⁰ The approach road on the Reading side was improved by local subscription in 1724, and the Reading part of the bridge was repaired by the corporation in 1730.⁴¹ Extensive renovation was carried out in 1815, when the county forced Earl Cadogan (as lord of Caversham) to pay for the Oxfordshire part; the Berkshire section was then rebuilt in wood, and was reinforced with iron in 1830,⁴² but despite the bridge being 'the great medium of communication between the south of Oxfordshire (including the town of Henley) and the county of Berks.', the narrow Oxfordshire section allowed the passage of only a single vehicle, causing considerable delays.⁴³ In 1869 a replacement cast-iron bridge with two lanes was jointly paid for by Oxfordshire county and Reading borough, which assumed sole responsibility in 1911 when Caversham became part of Reading.⁴⁴ The structure proved insufficient for the volume of traffic, and the present reinforced concrete structure (with four lanes) was opened in 1926, with a wider approach road.⁴⁵

A separate crossing point at Lower Caversham may have become significant soon after Reading abbey was founded in 1121, almost directly across the river. In 1231 the king granted Andrew, 'serjeant of Caversham' (presumably a royal official) an oak to construct a ferry to carry poor people,⁴⁶ while in 1238 Notley abbey was given timber for making a ferry for pilgrims coming to Caversham.⁴⁷ Both grants were probably for a ferry at Lower Caversham mentioned in 1505, giving access to the Marian shrine established in a chapel at the manor house on the site of the present-day Dean's Farm.⁴⁸ A nearby flashlock existed by the 14th century,⁴⁹ and by 1603 was associated with a weir and a footbridge called 'the

³⁹ C. Coates, *The History and Antiquities of Reading* (1802), 69--70; J. Doran, *The History and Antiquities of the Town and Borough of Reading in Berkshire* (1835), 279.

⁴⁰ Berks RO, R/Z3/48/1--2; R/Z6/1/1/1; R/Z5/5; *Jnl of Sir Samuel Luke* (ORS 29, 31, 33, 1950--3), I, 25, 30; II, 178; III, 193; *VCH Berks*, III, 358--9; F.S. Thacker, *The Thames Highway* (1968 edn), II, 230--1.

⁴¹ Bodl. 4° Rawl. 526; Coates, *Hist. and Antiqs Reading*, 458; OHC, QSB/25 (drawing of 1811, showing plaque dated 1730); S. Markham (ed.), *John Loveday of Caversham, 1711-1789: The Life and Tours of an Eighteenth-Century Onlooker* (1984), 49.

⁴² OHC, QSB/25; Thacker, *Thames Highway*, II, 231; *Oxf Jnl* 18 July 1812; Berks RO, D/EX1457/2/14. For a photo, M. Kift, *Life in Old Caversham* (1980), 22.

⁴³ *Oxf. Jnl*, 2 Oct. 1869 (for quotation); M.R. Mitford, *Recollections of a Literary Life* (1857 edn), II, 3.

⁴⁴ OHC, QSB/25; Reading Museum, REDMG: 1931.118.1 (photo during construction); A.L. Humphreys, *Caversham Bridge, 1231--1926* (1926), 23--4.

⁴⁵ Humphreys, *Caversham Bridge*, 29--32.

⁴⁶ *Cal. Close* 1227--31, 524.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 1237--42, 108, 111.

⁴⁸ TNA, E 36/214 f. 5v.; below, relig. hist. (Middle Ages).

⁴⁹ C.T. Flower (ed.), *Public Works in Medieval Law*, II (Selden Soc. 40, 1923), 124--5.

clappers',⁵⁰ which apparently superseded the ferry.⁵¹ Both were rebuilt in the 1880s, when pedestrians were charged a toll,⁵² although the footbridge (which was well used by Caversham and Reading people) was dangerously narrow, resulting in several drownings.⁵³ Reading Bridge was built nearby in 1923 for both pedestrians and vehicle traffic,⁵⁴ and a separate improved footbridge remained in 2018. Three years earlier a new pedestrian and cycle bridge opened between Christchurch Meadows and Vastern Road in Reading.⁵⁵



View towards
Caversham from
the bridge
(2018)

Carriers and Post

Inhabitants relied presumably on carriers and stagecoaches operating in Reading.⁵⁶ A Caversham-based carrier service mentioned in 1841 was short lived,⁵⁷ and so too was a fly service noted in the 1870s.⁵⁸ Hourly (and later half-hourly) horse-drawn omnibuses to Reading ran from the Prince of Wales by the 1880s,⁵⁹ and a regular Reading motor bus service started in 1918, stopping at Emmer Green and Kidmore End.⁶⁰ In 2018 there were

⁵⁰ *PN Berks.* I, 178.

⁵¹ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* IV, 312; *Cal. Pat.* 1550--3, 344--5.

⁵² HE Arch., CC72/00680; *Kelly's Reading Dir.* (1914 edn); OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. LVI.15 (1881 and later edns); *Reading Mercury*, 15 Sep. 1888.

⁵³ *Reading Mercury*, 12 May 1849; 9 Feb. 1901; 7 Nov. 1908.

⁵⁴ *Reading Observer*, 28 Sep. and 7 Dec. 1923.

⁵⁵ *Reading Chron.* 1 Oct. 2015.

⁵⁶ e.g. *The Reading Guide and Berkshire Directory*, V (1805), 124--6.

⁵⁷ TNA, HO 107/84/2.

⁵⁸ *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1877).

⁵⁹ *Stevens' Dir. Reading* (1884); *Smith's Dir. Reading* (1887 and later edns).

⁶⁰ Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. d. 535; *Emmer Green Past and Present*, 68--9. For buses from the 1920s onwards, L. James and J. Whitehead, *Kemp's and Chiltern Queens 1929--2002* (2017), app. 2; J.B.

regular services from Caversham to Reading, Henley, and Oxford, but outlying hamlets were unevenly connected.⁶¹

A Caversham sub-post office was established in Prospect Street in the 1840s,⁶² becoming a money-order office and savings bank by the 1870s⁶³ and a telegraph office by 1880.⁶⁴ Outlying sub-post offices opened in Kidmore End, Lower Caversham and Emmer Green c.1900, and later at Gallowstree Common,⁶⁵ and by the 1930s, as Caversham expanded, there were additional offices in Blenheim Road, Kidmore Road, Henley Road, Prospect Way, and Woodcote Way (Caversham Heights).⁶⁶ In 2018, following several closures and changes in location, there remained two branches in Caversham (in Church Street and Henley Road), and one each in Caversham Heights (Conisboro Avenue) and Emmer Green (Milestone Way).⁶⁷

River and Railway

As in neighbouring Thames-side parishes, river transport was important from an early date. In 1219 the dying William Marshal came to Caversham from London by boat,⁶⁸ and the countess of Warwick made the journey in 1432.⁶⁹ By then regular commercial navigation this far upstream was probably in decline; it was revived from the 16th century, however,⁷⁰ and a wharf may have existed by the 1630s,⁷¹ located possibly at the Reading end of Caversham bridge where there were two wharfs in the 19th century.⁷² In 1638 Reading corporation was granted a toll on barges passing under its side of the bridge, but the removal of stone arches in the early 1640s improved the flow of water and negated the need for a winch there, and in the 1680s Oxford bargemasters won a case to end the toll on the grounds that it had been levied for use of the winch.⁷³ Caversham's facilities were probably always less substantial

Macarthur, 'Caversham: The Growth and Development of a Minor Shopping Centre' (unpubl. thesis for Berks. College of Education, 1971), 35--6: copy in Reading Central Library.

⁶¹ Bus timetables, available online.

⁶² *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1847).

⁶³ *Harrod's Dir. Oxon.* (1876).

⁶⁴ ChCh, MS Estates 66, f. 149; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883).

⁶⁵ *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (various edns).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* (1939).

⁶⁷ Post Office website; below, Mapledurham, landscape etc. (communications).

⁶⁸ D. Crouch, *William Marshal: Knighthood, War and Chivalry, 1147--1219* (2002), 138.

⁶⁹ J. Harvey, *Gothic England* (1947), 176.

⁷⁰ R.B. Peberdy, 'Navigation on the River Thames between London and Oxford in the Late Middle Ages: a Reconsideration', *Oxoniensia* 61 (1996), 311--40; above, vol. overview.

⁷¹ *Cal. SP Dom.* 1637--8, 424.

⁷² OHC, QSB/25 (dated 1811); OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. LVI.15 (1881 and 1899 edns).

⁷³ Doran, *The Hist. and Antiqs Reading*, 279; *VCH Berks.* III, 356; Berks RO, R/FZ1/1.

than those by the River Kennet on the Reading side, from which barges ran regularly to London by the early 16th century. In 1812, Caversham itself had only two barge owners.⁷⁴

Caversham lock, located at Lower Caversham, was claimed in the 1390s to be 'so narrow and dangerous' that 'men with shouts, bargets and kiddles cannot pass there towards Oxford as they were wont to do of old',⁷⁵ although upstream journeys evidently continued in the 15th century. A winch was mentioned in 1641,⁷⁶ and in 1778 the lock was upgraded to a poundlock, which was rebuilt in 1875.⁷⁷

The Great Western Railway line from London was extended through Reading in 1840, with a station less than a mile from Caversham bridge.⁷⁸ It remained part of the main Bristol--London line in 2018, when the station was the ninth busiest outside the capital.⁷⁹

Population

In 1086 Caversham's recorded population of 41 tenants and two slaves was the second highest in Binfield hundred (after Dunsden).⁸⁰ The figure suggests a total population of around 200, although some presumably lived in Shiplake, much of which remained attached to Caversham manor until the mid 12th century.⁸¹ Significant growth had taken place by 1307 when 105 tenants were listed in Caversham alone,⁸² although population increase may have slowed thereafter, and taxpayer numbers fell between 1306 and 1327,⁸³ followed presumably by mortalities from 14th-century plagues and famines. Even so 153 people aged over 14 paid poll tax in 1377, more than in any other rural parish in the hundred.⁸⁴ In 1525 there were 89 taxpayers,⁸⁵ and in 1548 60 'housling people',⁸⁶ the latter presumably an underestimate. A 1551 survey of Caversham manor listed 64 tenants,⁸⁷ and the overall parish population has been estimated at c.330,⁸⁸ rising to c.350--400 at the beginning of the 17th century.⁸⁹

⁷⁴ Rixon, 'Reading', 16--22; Thacker, *Thames Highway*, II, 233.

⁷⁵ Flower, *Public Works*, II, 124--5; for context, Peberdy, 'Navigation', 315--16, 325--7.

⁷⁶ BL, Add Ch. 46164.

⁷⁷ Thacker, *Thames Highway*, II, 233--4.

⁷⁸ *Hist. GWR*, I, 52; above, vol. overview.

⁷⁹ www.gwr.com/plan-journey/stations-and-routes/reading (accessed May 2019).

⁸⁰ VCH Oxon. I, 410; VCH Oxon. XVI, 11 (Table 1).

⁸¹ Below, landownership; Shiplake, landownership.

⁸² TNA, C 133/128/1, transcribed in Pearman, 'Historical Notices of Caversham', 10--15.

⁸³ TNA, E 179/161/10 (30 names); E 179/161/8 (22 names); E 179/161/9, rot. 12d. (16 names).

⁸⁴ *Poll Taxes 1377--81*, ed. Fenwick, 295.

⁸⁵ TNA, E 179/161/201, rots. 4--4d.

⁸⁶ *Chant. Cert.* 42.

⁸⁷ TNA, LR 2/189, ff. 52--63v.

⁸⁸ D.M. McLaren, 'Stuart Caversham: A Thames-side Community in Oxfordshire during the Seventeenth Century', Reading Univ. PhD thesis (1975), 167--8.

⁸⁹ This and following based on *ibid.* 168--75; OHC, par. reg. transcripts.

Thereafter baptisms usually outnumbered burials, although emigration probably also outstripped immigration. In 1642 153 adult males signed the obligatory protestation oath,⁹⁰ and family reconstructions suggest a population of c.530 in 1666, despite a peak in burials in 1661 and 1662. In the latter year hearth tax was assessed on 75 houses,⁹¹ and in 1676 there were an estimated 200 conformists in the parish.⁹² Between 1680 and 1700 baptisms and burials were broadly aligned, despite deaths in 1688 caused possibly by typhus, and by 1738 there were an estimated 146 houses,⁹³ rising to 200 by 1768.⁹⁴

By 1801 the population stood at 1,069 in 230 households, growing to 1,752 by 1851.⁹⁵ More than half then lived in Caversham and Lower Caversham, which with nearby places such as Benson and Dorchester ranked together amongst the county's 'considerable' villages.⁹⁶ The rest of the population was mainly concentrated at Emmer Green (c.240 people), with another 320 or so divided amongst the hamlets of Kidmore End, Gallowstree Common, and Cane End. Subsequent suburban expansion from Reading, concentrated in the south, prompted faster growth than in any other rural parish in south Oxfordshire, the population of 3,583 in 1881 swelling to 5,441 by 1891, and to 6,580 (excluding Kidmore End) by 1901.⁹⁷ By 1911 it was 9,785, considerably higher than that of nearby Henley borough (with 6,456), and unevenly divided between Caversham East Ward (with 5,742 people) and Caversham West Ward (4,043). Continued growth brought the 2001 population to 30,953, of whom 9,265 lived in Caversham Ward, 9,365 in Thames Ward, 9,277 in Peppard Ward, and 3,046 in Mapledurham Ward.

Kidmore End's more rural population rose from 555 in 1911 to 832 in 1931, reaching 1,663 in 1961 and 2,110 ten years later. Boundary changes in 1977 reduced the number to 1,404, and in 2011 there were 1,302 inhabitants compared with Caversham's 31,734.⁹⁸

Settlement

Prehistoric to Anglo-Saxon

⁹⁰ F.R.L. Goadby, 'Protestation Returns 1641--42: Caversham', *The Oxon. Family Historian*, 3:7 (1985), 229--30.

⁹¹ E. Powell, *Records of the Hearth Tax for Reading and Caversham, AD 1662--3* (1913), 14.

⁹² *Compton Census*, ed. Whiteman, 359.

⁹³ *Secker's Visit*. 34.

⁹⁴ OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. d 558, f. 109; though cf. *ibid.* d 564, f. 88, estimating only 150 in 1774.

⁹⁵ Para. based on *Census*, 1801--2011; J.A. Dils, 'From Village to Suburb: Caversham 1840 to 1911', *Oxoniensia* 64 (1999), 87--8.

⁹⁶ *Gardner's Dir. Oxon.* (1852), 47.

⁹⁷ For Kidmore End's removal, above (boundaries).

⁹⁸ *Census*, 1911--2011.

Finds of Palaeolithic tools are associated with an ancient channel of the Thames running north-east through the parish's central part,⁹⁹ while later prehistoric finds include pottery and worked flint from a gravel pit west of Kidmore Road.¹⁰⁰ A barrow cemetery at Emmer Green recreation ground is probably Bronze-Age,¹⁰¹ and small-scale later Bronze-Age occupation has been identified at St Peter's Hill, Caversham Heights,¹⁰² and at Gorselands, Emmer Green.¹⁰³ Evidence of Iron-Age activity includes ditches and a post hole at Emmer Green community centre (Grove Road), which contained late Iron-Age and Roman pottery, charcoal, and daub.¹⁰⁴ Iron-Age swords were found close to the Thames east of Dean's Farm in 1965.¹⁰⁵ A 'Celtic head' found in a garden at Priest Hill is of unknown provenance and uncertain date.¹⁰⁶

Roman finds have been widespread, including numerous coins and pieces of pottery.¹⁰⁷ In 1924 a supposed 1st-century cremation group was discovered at the Henley Road cemetery, and almost entire pots recovered from nearby All Hallows Road.¹⁰⁸ Occupation close to Dean's Farm is indicated by two timber-lined wells, one containing 4th-century pottery and what may be ritually deposited objects, including a lead tank with a Christian Chi-ro symbol.¹⁰⁹ A large piece of Roman mosaic found just over a kilometre to the north-east (close to Marsh Lane) presumably indicates a nearby villa.¹¹⁰ Further north, Iron-Age to Roman settlement features were discovered at Highdown Hill Road, along with 3rd- to 4th-century pottery and coins.¹¹¹ A small Roman settlement (probably a farmstead) was located north-west of Bryant's Farm,¹¹² while large quantities of Roman pottery and tile were found close to Shipnells Farm at Hemdean Bottom.¹¹³ At 40 Kidmore Road finds including roof tile and burnt animal bone suggest nearby settlement.¹¹⁴

⁹⁹ J. Wymer, *The Lower Palaeolithic Occupation of Britain*, II (1999), map 3.

¹⁰⁰ S. Pigott, 'Neolithic Pottery and other Remains from Pangbourne, Berks., and Caversham, Oxon.', *Prehist. Soc. of East Anglia*, VI:1 (1929), 33--7; Berks. HER, 00813.00.000.

¹⁰¹ *SOAG Bulletin* 68, 34--40.

¹⁰² S. Ford and F. Raymond, 'A Late Bronze-Age Artefact Scatter and Medieval Ditch on St Peter's Hill, Caversham', *Berks. Archaeol. Jnl* 81 (2013), 27--35.

¹⁰³ *Emmer Green Past and Present*, 22.

¹⁰⁴ *Berks. Archaeol. Jnl* 81 (2013), 119. See also *VCH Oxon. I*, 259--60; Berks HER, 00786.00.000; *Berks. Archaeol. Jnl* 61 (1963--4), 103; *Emmer Green Past and Present*, 23.

¹⁰⁵ OS Map, 1:2500, LVI.16 (1966 edn).

¹⁰⁶ Reading Museum, 1974.262.1; *SOAG Bulletin* 42 (1986), 28--30; 43 (1987), 20--2.

¹⁰⁷ Berks HER; Reading Museum.

¹⁰⁸ *VCH Oxon. I*, 334; photo in Reading Central Library, local collections.

¹⁰⁹ P. Booth et al., *The Thames through Time: the Archaeology of the Gravel Terraces of the Upper and Middle Thames: The Early Historical Period AD 1--1000* (2007), 79, 214, 217, 223, 294; *SMA* 19 (1989), 50; Berks HER, 03520.00.000; 03521.00.000.

¹¹⁰ Berks HER, RD15711.

¹¹¹ *Berks. Archaeol. Jnl* 62, 1965--6, 73; *Emmer Green Past and Present*, 23.

¹¹² 'Land Off Peppard Road, Emmer Green, Oxfordshire' (unpubl. Oxford Archaeology Evaluation Report, Mar. 2017).

¹¹³ Berks HER, MRM16259.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* 00823.00.000.

Evidence of Anglo-Saxon activity is limited, though much has been found in Reading,¹¹⁵ and the place name Caversham (meaning 'Cāfhere's homestead or meadow') may recall a site close to the river.¹¹⁶ Settlement was presumably well established by the later Anglo-Saxon period and certainly by 1086, although little is known of its location. The field names 'Borough' and 'West' field in the far south-east were possibly associated with a late Anglo-Saxon manorial site in the vicinity of Dean's Farm, where the post-Conquest manor house was located.¹¹⁷ Dean's Farm has long stood in isolation, but possibly there was an early concentration of settlement there which shifted westwards towards the bridge in the post-Conquest period. In the far north-west, Highland Wood ('Hyde Grove' in 1479) near Kidmore End may commemorate an Anglo-Saxon hide farm.¹¹⁸

Medieval to c.1800

Medieval settlement was apparently concentrated in the south of the parish as later, close to the main open fields and meadows.¹¹⁹ The supposition is reinforced by the medieval tithing name 'Bovetoun' or 'above the town', applied to the less densely settled area further north. The parish church (c.350 m. north-west of the bridge) was established by the 12th century, and nearby tenant housing is indicated both by medieval bynames such as 'atte churche' and 'de cimiterio',¹²⁰ and by archaeological finds on the site of the nearby 19th-century vicarage (later rectory) house.¹²¹ Possibly that was one of several clusters of roadside settlement on the approach to the river crossing, since there are signs of further medieval occupation c.300 m north-west at 19 St Peter's Hill.¹²² The bridge itself is likely to have been a focus for settlement by the 12th or 13th century, and the approach to the ferry crossing at Lower Caversham, opposite Reading abbey, may have provided a second early nucleus, the later mill site there perhaps perpetuating that of its 11th-century predecessor.¹²³ The names West and East Thorpe, documented in the later Middle Ages,¹²⁴ apparently denoted the area

¹¹⁵ Berks HER.

¹¹⁶ *PN Berks*, I, 175; V. Watts (ed.), *Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names* (2004), 121.

¹¹⁷ Below, landownership (manor ho.); TNA, tithe award. It is otherwise unclear what the field lay 'west' of.

¹¹⁸ A.H. Cooke, *Early History of Mapledurham* (ORS 7, 1925), 60; TNA, E 318/5/170 ('Hydeland grove', 1544).

¹¹⁹ Below, econ. hist. (agric. landscape).

¹²⁰ D. Crouch (ed.), *The Acts and Letters of the Marshal Family: Marshals of England and Earls of Pembroke, 1145--1248* (Camden 5th Ser. 47, 2015), p. 399 (1240s); TNA, C 133/128/1; ChCh, Notley roll, m. 9 (mid 16th-cent. transcripts of medieval charters).

¹²¹ J. McNicoll-Norbury and D. Milbank, 'Medieval Occupation at The Rectory, Church Road, Caversham, Reading', *Berks. Archaeol. Jnl* 81 (2013), 79--86; below, landownership (rectory estate).

¹²² Ford and Raymond, 'Late Bronze-Age Artefact Scatter and Medieval Ditch on St Peter's Hill', 34.

¹²³ Above (communics); below, econ. hist. (mills).

¹²⁴ Mapledurham Archive, C1/11 ('thrope feld' [West Thorpe], Mapledurham Chazey, c.1400); TNA, DL 29/644/10447 ('Westhorpp', 1491--2); DL 29/643/10438 ('Estthrope', 1481--2); below, local govt.

near the church and bridge on the one hand, and Lower Caversham on the other,¹²⁵ the element ‘thorpe’ perhaps indicating that the pattern had pre-Conquest origins.

Settlement in the centre and north of the parish comprised small hamlets and isolated farmsteads. Its scattered character is suggested by personal bynames relating to woods, valleys, and springs or ponds,¹²⁶ and houses were probably strung out (as later) along roads and around commons.¹²⁷ A park lodge mentioned in 1478 was probably established considerably earlier, within the deer park created east of Emmer Green.¹²⁸ Amongst the hamlets shown on later maps, Chalkhouse Green (in the north-east) is possibly represented by the tenant byname ‘de Chalker’ (1306),¹²⁹ while Cane End (on the Wallingford road in the north-west) was mentioned in the early 15th century,¹³⁰ and Kidmore End and probably Emmer Green existed by 1551.¹³¹ Settlement nevertheless remained fluid, and the location of individual homesteads is difficult to determine, those established before c.1300 including ‘Appledore’ by Dyson’s Wood.¹³²

The 16th to 18th centuries saw modest growth within a broadly similar framework. Standing buildings indicate the linear character of settlement along the streets close to Caversham bridge and at Surley Row south of Emmer Green, where there were around a dozen houses in 1761.¹³³ In the early 18th century Caversham (or ‘Caversham Street’) was described as a ‘little hamlet at the bridge’,¹³⁴ but by the end of the century there were dozens of houses both there and along the north--south road leading to the mill and footbridge in Lower Caversham, known then as ‘Caversham Lower Street’. By contrast the upland hamlets of Cane End, Gallowstree Common, Kidmore End, Chalkhouse Green, Tokers Green, and Emmer Green contained only around 5--10 houses each.¹³⁵

Since c.1800

Early 19th-century settlement remained focused on Caversham village and its still separate satellite at Lower Caversham, with a number of modest scattered hamlets further north.¹³⁶ A

¹²⁵ Mapledurham Archive, C3/47; Berks RO, R/D138/1/5/1--7.

¹²⁶ TNA, C 133/128/1.

¹²⁷ For cottages on the commons c.1681: Berks RO, D/EC E4.

¹²⁸ Below, landownership (Caversham Park); econ. hist. (medieval).

¹²⁹ TNA, E 179/161/10, rot. 26d.; cf. *ibid.* C 134/42/1 (‘de Chalkere’, 1314).

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* E 210/6046 (as ‘*Kanoneshende*’ or Canons’ End, from its association with canons of Notley abbey: below, landownership).

¹³¹ TNA, LR 2/189, ff. 52, 62v.

¹³² *Ibid.* C 133/128/1; *ibid.* LR 2/189, f. 56; SOAG *Bulletin* 48 (1992), 19--21.

¹³³ Rocque, *Berks Map* (1761); below (built character).

¹³⁴ D. Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1962 edn), I, 292.

¹³⁵ Rocque, *Berks Map* (1761); Jefferys, *Oxon. Map* (1767); Davis, *Oxon. Map* (1797). For the gallows at Gallowstree Common, below, local govt.

¹³⁶ Davis, *Oxon. Map* (1797).

map of 1811 suggests that the village included some densely built-up areas such as at the junction of Caversham 'Street' and the Wallingford road, intermixed with well-spaced houses and several undeveloped areas.¹³⁷ The village was separated from Lower Caversham by open fields, and a cluster of houses at Little End stood in isolation on the road to Caversham Park. Modest growth in following decades¹³⁸ was followed by a rapid transformation in both the type and density of settlement in the south, although the hamlets north of Emmer Green changed little, having only 116 houses between them in 1901.¹³⁹



Caversham village in 1811 (map in OHC) - churchyard at bottom left

Mid and later 19th-century suburban development within a mile or so of the river was encouraged both by Reading's growing economy (stimulated by the arrival of the Great Western Railway in 1840), and by the 'magnificent prospects' enjoyed from the parish's south-facing slopes.¹⁴⁰ Initial development mainly comprised a few detached villas on higher ground, but from 1861 to 1881 the number of houses almost doubled from 362 to 709, reaching 1,466 by 1901. Dense piecemeal development in the 1870s took place within the Gosbrook Lane--Prospect Street--New Road 'triangle', set above the floodplain a short

¹³⁷ OHC, QSB/25.

¹³⁸ TNA, tithe map; above (popn).

¹³⁹ Dils, 'From Village to Suburb', 91; *Census*, 1901 (Kidmore End parish).

¹⁴⁰ Gardner's *Dir. Oxon.* (1852), 704; cf. Doran, *Hist. and Antiqs Reading*, 274. Following paragraphs based on Dils, 'From Village to Suburb', 92--103; OS Maps (various edns).

distance north-east of the bridge, and incorporating land sold by Christ Church, Oxford.¹⁴¹ In the late 1880s--90s terraced houses were built on lower ground at Lower Caversham and in the fields (south of Gosbrook Street) to its west, within walking distance of Reading across the nearby footbridge, but on land prone to flooding.¹⁴² At the same time terraces and semis spread north across the fields between Hemdean Road and Church Road, while an up-market development of the 1860s at Caversham Place Park was expanded with housing along the new Grosvenor and Derby Roads. At Emmer Green (still largely separate), new houses were built on part of the common enclosed in 1865.¹⁴³

The years leading up to the First World War saw building on a large scale, with 224 dwellings erected in 1903 alone.¹⁴⁴ Houses spread north from the village into the new Caversham Heights estate laid out in fields around Toot's Farm, and as far as Ashcroft near Farthingworth Green.¹⁴⁵ Further building took place on land belonging to Bryant's farm (a 48-a. holding in Lower Caversham), and immediately east of the Gosbrook 'triangle' at what became known as the Westfield Estate.¹⁴⁶ The Bryant's farm development was initiated by the People's Investment Company, a group of local architects and businessmen who bought the land and built some of the houses, but left much of the work to small developers such as George Stockwell, a builder who lived in Gosbrook Street. By contrast the Westfield Estate (with 112 houses) had a single main developer in Ebenezer West, headmaster of a private Baptist school, and a single builder in the firm of Haslam and Son.¹⁴⁷

Inter-war development included the dense infilling of Caversham Heights and Ashcroft, further building along Hemdean Road and around Caversham Place Park (notably the creation of Balmore Drive),¹⁴⁸ and erection of new housing around the Henley Road. An estate of 'cottage homesteads' at Micklands Farm (south of Caversham Park) was established in the 1930s by the Land Settlement Association, catering for unemployed people recruited from distressed areas,¹⁴⁹ and expansion also took place further north at Emmer Green and on a smaller scale at Kidmore End (which remained physically distinct), especially in the 1950s--60s. To the north and east of Caversham Park, some 1,500 homes were built between 1964 and the early 1970s at Caversham Park Village, a planned community designed by Diamond, Redfern & Partners for Davis Estates, in which cars and

¹⁴¹ *Sale Cat., Valuable Freehold Building Land... in West Field, Caversham* (1872); copy in ChCh, MS Estates 66; *Caversham Free Church* (pamphlet 1876): copy in Reading Central Library. Gosbook Lane later became Gosbrook Street and Road, and New Road was renamed Westfield Road.

¹⁴² For severe floods in 1947, D. Phillips, *The Story of Reading, including Caversham, Tilehurst, Calcot, Earley and Woodley* (3rd edn, 1999), 161, 163.

¹⁴³ Dils, *Rural Life in South Oxfordshire*, 39; TNA, MAF 1/409.

¹⁴⁴ *Reading Mercury*, 24 Dec. 1903.

¹⁴⁵ Berks RO, D/EX/1468/1; D/EX1942/4/3/2.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* D/EX/1272/1/5--7.

¹⁴⁷ Dils, 'From Village to Suburb', 101--2.

¹⁴⁸ *Reading Mercury*, 22 Sept. 1917 (sale of 45-a. Balmore estate).

¹⁴⁹ OHC, O41/1/C6/20; TNA, ED 21/59563.

pedestrians were separated using the Radburn system.¹⁵⁰ The late 20th and early 21st century saw further infilling, with an area of dense development in Amersham Road (including flats and terraces) started in 1974,¹⁵¹ and apartments built around the St Martin's Centre shops west of Gosbrook Road. As earlier, most development was private, although clusters of council houses were established notably at Emmer Green (from 1947).¹⁵²

The Built Character

The parish contains buildings of diverse age, size, and style. Sixteenth- to 18th-century vernacular houses make consistent use of timber-framing, brick, and flint, many of them presumably incorporating bricks and tiles produced at the Emmer Green brickfield, established by the later Middle Ages.¹⁵³ Such buildings are concentrated mainly at Surley Row (a conservation area since 1988),¹⁵⁴ Church Road, Church Street, Lower Henley Road, and Star Road, and in the upland hamlets.¹⁵⁵ Grander residences of 17th- to 20th-century date are scattered across the parish, the earlier ones all on high ground including the southern valley slopes. Most present-day housing, however, comprises small to medium-sized 19th- and 20th-century dwellings including numerous terraces and semis in the Reading suburbs in the parish's southern half. The only surviving (heavily altered) medieval structures are the church and Cross Farm (Kidmore End), although Caversham Court and several other houses probably occupy medieval sites.¹⁵⁶

The parish's earliest known house is the Cross Farm south of Kidmore End, a probably 15th-century timber-framed hall house with substantial 16th-century and later additions.¹⁵⁷ As at The Pink Cottage (also in Kidmore End), some early wooden windows survive.¹⁵⁸ That and two or three other houses are identified as probably 16th-century,¹⁵⁹ each of them apparently originating as a floored two-storey structure, while others may survive on Church Road and Church Street behind later façades.¹⁶⁰ Seventeenth-century

¹⁵⁰ *The Evening News*, 9 July 1968; Tyack and Pevsner, *Berks* (2010), 483.

¹⁵¹ Reading Borough council housing committee minutes, 25 Apr. 1974, Reading Central Library; *Reading Evening Post*, 10 May 1996.

¹⁵² Phillips, *Story of Reading*, 165; Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. d. 535; *Emmer Green Past and Present*, 67.

¹⁵³ Below, econ. hist.

¹⁵⁴ 'Surley Row Conservation Area Appraisal' (2010), available online.

¹⁵⁵ NHLE, Caversham; *Emmer Green Past and Present*, 30--3, 36--8.

¹⁵⁶ For Caversham Park, Caversham Court, and Cane End House, below, landownership; for church, below, relig. hist.

¹⁵⁷ NHLE, no. 1368978; J.E. Smith-Masters, *The History of Kidmore End, Oxfordshire* (1933), 51--5 (incl. photos).

¹⁵⁸ NHLE, no. 1368956.

¹⁵⁹ Buckside Cottage (6 Church Road), Lane Cottage (Upper Woodcote Road), Tudor Cottage (37 Surley Row): NHLE, nos. 1113445, 1302556, 1321893. For 16th- and 17th-cent. houses hidden behind later façades on Church Road and Church Street: Tyack and Pevsner, *Berks* (2010), 481.

¹⁶⁰ Tyack and Pevsner, *Berks* (2010), 481; info. from Megan Aldrich, 2018.

houses are numerous, many (based on probate evidence) built with upper and lower chambers, integral kitchens, and (in some cases) parlours, while some yeomen had a designated servants' chamber. Of the many halls mentioned in probate inventories, some may have survived from earlier structures now lost.¹⁶¹ Decorative use of brick and flint reached its apogee at Old Grove House (c.1600) near Surley Row, where an original hoodmould survives on one gable,¹⁶² and several farmhouses were re-fronted in the 18th century, amongst them Dean's Farmhouse, which has a 1727 fire insurance mark and was extended c.1820.¹⁶³ Chalkhouse Green Farm has an 'eccentric' early Georgian front with the central doorway at the top of a flight of steps,¹⁶⁴ while Pond House at Kidmore End features a Georgian porch with Doric columns.¹⁶⁵ Those and many other farmhouses and cottages have since been 'gentrified'.¹⁶⁶

The earliest surviving gentleman's residence is Kidmore House between Kidmore End and Chalkhouse Green, a compact, probably late 17th-century house of grey and red brick with a five-window front. Possibly this was the house with 8 hearths occupied by Francis Delaval in 1662.¹⁶⁷ Caversham Grove (now part of Highdown School) is a 15-bedroom Queen Anne mansion at the northern end of Surley Row,¹⁶⁸ which in 1733 included a hall and best parlour, and in 1741 was said to contain much fine Spanish marble.¹⁶⁹ It was enlarged by the architect Norman Shaw in 1878--80.¹⁷⁰ Rosehill House at Emmer Green is a tall later 18th-century house with a multi-bayed front, extended in the 19th century and once set in 64 a. of parkland; from the 1950s it was used as a conference centre before being turned into flats.¹⁷¹ By 1826 it was claimed that the beauty and prospects of Caversham Hill (the area around the junction of Peppard Road and Surley Row) made it 'peculiarly fit for the residence of the wealthy',¹⁷² and nearby early 19th-century mansions include Caversham Rise (formerly called Oakley House, and now a nursery training college), Hill House

¹⁶¹ D.M. McLaren, 'Stuart Caversham: A Thames-side Community in Oxfordshire during the Seventeenth Century', Reading Univ. PhD thesis (1975), appendix.

¹⁶² NHLE, no. 1302576; Tyack and Pevsner, *Berks* (2010), 482.

¹⁶³ NHLE, no. 1321905; HE Arch., file 104712 (1989 photos); Tyack and Pevsner, *Berks* (2010), 483.

¹⁶⁴ Pevsner, *Oxon.* 673; NHLE, no. 1194430.

¹⁶⁵ NHLE, no. 1059546.

¹⁶⁶ e.g. *Country Life*, 3 Dec. 1943, pp. 994--5 (Kempwood, Cane End); A.D. Thiam, *Hard Times but Happy. Voices from a Rural Community, Gallowstree Common and surrounding Hamlets* (1998), 11 ('weekend cottages'); below, social hist.

¹⁶⁷ NHLE, no. 1194422; Powell, *Records of the Hearth Tax for Reading and Caversham*, 14. For the family, below, social hist.

¹⁶⁸ NHLE nos. 1157071, 1113593, 1157067, 1321894.

¹⁶⁹ John Loveday, 'Tour no. 32', transcription by Sarah Markham, kindly supplied by John Markham, May 2017. For alterations in 1767, H.M. Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects* (1978), 576.

¹⁷⁰ *Sale Cat., Caversham Grove* (1915): copy in Henley Library; Tyack and Pevsner, *Berks* (2010), 60.

¹⁷¹ *Gardner's Dir. Oxon.* (1852), 705; *Sale Cat., The Rose Hill and Gillotts Estates, Oxfordshire* (1906): copy in Bodl. GA Oxon. b 90; OS Maps (various edns); J. Malpas, *Caversham Names* (1995), 27.

¹⁷² *The Henley Guide* (1826 edn), 64.

(formerly The Hill, now apartments), and Springfield (later an old people's home and flats).¹⁷³ Further south, Balmore (1855), with seven Italianate bays, stands well back from the Peppard Road in former parkland, and is now also converted into flats and surrounded by housing.¹⁷⁴ Large detached houses of the later 19th century include Dysons Wood (c.1866) at Kidmore End¹⁷⁵ and several in The Warren--St Peter's Avenue area, notably the Aesthetic Movement-influenced Chiltern Court (now offices) of 1880, designed by William Ravenscroft for the surgeon George May (d. 1909).¹⁷⁶



Kidmore House
in 2018

The rest of the modern housing stock mainly comprises a mix of detached houses, semis, terraces, and a few low-rise blocks of flats (the latter mainly in Lower Caversham).¹⁷⁷ An observer in 1872 dismissed Caversham as 'a long straggling place, partly mean, partly well built, partly winged with neat new villas',¹⁷⁸ while in 1894 the prolific local architect William Wing lamented 'the total absence of any sense of admiration for the picturesque evinced in the majority of our new developments'.¹⁷⁹ Nevertheless, many late 19th- and earlier 20th-century houses include decorative brickwork such as cream- or grey-coloured diamond patterns, bands, and edging, as well as Arts and Crafts-style timbered gables, enlarged chimneys, and recessed arched doorways.¹⁸⁰ Areas developed for middle-class owner-occupiers retain an air of spaciousness despite 20th-century infilling, although dense

¹⁷³ NHLE, nos. 1302888, 1157056, 1321895; TNA, tithe map.

¹⁷⁴ NHLE, no. 1113543; *Sale Cat., Balmore House Estate* (1861): copy in Reading Central Library; *Sale Cat., Balmore, Caversham Hill* (1917): copy in Bodl. GA Oxon. c 317 (6); Tyack and Pevsner, *Berks* (2010), 482.

¹⁷⁵ Smith-Masters, *The History of Kidmore End*, 36.

¹⁷⁶ *Sale Cat., The Warren* (1920): copy in Berks RO (D/EWK/B2/4/7/3); NHLE, no. 1119786.

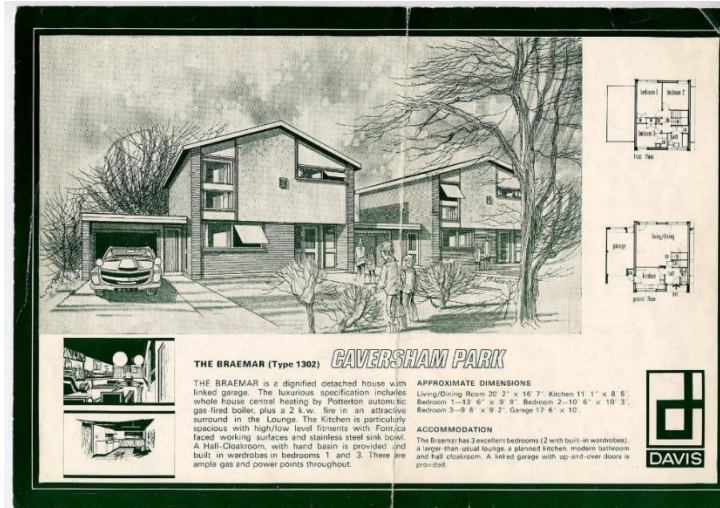
¹⁷⁷ Dils, 'From Village to Suburb'; OS Map 1:25000, sheet 171 (1999 edn); VCH fieldwork (2017).

¹⁷⁸ *Wilson's Imperial Gaz.* (1872).

¹⁷⁹ Wing, 'Lecture on Old Caversham'. For Wing and other local architects, S.M. Gold, *A Biographical Dictionary of Architects at Reading* (1999).

¹⁸⁰ Dils, 'From Village to Suburb', 110--11; info. from Megan Aldrich, 2018 (e.g. 2 Priory Avenue).

terrace developments such as the Gosbrook 'triangle' include almost 40 houses per acre.¹⁸¹ Mid to later 20th-century housing is mainly of standard design,¹⁸² the brown-brick 1960s houses of Caversham Park Village being unusual in incorporating cable connections to a single shared television aerial.¹⁸³



One of Caversham Park Village's 'medium-priced' homes

Today much of Caversham and Lower Caversham is rather nondescript, W.G. Lewton's eccentric library building of 1907, incorporating a tower and a clock supported by Old Father Time, being the most distinctive feature of the main street,¹⁸⁴ while the more interesting commercial buildings include the grey-brick Neo-Georgian former Lloyds Bank of 1928 on Bridge Street.¹⁸⁵ Sheltered housing at the Neo-vernacular Lyefield Court (1982--3) near Reading golf club incorporates roof lanterns.¹⁸⁶



Caversham Library, Church Street (2018)

¹⁸¹ Ibid. 93--4, 105; below, social hist.

¹⁸² *Emmer Green Past and Present*, 40--3. For a scathing assessment of mid 20th-cent. housing at Emmer Green, Gallowstree Common and Kidmore End: L. Brett, *Landscape in Distress* (1965), 26, 28--9

¹⁸³ J. Malpas, *Caversham Park and its Owners* (1997), 106.

¹⁸⁴ NHLE, no. 1113456; below, social hist.

¹⁸⁵ Tyack and Pevsner, *Berks* (2010), 481.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. 483 (misspelling the name).