

**WESTGATE ON SEA 1865-1940 :
FASHIONABLE WATERING-PLACE AND
LONDON SATELLITE, EXCLUSIVE RESORT AND A
PLACE FOR SCHOOLS**

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WESTGATE BAY



Westgate Bay

'A hypochondriac or nervous person may be half cured by residing on the sea coast and enjoying a view of the grand scenes of nature, which there present themselves, such as the rising and setting of the sun over the blue expanse of water, and the awful majesty of the waves during a storm'.

Erasmus Wilson L.L.D., F.R.S., F.R.C.S

WESTGATE ON SEA

by

John Betjeman

Hark, I hear the bells of Westgate,
I will tell you what they sigh,
Where those minarets and steeples
Prick the open Thanet sky.

Happy bells of eighteen-ninety
Bursting from your freestone tower!
Recalling laurel, shrubs and privet,
Red geraniums in flower.

Feet that scamper on the asphalt
Through the Borough Council grass,
Till they hide inside the shelter,
Bright with ironwork and glass.

Striving chains of ordered children
Purple by the sea-breeze made,
Striving on to prunes and suet
Past the shops on the Parade.

Some with wire around their glasses,
Some with wire across their teeth,
Writhing frames for running noses
And the drooping lip beneath.

Church of England bells of Westgate!
On this balcony I stand,
White the woodwork wriggles round me,
Clock towers rise on either hand.

For me in my timber arbour
You have one more message yet,
"Plimsolls, plimsolls in the summer,
Oh, goloshes in the wet!"

From 'Mount Zion' (1932).

Reproduced from *John Betjeman's Collected Poems*, enlarged edition, compiled with an introduction by Lord Birkenhead (John Murray, London, First pub. 1958, Fourth edn, 1979, 9 printings, printing, 1987), p. 13.

I am indebted to John Murray Ltd, publishers, for allowing me to use this poem.

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ABSTRACT

Exclusive coastal watering-places, successors to the inland spas, attracted a similar clientèle, fashionable, well-heeled and fickle. Many such places were developed in the nineteenth century; few held the truly fashionable for long, for fashion is always fleeting. Jealously guarding their reputations, they concentrated on survival in a highly volatile market and had no interest in competing for the favours of the short-stay visitor or excursionist.

Westgate on Sea, on the north coast of the Isle of Thanet in Kent, was one such watering-place, attracting, in its early years, titled visitors and royalty, the fashionable and the artistic. Now part of Thanet District, Westgate can be passed by unnoticed by the stranger travelling on the A28 to Margate. Yet for seventy years, despite the proximity of that truly plebian resort, Westgate remained independent and exclusive, bolstered by the presence of a uniquely large number of private schools, which became its lifeblood.

True child of the railway, created from a virgin site with metropolitan capital, Westgate had features which, when seeking to place it in the context of other exclusive developments, made it necessary to look for parallels beyond similar-sized resorts such as Grange-over Sands, Seaton and Frinton to suburbs such as Edgbaston and Hampstead, for Westgate was, to all intents and purposes, a London satellite.

Using evidence from many sources, both public and private, I have sought in this eight-part thesis to prove the uniqueness of Westgate's development and to see how, by determination and manipulation, Westgatonians were able to maintain a high 'social tone' for so long. By examining other such places, I hope to contribute something towards the story of the small 'exclusive' development, part of the rich urban scene and so important in the lifestyle of the Victorians and Edwardians and so far not fully researched.

ABBREVIATIONS

After the first reference the following abbreviations are used in Endnotes :

BRH	Bethlehem Royal Hospital Archives
B & C	Benefield and Cornford Records
CKS	Centre for Kentish Studies at Maidstone
Coutts' MSS	Coutts' Bank Archives, Westgate Estate Manuscripts
DRO	Diocesan Record Office at Canterbury
H.L.R.O.	House of Lords' Record Office
<i>I.T.G.</i>	<i>Isle of Thanet Gazette</i>
<i>K.G.</i>	<i>Keble's Gazette</i>
KCA	Kent Congregational Association
KCC	Kent County Council
KEC	Kent Education Committee
PCC	Parochial Church Council
MPL	Margate Public Library
PRO	Public Record Office at Kew
RH	Rogers and Hambidge Collection
RPL	Ramsgate Public Library
WPCM	Westgate on Sea Parish Council Minutes



Kent. c. 1850.
 Site of future
 Westgate on Sea. ●
 Boundary of
 Isle of Thanet —
MAP 1.

INTRODUCTION

It was not until the 1851 census that the seaside resort was considered a category in its own right - ten years after the publication of Dr Granville's *Spas of England and Principal Watering Places*, although such towns had been growing steadily in number and population from the time that they succeeded the inland spas as the playgrounds of the leisured classes. In *The English Seaside Resort : A Social History 1750-1914* (Leicester, 1983) John K. Walton wrote that 'Seaside resorts with their notorious preponderance of elderly spinsters and small businesses have not been attractive hunting-grounds for a generation of social historians weaned on the study of working-class structure, consciousness and organization, but the growing interest in the lower-middle class is one of several pointers which suggest that the time is ripe for an extension of vision'.¹

This study of Westgate on Sea and parallel developments will, I hope, contribute in some small measure towards that wider vision, albeit that it deals less with the lower-middle classes than with those who might be even less palatable to today's 'Popular Britain' - the upper-middle class, the gentry and even the nobility. However, as David Cannadine says in his recent book *Class in Britain* (New Haven and London, 1998), although 'class can be nasty, and class can be boring', it can also be 'a source of endless fascination, constant stimulus and unfailing surprise' and this study of the unashamedly class-ridden society of Westgate throughout its first seventy years has been so for me.²

Resorts are not, however, only interesting in the ways in which they help in the understanding of social history, for they were of importance economically too. In the stories of the 'exclusive watering-places' at which I have looked, elderly spinsters and small businesses do not play a large part. Instead I have found colourful, larger-than-life entrepreneurs, with 'grand designs', willing to risk their all in their attempts to turn their dreams into reality. Not infrequently, they lost their all as, for example, Sir Richard Hotham at Bognor, William Morton Pitt M.P. at Swanage and Sir Peter Hesketh at Fleetwood. Internal politics revealed everything from petty intrigue to open warfare and contemporary writers of guides and newspaper articles, unimpeded by any Trades' Description Act, showed a skill in 'puffing' their own resorts and denigrating their rivals, which could teach valuable lessons to any modern 'spin doctor'.

Westgate on Sea lies two miles west of Margate, fifteen miles north-east of Canterbury and just over seventy miles east of London. [Map 1] Named after the western of its two wide bays, it was from 1865 to 1935 obsessively independent, looking down upon its neighbours with disdain and even, as Anthony Hern wrote of Frinton in *The Seaside Holiday* (London, 1957), constructing 'a moat' around its 'entrenched middle class'.³ In 1935 its incorporation, after a bitter and attenuated battle, into the Borough of Margate ended an era.

I have chosen to end my study, however, in 1940, as the outbreak of the Second World War resulted in the exodus of Westgate's many private schools and, after the Fall of France, mass evacuation. When the war ended a different future had to be faced.

I first sensed that there was something very special about nineteenth-century Westgate when examining the names of subscribers to the building of the parish church in 1882-4.⁴ Scattered amongst the names of Kentish gentry were many titles, even including those of T.R.H Prince and Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, their daughters the Princesses Victoria and Louise, and H.R.H. Princess William of Prussia. A search through many manuscripts, often in private collections, revealed that Westgate on Sea was no ordinary resort, developed as a result of increased demand for holidays by the sea, but a unique development, built wholly with metropolitan capital and clearly aimed at a niche market of wealthy London clients. When in September 1863 a train belonging to the London, Chatham and Dover Railway passed for the first time through the cornfields of what is now Westgate, a dream became a reality, for without the railway the town could not have been.

Hove was called 'Belgravia sur mer'; Westgate 'Mayfair by the Sea', although Chelsea might have been more apt, for in its early years it was the haunt of the artist, the writer and the thespian.⁵ From its inception it was virtually a London suburb, so exclusive in its early days that only those with the right credentials were welcome and where a 'network' of contacts ensured its settlement by the 'right kind of people'. Topography and the pattern of landownership of both Westgate itself and its eastern neighbour enabled it to remain physically isolated in a way that neither Hove nor St Leonard's was able to do. Eastbourne separated the classes by cunning design and zoning, but it was always possible for the lower classes to cross the demarcation line. Westgate with its private gated-roads and ban on excursion trains could ensure its privacy much more easily.

Described in the *Penny Illustrated Paper* of October 1886 as a 'bijou watering place, a resort for favourites of fortune rejoicing in well-lined purses', Westgate reached its zenith in the 1880s, when surely there must have been a frisson of excitement amongst those seeing it for the first time.⁶ Not only did it have the natural advantages so essential to success - two wide, cliff-fringed bays, golden quick-drying sands, level walking and superb sunsets, which had inspired Turner - but the architecture showed, as D.J.Olsen wrote of London, houses which represented 'the independence and identity of the family [they] contained'.⁷ The 'Queen Anne' style, which was becoming fashionable in the streets of Chelsea, burst out all over Westgate, as houses made of the best Kentish red bricks with intricate white-painted verandahs were erected to order. St Saviour's church, paid for almost entirely from visitors' gifts and now a Grade II listed building, is praised by visiting architects for its standard of workmanship and the quality of materials used. At Westgate there was no jerry-built development aimed at accommodating the masses, but a planned and regulated environment worthy of those its founding fathers wished to attract.

Examining evidence given to House of Commons' Committees in 1879 and 1882, the reader can only be amazed at the confidence of the first Westgatonians in the future of their town.⁸ Those who know Westgate today would be surprised at the youth and vitality of its first residents, when houses, now converted to nursing and residential homes, were filled in the summer with children and their nursemaids, and the tradesmen and artisans, who had been attracted to the new town, had large, young families.⁹ [Appendix 1]

Edmund Gilbert called the holiday industry 'a delicate plant', easily injured, whilst to J.A.R. Pimlott the holidaymaker appeared capricious.¹⁰ As Jane Austen's Mr Heywood remarked to Mr Parker, the proprietor of the new watering-place of 'Sanditon', 'Every five years one hears of some new place by the Sea, and growing the fashion. How they can half of them be filled is the wonder. Where people can be found with Money or Time to go to them!'.¹¹ However, there was no shortage of people to go to them, but fashion and novelty played a large part in the demand for seaside holidays, Pimlott being moved to comment on 'the rapidity with which the less fashionable pressed upon the heels of the fashionable and drove the latter to seek new haunts'.¹²

By the 1890s Westgate was losing its popularity as a seaside destination for the élite and fashionable, but the arrival of a number of private schools, some with titled pupils, enabled it to maintain its high 'social tone' unscathed until the eve of the Second World War. Underneath the veneer, however, there was economic uncertainty and a number of bankruptcies. Demand for a willingness to adapt to a different pattern of holidaymaking, although largely restrained, grew steadily in the inter-war years.

The incorporation into Margate in 1935 was received with mixed feelings. For some it was a source of hope for the future; for others, notably the private schools, it foretold disaster. After the war Westgate, subsumed into Margate, made great efforts to maximise its assets, especially its golden sands and fine air, and promote itself as an ideal family resort and post-war Visitors' Guides show great optimism. [Plates 1 & 2] However, the growth in the cheap package-holiday to the sunshine-coasts of Europe sounded its death-knell and the increased sophistication of the holidaymaker exacerbated its decline. The Victorian houses proved difficult to adapt to modern demands and expensive to maintain. The last of the sea-front hotels closed its doors in 1998 and has since been demolished. The last of the major private schools moved into the state sector at the same time.¹³

Because the seaside resort has merited the attention of historians only comparatively recently, its literature is not extensive. J.A.R. Pimlott's *The Englishman's Holiday : A Social History* (London, 1947) was the first general survey of the seaside and, although written half a century ago, is still invaluable. Anthony Hern's more journalistic view of *The Seaside Holiday* reveals a keen observation and conclusions, sometimes refreshingly disrespectful to an age which tended to take itself very seriously.



PLATE 1. The golden sands of St Mildred's Bay (formerly Marsh Bay).



PLATE 2. The cliff-fringed sands of West Bay (formerly Westgate Bay).

The doctoral thesis of urban geographer J.A. Barrett, 'The seaside resort towns of England and Wales' (Ph.D thesis, University of London, 1958), based on resorts with a population of more than four thousand, eighty of which he visited, is comprehensive and particularly useful in his assessment of the importance of estate development. *The Seaside* (London, 1974) by Sarah Howell and *The Victorian and Edwardian Seaside* (London, 1978) by Janice Anderson and Edmund Swinglehurst, also general surveys, contain useful material on the Continental venues whose growing allure for the fashionable and well-heeled made survival for the English exclusive resorts increasingly difficult. James Walvin's *Beside the Seaside* (London, 1978) has, like Hern's book, an especially useful chapter on the period between the wars, a time when resorts were having to reconcile themselves to social change.

A different perspective is provided by Ruth Manning-Saunders in her description of the attitudes of visitors, especially those with literary connections, in *Seaside England* (London, 1951), whilst the seaside holiday features in the literature of the history of leisure such as *Time to Spare in Victorian England* (Hassocks, 1977) by John Lowerson and John Myerscough and *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution* (London, 1980) by Hugh Cunningham. Even general histories such as *Mid-Victorian Britain* (London, 1971) by Geoffrey Best look at the subject.

The most scholarly and comprehensive study is John K. Walton's *The English Seaside Resort*, which, as he says, provides not only a consideration of the influences of transport, landownership and estate development, important as they are, but a 'balanced account' paying attention to 'patterns of demand and investment, the provision of entertainment, the role of local government and the maintenance of public order'.¹⁴

Scholarly studies of the Isle of Thanet, especially of the Margate area and of the right period, are few. John Whyman's 'Kentish Seaside Resorts before 1900' (unpublished manuscript, University of Kent, 1970) and his doctoral thesis 'Aspects of Holidaymaking and Resort Development within the Isle of Thanet with particular reference to Margate c1736-1840' (Ph.D thesis, University of Kent, 1980) are of value and interest, as is Felicity Stafford's 'Holidaymaking in Victorian Margate 1870-1900' (M.Phil. thesis, University of Kent, 1979), which, although covering only a small part of the period in which I am interested, shows how great was Margate's need to expand and why Westgate treated it with such suspicion.

After the enthusiastic *Chronicles of Westgate on Sea* written by Athol Mayhew in 1882, the only books on Westgate are the 'recollections' of two long-time residents, Frank Burgess, Clerk to the Parish Council, and Bill Hambidge, who worked in the Estate Office. Based on memories and not researched, they are hazy on dates, but re-create well the atmosphere of their times. *Wings over Westgate* (West Malling, 1985) by Geoff Williams is the story of the Royal Naval Air Station based at Westgate in World War One and the subsequent establishment of R.A.F. Manston.

Fortunately there proved to be many primary sources relative to Westgate, although for such a small place with so short a history, they are remarkably widely scattered. Margate Public Library holds the complete run on microfilm of the local newspaper, *Keble's Gazette*, from its first issue in 1870 and of its successor from 1909, the *Isle of Thanet Gazette*, still published today. An invaluable source, they often provided the first clue for the next stage of research. The library also holds, on microfilm, census returns and church registers and has a fine collection of local directories, guides, histories, maps and photographs. Eight volumes of letterbooks of William Corbett, Westgate's first developer, were unexpected finds.

Public record collections yielded up their secrets. Canterbury Diocesan Record Office's newly acquired early records of St James's Church at Westgate provided hard evidence of the way in which West Margate was expected to develop in the 1870s. Had it happened in that way, Westgate's history would have been quite different. The Centre for Kentish Studies at Maidstone was a mine of information ranging from the privately-deposited Street Green Estate papers, through the Minutes of the Isle of Thanet Gas Company, Kent Methodist District Records, County and District Records of the Kent Congregational Association, Local Government papers at county and parish level to relevant Parliamentary Acts and Reference books and Tithe Maps and Apportionments. The file held by the Public Record Office, concerning the Local Government Review of 1929-1935 and closed until 1986, contained entertainingly scurrilous correspondence and frank reports; manuscript evidence given before House of Commons' Committees in 1879 and 1882, held in the House of Lords' Record Office, brought vividly to life the expectations of Westgate's founding fathers.

More, however, was needed to build a comprehensive story of Westgate's development and to provide answers to intriguing questions on finance and landownership, the control of the town and the provenance of what appeared to be an alien breed, the Westgatonian. F.M.L. Thompson writing in *Hampstead : Building a Borough 1650-1964* (London & Boston, 1974) says that, for the historian, a corporate landowner meant a higher record survival rate.¹⁵ It was indeed fortunate for me in my research, that when the early proprietors of the Westgate Estate had become financially embarrassed, their mortgagees were the partners of a prestigious private bank, which still survives, for it has been the one hundred and twelve bundles of legal and financial documents relating to the Westgate Estate over a period of half a century, and stored in the archives of Coutts' bank, which have provided me with the answers to many of my questions. Many early Westgatonians were clients of the bank and provided a valuable network in the search for the right kind of resident or visitor. The Westgate branch of the firm of William Rogers, Coutts' highly-respected auctioneer and valuer, and Westgate resident for over forty years, holds a fascinating collection of auction-sale catalogues dating from 1877.

For over half a century Westgate was physically cut off from Margate by land belonging to the Bethlehem and Bridewell Hospitals; the policy of the Governors towards the development of their land was vital to the maintaining of the 'social tone' of Westgate and to the shaping of its history. This corporate landowner's meticulous records, held in the Bethlehem Royal Hospital Archives, also have proved invaluable.

I have had unrestricted access to the baptism, banns' and marriage registers of St Saviour's Church, still in the care of the incumbent, to the contents of the Churchwardens' box and to the records of St Saviour's Church of England Junior School (formerly the National School) held at the school. Individual Westgatonians have lent papers and memorabilia, shown me their houses and patiently answered innumerable questions. Some with particularly valuable information agreed to taped interviews.

Two sets of records have, however, eluded me. No archivist or local history librarian will admit to knowing the whereabouts of the parish ratebooks or of the Minute Books of the Isle of Thanet Rural District Council. It may be that the complex problems of local government in Westgate, followed by amalgamation with Margate Borough, left them scattered, or even in private hands, and one day they may come to light. They are sources I would like to have used, but I have been able to compensate to some extent by using the details of the private road-rate assessments which were amongst the Coutts' manuscripts and the accounts of the activities of the Rural District Council, which were reported assiduously by the local press.

At first, taking as an area of reference Walton on the Naze in Essex to Bournemouth on the Dorset coast, I tried to set Westgate into the context of other 'exclusive' nineteenth-century resorts approximately the same distance from London, as access to metropolitan capital and patronage was generally considered essential to success. However, as more and more unique features of the Westgate story revealed themselves, I decided to widen the scope for comparison and look at other resorts, especially those of comparable size, which claimed exclusivity. This has taken me from Scarborough to Grange over Sands via Lincolnshire, East Anglia, Sussex, Hampshire, Dorset, Devon and Somerset to North Wales and Lancashire. Inspired by W.G. Hoskins of the value of 'field work', I have visited as many as possible.

I have walked many miles on 'exclusive' promenades, taking the air from the bracing East to the balmy South and on to the soft mild West, gazing at seascapes and assessing beaches, marine views and man-made accretions such as piers and pavilions, before turning my back on the ocean to view the built environment of the sea front. I have strolled through town centres, many much changed, and explored a variety of hinterlands. In addition to being extremely interesting and therapeutic, such activities have helped me reach tentative conclusions about the ingredients that were needed to create a successful 'exclusive' resort, able to survive the foibles of the clientèle at which it was aimed.

No written explanation of Bournemouth's success as a winter resort is as helpful as a stroll on its promenade in January, whilst the concept of 'zoning' becomes immediately clear as one saunters eastwards from the Grand Hotel towards the pier at Eastbourne, when the eye is suddenly arrested by the bulk of the Queen's Hotel, deliberately designed to divide aristocrat from artisan. I travelled by various means, testing the hypothesis that accessibility was all important, a view of which Mr Parker was an advocate when he said that 'Sanditon' was 'The most desirable distance from London! One complete measured mile nearer than East Bourne'.¹⁶ My peregrinations have brought an added bonus in that even the smallest of branch libraries is often the proud possessor of fascinating guides, maps and plans, which throw further light upon a town's development. Writings on individual resorts are too many to mention here, but they are fully listed in the bibliography.

However, despite every effort, I failed to find a real parallel to Westgate, as it became increasingly clear that, although it was described with enthusiasm by contemporary journals such as the *Whitehall Review* as a 'new watering-place', it was in many ways different from others of its kind.¹⁷ Its strong links with the metropolis, from whence came the capital to develop, the architect to design, the craftsmen to build, the tradesmen to serve and the well-heeled and fashionable to settle, made it unusual, probably, unique. Bournemouth drew on Lymington and Christchurch, Cromer on Norwich, Southport on Manchester, Bexhill on Lewes and Hastings, Frinton on Ipswich.

John Walton wrote in his study of seaside resorts that few were created out of nothing.¹⁸ Westgate was one of that rare breed. In an article written for *Northern History*, he also said that, although resorts that did not exist before the coming of the railway made it possible to convert a barren tract of land into 'a nascent holiday town', only a handful achieved more than limited growth and local celebrity.¹⁹ Westgate's growth was limited, but this was due partly to its topography and partly to the policy of its founding fathers; growth was not what they sought. Its celebrity, however, was certainly not confined to the locality and it is because of its patronage by the wealthy and fashionable metropolitan that I decided to look beyond the exclusive seaside resorts to the leafy suburbs of Hampstead and Edgbaston to find parallel developments.

F.M.L.Thompson wrote that, 'Social tone, status and morality, as well as property value, were seen to depend on the exclusiveness of one-class occupation and the vigilant manning of barriers - sometimes literally physical ones, gates guarding private residential roads and housing estates, more often the legal and financial defences of restrictive covenants and house price levels - to keep at bay undesirables whose occupations or habits might destroy the tranquillity or the morals of the residents'.²⁰ This ethos embraced by influential Westgate residents for some seventy years, was not compatible with the creation of a thriving seaside resort.

In this thesis, which is divided into eight chapters, I have explored the various aspects relating to the success or failure of such a development as Westgate. Chapter One is the longest out of necessity, because it deals with the complex and vital issues of landownership and finance. David Cannadine, both in his *Lords and Landlords : The Aristocracy and the Towns* (Leicester, 1980) and in *Patricians, Power and Politics in Nineteenth Century Towns* (Leicester and New York, 1982), of which he was editor, covers the subject of landownership most thoroughly, as does Harold Perkin in his article the ‘The “Social tone” of Victorian seaside resorts in the north-west’ in *Northern History*, vol. XI (1975). Perkin and Cannadine, together with H.J.Dyos, *Victorian Suburb : A Study of the Growth of Camberwell* (Leicester, 1966), F.M.L.Thompson, *Hampstead : Building a Borough 1650-1964* (London and Boston, 1974) and *The Rise of Respectable Society : A Social History of Victorian Britain 1830-1900* (London, 1988) and D.J.Olsen, *The Growth of Victorian London* (London, 1976) are all of the opinion that aristocratic influence and unified landownership are of major importance in the development of high-class resorts and suburbs.

Long before them, John Braye, writing of Swanage in 1890, said that, ‘The founder of a town should be a despot; all cities and towns that have been successful in history have had something of the sort...Eastbourne today has the Duke of Devonshire; whilst the neighbouring town of Bournemouth has two kings who reign over ground rents, and are a terror to jerry-builders and evildoers generally’.²¹ Perkin and Dyos consider such limited landownership to be all important; Cannadine and Olsen, whilst acknowledging that it is so, found there to be exceptions; Walton points out that Cannadine based his opinion on the study of eight of the largest resorts only; Myerscough and Lowerson find examples of exclusive developments with fragmented ownership. It would appear that there is a consensus of opinion that ownership of the land on which a new development took place was important, but it is also acknowledged that other factors have to be taken into account.²²

In the light of these theories, I have looked in detail at the pattern of ownership of Westgate land and the policies of its successive owners, considering also those of its eastern neighbour, the Bethlehem and Bridewell Hospitals. It is clear that, although Westgate had neither an aristocratic landowner nor continuity of ownership, and its land was sold freehold, rare in an exclusive development whether resort or suburb, landownership played a vital part in the style of its development.

Of particular importance is the entering into possession by Coutts’ bank of the Westgate Estate in 1884 when the proprietors, who were their mortgagors, became bankrupt. Bankruptcies were not infrequent amongst resort developers, who found that the initial outlay on vital, but unproductive services, was much more costly than they estimated and financial failure often led to the break-up of an estate and the lowering of tone.

Gerard Young, writing in the *History of Bognor Regis* (Chichester, 1983) of the sale of the estates of Sir Richard Hotham in 1800 says, 'In sixty-five lots, bit by bit, Bognor disintegrated from being the compact vision of a single mind into a collection of isolated properties subject to the whims of different speculators. It was an undoing from which the town never recovered'.²³

The failure of the Swanage Tontine and subsequent bankruptcy of William Morton Pitt led to the Court of Chancery permitting the sale of properties freehold and at reduced prices. Each of the four major purchasers went his own way and in 1862 a plan was unveiled, by one George Burt, for continuous terraces of a hundred and fifty closely-packed houses and an access road on high ground overlooking the sea. Fortunately, writes David Lower in *Swanage Past* (Chichester, 1994), this did not materialise, but a stretch of beautiful coastline was at risk of being ruined.²⁴

How different from Westgate, where Coutts' partners maintained a discreet silence at the time of the Parker scandal, but subsequently quietly insisted on the enforcement of high minimum values and restrictive covenants on building land. Edmund Davis, a former proprietor of the Westgate Estate, found himself a victim of fraud by his successors, the Parker brothers, and, facing further financial problems as a result, wrote to Coutts' solicitors in May 1884 begging them to advise him on how 'to arrive at the best course to adopt in the interest of all who are involved and to prevent a forced public sale of the property which would be disastrous to the value of the Estate'.²⁵

Prestige was more important than money to the bank. Thompson says that a landlord or owner, 'in hedging himself round with restrictive clauses in his building agreements intended to ensure an exclusive and homogeneous class of building', was less protecting his pocket than preserving his self-esteem, 'by creating respectable communities and, if possible, socially-elevated communities on his property'.²⁶ It was not within the partners' interest to lower the social tone of Westgate and, as the land was sold freehold, the bank did not face the possibility of having to accept lower standards at a time of reversion, when large, old properties, often in poor condition, were, as in pre-1914 Edgbaston, difficult to re-let.²⁷ Even when the Westgate property was sold in 1919, the same conditions of sale were applied and the covenants are still in existence. The owner of one of six town-houses recently built on the site of 'Cliffside' was advised by her solicitor to take out an indemnity insurance in case there was an objection, as the nineteenth-century covenants stipulate one dwelling-house only.²⁸

Local Government played an important part in resort development. In Chapter Two I have looked at the role of local authorities in the development of Westgate which, despite being a creation of the late nineteenth century, was for thirty years governed by a self-appointed oligarchy, which did not adapt kindly to the democratic process.

Although in 1891 its population was only 1358, it always haughtily refuted the idea that it might be considered a village - 'the parish is almost entirely urban and its requirements are of an urban nature', claimed the petitioners in 1899, when demanding urban status, and again in 1900, 1901 and several times after, as they hoped to wear down Kent County Council by their persistence, for they had confidently expected Westgate to become an Urban District in 1894 and were shocked and angry, when it was created a Civil Parish within a Rural District.²⁹

The urban character of Westgate is important, because there were other small resorts, especially in the west of England, that were for a time fashionable simply because they were rural retreats. Robin Bush writing of Exmouth in the late eighteenth century called it a settlement 'whose two-mile stretch of sands and dunes, uninterrupted by buildings and accessible only by footpaths, appealed to the romantics of an age which thought itself as enlightened'.³⁰ Such romantics had been prepared to endure long, uncomfortable journeys to remote places, where they would stay in fishermen's huts or farm cottages to be refreshed and renewed in utter seclusion. Westgate did not fall into this category; it was a highly sophisticated, metropolitan-orientated community with little interest in rural matters.

By 1901 the population had doubled to 2738; its rateable value in 1900 was £33,689, so the frustration was understandable, especially when it is found that resorts such as Seaton (1901 population 1325, Rateable Value £8201) and Budleigh Salterton (population 1883, Rateable Value £10,285) had been made Urban Districts in 1894.³¹ Indeed over sixty Urban Districts with populations of fewer than two thousand were created by the 1894 Act.³² Embittered Westgatonians fought a long battle to gain urban status, culminating in a determined last-ditch stand against amalgamation with their despised neighbour Margate in 1935. So much energy and so many resources were drained into the battle, which might have been used to better effect. Attempts to discover why the County Council remained so implacable in the face of such determination have uncovered many an example of arrogance and high-handed behaviour not conducive to harmonious relationships.

In Chapter Three I have looked at Westgate Society to try to find what part it played in the designating of Westgate on Sea as fashionable watering-place and London satellite. Some of Westgate's residents were sufficiently important to be the subject of biographies; the lives of others have had to be deduced from a variety of sources, as diverse as obituaries in national and local newspapers, wills and directories. In many ways the structure of Westgate's society conformed to that described by Walton, with problems of divergent needs and attitudes common to all resorts.³³ There were features of its structure, however, which were peculiar to Westgate.

As at Hampstead, there was no established resident aristocracy, established family interest or influential family in control of society - a social setting which Thompson says, 'perhaps, made Hampstead particularly attractive to reigning lawyers, for where no one was in possession, empires could be carved out by the freshly risen'.³⁴ At Westgate too it was possible for the 'freshly risen' - several of them lawyers also - to carve out empires and some certainly did.

Athol Mayhew, writing enthusiastically of the new town in 1882 said that 'The present owner [Edmund Davis] might with perfect justice assume that title, which the antiquary Twine, for similar reasons, bestowed on Sir Henry Crispe [of Quex Park], *Regulus Insulae Thaneti* - a little king of Thanet'.³⁵

Yet despite its aristocratic visitors and, in its early days, noble part-time residents, it was, as Cannadine says of Eastbourne, 'a middle-class leisure town [whose] activities and aspirations were quintessentially aristocratic'.³⁶ It was also, much like Hampstead, 'bourgeois through and through'; by the turn of the century, a desirable location for professionals - in Westgate notably schoolmasters, retired clergy and other academics, who found its ambience to their liking.³⁷ It is indeed unusual to find a seaside resort, where the town was run by those from the professions rather than by those in trade. A picture has emerged of an essentially 'suburban' society in what Dyos called 'a world of fantasy in which dreams of self-importance and fulfilment could become tangible'.³⁸

It was hoped by its founding fathers that it would become a commuter town, especially as the London, Chatham and Dover Railway Company had obtained powers to build City termini, so that it was possible to travel from Westgate in the comfort of the Granville Express to Holborn or St Paul's. Dyos says that, 'The right rail connection with town was as much the practical requirement of the 'desirable neighbourhood' as the correct social atmosphere was its romantic ideal'.³⁹ Commuting from the coast had become quite common by the late nineteenth century - and indeed from Brighton as early as the eighteenth. It is known that Westgatonians did commute - in the period before the First World War the Rev. Dr Charles Moor, who had moved to Westgate for the health of his family, travelled daily to the Reading Room of the British Museum whilst he was engaged in research in medieval history.⁴⁰ His neighbour, the Rev. John Storrs, went regularly to town to carry out his duties as vicar of St Peter's Eaton Square (1883-1913), Rural Dean of Westminster (1902-1913), Prebendary of St Paul's Cathedral (1900-1913) and chaplain to King George V (1912-13).⁴¹

Analysing resort society is never easy and all sources have to be considered critically. For example, census returns may be misleading, because information was gathered at high season as in 1921 and so would be distorted by details of visitors, or because they were taken out of season so that, at such places as Westgate where there was a high proportion of second homes, many houses were unoccupied on the night of the census.

Likewise, Visitors' lists in newspapers are interesting, but not wholly reliable. The Westgate lists, for example, included those who were part-time residents with their own homes. Directories likewise have to be treated with caution - they are always out of date by a year or two, and in resorts they often do not reveal the true extent of those who were letting accommodation to visitors.

In Chapter Four I have examined Westgate's built environment and what it tells us about the people who created it for, as Harold Perkin said, much can be deduced about the 'social tone' of a place from its buildings.⁴² Like many other places, Westgate has lost some of its buildings to the bulldozer and the developer, but enough remains to make it possible to see what it must have been like in its hey-day. It also has a rich pictorial and written archive, much of it in private hands, which was generously made available to me.

Useful literature on the subject included *Seaside Architecture* by Kenneth Lindley (London, 1973), *Sweetness and Light : The Queen Anne Movement 1860-1900* (Oxford, 1977) by Mark Girouard and *The Bungalow* by Anthony King (London 1984). Girouard and King actually write on Westgate itself; Girouard devotes a chapter to the 'Architecture of Enjoyment', in which he uses Westgate and Cromer as examples of 'Holiday Queen Anne'; King writes of Britain's very first bungalows which were built at Westgate. There have been disputes over whether the first were built at Westgate or at nearby Birchington, but I have found documentary evidence in favour of Westgate.⁴³ Donald Olsen's *Growth of Victorian London* proved to be of relevance because of Westgate's metropolitan links. F.M.L. Thompson's *The Rise of Respectable Society* (London, 1988) and John Burnett's *A Social History of Housing 1815-1985* (Newton Abbot, 1978) helped set Westgate's homes in context, whilst general books on the history of architecture were also useful.

In Chapter Five I have considered in depth the role of Westgate's private schools in shaping its destiny. Private schools were important to the economy and prestige of many seaside towns, but in Westgate their number in proportion to the rest of the population is outstanding and the dominance of the headmasters of the four largest and best known boys' preparatory schools in the running of the town unique.

It was the presence of such schools that enabled Westgate to maintain its high 'social tone' for so long and it was never left in any doubt whose interests should come first. As late as 1924 at a public meeting to discuss the proposed new bandstand, the former headmaster of Wellington House School, the formidable Rev. Herbert Bull, asked whether it was worth 'the while of the traders to antagonise the private residents and the schools for the sake of six weeks during which Tom, Dick and Harry might be attracted. It would be agreed that the schools were a valuable asset to the town...if they maintained Westgate as it was, the schools would long remain a most valuable asset'.⁴⁴

Anthony Hern wrote of Bournemouth that 'the trouble is that old people and invalids are resistant to change...a resort given over to the needs of invalid or valetudinarian visitors can become fossilised long before its time'.⁴⁵ If the words 'private schools' are substituted for 'old people and invalids', this judgment could well apply to Westgate.

However, the schools were the largest ratepayers, helped the economy, boosted prestige and gave valuable support, financial and otherwise, to Westgate institutions. It has been possible to analyse the vital part they played, for example, in supporting the parish church and the National School, because so many papers relating to those institutions are available. From the local papers and the records of Westgate Parish Council, it has also been possible to see how their headmasters played a major part in running the town - for twenty-six of its thirty-nine-year life, a private school headmaster was Chairman of the Council; for nine years headmasters held both the offices of Chairman and Vice-Chairman. They were members of the Rural District Council, of the Margate School Board, of the Board of Guardians; they sat on the Cinque Ports' Bench as Justices and were managers of the National School. I have been unable to find any other development, where schoolmasters dominated the local scene in such a manner.

In Chapter Six I have considered the part played by religion in Westgate society for, when it became evident that the new watering-place of Westgate was more akin to a London suburb than a traditional seaside resort, it was inconceivable that the subject should not be included. James Curl in *Victorian Churches* (London, 1995) quotes the Rev. William Pepperell, writing in 1872 of the churches of Kensington which proliferated greatly in the nineteenth century, 'That we live in a church-building age is ...manifest'.⁴⁶ The Kensington scene was one with which Westgate's first developers, William Corbett and Alexander McClymont, were more than a little familiar, active as they were at the time in developing West Brompton; St Luke's Redcliffe Square was one of their Estate churches.

A church was regarded as essential to the success of any exclusive development, resort or suburb, and Bishop Blomfield, Bishop of London 1829-56, established a tradition in his Diocese, whereby landowners and property developers built churches or contributed towards their cost in new developments. Small districts each of manageable size and each with its church school and charities were created. Corbett introduced that tradition to Westgate, where two new churches a mile or so from each other and with a total of nearly twelve hundred seats for a combined population of fewer than two thousand, were built within eleven years. It was usual on such estates for the site to be offered as a gift and the Vicar designate and a church building committee left to raise the funds. St Saviour's Westgate is now unique in Kentish resorts in that it was developed for such an estate - the Earl of Radnor's Christ Church at Folkestone having been destroyed by bombs.

R.C.K. Ensor wrote that, as late as the last two decades of the century, 'The Victorian nobility would rather walk than drive to church, so as not to infringe the resting of their grooms and horses' so that it is not surprising that, in such a climate of opinion, the new church erected in 1873 at the eastern end of Westgate was regarded as too far from the large seafront properties of the carriage-folk.⁴⁷ Westgate could so easily have become a one denomination estate, but the presence from the beginning of a large number of skilled artisans and traders led to the erecting also of a large Congregational Church and a Methodist Chapel. Walton says that churchgoing gradually became less important to holidaymakers, who, sometimes unable to find a free sitting, 'took the opportunity to escape from a church-going routine which derived more from social restraint than genuine conviction', but this does not appear to have been so at Westgate, where as late as the 1930s there were almost six hundred Easter-communicants in total at the parish church at four celebrations of the Eucharist.⁴⁸ In 1937, after the opening of their church, Westgate Roman Catholics claimed that attendance one Sunday in August had increased from three hundred to five hundred on the same Sunday from the previous year.⁴⁹

In Chapter Seven I have dealt with Westgate's most divisive matter - the provision of public education, not generally a subject of major importance in most seaside resorts, where visitors were unaffected by it. In Westgate, more suburban estate than resort, it was much more controversial than the provision of amenities for the holiday-maker. The plans for the Westgate Estate did not include a school and, indeed, not everyone agreed with educating the lower classes who might have ideas above their station and whose labour was lost to employers. In November 1878 Edmund Davis, then proprietor of the Westgate Estate, in a long letter to the editor of *Keble's Gazette* on the agricultural depression and unrest amongst farm labourers, wrote 'The farmer is by the new educational enactment, deprived, so to speak, of a portion of the labour, which used to be available'.⁵⁰

There was already a National School in the village of Garlinge, which could have been used by the children of the artisans and tradesmen who had moved in to Westgate, but it was never popular with the new immigrants. The Margate School Board, set up in 1875 and to which many Westgate ratepayers had to contribute, was, through parsimony or undue deference, reluctant to interfere in the new town's affairs. With the opening of the new parish church in 1884 and the expectation that a school would follow, bitter controversy arose between Westgate's strong non-conformist community and the Anglicans. For many years those who thought it would be detrimental to such a high-class development to have a Board School in their midst found themselves having to pay twice, as they unwillingly paid their rates and contributed to the Voluntary Funds to maintain the National School. To omit public education from this study would have been to omit a vital part of Westgate's history - Walton says that he had to leave undeveloped some important topics in his study, including religion and education, for want of accessible material.⁵¹ So much Westgate material on these topics was available that they do justify inclusion.

In Chapter Eight I have looked at the style of holidaymaking evident in Westgate, the ways in which resident and visitor could pass their leisure hours and the conflicts which arose. In exclusive resorts where residents were often reluctant, in order both to protect their environment and to spare their purses, to provide entertainment, much was made of other advantages. The writer of an 1882 *Guide to Bognor* opined that 'Overworked man and wearied woman need recreation, repose, fresh air and beautiful scenery. And these are to be had in the rising town of Bognor'; John Braye opined that 'the person worn out by incessant work, whose nervous system requires relaxation... will find in Swanage a place where there is freedom from the incessant and unnecessary excitement met with at fashionable watering-places'; and as late as 1900 'the élite of society, professional gentlemen and City Merchants' would find Westgate 'quiet, select and devoid of the turmoil and din which is usually inseparable from other watering-places'.⁵²

There were leisure pursuits in abundance for the residents of Westgate and visitors were welcome to share them, but not to expect special facilities. Those who did must go elsewhere - as the Rev. Bull said in 1913 of 'the undesirable visitors' brought from Margate by the new motor buses.⁵³ As, however, the long-stay visitors became outnumbered by the holiday-makers for whom their fortnight of freedom was their only break from work, some kind of entertainment was regarded as essential and gradually the traders, guest-house keepers and hoteliers became increasingly unhappy, as they saw their businesses under threat. The inevitable conflict became much more bitter in the inter-war years, when new attitudes to old authority were making themselves felt, yet Westgate succeeded in keeping at bay popular entertainment until amalgamation took place in 1935.

In my conclusion I have tried to bring together all the threads which wove the tapestry of Westgate on Sea - fashionable watering-place and London satellite, exclusive resort and 'place for schools' and to show what enabled it to rise to meteoric success in two decades and then maintain its high 'social tone' when those about it were losing theirs to the demands of the popular market. In so doing I hope to have contributed something towards the understanding of the ethos of the exclusive resort and estate, important constituents of the urban scene.

ENDNOTES

- 1 John K. Walton, *The English Seaside Resort : A Social History 1750-1914* (Leicester, 1983), p. 4.
- 2 David Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (New Haven and London, 1998), p. xiii.
- 3 Anthony Hern, *The Seaside Holiday : The History of the English Seaside Holiday* (London, 1967), p. 152.
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CHAPTER ONE

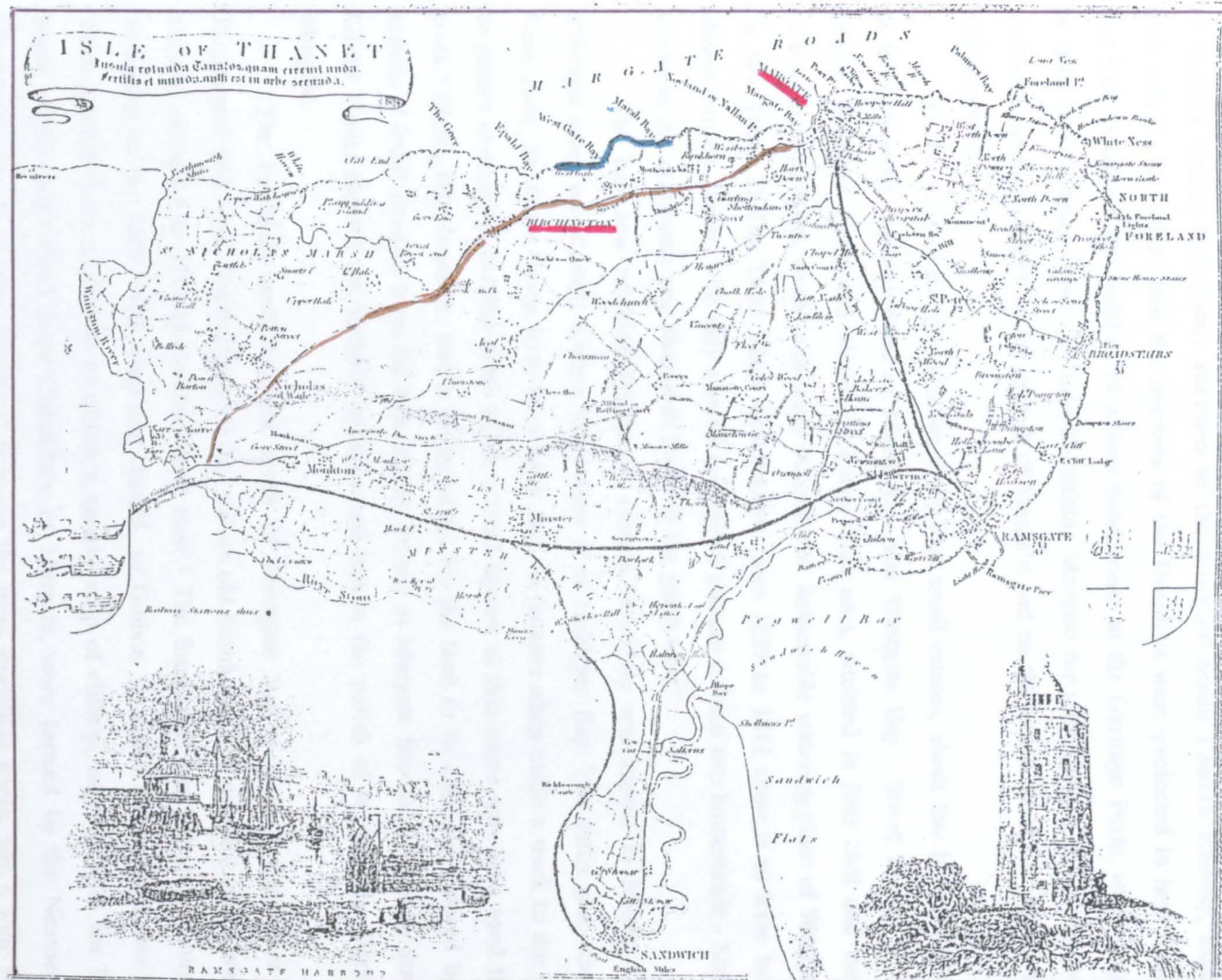
LANDOWNERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

THE ENTREPRENEURS

A century before the first brick was laid in the new Westgate on Sea, Margate, on the north coast of the Isle of Thanet, was already a seaside watering-place of renown. With its elegant new square of 1769, its large Assembly Rooms and Master of Ceremonies, its theatre, library, coffee houses and bathing machines, it became a worthy successor to the inland spas at a time when seabathing was being recommended by leading medical men. In 1796 the Royal Sea Bathing Infirmary, founded five years previously, opened its new building, with verandahs fronting the sea, on the open field site at Westbrook, West Margate. Founded primarily for poor patients to benefit from the sea water cure in the battle against consumption, it nevertheless demonstrated the belief in the efficacy of sea water and sea air in the battle for good health.

By the early nineteenth century, however, the first nail was driven in the coffin of Margate as a fashionable resort, when the steam-packets began to ply their trade between London and the town. The journey, shortened to six or seven hours, attracted more and more of the capital's tradesmen and artisans and the number of visitors landing at the Jetty more than doubled between 1820 and 1836.¹ Ten years later, in 1846, the South Eastern Railway reached Margate by a circuitous eighty-mile route via Tonbridge and Ashford enabling the much despised excursionist to visit and bringing about a further decline in the town's social status. [Map 2]

Margate, incorporated in 1857, was ripe for expansion; by the mid-century better class housing and hotels were being built at Cliftonville on the eastern cliffs and at Westbrook near to the Sea Bathing Hospital. However, as the writer of a nineteenth-century guide to Eastbourne and the South Coast remarked, 'fashion, as it is wont, gravitates towards the setting sun'.² There was always a desire to move westwards, whether in London, the provincial cities or the expanding seaside resorts. Margate would have looked enviously at Brighton's Brunswick Town and Hastings' St Leonard's, for Margate could go no further west. As W.G. Hoskins wrote, 'The growth of a town in certain directions might be frustrated for generations, not only by the existence of open fields, but also by the existence on the outskirts of large enclosed estates, which the owners either refused to sell or were debarred from selling'.³



Isle of Thanet c1850.
 Coastline of future Westgate on Sea. (Blue line)
 Neighbouring communities. (Red line)
 Main Road Canterbury to Margate (Black line)
 Known as Street (Brown line)
MAP 2.

Margate was separated on the west from the old village of Birchington by an area about four miles in extent, wholly devoted to agriculture. Immediately to its west lay property of the Bethlehem and Bridewell Hospitals. In 1695 John Edmanson of Tower Hamlets willed the hundred and twenty acres of Little Garling's Farm to the Hospitals and in 1842 the Governors purchased the ninety-four acres of Great Garlinge Farm from the executors of Mr Taddy for £7110, considering it 'a very satisfactory investment'.⁴

To the north these lands were exposed to the sea, portions of the cliff occasionally falling away and the crops being 'injured by the spray'.⁵ The Governors, however, were reluctant to release their land for building, despite being aware of the growing demand for seaside holidays - as early as 1836 the Committee of View, after one of its biennial visits to its Kentish estates, had drawn attention to the proposed South Eastern Railway, asking their solicitor to ensure that the interests of the Hospitals were protected in new leases, and had considered the building of a 'new good house at the Garlinge Farm, which could be used as a Lodging House for families visiting Margate for seabathing'.⁶ This policy was to have a profound effect on the growth of Margate and on the future Westgate on Sea for half a century.

To the west of the Hospital lands lay four small estates, about five hundred acres in total, forming the hinterland of Marsh Bay and Westgate Bay - Street Lodge, Street Green, Westgate Farm and Hundreds Farm. This area, situated in four civil and three ecclesiastical parishes, would ultimately become the fashionable watering-place of Westgate on Sea. [Map 3] The Tithe Maps and Awards from 1839 to 1842 show it to have been almost entirely arable, with only a small acreage of pasture around two homesteads - Street Green in the north-east and Hundreds Farm to the south-west.⁷

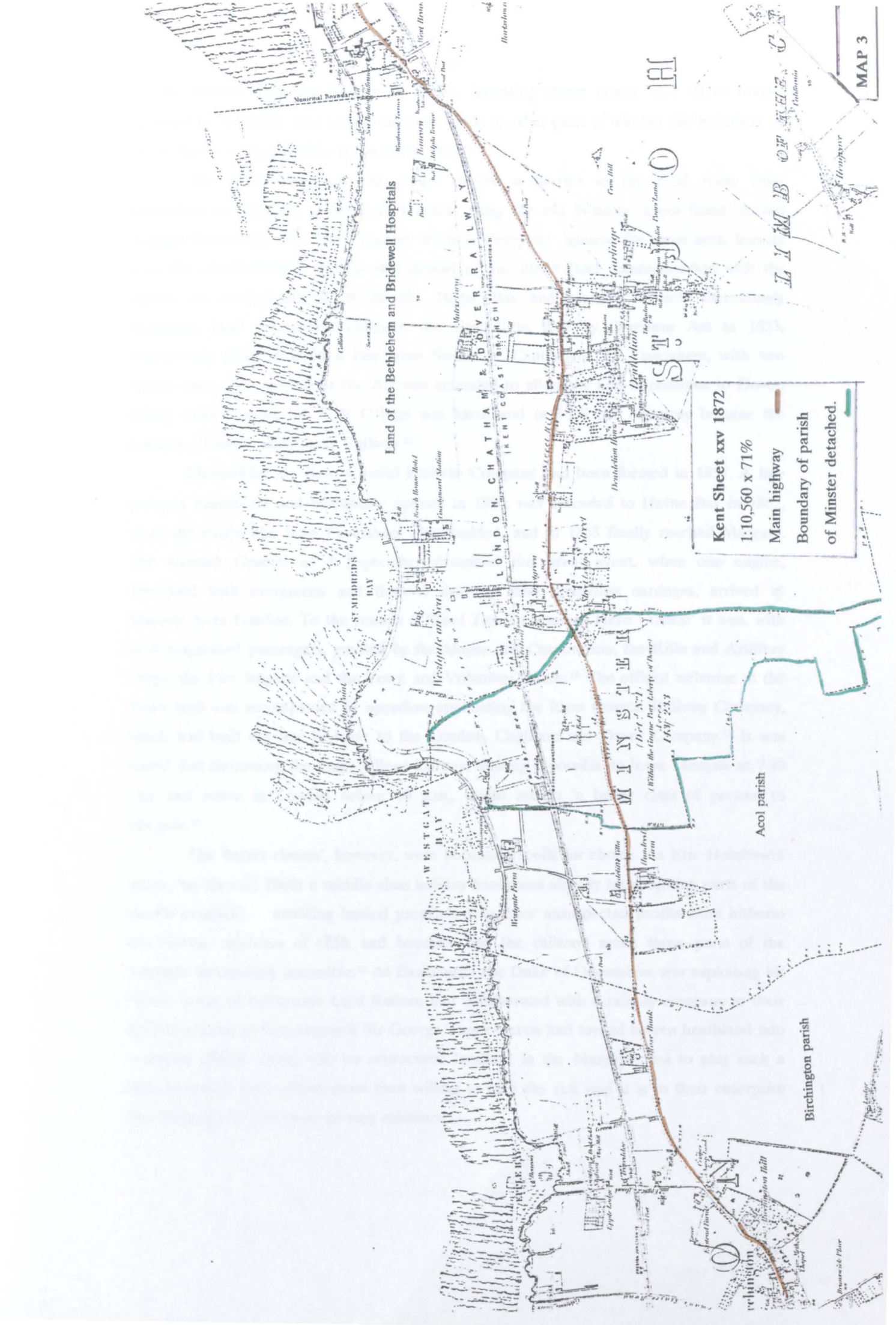
The bay now marking Westgate's eastern boundary was known as Marsh Bay, although some seventeenth century maps show it as Goldgate Bay. The suffix gate comes from 'gaet', an Anglo Saxon term for a track and, as farmers often made a track to the sea to gather seaweed to fertilize their fields, a local farmer of that name may have used that track.⁸ Marsh Bay, however, was a fitting name, for the land to its east was watered by a system of small streams from the hills inland, known as Margate Brooks. This area, Street Green Farm, abutted the Bethlehem lands and was in the parish of St John the Baptist, Margate.

The foreshore and the land south of Westgate Bay were in the parishes of Birchington and Acol. Overlooking the bay was an old farmhouse and cottages and a 'watch station', occupied in 1841 by several 'naval men'.⁹ The farmhouse and cottages belonged, according to the 1842 Tithe Map and Award, to Gibbon Rammell of Garlinge, but the fields around them, cultivated to within a narrow strip of clifftop, together with the land south of the High Road from Canterbury to Margate, were farmed by the Neames, a Birchington family of long standing.¹⁰ Between the bays, stretching south, was a wide strip of land known as 'Minster detached' and part of the parish of that name.

L I M B OF A E I E U

Land of the Bethlem and Bridewell Hospitals

Kent Sheet xxv 1872
 1:10,560 x 71%
 Main highway —
 Boundary of parish
 of Minster detached.



All the Minster land and that in St John's, including Street Green and Street Lodge, belonged to Rammell, who owned extensive lands in other parts of Thanet and members of whose family occupied other farms in the area.¹¹

The River Wantsum had always proved a barrier to any road route from Faversham to Margate; traffic from London, using the old Watling Street Road, passed through Canterbury. The South Eastern Railway Company ignored the same area, leaving it in the mid-nineteenth century still devoid of any direct land communication with the capital. As businessmen in Whitstable, Herne Bay and Margate became increasingly frustrated, local landowners obtained the East Kent Railway Company Act in 1853, empowering them to build a line from Strood to Canterbury via Faversham, with two branch lines. Two years later the Act was amended to allow the line to continue to Dover, rolling stock bearing the L & C logo was hired and in 1859 the company became the London, Chatham and Dover Railway.¹²

Meanwhile, the Kent Coastal Railway Company had been formed in 1857. A line between Faversham and Whitstable opened in 1860, was extended to Herne Bay in 1862, when the single line from Faversham was doubled, and in 1863 finally reached Margate. The *Kentish Gazette* of 8 September described this great event, when one engine, decorated with evergreens and flowers, drawing three first-class carriages, arrived at Margate from London. To the sounds of 'See! The Conquering Hero Comes!' it was, with its distinguished passengers, greeted by the Mayor and Corporation, the Rifle and Artillery Corps, the Fire Brigade and the Town and Volunteer Bands.¹³ The official welcome at the Town Hall was accompanied by speeches applauding the Kent Coastal Railway Company, which had built the line to lease to the London, Chatham and Dover Company.¹⁴ It was hoped that shortening the long, tedious journey, making it possible to leave Margate at 7.30 a.m. and arrive in London before 10 a.m., would attract 'a better class of person' to Margate.¹⁵

The 'better classes', however, were becoming spoilt for choice. As Eric Hobsbawm wrote, 'by the mid 1860s a middle-class holiday boom was already transforming parts of the British coastline... enabling landed proprietors to draw unsuspected profits from hitherto uneconomic stretches of cliffs and beaches' and the railways made those parts of the coastline increasingly accessible.¹⁶ At Eastbourne the Duke of Devonshire was exploiting his Sussex acres; at Folkestone Lord Radnor had collaborated with a railway company to their mutual benefit; at Bournemouth Sir George Tapps Gervis had turned barren heathland into a marine village. There was no aristocratic landlord in the Margate area to play such a part, but there were others more than willing to take the risk and it is to their enterprise that Westgate on Sea owes its very existence.

After the death of Gibbon Rammell in 1842 much of his property changed hands. Herman Dirs Mertens, London-born solicitor in partnership in Margate with his brother-in-law, William Brooke, through a series of intricate legal and financial transactions, involving also his brothers George and the Reverend Frederick Dirs Mertens, succeeded in acquiring by 1864 all the land south of Westgate and Marsh Bays, which became the new watering-place of Westgate on Sea.¹⁷ [Appendix 2]

The 1851 census showed the thirty-one year old Mertens, solicitor, to have been living at Street Lodge with his wife, two small children, five servants and a gardener; in Kelly's 1855 Directory for Kent he was listed as 'gentry'.¹⁸ In the 1861 census, still described as solicitor, he was a widower with five children under twelve; in 1871, married again with several more small children, he described himself as landowner; in 1881 living at Streete Court, his new 'charming Marine Freehold Residential Estate' south of the High Road and part of the Street Lodge Estate (its name gentrified by the addition of an 'e'), he recorded his income as 'derived from land'.¹⁹ Mertens was, indeed, one of those who, like the 'freshly-risen' Hampstead lawyers described by F.M.L.Thompson, carved out an empire where no one was in possession.²⁰ His brother George, 'manufacturer of solid work' and one of the distinguished guests on that first momentous train journey to Margate in 1863, was living at Salmestone Grange, Rammell's former property in 1871.²

Mertens' plans for his newly acquired land appear to have been carefully thought out. He did not release too much at once, so that, as Thompson said of the Maryon-Wilson Estate in Hampstead, 'the local land-market was not ruined by a glut of building land appearing simultaneously in every direction'.²² It was, therefore, logical that he leased the 94 acres 3 roods and 33 perches of Westgate Farm, the westernmost part of his property, to Frederick Henry Watson, a Birchington farmer from 11 October 1864. The nine-year lease at £237 1s 6d per annum was somewhat shorter than was customary, but it was no less meticulous, with details of crops to be grown in the final year and the stipulation that 'all to be left in a proper husbandlike state and condition for barley, oat and wheat tillage' and a penalty of £5 for 'every acre of deficiency'.²³

The new watering-place of Westgate on Sea began in 1865, when a pair of houses, Richmond Villas, later to become the Beach House Hotel, was built on the eastern side of Marsh Bay. In the next few years development was rapid, Mertens selling his land, one farm at a time, to a developer, who became proprietor of what was to be known as the Westgate Estate. Although the first proprietor erected some buildings himself to sell or let, he also sold land on to other builders or to individuals, who purchased their plots and built to their own specifications. Westgate land was sold freehold, subject to restrictive covenants, which demanded a high standard of building and approval of all designs. This was unusual enough to cause the Chairman of the House of Commons' Committee, considering the Westgate and Birchington Gas and Water Bill in 1879, to express surprise that the proprietors had not followed the practice of retaining the ground ownership.²⁴

On 16 December 1869 the ninety-nine acres of Hundreds Farm were conveyed, with the help of an £8000 mortgage, to William Corbett, partner in the firm of Corbett and McClymont, Estate Developers of South Kensington, who were currently involved in the building of the Redcliffe Estate at West Brompton and on 8 February 1870, with a further £16,000 mortgage, Corbett bought the hundred acres of Street Green Farm and twelve acres of the Street Lodge Estate.²⁵ Quoting, on 21 October 1870, from the *Builder* of the previous week, the editor of *Keble's Gazette* wrote that, Corbett 'with the same energy and clearheadedness which in a marvellously short time covered the Redcliffe Estate with good houses and brought it a population ... had set to work to make Westgate on Sea a fine watering place'.

On part of the Street Lodge Estate in the parish of Acol, he built his own house, complete with stables, naming it Redcliffe Villa after his West Brompton Estate.²⁶ [Plate 3] In Kelly's *Directory for Kent* of 1874 Corbett is described as 'Farmer'. Although he probably knew little about farming, he made good use of the farm, installing the thirty-year old William Osbourn and his family as his bailiff and showing sufficient interest to write to him in August 1871, suggesting that he employed extra help for the harvest as the weather was doubtful.²⁷ One use to which he put the farm was to provide stabling for visitors who wished to bring their horses and carriages, as there were no mews in the early days.

Corbett lost no time in beginning to develop at the east side of Marsh Bay after the purchase of Street Green Farm to the consternation of the 'neighbours'. In a letter to the Governors of the Bethlehem Hospital in August 1870, Mrs Paramour, tenant of Garlinge Farm, urged them to send someone down soon to see what was happening as 'the Coastguard Station has an entrance on our private road and houses are being built. People are crossing the fields and there is a contract out for building a breakwater from 'our bay' to Epple Bay'.²⁸ The Governors' solicitor took prompt action; padlocked bars were placed across the unauthorised entrances; notices were served. However, with an eye to the future, they also negotiated with 'Mr Lewin [Corbett's solicitor who had a large financial stake in the Westgate development] who wished to use the road for his own carriage'.²⁹

The small enclave at Marsh Bay included the very first bungalow in Britain, built in 1869 for the eminent London skin specialist, Professor Erasmus Wilson, whose connections with the Royal Sea Bathing Hospital at Margate would have made him familiar with the area. The architect John Taylor was known for his innovative building methods and his Marsh Bay bungalows were not of the kind which, in later years, were so derided by architects and planners. Wilson's 'gentleman's residence', with stabling, coach house with coachman's rooms over, conservatory and greenhouse, set in an acre of garden overlooking the bay, was always referred to simply as 'The Bungalow'.³⁰ The Professor told Taylor, 'I find everyone charmed with my bungalow... If there were many bungalows, there would be many buyers'.³¹



Plate 3. Redcliffe Villa, Corbett's house built 1871/2 - it is not included in the 1871 census return for Acol parish, but is shown on the 1872 Ordnance Survey Map [Map 3].



Plate 4. No. 2 Sea Road is of the same date. In correspondence of 1871, Corbett is seen to be trying to sell it. Named Cleveland's it was occupied by solicitor Henry Houseman for many years. Later it became the Northcott Guest House.

Taylor built others at Marsh Bay but, when Corbett and McClymont acquired the estate, he moved on to Birchington, because he felt that he could not compete with them, as they had access to much more capital.³² Anthony King says that, 'early-nineteenth century resorts had been essentially social places, providing... opportunities for group enjoyment, social rituals and personal display. The bungalow was an early rejection of this behaviour, representing a search for solitude, a quest for quiet and isolation from the city crowd'.³³

Wilson, knighted in 1881, the year that he became President of the Royal College of Surgeons, was a great advocate for the benefits of the sea, considering that, 'A hypochondriac or nervous person may be half cured by residing on the sea coast'.³⁴ By encouraging others to come to Westgate, Wilson, whose statue in the forecourt of the Sea Bathing Hospital looks towards Westgate, did what Dr Jebb had done for Exmouth, Dr Granville for Bournemouth and Dr Russell for Brighton; the nucleus of the new resort had been built and the first élite residents enticed.

On 12 April 1871 a modest ceremony marked the event which, above all, was vital to the future success of Westgate - the opening of the railway station of Westgate on Sea. Keble's Gazette described how Mr Corbett and Mr Spencer Lewin, 'already well known to our readers in connection with the estate...drew up at the station precisely at 1 p.m.' The editor opined :

Nothing would have led a bystander to suppose that any out of the way occurrence had transpired; and yet the strong possibilities are that this little episode in the history of the London Chatham and Dover Railway Company may yet be fraught with importance to it and that their Westgate on Sea station may in a few years be second to few on their line. Margate, of course, will always hold its own - there is nothing to apprehend on this score; indeed the very success we predict for Westgate on Sea will but add to her prosperity and prestige, for it will essentially be a child of Margate - a quiet aristocratic suburb to it - drawing its very breath, so to speak, from the parent source, for its world wide reputation for healthfulness and longevity, for restoring the *mens sana in corpore sano* - that desideratum of valetudinarians, 'the gift without price'. Margate then must be the gainer by the prosperity of Westgate on Sea. Its close proximity to the latter ...must inevitably constitute it a market for almost every necessary, which a growing child may require, so that although another class, to use a hackneyed phrase 'the upper 10,000' will perhaps be more especially attracted to this neighbourhood on account of its quiet and seclusion, Margate must reap a large share of its gain.³⁵

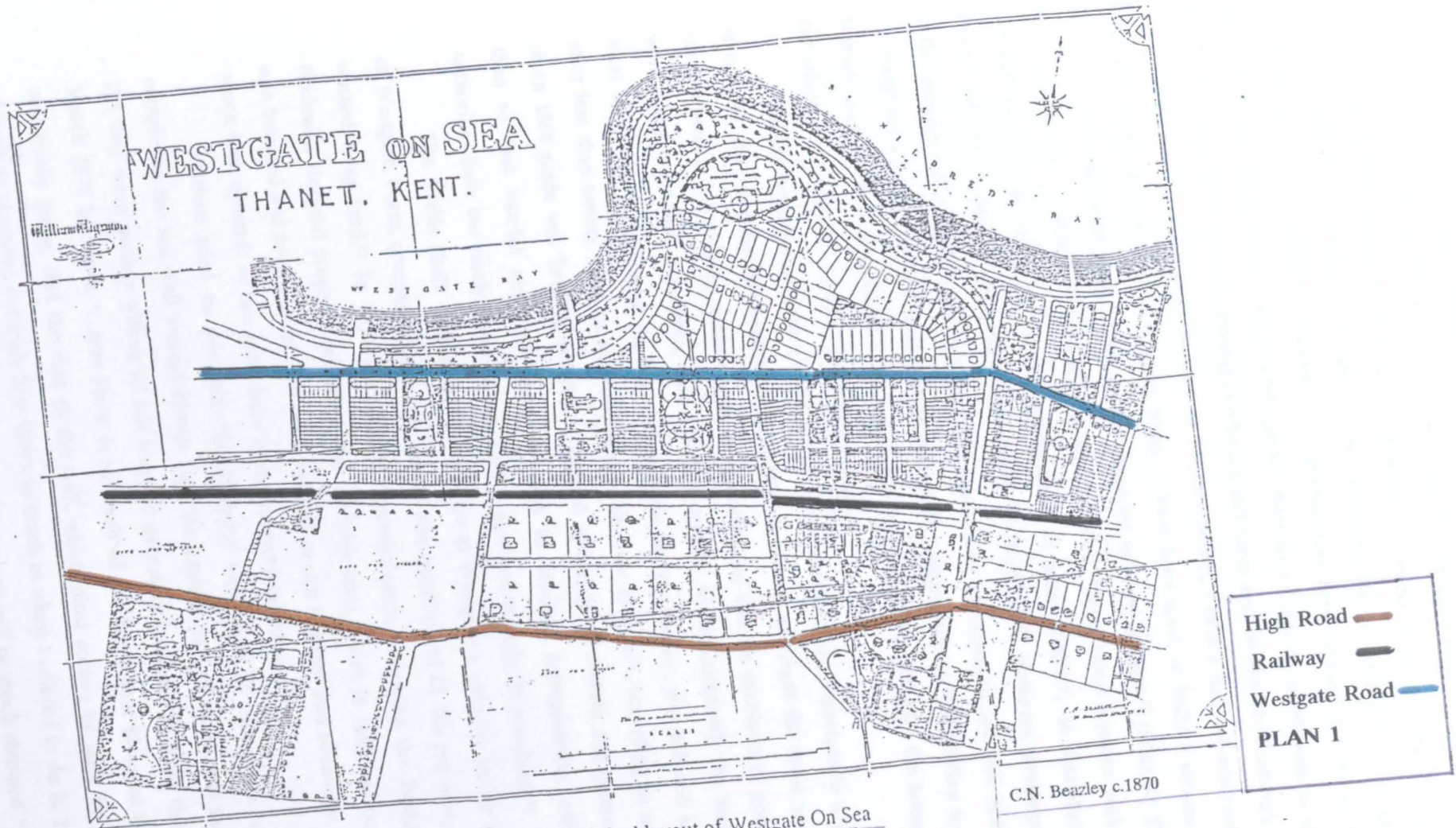
Such hopes were to be dashed over the years, as the early Westgatonians soon made it clear that they wished to have as little to do with the 'parent' as possible. Members of the Committee of the Commons, listening to evidence being given in 1882 in favour of building a stretch of railway line from Westgate to Minster, were bemused by the fact that none of the witnesses knew the cost of travel to Margate by train or cab or even how far the one was from the other.³⁶

When Corbett acquired the estate, he appointed Charles Nightingale Beazley of Westminster as Estate architect. Beazley drew up a plan for the new watering-place showing six large, tree-shaded squares with ornamental gardens and terraced houses similar to those found in London, detached villas in extensive grounds on the sea front and to the south and west, a mansion called Westgate Hall on the site of Hundreds Farm, shops, mews and two hotels. [Plan 1] 'There is in contemplation the erection of a first-class hotel on the promontory fronting the east side of Westgate Bay', enthused the local press, whilst Mertens 'in the laying out of the estate reserved as a gift an ample space for the large permanent structure [railway station] which, according to present appearance, will shortly be required'.³⁷

One problem common to many resorts, especially those such as Eastbourne, Folkestone and Bournemouth which sought exclusivity, was where to accommodate the artisans and service providers, without whom no resort could prosper. The problem appears to have been addressed at an early stage at Westgate, for the 1871 Census shows that the first to be needed - the navvies, excavators and brickmakers - were living in the old Westgate Farm cottages well away from the prosperous development at Marsh Bay, whilst a 'new' building had appeared on the cliffs at Westgate Bay - the Southampton Arms.³⁸

In August 1880 a correspondent to the *Westgate Chronicle* asked why 'the old pub and cottage' were allowed to spoil the western end of Westgate Bay; in October an application was made to transfer the licence from the Southampton Arms to the new Railway Hotel; by April 1881 it was unoccupied; a decade later it had gone.³⁹ A possible clue to its story might be that the given occupation of the head of household on Census night 1871 was 'builder and beerhousekeeper'.⁴⁰ In the *Survey of London* vol xli 'South Kensington', it is stated that, 'In view of the age old liking of London builders for making taverns the first structure to be put up on their building sites, it is not, perhaps, surprising that the pubs ... erected on the Redcliffe Estate were either ... in an area of naturally early development or built a little before most of the surrounding houses'.⁴¹

Corbett, drawing on his experience at West Brompton, would appear, therefore, to have been ensuring the contentment of the workforce about to descend on Westgate from London, for one unusual feature of the development of Westgate was that it was built almost entirely by metropolitan artisans, many of whom came from the West Brompton area.⁴² The faded sepia-photograph of the 'Southampton Arms' on the wall of the offices of Alfred Lockwood may well point to the pub having been built by his foreman, William Weston, whose birth place was Southampton.⁴³ During the 1870s artisans' cottages, many built by Lockwood, were erected in three roads to the south-east of the railway, tucked away well out of sight. They were rented out at seven to nine shillings a week, and in 1881 were occupied by skilled workmen, most connected with the building trade.⁴⁴ To the south-west, near to the new Gas and Waterworks, were the cottages for engine drivers and gas fitters.⁴⁵



Map showing the original layout of Westgate On Sea

William Wignore (top left) was Corbett's contractor and responsible for much of the infrastructure.
 Reproduced by permission of K.O' Toole of Benefield and Cornford.

By the time the railway station was opened, Archibald Roxburgh, a Westminster builder, was already in the process of erecting fourteen semi-detached villas on the western side of the road named after him, close to the railway and leading to the sea. [Plate 5] In June 1872, reporting on the dinner he gave to his employees on the roofing in of 11 and 12 Roxburgh Road, the local press enthused, 'The houses have every comfort and are let to families who close them in the winter. They prefer them to a hotel or apartments in the summer. We hope that a few enterprising gentlemen will come and do like Mr Roxburgh'.⁴⁶

Much further to the west on land in Minster parish, Corbett had sub-contracted Smith and Swain, one of the few Margate firms to have been used, to build a terrace of eight houses on the south side of one of the proposed western squares.⁴⁷ [Plate 6] They were possibly the 'prototype' of houses on the intended 'three sided squares with an enclosed park in the centre to provide promenades in poor weather', as described by Myerscough and Lowerson when they were writing of Brighton.⁴⁸ However, development of the western end of the Estate was slow and the terrace remained in splendid isolation for many years, by 1891 all the houses being apparently lodging houses.⁴⁹ According to John Burnett, such terraces had ceased to be fashionable as early as the 1840s for the houses did not adapt well to smaller families and fewer servants.⁵⁰

Resort development was a risky venture. Infrastructure, so important in a seaside resort and often overlooked, swallowed up capital. In resorts all round the coast, mundane matters such as sea defence, water supply, sewage disposal and the provision of good roads were often neglected, sometimes with unhappy results. At Bournemouth the nucleus of what was to be Southbourne on Sea, including six 'stately homes', was reduced to rubble after less than twenty years by the onslaught of the sea; Exmouth, according to the writer of an 1868 guide was 'healthy, but due to natural advantage of climate and position rather than to that careful and systematic attention to sanitary arrangements, which town authorities have but rarely learnt to pay, until neglect has brought its penalties'.⁵¹

The friable chalk cliffs made sea defence at Westgate a priority. In the 1864 lease of Westgate Farm, compensation to the tenant was promised of £2 10s per acre, if the sea washed away land.⁵² In 1837 the Charity Commissioners, reviewing the Bethlehem and Bridewell Hospital property, remarked that Garlinge farm, which in 1695 had comprised of one hundred and twenty acres, had been reduced to one hundred and twelve by 1821, 'since which time upwards of two acres have been destroyed by the sea'.⁵³

Corbett tried to persuade the Hospital Governors to co-operate with him in completing the sea wall around Marsh Bay, the eastern part of which was their property, but they were neither willing to sell him the necessary land nor to build themselves.⁵⁴ In March 1876 he wrote, '...now there is so much of the Bethlehem Hospital land gone and continually going, that the cost of the wall, which must sooner or later be done, will be something alarming, certainly four times as much as when I offered to do it. There is now a complete bay formed...The whole aspect of the place will be much changed'.⁵⁵



Plate 5. Semi-detached villas in **Roxburgh Road west**. Two were occupied by the time of the 1871 census, No. 1 by Archibald Roxburgh himself. The fourteen were completed in 1872.



Plate 6. 1-8 **Cuthbert Terrace** built by Smith and Swain of Margate 1871/2. They are not shown in the 1871 census return for Minster, but are shown on Maps 3 & 4.

Corbett's first task had been to construct sea walls, groynes and breakwaters. The expense of their maintenance remained the responsibility of successive owners of the Estate and a drain upon their resources and often the subject of legal disputes about access from the foreshore for repairs.⁵⁶ His next priority was to secure good drainage and a pure water supply, for these were particularly important to resorts seeking the class of visitor anxious for his health; the slightest whiff of doubt could spell disaster. At Eastbourne in 1863 an outbreak of scarlet fever was blamed upon the water supply. The Local Improvement Board started on a new drainage scheme and, when it became bankrupt, the Duke of Devonshire came to the rescue, so important was the matter.⁵⁷ Folkestone had a particularly bad reputation for poor drainage and in 1875 the South Eastern Railway, concerned for its profits if visitors stayed away, constructed a new sewer in conjunction with the Local Sanitary Authority.⁵⁸

Keble's Gazette reported as early as 1871 that thousands of pounds had already been spent in providing a perfect system of drainage at Westgate, cesspools fifty feet deep having been dug by Lockwood's men into the chalk.⁵⁹ Deep wells provided a pure water supply, but it was thought these might prove inadequate as the resort grew and waterworks were constructed by Corbett at a cost of £6000. Summoned before the Cinque Port magistrates in 1877 for non-payment of rates, he complained that he had yet to receive a single shilling from them.⁶⁰ He also intended to build Gas Works and run the two utilities as a private company.

Good roads were vital if the carriage trade were to be attracted - Eastbourne was famous for its wide, tree-lined roads - and *Keble's Gazette* described Westgate's roads as 'twice the width of our [Margate's] high roads with footpaths eight feet wide in addition, so that any part of the Estate can be built upon with finished and handsome approaches'.⁶¹ All roads except the High Road to Canterbury were retained as private, each purchaser of property having to covenant to pay a road rate for their maintenance by the Estate owner, the amount varying according to the position of the property. A corner plot on Sea Road was rated at six guineas a year; the cottages near the Waterworks at ten shillings each.⁶²

Marketing a new development was always difficult and Corbett's letterbook of 1870-1 is full of correspondence with potential purchasers of the Cuthbert Terrace property and two villas already completed in Sea Road. Letters invariably ended, 'I am anxious, in the early days of this new watering place, to offer every facility I can to tenants and purchasers'.⁶³ First class return-railway tickets were provided for potential buyers and cheap returns for long-stay seasonal visitors. In August 1871 he wrote to the sub-manager of the London, Chatham and Dover Railway Company, requesting tickets, one hundred up and one hundred down at 2/6 each for which 'I purpose to charge 4/-. This will give 1/6 per ticket towards the station and the platform, the cost of which I am anxious to recoup'.⁶⁴ It appears, therefore, that Corbett had built the station at his own expense, which may account for its modest appearance.

Corbett did not consider 1871 to have been a good year. Writing to George Mertens in October, he said, 'Westgate is moving slowly, very slowly. I cannot get rid of any plots of land'.⁶⁵ As Dr Granville said of New Brighton, which was planned to become a fashionable watering-place for the merchant princes of Liverpool, 'It must have required some courage to have planted the first dwellinghouse on such a waste and still more to have expected to attract others to follow the example'.⁶⁶ Keble's *Penny Guide* of 1871 reported that the estate was beautifully laid out 'with none of the untidiness and rawness of a new locality'.⁶⁷ Corbett, however, desperately trying to sell plots and the 'two charming villas in Sea Road', painted a different picture, explaining to a potential client that 'the large space between the house and the sea is to be preserved for a promenade'.⁶⁸

Corbett made every effort to make Westgate attractive to potential purchasers including following the custom of estate developers in supporting the erection of a church to raise the tone and provide what James Curl called 'some kind of heart to an area'.⁶⁹ Landowners such as the Duke of Devonshire and Sir George Tapps Gervis donated land and money for the purpose at Eastbourne and at Bournemouth and Beazley's plan of Westgate showed both a church and parsonage in the centre of one of the westernmost squares, similar to the pattern of design for London estates.⁷⁰ In fact, at that very time, St Luke's Redcliffe Square was under construction and Corbett and McClymont, who attended the church and were patrons of its living, had promised to raise the £6000 needed to complete its construction.⁷¹

In May 1871 the editor of *Keble's Gazette* suggested that the Vicar of St John's Margate should be thinking of a church for Garlinge [Westbrook] 'accommodation which they now, and will increasingly in a few years, more than ever require in the centre of this rising district'.⁷² In fact, the vicar, Canon Josiah Bateman, had already written in March that year to the Governors of the Bethlehem and Bridewell Hospitals, requesting an acre of land for a church and parsonage on the north side of the Margate Road opposite Dent de Lion. 'I am now treating with Mr Mertens of Streete Court and, through him, with Mr Corbett, Mr Lewin, Mr Roxburgh and others... I know that they will give the land I require on any part of their Estate, but this would carry the Church and house too far away from the people'.⁷³

His two and a half pages of pleadings, explaining the need for urgency because the Margate Great Tithes, commuted at £2000 per annum, once sunk into the Common Fund of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners would return no more, bore fruit and in October 1871 the Governors conveyed an acre of land to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.⁷⁴ The Canon related a somewhat different story to the Canterbury Diocesan Church Building and Endowment Society in July 1871, writing that, 'the proposed church comes exactly between the two new towns (as they may be called) of Westgate on Sea and Westbrook, which are mapped out, springing up and becoming important centres of population'.⁷⁵

This letter is of extreme importance as it reveals what it was thought was about to happen in the area to the west of Margate. Had the development of Westbrook happened at that time, the history of Westgate and, possibly Margate, would have been different. In 1868 a Margate architect, Mr Lane Sear, had tried to persuade the Governors to release all or part of their land for building and he was asked to submit a plan and make an offer for the lease of the land, but it is not mentioned again in the Hospitals' records and no such plan exists in their archives.⁷⁶

Corbett supported the efforts of Canon Bateman, as the new church, St James's Westgate, to be designed by his estate architect, would be reasonably close to that part of Westgate already developed. He wrote to all property owners, saying that, 'A church so near Beach House [about to be upgraded to a fashionable hotel] will be a very desirable acquisition'.⁷⁷ The outcome was disappointing, but he himself, together with Spencer Lewin, gave £1100, a third of the total building costs.⁷⁸ Herman Mertens contributed £400, his brother Frederick donated to the bell fund and Archibald Roxburgh, soon to become churchwarden, donated oak alms' dishes.⁷⁹

By the mid-seventies the pace of development was accelerating and Westgate began to take on the character envisaged by its founding fathers. Everything was in its favour to develop as a high-class resort for the family man, especially for those 'whose avocation may require their presence in the metropolis everyday'.⁸⁰ Mertens, Corbett and their successors knew the market at which they were aiming and, even when financial difficulties arose, did not lower their standards.

By 1875 the eastern end of the Estate was covered; 'marine residences' had been built in Sea Road overlooking the western part of Marsh Bay (re-named by 1872 St Mildred's Bay); two on prime plots at West Bay were in the course of construction; the first shops were opening in Station Road; the large villas a little way in from the sea were occupied, several by those within the Corbett West Brompton 'network'. William Aldin, son of a leading South Kensington builder, with whom Corbett had done business, William Logan, Corbett's neighbour at the Boltons and a clerk at Coutts' through whom Corbett dealt with the bank, his brother Thomas Logan, Gloucester Road wine merchant, who had set up shop in Station Road Westgate and was supplying wines to the newly-opened Beach House Hotel, Thomas and Spencer Lewin, solicitors of Southampton Row, heavily involved with financing both the Brompton and Westgate developments, solicitor Henry Houseman, another source of finance and Alfred Waterman, Gracechurch Street timber-merchant and creditor of Corbett and McClymont were 'part-time' residents for some years.⁸¹

An additional fifteen acres on the far west at Epple Bay had been purchased by Corbett in 1871 and quickly sold on and a semi-bungalow residence, with coach house, two-stall stable, flower garden and croquet lawn set in two acres with extensive views to the sea, had been erected.⁸² As the nine-year lease on Westgate Farm came to an end Corbett had sufficient confidence in the future to purchase it and the remainder of the Street Lodge in January 1875, borrowing heavily to do so.⁸³

The summer of 1875 was a good season and many fashionable titled guests stayed at the newly refurbished Beach House Hotel (see chapter three).⁸⁴ The distinctive Osborne House in Sea Road, built by William Wigmore of Walham Green, one of Corbett's contractors, was to have been sold in July 1875, but it soon became established as a County Club for Gentlemen with Wigmore as Proprietor.⁸⁵ [Plate 7] Such a club was essential if gentlemen of leisure were to be attracted to the town - at Eastbourne the Devonshire Club was described as the focus of 'the first circle of social life'.⁸⁶ Westgate appeared to be heading for success, although a period of economic depression in the country, as a whole, was already underway.

However, Corbett, also extremely active in London at this time, was in danger of overstretching himself. No other firm within the area of the District Surveyor for South Kensington built a greater number of houses in the seventies. They were working in Fulham and Pimlico and had also purchased the Elmers Estate in Surbiton in 1872.⁸⁷ It was easy to borrow in the 1870s - E.J.Cleary says that, 'The fact that mortgages normally included the personal bond of the borrower may actually be harmful, for men are more difficult to value than property. There is a temptation to lend, because one trusts the man, even if one thinks he is misjudging the value of his investment'.⁸⁸ Successive proprietors of the Westgate Estate appear to have proved difficult for their creditors to judge. The partners of Coutts' appear to have been pleased when William Logan brought them extra business at the time that he was connected with Corbett, his remuneration rising by almost a third in 1873, mostly from his 'private salary' (performance bonuses).⁸⁹

F.H.W.Sheppard, writing of the West Brompton development, says that Corbett and McClymont's handling of the legal and financial interests in their properties was neither simple nor easily intelligible and this was equally true of their Westgate enterprise.⁹⁰ Corbett had large mortgage debts and as soon as he sold a Westgate house, he paid over the sum to his mortgagee, as part repayment of the total borrowed and the next day re-mortgaged the property. The Westminster solicitors, Lee, Houseman and Brodie appear to have had an endless supply of small investors, eager to take up what seemed a safe investment.⁹¹ Hobsbawm says that it was fairly easy for businessmen and promoters to raise capital, not only from the informed, '... but from a mass of quite uninformed ones looking for a return on their capital...and finding it through the agency of family solicitors and stockbrokers'.⁹² According to Donald J. Olsen, if the 'thrifty Victorian' wanted to invest, mortgages, ground rents and improved rents offered a safe alternative to Consols.⁹³



PLATE 7. Osborne House built by William Wigmore of Walham Green. Advertised in *Keble's Gazette* July 1875 for sale by auction. Drawing-Room 16ft by 24ft, dining-room 18ft by 16ft, library with folding doors connecting to the dining-room. Seven bedrooms, smoking room on second floor, croquet lawn. Became first County Club for Gentlemen, then successively a private residence, a girls' school and an hotel.



PLATE 8. The Tower House built in 1885 by John Brown as a Retreat under the Habitual Drunkards' Act 1879 for 'the treatment of patients suffering from nervous exhaustion caused by intemperance, overwork or the excessive use of narcotic drugs'. (Hutchings and Crowsley, *Directory for the Isle of Thanet*, 1885-6). Later became the Convent of Les Oiseaux and then the Abbey School for boys.

Corbett had been seeking second mortgages on some of his Westgate properties since 1875 and in 1876 negotiated a charge of almost £6000 on the Gas Works.⁹⁴ By early 1878 Coutts' concerned partners put in an accountant to inspect Corbett and McClymont's books, asking William Rogers to make a valuation on the properties mortgaged to them. Estimating them at £137,950, he recommended that Coutts' should take over the arrangements, paying the interest to Lee, Houseman and Brodie.⁹⁵

On 1 May 1878 all the Westgate land and the Gas and Water Works were sold to Edmund Francis Davis for £80,000 and £15,000 respectively, as the result of a complicated mortgage agreement with Coutts.⁹⁶ On 4 May Corbett and McClymont suspended all payments. Two days later *The Times* commented 'This failure is attributed to the difficulty in letting or disposing of these properties in the present dull times'.⁹⁷ On 7 May the announcement appeared in the *London Gazette* that proceedings for 'Liquidation by Arrangement ...with creditors had been instituted' by Corbett and McClymont. Both men gave Westgate addresses as well as those in South Kensington.⁹⁸ The verdict of the *Building News* was that they had 'overbuilt'.⁹⁹ Corbett, writing to Logan in May 1879, said that, 'The sad misfortune which befell us was from no fault of mine. The most terrible depression of property, which has happened, not only on our estate, but also in the neighbourhood, I could not possibly avoid'.¹⁰⁰ In February 1879 the Bankruptcy Court made an order for the payment of 2/6 in the £ to joint creditors and 6d in the £ for others.¹⁰¹ In May 1879 it was reported that their joint liabilities were estimated at £1,300,000 'of which a large portion is covered by security with assets, consisting of upwards of one thousand finished and unfinished houses, property, stock and plant'. The Receiver said that most property was subject to mortgage and wages were due to between four and five hundred men and that it was necessary that the unfinished houses be completed. Corbett's separate liabilities amounted to £65,000-£70,000 and McClymont's at £45,000.¹⁰²

For Westgate the first chapter of its history ended quite painlessly, for the Estate had passed, it seemed, effortlessly into the hand of its new proprietor, who was welcomed with as much enthusiasm by the fickle local press as Corbett had been when he first started on his venture.¹⁰³ Corbett did not disappear from the Westgate scene. In the 1881 Census return he was listed at Redcliffe House, giving his occupation as builder; in 1883 he was described in *Keble's Gazette* as 'a building contractor in a large way of business', after a major fire totally destroyed his yard, carpenters' and plumbers' shops and engine room. The damage of some £2000 - £3000 was covered by insurance, but his workmen were not so fortunate. They, who were uninsured, lost all their tools.¹⁰⁴ Two years later he again suffered the complete loss of his sawmills by fire.¹⁰⁵ In January 1887 Redcliffe Villa, with furniture, a brougham, a Victoria and a bay horse, was auctioned and Corbett left Westgate.¹⁰⁶

After 1889 nothing more is known of him. A typical entrepreneur of his day, he gambled on the demand for the type of houses he was building being sustained. His Westgate venture appears to have been on the verge of success when his business failed, but he had borrowed heavily, at the very time that demand in the London market was falling, not only for the land and the houses on which he would obtain a return, but for those amenities peculiar to a resort on which there was no visible gain. The presentation of a large number of promissory notes, including one to the incumbent of St Luke's in February 1878, was the final blow.¹⁰⁷ Failure of builders in resorts was not unusual - at Eastbourne building had come to a standstill in the mid 1850s when the builders ran out of money, but the Earl of Burlington stepped in and advanced £37,000.¹⁰⁸

Edmund Francis Davis, the new Estate proprietor, was a thirty-two year old Jewish solicitor from Cork Street London. Such was his charisma that, although Corbett had done much of the groundwork and Davis was proprietor for only two years, he appears to be the only one remembered in the story of Westgate. Earlier, he had bought the Granville and Mount Albion estates in Ramsgate very cheaply, when Edward Pugin had filed a petition for liquidation in 1873, planning to turn them into a fashionable cliff-top watering-place, St Lawrence on Sea.¹⁰⁹ He bought St Peter's Cottage at nearby Broadstairs for £20,000 where in 1881 he had a staff of nine to look after him, his wife and three small children.¹¹⁰ By 1877 all seemed set for success; he had completed the ambitious project of the Granville Marina, was publishing the *Granville Illustrated News* to trumpet his achievements and the Granville Express was about to become a by-word for luxurious and convenient travel.¹¹¹

Even when it was mere rumour that Davis was about to buy the Westgate Estate, it was forecast that 'under such circumstances, Westgate, already a rapidly rising watering-place, bids fair to become a seaside resort of no small note'.¹¹² It seems likely however, that this was not the prime aim of Davis. Beazley drew up another plan for the Westgate Estate for him, which shows every part covered by villas in extensive grounds or terraced squares with private gardens. [Plan 2] With the exception of the 'Pleasure Gardens' on the greensward of the clifftops, there was no public recreational space, no provision for any place of entertainment and for only two hotels. The plan is far more like that of a high-class London residential estate than of a potential resort and Davis soon made it clear that his aim was to create 'Mayfair by the Sea' an exclusive environment for the well-connected and the well-heeled.¹¹³ Even before the seventeen-page mortgage agreement was finalised, advertisements appeared weekly in *Keble's Gazette* extolling the attractions of Westgate and the benefits of an Estate, where 'nearly the whole of the uncovered land is the property of the Vendor [and] there is no possible chance of the Aristocratic character of Westgate ever being destroyed'.¹¹⁴



ST. WILFREDS BAY

WESTGATE BAY

Plan of

WESTGATE-ON-SEA ESTATE, THANET,

THE PROPERTY OF
EDMUND F. DAVIS, ESQ.

PLAN 2



DESCRIPTION

There are 24 acres of land in front of the New Westgate Bay, to be laid out with streets, and with the surrounding fields and other buildings, together with the New Bay and Promenade.

Edmund F. Davis, Esq.

A purchaser was required 'Within two years to erect one messuage [semi-detached properties were rare] according to plans and elevations to be previously submitted to and approved by the vendor or his surveyor and that the said messuage to cost not less than...' In addition to the covenants standard in all exclusive developments, a Westgate purchaser was required to connect his house to the mains gas and water supplies of the Vendor and 'consume gas and water to be supplied by the vendor... in exclusion of every other person or company owning similar undertakings in the neighbourhood'.¹¹⁵ When giving evidence in 1879 before the House of Commons' Committee considering the Gas and Water Bill, Davis showed extreme economy with the truth when questioned about these covenants, pleading that he had sold the land freehold and signed no building leases and knew of no such covenants. However, he also stated that he would never allow another company to come on to 'his roads'.¹¹⁶

It was comparatively easy to create an exclusive estate at Westgate. On the east the two hundred acres of the Hospital Governors, subject to the control of the Charity Commissioners and unlikely to be offered for development, created a barrier which would protect the estate from the dangers, perceived or actual, of contact with Margate; on the south John Powell's Quex Park Estate contained good agricultural land, but no access to the sea and little to commend it for building; to the north and west topography created natural barriers.

The special reduced railway tickets for the Estate were discontinued, 'excursion' trains and those offering cheap fares were not allowed to stop at Westgate and fares on the Granville Express, on which there were no third-class seats, were expensive.¹¹⁷ Accessibility was important for a resort to develop, but as Harold Perkin wrote, 'The further away and the more expensive it was to visit, the more exclusive it became'.¹¹⁸ Davis wanted the best of both worlds - an estate within easy reach of the capital, but too expensive for the lower classes to visit.

In November 1878, in addition to the public notices of the intention of applying in the 1879 parliamentary session for the passage of the Westgate and Birchington Gas and Water Bill, notice was given of an application for a Provisional Order to erect a landing stage and promenade pier stretching a thousand yards between St Mildred's and Westgate Bays.¹¹⁹

In December a quarter of a mile of Westgate sea front was lit with electric lights - the first provincial town to carry out such a trial. On the first occasion scientists and other invited guests watched the spectacle, visible from Margate Jetty, and, after being entertained to a 'sumptuous dinner' at the Beach House Hotel, returned by special train to London in just one hour and thirty-five minutes.¹²⁰ The month-long experiment was then abandoned and it was to be nearly half a century before Westgate was to enjoy the benefits of an electricity supply.

The comment in the *Walton and Clacton Gazette* in October 1879 that, 'between the Essex and Sussex coasts, the season had been disastrous for all resorts', was not true of Westgate.¹²¹ Fashionable visitors were in evidence throughout the summer and in October 1879 forty lots of building land were sold for a price which worked out at £2400 an acre.¹²² Westgate had much to offer - level walking, safe bathing, boating and wonderful sands and advertisements tried to lure the type of buyer being sought.

Attention of Gentlemen and builders ought particularly to be turned to this rising Watering-place not only from the fact that there are some of the most excellent sites for houses to be found here, but on account of the unusual facilities that are offered in acquiring Plots of Land and the additional advantages that the houses, when erected, let or Sell readily.¹²³

Underneath the veneer of success, however, Davis's financial situation was far from stable. Accompanying the mortgage documents of 1878 were a comprehensive schedule of properties and an early map of the Estate showing the land which had actually been sold. [Map 4] Davis was forced to admit to the House of Commons' Committee, that the plan submitted in support of the Westgate and Birchington Gas and Water Bill was what was in contemplation rather than what was in reality; at most a hundred and seventy-five houses had been built compared with almost fifteen hundred shown on the plan.¹²⁴

The mortgage agreement safeguarded Coutts' interests, stipulating minimum values for the building land ranging from fivepence per square yard for the agricultural land of Hundreds Farm to fifteen shillings per square yard for land on the south side of Ethelbert Square. The decision of William Rogers, regarding any disagreement on minimum price, was final. Half-yearly payments were first to meet interest due and then reduce the principal; £15,000 was to be repaid by 1 January 1883; the remaining £80,000 by 1 January 1888.¹²⁵

In February 1879 Rogers was instructed by Coutts to produce a 'Statement of position of Sundry Properties belonging to Edmund F. Davis Esq'. [Fig.1] His total mortgages amounted to £253,300; the value on paper of the property was estimated at £378,575. He appeared to be having difficulties in meeting both the interest (at four to five per cent) and the required annual repayment of principal.¹²⁶

Although 1879 was a good season for Westgate, it was not a good year for its charismatic proprietor. The Westgate and Birchington Gas Bill, opposed by the Isle of Thanet Gas Company, was thrown out in March, although the Water Bill was successful.¹²⁷ Nothing more was heard of the Pier Provisional Order, perhaps because Davis was the sole undertaker and it is difficult to see how he could have raised the capital needed.¹²⁸

Part of Map c. 1871. The red areas are completed building.
Right : Southampton Arms
Below right : Cuthbert Terrace
Below Left :
Corbett's Redcliffe Villa
Hundreds Farm

Top right :
Sussex Gardens
Centre right
Street Court



Coutts' MSS, Box 1565, Bundle 471/111

MAP 4

By October he was seeking through his solicitors, William and Frederick Searle Parker of Bedford Row London, a charge on the Granville Marina and the premises at St Lawrence, offering as security all other property that he owned, including the lease on the foreshore rights at Westgate Bay held from the Marquis of Conyngnam, the 'Manor Park' Estate Office at Westgate, the freehold of the Beach House Hotel and all roads and road rates.¹²⁹ In a letter to Parkers he wrote, 'the Estate is too large to be conducted without further funds and it is only by certain arrangements with different parties that such working funds can be secured'. Continuing that he could not make any instalments that year and was unable to make arrangements for placing the loans elsewhere, he acknowledged that, with regard to the loan on the Mount Albion Estate, 'this purchase has proved so disastrous that I have no alternative but to request the utmost indulgence which can be granted'.¹³⁰

At the end of October the Rural Sanitary Authority, concerned about a report from the Medical Officer of Health on the state of Westgate's drainage, entered into correspondence with Davis and, receiving no co-operation, held an inquiry in December, when it was hinted that private-road owners might be compelled to lay sewers to link with the public sewer.¹³¹ In November the Isle of Thanet Gas Company had begun proceedings for an application for a perpetual injunction to restrain him from interfering with the Company's pipes in the Highway to Birchington from Margate.¹³²

1880 saw no improvement in his fortunes; by January he owed Coutts' £7000 in interest; in April, standing as Liberal candidate for Margate Borough in the General Election, he was defeated; in the same month the Parker brothers were negotiating a mortgage with Coutts' to buy him out.¹³³ A memo written in May stated that 'the lease and furniture of 27 Dover Street Piccadilly [was] to be wholly realised in the summer'.¹³⁴

In July *Keble's Gazette* reported that 'a reliable source said that Mr Davis had sold the whole of the Westgate Estate for a considerable sum to Messrs Parkers and that the management would be in the hands of Rogers, Chapman and Thomas of South Kensington, represented locally by Mr Herbert Rogers' (William's brother).¹³⁵ Local capital was neither sought nor invested and Westgate's future remained in the hands of Londoners, with the day-to-day running in the hands of the local agent.

In August 1880 the editor of the *Westgate Chronicle* on optimistic note wrote, 'In welcoming the new proprietors, we welcome gentlemen of position, ability and skill; their agents are tried men well up to their business and, under their guidance and management, we are assured of a successful future'.¹³⁶ The Parker brothers do not appear to have played an active part in the life of Westgate, the sole reminder being the naming of Dane End Road after Frederick Parker's home at Ware.

<i>Westgate on Sea</i>			
<i>Valuation of Freehold Land</i>		<i>Value Estimated</i>	<i>Value forced</i>
		£	£
1.	About 60 acres of Freehold land with roads made - frontages immediately available £1000	66,000	60,000
2.	About 5 acres - special on Sea Road (Hill Side)	9,000	7,200
3.	About 10 acres adjoining Donnera Rd part of Westgate farm - Roads partly formed £600	7,000	6,000
4.	Site of about 9 acres halled in, shrubbed & kitchen garden & Conservatories £400	1,500	3,600
5.	part building land in Canterbury Road about 12 acres £300	4,500	3,600
6.	About 63 acres of Westgate Farm with sea view & frontages - Roads not yet formed £286	14,650	13,000
7.	The Hundreds Farm with farm buildings, comprising about 72 acres of agricultural land, in time will be building land £150	11,300	10,500
8.	Ornamental gardens	3,500	3,400
9.	About 5 acres site for house - planted & shrubbed & matured kitchen garden £500	2,000	1,700
10.	Part of Street Lodge with frontages to the Canterbury Road about 31 acres £10,000 £250	13,000	13,000
		£ 137,510	122,300
<i>Freehold houses</i>			
Total rents £3,909 per ann.		73,050	68,200
Westgate Gas & Water Works to pay £3500		7,000	7,000
Waterworks Cottages £6000 to pay		6,000	500
		£ 218,550	196,300
Subject to £26,000 plain 10 th mortgage		55,448	112,512
Mortgages —		81,448	116,552
		£ 137,112	116,552

Fig. 1

Extract from 'Statement of position of Sundry Properties belonging to Edmund F. Davis Esq. Feby 3/79' made by William Bennett Rogers for the partners of Coutts'.
Coutts' MSS, Box 1565, Bundle 471/112.

Reproduced by permission of the Directors of Coutts' bank.

FIG. 1.

Davis did not leave the district immediately and even retained some business and political interests in the town, although the relationship seemed to cool very quickly.¹³⁷ The 1880s saw the zenith of Westgate's position as a fashionable watering-place. In 1881 the Census enumerator commented that there were about two hundred and thirty houses, where, ten years earlier, there had been but a dozen. Baths and Assembly Rooms in Sussex Gardens had opened in January 1880, the number and range of shops increased steadily, Miss Fanny Perkins' School for Young Ladies and William Bullock's Ringslow College for Young Gentlemen had been established, thus setting a pattern for the future. William Ingram, Member of Parliament for Boston and proprietor of the *Illustrated London News* had bought land in the Sussex Gardens area, where he would carve out an empire of his own. Houses in Adrian Square were occupied by professional men and amongst the owners of the thirty-three sea-front residences were the Dowager Marchioness of Downshire, Lord Charles Hill, Lady Rose Weigall, Algernon and Lady Clementine Mitford and Royal Acadamecian, William Quiller Orchardson.¹³⁸ Between 1880 and 1885 one hundred and seven building plots were sold. [Appendix 3]

In 1882 part of the Hundreds Farm was leased by a few 'enterprising gentlemen for the establishing of a Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club'.¹³⁹ The Westcliff Hotel, built on a promontory overlooking both bays, opened in 1883, the same year as St Mildred's. In April 1884 Christ Church Congregational Church opened and in July that year St Saviour's church was consecrated before a glittering congregation. The site of the Anglican church had been conveyed in April 1883 in time-honoured fashion by the Parkers, who had also promised a donation towards the building of the church and land for a parsonage and church school.¹⁴⁰ However, before St Saviour's was complete, another financial storm had broken over Westgate.

On 6 March 1884 a creditor of Parkers, a former army lieutenant, filed a petition naming the brothers jointly for an alleged act of bankruptcy, namely 'Departing from their dwelling houses with intent to defeat or delay their creditors'.¹⁴¹ On 8 March *The Times*, reporting the appointment of the Official Receiver as interim receiver, said that the creditor's solicitor had that morning attended the offices of the debtors and spoken with the chief clerk, who informed him that 'there were no title deeds or other securities representing investments of £10,000 claimed by the petitioning creditor, no such securities have been effected, money was paid by the debtors into their own bank accounts and applied to their own use. The debtors had been absent from Bedford Row since 23 February; there was no clue to their whereabouts, but it was believed they had absconded'.¹⁴² The Official Receiver called it 'a case of such importance and magnitude' that two special managers conversant with bankruptcy practice were appointed.¹⁴³

As the weeks rolled on it was clear that the brothers had been engaged in large scale fraud and it was unclear whether deeds in their strongroom related to their own property or that bought on behalf of their clients.¹⁴⁴ In addition to the lengthy hearings in the Bankruptcy Court, repeatedly adjourned as the trustees tried to unravel the complexities, there was a string of civil cases, where appellants from all over the country tried to ascertain whether they had lost everything.¹⁴⁵ By July 1884 it was acknowledged that the debtors were beyond jurisdiction.¹⁴⁶ By November some two hundred proofs representing almost £2,000,000 (multiply by £41.20 for today's equivalent) had been submitted to the court.¹⁴⁷ Many creditors lost almost everything and the trustees' date of release was not until August 1902.¹⁴⁸

Parkers owed Coutts' over a quarter of a million pounds but they, at least, had the requisite deeds and documents safely in the hands of their solicitors.¹⁴⁹ As mortgagees, therefore, they foreclosed, entering into possession not only of the large amount of uncovered building land of the Westgate Estate, but of Gas and Water Works, an hotel, a farm with a large acreage of agricultural land, sea walls, roads, squares, promenades and several town houses. They acknowledged that they had little hope of recovering much of the debt and eventually became Beneficial Owners, controlling the Estate and with it, much of the life of the town, for just on half a century.¹⁵⁰

THE BANKERS

This transference to corporate ownership makes Westgate almost unique amongst seaside resorts - the only other example, that I have found, being Sidney Sussex College at Cleethorpes. It took place very discreetly with only a brief report in the local press of the bankruptcy proceedings.¹⁵¹ References to Coutts' were rare - the partners of the day, in whose names all legal transactions were made, were simply referred to as the 'proprietors of the Estate'. There was none of the publicity given to Corbett and to Davis, for it was essential that confidence in the future of the Estate was retained, if losses were to be recovered.

The relationship between the Westgate Estate owners and residents and, later, Estate owners and the Parish Council, was mixed. In 1897 when the great storm washed away the sea defences along the north-east coast of Kent, Westgate benefited from Coutts' ability and willingness to take prompt action. Whilst authorities in other towns were wondering what to do and how to pay, William Rogers had been instructed to arrange for the prompt repair of Westgate's sea walls and it was completed before the 1898 season.¹⁵² They were happy to co-operate with the Parish Council over the improvements in the drainage system in 1898, but were implacably opposed to the introduction of an electricity supply at the same time (see chapter two).

They were willing to use the law to enforce their rights, carefully seeking Counsel's opinion over controversial matters and diligently seeing that the annual closing of the roads, which established their ownership, was carried out.¹⁵³ They regretted that they could not give the land for the Anglican parsonage or school, but they gave a donation towards the building of the latter and remained annual subscribers until they finally relinquished all their interests in the town.¹⁵⁴ In 1889 when the Westgate on Sea Band and Improvement Fund was set up to provide suitable entertainment for visitors, the partners of the time, Hugh Antrobus and Henry Dudley Ryder, donated £26 5s 0d, by far the greatest contribution made.¹⁵⁵

There is evidence in these actions of a change in outlook. No less anxious than their predecessors to preserve the high 'social tone', they were, however, no doubt aware of the fickleness of the fashionable (one of the partners in 1884 was the fourth Earl of Harrowby) and were prepared to consider the development of Westgate as an exclusive resort, when more than fresh air and the sea might be needed to attract visitors of the 'right kind'. G.R.Searle wrote that

The public provision of decent drainage and sewerage and the maintenance of law and order found favour with many businessmen, particularly with commercial managers accustomed to running large enterprises. Such men did not share the obsession of the small trader with economy, but set greater store by the efficient administration and cost effectiveness ...[which] would in the long run reduce business costs.¹⁵⁶

Donald Olsen, writing of the *Growth of Victorian London*, commented that 'the failure of over-ambitious speculations often left whole developments in a desolate half-completed state for years'.¹⁵⁷ Nothing was more off-putting to potential buyers. At Westgate builders did not buy large blocks of land for speculative building - it was unusual for more than four plots to be sold to one person.¹⁵⁸ It did not, therefore, suffer from overbuilding or the carcasses of half-finished houses ruining the appearance of the estate. When William Frostick died suddenly, leaving a pair of houses incomplete on land on the eastern periphery which he had purchased from the Bethlehem Governors, his executors were given a time limit to have them finished.¹⁵⁹

The tradition, started by Corbett and followed by Davis and Parkers, of holding annual public auctions of the freehold building land in a Westgate hotel in the late summer continued; plots were still subject to restrictive covenants, similar to other exclusive estates such as the Devonshire Estate at Eastbourne or the Calthorpe Estate at Edgbaston - dwelling houses only to be built, no alcohol of any kind to be sold, no lunatics or idiots to be received, no business enterprises to be carried out. Some plots had more stringent restrictions such as no stables. At the eastern edge of the Estate, on land which was once 'Widow Bugden's brickfield', the 'obnoxious business' of brickmaking was prohibited.¹⁶⁰

Development on the south of the High Road, shown on Beazley's plan as sites for large detached villas standing in several acres, had been slow, only Merten's Streete Court and Alexander McClymont's Doon House having been built by the time Coutts' took possession, but in 1884 John Brown, proprietor and licensee of the Tower House Retreat in Adrian Square, bought land to the west of Doon House for 'The only building in the United Kingdom ... specially designed and erected to meet the requirements of the Habitual Drunkards' Act.¹⁶¹ The new Tower House, with its twenty bedrooms, three reception-rooms, dining room, smoking room, library and billiard room, accommodated the fourteen male and six female patients, for whom Brown had been granted a licence in April 1885.¹⁶² Standing in two and a half acres of grounds with a carriage sweep bordering well-kept lawns with trees and shrubs, the red-brick structure with its distinctive tower had 'unique views over the town and to the seas'. [Plate 8] The grounds contained tennis courts, bowling green, coach house, harness room, three loose boxes, carpenter's shop, dark room, greenhouse and hothouse.¹⁶³

Apart from Ringslow College, this was the first purpose built 'institution' to be erected in Westgate, showing a subtle change in policy by the new Estate owners, although perhaps the friendship of John Brown with William Rogers (whose daughter was a bridesmaid at the Brown wedding in 1890) made the Retreat acceptable.¹⁶⁴ Although there were several recorded 'escapes', there appears to have been no opposition to the Tower House, although Mrs Rawlins was unsuccessful at the same Quarter Sessions in obtaining a licence to use her town-centre home for the same purpose. She was told that not only was it a breach of covenant, but that 'a great many inhabitants think that these establishments, although admirable institutions away from a town, do not make a seaside resort more popular'.¹⁶⁵

In 1886 a plot further to the west was bought by William Jarrett, partner in Farrers, Coutts' solicitors, and a creditor of Corbett and McClymont.¹⁶⁶ Set in seven acres of grounds, with stabling for four horses, a three-carriage coach house and accommodation for coachman and groom and a gardener's lodge, Hatton House was exactly the type of property envisaged by Westgate's founding fathers.

Annual land auctions continued, but it was becoming more difficult to find buyers. In 1886 seventeen plots were conveyed; between 1887 and 1890 ten; between 1891 and 1895 only nine. These were difficult years elsewhere. The Duke of Devonshire in 1887 reflected in his diary, 'There is certainly less prosperity than there was until recently. The place [Eastbourne] for the time being rather overbuilt'.¹⁶⁷ Competition between resorts was increasing; in 1883 the Earl De La Warr started his development at Bexhill; in 1886 plans for the development of Frinton Haven appeared in the *Essex Standard*; in 1886 Clement Scott published his *Poppyland Papers* praising the Cromer neighbourhood.¹⁶⁸

In 1886 twenty-six acres on the south east of the High Road, which had been retained by Mertens, were released for sale. [Plan 3] Although the agent's plan annexed to the sales' details showed a design for a villa that would be acceptable, the days of such places were past.¹⁶⁹ Some land was bought by the Kent, Sussex and General Land Society, laid out in a grid fashion and sold for the erection of modest housing (see chapter four); purchasers were offered the inducements of free conveyancing and payment by instalments. Plots were bought mainly by local builders and there was a steady stream of applications for planning approval by the District Surveyor.¹⁷⁰ [Plate 9]

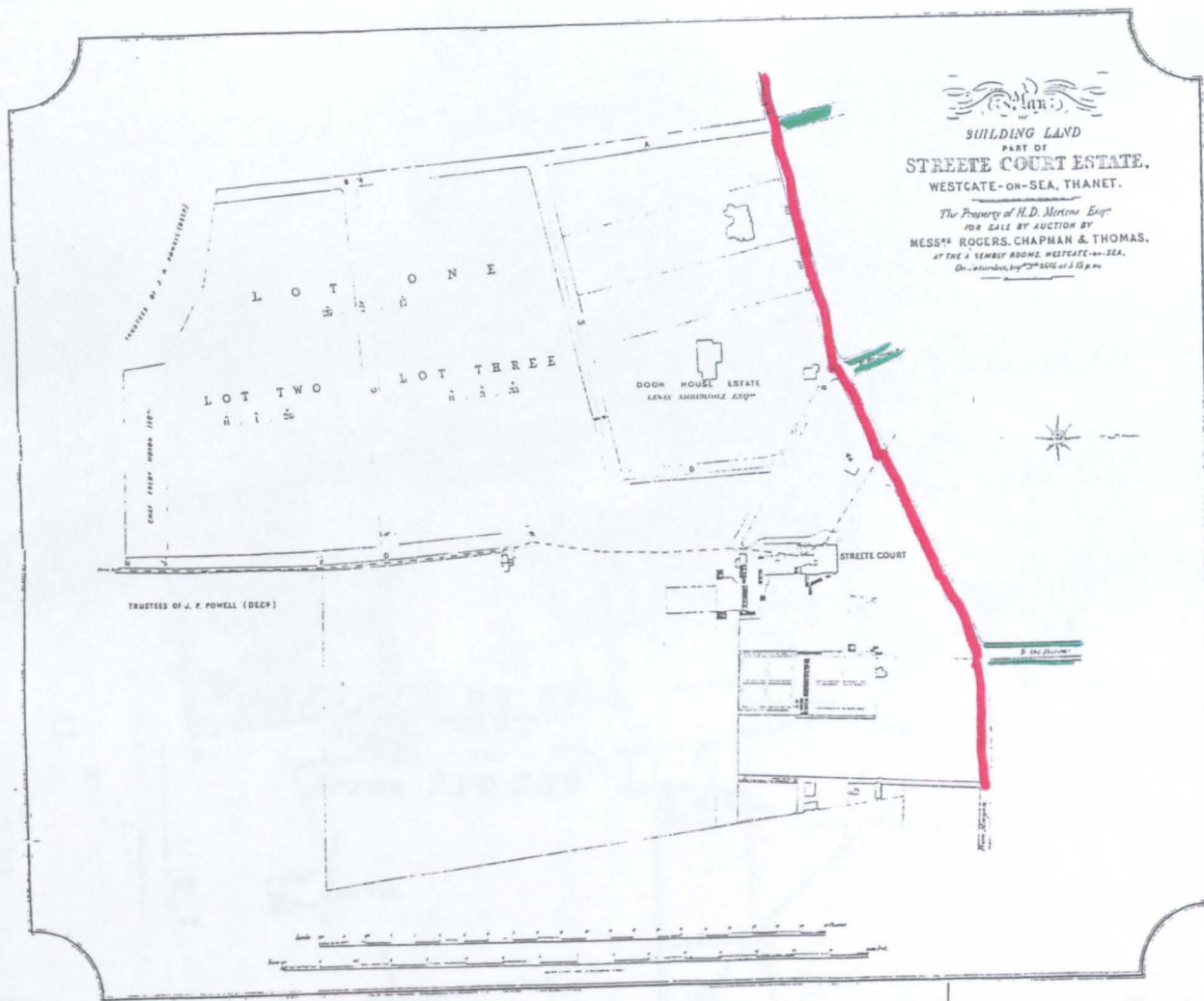
These plots were also subject to restrictive covenants, with some specific to them because of the position of the land, which was on the southern periphery and within a mile or so of Lord Sanger's Hall-by-the-Sea. Fever hospitals, booths, swings, 'huts on wheels' and roundabouts - unwanted near any high-class development - were forbidden.¹⁷¹ One Hampstead developer, having lost heavily on his development because of the proximity of a small-pox hospital, aroused anger amongst residents when he allowed Lord George Sanger to use an empty site for his circus.¹⁷² At Westgate there could be no risk of the property being overrun by the 'roughest and most undesirable class from the surrounding districts'.¹⁷³ The remaining land on offer, west of the road to Minster, was bought by Merten's solicitor, Henry Houseman, and leased as playing fields to some of the private schools.

By the 1890s a number of the 'marine residences' came onto the market. Families were growing up and the sea was no longer so attractive. Shirley Nicolson, writing of the Sambournes, who were on visiting terms with some of the Westgate families including the Orchardsons, said that in 1894 the Sambournes did not go to the family home by the sea, as 'The children had outgrown Ramsgate'.¹⁷⁴ Few of these large houses found new private owners, most becoming private hotels or boarding houses or private schools.

However, a comparison of the Ordnance Survey Maps of 1872 and 1898 shows how much had been achieved in a quarter of a century, although large areas to the south and west had still to be covered. [Maps 3 and 5] Westgate was still physically exclusive. In the east the Hospital lands had just been re-leased to William Hedgecock; in the south John Powell farmed his Quex estate; in the west the uncovered land was cultivated for Coutts', although it was soon to become the third field of the Golf Links.¹⁷⁵

In September 1900 Rogers and Chapman offered fifty-nine Westgate building plots, the largest number for many years.

Westgate is now recognised as one of the healthiest and most fashionable seaside resorts and, in addition to having been the sojourn of royalty, is year after year honoured with long visits from the élite of society, professional gentlemen and City merchants, all of whom find Westgate quiet, select and devoid of the turmoil and din, which is usually inseparable from other watering-places equidistant from town¹⁷⁶




 BUILDING LAND
 PART OF
STREETE COURT ESTATE.
 WESTGATE-ON-SEA, THANET.
 The Property of H.D. Merton Esq
 FOR SALE BY AUCTION BY
 MESS^{rs} ROGERS, CHAPMAN & THOMAS.
 AT THE 1 TENNIS ROOMS, WESTGATE-ON-SEA.
 On Saturday, July 21st 1886 at 11 o'clock.

Plan prepared for the
 sale by auction of the
Streete Court Estate
 21 July 1886.
 Main Highway. —
 Private roads —
 into Westgate.

Reproduced by permission of John King of Rogers and Hambidge

PLAN 3



Kent Sheet xxv
1898

UNIVERSITY
OF
CAMBRIDGE
356
A.2.40

Acres 710.289

WESTGATE-ON-SEA
Water Works

Westgate-on-Sea
KENT COAST LINE

Garlinge

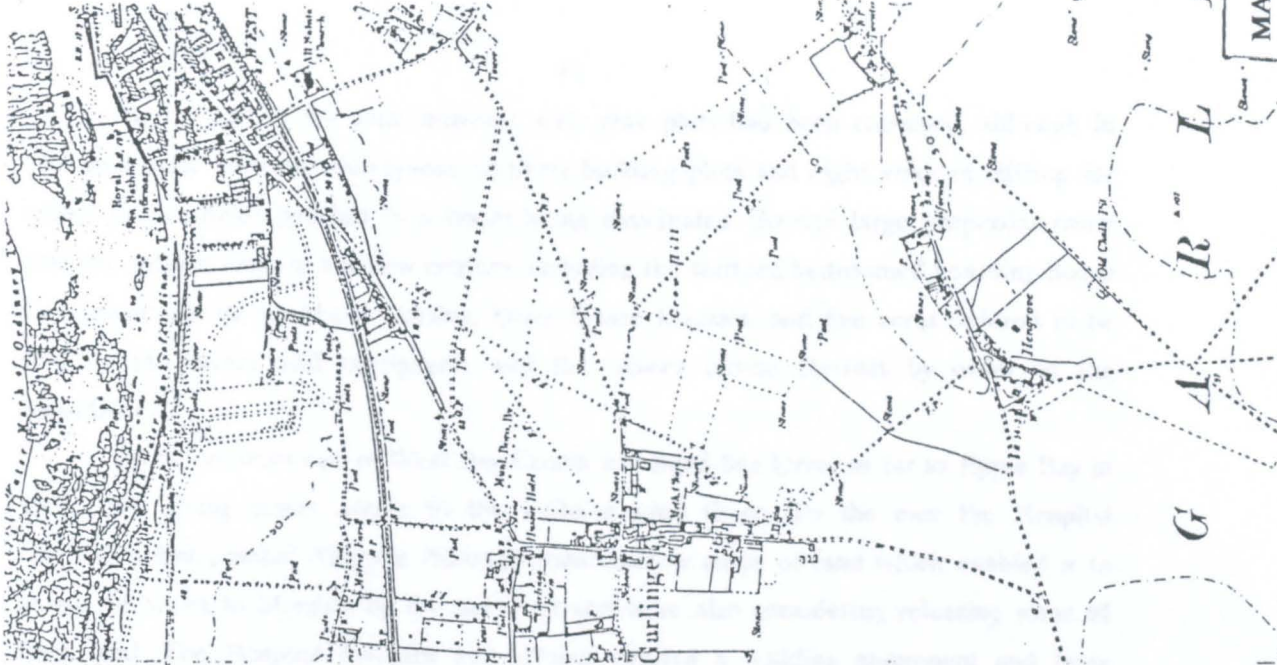
G

A

R

L

J



By the end of the year, however, only nine plots had been conveyed, although in 1899 and early 1900 the conveyance of thirty building plots and eight acres of clifftop for school playing-fields had led to a boom being anticipated. Several large properties came onto the market early in the new century, including the thirteen-bedroomed boarding house Danemead and its neighbour Corsbie, Doon House Mansion and five acres ordered to be sold by the owner and mortgagee, and the Tower House Retreat by order of the Liquidator.¹⁷⁷

At the western end of West Bay Coutts' extended Sea Drive as far as Epple Bay in 1903, thus giving better access to the building land there. To the east the Hospital Governors had granted Margate Borough some narrow strips of land which enabled it to create an outlet to Margate by the sea front and were also considering releasing some of their land. The Hospital Solicitor had already drafted a building agreement and lease suitable for a high-class development controlled by restrictive covenants.¹⁷⁸

If this scheme had been implemented, it would have been a serious threat to Coutts', as there would have been too many similar plots on the market, but little of the Hospital development was complete by 1914. As one solicitor wrote, there was 'difficulty in dealing with leasehold property in this part of the country where it is practically unknown'.¹⁷⁹ Forty-four acres of Hospital land at St Mildred's Bay were requisitioned by the Admiralty for a Royal Naval Air Service seaplane base for the duration of the war and were not released immediately in 1918, so plans for development were put into abeyance.¹⁸⁰

East coast towns suffered particularly badly during the First World War and recovery was slow, although the compensation received for damage suffered was put to good use and there was much optimism that there would be a bright future. In many resorts, however, where aristocratic landowners had once played a major part, there were changes as those landowners made their exits. In Thanet both the Bethlehem and Bridewell Hospitals and Coutts' bank gradually withdrew.

The Kent Agent to the Hospitals reported in 1918 that, although it had been a good year, the new rates of agricultural pay fixed by the Government would put many farms on the market unless prices were also fixed. The outlook for 1919 was not good.¹⁸¹ Private banks, which during Victorian boom years enjoyed great prosperity, had, as Edna Healey reminds us, begun to feel the chill wind in Edwardian times.¹⁸² A sharp fall in gilts in 1913 had cost Coutts' dear and between 1914 and 1919 they merged, first with the joint-stock bank of Robert Lubbock and then with the National Provincial and Union Bank.¹⁸³ An additional concern to all landowners was the new power of compulsory purchase of land for amenities, bestowed on local authorities under the Town Planning Acts. Most owners preferred to sell on their own terms.¹⁸⁴ Both bank and charity wanted to maximise their assets, but each was forced to make some concessions to a changed and changing world.

The auction of the Westgate Estate took place over two days in August 1919 at the Station Hotel in Westgate. On offer were eight thousand feet of road frontage of building land, forty-nine acres of the Westgate and Birchington Golf Links (also as building land) and the 'delightful walled and timbered freehold site known as Hundreds Farm, with stabling, living quarters, granary, store and cart sheds, plus over sixty acres of highly productive arable land'.¹⁸⁵ [Plate 10] The farm had been cultivated for Coutts' from the time they took it over and the auctions of hay, corn and lucerne were annual events.¹⁸⁶ On the second day the bank's residential town properties were on offer. Unfortunately for the bank, only a few building plots were sold even at a low reserve price and for some lots, including the farm and the golf links, there was not a single bid.¹⁸⁷ Some of the town houses, which in the 1880s had been let at sixteen guineas a week, but which had been occupied by the military during the war, went for as little as £70.¹⁸⁸

The bulk of the property was bought by one man, who might conceivably be called a Westgatonian, as he had lived in the town for almost fifty years. Arthur Read was the London-born son of a Hampshire-born carpenter, who had come to Westgate in 1872 to work with the firm of Lockwoods. He had taken over the business in 1904 on the death of Alfred Lockwood junior, retaining the firm's name. Following the example of his father he had built and bought wisely and the firm had been engaged during the war on the building of the defences on the Dover Heights.¹⁸⁹

After the auction was over and much property remained unsold, the bank offered it to Read, presumably at a good price. Seven prime seafront lots, fourteen fronting the main Canterbury Road, the three golf courses, the farm and twenty-three acres of agricultural land, two large blocks of building land and 1-8 Quex Villas on the south west near the Gas Works, 1-7 Beach Houses at St Mildred's Bay and various town houses were conveyed to him. With two partners he bought the tennis and cricket grounds.¹⁹⁰ He wasted no time in leasing the farmland and upgrading the golf course, retaining those areas as open spaces to the benefit of Westgate even today, for the town was saved from being joined physically to Birchington by the unsightly ribbon development, so popular in the inter-war years.

There had been considerable development of modest housing on the south side of the town from the time that the Streete Court Estate was sold and this continued in the inter-war years (see chapter four). The first council houses were built in the 1920s on the south-west perimeter, some land continued to be used as school playing-fields until 1940 and allotments and a Recreation Ground were established. [Map 6]

Westgate was finding it increasingly difficult to remain physically exclusive, although there was no lowering of its 'social tone' - the presence of so many schools ensured that. By 1930 Coutts' had transferred the private roads to the Rural District Council; the sea walls and private squares followed (see chapter two). By 1933 'nothing remained to be disposed of' and a long chapter in Westgate's history had ended.¹⁹¹

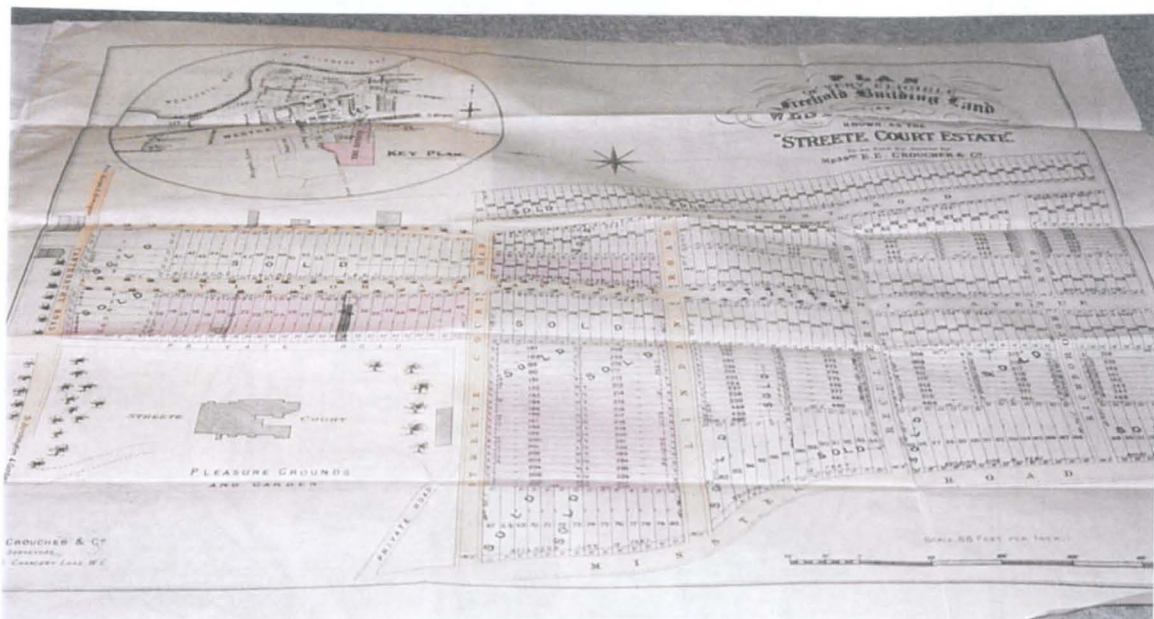


PLATE 9. Plan of the Streete Court Estate as laid out by the Kent, Sussex and General Land Society

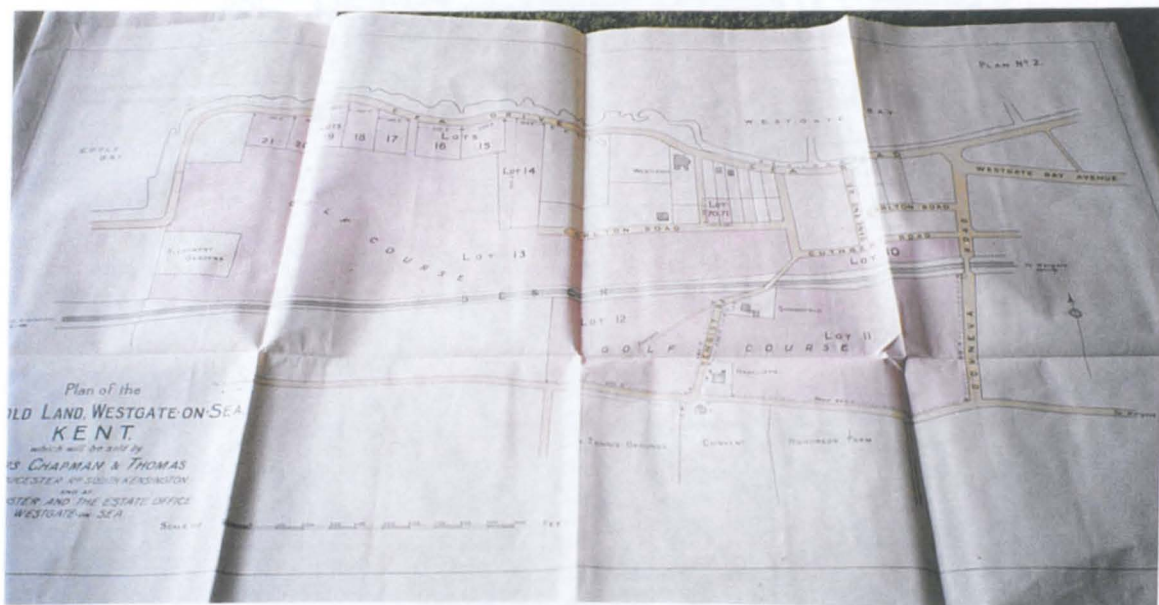


PLATE 10. Part of the catalogue for the auction of the Westgate Estate on behalf of Coutts' Bank, 30th August 1919. Plan shows the three fields of the Westgate Golf Course.

Photographs by permission of John King of Rogers and Hambidge.



Kent Sheet
1936 XXV

MAP 6

Meanwhile, the Hospital lands to the east were in the process of being developed into a high-class residential estate. In 1921 the Governors had requested Margate Corporation to allow them to call Garlinge Farm the Westbrook Estate; in 1922 plans were issued to local builders and it was marketed under that name. [Plan 4] They would have preferred to retain it as a leasehold estate, but were forced to relax their attitudes, when one prospective purchaser warned that stipulations which might have been acceptable before the war would 'mitigate against development now'.¹⁹² The revised Ordnance Survey Map of 1936 [Map 6] shows clearly the effect on Westgate of the almost-completed development. Westgate's physical isolation ended as its independence as a local authority, albeit the most minor, was coming to an close (see chapter two). It is impossible to judge what would have been the result, if the Second World War had not broken out when it did.

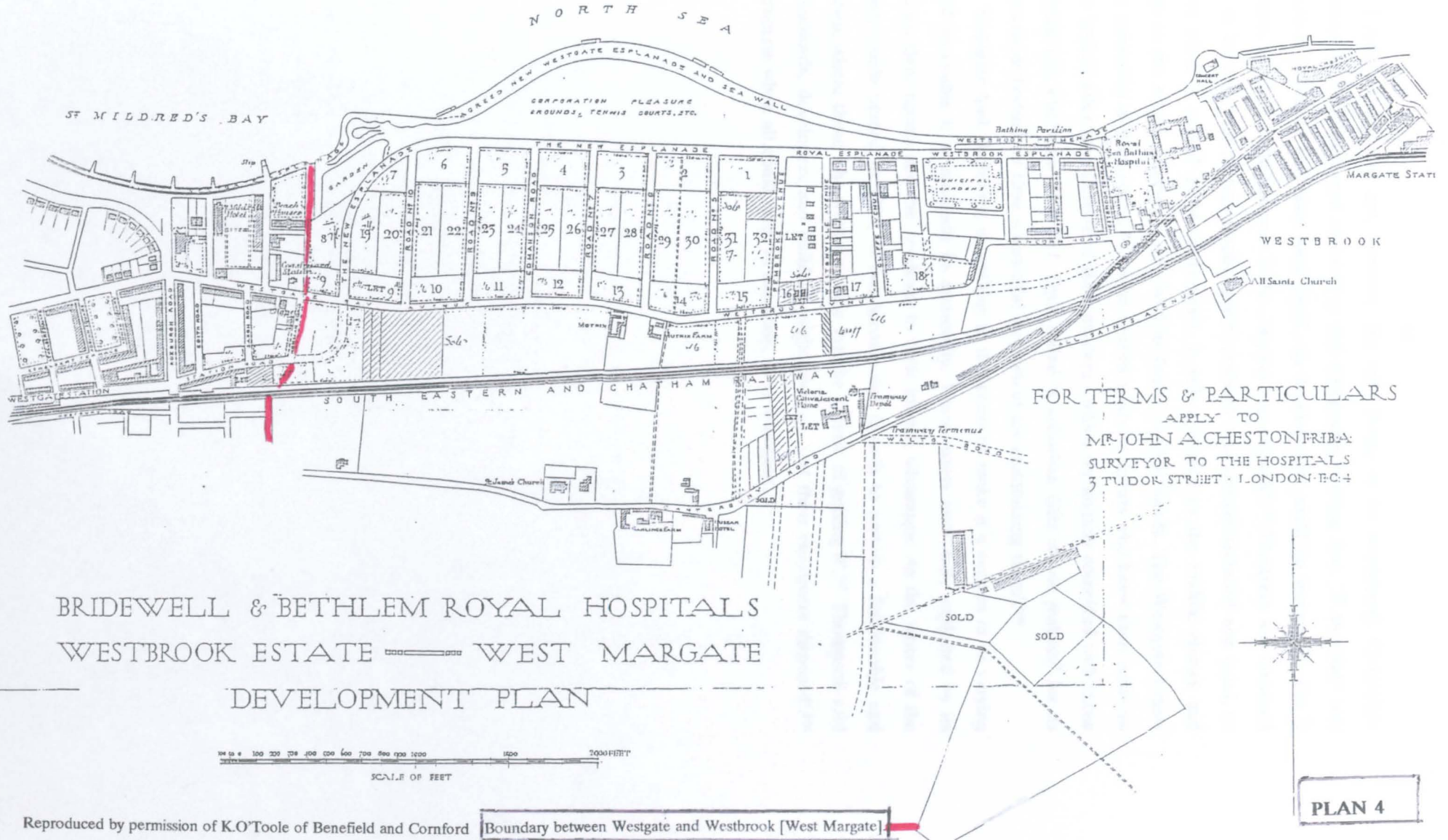
CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the pattern of local landownership was fundamental to the development of Westgate as a fashionable watering-place, a London satellite, an exclusive resort and a 'place for schools'. It enabled it, despite its proximity to a large, popular resort, to remain exclusive even when the demand increased for seaside holidays for the lower-middle and working classes with their greater leisure and spending power. It enabled it to maintain a high 'social tone' and withstand the pressures for popular entertainment and better transport for the masses and thus prevent its special character from being destroyed. W. M. Bounsall writing of Exmouth in 1868 said that

Other places far less favoured by Nature, have grown rapidly, after a fashion which impresses on the beholder the suspicion that owners and inhabitants must have conspired together expressly to destroy beauty and to replace it with deformity. Pains have often been lavished and capital squandered to cancel the very features and characteristics which have given a place its prosperity and fame.¹⁹³

Dr Flint and the Rev. Bull would have said 'Amen' to that (see chapter eight).

The plans of the first developers of Westgate, all of whom were metropolitan orientated, certainly seem to point to a desire to create a London satellite by the sea, where the City businessman could live in quiet seclusion, but within easy reach of his office. The gated-road, used, for example, by the Bedford Estate to keep out the undesirables from Somers Town, was introduced to Westgate.¹⁹⁴ The white gates fitted to the six roads leading off the High Road into Westgate were not removed until the 1920s. There was little provision for public recreational space, but many areas of private garden - not only in the town-like squares, but around all the private houses. Several on the seafront had over an acre of garden. To be able to create such an environment, the co-operation of the proprietor with the residents was essential, even in a freehold development.



ST MILDREDS BAY

N O R T H S E A

AGREED NEW WESTGATE ESPLANADE AND SEA WALL
CORPORATION PLEASURE GROUNDS, TENNIS COURTS, ETC.

THE NEW ESPLANADE ROYAL ESPLANADE WESTBROOK ESPLANADE

WESTBROOK

All Saints Church

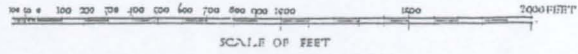
MARGATE STATION

WESTGATE STATION

SOUTH EASTERN AND CHATHAM

FOR TERMS & PARTICULARS
APPLY TO
MR JOHN A. CHESTON FRIBA
SURVEYOR TO THE HOSPITALS
3 TUDOR STREET · LONDON · E.C.4

BRIDEWELL & BETHLEM ROYAL HOSPITALS
WESTBROOK ESTATE ——— WEST MARGATE
DEVELOPMENT PLAN



SCALE OF FEET



PLAN 4

Reproduced by permission of K.O'Toole of Benefield and Cornford

Boundary between Westgate and Westbrook [West Margate]

Landownership was not, however, the only factor to be considered. Cannadine makes much of the importance of location and topography, writing that, 'If an estate was well located, if fashion and taste were loyal...its development could be successful...but if the location was bad, if fashion was fickle...success was unlikely'.¹⁹⁵ Westgate was favoured both in its location and its topography, which enabled it to remain secluded and quiet, so that even when it ceased to be fashionable, it still appealed to the middle classes and especially to the school principals, who held its future in their hands. The Westgate Estate was also extremely well managed for some seventy years by agents who knew their business and who looked after the interests of their masters - which fortunately coincided with those of the residents, who were what H.J. Dyos called 'a suburban élite whose jealousy for its social standards became in time a powerful instrument for maintaining them'.¹⁹⁶

Westgate had, therefore, everything in its favour to make it a success in its varying roles and to enable it to maintain its exclusivity. These assets were fully exploited by its proprietors, their agents and the residents to their mutual advantage. As the writer of the first Town Guide opined in 1908, 'It has become and intends to remain a fashionable and select town, where those who want quietude may be certain of getting it'.¹⁹⁷ Thompson said that, 'Landlords, developers and builders might propose, but their customers disposed'.¹⁹⁸ How fortunate when all could work in harmony, as at Westgate.

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CHAPTER TWO

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

GOVERNMENT BY COMMITTEE

'No one governs Westgate and, so left to itself in this manner, Westgate must perforce govern itself', wrote the editor of the *Westgate Chronicle* in September 1880. Thus it was that, at a time when local government was playing an increasingly important role in the development of seaside resorts, an able and willing group of Westgatonians was able to establish a self-appointed and unrepresentative oligarchy, which was to set the tone for Westgate's government for many years to come.¹

Fifteen years into its life there was still no such entity as Westgate. The development of the Westgate Estate was well underway and the railway station of Westgate on Sea had been built to serve it, but it remained part of four parishes, three of which (Acol, Birchington and Minster detached) were wholly rural, as was that part of the parish of St John the Baptist Margate, which formed the fourth part. [Map 3] Westgatonians were entitled to attend the Annual Vestry of whichever parish in which they lived, but would have had little in common with their fellows. Reluctantly, they paid their rates to a multiplicity of authorities, which were totally unable to provide them with the services they required and expected.

Geoffrey Best wrote that the mounting confusion over local government reached its climax between 1871 and 1875 with responsibility being spread rather than concentrated and local authorities multiplying instead of being consolidated.² Westgate was an excellent example. Its inhabitants were subject to the Overseers of whichever of the four parishes to which they belonged, to the Isle of Thanet Guardians of the Poor, to the St John's Burial Board and from 1875 to the Isle of Thanet Rural Sanitary District and the Margate School Board. Part of Westgate was under the jurisdiction of the Ramsgate portion of the Wingham Petty Session Division, part under the Justices of the Peace for the Liberties of the Cinque Ports and part under the Justices for the Cinque Port of Dover.³ The foreshore was in private ownership and the Estate had control over the roads, promenades and lighting.

Westgate was not alone with such problems. For example, Clacton, contemporaneous with Westgate (its pier was built in 1871, the same year as Westgate's railway station), was also under the control of a similar confusing number of public bodies and of four private companies.⁴ It seems to have been more successful than Westgate, however, in establishing its independence, for as early as 1876, following a Public Enquiry, three hundred and sixteen acres about to be developed were assigned to a special Parochial Committee under the jurisdiction of Tendring, to which the vestry appointed three members.⁵ Its population in 1881 was six hundred and fifty-one, so it was not its size that gave it an advantage over Westgate, where the population was about one thousand.⁶

Residents, whether full or part-time, and long-stay visitors to a high-class development had high expectations, especially seeking a healthy and well-regulated environment and so, as Westgate grew, its problems increased. Although the first developers had provided both a good water supply and adequate drainage, the Isle of Thanet Rural Sanitary Authority became increasingly concerned, because it had no powers over building lines, street cleaning and drainage at Westgate, which had 'no defined boundary'.⁷ In December 1879 an enquiry was held at its request, with the view of forming a special drainage district with urban powers for Westgate and Birchington - the Local Government Board could invest a Rural Sanitary Authority with such powers at its discretion, enabling it to make bye-laws relating to such matters.⁸ The inspector carrying out the enquiry criticised the Guardians of the four parishes concerned for not attending and there was opposition from local landowners whose uncovered land would be included; the decision was adjourned and the application finally refused by the Board.⁹

Health and comfort, however, mattered to the new Westgatonians and they expressed their concern in the columns of the *Westgate Chronicle* through the late summer of 1880, complaining about dirty roads, the smell from rotting seaweed and the lack of dustcarts. Dr Flint wrote that Westgate 'has gained for itself so high a reputation among medical men, that we inhabitants shall be forgetting our duty to England in general and the profession in particular, if we neglect to make it, as much as lies within our power, all that it should be'.¹⁰

Although Westgate did not achieve its own Board of Health, it was allowed to set up a local committee to work in conjunction with the Rural Sanitary Authority and at a meeting held 6 September 1880, addressed by Professor Wilson, sixteen leading citizens formed such a committee.¹¹ Geoffrey Crossick opines that committee lists provide an insight into social leadership in a place, for 'those invited to join were sought after for their names rather than their talents' - names being required 'to establish the body's credentials and to give it respectability'.¹² The function of those in such elected positions as Guardians, Local Board of Health members or churchwardens, on the other hand, was real, because they were chosen on their local standing. By 1880 there were still no elected positions for Westgatonians to hold.

With no indigenous élite, it would have been invidious to leave out any of the sixteen who wished to serve. Most of them came from the same metropolitan circle of what Harold Perkin called a 'finite group of personal friends, rivals, acquaintances and enemies...in whom the chains of patronage, friendship or connection converged'.¹³ There were no aristocrats, but most would have considered themselves gentlemen. Herman Mertens, landowner, Charles Beazley, architect, William Corbett, developer and Henry Houseman, solicitor, had been involved in the development of Westgate from the beginning. Professor Wilson, who was elected chairman, was one of the first residents.

William Bullock, headmaster of Ringslow College, Dr Flint, William Wigmore, Corbett's former contractor and proprietor of the County Club and Thomas Sopwith were listed in Gregory's *Postal Directory for Margate* of 1878. The Rev. Augustus Lyne, curate of Minster with responsibility for Westgate, Dr Clarence Harding, William Orchardson R.A. William Peto, London-based builder, Lewis Shrubsole, contractor and William Ingram, proprietor of the *London Illustrated News*, had arrived by 1880. The token tradesman, Henry Minter, 'high-class grocer' had opened his shop in Station Road in 1872.¹⁴ Minter, always referred to as 'Mr' and never as 'Esquire', was never allowed to forget that being in trade was 'indeed an awful social stigma'.¹⁵ Over the years the same names would appear again and again on committee lists. Fewer than half were full-time residents.

The committee's first task was to write to Edmund Davis, who, although he had disposed of his estate earlier in 1880, still claimed to be the owner of the foreshore. They complained about the rotting seaweed, no longer collected by the farmers to spread on their fields. Henry Houseman had earlier suggested that Davis should walk or ride around at low tide, when the wind was coming off the sea. Davis's reply was that he no longer had legal responsibility and was 'not prepared to do in the future what had been done in the past'. However a letter from the newly-constituted 'Sanitary Association', expressing its corporate opinion, brought better results, as a later issue reported that the offending seaweed had been removed.¹⁶

Westgatonians became increasingly anxious to obtain some recognition and to be able to have some say in the way in which they were governed locally - in early 1881 a deputation was sent to the Local Government Board asking that Westgate should have its own representative on the Board of Guardians. The Board, whilst agreeing that it was desirable, said that it was 'impossible to form them into a ward so that they might return a Guardian, because Westgate was not a parish for which the Act of Parliament provided'.¹⁷ The suggestion that it might be possible to divide Minster and allow Minster detached to become a ward was not well received by the people of Minster and Westgatonians had to be satisfied with the election of Dr Flint later that year as a Guardian of St John's parish.¹⁸

Law and order ranked only second to public health in residents' priorities. Walton says that authorities needed 'powers of prohibition and restraint', if resorts were to compete with rivals and keep the patronage of established visitors. Offensive activities had to be confined and excesses curbed.¹⁹ Despite the lack of effective local government, Westgate's residents had other means of ensuring their safety and privacy. The broad acres of the Hospital Governors provided a bulwark against unwelcome visitors from the east, all roads except the main road from Margate to Birchington were private and the proprietors of the Estate were as anxious as the residents to keep it exclusive. Those residents, despite complaining loudly and often about paying rates from which they derived no benefit, were well able to contribute to the protection of their environment when necessary.

Walton says that the special needs of resorts 'could not readily be met by private enterprise, unless public spirited local investors were prepared to forego the likelihood of a return on their capital by underwriting a seemingly unprofitable project in the hope of indirect benefits to their businesses or lifestyles'.²⁰ The early Westgatonians dipped deep into their private pockets to ensure the lifestyle they personally were seeking. The cost to tradesmen and small businessmen, obliged to offer support even if they could not afford it, could be great. Bankruptcies occurred all too frequently.

The Westgate Estate, as part of a Rural Sanitary District, was policed by the County Constabulary, a constant bone of contention amongst residents. Matters discussed by the Westgate Sanitary Association in May 1882 included the deficiencies of the Westgate Post Office, the nuisance of organ grinders, indecent bathing and, above all, the inadequacy of the police service, for which they paid a fourpenny rate.²¹ Parkers were recommended by William Rogers to engage a private constable 'to assist in putting down some of the many inconveniences which inhabitants suffer in the absence of proper police accommodation'.²² Such action was not unique. Lord Radnor retained his private uniformed policemen to patrol The Leas at Folkestone until after the turn of the century.²³

There were, however, problems for the constable, whose duties included the warning off the private roads of 'hawkers, barrel organs, pedlars, costermongers, German bands and negro melodists who were a great nuisance to the respectable inhabitants'.²⁴ The Chief Constable of Kent informed Parkers that the police had no power to take people into custody off private roads, unless requested to do so by the Special Constable.²⁵ A defiant shrimpseller with a portable fish-stall caused 'great annoyance' for three years and the matter was exacerbated by the Margate magistrates, who refused to swear in the constable.²⁶ The new proprietors, Coutts' partners, sought Counsel's opinion and were advised that the constable should try to turn him off without force. An injunction was then made to restrain him. It was then that Counsel advised that the erection of gates and 'Private Road' notices, and the closure of the gates at certain times in the year, would make it clear that the roads were private and permission was needed to use them.²⁷

J.A.R. Pimlott wrote that when basic needs had been supplied, 'Rising standards necessitated refinements such as ornamental gardens and bandstands, the provision of which could not always be left to private enterprise', thus again emphasising the important role of local authorities, but in Westgate only private enterprise could provide.²⁸ Davis had laid out cliff-top gardens for which successive owners of the Estate were responsible; in January 1880 the Baths and Assembly Rooms were opened as a private enterprise; in August 1880 a Popular Entertainment Committee was set up for the season; in 1882 land at Hundreds Farm was leased to provide a Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club.²⁹

With no natural leader, Westgatonians exemplified the Victorian ideal of self-help from the very beginning - unlike Eastbourne's residents, who, in Cannadine's opinion, relied heavily on the Duke of Devonshire until the 1890s.³⁰ It was, therefore, in a characteristically robust fashion that they prepared to provide, first a temporary and then a permanent, church for themselves (see chapter six).

The consecration of St Saviour's church in July 1884 was followed in September by the creation by Order of the Queen in Council of 'the consolidated chapelry of St Saviour's Westgate on Sea', an ecclesiastical parish made up of areas taken from Minster, Birchington with Acol and the new parish of St James's Westgate.³¹ This did not give Westgate any civil powers, but entitled it to a Vestry Meeting of its own. Dyos, writing of Camberwell, opined that 'the open vestry was not an efficient organ of local government in a rapidly growing suburb'.³² Nor was it in that London satellite, Westgate.

Westgate's lack of a single authority, in addition to causing annoyance, sometimes led to confusion. In 1887 a grocer in Westbury Road (in Minster civil parish) finally obtained a licence, after displaying the required notice at the door of Minster church, as his previous application, displayed at St Saviour's church, had been turned down, because 'that parish was not recognised for civil purposes'.³³ Writing in *Keble's Gazette* in the same year, 'Well-wisher' said that Westgate would be left behind if it did not respect the wants of its visitors and that an enterprising committee must be formed.³⁴ There was, in fact, a proliferation of committees whose works were reported assiduously, but there was no overall authority with the power to make decisions or to raise funds.

In April 1889 a public meeting of Westgate Estate property owners, tradespeople and householders was held to discuss the formation of a permanent committee, with the objects of providing a first-class promenade band and illuminating the sea front, the cost to be met by public subscriptions.³⁵ Of the eight committee members, only two were tradesmen, membership of the committee being confined to those pledging a minimum subscription of five guineas, for the Chairman, William Rogers, said that it was only fair that those deciding how much to spend should have made substantial contributions themselves.³⁶ The names of fifty-three subscribers appeared on the first list, paying from ten guineas to half a guinea; the partners of Coutts' headed the list subscribing twenty-five guineas.³⁷ Re-constituted each year, the Committee must have had some success, as in August 1890 a fulsome article appeared in *Keble's Gazette* referring to Westgate as the 'perfect town' with the asset of having no local government.³⁸

Westgatonians, however, frustrated and impatient for greater control, sometimes took matters into their own arrogant hands. In November 1889 *Keble's Gazette* reported a protest meeting of Birchington ratepayers, called after they had learned that some Westgate ratepayers had met, by invitation, at the house of William Rogers to discuss a petition to the Local Government Board to form a Local Board of Health for Westgate and with the intention of inviting a government officer to consider the situation.

The proposed Board was to cover a district beginning at the western Margate boundary, continuing westwards through Garlinge village and the Streete Court Estate, past the Gas Works, taking in some properties in the east of Birchington and all of the west cliff of Epple Bay. The plan did not please Birchington residents, who, fearing that Westgate would succeed, passed a resolution asking their newly-appointed County Councillor to oppose it.³⁹ Westgate did not obtain its Local Board, but it was not for lack of trying.

The Act establishing County Councils passed in 1888 had at least ensured Westgate ratepayers representation at that level, although the powers of the new Counties were not extensive at the time and there was pressure for further reform of local government. As the Local Government Bill went through its various stages in 1892-3, Westgatonians had great hopes that Westgate would achieve the urban status it believed that it deserved. The place was growing rapidly; the population of 1358 at the 1891 census was still very small, but showed an increase of about 35% in ten years.⁴⁰ It was, it claimed, entirely urban in character. Its population, largely of metropolitan origin, wanted to live in the style and manner to which they were accustomed - they were not seeking some rural idyll where they had to exchange comfort and civilized amenities for beautiful scenery and fresh air. They believed both to be compatible. They considered the aggregate rateable value of £16,000 for their properties to be not inconsiderable.⁴¹

At the Annual Vestry Meeting on 26 March 1894 the Local Government Act, which had become law on 5 March, was discussed earnestly, several gentlemen leaving 'the meeting determined to study the proposed legislation'.⁴² On 7 May Dr Flint, churchwarden and Justice of the Peace, addressed a public meeting on the Act and its application to Westgate. He told the meeting that the Parliamentary Committee of Kent County Council had already informed them that there was no provision for grouping 'the several portions of the different parishes' into a town of Westgate'.⁴³ A resolution was passed refusing to co-operate in the forming of a single parish council.⁴⁴

Throughout the summer of 1894 correspondence went to and fro, culminating in a petition, organised by Dr Flint, dated 29 October to the Chairman and Members of the County Council, asking for the alteration of the proposed boundaries for a civil parish. The one hundred and thirty-six petitioners, 80.8% of whom were in trade, wanted the portions of Minster, Acol and St John's, rural, abstracted because

Westgate on Sea is a Health Resort, catering entirely for visitors and families, who have settled there for reason of Health. Its requirements are thus essentially different from those of the above mentioned three parishes, the portions whereof outside Westgate are purely agricultural.⁴⁵

It is interesting to see whose signatures were missing - of the schoolmasters only John Vine Milne of Streete Court had signed.

The petition was to no avail. The 'Appointed Day' was 8 November 1894 and the County Council Parliamentary Committee issued orders on 20 November to all parishes in Kent having councils, that the first meeting should be convened not later than 7 January 1895.⁴⁶ Instead of obtaining urban status, therefore, Westgate became a civil parish, (slightly larger than the ecclesiastical parish of St Saviour's), with a council of nine. [Map 7] It would also return two councillors to the Isle of Thanet Rural District, which would meet at Minster. The Rural District consisted of ten parishes of which Westgate had the smallest acreage, but the largest population. (Tables 1(a) and (b) It remained part of the Margate United School Board and under the jurisdiction of the Dover Quarter Sessions.⁴⁷ There was no alternative for Westgate but to elect a parish council and continue the fight from within.

Table 1(a)

Total Area of Isle of Thanet Rural District land and inland water [in acres]

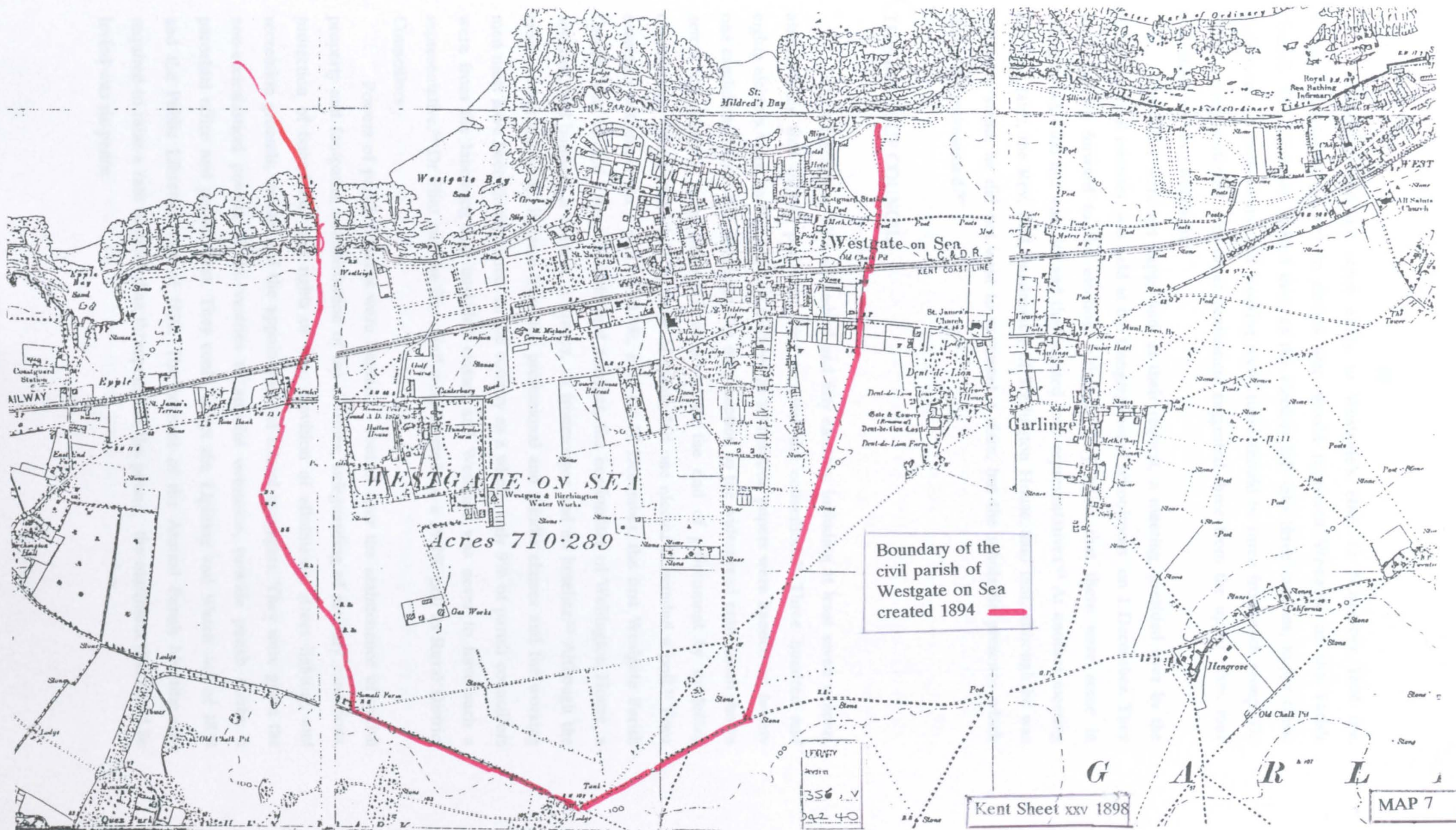
Acol	1137
Birchington	1671
Garlinge	1464
Minster	5241
Monkton	2371
St Lawrence (Extra)	1259
St Nicholas at Wade	3555
Sarre	667
Stonar	679
Westgate on Sea	604

Table 1(b)

Population in Isle of Thanet Rural District at the time of the 1901 Census

Acol	225
Birchington	2128
Garlinge	983
Minster	2338
Monkton	409
St Lawrence (Extra)	565
St Nicholas at Wade	510
Sarre	160
Stonar	59
Westgate on Sea	2738

Source : Westgate on Sea Parish Council Minute Book, vol. 2



WESTGATE ON SEA

Acres 710.289

Boundary of the civil parish of Westgate on Sea created 1894

1898
356
0a 2 40

Kent Sheet xxv 1898

G A R L

MAP 7

Democracy did not come easily to Westgate's élite. In November 1894 the Westgate Conservatives met to discuss who should represent Westgate on the Parish Council. The Chairman opined that, as the electors fell into three sections, upper class, tradesmen and professional and 'working men', there should be three from each group. Dr Flint, 'having conferred with other gentlemen' suggested three from the upper class, four tradesmen and two workmen.⁴⁸

The latter were not happy and, at their request, a meeting, presided over by the Congregational minister, was held at the Congregational schoolroom on 1 December. They were looking forward to the election, although 'they knew that there were some in Westgate who did not want it', and they wanted four representatives.⁴⁹ At another meeting two days later, the Rev. Bull, headmaster of Wellington House, said that, although he was willing to stand, he did not want to represent a class, but the scholastic presence which should be represented.⁵⁰

THE DISTRICT COUNCILS

On 4 December 1894 a hundred and fifty electors, including at least seven women, attended the first official parish meeting to elect the councillors.⁵¹ Three hundred and eighty electors were on the register; thirty-eight nomination papers were handed in; twenty one candidates nominated. Westgate was no exception to the widespread enthusiasm shown across the country, many hoping it would mean the end of government by unelected committees. Voting took place by show of hands, but one elector demanded a poll.⁵² Four nominees withdrew. On a poll of 60.5%, held on 17 December, the first Westgate Parish Council was elected - the nonconformist minister, the headmaster of Wellington House, a solicitor, two builders, a chemist, a draper, an ironmonger and an hotelier.⁵³ Although the cross section was wide, it came from the professional and middle classes and the working men must have been disappointed. In the country as a whole, only 9% of parish councillors were from the labouring and unskilled classes and Westgate was never to have such a representative.⁵⁴ Dr Flint and the Rev. Bull were elected on a 59.7% poll as Rural District Councillors

Powers of parish councils were limited - control over the maintenance of parish property and footpaths, administration of lay charities, safeguarding of sanitary conditions, protection of boundaries and rights of way, provision of allotments, street lighting, and recreation grounds, burials and the appointment of school managers. They were given the non-ecclesiastical powers of the vestries to appoint overseers, provide parish books, a parochial office and parish chest. They could adopt the Lighting and Watch Act of 1833 and the Public Libraries' Act of 1892. The consent of the Annual Parish Meeting was required to raise a rate of more than threepence in the pound; the maximum that could be levied was six pence.

As Chairman of the Annual Parish Meeting, Dr Flint called the first meeting of the new council for New Year's Day 1895 for the formal business of the signing by each member of the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and the appointment of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Clerk and Treasurer. Dr Flint was elected to remain Chairman, with the Rev. Herbert Bull as Vice-Chairman, until April 1895, when Dr Flint would take office as Rural District Councillor and the Rev. Bull become chairman of the Parish Council.⁵⁵ For the latter it was the beginning of a long and distinguished career in Westgate's local government, for he held almost every office available during his long stay in Westgate and was once referred to as 'Westgate's own John Bull'.⁵⁶ Premises for a council office were discussed and day and time of meetings fixed.⁵⁷

The advisability of framing or adopting bye-laws relating to council business and raising funds to meet the expenses of the parish meeting and polling was considered and the Chairman was asked to give notice to the Rural District Council that he would move at the earliest possible date for the appointment of a Parochial Committee, to consist of the whole of the parish council and two members of the Rural District Council. Such a committee would receive delegated powers and thus give them more control over the parish affairs.⁵⁸

The Council was determined to make maximum use of its limited powers and to maintain a high 'social tone'. The priority was the protection of residents and first tasks included the taking over of the privately-funded fire brigade and the consideration of the adoption of part of the Lighting and Watching Act of 1833 by negotiating with the Estate owners.⁵⁹ Under a private arrangement with the Westgate and Birchington Gas Company, of which the bank was the major shareholder, Coutts' partners had been responsible for the town's lighting, but they agreed to hand it over to a competent local authority with the company continuing to supply gas.⁶⁰ The high price of gas was a constant source of annoyance and when Coutts' refused to receive a joint deputation of representatives from Westgate and Birchington Council to discuss it, the possibility of lighting with electricity was soon mooted.⁶¹

Events in 1895 showed that those who had hoped for greater democracy were to be disappointed, for there was no change in attitude amongst Westgate's élite with the Rev. Bull leading the attempt to sever Westgate from the Margate United District School Board on the grounds that many Westgatonians subscribed towards the upkeep of the National School.⁶² The nonconformists, maintaining that as many as half of those attending the National School were the children of Dissenters and with only one elected member on the council, were particularly unhappy. Writing in *Keble's Gazette*, the Rev. Samuel King said that the School Board provided a check on the system which prevailed for the children of working men in Westgate and that the matter should not be settled solely on the criterion of obtaining rate relief.⁶³ Controversy raged throughout the year, a poll was demanded and refused and the Education Department requested to receive a deputation.⁶⁴

The Parochial Committee, making the most of its newly-delegated powers, further fuelled the flames of discontent by meeting in camera to discuss the vital question of Westgate's drainage and appointing, without the ratepayers' prior knowledge, an expensive consultant from Westminster. When the news leaked out a public meeting was demanded, the Committee's actions severely criticised and a hundred and twenty people returned a vote of no confidence.⁶⁵ Shortly afterwards six councillors resigned leading to a 'constitutional crisis'; their replacements by the election at the end of January 1896 radically altered the composition of the Council. [Appendix 4]

The town's drainage was always in the front of the minds of many of those who had influence - especially doctors and school masters. As early as 1888 a committee of ratepayers, with the help of the Estate's agent, had obtained a report from Bailey Denton of Westminster revealing the inadequacy of the cesspool drainage and methods of sewage disposal. The report stated that, 'Except proper drainage is carried out within a reasonable time, the prosperity of Westgate on Sea will materially suffer. Westgate on Sea is an example of how prejudice, once kindled, may adversely affect the public mind'.⁶⁶ The surveyor had offered four possible solutions and the parochial committee, feeling that the work could not be delayed, lost no time in implementing the recommendations.

Permission was granted by Margate Corporation for the connection of Westgate's sewers with those of the Borough; Westgate was to pay a rental of £350 per year over thirty years and contribute half the cost of the trunk sewer to its boundary, although the sewer would remain the property of Margate.⁶⁷ Kelly's *Directory* for 1897-98 commented in anticipation, 'the scheme of drainage... will leave nothing to be desired to make this fashionable watering place on a par with the most popular of our seaside resorts'.⁶⁸

Work began in October 1898. *Keble's Gazette* reported the following January that when the system was complete it would 'induce visitors to flock thither and many more permanent residents would pitch their tents'.⁶⁹ As the work neared completion, two hundred navvies were entertained to a 'sumptuous dinner'.⁷⁰ The Rural District Surveyor stated that no sanitary certificates would be issued in future unless the premises had been connected, making it essential for schools, lodging and boarding houses and hotels to have the work done. His report books for 1899-1900 are full of applications from builders.⁷¹

Good drainage was a good selling point and the full column advertisement for the Westgate Estate in May 1899 made much of the new tubular drainage with its outfall in the sea over five miles away (to the east of Margate).⁷² The concern over such matters is exemplified by the refusal of the Rev. Townshend Mylne to take up his appointment as vicar, after the death of the Rev. Lyne from blood poisoning, until the vicarage drains had been thoroughly checked.⁷³

The draining and sewerage improvements were costly, however, and made more so by a ten-year legal battle between the Hospital Governors and the Rural District Council over the siting of the sewage pumping station - an 'eyesore where a noxious business using a steam mortar' was a breach of covenant affecting their property which abutted it. Costs and compensation presented the ratepayers with a £1000 bill.⁷⁴

The co-operation of Coutts' had been necessary, although the partners, whose first act when taking possession in 1884 had been to seek Counsel's opinion on their responsibilities under the 1875 Public Health Act, were aware that the local authority could legally enforce action over public health matters.⁷⁵ Good drainage would be beneficial in the selling of the Estate land - as their solicitor said, 'The Estate is in favour of sewers'.⁷⁶

It was not, however, in favour of electric lighting, a concurrent issue. House owners no longer paid a lighting rate to the Estate owners, but they complained that Westgate gas at four shillings and ninepence per thousand cubic foot was much more than that supplied by the Margate Company at two shilling and eightpence.⁷⁷ At two public meetings in 1897 interest in electric lighting had been expressed and expert advice had been sought on feasibility and cost.⁷⁸ The mortgagees were approached for permission to allow wires to be laid down and the roads to be opened for the mains. Their reply was that they 'absolutely refused to allow the roads to be opened or interfered with in any way'.⁷⁹

Under the auspices of the Rural District Council, an application was made for a Provisional Order, a preliminary meeting was held at the Board of Trade in May 1898 and an enquiry, lasting almost a day, was held at Westgate.⁸⁰ Expert witnesses were called for both sides. It soon became clear that most objectors were in some way connected with Coutts' or with the Westgate Gas Company, who 'wished to preserve their monopoly of rights and interests, which are exercised to the detriment of owners and ratepayers'.⁸¹ The Rural District Council, believing that more residents would be attracted to the town, was in favour; nineteen private schools, with an aggregate rateable value of £2275, were in favour; Sir William Ingram, rateable value £2000, was in favour; the whole parish council, aggregate rateable value £2500, was in favour.⁸²

Opponents included William Jarrett, partner in Coutts' firm of solicitors, William Rogers, Coutts' agent, Hugh Lindsay Antrobus and the Hon. Henry Dudley Ryder, Coutts' partners, whose town houses had a rateable value of £1715, and Mr Hume, a baker, who felt that it could not be made to pay with a season of only six weeks.⁸³ In June the Board of Trade informed the Parochial Committee of its decision not to proceed with the application.⁸⁴ It was to be another quarter of a century before Westgate had electric light. Such controversy was not uncommon at resorts, where private enterprise often pioneered the provision particularly of gas and water and did not want to lose the monopoly. Local authority take-overs were expensive and uncommon. In 1901 when the purchase of the waterworks was considered by Birchington and Westgate Councillors, it was decided that, at an estimated £70,000, they could not recommend it to the Rural District Council.⁸⁵

Westgate changed considerably in the last decade of the nineteenth century, its population increasing by 101.62% between 1891 and 1901, and much had been achieved by the turn of the century, so that it was not surprising that the question of urban status arose again. On 20 December 1899 an application was sent to Kent County Council on the grounds that the parish, almost entirely urban in character, was large enough and of sufficient rateable value to have direct and exclusive management of its affairs; representatives would be more directly responsible to the ratepayers; its five hundred and fifty-three houses had a rateable value of £26,240; most of its nine miles of roads were private. These were powerful arguments. However, the request to be allowed to extend its boundaries to include Garlinge in the east was certain to lead to opposition from Margate Borough and Garlinge residents had not been consulted.⁸⁶

Size was not an issue, as much smaller places, such as Childwall in Lancashire with a population of two hundred and nineteen, had been given urban status in 1894. In Kent, although the application of Cheriton near Folkestone had been refused at first, it was granted in February 1898, after an inquiry at which its Rural District Council voiced no opposition, because Cheriton was 'of an urban character with a rapidly increasing population and for management of new streets and other matters, complete self-government would be advantageous'.⁸⁷ Westgate expected the same criteria to apply, so there was dismay and anger when the Parish Council was informed that the Parliamentary Committee had recommended the refusal of urban powers and the alteration of boundaries, because there was no *prima facie* case, and that the County Council had accepted the recommendation.⁸⁸ Further attempts were made, but to no avail and an inquiry was not allowed.

There are several possible explanations. If Westgate received urban status, then Birchington could not be denied it; Margate would have been unhappy with two urban districts so close to her boundaries; there would have been a proliferation of urban authorities on the Isle of Thanet; the Rural District would not have wished to lose so great a part of its rateable value - by 1922 Westgate was claiming that its contribution in rates to the Rural District Council amounted to 43% of the total raised.⁸⁹

The council was numerically fairly evenly balanced between professionals and tradesmen for much of its lifetime, but by 1900 twenty-one private schools, including four well-known boys' preparatory schools, were established in the town and, although only a third of the councillors were school principals, their influence was disproportionate. They were the most articulate and confident members of a body, where the traders, often dependent upon them for their livelihoods, were willing to defer to their judgements. In the thirty-nine years of the Westgate Parish Council, the office of Chairman was held by an headmaster for twenty-six years and that of Vice-Chairman for sixteen. From 1904-1912 headmasters held both offices.⁹⁰

It was not until 1916, when most of the schools evacuated, that the pattern was broken and, for the first and only time, an artisan, Thomas Haismer, a bricklayer, became vice-chairman for two years, serving under the chairmanship of George March, an hotelier. Haismer, whose family was in Westgate in 1881, served on the council for twenty-two years, always polling a high number of votes and with an exemplary attendance record, yet he was not considered for office until an emergency arose.⁹¹ The holiday industry was poorly represented on the council, with just one representative from 1895 to 1919, and then a long gap until the election of Harry Preston, proprietor of the Northlawn, in 1931.⁹² Three tradesmen - a hotelier, a butcher and a dairyman - served as chairmen from 1916 to 1925, but these offices returned to the schoolmasters for the traumatic period, when the terms of reference for the Onslow Commission were extended, leading to the County Review and the Local Government Act and all its implications for Westgate.⁹³

John Walton says that, 'Even the most successful resorts saw persistent movement for economy, retrenchment and caution usually expressing the perceived interests of retired residents and small tradesmen on the fringes of the holiday industry'.⁹⁴ This was certainly true of Westgate where the interests of residents and particularly the demands of the schools were always put first. A longer season, increasingly desired by the traders, was strongly opposed by the schools.

Even by the turn of the century, when most resorts were trying to attract visitors by providing entertainment and leisure facilities, Westgate was still interested only in 'better-class', long-stay visitors or permanent residents who did not need such amenities. Others were suffered rather than welcomed, whilst no attention was paid to the growing demand for holidays by the working classes, for whom, as the Rev. Bull said in 1913, Westgate had nothing to offer.⁹⁵ Little attempt was made to market the town as a resort and no 'Town Guide' to Westgate was produced before 1908, although a reference was often made in other Thanet guides.⁹⁶

The powers of the council were limited, especially with regard to the provision of amenities, as all authorities had to obtain permission from the Local Government Board or by private Act of Parliament to spend ratepayers' money on entertainments. In 1914, when public subscriptions for a band dropped, the Parish Council was refused permission to provide one by spending a sum not exceeding a penny rate or to use £95 invested in Consols, (its share from the sale of the St John's Council Offices) on either a bandstand or a shelter seat in the pleasure ground.⁹⁷ The provision of a band was a frequent bone of contention. When the question arose in 1924, Councillor Longrigg, headmaster of Streete Court, said that it was immaterial to him whether there was a band or not, whilst the Rev. Underhill, headmaster of Wellington House, opposed it if it were to be on the rates.⁹⁸ Walton says that, 'The social composition and economic attitudes of local government bodies clearly had a strong negative influence on resort development in many places in mid-Victorian times'; in Westgate it was still true between the wars.⁹⁹

As parish councils were responsible for recreation grounds, Coutts' had lost no time in transferring the clifftop gardens. They paid £60 to put the paths in good order and gave the Council notice in June 1895 that they would no longer be looking after them.¹⁰⁰ Shelters and seats were allowed only in the Pleasure Gardens, as the roads and promenades still belonged to the bank and when Nestlé applied for a licence in 1912 to install automatic chocolate machines on the seafront, it was to Coutts' that they had to pay a £30 fee for a half year.¹⁰¹

Bye-laws were obtained enabling the council to oversee the bathing and regulate boating.¹⁰² Bathing was often a matter of anguish to the civic fathers of exclusive resorts and Westgate was no exception. In August 1897 Elizabeth Frostick was summoned before the Parochial Committee for infringing the bye-laws by allowing her bathing-machines to be too close to each other and a lady's machine to be taken out and deposited amongst the mens' machines. She was warned that she might lose her licence if this serious offence recurred.¹⁰³

The operators of 'brakes, charabancs, omnibuses, large coaches, pleasure vans and vehicles of like nature' had to apply to the Estate Office annually for a licence to drive on the private roads.¹⁰⁴ Licences were frequently refused, even to some operators who had run a service for years, whilst local firms, such as Bobby's department store in Margate, complained at having to pay two guineas simply to give its customers the service they expected.¹⁰⁵ However, it was the Parochial Committee, using delegated powers, which licensed stands for Omnibuses, Hackney Carriages, Bath Chairs and Goat Carriages.¹⁰⁶

Bryan Keith-Lucas and Peter Richards say that because 'the franchise was based on the conception that it was the ratepayer who should control the local authority', councillors 'saw themselves as essentially trustees of the rate fund'.¹⁰⁷ This doctrine was strictly adhered to by Westgate Parish Council and no more so than in the matter of a Town Hall for Westgate. Such a building had been mooted in 1907, when William Rogers had informed the Council that Coutts' Directors were agreeable to have a Town Hall, with Parish Office and Fire Station constructed, 'so as to give the Parish Council accommodation worthy of such a large ratepaying district' - but they did not expect it to be erected from the rates.¹⁰⁸

In August 1907 the Westgate Public Hall Ltd Co. was formed with a capital of £8000 and seven Westgate gentlemen, who were not Council members, as Directors and the Council agreed to rent the premises from June 1908, subject to agreement.¹⁰⁹ The plans fell through, however, and late in 1908 Sir William Ingram began to build a Town Hall in the centre of the town, close to the church. The Council prepared to vacate their old premises, but a disagreement arose in 1910 over the rent being asked for the new Town Hall and Fire Station, which was much greater than they had expected.¹¹⁰

The Rev. Bull explained to Sir William, 'The Parish Council regard themselves only as stewards of Public Money on behalf of the whole body of ratepayers'.¹¹¹ Bitter correspondence passed between the two men, Sir William withdrew his offer, had the town Coat of Arms which he had commissioned (but which had not been granted by the College of Arms) removed, and a shop front erected in front of the proposed fire station.¹¹² The council, therefore, remained in the offices in what Ingram sneeringly called a 'back street, entirely unworthy of the Parish Council in a rising town like Westgate' for the rest of its days.¹¹³ No doubt had Westgate obtained urban status, things might have been different. Clacton, on being created an Urban District in April 1894, immediately leased an imposing block of public buildings erected by speculators.¹¹⁴

Although the matter of urban status had been dropped it never went away. In 1912 there was fresh cause for anxiety, when Margate Borough applied under Section 54 of the Local Government Act 1888 to extend its boundaries westwards.¹¹⁵ The borough had already, with the co-operation of the Hospital Governors, extended its promenade and constructed a clifftop roadway, giving the Hospital land access to Margate and, as the remainder of the land up to Westgate was in the market, Margate felt that it should be included in the Borough up to the Westgate boundary, and 'as a natural corollary, the back land and the village of Garlinge [population 1332] should be included'.¹¹⁶ At a well-attended public meeting in Garlinge, the advantages were forwarded and there was overwhelming support.¹¹⁷ Westgate Parish Council, meanwhile, fearing that the tentacles of 'rapacious Margate' would soon reach out for them, had already asked the Rural District Council to safeguard their interests.¹¹⁸

The outbreak of the First World War came at the height of a busy summer season. Many members of Westgate Council, including the Chairman, were away; only four councillors were present at meetings on 7 and 17 August; only three on 20 August, just enough to make a quorum.¹¹⁹ Five had been present on 8 August, when it was decided to print a circular to be posted throughout the town and sent to the London papers, denying rumours that the sands had been cleared and hotels commandeered and stating that the trains were running as usual and there was plenty of food.¹²⁰

However, despite the reassurances, bookings were cancelled and fewer visitors came for the late summer. Frederick Griffiths, son of the tenant of Ocean View who had been threatened with legal action by Coutts' for defaulting on her rent, said that there had been 'absolute failure as so many visitors had left and others cancelled'.¹²¹ When the Admiralty set up the seaplane base at St Mildred's Bay, Beach Houses, of which Ocean View was one, and St Mildred's Hotel itself, were requisitioned for the accommodation of officers, whilst other empty properties became V.A.D. hospitals and troops were stationed in the town.¹²²

The Council formed an Emergency Committee to struggle with the problems of war.¹²³ By early 1917 the fear of attack from the air became real as air raid warnings became commonplace. On 31 October 1917 several bombs and two aerial torpedoes were dropped; school was disrupted by the absence of children too tired to attend after being kept awake by the raids; the private schools left for the countryside.¹²⁴ The Council agonised over sources of money and labour to provide 'dug outs' and in March 1918 had to decide on assembly points in the event of invasion.¹²⁵

When peace came it was clear that things would never be the same again. James Walvin says, 'Long before hostilities ground to a halt, many people had come to the view that British Society should be changed; it seemed absurd that the sacrifices and sufferings in the war should result in a mere restitution of the *status quo*'.¹²⁶ Five hundred and thirty one Westgate men had served in the forces; seventy-seven, fifty-four of whom were non-commissioned, did not return.¹²⁷

Although there was a feeling of optimism and a short-lived immediate post-war boom, there were many problems for local authorities, especially those on the east coast. The claim by Councillor Setterfield that Westgate had suffered more than any town between Yorkshire and Ramsgate might be difficult to substantiate, but it had suffered and the £1200 received in rate relief from the East Coast Committee was regarded as unsatisfactory.¹²⁸ Perhaps not surprisingly, the matter of urban status arose again, with questions being asked why Westgate should have to submit to government by people who lived at Sarre and St Nicholas. Westgate paid the piper and should be able to play the tune.¹²⁹

The Council was severely castigated by a correspondent in the local paper in June 1919, because there had been no attempt to provide any amusements over Whitsun. The bandstand and shelter were disgracefully neglected, grass unmown and lawns and promenade unattended. It was not surprising, he wrote, that the season was short. 'Procrastination and *dolce far niente* appears to reign and it is time that the powers that be woke up'.¹³⁰ Other matters may have been considered more pressing. Food shortages were widespread and there had been forty applications for allotments, which parish councils had powers to provide. Four and a half acres, bought from the Estate at £90 per acre in 1920, were laid out in ten perch plots and more land purchased later.¹³¹

The inter-war years were to see changes on a scale that could not have been envisaged. Both Coutts' and the Hospital Governors, possibly influenced by the recommendations of the 1923 Royal Commission under Lord Onslow, originally set up to look into the changes brought about by the proliferation of new County Boroughs, but whose powers were extended to consider all local authority boundaries, decided to rid themselves completely of their seaside interests, as the disputed areas around Margate were bound to be affected.

Having sold the Westgate estate, their houses and utility companies, Coutts' began to negotiate with the District Council over the transference of the public areas, which were so costly to maintain. On 31 January 1923 the sea walls, promenades, slipways, groynes and 'other erections' at West Bay and St Mildred's Bay were conveyed to the District Council; on 18 April 1923 the former private 'open spaces' of Adrian and Ethelbert Squares were sold to them for £5.¹³²

Increasingly irritated by a growing number of complaints about road conditions and finding the private road rates, which could not be increased, insufficient for their upkeep, Coutts' opened negotiations with the District Council in 1921. The roads had to be made up to a satisfactory standard before being handed over, which cost Coutts' £25,000, before certificates were issued by the 'Viewing Justices' showing they had been 'made up and repaired in a substantial manner and of the width required by the Highway Act 1835'.¹³³ On 23 January 1930 they were conveyed to the District Council together with a fee of £300, private road rates were abolished and the gates at all entrances to the Estate, which had been closed on the first Monday in May each year, were finally removed.¹³⁴

It took a little longer to gain control of the foreshore, as the owners, the Hospital Governors, were reluctant to sell until the lease expired, but with the threat of compulsory purchase hanging over them, they eventually agreed and it was purchased by the Rural District Council in March 1933 for £2250.¹³⁵ Westgate thus joined other resorts where, as Walton says, 'The balance of spending, and therefore the balance of power, tilted away from the landowners who became increasingly concerned with profit-taking at the expense of political influence, and towards local authorities'.¹³⁶ The loss of its private roads, however, though welcomed by some, meant it would find it increasingly difficult to keep out the unwanted.

At the end of the war there had been an abundance of empty houses and the Parish Council was not in favour of the new 'social housing', but in 1926 the first Council houses were built in the south-west of the town and numbers increased steadily.¹³⁷ A Recreation Ground, on the south side, bought by public subscription as a War Memorial and made available for cricket and football, was laid out in 1920, trees planted and a shelter erected.¹³⁸

As news of the Onslow Commission's recommendations began to emerge, the Parish Council became increasingly uneasy. In 1928 a unanimous resolution was passed to press again for urban powers, after the Mayor of Margate had said in a speech that Westgate would soon become part of Margate.¹³⁹ The most important provision of the Local Government Act of 1929 enabled County Councils to submit schemes of reorganisation to the Minister, proposing the amalgamation, creation or even abolition of urban and rural district councils and Westgate feared the worst.

In March 1929 a special meeting, convened by the Isle of Thanet Rural District Council for representatives from all its parishes, resolved that steps should be taken to achieve the formation of an urban district from the existing rural district.¹⁴⁰ Westgate had never been a very active or interested member of the Rural District, considering the matters which usually came under discussion to be of little importance to it and resented the fact that it was by far the largest contributor to the District Council's coffers yet received little in return.

Westgate councillors would never agree to any expenditure to help another parish and particularly asserted their determination not to contribute towards Birchington's drainage or roads, a decision endorsed by the Annual Meeting of the ratepayers in March 1930.¹⁴¹ The future of the Rural District was hotly debated. The Chairman of Birchington Council complained that 'owing to the attitude of Westgate we are unable to get anywhere'; Westgate Council allegedly said that Birchington would go any where, providing someone would pay for their drainage; Alderman Coleman of Margate opined that Westgate was once regarded as a quiet retreat, but the mark of time had brought about a different state of affairs, as in other seaside resorts; Birchington claimed that Westgate, handed over to its inhabitants as a going concern by Coutts' bank with all the front made up and the whole estate in good condition, would never be reconciled to anything suggested by Birchington.¹⁴²

In May 1930 Westgate Council formally moved that it considered that 'any amalgamation with Margate would be against the best interests of the town'.¹⁴³ In October notice was received of a conference to be held at Margate on 2 February 1931 under Section 46 of the Local Government Act 1929 between the County Council Review Committee and representatives of the local authorities. Councillors Longrigg, Underhill and Fanthorpe, two headmasters and a barrister's clerk, represented Westgate.¹⁴⁴

Margate had drawn up a powerful case for the extension of its boundaries concluding that amalgamation would be beneficial to all as 'Westgate is practically a suburb of Margate and thrives to a large extent on its proximity to its neighbours'.¹⁴⁵ Witnesses included the Chief Constable of Margate who said that Westgate and Birchington, as rural areas, were policed inadequately and often Margate police were asked to help out, if problems arose. The Chief Constable of Kent, needless to say, disagreed.¹⁴⁶

The County Review Committee, unimpressed by Margate's argument, concluded that the Rural District had made a good case for an Urban District and that several parishes, especially Westgate and Birchington, were growing rapidly and were ripe for urbanisation.¹⁴⁷ The Parish Council breathed a short-lived sigh of relief, but 1931 was the year for parish council elections and it was clear that there was not a consensus of opinion in the town. This decade was arguably the most vital in the struggle for survival of the seaside holiday and the futures of many involved in it were at stake.

At the annual meeting of ratepayers on 9 March 1931, first-time candidates expressed their dissatisfaction with the *status quo*. Harry Preston, hotelier, criticised the policy of economy which he felt had been carried too far, especially regarding the provision of attractions for visitors. 'It is but natural that the schools should desire to maintain that calm, quiet, peaceful and placid air of the town, but will this bring business to the baker, butcher or any other trader in the town, including apartment, boarding house and hotel proprietors?' Frederick Southgate, twenty years in business as a confectioner, said that those who relied on visitors had had a very lean time and conditions could be altered by a progressive council. Lucien Ginnett, managing director of a local bus company, complained that the period during which money came in from visitors was of six to seven weeks duration and that, if it could be increased by a month, prosperity would be increased. Wilson Hill, chemist, said it was high time to try to attract a larger number of people in May and June, when Westgate was at its best. 'A season commencing the middle of July and finishing the second week of September is too short for a town, which has the natural advantages ours possesses'.¹⁴⁸ Hill, Preston and Ginnett were elected and the Council chamber was never to be quite so cosy again. The local paper reported that polling had been heavy and there had been queues at some times of the day.¹⁴⁹

As Margate had refused to accept the recommendations that the Rural District should become an Urban District, it appealed to the Minister of Health for an Inquiry.¹⁵⁰ The District Council prepared its defence stating that, 'Visitors do not come to Westgate and Birchington for the amenities provided by Margate; they come for the benefit of the air and quietude'.¹⁵¹ The local press accused Westgate ratepayers of 'inexplicable apathy', because they appeared to be willing to accept what their representatives told them.¹⁵² Councillor Longrigg sent a long statement to the Rural District Review Committee denying the truth in the claim that Margate had developed substantially. It might be due to the war or 'due to the decline in the popularity of Margate, which in common with other seaside resorts of the same standing, is beginning to feel the effect of the changing habits of the people of England in spending their holidays in touring the country instead of settling down for two or three weeks at the seaside'. He could see no advantage in joining with Margate and the towns would become a 'mere annex to a trippers' resort'.¹⁵³

Westgate's representatives attended the second enquiry at Maidstone in July 1932 with instructions to oppose Margate's plans and to support those of the Rural District.¹⁵⁴ For the first time, however, a voice had been heard in the Parish Council in favour of amalgamation. Councillor Preston said that he thought it would be advantageous for Westgate to go in with Margate and that the ratepayers should have been consulted.¹⁵⁵

At the Annual Parish Meeting of 1933 a rate increase of fivepence in the pound was reported due to the expenses incurred by the District Council's opposition to the proposals of Margate Borough.¹⁵⁶ In July the Parish Council received a copy of the letter to Kent County Council saying that the Minister could not confirm its proposal and that there was a *prima facie* case for including Westgate and Birchington in the Borough of Margate.¹⁵⁷

There was no question of the diehards surrendering. Councillor Longrigg, produced yet another plan for Urban Powers for Westgate and Birchington with the addition of most of Minster and Monkton, the remainder of the Rural District going to various local authorities.¹⁵⁸ The opinions of the residents had not been sought. The proposal was forwarded, although the newly-elected councillors were able to pass a resolution that the Council was averse to any further expenditure.¹⁵⁹ A letter from the Town Clerk of Margate, expressing the hope that after more mature consideration the Parish Council would accept the Minister's decision, was ignored.¹⁶⁰

In early 1934 the Parish Council in Committee considered communications from the Chairman of Birchington Council and the Town Clerk of Margate intimating that the two parishes would definitely be taken over on 1 October.¹⁶¹ Letters flooded the Minister of Health and in May 1934 a Ministry Inspector visited Thanet. He reported that he had motored around Thanet.

There was much building activity between Margate and Westgate. In fact Westgate now coalesced with Margate. There is not the least reason for anyone passing along the sea front to know when he leaves Margate and enters Westgate. It is much the same between Westgate and Birchington, but there is a visible break - largely because of the Golf Course, which will probably be built on....There is a difference in character in the older houses, but the modern houses are much the same in all three areas. Westgate and Birchington are both wholly urban in character.¹⁶²

As a result, the Minister confirmed his decision that the two parishes ought to be under urban government, but rejected constituting them into an Urban District as it was 'undesirable in the interests of good government to add to the number of Local Authorities in this area; indeed much could be said in favour of still further reducing that number'.¹⁶³ He favoured their inclusion in the Borough of Margate, although there would be opposition. They alleged their interests to be distinct from those of Margate; Westgate was a 'place for schools' and Birchington a 'centre for good-class residences'.¹⁶⁴

More letters were sent to the Minister, in which claims were made that the value of property would be lowered by 'bringing in a lower class of people and indecent amusements' and that the private schools would leave.¹⁶⁵ 'The feeling among all classes of ratepayers, apart from a small but noisy minority, is very strong', wrote Percy Underhill, headmaster of Wellington House.¹⁶⁶

Although the Minister agreed to another inquiry in Margate in August 1934, no new evidence was presented, but several private individuals were able to voice their protests.¹⁶⁷ Complaints followed that August was a month when many were away and a fourth and final inquiry was held on 11 October, which the local press called the 'Battle of the Boundaries'.¹⁶⁸ Yet all was not over. More letters to the Minister complained that the Inspector was biased and rude.¹⁶⁹ Margate was accused of wishing to 'aggrandise itself' by opening up 'secluded enclaves' to the tripper by adding miles of sea front and rateable value.¹⁷⁰ Safe in his London Office, the Minister, despite being reminded that some of the letter writers were acquaintances or even members of his Club, remained adamant.¹⁷¹

The Local Authorities received notification of the impending break up of the Rural District on 23 January 1935.¹⁷² The five-year struggle had resulted in Thanet being the last area in Kent to be settled and had cost the ratepayers dear.¹⁷³ The local press welcomed the decision, saying that what vocal opposition there had been was from a 'limited company of a few individuals'.¹⁷⁴ The District Council Surveyor closed his report books with the comment, 'Isle of Thanet Rural District Council abolished March 31 1935 under Kent County Review Order 1935'.¹⁷⁵

'GREATER MARGATE'

Within Westgate feelings were mixed and there was still defiance in the council chamber. Councillor Britton said that 'Margate caters for trippers, who are a different class of people from those who have been visiting Westgate'; Councillor Longrigg said he held to his declared intention to leave; Councillor Whitlock said that he felt it was not all over yet.¹⁷⁶ Several members, declaring the decision illegal as the letter had not been signed by the Minister personally, were prepared to continue the fight - having held up events for five years, they could probably do so for another.¹⁷⁷ However, only three supported that proposal, two voting against and four abstaining.¹⁷⁸

Preparations began for the election in March 1935 of Westgate's three ward councillors. A retired schoolmaster, a former army doctor and a 'gentleman' (a retired butcher) were elected in a low poll (42.5%) from six candidates.¹⁷⁹ At the first meeting of the enlarged Corporation, the former schoolmaster, Councillor Kenrick was elected Alderman. Frederick Cornford, a former parish councillor, was returned unopposed as his replacement.¹⁸⁰

1 April 1935 was an historic day, when the ancient custom of beating the bounds was revised by the Borough of Margate to establish its rights to its newly acquired territory, which had trebled its size from 2463 acres to 6952, making it larger than Eastbourne and nearly as large as Southend, Bexhill and Worthing.¹⁸¹ The car carrying the Chief Constable of Margate headed the procession, followed by that carrying the Mayor and Mayoress, the Town Clerk, the Vicar of Margate and the Town Sergeant.¹⁸²

Five coaches full of councillors, aldermen, officials, reporters and photographers brought up the rear, although many private cars joined the cavalcade, which was half a mile long by the time it reached Westgate where a ribbon was stretched across the former Westgate boundary. The Mayor was challenged by the Westgate councillors, asking on what authority he came. Replying that he was Mayor of Margate and his authority the County Review Order, he presented a copy to Councillor Kenrick, cut the ribbon and quaffed a ceremonial drink from the 1892 silver loving cup. The first visible sign of change was a Margate policeman on point duty at the junction near the Westgate boundary.

At the western boundary of Birchington, where two white pylons had been erected, each bearing the Borough arms, the health of 'Greater Margate' was drunk in ale brewed from Kentish hops, before the party made its way via Garlinge and the southern boundary back to the Town Hall for refreshments. All schoolchildren had a holiday, two pupils from each school within the new 'Greater Margate' being invited to the Mayor's party.¹⁸³

Changes were soon noticed as children from St Saviour's School were able to use Margate facilities for practical subjects and enjoy swimming lessons at St Mildred's Baths.¹⁸⁴ Despite three petitions in Westgate against Sunday opening of cinemas, already permitted in Margate, one hundred and sixty-nine voted against and two hundred and eleven in favour in a poll conducted in May 1935.¹⁸⁵ By the autumn Alderman Kenrick acknowledged that Westgate had gained by having access to Margate's excellent Public Library, whilst Councillor Cornford said that Westgate had entirely outgrown rural government and its future prosperity would be accelerated by being part of the Borough.¹⁸⁶ Other improvements included better lighting in the main road to Canterbury, a suntrap at West Bay and new bathing cubicles.¹⁸⁷ A letter in the local paper praised the new tennis courts and bowling greens, the freshly painted railings and shelters.¹⁸⁸

On the other hand, complaints were made about the state of the roads on the southern side of the town and about increased rates.¹⁸⁹ The major source of discontent, however, especially amongst the schools, was the use of the Margate postmark throughout the Borough. Some people so objected to envelopes franked 'Come to Sunny Margate' that they posted their mail elsewhere.¹⁹⁰ The Chamber of Commerce lobbied the Postmaster without success; in May 1936 the question was raised in the House of Commons.¹⁹¹

Dyos, writing of the nineteenth-century suburb, commented that, 'the right suburban address was to the resident primarily a social requirement'.¹⁹² Society, however, does not change and today parents will move, in order to be in the right catchment area for the school of their choice, and insurance companies base premiums on post codes.

It will never be possible, because of the outbreak of the Second World War so soon after amalgamation, to know whether it was good or bad for Westgate, but it appears to have been good for Margate, which, according to its Mayor, had taken on a new lease of life by 1936 and was 'set to become the most famous resort in the country'.¹⁹³

Nationwide the number of holidays was increasing as a result of holidays with pay, better coach and rail links, the popularity of the family car and holiday camps; the holiday industry was going through another period of change and everywhere authorities were having to re-think their policies. Bournemouth was considering the maxim 'Modernise or go under'; The *Scarborough Mercury* said that visitor numbers were down because 'All the world's awheel and hiking shorts and the cyclist's tent have become the symbol of our time'; Hastings was considering 'package holidays' to cover the autumn to the spring, as there had been a decline in the winter season with the fall in the franc and the lira and the 'pull of Swiss hotel plans'.¹⁹⁴ Bognor Council took a decision over a piece of sea front land, which ended its hope of becoming a high-class winter resort and led to the arrival of Billy Butlin.¹⁹⁵

As the war clouds gathered, civil defence preparations were made. The outbreak of hostilities came at a time when the whole holiday industry was about to be revolutionised and the private school 'industry' was facing major upheavals. When the war was over local authorities, especially those who had endured bombing and mass evacuation of their population, had to face incredible difficulties of recovery. Westgate's major industry - the schools - was lost for ever (see chapter five).

Local government played an important role in the development of seaside resorts in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but in Westgate its role was small. Never allowed to become an independent urban authority, it was influenced more by a powerful and articulate body with its own agenda and its ratepayers had little real power. The holiday industry was never truly represented on the Parish Council and not at all on the Rural District Council. Even aristocratic Eastbourne had an authority more fitted to its role as an exclusive resort.¹⁹⁶ Westgate, London satellite, was so much more like Hampstead where, Thompson tells us, 'the Hampstead gentry withdrew only gradually from local politics and in favour of newcomers from their own social class, so that local power continued to reside in the gentlemen of independent means and their close allies, the professionals'.¹⁹⁷

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- 193 *I.T.G.*, 28 November 1936, Mayor's address to the Westgate Chamber of
Commerce, p. 2.
- 194 *I.T.G.*, 'Round the Resorts', 29 January 1938, p. 11, 24 September 1938, p. 3,
9 July 1938, p. 3.
- 195 Young, *Bognor*, p. 233
- 196 Cannadine, *Lords and Landlords*, p. 309 (Table 39), p. 356 (Table 41).
- 197 Thompson, *Hampstead*, p. 396.

CHAPTER THREE

WESTGATE SOCIETY .

‘Westgate electors can be divided into three sections - working men, tradesmen and professional and what is vulgarly called “the upper crust”’.

Colonel Lewis Jones, Chairman of the Westgate Conservative Association November 1894.¹

John Walton wrote that seaside resorts are particularly intractable as objects of social analysis and Westgate, despite the judgment expressed by Colonel Lewis Jones just before the elections to the first Parish Council, contained features which made it especially so.² Most important is that from 1865 to 1894, despite a steady development of the area around St Mildred’s and Westgate Bays and immigration to it, there was no place named Westgate. It was possible to reside on the Westgate Estate, to use the Westgate on Sea railway station, but for administrative purposes one could not live in Westgate; one lived in the parish of Acol, Birchington, Minster or even (and this would have caused particular anguish) Margate, for no civil administrative area of Westgate existed until the Local Government Act of 1894 (see chapter two).

A second feature was what a writer to a *Guide to Exmouth* in 1868 called the ‘habitual resident’.³ In any seaside resort the population will be divided into residents and visitors and at some times in the year the latter will outnumber the former. In ‘exclusive resorts’ there is a third group - the second or even third homeowner and it was the patronage of that group that was so eagerly sought in Westgate’s salad days.

THE FASHIONABLE METROPOLITANS

Mertens, who, despite practising in Margate, was totally London-orientated, was justified in believing that he could create a watering-place that would attract the wealthy metropolitan, at a time when the benefits of sea air were being advocated to fashionable patients by doctors like Erasmus Wilson. Beazley’s plans for detached houses in spacious grounds, insuring privacy, were expected to appeal to such a clientèle and good access by rail was an added advantage.

As the town was built on a virgin site, there was no existing society to assimilate. The 1861 census returns for the future Westgate on Sea show that, apart from Mertens himself, already installed at Street Lodge, the population consisted of a few agricultural labourers, soon to be displaced when their cottages were demolished, and the coastguards.⁴ In 1871 and 1881 so many houses were unoccupied on census nights that it is impossible to analyse the type of society that was emerging. In 1871, for example, all but one of the Marsh Bay bungalows were occupied by caretakers or housekeepers, the only habitual-resident being Lady Wood and her household. The remaining dwellings were occupied by those working on the infrastructure.⁵ (Table 2)

Table 2. Analysis of 1871 Census Returns for the areas which would become Westgate on Sea

<u>Name of Parish</u>	<u>Number of dwellings</u>	<u>Unoccupied houses</u>	<u>Given occupations of heads of household</u>
Acol	8	1	Farm Bailiff* Farm Labourer Builder and Beerhousekeeper Excavator Bricklayer Bricklayer's labourer Coachman (Mertens')*
Minster detached	1	0	Brickmaker
St John Margate	30	10	Coastguard 8 Housekeeper 4 Landowner* 2 Builder* Foreman of Navvies Labourer Retired chemist* Railway agent Baronet's widow

*Still present in 1881

Source : Census returns for the parishes of Acol, Minster in Thanet, St John Margate 1871

In 1872 *Keble's Gazette* began to include Westgate in its Visitors' Lists and immediately the difficulty arose in differentiating between true visitors and those such as Professor Wilson and William Corbett at their own properties for the season. A number of others, staying in Roxburgh's semi-detached villas, close to the sea and the station, bought property within a year or two.⁶ In July 1879 *Keble's Gazette* reported that a 'considerable number of houses, especially most of the handsome villas along the sea front, have been built by gentlemen for their own occupation'.⁷ Kelly's *Kent Directory* had started to list Westgate residents separately in 1874. The 'gentlemen' were mostly from the professional classes - bankers, solicitors and doctors, whilst the tradesmen included two builders, one of whom was also a bathing-machine owner, and one shopkeeper.

The visitors' list grew longer each year, but continued to include new property owners such as Charles Moxon, retired Kensington architect and father-in-law of the painter William Orchardson, Martin Ridley Smith, partner in the London bank of Smith, Payne and Smiths, who was an 'habitual resident' for twenty-five years, and even William Rogers.⁸ Most names remained on the list throughout late July and August. By mid-September they had gone. The purpose of the list would appear to have been to follow the example set by the spas of making known who, from the same circles, was in town. It was soon to include Westgate's first really aristocratic habitual-resident.⁹

Lady Rose Fane, granddaughter of the Duke of Wellington and daughter of the Earl of Westmorland, married Henry Weigall R.A. (who had painted a portrait of her illustrious grandfather) in 1866 at Westminster Abbey. Ten years later Ledge Point overlooking Westgate Bay was built for him for, as Rachel Weigall wrote in the biography of her mother, 'Personal inclination and a family of six sons both pointed to a country house'.¹⁰

Lady Rose, who liked the picturesque coast and bracing air, still furthered the cause of Westgate, for her circle included Lady Waterford, a distant cousin, who, having first brought her husband to Westgate to recuperate after a bad hunting accident, became a regular visitor, and Lady Airlie and Lady Hosier, relatives of Lady Clementine Mitford.¹¹ Such connections were of far greater value than the best of advertising - Lady Hosier brought her family for a number of years and in 1880 the Visitors' List included Algernon Mitford and Lady Clementine, who with four children under five, soon found Westgate to their liking.¹²

Exbury, their sea-front residence, named by Mitford after the 'earthly paradise' of the Hampshire estate of his grandfather, was in the course of erection by 1881.¹³ [Plate 11] Mitford wrote in his memoirs that he was told in 1862, 'If you are the son of Mr Mitford of Exbury and Lady Georgina Ashburnham, you are descended from, perhaps the two oldest families in England'.¹⁴ Lady Clementine Oglivy, whom he married in 1874, was the daughter of the Earl of Airlie.

Although their main home was in Cheyne Walk Chelsea, where their circle included Whistler, Carlyle and Wilde in addition to their aristocratic friends, they entertained distinguished guests in Westgate.¹⁵ In August 1883 *Keble's Gazette* reported that H.R.H. the Grand Duchess of Mecklenberg-Strelitz, accompanied by her son the Hereditary Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess, drove to Canterbury with Mr A. B. and Lady Clementine Mitford where they visited the cathedral, leaving Westgate the following Tuesday for St James's Palace.¹⁶

In 1886 A. B. Mitford inherited Batsford Park from his cousin Lord Redesdale, sold his London home, gave up his post at the Office of Works and moved to Gloucestershire.¹⁷ The Westgate home was put on to the market in 1891.¹⁸ Throughout their time in Westgate, Lady Mitford played an active part in its life, especially in that of the church. With Prince and Princess Christian, the Marquis and Marchioness of Bath, the Marchioness of Conyngham, four earls and their countesses, Lady Clementine was a patron of the Grand Bazaar held in 1882 to raise money for the permanent church.¹⁹

Although a personal friend of the Prince of Wales and a member of the Marlborough Club, A.B. Mitford as a mere 'Mr' was not included as a patron, but he made a substantial donation to the funds and from 1884-1890 paid for seven sittings in the front pew on the south side of the centre aisle in the church, a clear indication of the family's place in the hierarchy of Westgate's residents.²⁰ In 1887 they made the church 'a most munificent gift' of a stained glass window by Kempe in memory of Mitford's father, who had died at Westgate in 1883.²¹

Exbury, with its nurseries on the top floor, was a family holiday-home for eight Mitford children, but proved difficult to sell and it was more than ten years before it was bought by the Honourable Lilius Dundas, a wealthy spinster of impeccable ancestry, who lived there until her death in 1958 and was instrumental in keeping the house as a private home.²²

Cecil Weld Forester, Member of Parliament for Much Wenlock from 1874-1885 and fifth Baron Forester from 1894, had a fifteen-thousand acre family estate at Willey Park in Shropshire and his wife, Emma, was the daughter of Sir Wolfstan Dixie of Market Bosworth.²³ His Thanet residence, bought in 1876, was on the border of Birchington, but he chose to be connected with Westgate, where he was a member of the Permanent Church Working Committee and was involved in fund-raising, sang with the church choir, was one of the first Managers of St Saviour's National School and an annual subscriber and was actively involved in the organisation of the Lawn Tennis Week for many years.²⁴

His family pew, suitably near to the front, was rented until 1892, when his name mysteriously disappears from the account book, although the family did not leave Rosebank until after Lady Forester's death in 1922.²⁵ A strong opponent of ritualism, he had supported the Public Worship Regulation Act 1875 and it could have been that St Saviour's Church, freed from debt in 1891, became progressively more ritualistic (see chapter six.) Such matters could divide a congregation. He did not contribute towards the alabaster reredos erected as a memorial to the first vicar, yet it could not have been a personal quarrel with the Rev. Lyne, as two of his sons represented him at Lyne's funeral and a stained glass window to the late Vicar's memory from his confirmation candidates was reputed to have been largely paid for by the Foresters.²⁶



PLATE 11. Exbury in Sea Road, the home of Algernon Bertram Mitford and lady Clementine.

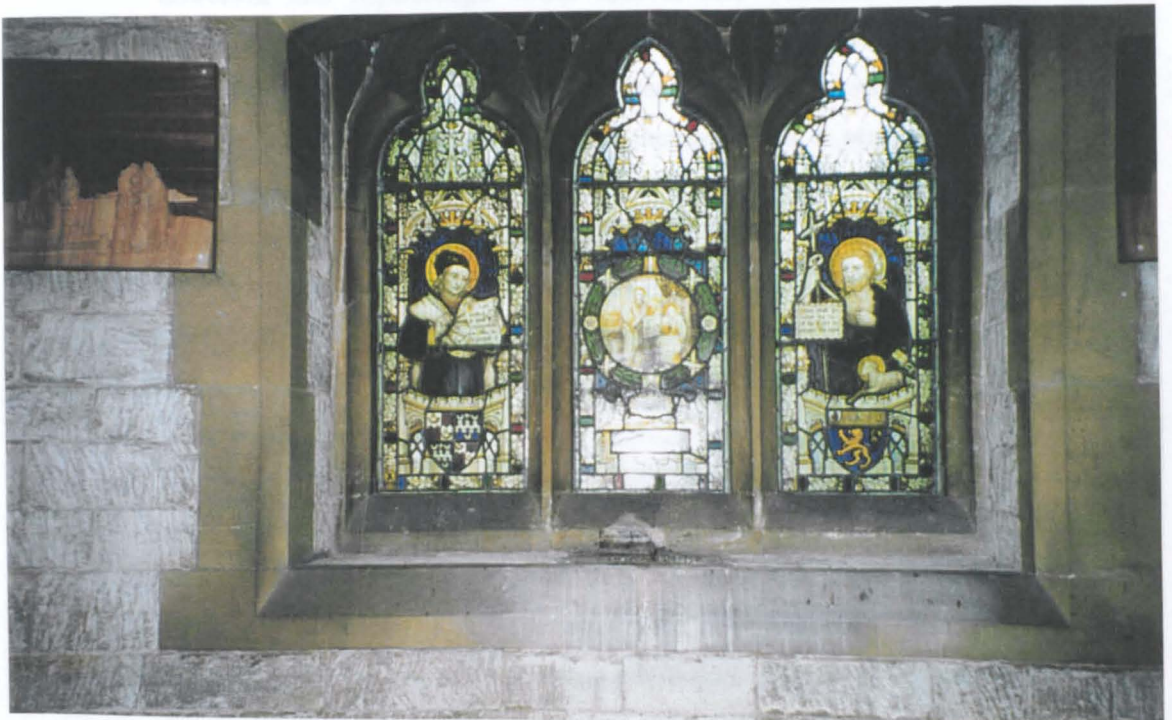


PLATE 12 St Saviour's Church. The Weld-Forester window in the north aisle. The Weld-Forester arms are bottom left and the Wofstan-Dixie arms bottom right.

In the south wall of the church a window commemorates two Forester children who died in infancy; in the north wall is one to the memory of Lord and Lady Forester given by the family in 1923. [Plate 12] Their sons attended Wellington House and Wolfstan, an officer in the Grenadier Guards killed in action in the First World War, is listed on Westgate's War Memorials.

In 1883 these members of the aristocracy were joined by Lord Arthur Hill M.P., who like Herman Mertens was a member of the Junior Carlton Club, and the Dowager Marchioness of Downshire to whom the Rev. Frederick Dirs Mertens, brother to Herman and headmaster of Ardingly College, was Household Chaplain.²⁷ These new owners of St Mildred's Court were enthusiastic in their support for the church, organising entertainments in their first summer and raising over £60 for the cause.²⁸

These then were the élite families at the top of the pyramid of Westgate society in its developing years, but they cannot be compared with the Cavendishes at Eastbourne, the de la Warrs at Bexhill or the Radnors at Folkestone, who had long connections with their estates and are remembered in the names of parks, pavilions, streets and squares and who were the focal points of their communities - as Cannadine says of Eastbourne, 'The social summit was Compton Place - the real presence of aristocratic ethos'.²⁹ No one individual in Westgate was ever regarded as at the summit.

Lowerson and Myerscough wrote that in late Victorian times hotels became especially popular for short or weekend visits, the newer ones basing their appeal on good services and trying to attract clients 'with stagey public rooms where self-important strangers had a chance to meet and parade themselves in a setting with the latest in interior design and domestic technology'.³⁰ By 1875 the Beach House Hotel was able to offer such accommodation and its guests that year included Sir John and Lady Hawkshaw, Viscountess Strangford, the Dowager Countess of Buchan, Lady Mary Legge and Lord Archibald Campbell.³¹ In September 1879 the hotel, which in June had played host to Sarah Bernhardt and her friends, was praised in the *Whitehall Review* as a 'Saturday to Monday sort of place'.³²

Each season saw the arrival of more titled guests, especially after the opening in 1883 of the purpose-built St Mildred's and Westcliff Hotels. In July 1884 for the consecration of St Saviour's Church, Lord Inverine, Lady Edith and Lady Keith Falconer, Lady Weld and three Members of Parliament were at St Mildred's, whilst the Marquis of Waterford and family, the Earl of Tyrone, Lady Susan and Lady Clodagh Beresford and Thomas Brassey, the railway baron, were guests at the Westcliff.³³

By the 1890s some of the family homes were being sold as the children grew up and the fashionable sought fresh fields, but for many years Westgate, with its ability to provide privacy and quiet, was still able to welcome titled guests, partly perhaps because of its connection with Coutts'.

The bank had remained in possession of the Beach House Hotel, but in 1890, the year that the Duke of Norfolk stayed at Turret Court for the season and the Leopold de Rothschilds at Sea Grange, they leased it to the newly-formed Westgate Hotels Company. Amongst its distinguished guests in July 1891 were His Royal Highness the Comte de Paris and the Comtesse, Princesse Hélène d'Orléans and their suite.³⁴ They just happened to be, with other members of the French Royal Family, clients of William Rogers, fluent French speaker and Coutts' auctioneer, valuer and Westgate agent.³⁵

These details might appear trivial, but they are important if the fundamental question is to be answered of how Westgate, physically so close to one of the most plebeian of resorts, succeeded in attracting the cream of society to a new-watering place. The answer has to be 'the network'. These titled families knew each other and in addition many had large families of young children. At four neighbouring properties at Westgate Bay there were twenty-seven young children in the early 1880s.³⁶

Hotels were not really equipped for small children, however, and families were more likely to take a house for the season, moving their own household with them. Lord and Lady Henley took a house in Westgate Road in 1875; the Earl and Countess of Lichfield one in Adrian Square in 1876.³⁷ In 1881 the Earl and Countess of Ellesmere took Goodwin House on the seafront, let at £170 per annum to Mrs Sweeting, who in April had recorded her occupation as 'letting apartments'.³⁸ In September they entertained the Princesses Victoria and Louise for three weeks.³⁹

Fashionable London artists were also being attracted to Westgate, where Turner had often painted the sunsets at Westgate Bay. Academician Henry Weigall was best known for his portraits and portrayal of historic events - his painting of Lord Beaconsfield addressing the House of Lords after the signing of the Treaty of Berlin was so admired that a replica was ordered by Lord Lytton for Government House in Calcutta.⁴⁰

The Scottish-trained William Quiller Orchardson, who had quickly gained success after he moved to London at the age of thirty, came to the Ivyside at Westgate, a well-appointed seafront house, with mahogany-panelled library and garden studio, designed for him in 1879.⁴¹ Like the Mitfords and the Weigalls, he had young children - in 1881 his one-year old son and five year-old daughter were at the Ivyside with their cook, nursemaid and housemaid, whilst their seven-year old brother was at school on the other side of town.⁴²

Orchardson used his Westgate address from 1879 to 1888, during which time he painted some of his most famous paintings, including Napoleon on the deck of the Bellerophon, exhibited at the Academy in 1880, and his social comedies such as 'Mariage de Convenance' (R.A. 1884) and its sequel 'Mariage de Convenance - after!' (R.A. 1886).⁴³ These latter portrayed, according to Julian Treuherz, 'with wit and insight the rituals of drawing-room society'.⁴⁴

He painted royalty, was knighted and honoured by burial in St Paul's Cathedral, where there is a massive monument to him in the crypt. In 1972 an exhibition of some eighty works gathered from collections from round the world toured the northern galleries and was well-received by critics and public.⁴⁵ He would have fitted well into Westgate society, where he was a member of the 1880 Sanitary Committee and the Permanent Church Working Committee, and with his father-in-law and neighbour, Charles Moxon, shared pew 71, very near the front, until 1887.

THE GENTLEMEN

This aristocratic and artistic top layer was supported by a considerable number of those of independent means and professional men, who considered themselves to be gentlemen, even if they did not have a grant of arms or an appropriate estate, for Westgate had no landed gentry. When attempting to define a 'gentleman', Geoffrey Best wrote that 'Use of the word had little to do with social mobility, but more with social acceptance' and this was evident in Westgate, where class distinction was assiduously protected.⁴⁶

W.G. Hoskins wrote that 'The proportion of people born in the place in which they are living is a measure of the strength of the social cement that holds the community together'.⁴⁷ It was many years before there were any native Westgatonians, but the community was held together by such men as Colonel Copeland, Treasurer to the Bethlehem and Bridewell Hospitals, who during his eight years in Westgate was Vice Chairman of the Parish Council (1896-8) and a School Manager, and the professional men, who made their permanent homes there.⁴⁸ It was in their mutual interest to maintain the high 'social tone', which had attracted them and they would not relax their grip.

Although soon outnumbered by schoolmasters, in the early days lawyers and doctors were much in evidence, lawyers being leading figures in Westgate's early history. Mertens, Davis and the Parker brothers were solicitors, as were Thomas and Spencer Lewin and Henry Houseman, whose London firms were important sources of capital in the early days (see chapter one). Houseman later purchased Streete Court and part of the Streete Court Estate and, although as a 'part-time' resident he was not officially involved in local affairs, was a constant thorn in the side, as, for example, in 1895 when it was proposed to remove twelve rows of free children's seats in the church and replace them with nine rows of adult pews for which rents would be paid. Houseman opposed it, causing William Minter, Vicar's warden, to complain to the Diocesan Registrar of the unfairness of a system which allowed one person, present for only six weeks of the year, to oppose the wishes of the majority forcing the matter to be settled at great expense in the Consistory Court.⁴⁹

However, unlike Bournemouth where, Cecil Cullingford says, lawyers were attracted not only for property transactions, but to draw up the wills of the growing number of wealthy, but ageing residents, solicitors in Westgate found little business.⁵⁰ The population was young and, more importantly, all the Estate owners used London firms for the many property transactions that took place. All auction sales in Westgate were conducted by Rogers, Chapman and Thomas of South Kensington and Belgravia and many of the larger properties were sold at auction or by private treaty in London itself.⁵¹ It was not until the 1920s that a Broadstairs firm took two rooms above the Estate Office, premises they still occupy today, to become Westgate's first practising solicitors.⁵²

William Ingram, educated at Winchester and Trinity College Oxford and a barrister by profession would have qualified as 'new gentry', although his grandfather was a butcher and his father a printer.⁵³ Herbert Ingram had gone to London in 1842 and started to publish the highly-successful *London Illustrated News* before returning to the Midlands, where he became Member for Boston. In 1860, together with his eldest son, he was drowned whilst on holiday in America. The Boston Liberals offered the candidature to William Ingram later and he began a tempestuous twenty-one year parliamentary connection with Boston in 1874. Successful in the General Election of 1880, he was unseated as a result of allegations of bribery and corruption and it was then that he took up residence in Westgate, where he had already bought land from Davis in the Sussex Gardens area.⁵⁴

Ingram was an astute businessman, building up his interests all over the town, developing the area around St Mildred's Bay until he controlled most of it, and purchasing The Bungalow after the death in 1887 of the widowed Lady Wilson to enhance further his position. Although he was a member of the 1880 Sanitary Committee, of the Permanent Church Committee and of the Improvement Committee of 1889, he was only involved in formal local government for a brief period as a Parish Councillor, which ended when he was ejected for non-attendance.⁵⁵ Although he was as anxious as other leading residents to maintain the right tone, his business interests sometimes conflicted with their wishes leading to tension.

His forty-four year relationship with Westgate was as stormy as that with Boston; he was frequently involved in litigation, particularly with Coutts', and his dispute with the Parish Council over the new Town Hall has been described in chapter two. Although the real power, limited as it was, lay in the hands of such men as the Rev. Bull, Ingram, especially after he was created a baronet in 1895, was sometimes treated like a Lord of the Manor. For example, at the celebrations for the Coronation of Edward VII each child was presented with sixpence in an envelope on which was written, 'Westgate on Sea Coronation Souvenir presented by Sir William Ingram Bart. Aug. 9th 1902'.⁵⁶

He was a flamboyant figure, who must have brought colour to Westgate at a time when it was beginning to gain the reputation for being a little dull. He led the life of a country gentleman, riding with the Thanet Harriers, keeping his own horses and greyhounds; he owned a racehorse, a luxury yacht and a villa in Monte Carlo.⁵⁷ It is easy to understand how, in July 1914, Flight Lieutenant Geoffrey Broome of the Westgate Royal Naval Air Station gained the impression that Westgate's 'destinies are ruled over by Sir William Ingram, who owns most of the town and endeavours to keep it quiet and exclusive'.⁵⁸

After his death in 1924, his executors asked that his ashes should be buried in the grounds of St Saviours' Church on the land next to his town centre development, but as it was not consecrated ground the Archbishop refused to create a precedent.⁵⁹ The Parish Council allowed his sons to place a discreet memorial in the retaining wall of the Sussex Gardens' enclave, which today means little to those who pass by, as it contains only the initials of Sir William and Lady Ingram and an inscription in Latin. [Plate 13] He left an estate of £264,715 19s 6d, re-sworn after the death of Lady Ingram to be £339,454 (approximately £7 million today).⁶⁰

As at most resorts, the presence of a doctor was regarded as desirable - Mr Parker was searching for a Surgeon for 'Sanditon' when he met with his unfortunate accident and, as early as 1871, Corbett suggested to Dr Nash, a prospective tenant of 3 Sea Road, that he should put up his plate as 'a resident medical man is much needed'.⁶¹ It is not known whether he did so, nor whether Charles Dalgairns M.D. of St Mildred's Court, was in practice. The fifty-six year old widowed Mrs Dalgairns was still in residence in 1881, with her daughter, three visitors and an household consisting of lady's maid, cook, 'upper servant' and two housemaids, showing her to be in comfortable circumstances.⁶²

Westgate doctors, because they were permanent residents, quickly became part of the ruling élite. There were usually two doctors in practice until the turn of the century, when the number increased to three. Dr Arthur Flint M.R.C.S. L.R.C.P. aged thirty in 1881 started to practise in Adrian Square, but then bought land in Westgate Road to build Westgate and Granville Lodges, the doctors' homes until the Second World War, each doctor having his surgery in his own home with a maid to open the door to patients.⁶³ [Plate 14] Dr Flint was a Parish and Rural District Councillor, a Guardian and a Justice, people's churchwarden, a founder of the Cricket and Lawn Tennis Club and its Secretary and Treasurer for many years.⁶⁴

In 1881 twenty-eight year old Clarence Harding M.R.C.P M.R.C.S. was living in a seafront villa with his young Australian-born wife and small daughter, four visitors from Edinburgh ranging in age from three to nine, three nurses, a cook, housemaid and page, so it is likely that he provided accommodation and care for delicate children with wealthy parents.⁶⁵



PLATE 13. The memorial to Sir William and Lady Ingram placed by their sons in the retaining wall of Sussex Gardens.



PLATE 14. Granville Lodge and Westgate Lodge built by Dr Flint.

In April 1882 *Keble's Gazette* reported the visit to Westgate of Prince Christian, who, having travelled by a special saloon carriage attached to the train, was met at the station by his son Prince Victor, his tutor and Dr Harding and drove in an open carriage to Northlawn to celebrate Prince Victor's birthday.⁶⁶ Dr Harding was a member of the Sanitary Committee of 1880, of the Permanent Church Working Committee and first Vicar's Churchwarden.⁶⁷ He left Westgate in the autumn of 1885, by which time twenty-nine year old Dr Arthur Street had arrived.⁶⁸ In its early days, Westgate's doctors were invariably young and very well qualified.

Like Dr Flint he first lived in Adrian Square, but after his marriage in 1885 had a 'Queen Anne' house built, which he named Burghfield after the birthplace of his bride.⁶⁹ He succeeded Dr Harding as churchwarden in 1885, holding office until 1893, when he resigned for reasons he declined to make public. It is likely that he had a difference of opinion with the Vicar, who said that he had relinquished his prerogative of electing a warden that year in the 'interests of peace and goodwill'⁷⁰. A manager of the National School from its foundation in 1886, he resigned in 1895 after a disagreement (see chapter seven).⁷¹ After the death of John Brown he became 'Principal' of the Tower House Retreat until its demise in 1903.⁷² He remained in Westgate until his death in 1943. One Westgatonian remembers him driving to visit his patients in an open two-seater car dressed in frock-coat and silk hat.⁷³

Dr Heaton, who joined the practice in 1898 and became known for his work as a radiologist, polled the second highest number of votes for the Parish Council in 1907 and, except for a brief period of war service, remained a member until the amalgamation with Margate.⁷⁴ Dr Walker, formerly a doctor with the Indian Army, who was in favour of amalgamation, became one of Westgate's first ward councillors in Margate Corporation.⁷⁵

William Summerskill L.R.C.P. M.R.C.S., known in Westgate as 'the shilling doctor' because of the low fees he charged, sent his three children, including his daughter Edith, who became a doctor and well-known Labour politician, to St Saviour's National School.⁷⁶ It is likely that class-conscious Edwardian Westgatonians would have looked askance at such egalitarian ideas, for he does not appear to have taken a high profile in the life of the town.

The Rev. Augustus Adolphus Lyne was exactly the kind of man that Edmund Davis said in 1879 he was seeking, as he realised the importance to an estate of having a popular clergyman.⁷⁷ Lyne was one of the new breed of non-graduate Anglican clergy, self-supporting and older, who were accepted for ordination at one of the new theological colleges. He had served for fourteen years as an officer in the Royal Navy before going to Chichester, a college whose registers revealed that 'from their age and education, the students were of a distinctly higher rank'.⁷⁸

He served his title at St Saviour's Eastbourne, a Tractarian church, moving after he was priested in 1876 to St Lawrence Ramsgate, where doubtless he would have met Davis who was developing the Granville Estate.⁷⁹ He arrived in Westgate in 1880 after 'the finger of God seemed to point very plainly to Westgate, where I believe I have work to do for the Master - to build a permanent church'.⁸⁰ As there was at the time no parish of Westgate, he became Curate of Minster with special responsibility for the Westgate district.

He was ideally suited to the task he had set himself. His family was included in Burke's *Landed Gentry* and his grandmother was the third daughter of the Duke of Hamilton.⁸¹ Elizabeth Lyne, whom he had married in 1871 at the fashionable church of St Mary Magdalene Paddington, was a member of one of the oldest families in Kent, the Boys.⁸² Alan Haig wrote that, 'Material substance was regarded as a valuable, almost necessary, prop to the clergyman's authority' and it was as well that Lyne was a wealthy man, for he could never have lived, in the style which was expected of him, on the stipend of £200 a year granted in 1884, even with the addition of the pew rents.⁸³

He was typical of the clergy frequently found in late nineteenth-century England - rich enough to be able to follow their own inclinations, used to giving orders, not taking them and prepared to go to great lengths to fulfil their ambitions. He gained the patronage of the rich and famous on the Permanent Church Committee and their support in fund raising, but when there was the danger that the church would not be completed after the failure of Parkers, he personally guaranteed the £3000 debt, so that the consecration in 1884 was able to take place (see chapter six).⁸⁴

A year later he shouldered the debt for the building of the church school. The feat of clearing those debts was astonishing. He was never loth to appeal - at the service for the laying of the Foundation Stone he asked ladies present to donate their unwanted jewellery, as 'trinkets useless to them might prove to be of value to God' and in 1893, when appealing at Evensong for offerings towards the clearance of the debt on the organ, he said that 'judging from the very large congregation present and the class to which they belonged, he felt sure that he was not asking too much'.⁸⁵

Believing that a Board School would be disastrous for Westgate, he made strenuous efforts to hold off such a threat and succeeded (see chapter seven). When he died in 1900 the local press paid tribute to his 'untiring essay'.⁸⁶ He was not the easiest of people with whom to work and often evoked criticism, but his contribution to the development of Westgate as a resort for the élite cannot be doubted.

Lyne's successors played a different role. The Rev. Townshend Mylne (1900-1913) and the Rev. Pendock Banks (1913-1931) were the academic equals of the circle of Oxbridge schoolmasters and retired clerics who were being drawn to Westgate. Both appear to have had 'the private means [which] kept the church and the parochial system afloat'.⁸⁷ Like Lyne, they were chairmen of the National School Managers, but they adopted a softer approach to their nonconformist critics and they played no part in Westgate political life.

The important, but quite different, roles of successive nonconformist ministers are examined in chapters six and seven. Anglican clergy were regarded as socially superior to nonconformist ministers in many circles and in 1937 there was a minor scandal, when it was learned that the new curate of St Saviour's was to be the Rev. Horace Pellatt, who had been Congregational minister in Westgate for two years, before leaving in 1935 to join the Anglican church.⁸⁸ Local rumour said unkindly that it was because he thought his social position would improve.⁸⁹

The clergy in Westgate, like the schoolmasters, played a disproportionately more important role than in larger resorts and, in a place where party politics seems not to have raised its head, sometimes polarised the class divide, nonconformists relating to the artisans and Anglicans to the gentry and professionals. Only two nonconformists served on the Parish Council throughout its life.⁹⁰ More, however, than any other profession, schoolmasters dominated Westgate public life and their role is dealt with in detail in chapter five.

TRADESMEN AND ARTISANS

In most resorts the provision of accommodation became the single most important economic activity, but in Westgate it was second to the all-year round education industry. Walton opined that the suppliers of accommodation, for various reasons, are difficult to fit into social categories and even to count.⁹¹ This is certainly so in Westgate where it is impossible to categorise, for example, William Rogers, whose home played host to the Duke and Duchess of Fife for three weeks in 1893 and to Waldorf Astor in 1895, or A.B. Mitford at whose Exbury home the Leopold de Rothschilds spent the summer of 1887.⁹²

From the early nineties Westgate increased its high-class hotel provision, when Kimberley, a double-fronted seafront residence with tennis lawn, heated conservatory and approached by a carriage drive, was auctioned in 1890 and became an hotel; St Clement's, a fine 'Queen Anne' building, near the sea similarly converted in 1902.⁹³ [Plate 15] Despite the refusal of a licence to its proprietor in 1905, the latter was reported as being full at Easter 1907, its guests including Admiral and Mrs Fitzgerald and Mr, Mrs and Miss Hoare and maids.⁹⁴ The purpose-built Station Hotel, one minute from the station, was primarily for the businessman and was staffed by 1881, although there were no visitors on census night.

For many years the only boarding house was the seafront Danemead, kept by Jenny Moneybright, an officer's widow. It appears to have been favoured by lady guests travelling with their companions or maids and there were six such on census night 1881.⁹⁵ The most popular form of accommodation until 1914 was the lodging house or apartments, where, depending upon one's purse, a house could be taken for the season for a household, including servants, or a suite of rooms or even one room, which the landlady would service.



PLATE 15. St Clement's Hotel - built originally as private residence.



PLATE 16. Abbotsford Guest House Sea Road. Subsequently a school for a short time, then became a private hotel..

Of the ten lodging-houses recorded in April 1881, five had no visitors, one had two, one had three, whilst at Abbotsford in Sea Road there were nine small children, a nurse and undernurse. [Plate 16] The remaining two appear not to have been connected with the holiday trade, as at one, in the artisan quarters, the five boarders were all connected with the building trade and at the other the boarders were a painter and his family, another painter and a carpenter. Four lodging-house keepers were widows, six were spinsters - in contrast, all hotel managers were male.⁹⁶

The 1891 census was taken on the night of 5 April and again there was a noticeable lack of visitors. The Westcliff's two visitors were outnumbered by the four servants; St Mildred's and the Station Hotels, although fully staffed, had no visitors; the Beach House and the Nottingham Castle were unoccupied. There were more lodging houses than in 1881, as some of the marine residences such as Northlawn, Dr Harding's first house, and Ledge Point, the Weigall's home, had been converted, as had a number of the four-storey town houses in Adrian Square. A few families, mostly professional, had taken apartments in various parts of the town, some bringing personal servants such as nurses and ladies' maids.⁹⁷

By the turn of the century there were fewer private holiday homes and a greater provision of visitor accommodation. In 1899 twenty-eight lodging houses, four boarding houses and four hotels were listed; by 1914 the number of lodging houses had doubled, but there was only one more boarding house.⁹⁸ Although St Clement's had become an hotel, the Beach House had been demolished in 1904.⁹⁹ This confirms that still the most popular way of holidaymaking was to take rooms and provide food for the family which the landlady would cook.

Some of these ventures were short lived, as can be exemplified by the case of Mary Southon. In 1900 Sir William Ingram bought Martin Ridley-Smith's eleven-bedroomed 'marine residence', Corsbie, and persuaded Mrs Southon, who had run a successful small business in Adrian Square and whose husband had a draper's shop, to take on the larger property at a rent of £180 per annum, promising that the business would pay. She had no capital. Two bad seasons left her with liabilities of £339 and no assets and, shortly before the Receiving Order was made, the landlord distrained for rent arrears, taking away her possessions. The sale of all that remained raised only £137. She said that she had always been able to keep up in the smaller property, but 1901 was a very bad year and Westgate had no winter season. She had kept only one servant.¹⁰⁰

Only a limited number of lodging houses could succeed, unless there was another source of income. In 1885 Alfred Read's Lymington House apartments in Westbury Road were listed and the same year he bought a plot in Ethelbert Square, the most expensive area in town.¹⁰¹ In 1891, living in the new Lymington House, he no longer designated himself as carpenter and his son as carpenter's apprentice, but as builder and builder's clerk respectively.¹⁰²

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PLATE 17. Lymington House Apartments in Ethelbert Square built and owned by Alfred Read.



PLATE 18. St Mildred's Hotel
 Reproduced by permission of K. O'Toole.

In 1899 an advertisement in *Keble's Gazette* read 'Lymington House : A few Paying Guests received by lady and gentleman. Young Society. Musical. Home comforts and perfect cuisine'.¹⁰³ [Plate 17] Lymington House, however, could have been supported, if necessary, by the increasingly successful builder's business, which led to Read's son being able to buy up the residue of Coutts' estate after the First World War and to his grandson being educated at Harrow.

The Visitors' List ceased to be published in 1906, although references to titled guests in the 'Westgate News' proved that some continued to come even in Edwardian times.¹⁰⁴ Some wealthy residents remained, more retired people settled. The artistic were still attracted. Louis Wain, the cat-artist and a protégé of William Ingram, had arrived in 1894 and remained for some years.¹⁰⁵ In 1892 Marie Bancroft's stay in Westgate to improve her health must have been successful, as she returned to the stage at the Garrick the following year.¹⁰⁶ Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft, having resisted the allure of 'Poppyland', took a house in Adrian Square and then moved to the newly-built White House with its huge garden in 1905.¹⁰⁷ There was still a greater emphasis on attracting new residents than holidaymakers.

Those engaged in the holiday trade in Westgate were, like others on the east coast, badly affected by the First World War, whereas south coast resorts, further from danger, were able to benefit as Continental holidays were impossible. Brighton's hotels and lodging-houses were crowded during the war years.¹⁰⁸ In the immediate post-war period some Westgate proprietors were able to recover with the help of government compensation if their properties had been requisitioned, but others who had moved away did not return. As a result, both private houses and lodging-houses came on to the market at a low price and were snapped up by enterprising entrepreneurs.¹⁰⁹

There was a short-lived boom, as war-weary Britons sought the sea and sun in 1919 and 1920, but the change in the style of holidaymaking was summed up by Councillor Press of Birchington, when he said in 1931 that, 'Every seaside place is losing what in the days of their fathers and grandfathers was their stock in trade - the letting of lodgings - because of the advent of the small motor car'.¹¹⁰ To survive it was necessary to adapt. Westgate, still trying primarily to please the private schools, could hardly hope to be untouched by the national economic situation and by the 1930s businesses were beginning to suffer. 'The days when royalty and nobility visited Westgate solely and wholly for the air and sands are gone never to return', opined Harry Preston, proprietor of the Northlawn.¹¹¹ [Fig. 2]

There are signs that Westgate was preparing to adapt after becoming part of Margate Borough, for in 1939, although only eight lodging-houses remained, there were twenty boarding-houses, nineteen private hotels and the five more prestigious establishments. [Plate 18] In 1925 Lady Pearson had bought The Bungalow on the death of Lady Ingram and converted it into the very up-market Rowena Court Hotel, managed by a woman.¹¹²[Fig 3]



*Westgate's
"Swiss"
Hotel
Cuisine
Française*

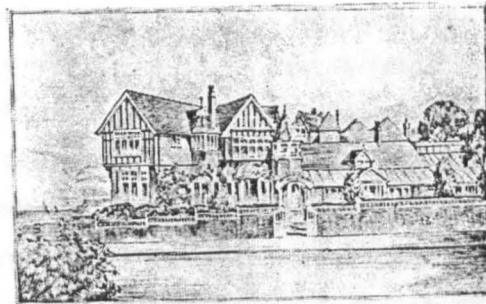
Northlawn

Sea Front, Westgate-on-Sea

.

The Northlawn was originally the home of Dr Harding and played host to H.R.H. Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein in 1881, when he came to visit his son. FIG. 2

ROWENA COURT HOTEL



W E S T G A T E - O N - S E A

On Sea Front . . . Every comfort
Excellent cuisine . Central heating
Cocktail bar . Television . Golf
Children's room

Rowena Court Hotel was originally the bungalow home of Erasmus Wilson and Sir William Ingram. On the death of Lady Ingram in 1925, the bungalow was bought by Lady Pearson and up-dated to become between the wars one of Westgate's most prestigious hotels. FIG.3

Reproduced from the 1947 'Westgate Guide', by permission of K.OToole.

The biggest change had taken place in Sea Road, where in 1881 all but one of the fifteen houses were private homes, in 1885 twenty-seven out of thirty-three, but by 1939 only four out of thirty-six.¹¹³

Walton found, however, that the accommodation industry is not alone in being affected by the holiday trade and that building and transport were over-represented almost everywhere at seaside resorts.¹¹⁴ The building trade in Westgate has certainly been important, being responsible both for some of the most successful businesses, but also for several failures. In 1881 six builders were listed.

William Corbett gives no details of his workforce, but from the accounts of the fires that damaged his property in 1883 and 1885 it was considerable; William Peto claimed to employ one hundred and forty three men, but this must have been in projects elsewhere, as there is no evidence of any widespread activity in Westgate by the firm of George and Peto.¹¹⁵ The attitude of Westgate society towards those in trade is well illustrated by the custom of distinguishing class by the use of 'esquire' or 'mister' as a title. As Peto and Corbett were always dignified with the title 'esquire', it is clear that they were not working builders.¹¹⁶

William Parkinson, who combined his building activities with keeping the Station Hotel, bought several parcels of land and was in the course of erecting a terrace of eight lodging-houses near the sea in 1881, three of which were occupied.¹¹⁷ All were complete by May 1882 and offered for sale as an investment. [Fig. 4] Parkinson and Corbett gave evidence in 1882 on the importance to the building trade of a direct railway link between Westgate and Minster as more people would come and more houses would be built.¹¹⁸ Both had left Westgate by 1891, their entrepreneurial business finished.

John Burnett's definition of a builder as 'an entrepreneur who organized building operations, and not merely one particular craft's part in them', applied to bricklayers and carpenters, who graduated from craftsmen to contractors, designing and estimating for buildings and employing their own workforce.¹¹⁹ Two Westgate builders fell into that category in 1881.

William Frostick, employing fifty men, came as Corbett's contractor in 1872; by 1880 he was engaged in many enterprises, such as furniture removal, the merchanting of coal, the renting of bathing machines and the management of the Bathing and Assembly Rooms which he had just completed building.¹²⁰ Starting as a 'humble roads' foreman', he built up a good business, building amongst other things St Mildred's Hotel and St Saviour's vicarage. His sudden death in 1888 at the age of fifty-three shocked fellow tradesmen who closed their shops to attend his funeral, 'because he had been associated with the town so long'. Fourteen carriages and forty workmen followed the draped coffin borne on a coal-lorry, drawn by two of his own horses.¹²¹

WESTGATE-ON-SEA, THANET.

DESIRABLE FREEHOLD FAMILY RESIDENCES FOR
OCCUPATION AND INVESTMENT.

Particulars and Conditions of Sale

OF THE ELIGIBLE

FREEHOLD RESIDENCES,

COMMANDINGLY SITUATE IN THE WESTGATE ROAD,
NEAR TO THE SEA, CHURCH AND STATION,

AND KNOWN AS

Nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 & 8, ST. MILDRED'S TERRACE
WESTGATE-ON-SEA.

Nos. 1 and 2 are let to good Tenants at rentals amounting to
£155 per Annum, thus forming a safe investment. Nos.
5, 6, 7 and 8, being ready for immediate occupation. Each
House estimated to be of the Rental value of £75 per Annum :

WHICH WILL BE SOLD BY AUCTION,

(Unless previously disposed of by Private Contract)

BY

MESSRS.

ROGERS, CHAPMAN & THOMAS,
IN CONJUNCTION WITH
Mr. HERBERT ROGERS,

AT THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS, WESTGATE-ON-SEA,

On MONDAY, the 22nd day of MAY, 1882,

AT FIVE O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON—IN FIVE LOTS.

Messrs. J. & C. ROBINSON & WILKINS,
Solicitors,

19, King's Arms Yard, E.C.

Frontispiece of Catalogue for the sale by Auction of St Mildred's Terrace in 1882.

The professionals involved in the sale are London-based.

FIG.4.

Reproduced by permission of John King of Rogers and Hambidge, Westgate.

George Roberts and Frank Rickett, who had been in his employ for many years, took on the business, but the heady days of the 1880s were over and the traders complained of the number of empty houses.¹²² In Eastbourne, where it had been estimated that between 1886-8 there were eight hundred houses empty in a borough of thirty thousand people, the situation was similar.¹²³ Although Roberts and Rickett won the contract to build All Saints' Church at Westbrook, they were declared bankrupt three months after its completion in March 1894. It was said in the Bankruptcy Court that they had no assets and that their books had never balanced.¹²⁴

Alfred Lockwood, encouraged to come to Westgate in 1872 by William Rogers and to whom reference was made in chapter one, created one of Westgate's most successful and long-lived businesses.¹²⁵ In 1881 the sixty-six year old builder employed thirty-two men, but the workforce of masons, bricklayers, carpenters, joiners, plasterers and paperhangers, whom he praised at a workmen's dinner, must often have exceeded that, as his firm built over a hundred houses of every kind from twelve-bedroomed marine residences to workmen's cottages.¹²⁶ When he died in May 1881, he was succeeded by his son, an architect of some reputation who designed the row of canopied-shops opposite the station. F.M.L. Thompson says that a builder, having recovered his outlay by selling some of the houses he had built, would often retain some and set up as a landlord himself.¹²⁷ The Lockwoods followed this practice, becoming substantial landlords in the town. Both father and son also lived in houses built by their firms. When Alfred junior died in 1904, his son Norman was not interested in the business, which gave Arthur Read the opportunity to merge the two firms, retaining the name of Lockwood, as it does today.¹²⁸

John Storr, the sixth builder listed in 1881, made no mention of employing others and it is likely that he was engaged in small scale building; in 1891 he was recorded as a coal merchant. Building was a precarious business, as was found by Frederick Denne, a bricklayer who turned builder in 1896 with no capital. Denne made an agreement to build thirteen houses where the owner would pay for material and labour, but when the price of both increased, Denne had no margin on which to operate, as the estimates had been exceeded. By 1899 his liabilities amounted to £508 4s 11d and his assets to £350 2s 11d. A Receiving Order was made against him and a number of his building plots were sold.¹²⁹

Yet Alfred Ross, in 1891 a twenty-eight year old carpenter, became very successful, obtaining the patronage of Sir William Ingram for whom he built, amongst other things, the Town Hall.¹³⁰ His business survived two world wars and many vicissitudes. Much depended on the astuteness of the individual in taking some, but not too much risk. There was always steady business in the maintenance of buildings and, in contrast to the use of London firms in the early days, records of the parish council, the parish church and the National School show that local builders were invariably used for construction work by the turn of the century. The large scale building which took place south of the main road, as the Streete Court Estate was developed, was mostly by local firms ¹³¹.

In Westgate's early days public transport provided little employment, although the railway needed a stationmaster, porters and clerks. Some visitors brought their own carriages, horses and coachmen on the train and some residents had their own stables. However, Westgate's other very successful business was built up by Joseph Jackson, a Walworth Livery Stable Keeper, whose mews were originally to serve the Beach House Hotel.¹³² A new wing to the mews was erected in 1888 to stable thirty more horses and provide accommodation for coachmen and in 1891, in addition to Jackson, the Riding Master, six stablemen, three coachmen and a fly driver were present on census night.¹³³

Jackson's success can be measured by the increases in his insurance premiums on his 'live and dead stock, utensils, stables, coach houses all adjoining and communicating'. In March 1879 these were valued at £1000, in 1882 at £2000, in 1883 at £3000, plus £1000 for similar cover at nearby Adrian Mews, and in 1884 at £4000. He also regularly insured 'standing fodder' in various fields at £100 per field, whilst by 1899 he was insuring materials for carriage repairs. In 1916, not only was he insuring his Westgate property and stock for £5000, but horses and carriages at Herne Bay.¹³⁴

The regulations, strictly enforced by the Estate, made it difficult for other operators to obtain licenses and Jackson had the monopoly for many years and, as society changed, with fewer visitors arriving with their own transport, he provided excursions by brake.¹³⁵ He disliked the motor car and his son took over the business when the horses were replaced by taxi-cabs. In the late twenties, the firm was still offering hacks and hunters for hire, but also garage accommodation for a hundred cars.¹³⁶

There was one only other carriage proprietor listed in the 1891 census, Frederick Cullen, bricklayer, who lived in the 'artisan quarter' and was clearly in business in only a small way.¹³⁷ His stable and coachhouse were insured in 1888 for a modest £150 and the horses, carriages, utensils, and fodder for £310.¹³⁸

The retail trade was important in any seaside resort and usually shopkeepers increasingly gained power in the running of their towns. This even happened in Eastbourne, but it did not in Westgate. Some served the town in a number of civic capacities, but they did not receive the recognition they deserved, in a society described by Best where, 'Professional men looked down on merchants, who in turn looked down on clerks, who in their turn looked down on shopkeepers, who considered themselves superior to artisans'.¹³⁹

There were no shopkeepers listed in the 1871 census, but in the next decade eighteen shops were erected on the north side of Station Road and five in the terrace adjoining the station, although not all were occupied on the night of the census. In addition to the essential grocer, greengrocer, butcher, baker and ironmonger, there were some providers of the luxuries of life - wine merchant, confectioner, stationer and bookseller, jeweller and a 'London watchmaker and optician', who also offered a clock-winding service.¹⁴⁰ This was in keeping with other fashionable watering-places, such as Bournemouth, where similar trades figured in directories.¹⁴¹

Westgate's first shopkeeper was Henry Minter, who opened his 'high-class grocery' in 1872 and a decade later was claiming that he obtained his stock only from London.¹⁴² In 1879 his stock and utensils in trade were insured for £500, stock in the store at the rear for £150 and his horse and van for £100. By the time that he had acquired the wine merchant's business at 13, Station Road, his stock in the cellar alone was valued in 1886 at £2550 (multiply by £45.06 for today's equivalent).¹⁴³ Crossick opines that those who required a modest amount of capital tied up in stock were at the top of the hierarchy of tradesmen.¹⁴⁴

Minter was first people's warden for St Saviour's church, having previously served for the parish of St James's Garlinge, was a member of the first Board of School Managers, Chairman of the Tradesmen's Club and a generous supporter of the church and National school. His brother William, previously employed at Peter Robinson's, set up his drapery business in one of a row of shops erected in 1883, as did Frederick Bessant, pharmacist; Charles Best, tailor and outfitter, moved from his modest premises in Station Terrace to an imposing new shop in St Mildred's Road.¹⁴⁵ [Plate 19] They too, part of Crossick's élite, were heavily involved in local affairs and Best had the unique honour of having a stained-glass window erected in the church in his memory. [Plate 20]

It appears that steady growth of high-class retailing was expected and more shops were built during the eighties where covenants permitted. [Plates 21, 22 & 23] 82.35% of Station Road shopkeepers had employed at least one servant in 1881.¹⁴⁶ The changes which began in the late eighties, however, soon affected the tradesmen and, although someone like William Minter could employ two servants and a nurse to care for his wife and five young children in 1891, only 36.11% of all Westgate shopkeepers by that time kept a servant.¹⁴⁷

Cases of real hardship began to arise. In January 1889 a Receiving Order was made against Walter Gilbert, ironmonger; in 1891 Frederick Crump, blacksmith, and Ellen Marsh, lodging-housekeeper were bankrupt and forty-three year old George Williams, watchmaker, committed suicide.¹⁴⁸ In 1892 James Burridge, baker and confectioner, seemingly one of the most successful businessmen, was in trouble with unsecured liabilities of over £2493, assets of £2000 and a long list of creditors. His London property was realised and the Westgate property assigned to a trustee and he was allowed to continue his Westgate business until October 1893 with the view of paying the creditors five shillings in the pound.¹⁴⁹ 1900 saw the stock in trade of a grocer in St Mildred's Road auctioned by order of the Official Receiver; 1903 the bankruptcy of John Thearle of the Beach House Steam Laundry.¹⁵⁰

In a letter in *Keble's Gazette* in May 1901 Dr Flint complained of the increased rateable values imposed by the Rural District Council. There were empty houses, falling rents, 'unprogressive' commercial conditions in the town, bills for the new drainage scheme and Margate Cottage Hospital.¹⁵¹ As Walton's says 'the advantages of seaside living were at best precarious for those below the ranks of big business and the affluent retired'.¹⁵²



PLATE 19. Charles Best, Tailor, and Outfitter whose shop is shown here for sale, was a highly respected tradesmen. The shop later became the Westgate branch of the National Provincial Bank.



PLATE 20. St Saviour's Church, the window erected by the widow of Charles Best.



PLATE 21. Station Road



PLATE 22. Alfred Lockwood's design for the shops

By permission of Ivor Read.

Right : Westgate Chemist's Pot-lids.



New fashions brought changes - in 1894 Joseph Thurley, bootmaker, insured not only his stock for that trade, but also cycles for £250, as he had become a cycle proprietor.¹⁵³ Few new shops were built after the turn of the century and some changed to become branches of chains such as the International Tea Company and Vye and Sons.¹⁵⁴ Some new trades such as newsagent, florist and tobacconist arrived, although gentlemen addicted to the deadly weed did not have to abstain in earlier times, as George Emmens, outfitter of 10 Station Road was insuring his tobacco stock at £200 as early as 1886 and continued to do so for a decade.¹⁵⁵

Neither resort nor high-class estate could survive without the labours of the working-classes, however much it might be hoped that they would remain inconspicuous. In chapter four the built environment and those who created it will be considered in some detail and it is clear that the desire to build well encouraged the immigration of highly skilled artisans. 27.5% of heads of household were involved in the building trade in 1881. There were many specialist craftsmen - twenty-five carpenters and joiners, plus bricklayers, plasterers and decorators, plumbers, a whitesmith and a japanner.¹⁵⁶ Some were still in Westgate in 1891; some had done well enough to move up in the hierarchy; some had moved from lodgings to their own homes.¹⁵⁷

After 1891 it becomes increasingly difficult to discover the occupations of the majority of residents if they are not listed in directories. St Saviour's Baptism, Banns' and Marriage Registers provide useful information, although they apply only to those seeking 'rites of passage' at the Anglican church, but by taking a fairly large sample it is possible to obtain some picture of male employment. Skilled manual workers continued to be connected mostly with the building industry, painters and decorators especially being in demand, but new trades appeared such as motor-mechanic, electrician and platelayer. In 1881 the number of general labourers was small and it was not until 1932 and 1933 that the registers show a sharp increase in their number - but the very poor may not have used the parish church for weddings and baptisms.

Of fifty-eight boys admitted to St Saviour's National School in the twenties and who left in the thirties, eight went into offices, fourteen into shops, eight became apprentices, ten delivery boys, eight went into farming, three to the printing works and the remaining seven became general labourers.¹⁵⁸

DOMESTIC SERVICE AND THE UNEMPLOYED

Domestic and allied services flourished from the earliest times. Although so many houses were empty or occupied only by a caretaker in 1881, there were one hundred and thirty-five domestic servants present that night.¹⁵⁹ Most were general servants, cooks or housemaids, although there were twenty-three nursemaids.



Staff such as parlourmaids, butlers, footmen, coachmen, and ladies' maids travelled with the family with whom they were in service, so if the family was not in residence, they would not be present. [Appendix 5]

In 1891 the total number of servants was high, because there were by then so many institutions. Out of a total population of 1358, two hundred and seventy-two were employed in domestic service. Although it was the school holidays, a cook, five housemaids, three parlourmaids, a kitchenmaid, scullery maid and a male 'house servant' were at Hawtrey's School; five housemaids, a kitchenmaid, scullerymaid, footman and page at Wellington House. The Tower House Retreat had six female and six male servants, William Ingram employed a butler, a lady's maid, cook, parlourmaid, two housemaids and a kitchenmaid. St Mildred's Hotel had ten staff, although there were no guests that night.¹⁶⁰

There was a marked increase over the decade in the number of women employed as laundresses; two in 1881, sixteen in 1891. It was possible to do well - Jane Hutchings, whose husband was a naval pensioner, had bought land from Coutts' near the Gas Works, built a cottage and set up her own business.¹⁶¹ In 1895 Ivy Cottage was insured for £400, the furniture for £270, whilst her trade was safeguarded by insuring 'linen in trust for £30'.¹⁶²

Despite the change in servant-keeping in the inter-war years, the demand in Westgate for domestic servants remained steady, as the number of boarding schools, hotels and boarding houses increased. Of sixty girls leaving St Saviour's National School in the thirties, two-thirds went into domestic work.¹⁶³

Often even exclusive resorts were not immune from the problems of seasonal unemployment and resulting poverty. Soup kitchens were not unknown in Eastbourne and there was slum housing away from the Cavendish and Gilbert estates.¹⁶⁴ Gilbert says that at Brighton 'behind the facade of high fashion [there] were the most appalling houses of the poor'.¹⁶⁵ Westgate had no slums; the purpose-built artisan cottages, although well away from the fashionable areas, were well built and modern for their day and unemployment was also not apparently a problem. In 1881 only a forty-nine year old Swiss butler claimed to be unemployed, whilst in 1891 one sixty-seven year old labourer was on outdoor relief.¹⁶⁶

In 1902 the Rev. Bull, one of Westgate's Guardians, complained that, with more than a thousand people on outdoor relief in the area of the Isle of Thanet Poor Law Union, costs were increasing and the poor rate rising, but Westgate, with a rateable value of £31,000, had only four recipients.¹⁶⁷ Its Guardians would have preferred more charitable giving and lower rates.¹⁶⁸

CONCLUSION

In some ways Westgate was like most seaside resorts - for example, because of the large number of landladies, schoolmistresses and domestic servants, it had a high proportion of women in its population (see Appendix 1). 62.9 % of the three thousand and nineteen voters on the 1930 parliamentary register were women.¹⁶⁹ It did not, however, conform to Walton's findings that there was often a shortage of children in resorts, as by 1881 there was an unusually large number, even if those attending the private schools or those whose families were habitual residents were excluded.¹⁷⁰ The National School was over subscribed from the its opening in 1886 (see chapter seven).

In other ways too, it can be said that Westgate society was not much like that in most resorts, even those which claimed to be exclusive. The strong position held by the professional classes made it much more like an exclusive estate or suburb - indeed it was very like Hampstead. The interests of the schools were, for more than half a century, put first (see chapter five). Those of the holiday trade counted for little, even as late as the 1930s when, as a present-day Westgatonian admits, attitudes were very snobbish.¹⁷¹ A former pupil of Hawtrey's speaks of an anti-town ethos, where even masters were not allowed to cross the bridge into the town.¹⁷² Visitors were suffered more than welcomed by all but a few.

The correspondence between residents and Minister at the time of the proposed amalgamation freely uses phrases denigrating the 'lower classes'.¹⁷³ The structure of society and its conflicts had changed little over seventy years and certainly there had been no attempt to accommodate the new class of holidaymaker. This was not typical of most resorts by the 1930s. Even at Eastbourne, which managed to retain its exclusivity to a degree, the day trippers and working-class visitors were accepted, even though they were segregated as a result of clever town planning. As with every other aspect of Westgate life, one is left wondering what would have happened after amalgamation, had the Second World War not come when it did.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

‘We do not build with sea sand at Westgate. We have the very best materials for all our houses that we can get’.

The confident, boastful words of John Greavson, the builder of the first two Westgate houses in 1865, in his reply to a question from a member of a Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1882, are indicative of the attitude of the first Westgatians towards their built environment and explain why, despite the ravages of time, there is still much to be admired in this little Victorian town.¹ Harold Perkin suggests that perhaps the most certain way to gauge the ‘social tone’ of a place is with one’s own eyes, and if one looks beyond the modern plate-glass shop-windows and the unsympathetic joining together of the once-proud detached houses on the sea front to form residential homes or language schools, it is possible to see that Westgate’s social tone was very high indeed.²

John Burnett wrote that the best examples of middle-class planning were to be found in the seaside resorts and spas.³ Westgate is one of those well-planned resorts. Most earlier resorts had remained loyal to the restrained and elegant terraces, squares and crescents in Georgian or Regency style - although Bournemouth was an exception - and Dr Granville considered that ‘none but the unrivalled crescents of Bath and Bristol is superior to the Marina at St Leonard’s’.⁴ However, although the Earl de la Warr set the tone of upper-class Bexhill with Palladian facades as late as 1883, in general, the later Victorians turned away from such orderly design. Seaside resorts were often developed by private capital at a time when the Victorian sense of identity was at its strongest and this sense of identity is still obvious at Westgate. [Plates 23 -26]

The many changes of architectural style in the nineteenth century did not meet with universal approval. In 1874 *The Architect*, referring to Bournemouth, where detached villas had been built in a variety of styles, commented that ‘it would be impossible to find anywhere such a vast array of houses of all sorts and sizes in which there is less architectural merit’.⁵ Westgate, which also delighted in a variety of styles and was just in its infancy at that time, was to fare better in the eyes of the critics - but then Bournemouth was not so near to the metropolis, whilst Westgate, London satellite and favourite resort of the fashionable and artistic, was able to experiment with impunity. As Westgate rose from the cornfields, architects, builders and house owners were untrammelled by existing buildings which had to be assimilated; those few that existed before 1865 served their purpose as shelter for the navvies and excavators and were then demolished.



PLATE 23. Westgate in Edwardian Times. The clock tower of Christ Church Congregational Church can be seen.



PLATE 24. Westgate in Edwardian Times. Sir William Ingram's Town Hall and shops



PLATE 25. West Bay. From right to left Waterside, Danehurst and Ledge Point (the last two now demolished).



PLATE 26. The original Westcliff Hotel can be seen standing out on the promontory and in the foreground left St Mildred's Court with its tower, reputed to be the highest in Westgate. Postcards reproduced by permission of K. O'Toole.

Beazley's plans for the estate, although never completed in the form envisaged, still form the basic layout of Westgate today. The wide roads, planned and constructed before any houses, other than the first two at St Mildred's Bay, were erected, mostly follow a grid plan, with Sea Road following the curves of the bays to create a marine drive and Hengist Road to the west, with its distinctive kink, following the line of an ancient field road. The result is that the sea is immediately visible on turning into a road, an important feature of seaside planning.

The railway line and the main Birchington to Margate road divide the town into three parts, which led to natural zoning. The small, but essential, commercial heart was confined to the area near the railway station, but the shops were carefully designed in small blocks, so that there was easy vehicular access to the rear. The accommodation above them was spacious, allowing ample room, not only for a family, but for servants and assistants to live on the premises.

When the first two villas at St Mildred's Bay were upgraded to become an hotel, mews and accommodation for coachmen and grooms were essential, if the carriage trade were to be attracted. The Beach House Mews, erected at the extreme eastern end of the north side of Station Road, were where Joseph Jackson, started his successful business in 1879 (see chapter three). The design of the entrance arch to the mews is interesting, as it is almost identical to the facade of the Hollywood Arms at West Brompton.⁶ The grey-white stock brick is enlivened by arcading and vertical decorative panels of red and black stretchers. [Plate 27]

To the west is the small block of first shops, completed and occupied by 1878; the first occupier, Henry Minter, already listed in Kelly's *Directory* in 1874.⁷ A second block of six, built in the same grey-white brick with red dressings and with exceptionally fine brick work on the upper-storeys and the corner building, soon followed. [Plate 28] Their corrugated iron canopies protected customers from exposure to the elements, a feature found in other exclusive Victorian resorts such as Southport.

In January 1880 advertisements appeared in *Keble's Gazette* for a further six shops to the west. Built by Alfred Lockwood from a design by his son, it is not unlike the first block in appearance, but is of the red bricks that were soon to become so popular and the canopies are of slate. [Plate 29] They were advertised to let; the baker's shop on the corner with stabling and coach house to the rear at £120 a year and the rest at £90.⁸ Lockwood himself remained landlord and all but two were occupied by the census of 1881.⁹



PLATE 27.

Jackson's Stables (formerly Beach House Mews) in Station Road



PLATE 28

Block of canopied shops in Station Road, all occupied by 1878.

Westgate railway station, which opened in April 1871 and is flanked by the stationmaster's house and the Estate Office, was a very modest building. [Plate 30] It was hoped that something more fitting would soon replace it (see chapter one). If it is compared with, for example, the beautiful stone structure at Grange over Sands, another small (although quite different) exclusive development, it is understandable that disgruntled passengers complained about the poor waiting-accommodation for 'blue-blooded Westgate'.¹⁰

Reference has already been made to the problem of the provision in resorts of accommodation for artisans and service-providers and how in Westgate the matter was put early on the agenda. Edmund Gilbert says that at Brighton, 'the fine buildings of the upper and middle-class districts hid from sight the lamentable slums that existed in other parts of the town'.¹¹ Not only did Westgate have no slums, it did not even have cottages for labourers. A correspondent to *Keble's Gazette* in September 1878, commenting on what was 'originally Marsh Bay, an agricultural land with four or five tumble down sheds and a farm, but now for fashion's sake styled Westgate on Sea', asked where the artisans' cottages were, as a labourer's house should not exceed £15 a year in rent and that these were not yet to be found in Westgate.¹²

Burnett says that, 'Where outright purchase of the land was possible and seemed to represent the best bargain, the builder bought', which is what Alfred Lockwood did, for the earliest Estate Map shows him to have bought land to the east and south of the railway, on which he built the houses in Essex and Chester Roads.¹³ Clearly meant for the workforce about to arrive, they were well built and not cramped. In 1883 four cottages in Essex Road, each with a parlour and four bedrooms, let at eight shillings and sixpence per week, were offered for sale at £275 each, freehold; a block of eight in Chester Road, with living room, kitchen and three bedrooms, let at seven shillings per week, were for sale at £250 each; Laurette Villa with two parlours, three bedrooms and two W.Cs, let at £30 per annum, was for sale at £450.¹⁴ The latter was probably meant to accommodate lodgers as basements were not allowed, so that no sub-letting could take place. In 1881 when artisan accommodation was insufficient, most of the houses in Essex and Chester Roads had an unmarried, male lodger from the building trade, but by 1891 just four out of the thirty-two houses in those roads had lodgers who were not family members.¹⁵

Lockwood built his office, a simple construction of flint with brick dressings and weather-boarding, close by the railway on its southern side and at the junction of the wide, tree-lined road named The Grove. [Plate 31] He also built a pair of semi-detached villas, let at £60 per annum, on the east side of the road, which were advertised in 1883 for sale at £1900 freehold.¹⁶ On the west side he built three detached villas in extensive grounds, in one of which, Eccleston, he lived with his family, confirming what Thompson says, that a builder would often live in one of his own houses as proof of confidence.¹⁷



PLATE 29.

Shops in Station Road advertised by Lockwood in January 1880.

The contrast between the grey-white stock brick and corrugated iron canopies of the older block and the red brickwork and slate canopies of the second block is noticeable



PLATE 30. Westgate on Sea Railway Station erected 1871 received complaints that it was not good enough for 'blue-blooded Westgate'.

The original interior woodwork is of an outstandingly high quality - doors and overdoors, fireplace surrounds and overmantels, with matching log and coal boxes, and fitted furniture, including an exquisite corner cabinet, must have been an excellent showpiece for the skills of Lockwood's craftsmen.¹⁸

Westbury Road, on the south side of the railway and parallel to it, links The Grove with St Mildred's Road, the main thoroughfare into town from the highway. There property was a little larger and more expensive than in Essex or Chester Roads; three cottages, rent £40 per annum, were for sale in 1883 at £700 each.¹⁹ In 1881 fifteen of the eighteen houses were occupied by members of the building trade with a high number of carpenters, although the heads of household also included a builder and Lockwood's foreman.²⁰

Parallel to Westbury Road was Harold Road, probably named by William Rogers, whose London home at that time was Harold House Balham.²¹ Here the houses were larger and detached and suited to visitors who wished to rent a house for the season. Most were unoccupied on census night 1881. Hawtrey's school later acquired two of these properties, which were connected by a subterranean passage to the main school buildings, three detached flint-faced villas, facing St Mildred's Road. Quite close to the station, the area suffered from bombing in 1942, when a number of houses were destroyed.²²

North of the railway line were the squares and roads near to the sea. Beazley intended that there should be six squares; only two, each within a minute or two of the station, were completed. However, much further to the west, the eight houses of Cuthbert Terrace were built on the southern side of what was planned to be Princes Square. Completed by 1871, they were described by the local press as 'the prettiest row of houses for their size we ever remember to have seen'.²³ Built on a rise, with a good view to the sea, by Smith and Swain of Margate, one of the few local firms to be used, they are of grey-white brick with white-balustraded balconies.²⁴ [Plate 6, chapter 1] It would appear that they were bought by those like William Rogers as investments, although Edward Inderwick, who described himself as a 'rentier', lived in the most westerly, with its distinctive apse-like end, for some years.²⁵ They appear to have been used as temporary accommodation - in 1881 two were occupied by stonemasons, the élite of the building trade, and others by schoolmasters employed at William Bullock's Ringslow College.²⁶ As the western end of the estate developed slowly, this terrace remained in splendid isolation for some years and by 1891 the houses were all lodging houses.²⁷

Roxburgh's semi-detached four-bedroomed villas on the western side of Roxburgh Road were contemporaneous; advertised as one minute from the station, they were for sale or let and ten were complete by June 1872.²⁸ They had bay windows - a feature which in suburbs helped distinguish such houses from working-class accommodation but at the seaside were an essential feature, because they increased the sea views. As Mrs Merrifield remarked in 1857, 'People went to the sea determined to see as much of it as they could'.²⁹

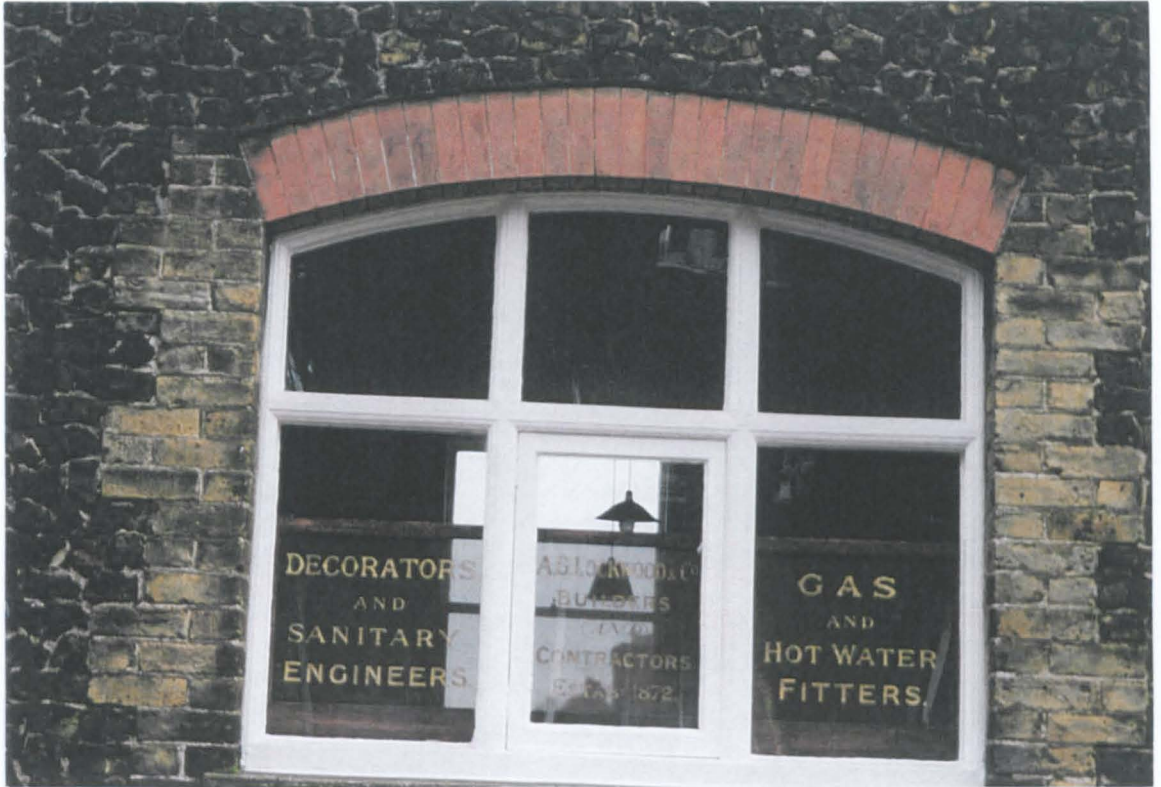


PLATE 31. The window of the office of Alfred Lockwood claims the establishment of the firm in 1872.



PLATE 32 .
Roxburgh Road east.

Neither innovative nor exciting architecturally, their conservatism is in contrast with the villas on the east side of the road, built a more confident decade later.³⁰ [Plate 32] They were, however, immensely popular, being rented, according to the local press, by those who wanted to take a house for the season rather than stay in an hotel.³¹ They were also first home to at least three of Westgate's best known and longest-lived private schools (see chapter five).

Adrian Square developed as Corbett intended and is reminiscent of many fashionable London squares. Its four-storey, grey-white houses, with porticoed entrances approached by flights of steps, were spacious and the walled garden with its lawn, trees and shrubs was private. In 1882 a furnished house with eleven rooms and servants' quarters was advertised at sixteen guineas a week - on a par with a similar property at Eastbourne at the same time.³² These were often taken by a family for the season or were temporary homes for professional men. [Plates 33 & 34]

In 1881 Numbers 4, 23 and 25 were occupied by families with young children and four servants each, presumably on holiday as their names do not occur again; Dr Flint was at Number 11, the Anglican curate, the Rev. Augustus Lyne at Number 12 and a Congregational minister from London at Number 26.³³ In the south-west corner of the square was the Tower House, the exterior of which is almost identical to a house in Redcliffe Gardens in West Brompton.³⁴ [Plate 35] It was used by John Brown as a Retreat for the Habitual Drunkard until the new building on the south side of town was erected.³⁵ The Adrian Square Tower House was used as a school and later by the Ursuline nuns, after their arrival in 1903, as their church until they were able to find new accommodation.³⁶ Many of the houses in the square eventually became schools or lodging-houses. Twenty out of twenty-seven were unoccupied on the night of the 1891 census.³⁷

In the early seventies several detached houses were built in Westgate Road, which runs parallel to the sea and is about a minute's walk from it, and it was these that were soon occupied during the season by Corbett's West Brompton circle. These were amongst the properties bought by Arthur Read from Coutts' in 1919 and had belonged to Corbett until the mortgages were transferred in 1895.³⁸ It is possible that Beazley remained the owner of at least two, as he was insuring 3 and 4 Westgate Road, not only against loss of the buildings, but against loss of rent, for some years.³⁹ The twelve-bedroomed 'The Cedars' on the north side of the road was advertised in 1883 by Lockwood at £2000 freehold and the same-sized 'Adrian House' on the south side, let for three years at £110 per annum, freehold at £1900.⁴⁰ These appear to have been used almost exclusively as lodging-houses and apartments.

PLATE 33.
Adrian Square East



PLATE 34.
Adrian Square West



The first two detached seafront villas, completed by 1871, overlooked the western side of St Mildred's Bay. They were modest in design but had large gardens at the back. Corbett's Letterbook shows him anxious to sell or let them and, to avoid their remaining empty, they were occupied by his acquaintances such as solicitors Henry Houseman and Spencer and Thomas Lewin.⁴¹ Nearby was the distinctive Osborne House, with its tower similar to that of Osborne House on the Isle of Wight. Built by William Wigmore of Walham Green in yellow stock-brick it was advertised for sale in 1875.⁴² It became, in succession, the County Club, a private residence, a school and eventually an hotel.⁴³

The four bungalows in Sussex Gardens overlooking St Mildred's Bay with their observation towers were set in spacious gardens. Unfortunately only part of Sea Tower remains. [Plate 36] However, an artist's impression of St Mildred's Bay from the sea dated 1876 and details in auction catalogues give an idea of what they were like. [Fig. 5] In 1878 William Ingram began, as described in chapter one, the systematic purchase of six adjoining plots in Sussex Gardens to create Sussex Mansions, a block of six dwellings. [Plate 37] At the northern end Loudwater, with its balconied 'apse' overlooking the sea, was his own home until 1887 when he purchased 'The Bungalow' on the death of Lady Wilson. It later became a private 'crammer' (almost certainly flouting the covenants) and eventually an hotel.⁴⁴ [Plate 38] In 1880 he paid £2000 for more land and erected St Mildred's Hotel with its lawns and gardens.⁴⁵ The hotel was connected to the Baths and Assembly Rooms which had opened in 1880, becoming part of a spacious and select area with no danger of overbuilding, where natural and built environments were in harmony.⁴⁶ The memorial to Sir William erected by his sons is in the retaining wall of his former 'estate'.

Two houses were built overlooking the centre of Westgate Bay in the mid 1870s. William Rogers' address in Kelly's *Directory for Kent* of 1874 is given as Danehurst, the house built for him on a corner plot with views across the bay towards Reculver Towers and, on a clear day, to the Isle of Sheppey. The house, which was converted to a hotel after the death of Ann Rogers in 1923, fell into disrepair in the war and was demolished. Fortunately there are numerous views of Westgate Bay, which show it and its neighbour on the opposite corner of Rowena Road, the Weigall's Ledge Point. [Plate 25]

Much can be learnt about the quality of life enjoyed in these seafront mansions from the details of the auction of the contents of Danehurst, which took place over three days in 1923. It had nine bedrooms, dressing-room, two bathrooms, day and night-nurseries, dining room (carpet 16 feet by 12 feet), drawing room (carpet 18 feet by 11 feet), morning room, conservatory overlooking the sea and billiard room. There was a servants' hall, housekeeper's room and maids' bedrooms, the usual domestic offices, garage with rooms over and a tennis court.⁴⁷ This catalogue and one for the sale of the contents of Cliffside in 1881 give further proof that Westgate was intended to be a high-class residential estate.



PLATE 35.
 Tower House
 Adrian Square



PLATE 36.
 Sea Tower

WESTGATE-ON-SEA.

Particulars.

A VERY ATTRACTIVE

FREEHOLD BUNGALOW

KNOWN AS

“SEA TOWER”

Well situate near the East end of the Parade in an excellent corner position facing the Sea, about 10 minutes' walk from the Station on the South Eastern and Chatham Railway within easy reach of the excellent Thanet Golf Links and Schools and Shops of the district brick built and tiled-roofed and containing the following accommodation viz:—

ON THE TOP FLOOR:—A Bedroom about 15ft. 2in. by 15ft. 0in. with Stove; and balcony overlooking the Sea;

ON THE HALF LANDING:—Two large spaces for luggage linen closet and window seat fitted with lockers;

ON THE FIRST FLOOR:—Front Bedroom about 15ft. 6in. by 15ft. 4in. with Dressing Room about 9ft. 6in. by 6ft. 10in. another front bedroom about 14ft. 6in. by 13ft. 4in., Two Back Bedrooms about 15ft. 9in. by 14ft. 4in. and about 14ft. 6in. by 13ft. 0in. respectively and Two Servants bedrooms each about 9ft. 6in. by 8ft. 3in. approached by separate staircase;

ON THE HALF LANDING:—w.c. and cistern cupboard with draw off tap;

ON THE GROUND FLOOR:—A good Hall about 16ft. 0in. by 7ft. 0in. Drawing Room about 17ft. 3in. into the Bay by 14ft. 4in., Dining Room about 19ft. 9in. by 14ft. 4in. with serving hatch and speaking tube to kitchen, Morning Room about 14ft. 6in. by 14ft. 6in., Sitting Room, about 9ft. 10in. by 8ft. 2in., a good Kitchen, Scullery, Housekeeper's Room, Pantry, w.c., Tradesmen's and Garden entrances;

ON THE BASEMENT:—Boot Cleaning Room, Larder, and Wine and Coal cellars;

and also a paved yard at the rear with brick built shed and servants w.c. and entrance from side road, and a tennis lawn in front with gate on to the parade; the whole having a frontage to the South side of the Parade of about 49ft. 8in., and a return frontage to the West side of the new road of about 186ft. 8in.; the situation of the premises, amidst similar property, commanding a fine sea view, in a place so easily accessible and so justly celebrated for its health giving air, renders them specially suitable for a family seaside dwelling

AND AN

EXCELLENT PURCHASE FOR

OCCUPATION OR INVESTMENT.

The drainage arrangements of the premises have been renewed by the Vendor.

The blinds and gas fittings are to be taken by the purchaser at a Valuation to be settled in the usual way the remainder of the fixtures will be included in the Sale.

The Vendor reserves the right to sell his furniture by Auction on the premises at any time before the completion of the purchase.

Note.—The Vendor sells the freehold up to the sea but as regards the portion beyond the garden wall subject to and with the benefit of a certain Indenture of covenant dated the 16th day of November 1870 and made between the late SIR ERASMUS WILSON of the one part and the late WILLIAM CORBETT of the other part by which (*inter alia*) the owners of this property are freed from the expense of maintaining the sea walls and pathway. This Indenture or a copy can be inspected at the offices of the Vendor's solicitors and any purchaser shall be deemed to have notice of all its contents.

The property included in the sale was together with other property, at one time subject to a certain Free Rent of £2 12s. and to a certain Land Tax of £2 14s. 7d. but it is believed that they have long since been redeemed or discharged, no claim having been made in respect thereof since the purchase of the property by the said SIR ERASMUS WILSON in 1870.

Frontispiece of Catalogue for the sale by Auction of Sea Tower 25 November 1903.

FIG.5.

Reproduced by permission of John King of Rogers and Hambidge, Westgate.

...the Sussex Mansions... had been built by the end of the...
...the Sussex Mansions... had been built by the end of the...
...the Sussex Mansions... had been built by the end of the...
...the Sussex Mansions... had been built by the end of the...
...the Sussex Mansions... had been built by the end of the...



PLATE 37.
Sussex Mansions

...brought their land and built their houses... for only a few weeks of the...
...the very rich and it would seem that they did not buy their properties for...
...enjoyment of their family and, perhaps, as status symbols. Smith...
...says that better than any other symbol, the house evidenced and expressed status and that...
...the house because a sign for the class of its owner and the status of its...
...parties of social intercourse...
...for doing, at the dinner...



PLATE 38.
Loudwater
William Ingram's house

Other detached double-fronted marine residences had been built by the end of the 1870s on the prime corner sites. St Mildred's Court, built for Alfred Waterman, a timber merchant, had the highest observation tower in Westgate and a magnificent mahogany staircase with newel posts which could have graced any country mansion. Later buildings, each with its own large grounds, had to be slotted in; an enormous large-scale Estate Map of 1882, showing each individual property, reveals just how much land was used up by them.⁴⁸ The plan accompanying the auction details of Cliffside exemplifies this. [Fig. 6]

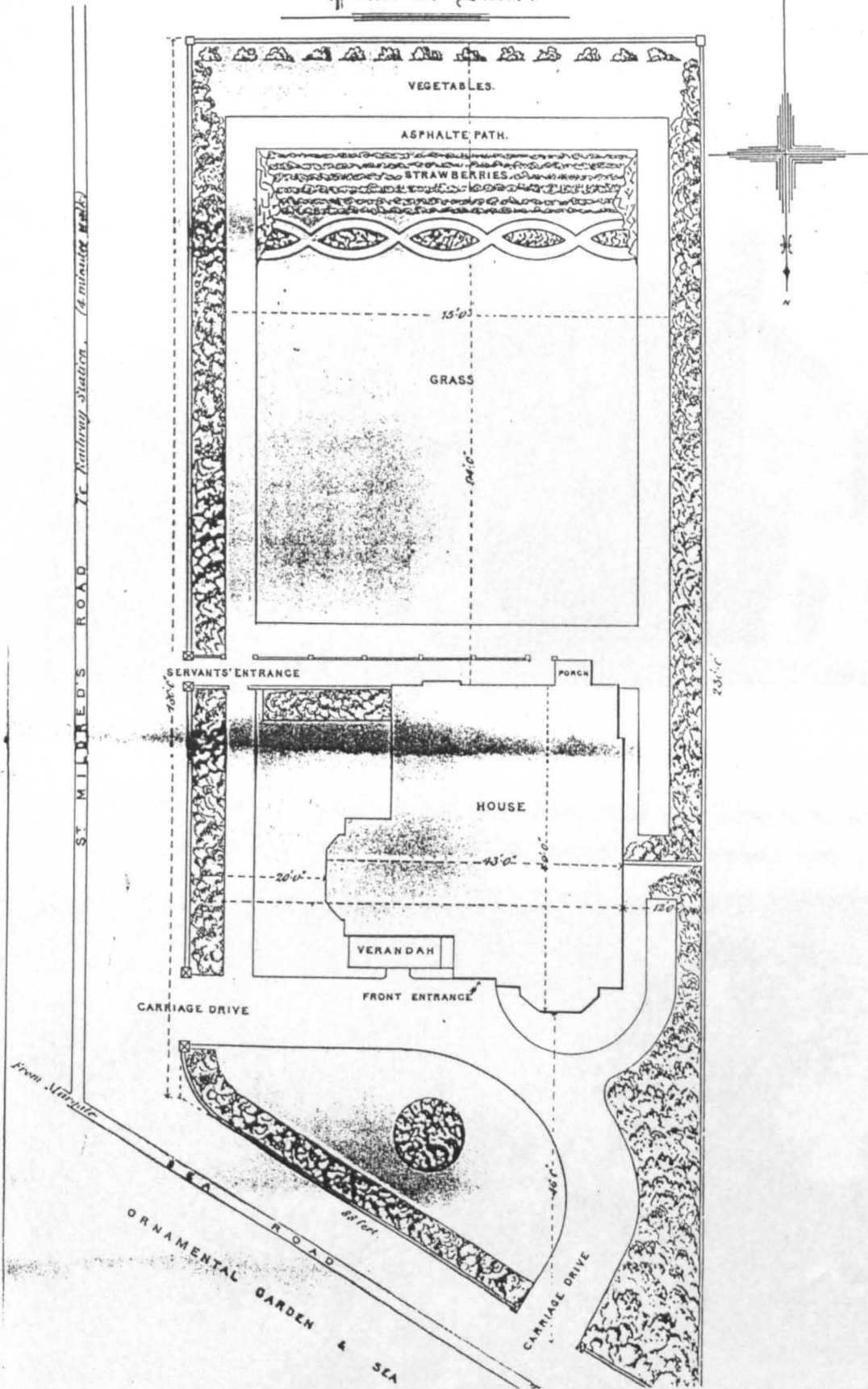
William Parkinson's St Mildred's Terrace (see chapter three) was well situated within a short distance from the station and, when first built, the houses had good views to the sea. Spacious and attractive, with features such as bay windows and French casements opening on to verandahs, they were well suited to becoming lodging-houses, being advertised as an investment with rents at £65 per annum (£90 for the larger corner property) on a three-year tenancy. [Plates 39 & 40]

Most houses in the nineteenth century were rented, the exceptions being those of the very rich or of skilled artisans. F.M.L. Thompson opines that probably only ten per cent were owner-occupied in the pre-1914 period, although he says that he does not have evidence to prove it.⁴⁹ It is difficult, for various reasons, to work out precisely the number of owner-occupiers in Westgate during this period, but it would appear to have been above that percentage and they would appear to have been from those two categories. Those who bought their land and built their houses to live near the sea for only a few weeks of the year were the very rich and it would seem that they did not buy their properties for investment, but for the enjoyment of their family and, perhaps, as status symbols. Burnett says that 'better than any other symbol, the house conferred and announced status' and that 'the home became a stage for the playing out of roles and the conduct of an accepted pattern of social intercourse' so that houses, for example, had to have dining rooms, strictly for dining, as the dinner party was the apogee of the social scene.⁵⁰

It is not easy to find the cost of these properties, as most changed hands at auctions or by private treaty, but if Lockwood was seeking £3000 for the twelve-bedroomed, but still modest, Goodwin House in 1883, it is likely that those with amenities such as billiard rooms, libraries, extensive servants' quarters and a multitude of domestic offices, cost much more.⁵¹ Several no longer exist, being too large, too difficult to modernise and too reliant upon an army of servants. Of those that remain, most have had houses or flats built in the gardens, which were also too big to be cared for without an outdoor staff.

By 1880 the fashionable and artistic had already begun to gather in Westgate (see chapter three). In his book *Sweetness and Light* Mark Girouard writes in the chapter on 'The Architecture of Enjoyment' how this inevitably meant the adoption of the 'Queen Anne' style, which had appeared in London, especially in the streets of Chelsea, in the 1870s.⁵²

CLIFFSIDE, — WESTGATE ON SEA,
 Plan of Land.



Plan in the Catalogue for the sale by Auction on 8 August 1881 of Cliffside Sea Road which had a double-frontage of 88ft by 180ft. The catalogue was printed by Parkins and Gotto of Oxford Street. The original owner of the house, which had children's apartments, was Gainsford Gotto. Solicitor and auctioneer were both from London. FIG.6. Reproduced by permission of John King of Rogers and Hambidge, Westgate.



PLATE 39. St Mildred's Terrace in Westgate Road. Eight houses near to the sea and station and used as lodging-houses. Built by William Parkinson and completed 1882

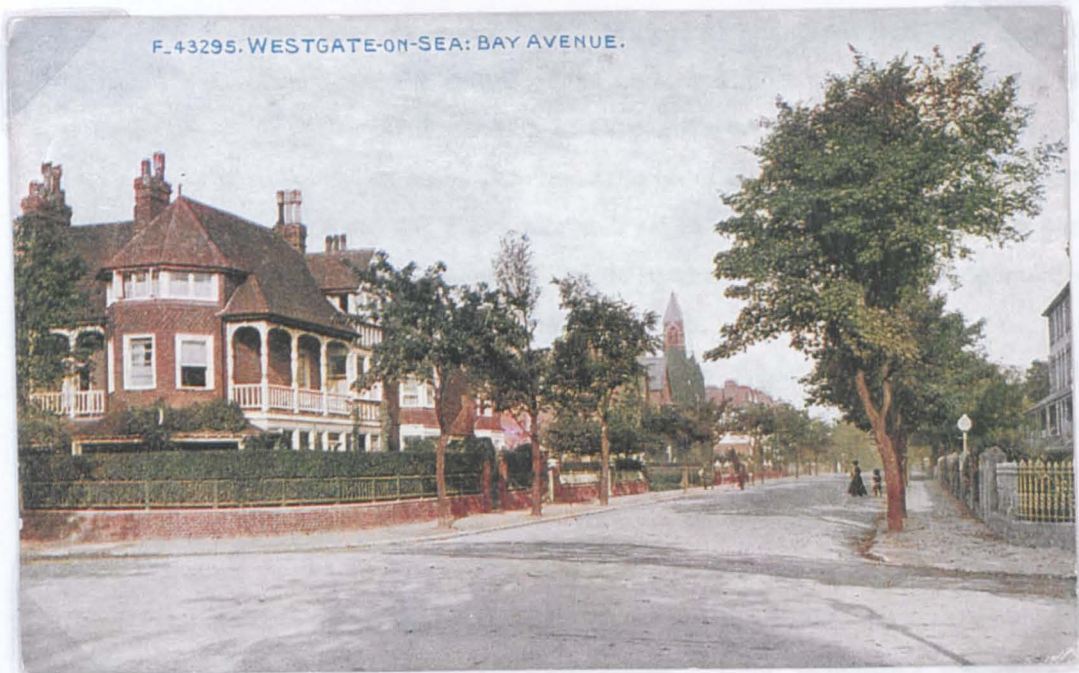


PLATE 40 Greville Lodge is opposite to St Mildred's Terrace, the railings of which can be seen on the right. The terrace has since lost its railings and Westgate Road has been re-named Westgate Bay Avenue. Reproduced by permission of K.OToole.

Girouard explains that, 'With red brick and white-painted sash windows, with curly pedimented-gables and delicate brick panels of sunflowers, swags or cherubs, with small window panes, steep roofs, and curving bay windows, with wooden balconies and little fancy oriels jutting out where one would least expect them', it was well equipped to become a holiday style.⁵³

Girouard says that 'the architectural cocktail' is particularly well exemplified at Westgate in Waterside, designed, with stables to match, by Ernest George for William Peto, a relative of his new partner, H.A. Peto. It was built in 1880; the date is on the western of the three intricately decorated gables; the WHP monogram on the most eastern. Girouard describes it as a delicate variation on 'Queen Anne' in the manner of Norman Shaw.⁵⁴ John Newman considers it to be the best of Westgate's buildings.⁵⁵ [Plates 41 - 44]

Girouard is most interested, however, in Exbury, the house designed by Beazley for A. B. Mitford, who was interested in the art of Japan where he had travelled extensively. It also has Norman Shaw mannerisms - tile hanging, a gable undercut by a bay window, a smaller gable tucked into the corner of a bigger one - with a two storey verandah projecting flush into the bay. The detailing such as the spindly supports and rails and the glazing of the windows show, according to Girouard, a Japanese influence.⁵⁶ [Plate 45] Even the door furniture shows the influence of the 'Queen Anne' movement. [Plate 46] The interior has many features characteristic of the style already made fashionable in Chelsea - for example, the drawing-room inglenook, with Mitford's monogram and the date 1880 entwined in a sunflower over the centre of the arch, is almost identical to the one at 44 Tite Street Chelsea used as an illustration in Girouard's book.⁵⁷ [Plate 47] The study and dining-room have their original wood panelling; the latter its original blue, white and green Morgan-tiled fireplace. [Plate 48] The house was set in an acre of ground with 'a perfect tennis lawn, a smaller lawn with swing and artistic summer house and gardens planted with choice and rare shrubs, plants and fruit trees'. [Fig. 7]

In the next two decades many more 'Queen Anne' houses were erected in Westgate. Built of expensive hand-made Kentish red brick with decorative panels, tile hung, with sash windows, hipped roofs and white verandahs, sometimes, as at Ellingham, extending all round the house, they were pointers to the wealth, the confidence and individuality of their creators. Not only were they costly to build, but their maintenance demanded an army of painters and decorators to keep the beautifully turned-balustrades and railings and the delicately fretted-bargeboards - John Betjeman's woodwork that wiggled round him - in good order so near to the sea.⁵⁸ [Plates 48 - 53]

PLATE 41
Waterside



PLATE 42.
The intricate plaster
gables with the WHP
monogram and the
date 1880.

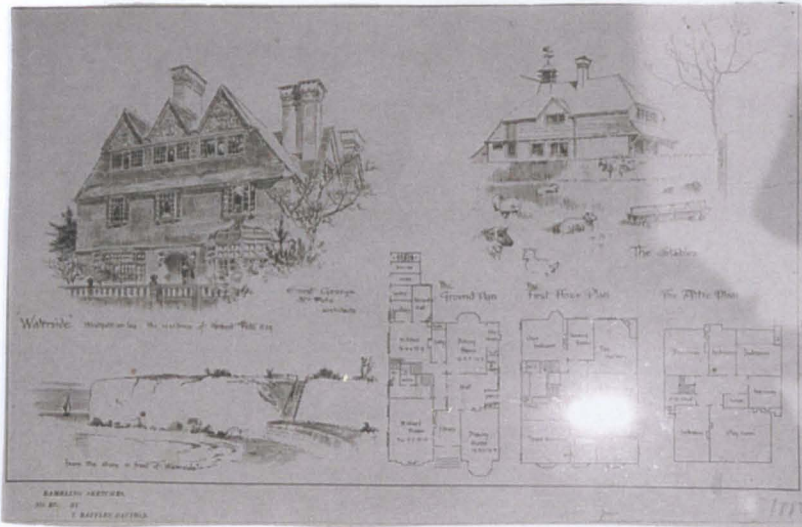


PLATE 43 Waterside was designed by Ernest George for William Peto, the son of his partner, with stables to match - **PLATE 44**. The original drawings are in the possession of Ivor Read, by whose permission they were photographed.



PLATE 45. Exbury House in Sea Road

PLATE 47. The interior of Exbury has many features of the Queen Anne style. The drawing room is almost identical to the room in 44 The Street, which was used to illustrate the style. It has Mitford's arrangement and the sunflower motif.



PLATE 46. Exbury was designed by Charles Beazley for A.B. Mitford. Mark Girouard comments on the Japanese influence. There are many indications that the house was designed in the fashionable 'Queen Anne' style - even the door furniture bears the sunflower motif.



PLATE 47. The interior of Exbury has many features of the new style. This fireplace in the drawing-room is almost identical to the one in 44 Tite Street Chelsea, which Girouard uses to illustrate the style. It has Mitford's monogram and the date 1880 entwined in a sunflower in the centre.



PLATE 48.

Tiles such as these in the dining-room were the very height of fashion.

Photographed by permission of the Sisters of the Daughters of the Congregation of Jesus.

The Auctioneers beg to draw especial attention to the fact that the purchaser has the power to build one or two Houses on the side garden facing the Sea, and Stabling on the strip of Land in rear of House, with Right of Way to Rowena Road.

PARTICULARS
OF THE
ATTRACTIVE & SUBSTANTIALLY BUILT
FREEHOLD RESIDENCE

KNOWN AS

“ EXBURY HOUSE, ”

WESTGATE-ON-SEA,

Built to the order of A. B. Freeman-Mitford, Esq., C.B., under the personal supervision of G. N. Boasley, Esq., F.R.I.B.A.,
WHICH STANDS

DETACHED, IN LOVELY GROUNDS OF CONSIDERABLY OVER
ONE ACRE,

Laid out by the well-known Landscape Gardener, Mr. Burbridge, at very great expense, and
PLANTED WITH CHOICE AND RARE SHRUBS, PLANTS AND FRUIT TREES.

THERE IS ALSO

A PERFECT TENNIS LAWN,

A SMALLER LAWN WITH SWING,

AND AN ARTISTIC SUMMER HOUSE,

WHILST IN THE REAR IS A

STRIP OF LAND,

AVAILABLE FOR THE ERECTION OF STABLING, WITH RIGHT OF WAY TO ROWENA ROAD.

The House & Grounds have a Frontage of 180 feet to Sea Road,

And enjoy the advantage of a West aspect, combined with uninterrupted and extensive
Sea and Coast Views.

The Accommodation is arranged as follows:

- TOP FLOOR.—LEFT FRONT BEDROOM, with Register Stove, Stone Fender. RIGHT FRONT BEDROOM, fitted Register Stove, Stone Fender, polished Deal Chest of 12 Drawers, and Washstand Cupboard with Marble top. SIDE BEDROOM (LOOKING SOUTH), fitted with Register Stove, Stone Fender, polished Deal Chest of 8 Drawers in recess, and Washstand with Marble top. Two SERVANTS' BEDROOMS, fitted with Register Stoves, Stone Fender, Chest of 8 Drawers, Washstands, and nest of Shelves.
- ON THE LANDING.—HOUSEMAID'S CLOSET, with lead-lined Sink (Hot and Cold Water laid on), Water Closet with valve apparatus, and a Linen Room, Box Loft in the Rear, Speaking Tubes to Drawing Room and Servants' Hall. The Staircase throughout to Ground Floor is of polished Pine, with massive Balustrade and Handrails.
- FIRST FLOOR.—LARGE BEDCHAMBER, with Register Stove, Stone Fender, stained Pine Overmantel with bevelled Plate, and two dwarf cupboards. This Bedroom leads on to a charming Veranda. LEFT FRONT BEDCHAMBER (18ft. 6in. by 14ft. 9in.), with Register Stove and two stained Deal Wardrobe Cupboards. SIDE BEDROOM communicating (18ft. 9in. by 13in. 9in.), fitted Register Stove and two Cupboards. LARGE BACK BEDROOM communicating (18ft. by 15ft.), fitted Register Stove and large double Wardrobe Cupboard. LEFT BACK ROOM, fitted Register Stove, Stone Fender, stained Chest and Cupboard under.
- ON THE LANDING.—BATH ROOM, with Hot and Cold supplies, Water Closet with valve apparatus, Housemaid's Closet, with Hot and Cold Water, Ivory Speaking Tube to Ground Floor.
- GROUND FLOOR.—ENTRANCE HALL. DINING ROOM (24ft. by 12ft. 9in.), with stained Pine Dado, handsome fitment of Sideboard to match, with Shelves over, Overmantel with bevelled Plates, Slow-Combustion Stove with Tiled Cheeks and Stone Fender. HANDSOME DRAWING ROOM, with deep Bay Window and Side Windows opening on to Veranda, an Antique Stone Mantel and Recess, with polished Deal Archway over and Side Seats, polished Deal 4-division dwarf Bookcase, Ivory Speaking Tube to Domestic Offices. LIBRARY.—Register Stove, Stone Mantel, and set of three dwarf Bookshelves round room. INNER HALL.—A Stove enclosed in Doulton's Tiles with Marble top, Water Closet with valve apparatus. The DOMESTIC OFFICES, entirely shut off from the other part of the house, comprise a LARGE KITCHEN, with Kitchen, polished Pine Dresser and Cupboard; SCULLERY, Stone Sink, with hot and cold supplies; SERVANTS' HALL, with range of Cupboards; PANTRY, with hot and cold supplies; Water Closet. In the BASEMENT, capital WINE AND BEER CELLARS, and cool LARDER. Side Entrance for Tradesmen.

The Blinds, Cornices, Cornice Pelm, Picture Rods, the whole of the valuable Pictures (naming a large item in furnishing), the Summer House, Tool House, and all the rare Plants, Shrubs, Fruit Trees, and Swing, will be included in the Purchase.

GAS AND WATER LAID ON.

POSSESSION WILL BE GIVEN ON COMPLETION OF PURCHASE.

The Sanitary arrangements are certified as being in perfect order by
Mr. Daniel Emptage, S.E.R.P.C.

PLANS OF THE PROPERTY MAY BE SEEN AT THE AUCTIONEERS' OFFICES, AND WILL BE PRODUCED AT THE
TIME OF SALE.

N.B. In the event of the Property not selling in its entirety the Auctioneers will proceed to offer the House and Land (respectively coloured green and brown on the plan) in one Lot, and the Garden in another Lot, and the purchaser of each Lot will be required to share a moiety of expense in erecting a party wall.

Details of Exbury for sale by Auction on 6 June 1891.

FIG. 7.

Reproduced by permission of John King of Rogers and Hambidge, Westgate.



PLATES 49, 50 and 51. Other examples of Westgate 'Queen Anne'.

(Top) **Ellingham** in Sea Road. (Centre) **Ellesmere** in Westgate Road, but with fine views towards the sea across Sussex Gardens and (Bottom) **Rochester House** in Sea Road.



PLATES 52 and 53. Still further examples of 'holiday Queen Anne'.

(Top) Roxburgh Road east and (bottom) Forest House at the junction of Sea Road with Westgate Bay Avenue.

High quality brickwork points to the skills of the bricklayers - to be seen even in the post 1880 shops with their gables and finials. 21 Station Road, William Minter's draper's shop (which it would appear, he owned freehold), displays the date 1883 in a cartouche set in an intricate pattern of diapered brickwork.⁵⁹ Osbourne's dairy with its tall chimney and curly pedimented corner gable was the first of a distinctive row of ten shops built in the mid-eighties. [Plates 54 - 57]

Probably the last two houses to be built in this style were Thanet Lodge and Surbiton Lodge in the early twentieth century. Thanet Lodge, described by the local press as a 'palatial residence' was built for James Rossdale, a wealthy London Jew, who had other property interests in the town.⁶⁰ The twelve-bedroomed Surbiton Lodge designed by a Margate architect and built, it would appear, speculatively by Lockwood's, was set in spacious grounds with room for a tennis court and with two carriage drives. Described in the sale literature as 'a medium size residence', it did not sell immediately, for such properties with their need for an army of servants were becoming less popular.⁶¹

In 1904 three large, detached houses, the first to be built on the seafront at Westgate Bay (re-named West Bay) for two decades, were erected by Bannister and Fletcher, well-known London architects. Built in different styles, their distinctive roof tops enhanced the skyline of the Bay. [Plate 58] The Observatory merits a mention by John Newman.⁶² A short distance to the west Sir William Ingram's company, on land which had been planned to be the westernmost square, completed an L shaped development of superior houses round a communal private lawn just before the outbreak of the First World War.⁶³ The standard of the built environment, and with it the high social tone, was maintained.

Beazley's original plans show the land south of the high road to be laid out for large mansion type houses in spacious grounds of about seven acres. Thompson says that the 'upper-middle class wanted sufficient wealth to gratify an ambition to live in the country in style, while most likely remaining in business or professional life and investing only a small proportion of their total assets in a country property'.⁶⁴ They needed medium large houses, plus plenty of servants, to be able to entertain; a coachhouse, stables and lodge and large garden with greenhouses and conservatory were essentials.

The ground to the south was advertised as the highest in Westgate - height always added prestige, whether at Edgbaston, Hampstead, Eastbourne or Westgate - and it was 'sheltered to the north and north east'.⁶⁵ Four such houses were built. Mertens' Streete Court, now a private dwelling converted into flats, was the most easterly. Its neighbour was Doon House, the fifteen-bedroomed residence built for Alexander McClymont. In 1902 the estate was sold and divided and the original house, then occupied by Doon House school, was later used by other educational establishments, and finally purchased by the Roman Catholic Church.



PLATE 54. High quality brickwork on the early shops at the eastern end of Station Road.



PLATES 55. Diapered brick gable with 1883 cartouche on shops at the western end of Station Road.



PLATE 56. The 'Gothic' style Bridge Hotel (formerly the Station Hotel) at the junction of Cuthbert Road and St Mildred's Road. Occupied in 1881 by William Parkinson, hotelkeeper and builder.



PLATE 57. Osbourne's Dairy, with its curly pedimented gable, built a decade later on the opposite corner to the hotel.



PLATE 58. Sea Road west. The Ingleton (on the left with the decorative white woodwork was the most westerly house in Sea Road from 1880 to 1904. Coutts' extended the road in 1903 (see chapter one) to become **Sea Drive** and three distinctive houses were built 1904-5. **The Observatory** (with the tower) was a private residence, but later became a boys' prep school, first known as The Observatory and then as Flete House. The next two houses started as private residences, but became private hotels in the inter-war years. The varying roof styles create an interesting sky-line.



PLATE 59. The White House was also built 1904-5 and was the home of Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft from 1905. It has fine sea views from its bay windows.

Much of the rest of the land was sold to the proprietors of Doon House Preparatory School, by then well established, and the foundations of a new school building in neo-Georgian style were laid in 1906.⁶⁶ The quality of the building is high and inside, a central staircase sweeps up to the first floor, with a landing halfway where a splendid window, with stained-glass panels bearing the school mottoes and the coats of arms of the colleges of the founders, looks out across the town to the sea.

To its west was the twenty-bedroomed Tower House, a purpose-built Retreat for Habitual Drunkards. Set in two and a half acres of grounds, its tower with unique views over the town and sea, gives it an impressive appearance. Subsequently acquired by the nuns of the Order of Les Oiseaux, a chapel by F.A Walters was added and its Gothic apse still dominates the southern skyline today.

The most western of the four mansions was Hatton House, today the main building of the Ursuline Convent. It remains much as it was when it was built in the 'Italianate style' complete with lodge and stables, for William Jarrett in 1886. Its entrance hall has a fine plastered ceiling and a staircase with a newel post intricately carved with the sunflower, the motif of the 'Queen Anne' movement.

Hidden behind their perimeter walls and approached by carriage drives, only the Tower House was clearly visible from the road, so that the occupants of these residences were ensured of the complete privacy they desired. These properties would have been in the same class as those built at The Meads in Eastbourne, mansion type houses in the vernacular style, and part of the second stage of Henry Currey's development for the Duke of Devonshire. The Sussex properties were, as David Cannadine says, designed for those who wished to emulate in a small way the aristocratic lifestyle of Compton Place.⁶⁷ There was no resident aristocrat to emulate in Westgate, but these properties matched in grandeur and style anything that the local gentry could offer.

In 1886 Mertens released on to the land market some of the fifty acres which he had retained to the south. Although it was still hoped that villas would be erected - the auction sale literature even included a suitable design - it was not to be. The purchaser, the Kent and Sussex Land Society, laid out a grid plan of small plots suited to the speculative builder to build either for investment or for the new class of owner-occupiers, skilled workers earning good wages or with working children living at home. The three-bedroomed houses, set in small front and rear gardens, had a kitchen and scullery and a lobby leading into a bay windowed-front parlour. [Plate 60] 'The possession of a parlour, appropriately furnished with ritual objects...was an important part of the struggle for achievement and respectability', wrote Burnett.⁶⁸ The Streete Court Estate was started in the 1890s and the reports of the District Surveyor show a steady stream of applicants for planning permission from mostly local builders, whilst the baptism registers show the houses were soon occupied by young families, where the father was in skilled manual work.⁶⁹



PLATE 60. 94 Belmont Road built c 1900 on the Streete Court Estate and close to the fields of the Quex Park Estate. Covenants prohibited 'the erection of swings, roundabouts or huts on wheels'.



PLATE 61. Wellesley Road houses built in the 1930s on the south side of town.

Westgate was not affected by the severe accommodation problem that existed nationally after the First World War and the Parish Council, reluctant to see any lowering of tone in Westgate, did not consider that there was any need for local authority housing provision, when it was asked by the Rural District Council to list its requirements.⁷⁰ However, in 1926 the first eight council houses were erected to the south-west on some of the farm land sold to Arthur Read in 1919 and some fifty more were built in the inter-war years.⁷¹

At the same time a Margate builder started a development of small private houses for sale or let on the southernmost part of land formerly held by Mertens. Within a decade six new roads and nearly two hundred houses were constructed; in 1937 these were advertised at £500 to £600 each; the more expensive had garages.⁷² They were much more modest than most Westgate housing, but were well situated within cycling distance of the new air base at Manston, which was attracting skilled workers and their families to Westgate. [Plate 61]

Some development took place on the western seafront between the wars. These houses were modern and less servant dependent than those built in the early years, but were of a good standard, as the land was still sold subject to restrictive covenants and stipulations regarding minimum price.⁷³ They were being built at the same time as those on the land to the east released by the Governors of the Bethlehem and Bridewell Hospitals for a similar high class development. The houses were as individual as those of earlier days, but the development led Mr Heatherington, the Local Government Inspector to say that there was now (1935) no way of telling where Margate ended and Westgate began, or where Westgate ended and Birchington began, except that in the latter case there was the Golf Course in between.⁷⁴ [Plates 63 - 64]

There are relatively few public buildings in Westgate, further proof that it was not developed primarily as a resort. St Michael's Home - the only convalescent home in Westgate until after the Second World War - was built in 1895 on rising ground a short distance from the sea and overlooking the first field of the new golf course. The Sisters of the London Deaconesses' Institution had come to Westgate in 1876 to open a small convalescent home for 'women of the middle and artisan classes and upper-domestic servants'.⁷⁵ From one modest house in Westbury Road, they expanded to three for the 'reception of necessitous men and women [who] must bring a letter of recommendation'.⁷⁶ In 1892 their Chaplain and Treasurer, the Rev. George Prescott, vicar of St Michael's and All Angels Paddington, left money for a purpose-built home. His executors bought the site from Coutts' and three years later the house was complete.⁷⁷ On a corner site, built of yellow stock-brick with red brick dressings, it has Gothic arched windows and an unusual facade across the angle, with fine terracotta panels over the doorway equal to Westgate's best 'Queen Anne'. [Plates 65 & 66]



PLATE 62. The L shaped development of seven houses around a private lawn built by Sir William Ingram's Company in 1913 on the corner of Domneva Road and Sea Drive.



PLATE 63. 103 Sea Road built in the early 1920s (first listed in the 1924 *Directory*).



PLATE 64. 111 Sea Road, a double-fronted house, first listed 1935.

These institutions were not necessarily ones at the most exclusive of resorts, as
evidence the convalescent home at Richmond with its "luxurious High Gothic design" was
situated only All Saints' Margaret Street and at Richmond. A residential was



part of village and was demolished in 1904. The St Michael's Hotel and the Wycliffe were
built in 1895 by the London Diocesan Deaconesses' Institution.

PLATE 65. St Michael's Convalescent Home built for the London Diocesan Deaconesses' Institution in 1895.



deaconesses' home at Richmond. The building was designed by the architect John
James Burnet and was built in 1895. It was one of the most important buildings in the
village at that time.

PLATE 66. Decorative terracotta panels over the doorway.

Such institutions were not uncommon, even at the most exclusive of resorts; at Eastbourne the convalescent home at Holywell with its 'sumptuous High Gothic chapel' was connected with All Saints' Margaret Street and at Bournemouth a sanatorium was established under the patronage of the Brompton Hospital.⁷⁸ They were usually sponsored by the well-heeled and well-connected and patrons of St Michael's included the Countess of Halsbury, Lady Rose Weigall and Mrs George Marjoriebanks, wife of a partner in Coutts'.⁷⁹ Usually these buildings were discreetly on the outskirts of the town, but they were impressive enough to display the generosity of their Lords and Ladies Bountiful.

Westgate had only three purpose-built hotels. On the eastern extremity what was originally known as Greavson's house became the Nottingham Castle, which came to be frequented by the coastguard fraternity, whose station and houses were nearby and was probably simply a pub, but such a description would have been an anathema to the good burghers of Westgate and its head of household described himself as hotelkeeper in the census of 1891, although there were no visitors staying and it had been unoccupied in 1881.⁸⁰ The 'charmingly irregular and capricious' Beach House Hotel was created from a pair of villas and was demolished in 1904.⁸¹ The St Mildred's Hotel and the Westcliff were both built in 1883 in very different styles. The Westcliff stood proud on the promontory, as Sarah Howell says, 'a guide to the status of its habitués'.⁸² It was destroyed by fire in January 1938.⁸³ Its replacement is now a home for the Royal Institute for the Blind. St Mildred's Hotel with its distinctive canopied entrance has been divided into flats.

Of the purpose-built hotels only the Bridge Hotel, formerly the Station Hotel, remains. It is interesting that it is considerably bigger and more impressive than the hotel built near the new Margate station (now the Flag and Whistle), which demonstrates the importance given to the businessman traveller in early Westgate. Built on a junction site within a minute's walk of the station, added interest has been given to a rather plain Gothic style building by avoiding, as at St Michael's, a sharp angle facing the eastern entrance to Cuthbert Road. In fact in pre-1914 Westgate there are no angles at corners of main roads, a feature which is very common in Victorian London suburbs.⁸⁴ The flint walls bonded in red brick, which marked out those buildings which were part of the original estate, are also rounded at the corners. This all helped to create an harmonious picture and to enforce the impression of building of quality.

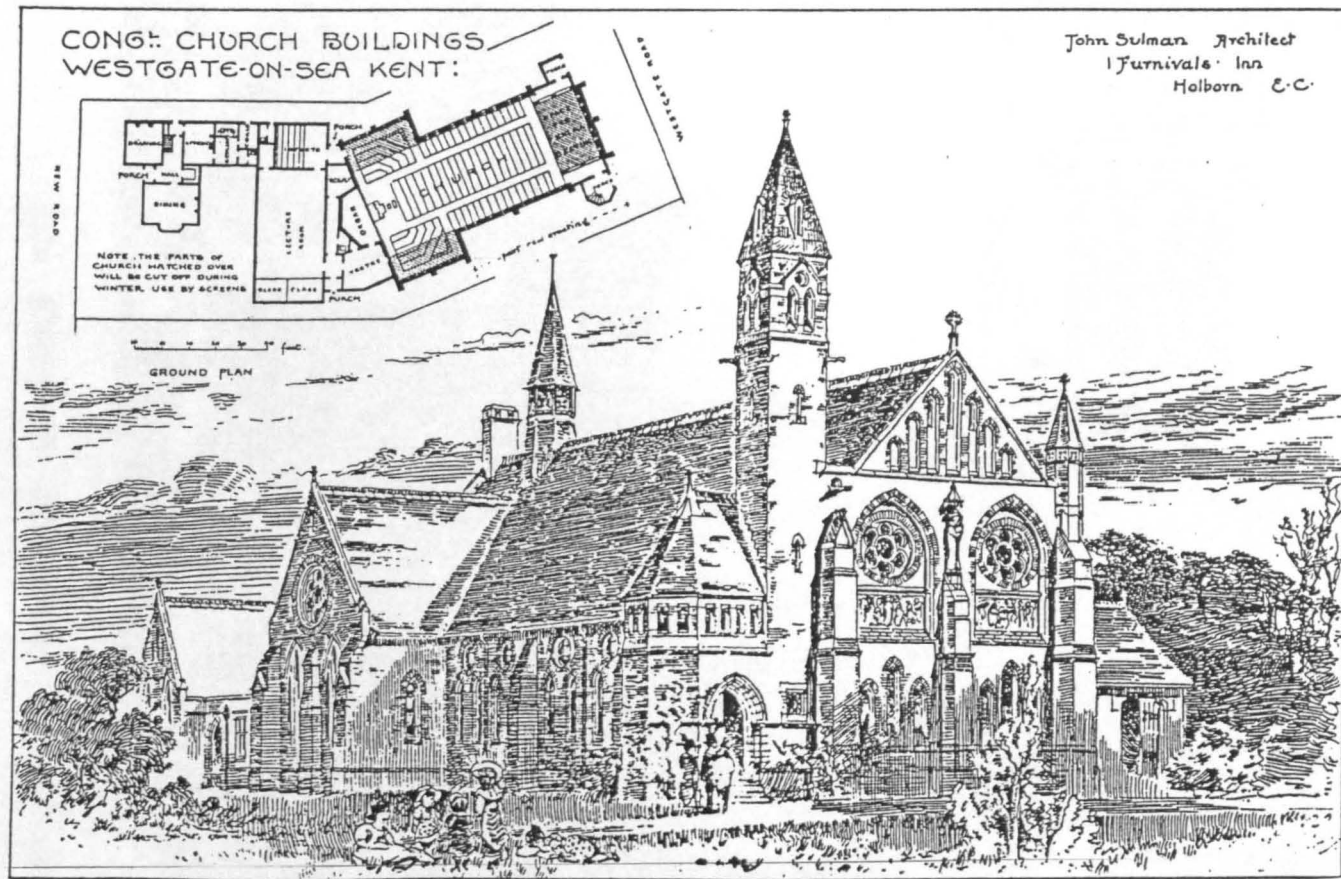
The importance of a church to an estate has been discussed in chapter one and to an exclusive resort in chapter six. On many estates, such as those in Hampstead belonging to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster and to Eton College, landowners would not allow a dissenting church to be built.⁸⁵ In Beazley's plans one church only, together with its parsonage, was shown in one of the western squares on an island in the middle in the manner of St Luke's Redcliffe Square and St Mary the Boltons West Brompton.⁸⁶

The Anglican church of St James's Westgate (now Garlinge) was intended to serve the twin developments of Westgate and Westbrook, but as Westgate began to develop westwards, plans went ahead for a new church (see chapter one). A temporary iron church was erected in 1880 on the site shown on Beazley's plan; four years later the permanent church in the town centre was consecrated four months after the Congregational church had been opened a short distance away. Both were in Westgate Road, a short distance from the sea and close to the houses which were already occupied, either by residents or, in the season, by visitors.

Christ Church, designed for the Congregationalists by the London architect John Sulman, was built of red brick in the Gothic style, but, surprisingly, it bears the 'signature' of the 'Queen Anne' style with a very fine terracotta panel of the sunflower near the main entrance. [Plates 67 (a) & (b)] Its slender clock tower rising above the houses marks its importance as a public building worthy of a growing town, but like its Anglican counterpart, the design had to be modified to suit the funds available. [Fig. 8] It is less severe in appearance than some nonconformist churches and there was some criticism early in 1885, when a life-size statue of John Wycliff, sculpted in Portland stone and donated by a Mr Hawkins of London to commemorate the five-hundredth anniversary of Wycliffe's death, was erected in a central niche on the south wall, twenty-one feet above the ground.⁸⁷

The steeple of the Anglican church of St Saviour should have complemented the clock tower of Christ Church, but it was one of the casualties of the Parker bankruptcy. The original design by Beazley showed a church, capable of seating a thousand, similar to Street's St Saviour's at Eastbourne, where the Reverend Lyne had served his title. [Fig. 9] The Parker brothers had promised, not only in the time-honoured fashion of estate proprietors to give the site, but to defray the cost of the tower and steeple.⁸⁸ Although the site was conveyed to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in April 1883, the bankruptcy left such a deficit that another church had to be designed to seat only six hundred and which had no steeple. [Fig. 10] The church, built of Kentish ragstone, is visually a foil both for Christ Church and for the red brick houses which stood nearby; its five-light Gothic east and west windows a contrast to the wheel windows of its Congregational contemporary. [Plate 68]

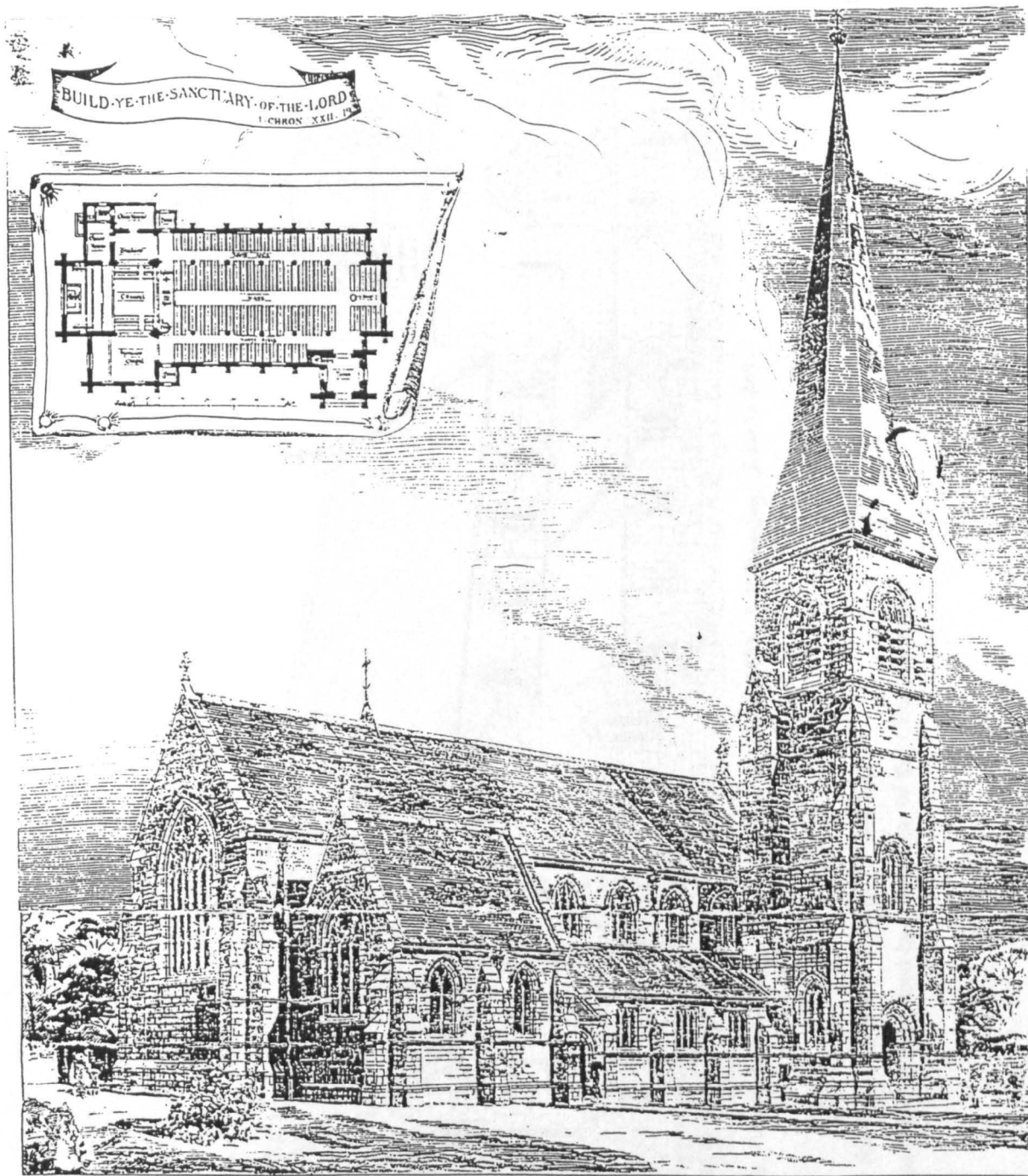
Beazley also designed the Vicarage which was built in 1886 by William Frostick close by the church, but unfortunately no photographs exist of the building, which was demolished by the Diocesan Board of Finance in the 1960s and replaced by eight maisonettes. It may well have had modest touches of 'Queen Anne', for Beazley's 'conversion' to the style was certainly visible in his design for the National School, also opened in 1886.



Proposed buildings of Christ Church Congregational Church.

FIG.8.

From the Congregational Year Book 1882. Supplied by Dr William's Library



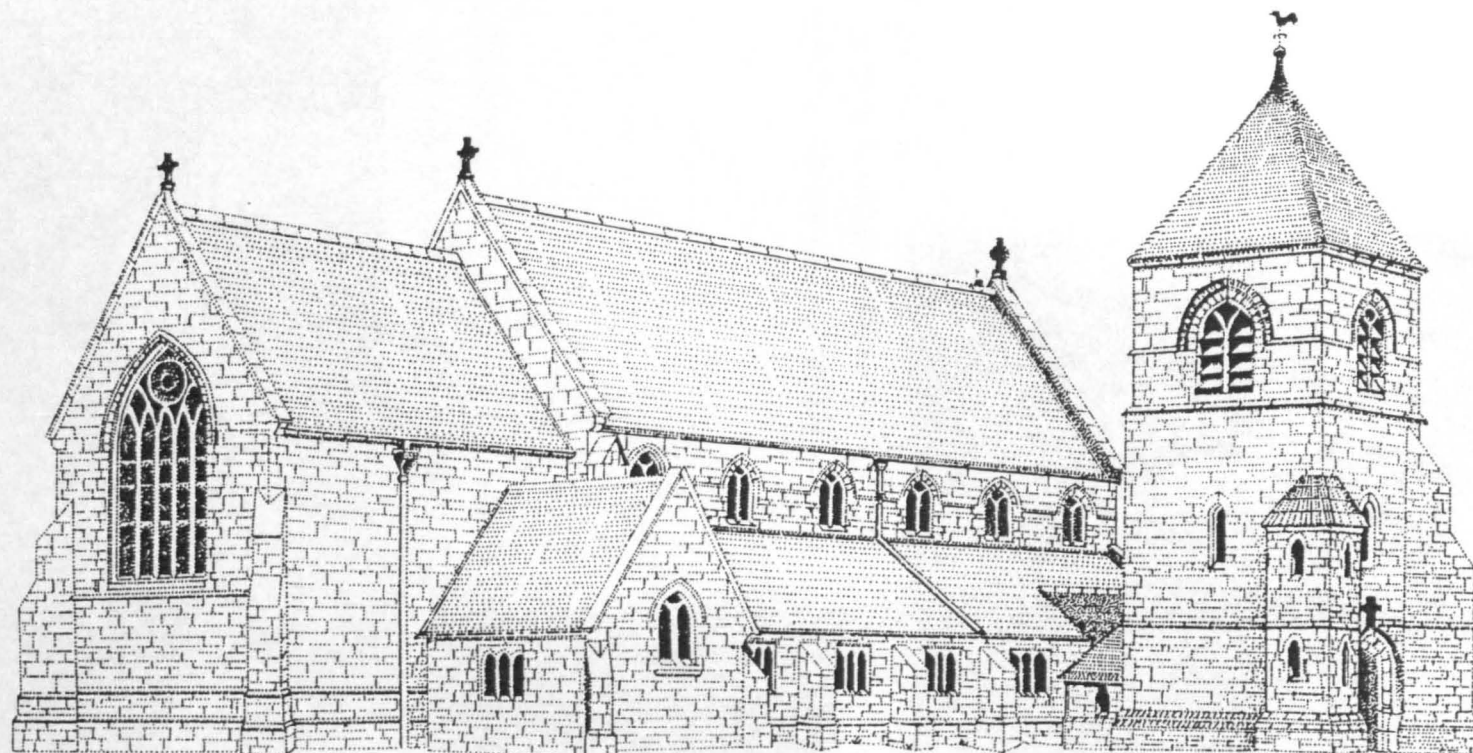
J. Aiserman Photo-lith. London, W.C.

New Church of St. Saviour's, Westgate-on-Sea.

First Design for St Saviour's Church by Charles Beazley as shown on the first appeal leaflet 1882.

FIG.9.

From the Churchwardens' Box. Reproduced by permission of the Churchwardens.



St Baviour's, Westgate-on-Sea. From an original drawing in 1863 by C.N. Beazley. Built in 1884.

JMSmit

Second Design for St Saviour's Church by Charles Beazley.

From the Churchwardens' Box. Reproduced by permission of the Churchwardens.

FIG.10.



PLATE 67 (a)

Christ Church Congregational Church,
designed by John Sulman, built in 1884.



PLATE 67 (b)

The sunflower motif near the main entrance.



PLATE 68. St Saviour's Parish Church, designed by Charles Beazley, built in 1884.

The last public building to be erected in Westgate is also its most striking. Completed in 1910, William Ingram's 'Town Hall that never was' is an amalgam of styles, where the finished product does not just announce the status, confidence and individuality of its creator, but actually trumpets it. Its stone tower complements that of its neighbour St Saviour's church, but because the church stands in a low, stone-walled churchyard, does not compete with it. The brownish-coloured, highly decorated plasterwork contrasts with the varied gables and finials of the shop fronts opposite. It cannot be ignored and is indicative of the hopes and dreams of many Westgatonians, who expected one day to have their urban character recognised and their rightful status bestowed upon them. [Plates 69-71]

Donald Olsen wrote that the Victorian appetite for novelty was insatiable and that, 'in giving up the possibility of a genuinely original style, the Victorians gained the freedom to move with pleasure and assurance among all styles that human ingenuity had ever devised'.⁸⁹ Westgate, with no aristocratic landlord and with a multiplicity of freeholders each wishing to express his independence and identity, could have become a jumble of badly-designed inappropriate buildings. That it did not is to the credit, as Cannadine says, of 'like-minded people, who wanted to live with their own kind, [and who] imposed their own standards'.⁹⁰ Meanwhile, Coutts', upon whom estate proprietorship had been thrust and resigning themselves to the fact that they might find it difficult to recover their losses, made few concessions with regard to use and none to lower building standards or minimum price, with the Estate Office overseeing all developments.

Donald Olsen wrote of London

The new Victorian aesthetic sought variety as an end in itself : in form, colour, texture, size and in emotional and intellectual content. Visual contrasts were valued not only as between adjacent buildings, but within any given building and upon any given facade...The identity and separateness of every building from every other, and every subordinate part of every building were jealously preserved and vehemently emphasized. The portico to stress the doorness of the door, the heavy dressing to show the windowiness of the window, the scalloped gable to express the roofness of the roof were structural assertions of the absolute value of the individual.⁹¹

Westgate, this London satellite to which the artistic and fashionable flocked in its early days, is a fine example of where this ethos was put into practice. Nowhere is the sympathy for contrast in adjacent buildings shown more clearly than in St Mildred's Road north. In 1881 there were no buildings; by 1891 it was lined with attention-seeking houses.⁹² The maverick flint-dressed, slate-roofed, mini Gothic castles of Appleshaw and Highclere, almost opposite one another, might look out of place if viewed in isolation. Placed between the 'Queen Anne' of Norlands and Burghfield, and considered as part of the road as a whole, with the rounded white corner balconies of Greville Lodge at the southern end and St Clement's at the northern, their creation can be explained. [Plates 72 & 73]



PLATES 69, 70 and 71. (Top) The Town Hall built by Sir William Ingram 1910.
(Centre) Plasterwork decoration showing the 'coat of arms' on the south side.
(Bottom) Plasterwork decoration on the north side.

Houses and other buildings do not alone create an environment that is pleasing. Attention has to be paid to detail. Restrictive covenants prohibited building on the greensward and, for that reason, it was some time before even a modest shelter was provided.⁹³ The bandstand erected in 1902 to commemorate the Coronation of Edward VII caused some controversy before it was accepted, whilst even the discreet granite cross of the British Legion War Memorial found disfavour in 1923 with a newcomer to Beach Cliff, the house opposite the proposed site, who threatened to take legal action to protect his right to an uninterrupted sea view.⁹⁴

The Parish Council saw to it that there were no unsightly advertising hoardings, complaining frequently to the Railway Company about those they disliked, and negotiated at length with the Telegraph Company over the colour of the first pole to be erected, demanding first that it should be white and then at a later date that it should be green.⁹⁵

In 1879 the *Granville Illustrated News* described Westgate as

the finest stretch of open sea on the coast of England. One may walk its whole length without being reminded, even by advertisement or signboard, of such things as we wish to forget when we leave cities and come to the sea. There is no regulation line of flat white lodging houses to overshadow the sea itself...There is no obtrusive hotel with a stucco face and a style of architecture that can be called Anglo-Marine. Indeed there is no stucco in Westgate.⁹⁶

In the same year Athol Mayhew described it as

‘perhaps the most picturesque town on the south-east coast, wanting indeed, the antique colouring which gives a tenderness to the grouped buildings of old places...but compensating this one artistic deficiency by the lively prettiness and fanciful graces of its houses’.⁹⁷

One Edgar Pickering wrote this flowery tribute in 1890 in *Keble's Gazette*

Stroll past these dainty dwellings embowered in all beauty of flowers and shrubberies. Here is the dream of an artist materialized in brick and timber, a veritable gem. It is an early English town in every way - Queen Anne, Elizabethan. Although the styles of architecture are so various, there is nothing to excite a feeling of incongruity...No where in England could the *tout ensemble* which these delicious groups of buildings present be matched.⁹⁸

Three years later ‘The Isle of Thanet Rambler’, Arthur Montefiore, wrote

‘Westgate is a place of the most undoubted charm... it blossoms out pleasantly in red brick on the white chalk, and it maintains a cheery and hospitable look, even on the most winterly day’.⁹⁹



PLATE 72 (a) and (b). The east side of St Mildred's Road north
PLATE 73. The west side of St Mildred's Road north.

This road is an excellent example of the use of contrasting styles in juxtaposition.

John Newman writing for the Pevsner *Buildings of England* series said that

'In the 1880s and 1890s the sea front was lined two deep with big jolly houses very typical of those years of bright red brick, largely hung with orangey tiles and breaking out into plentiful bow windows and balconies'.¹⁰⁰

Westgate could not have competed with the classical elegance of Kemp Town, Hove or Eastbourne - it was too small, and its northerly aspect did not lend itself to the cold hardness of stucco. It had no picturesque fishing-harbour around which to nestle as did Cromer or Lyme. It was a virgin canvas on which to paint and its founding fathers fulfilled their aims of creating a high-quality built environment in harmony with the cliffs, the sea and the sands, a watering-place for fashionable metropolitans where they would feel at ease.

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CHAPTER FIVE

WESTGATE - 'A PLACE FOR SCHOOLS'.

Westgate - 'a place for schools'. Such was the verdict passed by Mr Heatherington, inspector to the Ministry of Health in 1934, after he had visited the Isle of Thanet at the time of the Local Government Review.¹ It was a description which had become increasingly apt over a period of some fifty years, as Westgate had become a favoured venue for educational establishments of all kinds.

The reports of the Clarendon Commission of 1864, of the Taunton Commission of 1868 and the measures of Forster's Education Act of 1870 were contemporaneous with the birth and early development of Westgate and there was a growing demand for places at public schools resulting from the increased birth rate and improved standard of living. As competitive scholarships and entrance examinations were introduced, a new class, described by Donald Leinster-Mackay as 'hungered for gentility', wanted their sons to increase their chance of success.² Preparatory schools, seen as the infrastructure of the public schools and other private schools, including those for girls, were seeking to expand. Compulsory school attendance, following the introduction of state education, stimulated the private sector to offer education at all levels to those parents, whose children would never be allowed to mix with the common herd. Westgate, in its determination to retain its high 'social tone' in the face of a changing holiday pattern and the ever-present threat from popular Margate, was to benefit from this increased demand.

The seaside had already proved a popular venue for the newer public schools such as Lancing, St Lawrence and Dover and a proprietary college was established at Eastbourne in 1867. Although it 'tottered from crisis to crisis' it was supported by the seventh Duke of Devonshire for many years, because he realised that it would bring prestige to the town. He remained a majority shareholder, spent over £12,000 on the buildings and endowed it with two scholarships, so that ultimately it was numbered amongst the thirty leading public schools between 1880 and 1902.³

It might, therefore, have been expected that Edmund Davis would have considered something similar for Westgate, although no kind of school was shown in the plans for the Estate. The large site to the south west earmarked on Beazley's plan of 1878 for Westgate Hall (which was never built) would have been admirable. However, Davis might well have had difficulty in forming a company for a proprietary school, as there were not enough men of substance living permanently in Westgate and his own financial position was precarious. Later Estate owners found it expedient to modify the strict covenants, which allowed most properties to be used only as private dwellings, and devised schemes of licensing and indemnity and it was to be the schools who ultimately would preserve the aristocratic and exclusive character of Westgate so eagerly sought by Davis.

At least two schools preceded the Davis era; Miss Fanny Perkins' Ladies' School at 14 Roxburgh Road, listed in Kelly's *Directory for Kent* of 1874, probably being the first. From 1876 *Keble's Gazette* advertised that the Misses Perkins received 'Young Ladies as Boarders or Daily Pupils at 'Ethandene', where there was a resident foreign governess.⁴ By 1881, when the census recorded in April thirteen pupils present, the school had moved to Westgate Road; just before the First World War it took Coorabelle, one of the prime seafront houses; in 1916 it took over the Ivyside.⁵ Under the joint-proprietorship of three successive sets of spinster sisters, (a common phenomenon at that time according to Leinster-Mackay), it became one of the best known and longest-lived of Westgate Schools, going, on the evidence of the number of sittings rented in the parish church, from strength to strength.⁶

From 1876 William Thornton Bullock was also advertising in *Keble's Gazette* for pupils for Sheen House; a year later he had moved to Westgate College (soon to be re-named Ringslow College), a purpose-built property in Rowena Road.⁷ Bullock soon set the pattern, later followed by other Westgate schoolmasters, of taking a leading part in local affairs. He became churchwarden of the new church of St James's, where his two eldest children were baptised, but was soon one of the strongest supporters of a new church to the west nearer to his school, becoming Secretary and Treasurer to the Temporary Church Committee set up in early 1880.⁸

At the opening service of the iron church of St Saviour's in May 1880 the choir was trained by Mr Gill from Mr Bullock's school and Bullock transferred his allegiance.⁹ His second daughter, Mary, was baptised in the iron church by the Rev. Lyne in February 1881.¹⁰ He was then only thirty-four years old, but his school had become well established with thirty pupils, ranging in ages from nine to seventeen, in residence on the night of the census.¹¹ A few months earlier he had paid £1300 for land for playing fields opposite the school.¹² Three tutors from his school were resident at 5 Cuthbert Terrace, cared for by an indoor servant and his wife.¹³ The school was advertised in *Grant's Directory for the Isle of Thanet* of 1883 :

Ringslow : High Class Preparatory School for Boys between 7 and 15.
100 guineas a year, or sons of clergy 80 guineas.
Headmaster : William Thornton Bullock M.A. Oxford, Classical Honours.
Assisted by the Rev. F.B. Finnan M.A. Classical Tripos.
Staff of competent masters.

The local paper reported in the summer of that year that Ringslow scholars had arranged a firework display on their cricket ground, after Mr Bullock had returned from Winchester with the news that one boy out of a hundred candidates had won an open scholarship.¹⁴ In February 1883 he paid £550 for more land which was later used for the chapel and other expansions.¹⁵

He was a member of the Permanent Church Working Committee set up in 1882 and his personal donation of twenty guineas to the fund placed him amongst the top twenty subscribers.¹⁶ His second son was the first baby to be baptised in the new St Saviour's church in August 1884.¹⁷ He paid for twenty-one sittings in the centre of the back of the church until 1886, after which the sittings remained unlet for a year and nothing is heard of William Bullock or the school.¹⁸ Alas, it would seem that he had overstretched himself, for in December 1888 *Keble's Gazette* reported that an application had been made at the County Court for the discharge of William Thornton Bullock, who had been made bankrupt. The Official Receiver said that Bullock had started on borrowed capital and 'was guilty of a rash speculation in taking a larger school than he required'. One of the boys fell over the cliffs and was killed, causing great panic among the parents and injuring the school. Judge Self granted Bullock a discharge, saying that his failure had been due to causes over which he had no control.¹⁹

Other educational establishments are recorded in the 1881 Census; at 4 Cuthbert Terrace James Thompson M.A. and his wife had five resident male pupils ranging in age from ten to eighteen, one of whom was Charles Beazley, the sixteen-year old son of the Estate architect; at Dunalastair in The Grove on the south-eastern side of town, Miss Laura White had five boy pupils aged from five to nine, including the seven-year old Charles Orchardson; at the Elms Mrs Howlett, her neighbour, head of school and assisted by her daughter, had only one pupil present that night, but, as the census was taken in April, the figures for all the schools are unreliable evidence of the number of scholars normally attending.²⁰ The Elms, a large house in spacious grounds, was one where special dispensation had been given for its use as a scholastic establishment.²¹

At 19 Adrian Square the Dutch-born Madam Quispel managed her School for Young Ladies; Mrs Evans and her two daughters had established a school nearby at Carlton House. With the exception of Jennie Quispel, the founders of these schools were all West London born, forming yet another link between Westgate and that part of the capital.²²

In the mid-eighties the number of schools increased rapidly. Two of them, St Michael's (later re-named Hawtrey's) and Wellington House, were amongst the most prestigious in the preparatory school world, giving Westgate the opportunity to become a centre of excellence in this field.

Leinster-Mackay writes of the difficulty in defining a preparatory school in the nineteenth century as, 'No clear line can be drawn between the case of a gentleman, who takes a number of private pupils into his house, and that of one who teaches a similar number of pupils, but calls his establishment a school'. His final definition was a school which prepared boys between eight and thirteen for public school or the Navy.²³

'A landmark in the improvement of the English prep school' was created, according to Leinster-Mackay, when the Rev. John Hawtrey, an assistant master at Eton, set up St Michael's School at Aldin House at Slough in 1869, taking with him all the younger boys from Eton, but retaining a strong link with the public school.²⁴ Later the Kent-born Hawtrey visited Westgate where his sister was recuperating - possibly in 1881 when an Agnes Hawtrey is recorded as a visitor to the house of Mrs Dalgairns, a physician's widow. He liked the bracing air and decided to move his school to Westgate in 1883.²⁵ [Plate 74] The move is commemorated by the gift to the new church of St Saviour's of its font, which bears the inscription, 'This font was presented by the Rev. John Hawtrey 1883'. [Plate 75]

St Michael's school opened in Westgate on St Michael's day, 29 September 1883, in three houses on the south side of the railway.²⁶ A former pupil described them as 'a hideous collection of red-brick villas on both sides of the Margate-Westgate Road, connected by a gas-lit subterranean tunnel'; certain evidence that seekers after truth should not rely upon the memories of small boys, as the houses had flint dressings and the tunnel connected two sides of an unmade minor road.²⁷ Photographs show that the class rooms were very basic, with long deal tables, an assortment of 'kitchen' type chairs, hideous flock wallpaper and maps, charts and a copy of the timetable on the walls.²⁸ A former pupil says that internally the houses were virtually unaltered, with living rooms as classrooms and bedrooms as bedrooms, partitioned where necessary. There was little heating. As at Eton, every boy had his own bedroom, except for sharing brothers.²⁹

Amongst the Rev. John Hawtrey's ten children were Charles, the actor-manager, and Edward Montague, who had assisted his father at Slough. Educated at Eton and St John's Cambridge, a keen sportsman, clever actor and a Diocesan Lay Reader, Edward accompanied his father to Westgate where he became a highly-respected pillar of the church and community.³⁰

Christopher Martin says that assistant masters were underpaid and had to postpone 'the luxury of marriage as they scrambled for promotion'.³¹ As headmaster presumptive, the thirty-six year old Edward needed a wife, for the Rev. John was nearly seventy and determined to keep the school in the family. The banns of marriage of Edward Hawtrey and Agnes Ellen Collins of Biggleswade, daughter of the agent of the Marquess of Ailesbury, were called in November 1884, the first in the new parish church.³² Over the years Mrs Hawtrey established for herself a formidable position in the town, being referred to in her obituary in 1940 as 'The Queen of Westgate'.³³ Edward became headmaster on the retirement of his father in 1889 and remained so until his death in 1916, when he was succeeded by his son-in-law Frank Cautley and St Michael's was re-named Hawtrey's.



23 WESTGATE-ON-SEA. — St Michael's School. — LL.



PLATE 74. (Top) St Michael's School (Hawtrey's)

PLATE 75. (Below) The Rev John Hawtrey gave the font to St Saviour's church to commemorate the arrival of his school in 1883.

1885 saw the arrival of at least three new schools, each of which is of interest in that it points to the attempt to bring in schools of good quality to meet demand. St Margaret's School for the daughters of Gentlemen which, like Ethandene opened in Roxburgh Road, was remarkably progressive for its time, including as it did, not only French, but Arithmetic and Algebra in the curriculum.³⁴ Frances Buss had made the teaching of Arithmetic of extreme importance at the North London Collegiate School, after the failure in 1863 of her pupils to do well on the first occasion that Cambridge allowed girls to take its examinations, but as late as 1894 inquirers for the Bryce Commission were told in Lancashire that it was music not arithmetic that mattered.³⁵ St Margaret's did not eschew such ladylike pursuits, including in their curriculum the teaching of 'Pianoforte, Singing, Violin and Dancing' and they achieved a high reputation, carrying off most of the prizes at the Thanet Music Festival regularly.³⁶ On the night of the 1891 Census twenty pupils, aged between nine and nineteen, were resident with the Principal, Miss Spreck, two governesses, a matron, cook, two housemaids and a laundrymaid.³⁷

The education was sound; the girls took the Matriculation examinations and some went to university. In 1907 *Keble's Gazette* reported that one of the pupils had passed the 'Little Go' examination for Girton, gaining first class in French and second in Classics.³⁸ At least two entered medicine, a very difficult field for women at that time. In 1910, at the age of seventy, Miss Spreck took two of her governesses into partnership and soon removed the school to Sea Road, taking over three houses in an excellent position overlooking St Mildred's Bay.³⁹ She retained some involvement and, perhaps, some financial interest and is remembered with affection by one former pupil, who started there in 1923, as a very grand old lady, (she would have been over eighty by then) who always wore black rustling silk with sequins and was very kind to the children.⁴⁰

Caroline Widnell was in her forties when she came to Westgate in 1883 to set up her Dame 'Preparatory School for Young Gentlemen, removed from Englefield Green near Egham, at 8 Adrian Square'.

Miss Widnell, who has devoted many years to teaching, undertakes the Education of a selected number of young gentlemen, assisted by a French Governess and a tutor. The course of Instruction which includes the usual branches of study in the English and French languages 40 guineas per annum. Latin, Greek, German, Music and Dancing.⁴¹

The offering of Latin and Greek in her curriculum show her to have been a serious contender for pupils wanting to prepare for public school for, according to Leinster-Mackay, the provision of classics was one of the problems of Dame Schools and it was often necessary to import a visiting master.⁴² For sixteen years, she rented between fifteen and twenty sittings in the church, apparently maintaining a steady roll.⁴³

Care in the vacation was a facility greatly in demand, for as the Empire had grown so had the need for accommodation throughout the year for the children of those serving it, so the offer in the advertisement for Henry Richardson's School for Boys at Miss Perkins' former school at 14 Roxburgh Road, that 'The children of parents residing abroad can remain with the Principal and his family during the vacation, if desired' was an ingredient for success. Arrangements could also be made for Visitors' children.⁴⁴

Henry Richardson, Bachelor of Arts of Jesus College Cambridge, was twenty-four when he came to Westgate with his young wife and brother, also a schoolmaster. He was 'assisted by an efficient staff of resident and visiting masters' and charged from 40 to 60 guineas a year, (day boys 6 to 12 guineas) 'according to age and requirements [with] special terms for two or more brothers'.⁴⁵ In 1888 he was renting fourteen sittings in the church; in 1890 he had increased the number to nineteen; by 1891 he had gained sufficient confidence to lease Doon House, the former summer residence on the southern side of the town of Alexander McClymont.⁴⁶

The arrival of the brothers Bull in Westgate in 1886 was to have an even greater effect on the town than that of the Hawtreys, for the Rev. Herbert Bull was to play such an important part in its life that at his funeral it was stated, 'When one thinks of Westgate, one cannot help thinking of Mr Bull'.⁴⁷ With his brother Reginald, he took over the failed Ringslow College, re-naming it Wellington House School, for he had been an assistant master at Wellington College since 1884.

Already ordained a deacon when he went to Wellington College, he served two years as assistant curate to St Saviour's Church and was priested in 1888 thus being able to combine the headship of his school with the chaplaincy.⁴⁸ Bull was a Rugbeian, familiar with the precepts of Arnold, who had said in 1841, 'It seems to me the natural and fitting thing that the master of the boys should be officially as well as really their pastor, and that he should not devolve on another, however well qualified, one of his own most peculiar and solemn duties'.⁴⁹ The school chapel, designed by a London architect and built in 1898, was a landmark in the town until it was demolished in the early 1970s.

Like Edward Hawtreys he soon took a wife, his banns being read by his brother in the parish church in March 1889.⁵⁰ The headmasters' wives played an important part in ensuring the success of their schools, as in addition to looking after the welfare of the boys, they had to play hostess to parents often from the aristocratic and upper classes. Elinor Bull was elegant and beautiful and, in the annual school photographs, always dressed in the latest fashion.⁵¹ She looked well able to carry out her social duties and was a great favourite with the small boys in her care.⁵² Reginald Bull left soon after the marriage and set up his own preparatory school at Southborough. Wellington House prospered and within ten years had fifty pupils and was ready for expansion.⁵³

To the Misses Harrison belongs the distinction of founding the first seafront school at Westgate. Schools on the front at seaside resorts are rare, but in Westgate they were soon to occupy many of the houses. The Harrisons took up residence at Penryhn Lodge, a red and white 'Queen Anne' house and started with three pupils in 1889.⁵⁴ [Plate 76] Writing twenty years later, Jane Harrison explained that it was founded

with the idea, primarily, of providing in a healthful place, and within easy reach of London, a school in which boys, who for any reason needed special care or individual tuition, could be educated on strictly preparatory school lines; but more effectively than in larger schools. It was at that time the only school of its type in Westgate....The aim of the education given at Penrhyn Lodge has been to induce the boys as far as possible, to do their best from the highest motive, and to inculcate in them at the same time that strong sense of duty and loyal citizenship, which is the best tradition of English men.⁵⁵

The first pupils stayed only two years before moving on to other preparatory schools, such as St Michael's, Wellington House, Twyford and Summerfield, but numbers increased steadily and by 1894 it was found necessary to rent an additional house.⁵⁶ From that time the boys remained for the full four years and went straight on to public school or the Navy.

Between 1894 and 1909 fifty-nine out of ninety-six (57.3%) went to Dartmouth or the top schools listed by J. de S. Honey.⁵⁷ In 1899 Henry Baynes was first in the Harrow entrance examination, going on to read History at Cambridge and to take Holy Orders. Most of the boys came from the Home Counties and London and they included two sons of William Orchardson.⁵⁸ Leinster-Mackay describes Miss Jane as a 'typical Dame, large, formidable with white hair, a lace cap and jabot and a silk dress'.⁵⁹ It seems an apt description, for Miss Jane was to cross swords with the Parochial Committee on more than one occasion as, for example, when she sought permission in 1896 to build a much needed annex for drill in wet weather, for dancing, music and theatricals.⁶⁰ The school grew to twenty-nine pupils, but when numbers fell she sold it to Donald MacDonald in 1907. He remained in Westgate until 1913, when, because numbers had again increased, he moved it to Deal, renaming it Tormore School after his home in Skye.⁶¹ Later it amalgamated with Betteshanger and finally was absorbed into Northbourne Park School.

The nineties were to see many changes in Westgate, as its heyday as a summer retreat for the fashionable began to come to an end. As some of the large houses began to come on to the market, it became clear that they had no future as private homes, but properties such as Mertens' mansion, Streete Court, were eagerly sought after by the burgeoning preparatory school industry. It had been put up for sale in June 1891 and bought, together with thirty-three and a half acres of ground, for £7750 but it was still waiting for an occupant when John Vine Milne, the father of A.A. Milne, visited Westgate.⁶²



PLATE 76. Penrhyn Lodge School Sea Road - the Misses Harrison's Dame Preparatory School. Became a V.A.D. hospital during World War One and a private hotel in the inter-war years.

PLATE 77. The new building of Doon House Boys' Preparatory School. Foundation stone laid March 1906.



PLATE 78. The stained glass in the staircase window shows from left to right : the arms of Hartford College, the alma mater of John Campbell, the Doon House school badge and motto and the arms of University College Oxford, the alma mater of the co-founder George Reece. Photographed by permission of the Manager of Summerlands

He had been running a commercial school in Kilburn but had decided that there was no future in that type of school, so he rid himself of all the boys over fourteen and moved to Westgate, with those who were left forming a nucleus of his new school, Streete Court. Unlike most preparatory school heads he had taken up teaching without a degree and had gradually gained a London B.A., yet he had the confidence to set up a school in competition with the other fashionable and prosperous schools in the area whose Heads had Oxbridge degrees.⁶³

In 1894 he rented fourteen sittings in the parish church; by 1898 he was able to take over the forty-five seats in the front of the north aisle which the Consistory Court had allowed to be rented to provide funds for the maintenance of the fabric.⁶⁴ Fifty pupils were regarded as a viable roll for a preparatory school at that time. Successive headmasters of Streete Court played an important part in church and community life, serving as churchwardens, parish and rural district coucillors and as Justices.

In 1894 Doon House changed hands when John Campbell M.A. and George Reece B.A became joint headmasters.⁶⁵ A third preparatory school marriage followed; the banns of George Reece and Frances Louisa Campbell, spinster of the parish of Uppingham, were read for the first time on 24 November 1894, so that it appears that Campbell and Reece were brothers-in-law as well as partners.⁶⁶ This school also flourished and in 1906 a new purpose-designed Doon House was built in the grounds of the old house. [Plates 77 & 78] The original Doon House became Westgate House School, before eventually being sold in January 1937 to the Westgate Roman Catholics to be converted for use as a church (see chapter six).

William Peto's name disappears from the pew rent accounts in 1890 and his home, Waterside, was the second seafront residence to become a school.⁶⁷ Marie Christine Russell had been born and educated in Germany but, when, as a widow, she returned to England and founded the Waterside School for Young Ladies, she chose to be known as Mademoiselle Nina Russell.⁶⁸ Her school was less conventional than either Ethandene or St Margaret's; no uniform was worn, the children played on the grass on the seafront and bathed in the sea. Emphasis was placed on music and the arts, visiting masters from London taught singing and elocution and pupils regularly gave concerts for good causes.⁶⁹ When the contents of the school were sold in the spring of 1940 they included a baby grand piano and no fewer than seven uprights.⁷⁰ Miss Russell remained Principal until 1930, when Catherine Lewis Jones, whose family had come to Westgate in the 1870s, took charge until the outbreak of war in 1939.

By the mid-nineties the shape of scholastic Westgate was emerging sufficiently for the Rev. Bull to say on the eve of the elections to the first parish council in 1894 that the scholastic section must be represented.⁷¹ He was already making a name for himself in the preparatory school world, emerging as a leader of the Association of Headmasters of Preparatory Schools, which had been formed after the Headmasters' Conference of 1891. He served as its Secretary from 1895 to 1898, became Chairman in 1899 and again in 1910; his successor at Wellington House, the Rev. Percy Underhill, was Chairman in 1933, Secretary from 1937 to 1957 and Vice-President from 1961 to 1963.⁷² Edward Hawtrey was also a member of the Council and the Heads of Streete Court and Doon House were members of the Association, which had been formed because it was thought 'desirable to make the relation between preparatory and public school somewhat closer and more systematic'.⁷³

There is little doubt that Westgate's healthy reputation was an important reason why so many schools came there. Public schools had been cursed by unsuitable sites; poor hygiene and sanitation and epidemics were rife, for the children of the rich were as susceptible as those of the poor, even when they were carefully segregated. Preparatory schools learnt from the mistakes of the public schools for their boys were twice as vulnerable as public school boys, as some diseases only struck once. There was a marked decline in the incidence of fatal infectious disease after the Public Health Act of 1875, which helped accelerate the growth of all kinds of private schools and schoolmasters, who regarded infectious diseases as 'a scourge from which few expected to escape for very long', quickly became aware of the need for good sanitation and precautions for the prevention of epidemics in schools.⁷⁴

Few schools had a separate sanatorium and an epidemic of scarlet fever could close a school for three or more weeks with serious financial consequences. It can be understood, therefore, why the news that St Michael's and Ringslow College had received their sanitary certificates was reported in the local paper in 1887.⁷⁵ When Westgate's new drainage system was completed, the major schools were amongst the first in the steady stream of applications for connection to the new sewers and in 1899 J.V.Milne submitted a plan for a separate sanatorium for Streete Court.⁷⁶ St Michael's and Ethandene also had separate sanatoria, for even in healthy Westgate there were epidemics, although they were, understandably, not publicised.⁷⁷

As Leinster-Mackay says 'In Victorian times, illness was endemic. It was expected that children would experience the childish ailments of whooping cough, measles, chicken pox, mumps, and scarlet fever'.⁷⁸ Some caught the more serious typhoid and a few suffered diphtheria or smallpox. In September 1898 when there was an outbreak of typhoid at Garlinge the Medical Officer of Health decreed that no child from Garlinge was to be admitted to the National School at Westgate for six weeks.⁷⁹

In November 1902 a child from the National school died from diphtheria and her sister was in hospital; in 1907 the school was advised to close to get rid of the same disease and later in the same year was closed again, because over sixty children had whooping cough. In 1908 the school was closed for a month in May because of measles and chickenpox and in July because of scarlet fever.⁸⁰ It was not surprising, therefore, that the private schools were nervous of allowing their pupils any outside contacts, but even so they were not immune. In March 1929 nine-year old Anthony Dickson of Wellington House died of heart failure after pneumonia, following measles and influenza.⁸¹ As late as 1965 Wellington House school fixture lists were wrecked because of quarantine, whilst Rugby and Cricket matches were cancelled because of German Measles.⁸² At Hawtrey's, boys were not allowed to visit the cinema in the last two weeks of their holidays in case they came into contact with infection.⁸³

By the turn of the century the number of private schools in Westgate had considerably increased. At the time of the great 'Electric Light Debate' in 1897-8 it was stated at a public meeting that there were nineteen private schools with an aggregate rateable value of £2275 and four hundred and fifty pupils (see chapter two). The town's population in 1901 was 2738. Some schools were very short lived, but others stayed a remarkably long time, thus belying the frequently heard criticism that preparatory schools were ephemeral. [Appendix 6]

Only two more major players were to appear on the Westgate school stage after 1900, although there were many minor ones. Until that time all but one of the Westgate schools were Anglican, so the arrival of two communities of nuns after the expulsion of religious orders in France in 1903, introduced a new dimension. The first to arrive were sisters from the community of the Canonesses of St Augustine in Paris, who were fortunate to find the Tower House looking for a new owner.

The introduction to the sale details pointed out its suitability for 'Scholastic Purposes'.⁸⁴ In July 1904 Coutts' granted a licence to carry on a school convent and the community moved in; by the following year its school was listed in Kelly's *Directory* as the Convent School of Les Oiseaux for Young Ladies.⁸⁵ [Plate 80] The community erected an iron church, which was replaced a few years later by a Gothic chapel dedicated to the Sacred Heart and designed by F.A. Walters, the architect of Buckfast Abbey and the church of Our Lady of Ransom at Eastbourne. [Plate 81] The nuns then used their iron church to provide elementary education for the poorer children of the Roman Catholic community in Westgate, which led, despite opposition from within the town, to the recognition of St Mildred's Junior School in May 1930 by the Education Department.⁸⁶



PLATE 79. St Margaret's Girls' School Sea Road.



PLATE 80. The Tower House Convent of the Canonesses of St Augustine, Les Oiseaux School.



PLATE 81. The Chapel of the Sacred Heart built 1912 for the Convent and used as the first Catholic Church in Westgate.

In 1904 the Canonesses were followed by a group of French Ursulines from Boulogne. Alfred Crawford had just abandoned his short-lived Winchester College at 25 Adrian Square and it, with two neighbouring houses, was available for renting.⁸⁷ The nuns moved in with a small group of French boarders who had accompanied them into exile and by 1905 were advertising their 'High School for Young Ladies' in the *Catholic Directory*.⁸⁸

They did not have to wait long to find a more suitable home. In January 1906 William Jarrett died and Hatton House, on the south of the main road and neighbour to the Convent of Les Oiseaux, was put up for sale.⁸⁹ The Ursulines purchased the property with its lodge, stables and coach-house for £8000 and Coutts' granted a licence which modified the covenants. Extra land was bought in 1913.⁹⁰ By that time the school roll numbered about fifty, thirty boarders and twenty day-girls from the surrounding area. In 1926 the French nuns were replaced by a community from the English province and the school continued to grow, so that by the outbreak of the Second World War, there were over seventy pupils.⁹¹

The First World War was to end the 'Golden Age of the Private School', although it was not apparent immediately. Leinster-Mackay says that the effect of the war on the Association of Headmasters of Preparatory Schools was minimal, the main concern being loss of revenue, although in some schools there were staff shortages, as masters joined the forces. More women teachers were employed.⁹² In Westgate, however, as danger from air raids became real, there was some upheaval in 1917 when several schools left for the comparative safety of the countryside. Wellington House was 'in exile' at Benenden from the Summer Term of 1917 to the Christmas Term of 1918, whilst St Margaret's went to Southborough, returning in April 1919.⁹³

The boys' schools, in particular, had been affected by the war in other ways. 'In late Victorian England, as the tide of imperialism had risen, loyalty to team and school had blended into service to the Queen and Empire', wrote Christopher Martin.⁹⁴ The obituary of Edward Hawtrey, who died in 1916, referred to his grief over the deaths of his former pupils.⁹⁵ Some thirty former pupils of Doon House were killed and a school chapel was built in their memory.⁹⁶ Over two hundred former Wellington House boys served in the First World War and sixty-six are remembered on the Roll of Honour, now in the parish church.⁹⁷ It is poignant to see the names of some of those who, a few years earlier, had written their names in childish script, in the book recording school captains.⁹⁸ As Martin commented, 'Those enormous memorials commemorated not merely the fallen, but the end of a particular educational ideal'.⁹⁹

Immediately after the war there was a climate of optimism and prosperity nationally and the demand for schools actually increased. The number of Westgate schools reached its pre-war total, but changes were taking place. After the death of Edward Hawtreys in 1916, Mrs Hawtreys retained the proprietorship of St Michael's, soon known as Hawtreys's, with her son-in-law Francis Cautley as headmaster. At one time there had been high hopes that the Hawtreys' only son, Michael, would succeed his father, but after coming down from Cambridge in the summer of 1907, he died in September at the age of twenty one from 'inflammation of the spinal cord'.¹⁰⁰ Mrs Hawtreys remained in charge until she retired in 1938 at the age of eighty-eight and the school passed into the joint ownership of Cautley and Dorian Williams, the Hawtreys' great nephew.¹⁰¹

The Rev. Bull retired from Wellington House in 1920, although he remained the owner of the school and bought a house which overlooked the school playing fields. He continued to show an interest in the school and in Westgate, although he used his retirement to travel widely. When he died in 1928 he left the school to the Canterbury Diocesan Board of Finance on condition that it was always let to a man of high Christian principles.¹⁰² Under Bull's successor, the Rev. Percy Underhill, Wellington House continued to flourish. Although not amongst the schools listed by Leinster-Mackay as having special links with specific public schools or amongst those which sent the majority of their pupils to Eton, an analysis of the admission register shows that the school sent boys to all the major public schools, with by far the greatest number going to Eton.¹⁰³ [Appendix 7] The names of the pupils' fathers in the admission register show that Wellington House could hold its own in attracting the aristocracy, as they included the Earl of Radnor, Baron Profumo, the Earl of Breadalbane, Holland and West Monkton, Viscount Hawarden and the Marquis of Cholmondeley.¹⁰⁴ As, in the same period, pupils at Hawtreys' included the two elder sons of the Duke of Rutland and the future Dukes of Beaufort and Somerset, as well as the sons of more minor aristocratic families, the hearts of the founding fathers of Westgate would have been gladdened by the prestige they brought.¹⁰⁵

However as the post-war boom changed to depression and slump, the thirties were crisis years for many private schools. A writer in the *Eastbourne Chronicle* of August 1937 complained of the 'disastrous boom' which had brought more schools than the town could bear, followed by a decline, as parents became more demanding, forcing heads to accept pupils at special rates and cut staff salaries, whilst 'many climbed down from their previous lofty attitude about day boys'. The writer did not think there would be a revival; the market was saturated; more day schools were being established near London; the popularity of the seaside as a place for a school was declining, as more and more schools were setting up in the country, often mainly serving the local area. He felt that, although boarding schools would retain boys whose parents were abroad with the army or government service, they must adapt as they were an out-of-date luxury.¹⁰⁶

This opinion fits well with that given by the Rev. Underhill in his letter of 1934 to the Minister of Health, when he was trying to convince the Minister that amalgamation with Margate would be the death knell of Westgate schools.

School Principals view with gravest concern the decision to incorporate Westgate into the Borough of Margate...Margate to the outside world bears a certain character which is totally and absolutely opposed to that enjoyed by Westgate. Some years ago there were a number of Private and Preparatory Schools in Margate. We have watched these go, one by one, either out of business altogether, or to other and more quiet places, until at the present time, there are only a few schools left in Margate and those chiefly Day Schools.¹⁰⁷

Leinster-Mackay says that, surprisingly, some schools were founded at this time, although the net loss of established schools between 1930 and 1940 was high.¹⁰⁸ Some schools amalgamated, others closed. Westgate reflected all these trends, with 1930 a peak year of twenty schools. New schools were established, some to last as little as two years. By 1939 the number had been reduced to thirteen, one of which was started that year and then disappeared into obscurity and two were pre-preparatory schools. The remainder were those of long standing.¹⁰⁹

It was not only the boys' preparatory schools which were feeling the effects of the financial climate of the time. The culture of the early nineteenth century when, as Dorothea Beale said, 'No mother of good position would have thought of sending her daughter to a day school' still existed.¹¹⁰ Yet despite all the efforts of the women educational pioneers, Josephine Kamm says that it was still often true that 'in every family, a daughter's prospects would be cheerfully sacrificed to pay for an expensive education for the sons'.¹¹¹ Maria Grey had said in the 1870s that 'In the past, girls had not been educated to be wives, but simply to acquire husbands and to think their education of no social consequence, except as fitting them to take their place in their own social sphere'.¹¹² This attitude existed in some girls' schools, including at least one in Westgate, as late as the eve of World War Two.¹¹³

In 1932 as the headmistress of the long-established Ethandene neared retirement, the school amalgamated with the more recently-formed Ledge Point to become West Bay School under the joint headship of the two former headmistresses.¹¹⁴ [Plates 82 & 83] Although this gave the school two buildings with the possibility of offering new facilities such as a science laboratory, the roll was only about fifty. The school started to share the teaching of music and games with St Margaret's School, giving as one former pupil wryly said, the opportunity to West Bay to come second in the Thanet Schools' Music Festival, with St Margaret's retaining its customary premier position. St Margaret's had taken some day girls, even as early as the 1920s.¹¹⁵



PLATE 82. Ledge Point was originally the home of Lady Rose Weigall and her family. It later became a 'pension' and the extension on the left was erected. In 1923 became Worcester Park School for Young Ladies. Later it was called West Bay School. It amalgamated with Ethandene in 1935.

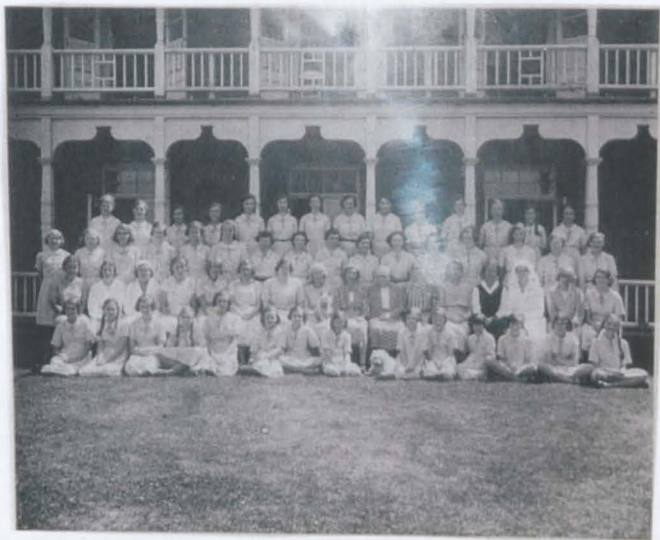


PLATE 83. The girls of West Bay School in 1937.

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After the Munich crisis in 1938, schools across the country began to prepare for the worst; some began to construct trenches and shelters; some pupils were sent overseas. Those in specially vulnerable locations began to consider moving to places of greater safety, some heads doing it in conjunction with the national scheme of evacuation being drawn up by the government, but others arranging it privately.¹¹⁶

Hawtreys had intended to stay in Westgate, as the Principal, Dorian Williams, told the *Isle of Thanet Gazette* in September 1939. 'We intend to stay at Westgate on Sea. We have an underground shelter to house all the pupils and staff. I think we shall be safe at Westgate'. Parental pressure was too strong, however, and the school soon left for Llangedwyn Hall.¹¹⁷ Lieutenant Colonel G. Anson, Principal of Doon House, said, 'Westgate on Sea is one of the safest places in the country. The school has underground concrete cellars for the protection of the boys who will have six feet of concrete above them'.¹¹⁸ He too had to bow to parental pressure and took fifty boys to Falmouth, although he returned for a term after the 'Phoney War' allowed a false sense of security.¹¹⁹ Streete Court went to Barrington Court at Ilminster; Wellington House to Alfoxton House in Somerset; St Margaret's to North Wales.¹²⁰ West Bay and Waterside closed and early in 1940 advertisements appeared for the sale of the contents of St Margaret's and Waterside.¹²¹

Defiantly, some heads decided to try to benefit from the exodus. In September 1939 Miss Lewis Jones (former head of Waterside) advertised the opening of a day-school at 10 Cedric Road on the 22 September; Les Oiseaux opened a preparatory school for boys and girls, offering also private lessons in French and German; Punjab House School had vacancies for a few children from six to ten.¹²² As late as January 1940 Thomas Gullick, who had formerly run a university 'crammer', was offering to take day boys aged from fourteen to nineteen as well as boarders for the duration of the war.¹²³

Alas, such optimism was short lived. In May 1940 France fell. On 24 May it was reported that the Ursuline pupils and teaching staff had left for Wallingford and Doon House for Peterchurch in Hereford.¹²⁴ The headmaster of Grenham House in Birchington, who had evacuated in 1917 at great cost, says that the sensible thing was to look for a school where numbers were falling - a frequent situation by then - and so he joined up with one in Dorset.¹²⁵

By June 1940 Thanet, like the whole of the coast from the Wash to Hastings and Bexhill, was out of bounds by order of the Home Secretary. All children were offered evacuation and trainloads of children left Margate for Staffordshire.¹²⁶ An air raid on 3 July 1940 which caused severe damage to Westgate hastened the exodus.¹²⁷ The town became deserted and empty buildings were requisitioned. Doon House became the Officers' Mess for those stationed at R.A.F. Manston; Streete Court and Wellington House were taken over by the army.

When the war ended, most schools did not return. Leinster-Mackay says that, 'Economic pressures of the thirties compelled many schools to amalgamate or close. The Second World War accelerated the process'.¹²⁸ Hawtreys had taken over Aldwick Grange in 1941 and five years later moved to Tottenham House in the Savernake Forest.¹²⁹ The destruction of some of its property may have affected its decision not to return and there were no immediate members of the Hawtreys family with their Westgate connections left, although Francis Cautley returned to the town after his retirement. Streete Court removed to Surrey, where it was until very recently. Doon House closed. Neither son of the last Principal was interested in schoolmastering and his widow sold the property to the British Legion.¹³⁰ It is now a nursing home.

In May 1946 Wellington House, whose buildings had been de-requisitioned more quickly than some, returned under Hubert Riley, who had become head in 1938. As the school belonged to the Canterbury Diocesan Board of Finance their return was more likely, but although numbers began to creep up, they were insufficient to make the school economic, even with the acceptance of day boys. Before the war sixty had been regarded as a good average roll (Hawtreys was a little larger with about eighty). A hundred pupils were needed in the post-war period to make a school viable. Playing fields as well as buildings needed restoration and there were fewer schools of comparable standing with whom to play matches and have social contact.¹³¹ The school closed in 1970, the buildings demolished and modern town housing built on the site.

The Convent of les Oiseaux returned, but in 1971 was taken over by the Abbey School at Ramsgate and became a boys' school. It closed in 1995. The Ursuline Convent returned in 1946, amalgamated with the Abbey Boys' School in 1995 and in 1998 became a church-aided school within the state system. Chartfield Nursery School was re-opened and has now become a private primary school.

Private schools played an important part in the life of many southern resort towns, but nowhere did they have so great an impact as in Westgate. In 1901 there were twenty-one schools in Westgate and thirty in Bexhill, but Bexhill's population was 12,213 compared with Westgate's 2738; one to every four hundred and seven inhabitants, compared with one to one hundred and thirty in Westgate.¹³² In 1911 there were eighteen schools in Westgate and eighty-two in Eastbourne; the population of the latter was 52,542, that of Westgate 3538 - one school to one hundred and ninety seven of the population, compared with Eastbourne's one to six hundred and forty.¹³³ The Mayor of Bexhill said in 1908 that the character of his town had been formed by those institutions.¹³⁴ Westgate's character may not have been formed by them, but the ethos of its founders was certainly maintained by them. The life of the town - social, cultural, political and economic - had to revolve around them, because the town depended upon them.

Their first important function had been the taking over of large properties at a time when there was no longer a market for them as private homes. The large residences of the 1870s and 1880s needed an army of servants and lacked the amenities which were becoming necessities before the turn of the century. This was not a problem unique to Westgate - in Eastbourne some of the Meads villas became schools, whilst in Hampstead 'a veritable rash of girls schools broke out in the 1890s'.¹³⁵ The proportion of schools to other properties in Westgate, however, meant that they dominated the town and no part of it was a 'school free' zone.

By 1934 there were ten in close proximity to each other on or near the seafront, whilst five stretched out along the southern side of the Canterbury Road from the Margate boundary to that with Birchington. Many of the town houses in Adrian Square also housed schools. Such establishments were not always the easiest of neighbours, especially for hotels and guest houses. The residents of one required peace and quiet, whilst visitors to the other sought pleasure and enjoyment on their holiday. However, the schools were there for some nine months of the year, whilst the holiday season was little more than six weeks.

The occupation of these large properties by the schools meant that they were major contributors to the rates which, on occasions, they were not slow to mention. For obvious reasons they were quick to embrace the new drainage system, but often opposed amenities which might benefit the visitor. They were, at best, lukewarm about the provision of a band on the rates and vigorously opposed plans to build a pavilion on the seafront in 1923.¹³⁶

Complaints about buses (only permitted by the Estate owners under licence) were frequently made. In 1913 the Parish Council received a request from Edward Hawtrey that motor traffic should be confined to the main road and not allowed on the front, where 'the heavy motors were an abomination'.¹³⁷ In 1921 Cautley asked that buses should be banned from town altogether and, when told that the Council was powerless if the Estate owners had given permission, made the ludicrous suggestion that they should enter from the main road by a narrow road, well to the west of his property, which had a sharp bend approaching a bridge scarcely wide enough to take even the smallest bus.¹³⁸ In 1928 Mrs Hawtrey complained that the buses were exceeding the eight miles an hour speed limit; in 1930 the Rev. Underhill opposed a request that a bus service which terminated at Westgate Bay Avenue should be allowed to continue to the Gas Works through the town, as it 'would mean Margate buses on Westgate's roads'.¹³⁹

When the problems of car parking began to emerge, the Parish Council agreed that spaces must be provided as 'the town catered not for day trippers, but the very best class of people' yet there could be no spaces on the front near to St Margaret's, as the school required quiet.¹⁴⁰

Such an anti-town ethos must have been a cause for resentment. A master who arrived at Wellington House in 1923 wrote

The sea and the beach itself were at that time forbidden areas, as I learnt when summer came...but as a daring innovation a selected few of the older boys were cautiously dipped in the sea. But the beach itself was not considered in any respect an addition to the School's amenities... Propriety ended at the promenade. Beyond, you never knew whom or what you might meet.¹⁴¹

To those who had invested in land the schools were welcome purchasers or hirers at a time when sales were declining. The Rev. Bull bought eight acres on the cliff top in 1899; Edward Hawtrely purchased ten acres which he had previously leased opposite the school for a playing-field in 1903.¹⁴² There Mrs Hawtrely held court in a thatched 'pagoda' when parents attended matches in the summer.¹⁴³ After the sale of the Streete Court Estate, Doon House, Streete Court School, St Margaret's and Ethandene acquired large playing-fields to the south of the town. In a place where there were no public open spaces except for the grass on the seafront, these playing-fields provided oases of green, but they were not, of course, accessible to the public except by special invitation. Successive heads of Streete Court were generous in allowing their grounds to be used for church events and Mrs Hawtrely offered her field for the peace celebrations in 1919.¹⁴⁴

It is difficult to discover how much money the schools spent in the town and how much employment they provided. At the time of the 1881 and 1891 census their servants were not local and it is unlikely that items such as school equipment and uniforms would have been bought in the town. A member of the Eastbourne Chamber of Commerce complained bitterly in 1937 that he could name at least four big private schools which bought their clothing from outside the town, giving local traders no chance to compete.¹⁴⁵ At the time of the installation of the new Westgate drainage the schools used local firms, but the Rev. Bull used a London firm to build his new chapel and extensions in 1898.¹⁴⁶

They are likely to have used local shops for daily supplies, although the only shopkeeper that advertised that he served the schools was Frederick Bessant, the chemist.¹⁴⁷ In January 1922 William Longrigg of Streete Court incensed local traders by complaining in the local paper about the closure of the shops at Christmas from Saturday 24 December until Friday 30 December. 'Our tradesmen live largely on our summer visitors, but surely they exist in the winter by the support of local residents. Some of us will be inclined to break the habit of a lifetime and deal less with local firms', he wrote. The shopkeepers were quick to contrast their thirteen days' annual holiday with his ninety.¹⁴⁸

The major hotels benefited when parents visited, but in the thirties Hawtrey parents were expected to use only St Mildred's Hotel and Rowena Court.¹⁴⁹ The smaller hotels and apartment houses, however, suffered by a shortened season caused by the placing of the interests of the schools and their desire for peace and quiet above all else. The growing murmur of discontent can be seen in the election leaflet of Henry Preston, himself an hotel-proprietor, in 1931.

It is but natural that the schools should desire to maintain that calm, quiet, peaceful and placid air of the town, but will this bring business to the Baker, Butcher or any other trader in the town, including Apartment, Boarding House and Hotel Proprietors?¹⁵⁰

Unique to Westgate, however, is the way in which the schoolmasters took upon themselves the mantle of the Lord of the Manor. The town had no indigenous leader to whom to turn, as Eastbourne looked to its duke or Folkestone to its earl. Birchington had the Powell Cottons and even despised Margate had old families such as the Hatfields, the Friends and the Cobbs. Coutts' partners watched over their estate with eagle eyes, but maintained a very low profile and at no time were their agents on the parish council, unlike at Eastbourne where the Duke's agent, George Wallis, played an important part in town government and became first Mayor.¹⁵¹

George Palmer of Reading said that 'men conscious of a power to help their fellows should be willing to take their share in municipal and other government' and the headmasters of Wellington House, Hawtrey's and Streete Court certainly set an example of service.¹⁵² From the formation of the Westgate Parish Council in 1894 until its demise forty years later, they played a major part in local government and the offices of Chairman and Vice-chairman were frequently filled from their ranks (see chapter two).

Thomas Bamford wrote that public schools create leaders, cutting off their pupils from the rest of society and becoming cradles of power and influence and that 'the lower echelons assume that the leaders have important secrets and access to the major corridors of power'.¹⁵³ It is not surprising, therefore, that it was Bull and Hawtrey who were chosen by the Parochial Committee in 1897 to go to the Directors of the Gas Company, (the partners of Coutts') to discuss the high price of gas, that it was Bull who offered to lead a deputation to the Education Department over the proposed severance of Westgate from the Margate School Board or that the schoolmasters, led by Longrigg of Streete Court and Underhill of Wellington House, were the most determined opponents of the amalgamation with Margate between 1929 and 1935.¹⁵⁴ Some even threatened to take their schools away if Margate took over.

The school heads took the lead in every field. Herbert Bull served for nineteen years on the Parish Council; sixteen of them as chairman. He was a Rural District Councillor and Guardian, a manager of the National School, a member of the Margate School Board and served for twenty-seven years as a Justice for the county on the Cinque Ports' Bench. With his brother, he founded the Westgate hockey club. He was active in the life of the parish church and was Rural Dean for Westbere for many years. Edward Hawtrey too was a parish councillor and a Justice, William Longrigg of Streete Court a parish and rural district councillor and a Justice, whilst his partner George Chittenden, who held the same offices, was also churchwarden for many years.

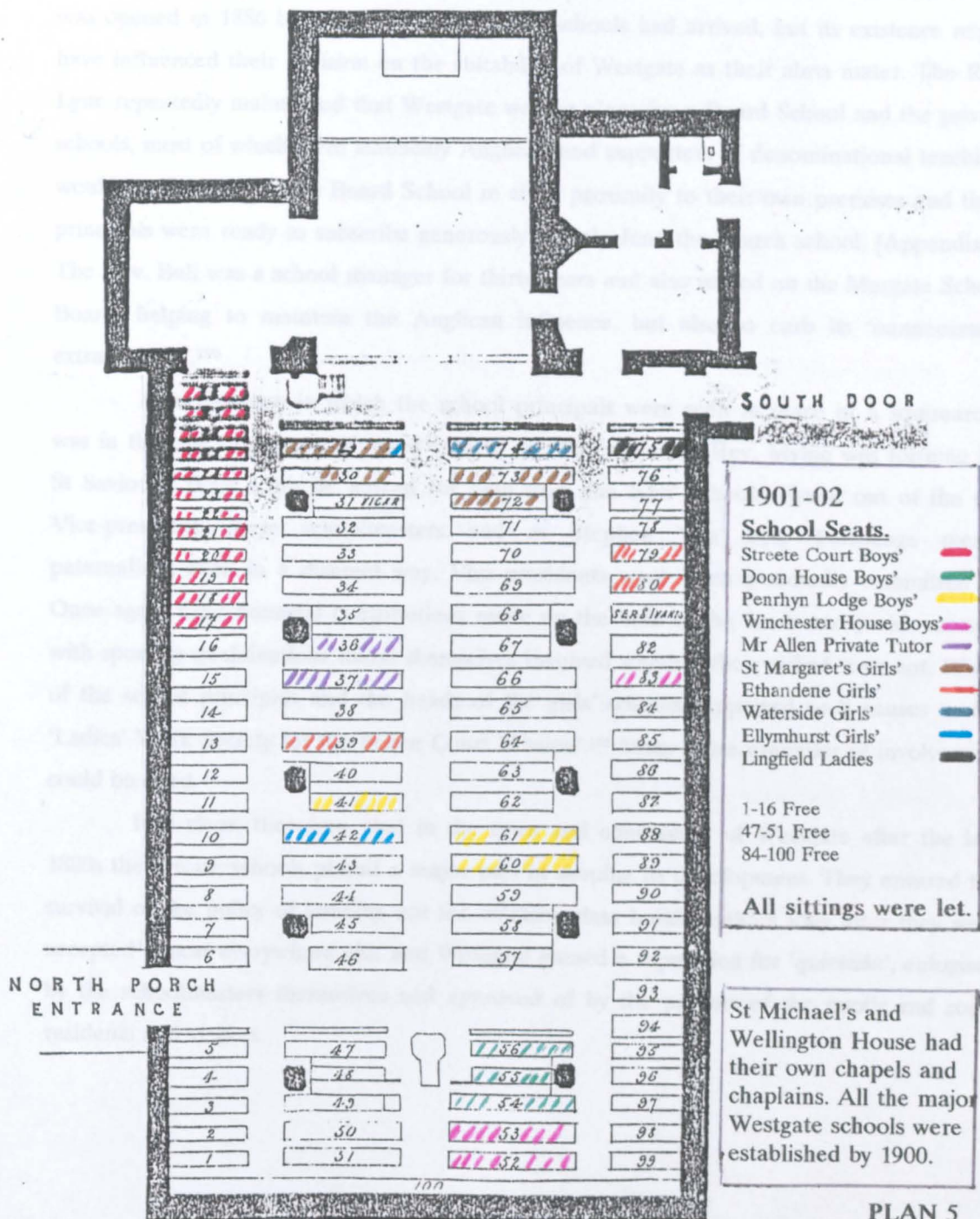
The principals of the girls' schools played no part in public life, although they were active in the church. Most would have been eligible to vote in local elections and some, no doubt, eligible to stand for office, yet they retained a ladylike silence, never voicing an opinion in public. Parents would not have expected otherwise. In 1938 a teacher arrived with eighteen of her pupils from Eastbourne to become joint head of West Bay School. Her tenure was brief for the parents were not yet ready for either her Eton crop or progressive ideas.¹⁵⁵

The schools played a valuable role in the life of the parish church, for it is difficult to see how it could have managed without their financial support. [Appendix 8] When the parish was created the Ecclesiastical Commissioners granted a stipend of £200 per annum to the incumbent, which could be supplemented by the revenue from the pew rents, which could amount to £147 per annum (although it sometimes exceeded that sum.)¹⁵⁶ At first there was no difficulty in disposing of the sittings, as the wealthy part-time residents were happy to pay a full year's rent to ensure they had seats in the right part of the church for the short time that they were present, usually paying for a complete pew so that it would not be necessary to share with someone below their rank.¹⁵⁷ As they withdrew, however, there were fewer people to replace them and the school principals arrived at an opportune time. All the major schools had rented sittings, as it would not have been fitting for them to make use of the free seats and it can be seen not only how they grew in number, but also how they gradually began to take up the 'best' seats. [Plan 5]

The importance of their contributions is illustrated by what happened in 1917 when most of the schools evacuated. The church's finances were strained and only the generosity of the incumbent, who gave the church his fees as chaplain to the forces stationed in Westgate, kept it solvent.¹⁵⁷ By 1919-20 things had returned to normal and rents for school sittings again increased.

GROUND PLAN OF
The Church of St^e Saviour;
WESTGATE (o^y) SEA,

referred to in Schedule of the Instrument dated 26th February 1885, fixing and assigning the Seats of certain Sittings in that Church.



PLAN 5

Income for year £148
School rents £68 or 46%
Source : Pew Rent Book
By permission of the Churchwardens

The school principals supported the Sunday School, the Choir Outings and other causes as they arose. From details of church accounts it is interesting to see what met with their approval. The Rev. Bull, a most generous supporter, contributed in 1907 towards the installation of a West Door to allow for easier access and, more importantly, safer egress, but gave nothing towards the church heating fund or the fund to provide a curtain for the said West Door. Waterside school did not support funds on a regular basis, but in three successive years gave concerts in aid of the fund to purchase additional land on the south side of the church before Sir William Ingram built his Town Hall and shops nearby.¹⁵⁸

The schools' financial support for the National School was also vital. The school was opened in 1886 before most of the major schools had arrived, but its existence might have influenced their decision on the suitability of Westgate as their alma mater. The Rev. Lyne repeatedly maintained that Westgate was no place for a Board School and the private schools, most of which were staunchly Anglican and supporters of denominational teaching, would not have wanted a Board School in close proximity to their own premises and their principals were ready to subscribe generously to help fund the church school. [Appendix 9] The Rev. Bull was a school manager for thirty years and also served on the Margate School Board, helping to maintain the Anglican influence, but also to curb its 'unnecessary extravagance'.¹⁵⁹

A further way in which the school principals were seen in place of a squirearchy was in the role of patrons of 'good causes'. In 1901 when the Rev. Mylne was forming his St Saviours' Boys' Club he looked for help from the boys' schools. Seven out of the ten Vice-presidents were schoolmasters and as Stephen Yeo says, 'Patronage meant paternalism, even in a discreet way. Vice-presidents were often personally committed'.¹⁶⁰ Once again their financial contributions made up the bulk of the funds and junior masters with sporting qualifications found themselves involved whether they wished it or not. Wives of the school principals and the heads of the girls' schools supported such causes as the 'Ladies' Work Society for the Police Court Mission'.¹⁶¹ Many more examples of involvement could be cited.

It is clear, therefore, that in the town and community of Westgate after the late 1880s the private schools played a major part in shaping its development. They ensured the survival of the policy of keeping out the working class holidaymakers long after they were accepted almost everywhere else and Westgate gained a reputation for 'quietude', eulogised by the schoolmasters themselves and approved of by the parents of the pupils and some residents and visitors.

But one man's quiet is another's dullness and boredom and Westgate was frequently criticised for that. The editor of the *Isle of Thanet Gazette* wrote in 1924, when commenting on a meeting held to discuss the building of a seafront pavilion at which the Rev. Bull had said he had heard that Birchington was getting the cream of the visitors, that there were two diametrically opposed standpoints among the residents of Westgate.¹⁶² Birchington was indeed flourishing, with new hotels and modern houses at Minnis Bay, and was becoming the fashionable venue for the artistic and those who wanted a little more liveliness than Westgate could provide.

In Westgate not only were there the larger prestigious schools, but a proliferation of smaller ones, set up to provide for those whose parents did not want them to attend the National School, but whose class would preclude their acceptance into schools for the 'children of gentlemen'. C. H. Bishop writing of the Folkestone schools at the west end of the town said, 'Needless to say, no tradesman's son or daughter was admitted to these schools, however wealthy; east was east and west was west'¹⁶³. It is interesting that the Governors of the Bethlehem Hospital, when they were first thinking about the development of the Westbrook Estate in 1903, instructed their solicitor to include in the occupancy clause 'nor for a Convalescent Home or School'. In May 1928 the Governors received a complaint from a resident that a neighbour had set up a school, so it is clear that they were not universally welcomed.¹⁶⁴

It was in 1970 that the editor of the final issue of the *Wellington Review* wrote, that the school which was about to close was 'an anachronism as a society existing primarily to teach the doctrine of the Catholic Church and secondarily to educate the sons of gentlemen in the art of being so' but such a judgement might have been passed on the Westgate schools some thirty years earlier.¹⁶⁵ Even if the war had not come, the process of adaptation to being part of Margate Borough would have proved too painful and some would not have survived the changes being brought about in their own industry. The loss of the private schools, which had been more important even than the holiday industry for half a century, together with the loss of identity after the Local Government Review, made 1940 a watershed for Westgate.

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CHAPTER SIX

CHURCH AND SOCIETY

WORSHIP AND MISSION

It was unthinkable that any late-nineteenth century development purporting to be fashionable, whether a suburb such as Hampstead or Edgbaston or a resort such as Torquay or Bournemouth, should succeed, if it did not make adequate provision for residents and visitors alike to fulfil their obligations in an age which James Obelkevich calls 'self consciously religious'.¹ Cannadine writing of the early development at Eastbourne, and referring to the building of the Trinity Chapel of Ease, said, 'As usual, the church was the first large-scale piece of construction'.² The developer of the Chalcots Estate at Hampstead recommended the owners, Eton College, to supply a church, as it would be profitable even as a speculation.³ At Westgate, as the population grew and the number of visitors increased, existing church accommodation soon became inadequate.

The first part of Westgate to be developed lay in the large medieval parish of St John the Baptist Margate and, as was described in chapter one, the Vicar, Canon Josiah Bateman, succeeded in obtaining the gift of a site and funds for the erection of a church to serve the new community. St James's Westgate (now known as St James's Garlinge) was consecrated by the Bishop of Dover on 3 January 1873. Designed by Charles Beazley and built of Kentish ragstone in the Gothic style with steeple, it seated four hundred and twenty. The pews on the north side were to be rented, but those on the south were to be free - an arrangement which met with the approval of the local press, which called it fairer than usual, as 'the poor are always on the periphery and in the cold'.⁴ It is known that some of the new Westgate residents became members of the congregation, for the babies of Henry Minter, Henry Houseman, Joseph Jackson, William Weston, Colonel Lewis Jones and William Bullock were baptised there and Minter, Bullock, Herman Mertens, William Logan and Archibald Roxburgh served as churchwardens.⁵

However, as early as 1878, with the more westerly part of the Westgate Estate beginning to take shape, a demand for a church closer to the new houses was made. In August that year a letter appeared in *Keble's Gazette* from William Bullock, in which he complained that there was no church within a mile of his school, Ringslow College, and that, as St James's had been full to overflowing the previous Sunday, he wished to launch an appeal to erect a church and parsonage on a site promised by the new Estate owner, Mr Edmund Davis.⁶ Henry Weigall also wrote, expressing concern, that, 'With rare exceptions the working-class of Westgate are never seen at church'.⁷

A proposed new church did not meet with universal approval. 'Regular attender' asked what was the underlying motive for another, and necessarily rival, church. 'Mr Bullock must be aware that it is a seasonal problem, for it is difficult to find a seat in any church in August from St John's to Holy Trinity to St Paul's [Cliftonville]. He was concerned for St James's, where attendance was small and the service cold and considered that Mr Bullock, as churchwarden, should be doing something to make the services more attractive.'⁸

D.Robert Elleray says, 'Resorts and spas often possessed a wider range of places of worship than other towns, and... the provision of such variety became the concern of the commercial, social and promotional interests of the town'.⁹ Evangelicals were not attracted to Bournemouth until Holy Trinity was built in 1867 because of High Church dominance; in Worthing, where Evangelicals held sway, it was the reverse and in 1885 St Andrew's was built as a counter-balance; the *Guide to Southport* (1887) gave helpful details of churchmanship - 'the best singing is at Holy Trinity, St Andrew's has a surpliced choir, but is not high, St Luke's is high, St Paul's and Christ Church are evangelical'.¹⁰

Church accommodation for Westgate nonconformists was particularly poor. There were Methodist chapels in the neighbouring villages, but the nearest Congregational and Baptist churches were in central Margate. Roman Catholics had no choice but to attend in Margate or Ramsgate. In October 1878 the *Kent Congregational Magazine* recommended that efforts should be made to 'commence a Congregational cause in this fast growing watering place' and Davis offered to donate a freehold site for a church and school on condition that the building commenced immediately.¹¹ This was more easily said than done, as the number of full-time residents was still small and both Anglicans and Congregationalists had ultimately to appeal to the wider public to help them achieve their aims.

The Rev. Thomas Blandford of Herne Bay drew the attention of the Kent Congregational Association's Executive Committee to 'the growing spiritual needs of a community, in which several Congregational families, having made their homes, would form the nucleus of a future fellowship'.¹² A county-wide appeal was launched and negotiations for a suitable site began.¹³ In 1879 Congregational services were held in a tent during the season, but after 1880 they took place in the Assembly Rooms under the pastorate of the Rev. Robert Tuck from Margate.¹⁴

A committee was set up consisting of local ministers and church members.¹⁵ However, because of the change of ownership of the Estate in July 1880, it took longer to decide upon a site. Finally, from three offered, the one nearest to the seafront and town centre was chosen, although part of the cost had to be met and the land was conveyed in August 1881.¹⁶

A Trust Deed was drawn up by which the land and buildings would be 'held in trust for the religious purposes of the denomination in accordance with the Model Deed of the English Congregational Chapel Building Society', from whom a loan of £300 was obtained, and fund raising commenced.¹⁷ A public tea in July 1882 attracted a hundred people and £95 was raised by a bazaar and in January 1883 the Kent Congregational Association made a grant of £65.¹⁸

The Rev. Blandford moved to Westgate with his family to become the first minister; on 12 June 1883 the foundation stone of Christ Church was laid by Samuel Morley M.P. the prominent dissenter, philanthropist and temperance advocate. At the service the Rev. Joshua Harrison of Camden Town said that, 'Wherever they [Congregationalists] met together and formed a church, they should be anxious to spread education, stop intemperance, produce temperance and scatter relief among the sick and poor'. Morley, concerned that 'between rationalism on the one hand and ritualism on the other there was a very dark future', hoped that there would be many efforts to do social good. He was pleased that a flourishing Sunday School already existed and hoped that a branch of the Blue Ribbon Society would soon be formed.¹⁹ Westgate was to become a stronghold of the temperance movement, seeing it, perhaps, as another weapon in the fight to maintain order and a decorous environment.

Christ Church, officially opened on 22 April 1884, was designed so that it could be built, as the money became available, in stages, the first providing four hundred and twenty-six sittings in the summer, some of which could be screened off in the winter. The space under the gallery could be used for winter meetings or Sunday School. When completed the church, which had already cost almost £3000 and on which there was a large debt, would be capable of seating over five hundred.²⁰ Although visitors were welcome, it is clear that the first consideration was to provide for the spiritual needs of the nonconformist residents of Westgate and soon permission to form a church was sought.

The Kent Congregational Association Executive Committee, however, whilst 'being fully in sympathy with the desire of the friends at Westgate', would not recommend it, as Westgate was still receiving a larger grant than any other church in Kent.²¹ A further application was rejected in June 1886 despite the willingness of the local committee to take all financial responsibility, but three months later it was sanctioned and on 4 November 1886 forty-three people formally covenanted to form a church fellowship.²² Many of Westgate's tradesmen and skilled artisans were amongst the leading Congregationalists. Alfred Lockwood junior, specially commended at the opening service for his generosity, became a deacon, treasurer and superintendent of the Band of Hope.²³ His mother founded the Sunday School and was its first superintendent.²⁴ The Hobday, Denne, Dallas and Dyke families were in the building trades, the Battersons and Howes were shopkeepers and Frances Eavery, one of the first Sunday School teachers, was a lodging house keeper.²⁵

However, members of the professions were also supporters, for intellectual interests were fostered and within a decade there was a flourishing Social and Literary Society.²⁶ Alfred Blandford B.A. the minister's son, established a boys' preparatory school in 1894.²⁷ Streete Court School had seats in the parish church, but John Vine Milne, its founder, appears to have been active in the affairs of Christ Church.²⁸ The Erlebach brothers, founders of Woodford House Preparatory School in Birchington, where there was no Congregational church, also became active members of the Westgate Church.²⁹

It took the church some time to pay off its debts and it continued to receive grants from the County Association until 1899, although they were gradually reduced in amount. Throughout the period church activities were closely monitored - in 1897 the Canterbury District Committee reported that, at Westgate, 'every department of work is well maintained and, during the year, £205 has been contributed towards the reduction of debt'.³⁰ The next year's report was not quite so favourable; 'the finances are not quite up to past years'.³¹ In 1899 Alfred Erlebach left a generous 'further' gift in his will to help the church pay off its debt and on 15 December 1900 it was at last possible to hold a public meeting of thanksgiving to celebrate the liquidation of the debt.³² Costs had mounted to £4000 after the erection in January 1887 of a 'new and commodious iron building for Sunday School purposes', but Sunday School numbers had grown rapidly - as early as 1888 there were a hundred and forty-four children on the books - showing the importance attached to such institutions by nonconformists, often frustrated in their efforts to provide acceptable day-school accommodation for their children.³³

Meanwhile, the Anglicans were forging ahead with their plans for more accommodation. In February 1880 a meeting, chaired by Herman Mertens and attended by leading residents and the incumbents of Minster, Birchington and St James's whose parishes would be affected by a new ecclesiastical parish, was held at the Beach House Hotel to 'discuss the urgent matter of church accommodation in Westgate'.³⁴ A committee was appointed and within six weeks a temporary church, costing £630 and accommodating three hundred and fifty people, was erected on land which was part of the parish of Minster with the Rev. Augustus Lyne as curate in charge.³⁵ The Vicar of Minster, the Rev. Alfred Sitwell, had oversight of the establishment of a permanent church and, with the consent of the Archbishop, of a parish.³⁶

The iron church was complete with altar, organ and font - the names of Westgate babies baptised there by Lyne from May 1880 to July 1884 are to be found in the registers of St Mary's Minster.³⁷ From the beginning it was far too small in the season and by the summer of 1881 many were unable to obtain seats for morning service.³⁸ A subscription list was opened for a permanent church, the new estate owners, the Parker brothers, granted a site and Lyne launched an appeal, which, like that of the Congregationalists, was to the wider community, emphasising the small resident population. [Appendix 10]

Rich visitors frequently became benefactors of new churches in resorts and in Westgate, where there was no indigeneous élite, their support was vital. At a meeting, held in London at the offices of the Parkers in February 1882, a permanent committee containing many prominent names was set up. The working committee, with the task of raising the money and overseeing the plans and eventual construction of the church, consisted largely of the 'quality' with local connections.³⁹

In August 1882 a Grand Bazaar took place over two days at the Assembly Rooms with the cream of society as its patrons and raised £550 (see chapter three).⁴⁰ The need for a permanent church was becoming ever more urgent - on 18 August over three hundred people were turned away and parents were asked to send their children to the special afternoon service.⁴¹ Beazley's design for a church to seat a thousand was a very ambitious project for such a small community, for the first estimates ranged from £9000 to £15,000.⁴²

On 2 April 1883 the site was conveyed to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners as a gift from the Parkers, although it was mortgaged land and Coutts' partners of the day were also signatories.⁴³ Response to the appeal was generous; donors included nobility, county and local gentry, and royalty in the persons of T.R.H. Prince and Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, their daughters the Princesses Victoria and Louise and H.R.H. Princess William of Prussia.⁴⁴ [Fig.11] When sufficient funds did not materialise the Committee, neither wishing to delay the building of the church nor to burden itself with a great debt, cancelled the first plans and accepted a more modest design - a change of plans which cost £353 in compensation to the architect and the loss of a grant of £300 from the Church Building Society (see chapter four).⁴⁵

A contract was given to J.G. Naylor and Sons of Rochester, building began in July 1883 and the foundation stone was laid on 28 August by Sir Erasmus Wilson.⁴⁶ Some five to six hundred people were present to witness the ceremony attended by most of the neighbouring clergy and to hear the Rural Dean exhort them to 'be up and doing; build the sanctuary of the Lord'. A large bottle, containing copies of *The Times* of that day, of *Keble's Gazette* of the previous week, of that day's service and special hymns and of the Treasurer's report, was placed in a specially made recess. Mr Hitchin, the Committee Treasurer, handed Sir Erasmus an inscribed silver trowel. The mortar was laid, the white stone, inscribed in Gothic Script with a text from St John VI, verse xxxvii, lowered into place under the east window 'in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost', 'proved to be true and was tapped twice with a mallet'. [Plates 84 & 85] A further appeal for generous offerings raised £115 and Sir Erasmus made a donation of a hundred guineas.⁴⁷ The service was followed by lunch (at 4/6 per head) at the Assembly Rooms at which numerous toasts were given.⁴⁸ In the margin of the manuscript subscription list, the long-suffering treasurer wrote in pencil against the expenses for the luncheon amounting to £38 3s, 'Vicar's extravagance. He would have it'.⁴⁹



PLATE 84. The statue of Sir Erasmus Wilson which stands in the grounds of the Royal Seabathing Hospital Margate looking towards Westgate.



PLATE 85. The foundation stone of St Saviour's Church was laid by Sir Erasmus in August 1883.

Subscriptions given or promised:—

	£.	s.	d.		£.	s.	d.
Anonymous	500	0	0	A. Akers Douglas Esq., M.P.	5	5	0
E. Inderwick, Esq.	100	0	0	J. H. Brown, Esq.	5	5	0
Messrs. Cobb & Co.	100	0	0	Mr. G. B. Hutchinson	5	5	0
Cards & Boxes, per Rev. A. A. Lyne	129	13	10	Mr. J. Burrigge	5	5	0
Diocesan Church Building Society	50	0	0	Mr. W. Frostick	5	5	0
Francis Lyne, Esq.	50	0	0	Mr. W. Minter	5	5	0
Rev. A. A. Lyne	50	0	0	Mr. A. G. Lockwood	5	5	0
J. D. Thomson, Esq.	50	0	0	Mrs. Watson	5	5	0
Robt. Grant, Esq.	50	0	0	H. R.	5	5	0
Offerories, Holy and Easter Week	46	2	4	Messrs. Thornton & Treves	5	5	0
Rev. A. H. Sitwell	30	0	0	Mr. J. D. Biggleston	5	5	0
C. Moxon, Esq.	30	0	0	Mrs. Rowe	5	5	0
Mrs. Offley Smith	26	5	0	Mr. D. Bentley	5	5	0
General Hutchinson	26	5	0	Mr. M. Mc Lennan	5	5	0
C. N. Beazley, Esq.	26	5	0	W. Aldin, Esq.	5	5	0
Miss E. Hill	25	0	0	Miss Eavery	5	5	0
Miss L. Hill	25	0	0	L. Shrubsole, Esq.	5	5	0
Miss A. Hill	25	0	0	Ecclesiastical Commissioners	5	0	0
W. B. Rogers, Esq.	25	0	0	H. Smith, Esq.	5	0	0
Mrs. E. Price	25	0	0	W. J. Holland, Esq.	5	0	0
W. Q. Orchardson, Esq. R.A.	25	0	0	Mr. W. Godbolt	5	0	0
H. Houseman, Esq.	25	0	0	Right Honorable E. Gibson, M.P.	5	0	0
Concert by Mrs. Marshall	22	14	6	Right Hon Earl Granville	5	0	0
W. T. Bullock, Esq.	21	0	0	Rev. W. Benham	5	0	0
Arthur Flint, Esq.	21	0	0	The Marquess of Bath	5	0	0
T. F. Cobb, Esq. (Executors of)	21	0	0	H. R. H. Princess Christian	5	0	0
Dr. Godson	21	0	0	H. R. H. Prince Christian	5	0	0
H. J. Chapman, Esq.	21	0	0	Mrs. Worthington	5	0	0
Lectures, per Rev. A. A. Lyne	20	4	4	Sir Walter Farquhar, Bart.	5	0	0
H. D. Mertens, Esq.	20	0	0	C. A. Ionides, Esq.	3	3	0
W. Corbett, Esq.	20	0	0	Miss H. Candler	3	3	0
G. W. Willett, Esq.	20	0	0	Miss E. Candler	3	3	0
W. Ingram, Esq.	20	0	0	Rev. W. H. Brett	3	0	0
G. Clarence Harding, Esq.	15	15	0	Rev. H. J. Rhodes	3	0	0
R. H. Perryn, Esq.	15	15	0	Messrs. Cutlack & Co.	2	2	0
Sir Erasmus Wilson	15	15	0	C. Knowles, Esq.	2	2	0
H. Powell Cotton, Esq.	15	0	0	Captain Hatfield	2	2	0
Mrs. Dalgairns	12	10	0	Mrs. Hatfield	2	2	0
Martin R. Smith, Esq.	10	10	0	Miss Hatfield	2	2	0
Miss Keen	10	10	0	Mr. G. W. Andrews	2	2	0
Mrs. Sweeting	10	10	0	Mr. J. Jackson	2	2	0
A. B. Cobb, Esq.	10	10	0	Miss Edwards	2	2	0
T. Lewin, Esq.	10	10	0	Rev. G. Collis	2	2	0
Dr. Rowe	10	10	0	Mrs. Williams	2	2	0
T. Logan, Esq.	10	10	0	Anonymous	2	0	0
Mrs. Manby	10	0	0	Lady Francis Hamilton	2	0	0
Mrs. Bosanquet	10	0	0	Miss Porter and Miss Foster	1	1	0
Mrs. Warre	10	0	0	E. E. Jackson, Esq.	1	1	0
J. Godman, Esq.	10	0	0	Miss Goddard	1	1	0
Rev. A. Loccock	10	0	0	Mr. Stewart	1	1	0
Mr. H. Minter	10	0	0	Mrs. Stewart	1	1	0
R. W. Burrows, Esq.	10	0	0	Mr. Munns	1	1	0
P. B. Neame, Esq.	10	0	0	Mrs. Howlett	1	1	0
J. L. Dore, Esq.	10	0	0	Mr. Weston	1	1	0
Messrs. Tomson & Wotton	10	0	0	Mr. G. Howard	1	1	0
C. T. W. Forester, Esq., M.P.	10	0	0	Mrs. Sich	1	0	0
H. Peto, Esq.	10	0	0				

Part of the printed list of subscriptions to the Building Fund for St Saviour's Church 1882-4.

FIG. 11.

From the Churchwardens' Box; now in the Diocesan Record Office, U3/272/6/B25.

Despite many setbacks, including damage to the east gable wall, part of which was blown down in February 1884 in a great storm breaking the window-frame, the church was completed in time for the consecration at the height of the season and Westgate was full of titled visitors in July 1884.⁵⁰ The service of consecration by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Edward White Benson on 23 July, followed by communion, took four hours and every seat (ticket only) was taken. The congregation heard the Archbishop, in a long and erudite sermon, urge them to support their minister and especially to help relieve him of the burden of debt of £3000, which was guaranteed by one man.

At the time, it was not known that this was Lyne himself.⁵¹ Had he not taken on the debt the church would not have been consecrated - it was not unusual for the consecration of a new church to be delayed because of a debt. Not all resorts were fortunate enough to have a rich patron. At Bournemouth and Exmouth the leading landowner footed the bills for new churches; at Eastbourne George Whelpton, a London pill-maker, provided much of the money for St Saviour's, where his son was to become Vicar; at Brighton the 'Wagner' churches were built by a family of parsons from the money of their hatter-father.⁵² There was no such single benefactor at Westgate.

The events that led to the completion on time were only fully revealed in 1891 when, after the debts had finally been cleared, *Keble's Gazette* took the unusual step of publishing in full the accounts of St Saviour's from 1880 to 1891 and the remarkable story of one man's 'untiring zeal and earnestness of life'.⁵³ [Appendix 11] Lyne recounts how

The crowning blow of all awaited us in 1884, when the owners of the estate went bankrupt, and the church was more than half-built, and, with one fell swoop, their promised donation (upon which we were almost existing) of £1500 was lost to us. The work then staggered and threatened to collapse, and it was proposed in committee to cease building and discharge the workmen and leave the church in a half-finished condition. But it is worthy of record, that a text about this time was sent to me anonymously, and, by a person, who I afterwards discovered knew nothing of myself or Westgate, or of the work going on here. The text was Chronicles I, xxviii 20 '...be strong and of a good courage and do it, fear not, nor be dismayed : for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee. He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou has finished all the work for the service of the House of the Lord'. Our Committee was then dissolved and the whole burden of the work became at once mine and only mine.⁵⁴

In September 1884 an Order in Council from the Queen established the 'Consolidated Chapelry of St Saviour's Westgate on Sea' delineating the boundaries and creating the parish from land taken from the new St James's, Minster, and Birchington with Acol.⁵⁵

There was, as has been described above, some unease in St James's, which would be left with little more than the agricultural community of Garlinge, but it was still thought possible that the Westbrook lands of the Bethlehem and Bridewell Hospitals might be developed. The parts of the other two parishes affected had few inhabitants and would be of little loss to their incumbents, so there was not the opposition that often occurred when new parishes were created and income and burial fees were lost.

The Archbishop, patron of Minster, nominated and presented Augustus Lyne as first Vicar in September 1884.⁵⁶ W. N. Yates, writing of St Andrew's Worthing, said that, 'It was realised... that the congregation would always be eclectic and that many would be visitors. Indeed, it would seem that the likely benefit for the tourist trade was one of the most powerful arguments in favour of the new church'.⁵⁷ So indeed was it at Westgate.

Many members of the upper class saw the Established church as an essential part of the social order and wished to uphold it; Lyne was always quick to exploit those wishes. Well before the permanent church was complete, his temporary church had become a venue for the 'upper classes', who were Westgate's part-time residents or its seasonal visitors. *Keble's Gazette*, when announcing in September 1881 the forthcoming visit of the Princesses Victoria and Louise, reported that a 'pew in St Saviour's Church has been placed at the disposal of the Royal party'.⁵⁸ Their hosts, the Earl and Countess of Ellesmere, provided fruit and flowers from their Worsley estate for the Harvest festival, which took place during the royal visit.⁵⁹

Even the finished church was but a shell in Lyne's eyes and appeals to visitors over the years brought gifts of furniture, furnishings and ornaments of the highest quality. An early task was to acquire an organ for the 'Glory of God', as he said in 1885, when it was made known that the bazaar in the grounds of Streete Court was to provide such a luxury for which he was criticised whilst there was still a debt.⁶⁰ The proceeds of £450 resulted in an agreement being made with Frederick Browne of Deal to erect an organ in which 'only the best material and mechanisms ...shall be used'.⁶¹ It was installed in August 1886 and the dedication service was followed by the musical treat of two organ recitals, one of which was by the organist of Lichfield Cathedral.⁶²

The church was built when there was a high level of controversy in the Church of England and much anti-ritualist feeling. The suit brought against the Rev. C.J. Ridsdale of St Peter's Folkestone in 1877 by the Church Association on the charge of ritualism would have been fresh in the minds of Kent clergy and, according to W.N. Yates, Margate was one of the least ritualistic towns in Kent.⁶³ In 1888 the *Church Times* said that, 'No watering-place has a chance of doing well that has not at least one decent church...a health resort which does not provide for the Ritualist cuts itself off from a large section of the community'.⁶⁴



PLATE 86. The interior of St Saviour's Church, which was consecrated in July 1884. Designed by Charles Beazley according to the precepts of the Ecclesiological Movement. The east window by Charles Kempe was a gift from A.B. Mitford. The reredos in Derbyshire marble is in memory of the first vicar the Rev. Augustus Lyne who died in 1900.



PLATE 87. The organ in St Saviour's Church was installed in August 1886. Lyne was accused of extravagance in having it erected when there was still a debt on the church, but he insisted.

David Cannadine quotes from William Neil, writing in similar vein about Eastbourne

It was the done thing from 12 to 1 to parade in front of the Grand Hotel with a prayer book under the arm. This showed that you were the kind of person who went to church (whether you had been or not) and, equally important, that you were the kind of person who did not need to cook his own dinner.⁷⁰

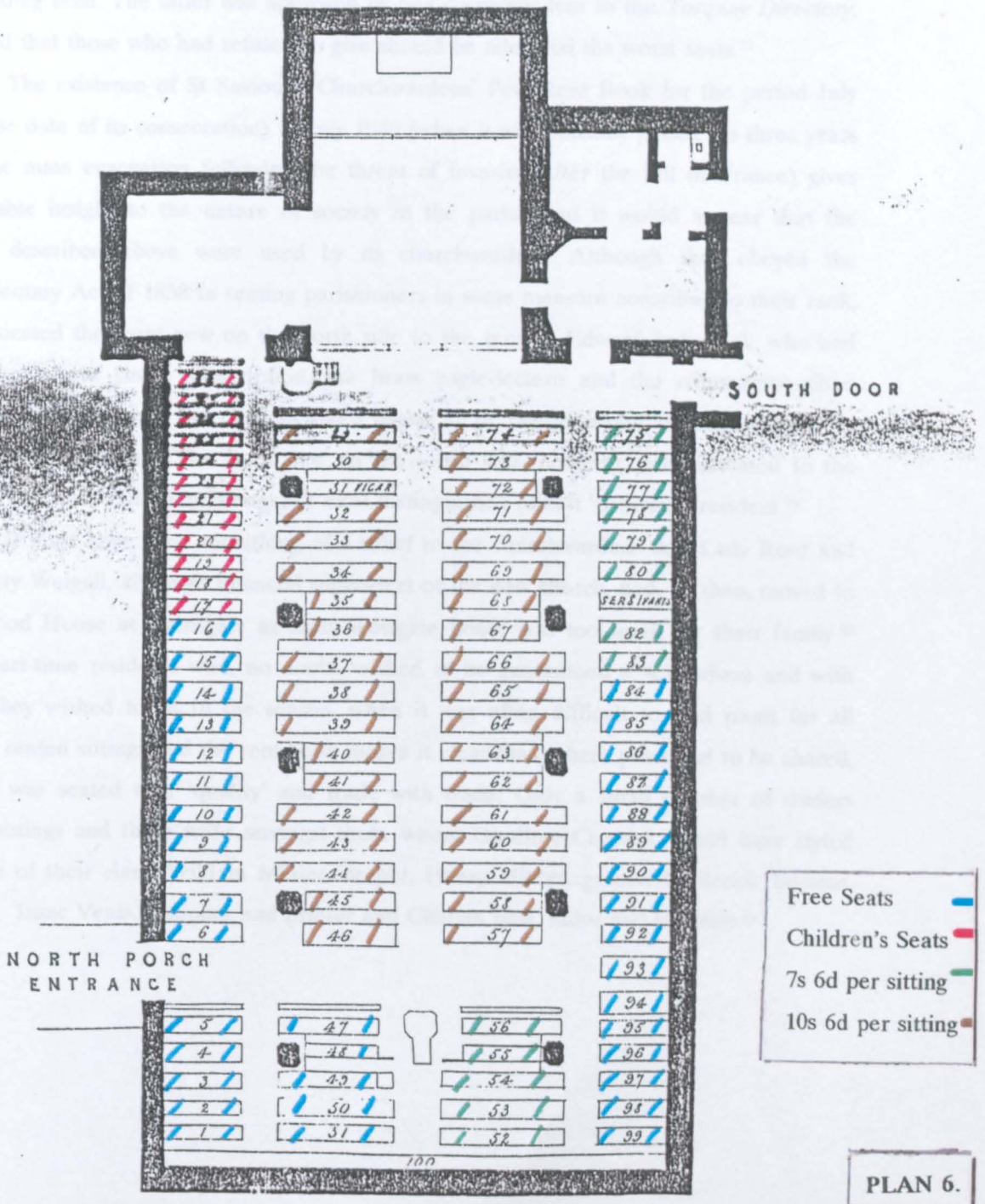
The Ecclesiastical Commissioners had granted a stipend of £200 a year to the incumbent of St Saviour's and the right to the income from pew-rents as laid down in a Statutory Instrument, by which one-fifth of the seats were to be free and the remainder to be rented at 7s 6d per sitting for the side and back seats and 10s 6d for those in the centre.⁷¹ [Plan 6] All seats were numbered; sometimes sittings were sub-let during the season, if a resident were letting his house. There were seats in the south side-aisle set aside for servants. The banker, Martin Ridley Smith, and Colonel Copeland rented seats for their servants for many years and those from many households were expected to attend.⁷² In *Not in Front of the Servants*, Frank Dawes recounts that servants were expected to dress in plain sombre clothes to attend church so that it amounted to an outdoor uniform denoting their station as domestics.⁷³

The system of pew rents was one which had come under attack some years before St Saviour's came into being, for it was regarded by many as being divisive and they had been abolished in many churches after 1870. They were particularly disliked by High Anglicans - St Saviour's Eastbourne emphasised the fact that it had no rented pews and was maintained entirely from the offertories of the congregation.⁷⁴ Many churches were, however, ill-endowed and offertories did not yield enough. Moreover, the lack of rented pews did not mean that those wishing to attend could choose to sit where they liked. It was the duty of churchwardens to allocate seats and, even in ancient churches where there had never been rented pews, certain seats were by custom reserved for certain people. Those who held pews were reluctant to surrender their rights and there was the dislike of sitting next to someone uncongenial; this was particularly so in resort towns, where accommodation was often insufficient in the season.

In June 1872 the writer of a letter in *Keble's Gazette* complained that residents dreaded the influx of visitors. Referring to overcrowding at St John's Margate, the writer opined that visitors should attend the 'empty afternoon services', asking, 'Why should delicate ladies feel compelled by their churchwardens to absent themselves or go through a baptism of fire? Why should they risk discomfort by sitting close to, perhaps, some disagreeable person, perhaps, some fever convalescent?'⁷⁵

GROUND PLAN OF
the Church of St^t Saviour;
WESTGATE / SEA,

referred to in Schedule of the Instrument dated 26th February, 1885, fixing, and assigning the Seats of certain Sittings in that Church.



Churchwardens were instructed in their duties in Prideaux's *Practical Guide* of 1895 that

In the matter of seating they were subordinate to the bishop, who was presumed by law to be the properest person to be entrusted with the judging of different qualities and degrees of people, in order to the placing of them in the church, each according to his rank, so that there shall be no contention there about this matter.⁷⁶

In new churches this 'ranking' of the congregation could cause considerable discontent. At Torquay the churchwardens of the new church at Upton were forced to call a public meeting to explain the method that they had used to allocate seats. Whilst individual choice was given as the first criterion, the second was the amount of subscription given towards the building fund. The latter was approved by one correspondent to the *Torquay Directory*, who said that those who had refused to give should be allocated the worst seats.⁷⁷

The existence of St Saviour's Churchwardens' Pew Rent Book for the period July 1884 (the date of its consecration) to July 1940 (when it was officially closed for three years after the mass evacuation following the threat of invasion after the fall of France) gives remarkable insight to the nature of society in the parish and it would appear that the criteria described above were used by its churchwardens. Although they obeyed the Parliamentary Act of 1838 in seating parishioners in some measure according to their rank, they allocated the front pew on the north side to the rentier, Edward Inderwick, who had given the largest single subscription, the brass eagle-lectern and the communion-silver consisting of two patens, two chalices and a flagon all of 'chaste design' commissioned from a London silversmith.⁷⁸ The front pew on the south side, however, was allocated to the Mitford family, at that time Westgate's most distinguished (albeit 'habitual') resident.⁷⁹

It must have been something of a relief to the churchwardens that Lady Rose and Mr Henry Weigall, although financial supporters of the new church, had, by then, moved to Southwood House at Ramsgate as their Westgate house was too small for their family.⁸⁰ Many part-time residents who, no doubt, wished to be guaranteed a seat where and with whom they wished to sit in the season, when it was often difficult to find room for all visitors, rented sittings and the rent-book makes it clear that, where pews had to be shared, 'quality' was seated with 'quality' and trade with trade. Only a small number of traders rented sittings and these were amongst those whom Geoffrey Crossick would have styled the élite of their class -William Minter, draper, Henry Minter, grocer, Frederick Bessant, chemist, Isaac Venis, stationer and printer and Charles Best, tailor and outfitter.⁸¹

It is not easy to draw definite conclusions from the records in the pew-rent book, as we do not know who sat in the free seats, but it seems as if a rented seat was a sign of status; the principals of the private schools took them for their pupils. It is likely, however, that the lower classes might not have felt at ease in such a setting, although they might not have felt any more at home in the Congregational church, for Congregationalists were proud of their middle-class image. Graham Neville, writing of Eastbourne, asked, 'Who could afford to dissent?' He answered the question himself, saying, 'The independent, not the servant'.⁸²

However, St Saviour's Baptism Registers reveal that the 'quality, trade or profession' of the fathers of the first hundred of those brought to be baptised varied greatly, eighty-five coming from the lower-middle and working classes - forty-four skilled artisans, sixteen in trade, ten labourers, nine servants and six in agriculture, whilst there were thirteen professionals, one army captain and just one self-styled gentleman.⁸³ This pattern was to persist over the years, so that it is clear that even the poorest made use of the parish church for 'rites of passage', as banns' and marriage registers show a similar pattern.⁸⁴

Frances Knight considers that 'the Church of England's greatest achievement was perhaps the unrivalled popularity of its occasional offices' and that it was in this role as provider of these rites of passage that the Church was 'able to impinge to some extent on the lives of hundreds of thousands of people who would not have considered regular Sunday church-going'.⁸⁵

St Saviour's registers do not, however, reflect accurately either the make-up of its congregation or of Westgate society as a whole - a timely reminder that one set of records cannot be used in isolation. It is clear that the part-time residents did not make much use of the parish church for their family rites of passage; William Peto, whose infant son was baptised in August 1884 just after the consecration of the new church towards which Peto had donated generously, was a rare exception. On the other hand, a number of babies were baptised (thirty-one between 1887 and 1914), whose fathers were recorded as 'gentlemen' with residential addresses in fashionable areas of London, so that it can only be assumed that the incumbents offered this 'pastoral care' to visitors, where possibly the mothers had come for the births.

In the first decade after consecration only fifteen marriages were solemnised at St Saviour's and only one of those could be described as a 'society wedding'.⁸⁶ There were, in fact, very few unmarried people of marriageable age of any class in Westgate at the time of the 1891 census and the families of the part-time residents were young.

When, later, some of the latter were married at churches such as St George's Hanover Square, Christ Church Lancaster Gate and St Peter's Eaton Square, the local press, basking in a kind of reflected glory, printed full reports, including lists of guests (often titled) and naming any who had been invited from Westgate.⁸⁷ The marriage of Hilda Knowles of Comberton (formerly Osborne House) in November 1902 must have been a welcome diversion in the Westgate winter, as a hundred guests arrived from London by special train and were ferried to church and reception in carriages with liveried coachmen supplied by Joseph Jackson.⁸⁸

Under the second vicar, art connoisseur Townshend Mylne and the third vicar, academic and composer Charles Pendock-Banks, St Saviour's became a little more high-church - reference has been made to the erection of the alabaster reredos in memory of Augustus Lyne (see chapter three). There was always the risk of losing part of the congregation, if new practices were not approved. St Margaret's Girls' School removed itself to St James's in 1907 and never returned.⁸⁹ A former pupil from the 1920s said that St Saviour's was regarded as far too high and it may not have been coincidence that the defection occurred just after the acquisition of the vesper candlesticks and the processional cross.⁹⁰

The hopes and expectations of the 1880s and the apparent success of both Christ Church and St Saviour's may have been a reason for the optimism shown in establishing a Methodist church in Westgate later in the decade. Nigel Yates, when analysing the number of new churches built in Kent between 1830 and 1901, wrote that 'The churches offered as much choice to the potential worshipper as the vast expansion in the number and variety of shops offered to the potential customer'.⁹¹ Certainly most resorts offered an astonishing range - in Llandudno, where the first churches were Welsh, it had even been considered expedient to provide for English visitors.⁹²

In 1887 the Wesleyans took over the Assembly Rooms for Sunday Services and in August that year Dr Marmaduke Osborn, well-known in Methodist circles, was a preacher.⁹³ On 26 May 1888, after a tea attended by a hundred and twenty people, the Secretary to the Wesleyan Methodist Extension Fund gave the news at a public meeting that a temporary iron chapel was to be erected on a corner plot near St Mildred's Bay, purchased by the Society for £520 for the eventual erection of a permanent chapel and school.⁹⁴ The chapel opened on 13 June 1888 with a well-attended service, for 'the need had been felt by the Society for some years, residents there having been isolated from Methodist services'.⁹⁵ Those responsible for the establishing of this church in Westgate came from the Margate Circuit, the site on the eastern edge of the estate having been conveyed by Coutts' to Edward Harlow, chief steward of the Margate Circuit and a respected local farmer.⁹⁶ From the start it enjoyed support from the Westgate Congregationalists, whose ministers were often present at services and events.

In 1891 at a meeting in Margate, it was said that it was hoped that a permanent Methodist chapel would be erected as part of the Centenary Memorial Scheme.⁹⁷ In the Schedules of the Wesleyan Trust Property in Kent, listing all properties in each circuit, the land is not mentioned until 1892-3, when it was noted that there was an iron chapel at Westgate and that, 'A permanent building will be erected as soon as possible'.⁹⁸ Although a similar note was made from 1894 to 1898, no reference to it was given from 1899 to 1901.⁹⁹ In 1902, however, the property is listed, giving details that it opened in 1888, was currently valued at £700, had thirteen trustees and naming the holder of the deeds. Its income that year was £37 11s 6d, more than Birchington, Garlinge or St Nicholas and greater than any of the Ramsgate Circuit churches, except Ramsgate itself and Broadstairs, but its liabilities were £550, more than the original cost of the land.¹⁰⁰

It is interesting to note that all three of the Westgate churches confirmed Yates' opinion that 'Congregations built up debt they found hard to clear. They erected buildings which had become redundant within a few generations'.¹⁰¹ Westgate churches were built at a time when its population was still small; by 1891 the number of persons recorded in the census was only 1358. Changes were already taking place which made the likelihood of an increasing income less, rather than more, and there were growing anxieties over the future.

Presiding over a meeting of the Christ Church Guild in February 1892, the Rev. Samuel King led a debate on 'How shall we make Westgate go'? He pointed out that the prosperity of Westgate as a town and health resort was not going forward as it should and was the concern of traders, businessmen and churchmen alike.¹⁰² St Saviour's, as has been described above, had just cleared its debts, but was soon to embark upon another (see chapter seven); Christ Church was struggling to free itself from indebtedness to the Kent Congregational Association. The Wesleyan church was proving a heavy burden to the Margate Circuit and was dependent upon the philanthropy of its Circuit steward; when Edward Harlow died in 1902 it appeared that the chapel site had been retained in his name. After his death his executors were required to sell all his property to provide an income for his widow, so it was sold to the Circuit which already had a large deficit.¹⁰³

The death of the Rev. Lyne in December 1900 marked the end of an era and in his obituary in *Keble's Gazette* much was made of his achievements.¹⁰⁴ He personally was responsible for much of the success of St Saviour's but, as he pointed out to the partners of Coutts' in 1895, in so doing, he felt he had also done much to help the Estate succeed.¹⁰⁵ His successors took a lower profile, building upon his foundations, but adapting to the inevitable changes, for the first decade of the new century saw Westgate passing through a period of depression from which the churches were not immune.¹⁰⁶

The first to suffer were the Methodists. Their high expectations had not been fulfilled; perhaps, more than either of the other two churches, they had suffered from the long delay in the development of the Hospital lands, on the borders of which their chapel was sited. In 1904 the Rev. Albert Hooper of Christ Church, presiding over a meeting of the Wesleyan Chapel in Westgate, said that he hoped that it would not be the last in that chapel.¹⁰⁷ No news of any activities there are reported by the local press after 1904 and the exact details of its demise are not known.¹⁰⁸ A Sunday School outing for the three Margate Wesleyan churches, the Congregational and the Baptist was reported in June 1906, but no reference to the Westgate church was made.¹⁰⁹ In the programme of events to celebrate the Centenary of the Margate Circuit in 1908, Westgate was not listed amongst the venues, nor was it referred to in the booklet written for the occasion.¹¹⁰

One Westgatonian, born in 1899, recalls in his memoirs that he attended Sunday School there when 'Mr Bushell of Garlinge was superintendent', but went on to say that the chapel then closed because of lack of support.¹¹¹ Mr Frank Burgess, nonagenarian member of a leading Congregational family (his grandmother sang in the choir on the day of the opening of Christ Church) says that he does not remember ever hearing his parents speak of it being used as a chapel and that it was known to him and his contemporaries as the X chapel, because Dr Heaton was using it for experiments with X rays. He was of the opinion that the failure to build a more permanent structure would have affected the attitude of Westgate people, including visitors, who 'would not like attending an iron church'.¹¹²

The Congregational Church was also suffering from straitened circumstances. From 1907 the funds of the Kent Congregational Association were in deficit and grants to churches were cut back.¹¹³ Yet in 1909 there was an appeal to them for financial aid for Westgate 'who were in pressing monetary need'. An emergency sum of £15 was granted 'on the clear understanding of the exceptional nature of the grant'.¹¹⁴ There is no evidence of what this pressing need was, but a clue can be found in a letter of 1910 (no month or day is given) written by Mr H. Erlebach who said that, 'Some of us found ourselves unable to continue our membership of Westgate' and going on to say that they had made friends with a small community at the Bay [Minnis Bay, Birchington] which included some Baptists.¹¹⁵

The community at Birchington Bay about a mile from the old village was growing fast. John Seddon had started his bungalow development in the late-nineteenth century on the eastern cliffs; in 1905 the Bay Hotel was built and houses and bungalows appeared in the roads immediately behind the seafront at the bay, presenting a formidable rival to Westgate. The Bay Congregational church was started in 1911; by 1913 it had its own minister, twenty members on its roll and sixty children in the Sunday School.¹¹⁶ The loss of the Birchington members would have been a great blow to Westgate and in 1911 Christ Church was forced to ask for a further grant from central funds.¹¹⁷ In 1919 Westgate and Birchington Congregational churches were temporarily amalgamated.¹¹⁸

St Saviour's church had lost some of its wealthiest part-time residents by the turn of the century and had come to rely heavily upon the private schools (see chapter five). It was, however, still able to call upon the sufficiently well-heeled to help on special occasions. In 1907, when Sir William Ingram was developing the area close to the church for his Town Hall and shops, the church managed, through the generosity of individuals and concerts given by pupils of Waterside girls' school, to raise £300 to purchase a piece of land to the south of the church to match that on the north and thus provide 'a worthy setting' for St Saviour's.¹¹⁹ Today, since the area around it has become even more built-up, it provides, with its grass, well-matured shrubs and trees and abundant wild-life, a welcome open space in the heart of the town centre.

Again through the generosity of school principals and others, it was possible to make an attempt to reach out to the residents of the new Streete Court Estate in the south-east, which was being developed at the turn of the century and a Mission Room was opened.¹²⁰ [Map 8] It was not a success and no effort was made to provide permanent church accommodation there, even though an anonymous gift of a parcel of land in the area was given for the purpose.¹²¹ The residents, however, according to the parish registers, made good use of the parish church for their rites of passage.

Between the wars when the first council estate was developed towards the south-west, the newly-established Parochial Church Council expressed its concern over the growing needs there.¹²² In 1927 an anonymous donation made it possible to purchase a site in the area and fund-raising began to erect an iron Mission Church to seat a hundred and fifty.¹²³ [Map 8] Gifts of furnishings and furniture were made and it opened on 26 September 1929, despite a debt which had to be guaranteed by members of the mother church.¹²⁴ There were no collections at services, but a free-will offering scheme was introduced. The success of the church was due to the willingness of many volunteers to give time, energy and money to organise its many activities. Stephen Yeo says that, 'either a mother church had to subsidise its offspring in a poorer quarter of the town, albeit complainingly, or a regular system of free-will offerings had to be instituted'.¹²⁵ Westgate tried both, but the Mission Church debt was not cleared until March 1939, although the building was well used both for services and social occasions.¹²⁶

There is no evidence of anti-catholicism in Westgate, although the Estate was being developed at a time when the Ritualist controversy was arousing fears in the Anglican church and there was, nationally, public hostility to Rome after the Vatican Council of 1870 declared Papal Infallibility. A report in *Keble's Gazette* in 1887 that a site had been acquired in Westgate Road to provide a Roman Catholic church, was, however, followed by quick denial and the arrival of a number of private schools with strong Anglican bias seems to have strengthened the position of the Established church.¹²⁷

Many resorts had a well-established Roman Catholic presence well before the end of the nineteenth-century. At Bournemouth, where it had been recognised as early as 1867 that 'families were being deterred from coming to the town despite its ideal climate, because they were unable to worship according to their own beliefs', the Roman Catholic church of the Sacred Heart was established in 1875.¹²⁸ At Llandudno a building was adapted for Catholic worship in 1867; Lyme Regis, Weymouth and Poole had Catholic chapels by 1885 and Exmouth a small Catholic church by 1887.¹²⁹ The impressive church of Our Lady of Ransom at Eastbourne was built in 1901 and the church of St Mary Magdalene Bexhill in 1906.¹³⁰

In Westgate Catholic presence dates only from the arrival of two religious orders of nuns at the beginning of the twentieth century, as described in chapter five - perhaps providing further evidence that there was not a whole-hearted attempt to develop a resort fully. The convent of Les Oiseaux had its own chaplain and by 1912 was able to erect a purpose-built chapel which became the 'parish' church for Westgate, for the nuns allowed Catholic families and visitors to use the transepts for Sunday services until 1937.¹³¹ A similar situation came about at Seaford, where French nuns, the Sisters of Providence, arrived at the same time as the Westgate nuns and allowed their Oratory of St Barnabas to be used by the parish until the building of a new church in 1936.¹³²

Westgate was originally part of the Ramsgate Mission, for ordinary parishes did not come into existence until the Codex Juris Canonici of 1918, but between the wars the Westgate Catholic Community grew sufficiently strong for there to be a demand, not only for a parish church, but also a Catholic school.¹³³ As Edward Norman wrote, 'It became almost axiomatic that where a church was established there must be a catholic school also'.¹³⁴ For some time the nuns had been providing a convent school for the poorer Catholic children in the town and, despite some objections, it was recognised by the Board of Education on May 5 1930 as a public elementary school.¹³⁵

In October 1932 Father Wilfred Upson O.S.B. took up his duties as parish priest and the Catholic presence in Westgate became high profile.¹³⁶ A week rarely passed without news of it in the local paper. The major festivals were openly celebrated with great pomp and Catholic visitors crowded the Convent Church on summer Sundays, often having to stand.¹³⁷ Non-catholics were invited to Mission services.¹³⁸ In June 1934 the first ever Catholic public procession in the town took place, as Westgate Catholics 'gained part of their Holy Year Jubilee Indulgences with two processions from the Church of the Sacred Heart at the Tower House Convent, [along the main Canterbury Road] to the Ursuline Convent and back'. Two hundred pilgrims, headed by cross and acolytes, followed by the children of the Elementary School and the pupils of the two Convent schools, took part. 'Mr Medland and Mr Harris, members of the Unemployed Pilgrimage to Rome last September, carried banners, the former bearing the Papal Flag'.¹³⁹

The following year the Bishop of Southwark said that, if progress was to be made at Westgate, it was necessary for them to have a church of their own and it was during the 1936 Mission that negotiations began for the purchase of Westgate House (the original Doon House) together with five acres of grounds.¹⁴⁰ Father Upson said that a site which they already possessed was too far from the centre and was 'far too small and unworthy of the dignity which every catholic church should possess'.¹⁴¹ Cardinal Vaughan had set a high standard at which to aim, when he said that 'Churches are buildings, not merely in which, but with which, we worship God'.¹⁴²

The Westgate Catholic Community had increased so rapidly, Father Upson said, that it was almost impossible to accommodate the congregations which attended the convent church, which was first opened to the public twenty-five years earlier, when there was only one Catholic family in the district. The Sunday congregation had increased to more than two hundred.¹⁴³

The property, acquired in January 1937, cost £3000, but despite many fund-raising events, a debt remained when the Abbot of Ramsgate pronounced the Blessing and celebrated Pontifical High Mass on 3 July.¹⁴⁴ Father Anthony Flannery of Ramsgate emphasised that they had not come to Westgate 'in any spirit of aggression or rivalry...or to make a disturbance of any kind'.¹⁴⁵ Over five hundred people attended two masses in late August 1937 compared with three hundred the previous year at the Convent Chapel.¹⁴⁶

PASTORAL CARE AND SOCIAL ORGANISATION

From its foundation Christ Church had many sub-organisations, some of which have already been referred to above and these increased in number and variety over the years. In the 1930s it was reported that Christ Church Schoolroom was in use most evenings to accommodate the Girls' Life Brigade, Boys' Club, Men's Club, Women's Guild and Fellowship. Monthly garden parties were held in summer in aid of foreign missions.¹⁴⁷ At the same time the burgeoning Catholic Community was also able to boast of branches of the Catholic Women's League and the Apostolic Prayer Society, a Girl Guide Company, Brownie Pack, Cub Pack and Boy Scout Troop.¹⁴⁸

Stephen Yeo says that, 'A round of meetings and activities in a tight sub-community could bolster a sense of security, respectability, social place and improvement in an economically and socially shifting world'.¹⁴⁹ This may well have been the feeling of the nonconformists in particular, as they created a bulwark against Anglicanism, whose influence could not easily be avoided, if their children attended St Saviour's School.

There was far less sense of community amongst St Saviour's church members, especially in the early days when many were part-time residents. Hugh McLeod says that 'For the upper classes they [churches] were places of worship first and last. Their community already existed in the form of the branch of Society to which they belonged'.¹⁵⁰

The nature of Westgate society, however, meant that anglicans and nonconformists alike had to meet pastoral needs, which were, perhaps, peculiar to high-class developments. Of the population of 1358 recorded in the 1891 census, two hundred and seventy-two - 20% of the total population - were domestic servants. Of those, two hundred and forty-one were single women under the age of thirty-five, none of whom was born locally and most of whom came from a considerable distance.¹⁵¹

The Young Women's Christian Association, formed in 1855, aimed to meet the needs of working women and girls away from home by providing clubs and hostels, and branches were to be found in many 'exclusive' resorts, where there was an above average number of young women employees. At Sidmouth there was a branch as early as 1882; by 1895 the Digby Institute at Bournemouth, where the population was approaching 60,000, could take a hundred girls; at nearby Swanage a branch was opened in the same year by 'two ladies who reside there for the use of business employees, governesses, Christian workers and others needing change and rest'.¹⁵²

Little is known about the Westgate branch of the Y.W.C.A., but *Keble's Gazette* reported in November 1888 'the formal opening of the new room at 22 Westbury Road [when] there was a large attendance of members, giving evidence of the flourishing state of the branch'. The presence of the ministers of Westgate Congregational Church, Birchington Wesleyan Chapel and the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion at Margate showed the involvement of the nonconformist churches.¹⁵³ The branch, which had two subsequent homes in rooms behind or over shops, remained listed in the local directories until 1901.¹⁵⁴

In other resorts such as Southport, branches of the Girls' Friendly Society, founded in 1874 with particular concern for the welfare of servant girls, were to be found.¹⁵⁵ The structure of this Society relied upon the local branches run by Associate members, who were expected to be 'ladies' and, as Brian Harrison said, 'this bipartite structure was not ideally suited to what was (especially outside industrial areas) a three-class society'.¹⁵⁶ It was particularly difficult in places like Westgate, which had no indigenous élite, to recruit Associate members in the early days - the vicar had no daughters, the two doctors had only young families and the wives of the preparatory school heads would have been well occupied with fulfilling their own roles. This is, perhaps, the reason why the nonconformist churches were the first to take the initiative in concern for the welfare of the young working-women of Westgate, but later the anglicans became involved.

Lyne's successor, the Rev. Townshend Mylne, wrote in his annual report to the parish in 1907, 'During the past winter many kind ladies of St Saviour's have instituted a pleasant evening once a week for the young women in service, or otherwise engaged, supplying a long felt want'.¹⁵⁷ Three years later the Margate and Westgate branch of the Girls' Friendly Society was formed with Miss Ella Rogers, the elder daughter of William Rogers, as branch secretary.¹⁵⁸

By 1915 the branch had eighteen working associates, six honorary associates, thirty-nine members and twenty-six candidates. A decade later membership had reached ninety-five for, despite the changes brought about by the war, there were still many young women in service in the private schools, the larger hotels and some of the private residences. The branch was still active, and Miss Rogers in office, on the eve of the Second World War.¹⁵⁹ Although the G.F.S. had attempted to broaden its regional and occupational base, and its Westgate membership may have included young women in other employment, it is unlikely that any upper and middle-class girls in Westgate would have joined. Indeed, in early 1938, St Saviour's Young Lady Workers' Club was formed under the presidency of Miss Lycett, the daughter of the fourth vicar.¹⁶⁰

The St Saviour's branch of the Mothers' Union, a society whose aims included the recruitment of members of the G.F.S. when they married, was formed in November 1901 when the inaugural meeting was addressed by Mrs Temple, wife of the Archbishop of Canterbury.¹⁶¹ Starting with a membership of forty five, its numbers reached one hundred and fifty, including some members from St James's parish, within two years.¹⁶² The linking of the two parishes is interesting, because most of the members would have come from the areas on the eastern border of St Saviour's, much of it officially in the ecclesiastical parish of St James's, but in the civil parish of Westgate.

If one role of the churches was to keep young women out of moral danger, then another was to keep young men out of mischief, for a reputation for law and order was necessary if 'better-class' visitors and residents were to be attracted. With so little else for young men to do in their limited spare time, it is not surprising that the fear that 'Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do' was prevalent.¹⁶³ The fear was realised when there were acts of vandalism and petty theft of which, indeed, the churches were often victims.

In early 1886 *Keble's Gazette* reported that Mr Murdoch McLennon, a greengrocer and member of St Saviour's Church, tried 'a novel way of preventing boys and young men running the streets to the annoyance of tradesmen' by allowing them use of a room at the back of his shop every evening where books, papers and games were provided. In January the boys had had 'a good supper with joints of meat', which they had provided themselves, as McLennon had encouraged them to 'save a few halfpennies', he himself providing the vegetables and the dessert.¹⁶⁴

Alas, McLennon left Westgate later that year and the young men were left, once more, to their own devices. In October 1887 the churchyard was entered after dark, trees broken down, creepers pulled away and a noticeboard and offertory-box damaged.¹⁶⁵ Two years later it was Christ Church which was forcibly entered and had money stolen from the offertory-box.¹⁶⁶

Nothing more appears to have been done until 1893, when St Saviour's formed a Youth Club, which met in the school and in which the Rev. Lyne was personally involved.¹⁶⁷ But such activities needed great commitment and, unless there were others willing to help, the burden was heavy. In January 1894 the local press reported that the Vicar had re-opened the Youth Club, although 'the conduct the previous year had been so outrageous and destruction to property so considerable that many parishioners did not want it to re-open'.¹⁶⁸ Nothing more was heard of the club in the time of the Rev. Lyne but the second Vicar, the Rev. Mylne, made a Lads' Club one of his priorities. Stephen Yeo says that 'many agencies [church-based] withered and died and there was a constant re-starting of bodies with similar aims to their predecessors'.¹⁶⁹ This appears to have been so in Westgate.

Mylne started the Lads' Club in the winter of 1901 and it met three evenings a week in the school, where members could play pingpong, draughts, cards and chess or read books and magazines.¹⁷⁰ By Easter 1902 it had a membership of eighty, a hockey team had been formed under the leadership of the curate and had won all eight matches and a second team was also doing well.¹⁷¹ Swimming and football soon became available and Mr Burge of Garlinge lent a field. The club was greatly helped by those who gave donations, those who became Vice-Presidents, and tradesmen and artisans, who became honorary members (see chapter five).

When St Saviour's Mission Hall was opened near the Linksfield Estate in 1929 many activities were made available, including instruction in gymnastics and boxing by two ex-army instructors.¹⁷² At the same time the Congregational church had introduced badminton and gymnastics and formed companies of the Girls' Life Brigade and the Boys' Brigade.¹⁷³ Hugh Cunningham says that 'some members might join in a calculating spirit - to extract from an organisation what they wanted and nothing else' and Westgatians have told me that they did indeed do that.¹⁷⁴ Boys joined the church choir or went to Christ Church Sunday School, not always according to the ideology of their families, but to be able to take part in sporting activities or to go on outings.¹⁷⁵

Drunkenness on the streets was always a matter of concern, but especially for resorts or estates considered 'exclusive'. Westgate, protected by its private roads, the prohibition of excursion trains, and restrictive covenants on all building plots making the sale of alcohol in any form almost impossible, should not have suffered from the problem. There were no public houses; hotel proprietors found it difficult to obtain licences.

Yeo says that, 'after Sunday Schools, temperance was the most important inspiration of church/chapel penumbras from the mid-nineteenth centuries onwards'.¹⁷⁶ Although Brian Harrison says 'that the temperance movement never prospered in the Home Counties, centres of malt and hop production', it certainly flourished in Westgate, where both were produced on its doorstep.¹⁷⁷

In the 1880s when many artisans were in Westgate at the height of its building boom, two sisters, the Misses Gascoyne, with motives of a 'purely benevolent character' set up reading rooms where tea, coffee and soup were available 'primarily for the workmen in the area'.¹⁷⁸ When Christ Church was completed a supper was given to the workmen at the Assembly Rooms, where there was 'beer, or water for abstainers'.¹⁷⁹ At the laying of Christ Church's foundation stone a copy of the *Temperance Record* was amongst the items placed in the cavity behind the stone.¹⁸⁰

The Congregationalists were quick to establish a Band of Hope under the leadership of Alfred Lockwood and in 1887, under the auspices of the wives of the Westgate and Birchington nonconformist ministers, a special drawing room meeting of the British Women's Temperance Association was held to listen to two speakers from London and a branch was formed, some pledges being taken that day.¹⁸¹ By 1897 Christ Church Band of Hope had eighty-two members, one of whom won a silver medal in a national competition.¹⁸² A Westgate and Birchington branch connected with the Wesleyan Church had also been formed.¹⁸³

In 1901 St Saviour's Church founded a juvenile branch of the Church of England Temperance Society, which soon had a membership of a hundred and thirty children who, it was reported, enjoyed being taught 'basket work, matmaking, wood-carving and painting'.¹⁸⁴ In 1905 the Vicar reporting on the Band's good year, said that 'all seem to have grasped the meaning and the rationale of the need of abstinence'.¹⁸⁵

No doubt the temperance ethos helped provide a safe and proper environment, especially for the schools. Visitors experiencing difficulty in obtaining alcohol at their holiday hotels just had to wait until it had been sent for from one of the few which had a licence, for as late as the 1930s this attitude still prevailed. A respected local builder found it impossible to obtain a licence for a proposed hotel on the rapidly developing south side of the town, whilst in 1938 the proprietor of the prestigious Rowena Court Hotel, who said that some visitors booked out when they found her premises were unlicensed, only obtained a licence for a limited period in the face of much opposition.¹⁸⁶

The Congregational minister, the Rev. Samuel King served on the Parish Council for a short time and the Rev. Thomas Blandford stood as a candidate for both Parish and Rural District Councils.¹⁸⁷ The anglican ministers rarely expressed an opinion on Local Government except on the matter of education (see below, chapter seven). A direct intervention such as the request in 1917 by the Rev. Banks that the Council should supply an air-raid shelter for St Saviour's School was most unusual.¹⁸⁸ None of the churchmen appear to have taken sides in the matter of the Local Government Review between 1929 and 1935, but both Christ Church and St Saviour's had a change of ministry at that time. The Rev. George Lewis succeeded the Rev. Robert Baker at the Congregational church in 1932, being himself succeeded two years later by the Rev. Horace Pellatt, whilst at St Saviour's the Rev. Norman Lycett replaced the Rev. Banks in 1931.¹⁸⁹

After amalgamation had taken place, the Rev. Lycett was quick to come to terms with the new arrangement and St Saviour's witnessed its first Civic Service on Empire Day 1936, when the Mayor and Corporation, led by the Garlinge Silver Band, processed from the Town Hall to the church accompanied by representatives of all the local organisations. Residents, according to the *Isle of Thanet Gazette*, lined the pavements several deep and the vicar preached on citizenship, taking as his text Philippians iii, v. 20.¹⁹⁰

The Second World War caused huge upheavals for the churches in a very short time. After the fall of France, the threat of invasion was very real, there was mass evacuation and Westgate became a prohibited area. On 8 June 1940 the Diaconate decided to eliminate all the liabilities of Christ Church and made plans to remove essential records, if compulsory evacuation took place.¹⁹¹ On 19 July it was reported that the Rev. Kenneth Jackson was to terminate his appointment in August, because of the evacuation and the reduction in income.¹⁹² During the war years services were conducted by a minister from Whitstable and the building was kept open day and night as an emergency centre.¹⁹³

On 5 July 1940 the vicar of St Saviour's wrote in the Record of Services, 'On Wednesday July 3, there came a severe bombardment from the air. Only Westgate was raided and sixteen bombs were dropped in St Saviour's parish. No lives were lost and comparatively little damage done. Laus Deo'.¹⁹⁴ In the next raids, however, bombs fell near to the churches. On 19 July, from an emergency meeting of the Parochial Church Council, a statement was sent 'with untold expressions of regret' to the Archbishop saying

The P.C.C. assembled together with other members of the congregation, is sadly of the opinion that the services at St Saviour's cannot any longer, with advantage, be continued and respectfully asks His Grace for his approval and consent to close the church after Sunday July 28th 1940 until happier conditions arise - to which may God in his love and mercy bring us all.¹⁹⁵

The last baptism before the three-year closure was that of the son of the porter of Wellington House School on 26 May 1940; the last wedding was on 29 June; the last banns read on 14 July.¹⁹⁶ The church officially closed on 29 July, thus discharging the Parochial Church Council of its financial obligations.¹⁹⁷ The Rev. Lycett left the town and the curate became a chaplain to the Forces.¹⁹⁸ On 1 December 1940 services conducted by the Tait Missioner, who lived locally, were resumed for parishioners still in Westgate, although the church remained officially closed, and 'Parade' services for troops stationed in the district took place regularly.¹⁹⁹ When the threat of invasion receded and evacuees began to drift back in 1943, the Rev. Lycett officially resigned his living and the church re-opened in May 1943 under its new vicar, the Rev. William Williams.²⁰⁰

The churches played an important part in the life of Westgate, as they did in most other exclusive developments. L.J. Bartley says, for example, that the parish church of St Peter Bexhill exerted immense influence on development, which was not only religious.²⁰¹ In less exclusive resorts, where the short-term holiday maker and the excursionist soon became the most frequent visitor, church was less likely to be important. John Walton says that, although more church accommodation was made available in new resorts, 'it was impossible to provide sufficient room for thousands of additional worshippers for a few weeks at the height of the season and many visitors took the opportunity to escape from a church going routine which derived more from social constraint than genuine conviction'.²⁰²

However, the activities of the Westgate churches of all denominations received a great deal of attention from the local press, even as late as the inter-war years, showing that religious matters were still regarded as of importance. It was, perhaps, the novelty of having a new and rather unusual development in its midst that made its churches of such interest. For example, the press report of the consecration of St Saviour's Eastbourne on 31 January 1867 by the Bishop of Chichester was very low-key compared with that of the consecration of St Saviour's Westgate in July 1884.²⁰³ The former took up less than one column, the activities of the Local Board receiving far more attention. Only a hundred people were present and no one of any distinction was named.

F.M.L. Thompson, writing of Hampstead, says that 'Prominence of churches did not necessarily rest on particularly intense devotion and piety...Local churches conferred social acceptance and assisted personal advancement...Recognition as an acceptable and equal member of a congregation was the essence of absorption into a community of social kin - local churches could, therefore, form communities out of the atoms of a raw building estate'.²⁰⁴ This was, perhaps, the most likely reason for the energy and devotion put into the founding and enhancing of both the buildings and church life in Westgate.

Westgate could easily have become a one-denomination development, if the principal landowner had been old-established and firmly Anglican. Cannadine describes religious life in Edgbaston as vigorous and 'predominantly Anglican, despite its nonconformist élite'. The Calthorpes would not offer accommodation to Dissenters, who had to worship in the city'.²⁰⁵ Thompson says that in Hampstead, 'The landowners' [Dean and Chapter of Westminster and Eton College] power was quite strong enough, however, to prohibit the erection of any non-Anglican place of worship, a prohibition which would effectively discourage most nonconformists and Catholics from taking houses on an estate, and one which was effectively enforced until 1883'.²⁰⁶ In 1883 the College allowed the Congregationalists to erect a chapel - their 'one and only lapse from purity'.²⁰⁷

At Westgate the artisan population, many with strong nonconformist ideals, became established early as the first permanent residents. The priority of the successive proprietors of the Estate was to make it a success. Davis was a Jew and, therefore, presumably cared less about the denomination of purchasers than the opportunity offered by a variety of churches to make the development attractive. Coutts' partners appear to have been happy to sell a site to the Wesleyan Methodists - although it is interesting to note that it was on the eastern periphery of the Estate. In Hampstead a Methodist chapel was only permitted in the predominantly working-class district of Lisburne Road.²⁰⁸

By the time that the Catholic presence was becoming strong in Westgate, Coutts' had disposed of their interests, but earlier they had created no difficulties, when the two religious orders wished to change the use of properties - they presumably were thought to pose no threat to Westgate's 'social tone'. Their properties were on the south side of the town out of sight of the general public. Those who might have raised an objection were, no doubt, pleased to see two large, highly-rated buildings occupied rather than left empty. It is interesting to note that the more high-profile presence of the Catholics of the inter-war years coincided with a more vocal expression of discontent from the traders. It appears that both groups had a greater interest in providing for visitors than generally had been the case.

In conclusion, it can be said that the churches in Westgate helped to make the development a success at all its stages; they provided a heart for the new estate and a focal point for the new community, they provided venues worthy of the most sophisticated of metropolitan visitors and habitual residents and they provided a decorous and ordered environment for the private schools and the facilities to ensure the carrying-out of their religious obligations for those without their own chapels and chaplains. The contribution of the churches to Westgate's development cannot be ignored.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

THE GREAT DEBATE - EDUCATING THE LOWER CLASSES

Forster's Education Act, making compulsory the provision of elementary education for children from five to thirteen in every district, either by the Voluntary Societies or by an elected School Board, was passed in 1870, at the very time that Westgate was coming to birth. Its aim was to provide such education for the children of the poor, but in resorts or estates which were competing for the patronage of the rich and fashionable, acknowledging the existence of the poor and of their offspring was always an embarrassment. Yet it was not possible for such places to manage without the lower classes, who provided them with the services necessary for the inhabitants to be able to live according to the manner to which they were accustomed. In Westgate accommodation had been provided for them on the eastern side of the Estate and there was a row of cottages in the south-west near the new Water and Gas Works.

By 1881 when Mundella's Act made school attendance compulsory for five to ten year olds, there were, including the homes over the shops in Station Road, ninety-five households with young families.¹ The better-off tradesmen would probably have preferred private education for their children, but the first of the many private schools to be established in Westgate made it clear that they were for the sons and daughters of gentlemen.² The leading tradesmen, however comfortably off and well-respected, were always aware to which 'station in life' they had been called. Later when some small private day-schools were established it is likely that they provided for the children of the better-off shopkeepers and artisans.

Those children who wished to take advantage of education as provided under the 1870 Act had to go to a National School, either at Garlinge or Birchington. [Appendix 12] For most, the Garlinge school was the nearer, yet there appears to have been a marked antipathy towards it, which continued for many years.³ The nearest Board school, which was at Margate over two miles away, had been the former British and Foreign School and was handed over to the Margate School Board on its establishment in 1875.

Neither plan of the Westgate Estate drawn up by Beazley showed a school site, although both provided for a church and parsonage. In 1878 when Edmund Davis offered sites for churches to both Anglicans and Congregationalists that for the nonconformists - a corner site near to the St Mildred's Road railway bridge - was to include room for a school.⁴ However, as described above, the Congregationalists turned down the original site, had to pay half of the cost of the one in Westgate Road and buy land for a Sunday School room.⁵

The first signs of the controversy, which was to divide the new town for many years, appeared in December 1883. The Margate United School Board, which, despite the demands of the 1870 Act, had not been set up until 1875 and was dominated by Anglicans, called a special meeting to discuss a letter written by John Greavson of Westgate in which he claimed that, in a private survey in 1881, he found seventy-seven children of school age.⁶ It is likely that Greavson did not include the children who lived in Waterworks Road in the ecclesiastical parish of Acol with Birchington, but the area was part of the Westgate Estate and their education needed to be considered.

Greavson maintained that there should be a Board School for Westgate, as most parents would not send their children to Garlinge, so they went to Birchington or Margate; the School Attendance Officer reported about fifty vacancies at Garlinge, which had places for two hundred children, but the average attendance was only ninety-six. The Chairman of the Board, William Leetham, said that spending £3000 on a school for Westgate could not be contemplated, until there was a more permanent population. He hoped that when the new church was built there would also be a school, as 'building a church without a school was an anomaly'. Other Board members supported him, one saying that the inhabitants of Westgate did not want a Board School in their midst and that there would be opposition, whilst Francis Cobb, a banker, said that they could not build schools everywhere just because parents did not like what was available.⁷ In a superb example of *laissez-faire*, it was decided to put it off for the future and let the new Board, to be elected in January 1884, make the decision.⁸

The election was fought on the issue of a Board School for Westgate and the added burden on the rates. One candidate was William Wigmore, proprietor of the Westgate County Club, who, although not a member of Christ Church Congregational Church, was a supporter. He said that he had been asked by a number of influential residents to offer himself for election and was standing as an independent, non-sectarian, although he felt that Bible instruction should be given in every school.⁹

Westgate ratepayers complained at being forced to contribute to the Margate School Board. Nationally, School Boards were criticised for their extravagance, for, as Marjorie Cruickshank wrote, 'whereas the denominationalists had to pinch and scrape to keep their schools going, the School Boards could finance their activities from the bottomless pocket of the rates'.¹⁰ The editor of *Keble's Gazette* commented in March 1885 that 'the ever-growing extravagance of the School Boards, will in time, secure them [the Voluntary Societies] a larger measure of support than at present. Only a well organised body like the National Society can hope to provide effectual resistance to the despotism of the Education Department and the advocacy of secular education in the House of Commons'.¹¹

The Anglican Church had long considered itself the guardian of education and, despite increasing challenges from the nonconformist churches, had tried to maintain this in the nineteenth century, when many new churches were built and there was much subdivision of parishes. The building of a new church was usually followed by the building of a church school. At Folkestone Lord Radnor gave the site for Christ Church Sandgate Road in 1850, and for a school in 1852; at Eastbourne the consecration of St Saviour's church in 1867 was followed by the opening of a National School in 1874, both sites having been donated by the Duke of Devonshire; at Bexhill the erection of St Barnabas's church took place in 1891 and the opening of the church school in 1897.¹²

At the 1884 election for the Margate School Board, William Wigmore was successful along with four Anglicans, one Wesleyan and the Rev. David Lloyd, Minister of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion and a bitter opponent of the Church of England.¹³ In the autumn that year, after the opening of Christ Church and St Saviour's, the School Board sent a letter to the Department of Education, expressing its concern about the lack of elementary education in Westgate.¹⁴ In March 1885 a bitter dispute began between those Board members who were adamant that a Board School was needed and Westgate's Augustus Lyne and his supporters, who were equally sure that it was not.

At its March meeting the Board discussed a letter from the Department in reply to the Board's communication in which it was said that the Department understood that a temporary infants' school had already been opened in September 1884, that the Rev. Lyne was 'actively engaged in securing a site and collecting money to build a school to accommodate about a hundred children, which he expected to be ready in four to five months', and that there was plenty of room at St James's School, only ten minutes away from the homes of most of the children. 'Their Lordships wished to know whether the Board considered these arrangements to be satisfactory'.¹⁵

The Board was divided in its opinion. The Rev. Lloyd said the Board was like Mr Micawber; some members were trying to make it a 'Church School Protection Association'. He believed the Department would ultimately force the Board to provide a school. He had been to Westgate and Mr Lyne 'by an ecclesiastical fiction known as the Vicar of Westgate seemed to be omniscient'; all that he said was misleading. Asking who had appointed the Committee referred to by Lyne, he said that the Vicar was throwing dust in the eyes of the Department and 'humberging' the Board. 'If a person who was in business did anything like that, he would be called tricky'.¹⁶ He was supported by the Wesleyan, Mr Coleman, and by Wigmore, but when it was put to the vote, the Chairman used his casting vote and it was decided not to act, but to give Lyne the opportunity to do something.¹⁷

On 7 March *Keble's Gazette* had published a statement by Lyne, quoting from a letter from the Department of Education which said, 'Unless plans are at once forwarded and unless you can guarantee at the same time that the building will be commenced immediately on the plans being approved by the Department and that the requisite funds for the erection of the school will be forthcoming, my Lords will call upon the School Board without further delay to build the school'.¹⁸

Lyne explained that he had gone to London to speak in person with the Secretary for Education informing him that it would be a waste of money to build a Board School in Westgate, where the population was only about eight hundred. The two hundred children supposedly in need of a school place did not exist, as all the artisans' houses were in St James's parish, where there was already a school within ten-minutes' walking distance. About twenty-four infants, some from neighbouring parishes, were attending the temporary school he had established; it was unlikely that there would be an increase in the number of cottages as 'the Estate had been laid out for a very superior style of house' and that the 'class of inhabitant was such as would not seek accommodation of that kind'. Nevertheless, his Committee would prepare plans for a school to accommodate about two hundred children and try to procure a site as central as possible, but they would have to take what was offered by the Estate owners.¹⁹

The report of this visit caused an uproar. John Greavson demanded to know who the members of this Committee were, by whom they had been elected and when and where the meeting had been held. He criticised Lyne personally, saying that he 'should in charity hope that he [Lyne] was ignorant of the educational needs of his parish, otherwise you place me and the parish in the painful position that you took an unauthorised journey to mis-represent the facts and to endeavour to mislead the Education Department'. He pointed out that the roads mentioned by Lyne were as much a part of his responsibility as the church and the vicarage and there were workmen living in other roads. The list of two hundred children, who had to go to Birchington or Garlinge, a distance of over two miles, and take their dinners was correct. 'When Lyne was advocating a new church for Westgate, I was highly edified by his earnest, pathetic pleading that there was need for a Westgate Church, as Garlinge Church was too far for men and women to walk'. The 'temporary school', he continued, was in a damp, partly-finished house with no amenities and no playground. He was willing to show any member of the School Board or the Inspectorate around and show that for every superior house there were four others. Moreover, sixty more cottages were planned. A school for all ages was needed and they should have a Board School at once.²⁰ Greavson complained that the Committee did not represent the desires of the majority and 'their interference with the wishes of the working classes will receive its just and proper reward'.²¹ It would cost him almost twice as much in fees for his three children to attend the Voluntary School instead of a Board School.²²

In June 1885 a special meeting of the Board was called to sanction the chosen site, already accepted by the Department, who had turned down the one first offered near to the Waterworks on the extreme south-west boundary of the Estate. Wigmore did not think highly of the second site south of the railway and part of Corbett's builder's yard. It lay 'immediately adjoining some manufacturing workshops in which machinery was employed and immediately adjoining a railway siding'. He did not think it suitable for a place like Westgate.²³

Lyne meanwhile was insisting that the delay was caused only through lack of funds, for the failure of Parkers had meant a loss of £1600 to the church and the gift of a site for a school (although there is no evidence that one was actually promised). Coutts' had already declined to donate land and a huge debt remained on the church, but adamant that 'Westgate was no place for a Board School' he launched himself into a passionate appeal for funds, not only from the parish, but from all church people.²⁴ Such appeals were not uncommon in new resorts, but visitors, who often had their own schools to support and would derive no benefit, were often slow to respond.

Lyne, not daring to delay, in case the Education Department ordered the Board to take action, offered to stand as guarantor himself for £200 and to secure £100 from the church offertories.²⁵ The appeal letter, sent out to coincide with a sermon preached against Board Schools on 19 September, let loose another storm of protest in the press. The Rev. Blandford of Christ Church complained of having received two such letters in one week, the second containing the misleading statement that 'in the former [Voluntary Schools] only, is special provision made for religious education ... What he [Lyne] means is that there is no denominational teaching. The lambs are fed with religious truth in Board Schools as well as in Voluntary Schools, but they are not fed according to the prejudices and biases of any one church system'. Moreover, he continued, there was an error in the passage Lyne quoted. 'Feed my Lambs' was not from Isaiah, but from St John. He [Lyne] should not bring the sacred name of Jesus into party strife.²⁶

By the end of September 1885 the unelected Committee of nine was able to announce that it had obtained a full advance of the capital sum required, that subscriptions were coming in, that the plans, drawn up by the Estate architect, had been approved by the Department and that the site had been bought. The total estimated cost was £1750.²⁷

Accounts published in October 1886, after the completion of the school, reveal that of that sum less than £500 had actually been subscribed.²⁸ The rest had been raised as a loan from Cobb's bank by Lyne himself on the security of his Royal Naval Retirement Bond. The Bank also had required a Life Insurance Policy to be taken out.²⁹ This debt had to be serviced and was one of the on-going costs for the new school in its first years. Yet some admiration must be shown for Lyne - so certain was he that this was the right thing to do, that he was prepared to take on this additional burden.

The list of donors is interesting - of the £500 subscribed by the time the school was opened, £121 came from those who had a pecuniary interest - Corbett, who built the school, Cobb, the Margate Banker, who made the loan and J.D.Thomson, the solicitor who dealt with the legal matters. The National Society donated £45, the Diocesan Church Building Society £50, offertories and special collections raised just over £50, more than half of which came from St Michael's School (Hawtreys). A bazaar accounted for £74.

The remainder came in donations, ranging from twenty-five guineas to five shillings. Local landowners from beyond Westgate contributed, but the wealthy second-home owners, many of whom were already selling up, were noticeable by their absence.³⁰ Giving a donation was not the end of the matter as annual subscriptions had to be procured, both to complete the paying off of the building debt and the maintaining of the school.³¹ For the first year there would be no grant from the Education Department.³² No help could be expected from the nonconformists in the parish, although, within a decade, it appears that about half the pupils on roll were from Dissenting families.³³

The Foundation Stone, set in the east wall and bearing the inscription, 'Jesus said, Suffer the Little Children to come unto me', was laid on 1 December 1885 by the Bishop of Dover, who said that the stone was laid in faith and it was their intention and desire that the little ones should be brought up in the faith.³⁴ The school took four months to build, was opened officially on 26 April 1886 and received its first scholars on 3 May.³⁵ Described as a 'substantial structure, pretty in design', it opened with a hundred and seven children to be taught in two classrooms by a certificated Headmaster, with a former pupil teacher and a fourteen year old monitor as assistants.³⁶ [Plate 88]

Education was not yet free. Fees had been set by the managers at threepence a week for infants and fourpence for older scholars. To encourage regular, punctual attendance, a dated ticket would be given each Friday to each child who had attended each time the school was open and would be accepted in lieu of one penny of the fees for the following week. At the end of the year prizes would be given to all who had attended four hundred times in the year and half-a-crown to all those who had not missed once.³⁷ On the first day Lyne explained to the parents present that children would be expected to attend Sunday School or they would forfeit their half-crown, an action certain to anger nonconformists who, as Marjorie Cruickshank says, called it 'unfair inducement'.³⁸

By the end of September 1886 the school roll had increased to one hundred and ninety-nine and an applicant had to be refused admission.³⁹ No increase in staff was possible because there was insufficient money. It was often the case that, when there was only one school in the area - the greatest cause of anger from nonconformists after the abolition of the church rate in 1868 - the quality of teaching was poor and the accommodation unsatisfactory. St Saviour's National School was a pleasant building, but it suffered from overcrowding from the start.



PLATE 88. St Saviour's National School was opened in May 1886. It was designed by Charles Beazley in the 'Queen Anne' style and built by William Corbett.

As early as 1887 the Inspectorate criticised the lack of space for infants, threatening that the grant might be withheld, if things did not improve.⁴⁰ The managers always felt under threat, for the relationship between them and the Margate School Board and between them and the local nonconformists was never happy. There were many complaints that Westgate people had to pay the School Board rate, although the nearest Board School was at Margate and in 1887 those who considered this to be unjust were encouraged to sign a petition promoted by the Cross Commission, which was considering the working of the Elementary Education Acts.⁴¹

When the Wesleyan Methodists purchased two plots of land on the eastern edge of the town in 1888, they were hopeful of building both a chapel and a school.⁴² Although the school never materialised, the plan showed the anxiety of the nonconformists over the kind of education being provided and must have caused concern to the managers of the National School at a time when their financial problems seemed almost insuperable. In April 1889 Lyne was forced to issue another appeal [Appendix 13a] and the managers had to dispense with the services of an additional teacher, taken on in September 1887, because the yearly income was insufficient.⁴³

Two events were soon to bring matters to a crisis point. In 1891 the Education department proposed to make education free for all, replacing fees with a grant of ten shillings a year for each child and, at the same time, to insist on raising standards of accommodation and equipment. Many Anglicans would have agreed with Lyne, who said that he thought the ultimate intention was the extinction of the Voluntary Schools.⁴⁴ By 1890 the Church of England had already surrendered almost a thousand of its schools; ways of raising money were becoming exhausted and the most highly qualified teachers, often trained in Church Training Colleges, were moving to the Board Schools where they were better paid and where there were greater opportunities to widen the curriculum.⁴⁵

The managers of St Saviour's School decided on an ingenious scheme, by which each child would be charged one penny per week to be returned for full attendance.⁴⁶ This would still leave them eligible to apply for a grant.⁴⁷ In April 1895 the scheme led to a test case. The father of a child, who had attended school every day since September 1894, but who had been sent home each day after prayers, because she did not have the fee, was summoned before the Margate magistrates, who had little sympathy for the managers. The defendant's solicitor said that it was 'the worst possible policy for the managers to raise such a question, unless they wanted a Board School established in their midst'.⁴⁸ As they most certainly did not want that to happen, a public meeting was held at which, after much heated discussion, it was decided that the schools would be absolutely free.⁴⁹

This dispute could not have come at a worse time for in early 1893 the managers had received their second warning that the accommodation for infants must be increased.⁵⁰ The estimated cost was £450 to £500 and there was much debate about the admission of children from other parishes, as, out of one hundred and ninety-nine scholars, ninety-seven were from outside St Saviour's.⁵¹ On 14 November 1893, at the managers' meeting, Colonel Copeland asked whether they could refuse admission or whether they were 'compelled to put their hands in their pockets and provide for those from other parishes'.⁵²

At an emergency meeting held a week later, they were told by the Chairman that he had met informally with the Chairman of the Margate School Board, who had said that accommodation for a hundred children was needed in the neighbourhood of St Saviour's and that if they did not enlarge their school or if they turned away children residing outside the district, then provision would be made by the Board.⁵³ Feelings ran high because there was surplus accommodation at Garlinge, which was not being taken up by the parents and the managers decided to write to the Education Department on the matter.⁵⁴ Although they received an answer to their liking and it was decided to exclude infants from outside the parish, the matter was not over.⁵⁵

By March 1894 it was made known that the Board was proposing to build a school in Westgate and was negotiating for the purchase of land.⁵⁶ Determined to resist that happening, the managers sent a letter to all church people pointing out that such a Board School would take away some of the pupils from the National School, which would then be unable to survive.⁵⁷ By April £62 had been promised, but, despite house to house visits, the response was disappointing. 'Some of the parishioners are not throwing themselves into the matter with the zeal that could be wished', stated the Vicar.⁵⁸ It was resolved that, 'for the sake of preventing the erection of a Board School in the parish, that, at all costs, our school must be sufficiently enlarged'.⁵⁹

Once again Lyne was forced to take on a burden of debt, borrowing £700 and advancing it to the Committee.⁶⁰ By July tenders had been received and the lowest for £870 was accepted.⁶¹ The work was carried out in the summer holidays ready for the start of a new term under a new Headteacher, for the summer had been fraught with the additional problem of finding a replacement for Mr Musselwhite. The first three candidates to be offered the post, turned it down.⁶² One reason may have been the lack of affordable accommodation for a family, for early in 1895 Lyne wrote to the owners of the Estate, begging them to give a site for the erection of a school house.⁶³

It is from this letter, written as a private individual, rather than as chairman of managers, and not meant for public perusal, that much is revealed about the attitude to Board Schools. Explaining that the managers were 'absolutely without funds, there being a debt on the School Enlargement of £550 and upward of £400, with architect's fees, to raise for the Master's house', he went on to say

'after all the managers, and may I add myself, have done in respect of the Westgate Estate, I trust it may not be thought that I am asking too much as it will be of great benefit to the place. Hitherto our headmaster, being single, lived with his parents in Margate so a house was dispensable, but our new master is married with a family. We had a very hard struggle to preserve our schools and the Board had almost forced itself into Westgate before our enlargement, as our Managers (in Trade) declined being answerable for the large sum required and had the Board come, it would have been simply ruin to such a seaside resort as this.

In a lengthy postscript written the following day he added

The expenses of the schools and the late enlargement are solely due to me, as I became entirely answerable for the cost of both and site and thereby have saved the owners of property and the ratepayers the presence of a costly and unsightly Board School and possible decrease in the value of property brought about by a rowdy School here.

He also asked for a further piece of land to extend the playground, as some had been lost by the enlargement of the school. The comment of William Rogers is also enlightening.

'Mr Lyne is asking you to give him the whole of that land, asking it for the purpose of enlarging the playground. Now when the School Building site was selected, special care was taken, so that it would be out of the way and not be a nuisance to the neighbours. If you sell or give this land for the purpose of a playground, you will be doing damage to all your adjoining lands'.⁶⁴

The school house was completed in 1897, large enough for a family and to accommodate another teacher as a lodger.⁶⁵ The press comment was that it was 'somewhat larger than is customary for a school house and that the Rev. Lyne was appealing for funds'.⁶⁶ It is not clear under what circumstances the land was acquired for there is no further correspondence or any record of it in the list of conveyances in Coutts' archives, but the house was a source of some concern to Kent Education Committee in 1906, when they decided that 'in view of the special circumstances attached to this house, the Committee is of the opinion that it is not desirable for them to enter into a formal tenancy agreement'.⁶⁷

Soon after the first Westgate on Sea Parish Council was elected in December 1894 it sought dissolution from the Margate United School Board, but the Education Department was not sympathetic, even refusing to give the grounds for not allowing an inquiry.⁶⁸ Council business was dominated by this matter throughout its first year and, although public meetings were held, much of the deliberation went on in secret. The new Council was dominated by Anglicans and usually the only opponent to such suggestions was the Rev. Samuel King, the Congregational Minister.⁶⁹ In December 1895 it was one of the issues which led to a vote of confidence in the Parochial Committee being lost, resulting in mass resignation of councillors (see chapter two).

The elections for the Margate School Board in 1898 were dominated by the charges of 'the unnecessary extravagance' of the School Board with its so-called 'Progressive Programme'.⁷⁰ The Westgate vote was split for the first time by the Nonconformists' insistence on the nomination of the Rev. King as their candidate, whilst the Anglicans supported the Rev. Herbert Bull, who had represented Westgate for some years.⁷¹ Bull polled 1641 votes to King's 1182, but both were elected to a Board in which six out of nine members were clergy, three Anglicans and three Nonconformists.⁷²

The Rev. Lyne, who had hoped that achieving the enlargement of the schools would protect the town against the School Board, died in 1900 and was thus spared having to cope with the changes brought about by the passing of Balfour's Act in 1902, by which School Boards were abolished and Local Education Authorities established. Counties and County Boroughs became responsible for all types of education and the larger boroughs, of which Margate was one, for elementary education. St Saviour's National School became a 'non-provided' school under the Act, by which school maintenance and teachers' salaries became the responsibility of Kent County Council, who would delegate their powers to Kent Education Committee. The provision and repair of the school buildings remained with the managers. New trust deeds altered the conditions of appointment of managers; at St Saviour's four were still appointees of the church, with the Vicar ex-officio Chairman, one was appointed by the County and one by the minor authority, Westgate Parish Council.⁷³

This Bill had caused great controversy in Parliament and a large number of voluntary schools faced extinction, but when the Bill was introduced in March 1902, Balfour had said that it would be absurd to abolish them, as the gap created would be impossible to fill. Nonconformists were outraged, as the national levy seemed like a re-introduction of the church rate. At the 110th Annual Assembly of the Kent Congregational Association held at Bromley in April 1902 a resolution was passed strongly condemning the Bill.⁷⁴ Cruickshank says that 'for years nonconformists had demanded a universal system of Board Schools and had looked forward to the gradual disappearance of church schools. Now it seemed that these schools were to be given a new lease of life and the way made clear for their unlimited extension'.⁷⁵

Writing to the parish, in the annual report at Easter 1903, the Vicar, the Rev. Mylne said, 'It is impossible to say how the new Education Act will work here or elsewhere - but, if all will try and loyally abide by its conditions, the children at any rate ought not to suffer - and that is the main point after all'.⁷⁶ In September 1903 at the first managers' meeting after the Act had come into force, the chairman welcomed the County's appointee, Alfred Blandford, (son of the first Congregational Minister and head of a private boys' school) and Parish Council representative, David Dallas, also a Congregationalist.⁷⁷

The Council had first offered the position to the Rev. Albert Hooper, Minister of Christ Church, who declined, because he was a member of the Committee of the Margate and District Citizens' League and 'as such I am obliged to refuse payment of that part of the Education Rate, which may be used for sectarian purposes'. He continued that he had no complaint against St Saviour's School, but was 'one of those nonconformists, who believes that the Education Act of 1902 contains the element of grave national injustice'.⁷⁸

The Passive Resistance League, whereby nonconformists refused to pay the school rate, had been formed as a result of an attack on 'Rome on the Rates' by Dr John Clifford and other prominent nonconformists and a meeting in Margate in December 1903, addressed by Dr Clifford, was well attended.⁷⁹ In January 1904 Catherine Kelson and Charles Haig of Birchington were summoned for non-payment of rates. Kelson said that she objected to the portion of her rate of £2 8s which was for educational purposes and could not conscientiously pay. Distress orders with costs were made against both defendants.⁸⁰ In April *Keble's Gazette* recorded the sale of 'Passive Resisters' Goods' at the Congregational Church School Room Westgate, 'at the conclusion of which short speeches were made' by, among others, the Rev. Hooper.⁸¹

Generally, however, the new act seemed to work satisfactorily in Westgate, although the managers lost no time in writing to Kent Education Committee recounting the history of the school and their unhappy relations with Margate School Board.⁸² By that time there were two hundred and thirty-three children on the roll and a new headteacher to work the changes, for Edmund Humphrey had died of pneumonia in 1900 and his wife, previously assistant mistress, had been accepted as headteacher.⁸³ Not everything went to plan. When no supplies of books or even registers had arrived by 8 April, the Correspondent to the Managers was forced to send a telegram, as no reply had been received to a letter despatched earlier. The School Log Book recorded a week later that 'The Rev. Mylne, Chairman of Managers, certified the registers as being correct and, as having been kept on spare sheets of paper from an old register. Each separate sheet had been signed by him'. The registers eventually arrived on 1 May.⁸⁴

Such teething-troubles were followed by more problems in the shape of the Inspectorate, critical of lack of equipment and the state of repair of the building. They were, however, satisfied with the standard of teaching and the running of the school. In May 1905 Mrs Humphrey was able to report to the managers that twenty children had received silver medals for full attendance in the previous twelve months and the following year she was able to say that, 'just as we were one of the first schools to get the Excellent Merit Grant, so now we are one of the first to get no report at all - an honour reserved for very few schools'.⁸⁵ New subjects were introduced and in December 1906 the Inspector reported that he was going to recommend several features of the school to other schools.⁸⁶

On 28 March 1907 the school received its new title 'Westgate on Sea C.E. School'.⁸⁷ Within just over a year fresh problems had arisen for the managers, when in October 1908 the Board of Education announced its decision to insist upon ten square feet of space for each child; inspectors were to measure each school.⁸⁸ The number of scholars at Westgate exceeded the accommodation and by December 1909 it was rumoured that Kent Education Committee intended building a small Mixed School for a hundred pupils and that a large proportion of the rate would fall upon Westgate.⁸⁹ In July 1910 a letter from the Board said that numbers must not exceed two hundred and fifty or the annual grant would be endangered. Forty-one children would have to be excluded.⁹⁰

Denominational schools were finding it increasingly difficult to fund their needs and, Cruickshank says, 'poverty and shabbiness became indissolubly associated in the public mind with church schools'.⁹¹ In 1886 the total income received by St Saviour's in annual subscriptions had been £84 1s 6d; by 1900 it had risen to £94 8s 0d, but then had fallen steadily; by 1910 it was only £51 12s 6d, one third of which was given by the heads of the private schools in the town, whose interests were best served by a church school as opposed to a state school.⁹²

In June 1911 the managers agreed that action must be taken; plans were drawn up, estimates sought and applications for grants made to the Diocesan Society, the National Society and other charities.⁹³ A public notice under Section 8 of the Education Act, stating the intention of providing accommodation for about one hundred scholars, was issued in November.⁹⁴ Kent Education Committee's Sub-Committee, not entirely happy about either the loss of playground space or the prospect of a two-storey building, (it had been decided to build over the existing classrooms) reluctantly gave its approval.⁹⁵ [Plate 89]

In early May 1912 the managers decided to launch a public appeal to all Westgate ratepayers, emphasising once more the desirability of retaining a church school, although the financial advantage of avoiding a council built school was pointed out. [Appendix 13b] On 31 May at a well-attended public meeting it was unanimously decided, that a Voluntary Rate of eightpence in the pound should be raised, spread over two years.⁹⁶ Estimates ranging from £770 to £944 were received and the contract given to Lockwood.⁹⁷



PLATE 89. St Saviour's National School showing the additional building and extensions of 1894 and 1912.

The *Isle of Thanet Gazette*, reporting in detail the various estimates, concluded that it would be a considerable burden on the parish.⁹⁸ The managers' problems were not even ended, for the Board then began to insist on an extension of the playground and the appointment of a separate Headteacher for the Infants.⁹⁹ In desperation it was agreed that, as Mr Bull was to be near Whitehall on 31 July, he should approach the Education Authority and state their case.¹⁰⁰

As the work was to take ten weeks, temporary accommodation in a room in a former private school some distance away was found for some children.¹⁰¹ Coutts' directors agreed to sell a piece of land to the east of the girls' playground for £40 to compensate for the loss caused by the enlargement.¹⁰² The School Log Book reflects some of the difficulties for the Headteacher, with the Infants' Class and Standard One in a different part of the town (which she visited daily), cookery and handicraft taking place off site and builders' materials in the playground making it impossible to do drill outside. She reported, however, that 'Each teacher is trying to help me over the temporary difficulties'.¹⁰³

In the annual report to the parish at Easter 1913, the Rev Mylne thanked

all those who have contributed their share, or a portion of the same, towards the Voluntary Rate to meet the largest proportion of the cost of building the new classrooms and not to omit the extension of the playground. We still have a substantial sum to raise before we have paid our way, but I feel certain the same spirit which prompted us to undertake the work will carry us through'.¹⁰⁴

The full cost, including architect's fees and the purchase of extra land, was £1085 14s 9d, which was over budget. £643 was raised by the Voluntary Rate, £90 by donations, £205 from grants. Waterside Girls' School raised £45 by a sale of work, leaving a deficit in April 1914 of £92, finally cleared by a sale at Streete Court School.¹⁰⁵

Townshend Mylne had died suddenly in August 1913, so that it was his successor, the Rev. Charles Pendock-Banks, who was faced with having to finish the work of raising the funds to pay for the enlargement and to oversee the division of the schools into two departments, one outcome of which was a reduction in salary for Mrs Humphrey.¹⁰⁶

The managers, powerless to oppose the Board, promoted Miss Hobson, for six years Assistant-in-Charge, as Head of Infants from 31 October 1914.¹⁰⁷ On 6 November Mrs Humphrey recorded that the division 'had been quietly effected'.¹⁰⁸ Once again Westgate had shown itself willing to save its school from the clutches of the Local Authority and the risk that 'the children would pass out of our control : and definite Religious Instruction in the tenets of the Church would not be allowed'.¹⁰⁹ There were still enough people, who were prepared to ensure that the town's 'social tone' should not be lowered by the introduction of a Council school and that its 'exclusiveness' should be preserved.

Whilst these major changes were taking place, war had broken out in Europe. With the common belief that it would all be over by Christmas, the significance for Westgate was not immediately realised, but soon the School Log Book was recording the poignant story of an east coast town, set against the background of the national trauma. At first St Saviour's would have been similar to most schools throughout the country, Mrs Humphrey faithfully recording the children's fund to buy wool 'to knit various articles for the soldiers and sailors [which] both boys and girls were knitting', writing with pleasure of visits from former pupils on leave from their ships or from the western front, with pride of those awarded medals for bravery and with sorrow of the loss of those killed in action.¹¹⁰ Members of staff were called up and replacements had to be found.

By 1917 the east coast was under special threat and in June it was noted, 'Practised children in getting under desks quickly during the week and the children in upstairs room making their escape quickly by means of a ladder placed against the lead roof of the girls' cloakroom'. By October there had been several severe night-raids, bombs had been dropped in Margate and several people killed. The children became increasingly nervous and often missed school because they had been up most of the night.¹¹¹ Kent Education Committee conceded that, 'if in consequence of an air-raid warning or an air-raid, it is found impossible for the scholars to make an attendance at school as defined by Article 43 (b) of the Code, the meeting and attendance on that occasion should be disregarded in calculating the average attendance...If the Department or School fail in consequence to meet four hundred times in the year ... the Board will be prepared to regard the failure as due to unavoidable cause'.¹¹²

Many of the private schools evacuated to safer areas that year and did not return until 1919; some of St Saviour's pupils also left town, but the rest of the school struggled on despite the air-raids, which continued as late as June 1918.¹¹³ Almost a year later Mrs Humphrey recorded that 'There are signs that some of the children are recovering from the effects of the air-raids. The progress is slow, however, many being unable to concentrate for more than a few minutes'.¹¹⁴

The events at the school, of course, mirrored what was happening in the town as a whole; over five hundred of its male population had served in the forces, visitors had stayed away during the war and some of the private schools had evacuated. At the very time that many of the ratepayers were saddled with the extra burden of the Voluntary Rate to which they had agreed, the economy had suffered a devastating blow.

School managers were soon facing a new anxiety - the likely effect of the far-reaching changes proposed by Fisher's Education Act of 1918. For the first time older children would have to be properly organised and possibly leave St Saviour's school at the age of twelve.

In November 1918 Kent Education Committee began to seek the opinions of managers.¹¹⁵ A joint meeting of managers from Birchington, St Nicholas and Westgate schools was held. A statement issued said that a Central School would not be satisfactory and that there should be a separate Central Class for Westgate on the grounds that Westgate needed advanced classes, the children often remained until fifteen or sixteen, the daily journey to Birchington would be detrimental and that Westgate was not a rural parish'.¹¹⁶ The question of urban status for Westgate and its fear of being taken over by Margate was once more being raised by the Parish Council and was given as the reason for not wanting to combine with the other schools, although all three were Church of England foundations. Many of the provisions of the Act, however, were abandoned under the cuts made by the 'Geddes axe' and changes did not come about immediately.

The managers were still faced with major problems, however. Despite the inspector's report in 1924 that 'a comparatively small number of the scholars pass through Standard VII', the pressure on accommodation continued to grow.¹¹⁷ A 'shed' in Lockwood's yard was hired for the teaching of handicraft and cookery.¹¹⁸ When a new Standard VII was formed in 1933, a second room in the yard was rented for ordinary lessons on four days a week, for there were two hundred and sixty-five children on roll; each lower class had forty pupils, Standard VI thirty-eight and Standard VII twenty-seven.¹¹⁹

In some perverse way this must have been something of a relief to the managers, who had feared that they might lose a number of pupils, when in 1929 a public notice had appeared, signed by the Right Reverend T.E. Abbot Egan and others, to the effect that an elementary Roman Catholic School was to be established for about one hundred and twenty children.¹²⁰ The managers of St Saviour's School and individual members of St Saviour's Parochial Church Council had opposed it and were at first upheld by Kent Education Sub-Committee.¹²¹ When the application had been changed to one for a junior school only, the sub-committee withdrew its opposition and the school, which had previously been organised by the nuns of Les Oiseaux, was recognised by the Education Committee on 5 May 1930.¹²²

Although the growing Roman Catholic Community was pleased, it still resented the fact that on reaching eleven the children had to be transferred to St Saviour's School, unless their parents could send them to the Catholic School in Margate. Special arrangements were made with the managers for Roman Catholic priests or teachers to go into the school daily to give denominational religious instruction.¹²³ Catholics felt, however, that although the solution was 'certainly a helpful one in face of practical difficulty', it would 'never [be] a satisfactory substitute for a Catholic School'.¹²⁴

When Westgate was incorporated into Margate Borough in 1935, (see chapter two) the school underwent yet another change, as Margate, a Part II Authority, replaced Kent County Council as the Local Education Authority for Westgate and St Saviour's school became the 'Margate, Westgate on Sea C.E. School'.¹²⁵ Two pupils were invited to attend the Beating of the Bounds ceremony and a reception at Margate Town Hall given by the Mayor. All Margate schools enjoyed a day's holiday.¹²⁶ As a result of changes in organisation thirty boys were able to attend the Handicraft Centre in Margate and sixteen girls, who had recently been travelling to Broadstairs for Cookery, had lessons at the Margate Centre for Domestic Science.¹²⁷

Margate Education Committee, recognising that Westgate was growing fast on the southern side of the town, where the first social housing was being developed, announced its intention of providing places in the district for three hundred children at Westgate C.E. School, one hundred at the Roman Catholic School and four hundred at Birchington.¹²⁸ They also proposed building a three-form-entry secondary school on the Westgate-Birchington border.¹²⁹ The new school was opened in April 1938 and the Headmaster of Westgate C.E. School recorded in the Log Book that 6 May was 'the last day of the School's life as an 'all- through' school and ninety children - those born in 1926 and earlier are being transferred on Monday next to the new King Ethelbert School in Canterbury Road'.

In September 1938 as the war clouds gathered, sand was delivered for Air Raid Precautions and a scheme for quick evacuation and dispersal of the children was practised; in April 1939 Air Raid Shelters were planned and the beginning of term was delayed in September until they were complete.¹³⁰ Soon contingency plans were being made for evacuation and, when the school closed for the Whitsun holiday in 1940, head teachers were instructed to remain in the town.¹³¹ On 2 June, although some pupils remained in Westgate, ninety children with their teachers left Margate station for Lichfield. They went on to Cotton in Staffordshire, where they shared the local Church of England School until their return to Westgate early in 1945.¹³²

When in 1938 the first Westgate children moved to the new King Ethelbert School, an era had ended. For the first time in its history, some Westgate children had to attend a state as opposed to a church school. St Saviour's School played an important role in the life of the town, for there was a perceived superiority in having a Voluntary School rather than a Board School, as it was common thinking that the former catered for the deserving poor, rather than the underprivileged. Inspectors had often specially praised the 'excellent tone' of the school - something which must have been recognised as worth preserving by residents.¹³³

Many must have agreed with the Attendance Officer, who, in giving evidence to the Margate School Board in 1885, said that other [non-Board] schools gave less trouble, because the fees had been raised and that 'Board Schools were for children of the lower strata of society to a great extent'.¹³⁴ Westgate residents were prepared on many occasions to dip deep into their pockets to exclude such 'strata' and to support the church in its desire to retain its school.

L.J.Bartley writing of Bexhill said that, 'The extent to which the Church of England successfully provided local education (although even before World War I under increasing difficulties both on accommodation and financial grounds) meant that no publicly elected School Board was ever formed for Bexhill'.¹³⁵ Bexhill, however, was much larger than Westgate - it became a Part III authority in 1902, so it was no mean feat for Westgate to be able to keep the Margate School Board at bay for so long. It was able to do so, because it had the support of those with influence and money or those in whose interests it lay to retain the ethos that such a school gave to the neighbourhood.

Coutts' may have refused to give a free site, but their donation to the building fund of twenty-five guineas and their annual subscription of five guineas, which continued until they disposed of their estate just after the First World War, show that they considered it worthwhile. That support became increasingly important as the years went on and other subscriptions became less easy to obtain. From 1901 until the outbreak of World War I, the Admiralty (who owned land on the eastern boundary where the coastguard families lived) and the Bridewell Hospital were also subscribers. The latter, no doubt, also believed that they were preserving the exclusiveness of future developments.¹³⁶ The private schools, especially the four boys' preparatory schools and Ethandene and Waterside girls' schools, gave invaluable support. [Appendix 14] The majority of the private subscribers were wealthy residents, who would not have made use of such a school themselves - although their gardeners, coachmen and other outdoor staff might have done so.

Thus, because of the way the development of Westgate had turned - from 'London satellite' to 'place for schools', - the survival of the church school was vital to maintain the 'social tone'. The determination to try to break away from the Margate United School Board was, however, not simply because of the inherent antipathy to Margate. Westgate ratepayers objected to paying for the education of children outside the parish, in much the same way as they objected to paying the Poor Rate when they had few people on outdoor relief.¹³⁷ John Braye writing in 1890 of Swanage said, 'The peculiarities of the founders of a place indelibly fix their stamp on the manners and customs of the people, and mould them for ages'.¹³⁸ In Westgate they had indeed done so, and it is, therefore, not surprising that a church school was established, survived and reigned supreme, despite dissensions and bitterness lasting more than half a century.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

'BUT WHAT DO PEOPLE DO AT SUCH A PLACE?'

The writer of the article in the *Whitehall Review* in September 1879, commenting on the cluster of new watering places (Westgate, Birchington and St Lawrence) 'affecting to be somewhat aristocratic and exclusive', which had grown up on the north coast of the Isle of Thanet, answered his own question.

Why nothing. That is the express aim and intention and final cause of these new seaside places. You are not supposed to care for crowds and company. You smoke the weed and chew the lotus. Repose is the order of the day.¹

Visiting the seaside at that time was meant to do one good with the emphasis on health rather than enjoyment and, as medical opinion changed, so the fashions for sea bathing and sea-water drinking were followed in succession by seeking sea air, ozone and sunshine. In the last quarter of the nineteenth-century sea bathing was still popular and would remain so, but sea air had become all important and Westgate was able to exploit its breezes straight from the 'German Ocean', for a bracing climate was beginning to be considered the more healthy.²

NATURE'S BOUNTIES

Air 'surcharged with ozone' was, however, not quite enough to attract the clientèle that Westgate sought, although it would always be regarded as its greatest asset.³ Topography was all important and safe bathing, access to a sandy beach, marine views, preferably with sunsets or sunrises over the sea, and an interesting hinterland for exploration all played a part. Nature had been kind to Westgate, for not only did it have easy access to glorious sands, well washed by the changing tides and quick to dry, but it had, as did Scarborough and Llandudno, the immeasurable advantage of a double bay and a shoreline with gently sloping cliffs. The bays were separated by the Ledge Point headland; gradually St Mildred's Bay became the more public and Westgate Bay the more secluded. A nonagenarian, born and raised in Westgate, said that his mother would never allow him and his siblings to play at St Mildred's Bay, because it was too near to Margate, although in this period before the First World War it was still well separated by the Hospital cornfields.⁴

The beach was a paradise for Victorian and Edwardian children. Buckets and spades, paddling at low tide and exploring rock pools were great sources of enjoyment and nursemaids and nannies could accompany their charges into the water, although no Victorian or Edwardian lady would be seen tucking up her skirts to do so. Dr Ina Beasley, whose family visited Westgate on holiday before the First World War reminisced, 'My mother didn't particularly care for beach pursuits and she always kept on her shoes and stockings. She wouldn't have dreamed of paddling or bathing'.⁵

A stretch of sand exposed for a long period each day was most important. Clement Scott, writing of Cromer in the late nineteenth century said

Custom had established a certain fashion in this pretty little watering place and it was religiously obeyed; it was the rule to go on the sands in the morning, to walk on the one cliff for a mile in the afternoon, to take another mile in the opposite direction at sunset, and to crowd upon the little pier at night.⁶

It is a little puzzling as how this rule could be obeyed quite so religiously, as there are days when sands are not uncovered in the morning, for tides are controlled by nature, not by man, but there is little doubt that, by the last part of the nineteenth-century, shingle was regarded as a drawback to growth; John Travis considers the steep, pebbly beaches of Sidmouth and Budleigh Salterton a major cause of their decline.⁷ Westgate's sands gave it an advantage over its western neighbour, Herne Bay, which the writer in the *Whitehall Review* considered by 1879 to be 'decidedly passé'.⁸

Corbett ensured that bathing from machines was made possible as early as 1871 at St Mildred's Bay - the manager for the Railway Company was asked to arrange the transport of an old horse at half price, as it could be used for the machines and the Estate foreman, William Frostick, who managed them was instructed to give preference to Westgate residents.⁹ An artist's impression of 1876 shows a number of machines in the water surrounded by bathers disporting themselves.¹⁰ Westgate retained its bathing machines at that bay until 1914, when Mrs Lamb, whose business they formed, became one of the first casualties of a severely-curtailed season when the Admiralty took over the foreshore.¹¹ [Plate 90]

The supervision of the beach was carefully maintained, as Mrs Frostick found in 1897 when summoned before the Parochial Committee for infringing the bye-laws by not ensuring that the sexes were kept thirty yards apart (see chapter two). However, powers were limited; when Mr Cautley of Hawtreys School asked whether it was possible to insist that men bathers should wear university costumes, he was told the matter would have to be referred to the Local Government Board.¹²

Mixed bathing for families was allowed at Westgate Bay from 6.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. as early as 1899, two years before it was permitted at Bexhill, the resort which always claims to have been the first to allow it.¹³ The owners of the foreshore (Coutts' and the Bethlehem Governors) insisted that standards were maintained. Dr Beasley remembers

Of course there was a big notice up that said you mustn't undress on the shore. The exact wording was 'bathing is forbidden from the foreshore after 8a.m.'...I don't think you were even allowed to come down in a bathrobe. You had to go into a bathing machine, tent or hut. I don't know what the difference was, I'm sure. I think you hired the tent by the week and the bathing huts you just fed your 6d or what ever it was.¹⁴

Even after the war the infringement of bathing bye-laws was a matter of concern to the Parochial Committee. In 1920 beach inspectors reported that people were bathing without using either machines or tents, but at a public meeting, chaired by William Ingram, some ratepayers wanted free bathing at both bays, saying that the bye-laws had been passed when all resorts had machines.¹⁵ Others disagreed and no decision was taken, but the next year Westgate's anachronistic attitude made national news, when the *Daily Telegraph* reported that it had been suggested that bathers should wear costumes extending from the neck to two inches from the knee. The Rural District Council changed this to three inches before submitting the application to the Minister of Health, who, having deleted that clause, approved the bye-laws that 'no one over the age of ten was to bathe between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. except from a house, bathing machine, cabin, hut or tent' and that a costume must be worn 'to prevent indecent exposure of the person'. Those swimming before 8 a.m. or after 5 p.m. 'must wear bathing-drawers or other suitable clothing'.¹⁶

By 1934, when sunbathing was the fashion and resorts vied with each other to claim the greatest number of sunshine hours, it was the sunbather who incurred the wrath of the 'Old Guard', who made a last desperate attempt to retain Westgate's respectability by trying to restrict the activity. In doing so it drew upon itself the scorn of such as Flight Lieutenant Sugden who, complaining that Westgate Council were doing their utmost to drive prosperity away by 'their petty-minded, early-Victorian outlook on life', went on to say, 'It will be a glad day for Westgate when Margate officially takes the place under its wing'.¹⁷ Whether Margate influenced the change in attitude is not known, but in the summer of 1937 the *Isle of Thanet Gazette* carried a two-column advertisement for Westgate's Bathing Beauty Competition and in 1939 the Chamber of Commerce replaced its discreet logo on a plain cover with a picture of a girl in a red two-piece costume playing with a beach ball.¹⁸ Miss Dundas must have considered that the day of 'the indecent amusements of the lower-classes', had finally arrived.¹⁹

In the early days of the seaside watering-place, looking at the ocean was not a pastime in itself, but, from the mid-eighteenth century, attitudes began to change as writers and artists revealed its grandeur. Erasmus Wilson had no doubts of the benefits that could be derived from 'enjoying the view of the grand scenes of nature, which there present themselves, such as the rising and setting of the sun over the blue expanse of the water, and the awful majesty of the waves during a storm'.²⁰ His thoughts echo the writer of the 1865 *Guide to Exmouth* who opined, 'Happy is the sojourner on the coast, who has a taste for the beauties of nature, who, while wandering on the shore, not merely inhales the refreshing breeze, but finds at the same time in the contemplation of the seas, a never failing source of enjoyment and reflection.'²¹

Once again, Westgate was favoured. By a fortunate quirk of geography, Westgate Bay, although on the north Thanet coast, actually faces due west and enjoys superb sunsets. A century ago its chalk cliffs and caves had a untamed beauty difficult to imagine today and the curves of its bays enabled the editor of the *Builder*, understandably enthusiastic for a project in which, as a close associate of Corbett, he had an interest, to write in 1871, 'The views embrace Reculvers on the left and Margate on the right and Daundelyon, Street, Birchington, Minster and Canterbury, rich in association, are handy for drives'.²²

He did not exaggerate, for westward from Westgate Bay the twin towers of medieval Reculvers, almost ten miles away, stand stark against the skyline. Ships on their way to and from the Thames Estuary pass on the horizon and east of St Mildred's Bay Margate's stone jetty juts out beyond the clifftops. Not surprisingly many of the seafront houses boasted a look-out tower.

The clifftops, although pleasant for walking and riding, were not without their dangers. In 1879 Lady Sebright, who had taken apartments at Danemead, was riding on the cliffs with one of her young children in her arms, when her 'valuable black mare' tripped in a hole near Ledge Point and fell, throwing the rider. Fortunately the child was not badly injured, but Lady Sebright was concussed.²³ In 1893 the cliffs claimed two lives. A coastguard was killed when he fell whilst on duty and a Mr Anderson, staying in Roxburgh Road, fell thirty-six feet through a hole after climbing a fence opposite the Westcliff Hotel in order to light his pipe.²⁴ His widow's claim for compensation from Coutts' failed on the grounds that people used the area at their own risk. Drowning accidents and the case of a holidaymaker who in August 1937 fractured his spine when diving at Westgate Bay show that seaside holidays could be positively bad for the health.²⁵

In 1909 the headland was in such bad condition that it was feared it might fall into the sea and, despite the forecast that 'If Ledge Point Green goes, there will be no Westgate', the Council was in a quandary. To protect the cliffs it would need to borrow more than £20,000 over a twenty-year period and raise a sixpenny rate.²⁶ Two years previously it had been estimated that it would cost over £10,000 to join the two bays by a continuous esplanade and, although desirable, could not be afforded.²⁷ These are just two examples of how Westgate's development was stunted by its lack of urban government. Sea walls and cliff protection were not high on the list of priorities of the Rural District Council, although the District Surveyor succeeded in 1924 in obtaining the agreement of Coutts' to pay for considerable work on the cliffs between Westgate Bay and Epple Bay, before handing over the sea walls to the District Council.²⁸

In 1925 the authors of the East Kent Regional Planning Scheme, considering access to the tops of cliffs to be of vital importance to a community, commented that, 'If the Isle of Thanet had taken concerted action it could have had a coastal walk from Birchington to Pegwell'.²⁹ That a continuous cliff pathway has never been achieved points to the problems of multiple owners and the huge expense involved in such a project.

Even if repose was the order of the day in the seventies, equine pastimes were popular from the beginning and ample provision made for them. In 1880 Joseph Jackson's Livery Stables offered:

Phaetons, Waggonettes, Basket Chairs, Pony Carriages and Victorias for hire. Pair and single Horse Carriages of every description
Saddle horses and ponies and a Riding Master, if required.³⁰

It was quite usual for wealthy families to put the family coach, carriage and riding horses and children's ponies on the train when travelling to the country or the sea. Corbett requested this arrangement for his own horses in September 1871 and the newly-opened Beach House Hotel advertised in 1878 that it had first-class stabling with comfortable quarters for coachmen.³¹ In 1884 Jackson took three acres of land for riding and jumping lessons and he is recorded in the 1891 census as 'Riding Master'.³²

The provision of amusements was not of great importance in places such as Westgate in the early days, where as John Travis wrote of the Devon resorts a 'genteel ambience proved particularly attractive to those who disliked crowds and valued social status'.³³ The Beach House Hotel claimed sea views which were the 'pleasantest in Thanet', had private gardens extending to the sands and Reading, Music, Billiard and Smoking Rooms for the enjoyment of its guests.³⁴ Some guests would have been within the circle of the first residents, whose houses, with their large dining rooms, opulent drawing rooms, libraries and billiard rooms and where domestic offices included the obligatory wine and beer cellars and 'butler's pantry with lead-lined sink', point to an active social life.³⁵

'ONE CANNOT LIVE ON AIR ALONE'.

Although it was not until 1922 that this remark was made at an Annual Parish Meeting, for some visitors the quiet must have proved tedious - Ruth Manning-Saunders says that invalids could find Bournemouth very dull, if they went there without friends, as the place consisted mostly of large houses scattered through the pine trees, whilst Henry Lovett, the founder of the *Bognor Observer*, wrote in 1872, 'You will not have visitors - at least not any number to trouble you - in future years, even if you do get some who come in ignorance of your parsimony this Season and such will not stop with you long'.³⁶

Pimlott wrote, 'Nature pre-disposed : man disposed' and, within a decade, the fickle public became more demanding.³⁷ In 1887 'Well-wisher' complained

Nothing here [Westgate] deserves the name and yet, forsooth, we are the fashionable watering place...No watering place can live on its past or a mere name...or on the report of the health-giving character of its air, or its superior railway and it must adapt itself to the needs of the present and it must care in every respect for the wants of its visitors.³⁸

Early seaside watering-places had been expected to offer facilities similar to those of the inland spas - assembly rooms, circulating libraries, coffee and reading rooms and some kind of 'gathering place'. Kenneth Lindley writes that, 'The construction of the promenade was the first step in the transformation of a stretch of coastline into a resort, for it asserted man's mastery of the elements and stabilised the immediate shoreline against the encroachments of the sea'.³⁹ Such works had been Corbett's priority and his successor was making plans for improvements even before the mortgage agreement was finalised, for early in 1878 it was reported that Mr Davis was about to lay out 'gardens of a most elaborate design and construction'.⁴⁰ By May it was rumoured that a new bathing establishment in Sussex Gardens was to be opened in August.⁴¹

A meeting place suitable for use, even in adverse weather, as a promenade and amusement centre was essential. In many resorts this was the pier, the great status symbol of the eighties - Pimlott regarded the building of a pier as a sign that a seaside resort was of age - and the application in 1878 for a Provisional Order to erect a Landing Stage and Promenade Pier at Westgate was greeted enthusiastically.⁴² In 'Westgate News' it was explained that

The pier is to be a little over half a mile long, with a large cross head, which will make a pleasant and popular promenade. The starting point will be thirty feet below the top of the cliffs. At the head of the pier will be, at low tide, a depth of sixteen feet of water. Steamers will be able to call at all times. A handsome pier of these proportions will be a vast attraction to this town, which has this year extended its season considerably beyond that of Margate.⁴³

This grandiose scheme of Davis is somewhat puzzling. The pier was to strike out in a north-westerly direction from Ledge Point across Westgate Bay in front of the homes of Lady Weigall and of William Rogers and some of the prime sites not yet covered.⁴⁴ It would have been longer than Margate jetty, which had been lengthened in 1877, longer than the piers at Folkestone, Eastbourne, Bournemouth, Clacton and Walton and would have altered Westgate beyond all recognition, as had happened, for example, at Cromer. In *Cromer Past*, E.A. Goodwyn says that, when in 1877 the jetty was demolished to make way for a pier, 'The change from jetty to pier illustrates perfectly the changed character of Cromer'.⁴⁵

One of Westgate's prime features, the beautiful Westgate Bay, would have been destroyed, as would the peace and quiet which Davis appeared to have been promoting. Piers often took over many of the amusements of the London Pleasure Gardens and, although popular with the masses, were looked upon with disdain by the upper classes. Sarah Howell says that it was 'an acknowledgement that resorts could no longer depend entirely on people who could provide their own horses and carriages, staying five or six weeks'.⁴⁶ Yet that was exactly the kind of clientèle that Davis was seeking.

At Eastbourne the pier provided a demarcation line between the exclusive west end and the popular town centre. Neither Bexhill nor Frinton built piers, although one was included in the first plans of both towns; later they, like Seaford, boasted that the lack of such an amenity was an asset.⁴⁷ It is certainly debatable whether the arrival of steamers at Westgate at all times would have been of benefit. For a man who had sought to ban excursion trains from stopping at Westgate, it appears that Davis was taking a considerable risk, as it is difficult to see how he could have regulated the steamers' passengers and prevented the lowering of tone, which had resulted from the arrival of the East Enders in Margate and Clacton.

This pier, like so many other grandiose schemes of resort developers, did not materialise and it appears to have vanished into the mists of time. No stated reason has been found for it not proceeding beyond the Provisional Order stage, but lack of finance must have been one. Piers were notoriously expensive to build and maintain - at Eastbourne, even after the Duke of Devonshire had shown a willingness to contribute, there was a long delay in building because of the reluctance of the townspeople to invest and at Clacton Peter Bruff's scheme was saved only by the intervention of the Woolwich Steam Packet Company.⁴⁸ Walton says that a high proportion of the capital for piers was subscribed locally, but Davis, 'his heirs and assigns', were the sole Undertakers of the Westgate Pier project and the formation of a company with local shareholders might have proved difficult.⁴⁹

Those who had already invested in property might well have been unhappy at the threat to their much vaunted quietude, especially when they examined the details of the goods permitted to be landed. Chaises and other four-wheeled carriages at seven shillings and sixpence each might have been acceptable, but bones and bone dust at one shilling and sixpence a hundredweight or manure at a shilling a ton would surely not have fitted into Westgate's image and doubt might have been cast on Davis's promise that the aristocratic character of the place would never be destroyed.⁵⁰

The matter of a landing stage for small boats arose again in 1898 when the Parish Council, having written to the Estate owners for permission to erect one, were asked to submit a detailed plan stating the rent they would be prepared to pay. The scheme was dropped because the Council had such limited spending powers.⁵¹ By 1935 the Town Guide was able smugly to proclaim 'The prospect of a quiet holiday is further assured by the absence of a pier'.

Although 1879 had been a bad year for resorts, as bad weather and the depression had reduced the number of visitors everywhere, the number of new residents and visitors to Westgate continued to grow and the need to improve the town's amenities was beginning to be recognised.⁵² Three witnesses favouring a new stretch of railway between Westgate and Minster, giving direct access to Canterbury, Dover and Deal, told a Commons' Committee in 1882 that there was nothing to do in Westgate and such a facility would encourage parents to explore, whilst their children were on the sands.⁵³ When questioned about the desirability of leaving children apparently to their own devices, the shocked speakers said that families visiting Westgate would have their own nurse and nursemaids, for the class of visitors were 'the best families in London and the South-East'.⁵⁴

For such families social etiquette was still of paramount importance. Bored husbands could make use of the County Club, established in 1877, with its ground-floor dining room, communicating with a library, and smoking room on the second floor. Election to membership was by ballot and entrance and subscription fees one guinea each. Within a year it had one hundred and eighty members and a smoking retreat had been built at the end of the garden.⁵⁵ In 1894 when Osborne House was sold to a private buyer, so important was such an establishment, that William Ingram, seizing an opportunity to extend still further his empire in Sussex Gardens, built a new County Club close to the St Mildred's Hotel.⁵⁶

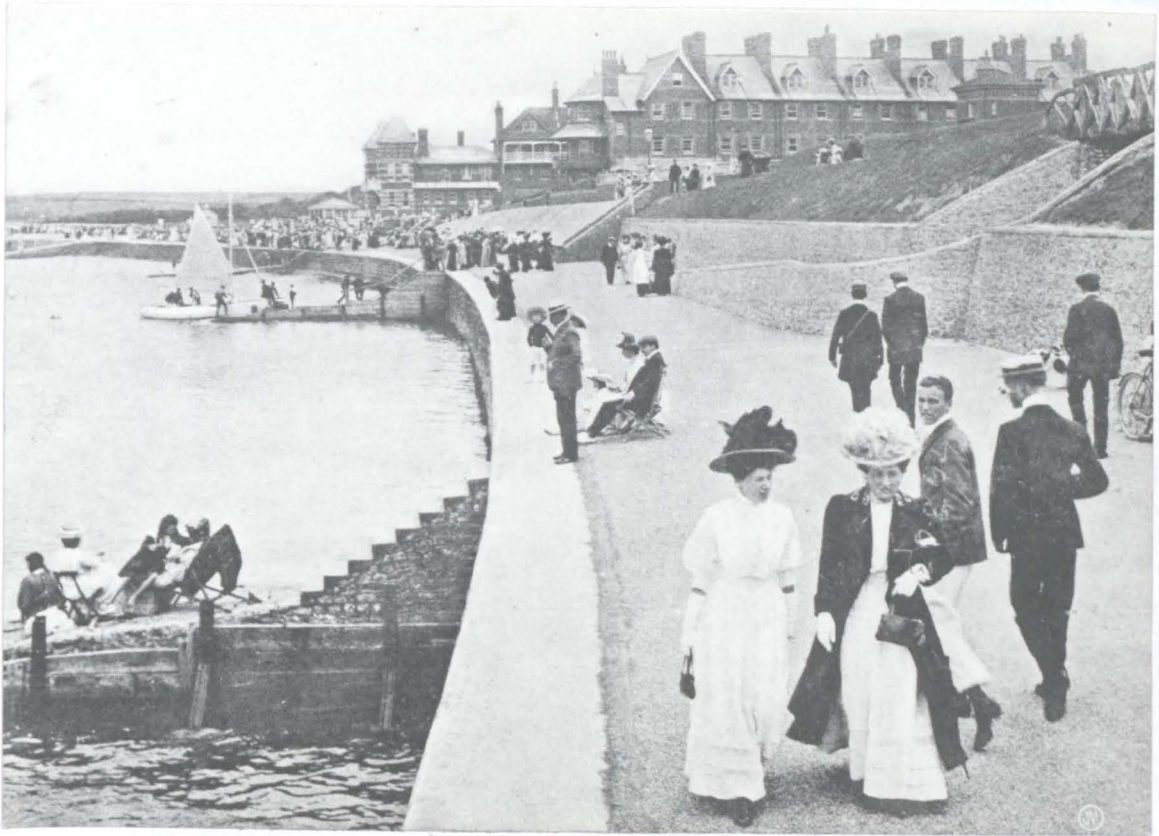
Their ladies would have doubtless followed the social round, which necessitated frequent changes of dress, for this was an age of conspicuous consumption and the seaside an excellent place to display wealth. Westgate was not like Cromer, which Clement Scott said he could not 'recommend to the young ladies with travelling trunks filled with fashionable gowns', nor like Swanage, which, a diary writer of 1874, said was 'a place where you can do as one likes, as there is no promenade to make a swell appearance at'.⁵⁷

Such watering-places might presume to call themselves fashionable, but they were not in the same league as Westgate, where it was suggested that ladies should take at least forty dresses for a stay.⁵⁸ [Fig. 12] Jane Ashelford says that, in the late nineteenth-century, ladies on a four-day visit to a country house could not wear the same dress twice and so would have required at least twelve to sixteen complete ensembles.⁵⁹

Strolling in the gardens and on the promenade, meeting friends and gossiping would not have taken up all the day, so a little shopping might be in order. For its size, Westgate's retail facilities were quite impressive (see chapter three). William Minter, 'Silk Mercer, Costumier, Milliner, Hosier and Glover' opened his new shop in 1883.⁶⁰ Having served his apprenticeship at Peter Robinson's, an establishment specializing in 'court millinery, mantles and dressmaking', Minter provided millinery and dressmaking services on his premises and advertised all kinds of drapery, including a 'large and varied assortment of Manufactured Fur Goods' at 'London prices'.⁶¹

Alison Adburgham wrote that even after the department stores were established in London, the élite still patronised the little shop where the relationship between customer and shopkeeper remained the same and 'London prices' would have made clear the kind of establishment Minter was running.⁶² Bored ladies, to whom 'the lure of the inexpensive' was not an attraction, might well have been enticed.⁶³ Frederick Bessant, 'Pharmaceutical and Dispensing Chemist and purveyor of unrivalled lavender water' also arrived in 1883 from Roberts and Company of New Bond Street and by 1908 was able to advertise in the first 'Westgate Guide' that he dispensed for named members of the aristocracy and the most élite of the private schools.⁶⁴ The advertisement of C.S. Burchell in the same publication revealed that Westgate was, at least in some ways, moving with the times, for his stock included 'motor veils and veiling'.⁶⁵

January 1880 had seen the opening of the double-fronted Assembly Rooms built of red brick and stone, which would eventually be joined to St Mildred's Hotel via a first-floor corridor.⁶⁶ [Fig. 13] On the ground floor was a swimming bath seventy feet by twenty-eight feet, complete with dressing boxes and gallery, and private baths and waiting rooms. At first floor level there was a large entertainment hall fitted with casements leading to three balconies and two retiring rooms.⁶⁷ The rooms met a growing need and were soon well used for concerts and other events, as a varied intellectual and social life developed. Lectures, sometimes accompanied by lantern slides, were well patronised, for 'rational recreation' was very much alive in Westgate and, fuelled by the enthusiasms of the school teachers, clergy and other professionals increasingly drawn to the town, would remain so for all its independent life.



Conspicuous consumption and display of wealth at St Mildred's Bay.
 Historic Thanet No. 34. Kent County Council Supplies' Department.

FIG. 12.

St. MILDRED'S

FULLY LICENSED **HOTEL** A.A. & R.A.C.



St. Mildred's Orchestra, composed of artistes from London's Leading Bands, provides unparalleled dance music

St. Mildred's Hotel enhances the wonderful vitalizing air and sun of this beautiful Thanet Health Resort

CHILDREN'S NURSERY OF
 MODERN DESIGN WITH QUALIFIED
 NURSE IN CHARGE

Advertisement from 1947 Westgate Guide - K. O'Toole's collection.

FIG. 13.

Musical and other events were chiefly for the benefit of the residents, although visitors would no doubt have been welcomed, especially if they were fund-raising events. In August 1881 a pupil of Charles Hallé was the pianist at a concert arranged by the Rev. Lyne in aid of the church building fund.⁶⁸ In July 1883 a concert was held to raise money to help Corbett's workmen, who had lost their tools in a fire. Seats cost three shillings, two shillings or one shilling; carriages to come at 10 p.m.⁶⁹ In 1886 the first concert of the Westgate Choral Society took place, when Sterndale Bennett's 'The May Queen' was performed.⁷⁰ In 1887 four weekly recitals of poetry and Shakespeare by Mr Samuel Brandram were held in the afternoons; carriages to be ordered for 5.15 p.m.⁷¹

Amateur dramatic and choral societies were formed, a circulating library opened and a Literary Institute established by the nineties. Christ Church had its own Literary and Social Society; the subjects of its debates were wide ranging. There was an active Conservative Association and a Liberal Club from the 1890s; a Westgate and Birchington Branch of the Labour party from 1925.⁷² The Tradesmen's Club, founded in 1888, allowed its members to express their concerns and gave mutual support, but it was forced to close in the early part of the twentieth-century 'on account of its non-financial success', re-opening again in 1913.⁷³

The Working Men's Club, built on a site given by Davis, is listed in a Directory of 1885.⁷⁴ Such organisations were of little apparent interest to visitors or the well-heeled residents, habitual or permanent, but their importance, especially in a community such as Westgate, where law and order were of prime concern, was well summed up by Lord Salisbury in 1888, when he was addressing a Working Men's Club in Liverpool. 'The healthiest thing for men is a healthy association with the best men of their own class. There are more dangerous activities than having a luncheon of bread, cheese and beer'.⁷⁵ They were, in fact, informal agencies of social control and, therefore, had a part to play.

Another organisation embraced by Westgate at the turn of the century was the Volunteer Force, where, as Hugh Cunningham wrote, 'With at least a pretence of military discipline, undue familiarity could be resisted, while at the same time, the middle class could be active patrons of working-class leisure'.⁷⁶ In January 1900 a hundred and eighty men attended a meeting in the schoolroom, which was decorated with large portraits of the Queen and Lord Nelson, the latter unfortunately hidden by the vast quantity of bunting. Colonel Lewis-Jones, a veteran of Alma and Inkerman, presided and County Councillor Robert Grant and the curate, the Rev. Urquhart Binks, former members of the London Scottish, were present.⁷⁷ The Corps was attached to the East Kent Rifles and on 24 February 1901 four volunteers were presented with money-belts, as they were about to go to South Africa.⁷⁸ When the first two returned in June 1902 they were met by large crowds at the station, welcomed by Sir William Ingram and presented with solid-silver cigarette cases to be engraved.⁷⁹

Pimlott says that when 'elementary needs had been supplied, rising standards demanded refinements which could not always be provided by private enterprise', but in Westgate there was little choice, for throughout this time, when other resorts were spending large sums to provide entertainment, Westgate was without a single local authority.⁸⁰ The provision of amusements of any kind for residents or visitors depended on the readiness of energetic citizens to exercise self-help and pay for their wants from private means. This was bound, however, in time to prove unsatisfactory and to lead to division.

CONFLICTING NEEDS

In July 1887, possibly as a result of the criticisms earlier in the year of 'Well Wisher' (page 215), the first commercial entertainment was introduced by the engaging of a Town Band, provoking the comment, 'As Westgate is peculiarly devoid of the class of amusements usually so abundant at seaside resorts, the band is a decided relief and is much appreciated'.⁸¹ By 1889 a permanent 'Improvements' Committee' was set up to provide additional attractions including the illumination of the seafront, but there was considerable disagreement and the question of whether there should be a band and who should pay for it was recurrent (see chapter two). The Parish Council was of little help, as a rate could not be levied for such amenities and the problem was actually exacerbated after its formation. Ratepayers resented having to pay rates, on which they felt Westgate received a poor return, and at the same time being asked to subscribe towards the provision of facilities more beneficial to visitors than to themselves.

Victor Rushworth's London Chamber Orchestra was engaged to play morning and evening that first season and the Manager of St Mildred's Hotel, a member of the Committee, invited it to play in the hotel grounds on Sunday evenings in August.⁸² In April 1890, when the band was again under discussion, the Rev. Lyne said that it would be 'wrong to tempt the bandsmen to come to Westgate on a Sunday with their instruments as they needed rest. Visitors who came fagged and worn in mind and body came for the rest and it would be a grievous wrong to them and God and a great harm to Westgate'.⁸³ However, Mammon triumphed. The band played in mid-August on the ground adjacent to the hotel on Sunday afternoons and 'large numbers of promenaders were in the vicinity'.⁸⁴

When the inconvenience of the band having no shelter was apparent, a covered bandstand was suggested.⁸⁵ In 1897 the proposal to erect a bandstand to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee met with opposition; the Rev. Bull said that it was absurd to spend so much on a bandstand, as the band would have to play always in the same place and it would only be used for a short time each year; Dr Flint said that he did not want to 'Margatize' Westgate and, if there were to be a bandstand, it should be provided by the Parish Council, so that all would have to contribute.⁸⁶

Eventually a bandstand giving cover to the band, but none to the audience, was erected in 1903 from public subscriptions to commemorate the coronation of Edward VII.⁸⁷ [Plate 91] In 1914 the Parish Council sought permission to erect a shelter in the bandstand using invested money, but the Local Government Board, possibly fearing the cry of *ultra vires* from some articulate opponents, refused (see chapter two).⁸⁸

When the First World War was over, pre-war attitudes soon returned to Westgate, despite the fact that, as C.H. Bishop wrote of Folkestone, 'The bitter experience of the war changed the climate of men's thoughts, and a return to the heyday of Edwardian fashion and manners was unthinkable'.⁸⁹ Individual Westgate businessmen tried to make the most of the short-lived boom and a number of hotels made improvements, taking advantage of the compensation to which they were entitled if their premises had been requisitioned.

Christmas 1919 saw St Mildred's Hotel busy with a large number of families enjoying the festivities.⁹⁰ There was dancing at the Town Hall, which Sir William Ingram, astute businessman that he was, had turned into an 'entertainment centre' when the Parish Council rebuffed him in 1910. It also boasted a cinema, an art gallery and, at one time, a skating-rink. On New Year's Eve 1919 more than one hundred and fifty people attended a Fancy Dress Dance.⁹¹

It was, however, an uphill struggle against the diehards and in 1921 the *Isle of Thanet Gazette* reported a quiet Whitsun in Westgate with a very small number of visitors, as the buses [excursion] went to other towns, because there was no entertainment.⁹² In June the Council banned Punch and Judy - Westgate was like Llandudno half a century earlier - 'a good place for banning things'.⁹³ Other beach-amusements had always been banned, as was the sale of food (see chapter one). The Parochial Committee could only give permission for discreet trading, such as the sale of newspapers or the taking of photographs, in the cliff-top gardens, until Coutts' transferred the promenade to the local authority. There were no shops on or near the seafront.

There was an unusual interest shown in the Parish Council elections of 1922, when it was clear that those dependent on the holiday trade were no longer prepared to stay silent. Several voiced the opinion that the Council should cater more for visitors and it was then that Lewis Haismer, hoping to succeed his brother who had been a councillor for twenty-two years, said that much had been said of Westgate's lovely air, but they could not live on air alone. A band and a concert party were needed. One intrepid lady even dared to ask whether there could be a concert hall, as the bandstand was cold and the concerts bad.⁹⁴



PLATE 90. Bathing Machines at St Mildred's Bay. These were still in use until August 1914, when the Admiralty took over the foreshore for a seaplane base.



PLATE 91. The Coronation Bandstand erected after much controversy in 1903. Reproduced by permission of K.O'Toole.

In the inter-war years the choice of holiday destinations was being ever widened by the arrival of the baby-car and the char-a-banc, but that choice was affected by the availability of desired facilities. Visitors, as Hugh Cunningham says, no longer came as part of a social round, but 'to escape from the pressures that otherwise circumscribe their lives'.⁹⁵ Some kind of entertainment was essential.

Matters came to a head in 1923 when the proposed provision of a pavilion costing from £10,000 to £11,000 came under discussion. Dr Flint maintained that, whilst a pavilion might be an attraction, Westgate's prosperity did not depend upon it. Its attractions were the air, the sea, the shore with its weed-covered rocks, the bathing, the greens and the comparative quiet. Thanet's proverbial fine, dry weather made a pavilion unnecessary. An inclement season was rare. Councillor Longrigg of Streete Court School, endorsed by the Rev. Underhill of Wellington House, said that he felt that the best interests of the town would not be served 'by catering for a class of visitor we do not want'.⁹⁶

Those involved in the holiday industry disagreed. They knew that, unless visitors came for the purpose of recuperating from 'nervous disorders [when they would] find restful seclusion undisturbed by street noise of any kind', they would look for some kind of entertainment, especially in the evenings.⁹⁷ Hotel-proprietor, Harry Preston, contended that those who were in Westgate to earn a living did not consider the attractions listed by Dr Flint to be sufficient to entice the visitor.⁹⁸ Preston was reminded that there were 'several sections of inhabitants to be considered; first, the schools, major ratepayers and a great asset to the town, second, the private residents, third, the hotel and boarding-house keepers and last the general inhabitants'.⁹⁹

Further controversy arose when it became known that there was to be a military band instead of an orchestra that year. An indignant 'Westgate Townsman' asked

What in the world attracts trippers etc - the very class which is considered so objectionable by certain of the Westgate townspeople more than a noisy, military band?...The townspeople of Westgate should wake up and rouse themselves or they cannot expect to sell their goods, if they have none to offer...or it will soon be goodbye to Little Westgate and the town will gradually vanish and become submerged into the present day Margate or the future Birchington.¹⁰⁰

Other resorts had come to realise that good music and the right amenities would help lengthen the season, a reason for the Duke of Devonshire having provided over half of the £70,000 needed by the Eastbourne Parks and Baths Company to upgrade their facilities and helped fund Eastbourne's own orchestra.¹⁰¹ Folkestone, realising that it must adapt to survive, laid out new marine gardens, a permanent amusement centre and the Leas Cliff Hall - 'interests and facilities, as well as those of the pre-war period still in existence [which] proved very attractive to the new type of visitor'.¹⁰² The unique De La Warr Pavilion, completed in 1935, was a symbol of Bexhill's confidence in its future.

Westgate's traders were, however, no longer prepared to be browbeaten by those who had held the reins for so long and, despite the opposition of the schoolmasters and the seafront residents, who complained of the contravention of their covenants, the pavilion was opened in July 1925.¹⁰³ A low-level building, nestling in the cliffs, it enabled a concert party to perform to an audience of six hundred.

In 1932 the cinema was refurbished and modernised for the new 'talkies' under new management and re-named The Carlton.¹⁰⁴ It showed two programmes a week and by 1937, in addition, staged an eleven-act live show.¹⁰⁵ Yet later the same year, the Chamber of Commerce opposed plans of Margate Corporation to build a semi-circular enclosure with a roof, but open in the centre, which would take up to six hundred deck-chairs for the purpose of listening to music. The cost of maintaining an orchestra and the thought of contributing through the rates towards the estimated £24,000 was too much to countenance. Mr Alexander of St Mildred's Hotel said that he had had a good season without music.¹⁰⁶ Dr Addison opined that Westgate was essentially a children's place and such provision would be wasted.¹⁰⁷ It is clear that ratepayers in general were still reluctant to pay for any amenity from the rates and that such provision was reliant upon private enterprise.

Car parking created a problem, as elsewhere; Eastbourne was criticised for allowing seafront parking to spoil the appearance of the town; Hastings was commended for building an underground car park.¹⁰⁸ Westgate Parish Council, acknowledging in 1928 that there must be parking because the town catered, not for day trippers, but the very best class of people, nevertheless decreed that the peace and quiet of the schools must not be disturbed.¹⁰⁹ By that date, there were ten such establishments in and around Sea Road.

If that peace and quiet became too unbearable, the occasional excursion into the countryside or to a place of historic interest had always been possible. As soon as it became clear that those with their own carriages staying for several weeks were becoming fewer, facilities were forthcoming. In 1895 Joseph Jackson advertised 'Special Trips', by the brake 'Reliance', departing daily from Westgate Station for such destinations as Grove Ferry, the North Foreland, Pegwell Bay, Sandwich and Canterbury.¹¹⁰ Westgate's hinterland might not have compared with the beauty of the South Downs or with the wooded hills and valleys behind Folkestone, for by the nineteenth-century it had long lost many of its trees, but its uplands covered with corn and other crops, the pretty villages of Minster, Monkton and Manston set against the great open skies of Thanet, the marshlands dotted with sheep and an abundance of wild flowers made it worthy of exploration.

Rail transport to and from Westgate was good; other means were less reliable. The notice 'Charabancs, Omnibuses, Large Coaches, Pleasure Vans and Vehicles of like nature, not expressly licensed by the Surveyor of the owners of the Estate are not allowed on these roads' was displayed prominently at the entrances to the town.¹¹¹ In 1913 William Sayer of Margate had the renewal of his brake licence refused and Birchington Parish Council took up the case of Mr Walker who, after running brakes for twenty years, was no longer to be allowed on the Estate roads and had been threatened with action for trespass.¹¹²

Although Westgate Parish Council had delegated powers to license the buses, it could not grant permission to run over the private roads. This provided a convenient excuse for those, like Councillor Bull, who feared the new buses would bring undesirable visitors from Margate. The editor of the *Isle of Thanet Gazette* was astute enough to comment in 1923 that the private roads had established peace and seclusion and when the situation changed (referring to the proposed handing over of the roads to the Rural District Council by Coutts) 'objectionable elements would be introduced if the town was popularised'.¹¹³

By the late twenties both a regular Motor Bus Service and Coach Tours were advertised in the town guide, but the fact that char-a-bancs were not allowed on the seafront and there were no trams running anywhere near was also stressed.¹¹⁴ Tramways were always seen as a threat to the exclusive resort; their overhead wires were unaesthetic and a proposal to introduce them to Folkestone was defeated in a poll in 1905 on those grounds; at Eastbourne it was feared that they would deter high-class visitors and allow the working class to enter middle-class areas.¹¹⁵ Neither town accepted them, although they were allowed at Bournemouth, Brighton and Hastings. The first 'Westgate Guide' of 1909 boasted that 'A wealthy line of electric tramways has swept triumphantly through Ramsgate and Broadstairs, St Peter's and Margate to find itself stopped dead at the entrance of this little village'.¹¹⁶

When the Isle of Thanet Light Railway Electric Company had applied to extend its routes from its terminus at Garlinge to Birchington, via the Canterbury Road, it met with formidable opposition from the 'frontagers'. At the enquiry held in May 1899 there was legal representation on behalf of nine private residents, three schools, the partners of Coutts', the Governors of the Bethlehem Hospital and Kent County Council. Their Counsel made it clear that

The frontagers had no desire whatever to see any increased facilities granted for the transmission of the surplus visitors from Margate to Westgate for their recreation, in as much as that it would destroy the present value of the property in Westgate and would destroy all the advantages which those, who had bought property and settled down for the rest and quietness, had hitherto enjoyed....Westgate desired to become a separate place. The two towns were quite distinct as to its class of visitors and, so far, Westgate had no desire to see the tramway come there.¹¹⁷

Mr Hovenden of the Hockeredge said that the occupiers of the houses in that locality were quite a different class to those who came to Margate and the owners of the roads in Westgate had retained the roads in their own hands in order to prevent Westgate being turned into an East End resort. More people in Westgate than their own visitors was objectionable, particularly the trippers, although he would not go so far as to include those who kept their own trap. Dr Flint said that Westgate rents were high to cater for a high class residential population and high-class visitors. At Margate the matter was very different.

Although the Chairman of the Light Railways' Commission, the Earl of Jersey, said that the comparisons between Westgate and Margate made it very awkward for him, he decided to close the enquiry as 'there was more opposition than he cared to override'.¹¹⁸ The Official Guide of 1927 explained that 'The electric tramways, which at one time threatened to sweep through the town, were prohibited on the grounds that they would tend to spoil the town's exclusiveness', but in 1937 the presence of a tramway terminus fifteen minutes' walk away was actually cited as an amenity.¹¹⁹

The summer visitor was often able to have his stay enlivened by one of the many bazaars and fetes held in the early years to raise money for good causes. These ranged from the elaborate two-day affair held in 1882 on the greensward at St Mildred's Bay in aid of the new church to modest garden parties held by the Congregationalists in the 1930s for missions (see chapter six). Swimming competitions were held regularly in August for *bona fide* visitors and residents; that in 1914 was cancelled, becoming an early victim of war.¹²⁰ It was revived as soon as war was over and in 1920 six thousand people were reported to have watched.¹²¹

In 1923 the traders organised a Gala Carnival and Sports Day, with decorated cars, motor cycles, bicycles, horses and prams and pedestrians in fancy dress in the procession. There were fireworks in the evenings, dances at the hotels and a Fancy Dress Ball in the Town Hall.¹²² After amalgamation it would appear that Westgate was becoming more prepared to embrace conviviality, for Carnival programmes became progressively more adventurous with the introduction of beauty competitions, sideshows and sports of all kinds.¹²³ In 1937 Westgate's Carnival was reported to be better than Margate's, with a 'jolly noisy procession' with over two hundred floats - 'the noisiest Westgate can remember'.¹²⁴ This was then, perhaps, the shape of things to come.

PARTICIPANT SPORT

One kind of pastime, however, not only met with approval but positive encouragement, especially after the arrival of the schools. Organised games had become an important part of public and preparatory school life by the 1870s and the boom in participant and competitive sport which followed was exploited by resorts, for a holiday was a time to improve skills.

Men began to swim seriously as opposed simply to bathe, especially after the first Channel swim was completed in 1875; tennis, golf, cricket, archery and bowls were all popular. These, however, cost money in the form of annual subscriptions and special clothing and they were able to contribute further to a town's exclusivity. Westgate's Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club, founded in 1882, was open to visitors, but the comparatively high subscriptions ensured that only the 'right people' would be able to take advantage. Presidents and Vice-Presidents came from the town's élite.

The first recorded cricket match was the town versus Mr Bullock's Ringslow College in 1882.¹²⁵ By the following year a tennis tournament was organised for August with single and double handicaps for gentlemen and ladies and prizes of silver mounted racquets.¹²⁶ By 1890 this had developed into a Lawn Tennis Week with seven classes of matches, including singles for girls and boys under sixteen, on thirty full-sized courts in nine acres of well laid out grounds.¹²⁷ There were one hundred and nineteen entries in 1895 and a grand ball at the Assembly Rooms finished the week.¹²⁸ The first town guide claimed the courts to be as superior as those at Wimbledon. When Coutts' sold the Estate in 1919 the Club Grounds, advertised as building land, were purchased by Arthur Read and two others, who re-opened them in May 1920 when a good season was anticipated.¹²⁹

Golf became the most popular of holiday sports, gathering momentum and reaching its climax in the 1890s. The Royal Eastbourne, the Brighton and Hove, the Seaford and the Sandwich Royal St George's Clubs were all founded in 1887, Folkestone and Littlestone in 1888, Bognor, Clacton-on-Sea and the Royal Cinque Ports at Deal in 1892.¹³⁰ With all its rivals providing courses by the sea, it was essential that Westgate was not left behind. In 1893 Dr Flint and others leased enough ground from Coutts' to establish a six-hole course, which was laid out under the direction of a professional from Sandwich and opened in May.¹³¹ Later three holes were added and in 1913 twenty-eight acres on the clifftop, on the western periphery overlooking Epple Bay, was leased for a further nine holes.¹³²

In 1919 the forty-nine acres of the golf links were included in the sale of building land.¹³³ They were bought by Arthur Read and considerable work done on them resulted in fairways and greens, which were 'magnificent'. A new Clubhouse, with lounge, reading and retiring rooms, was built and an Open Competition held at Easter 1924.¹³⁴

Between the wars local authorities were becoming concerned at the possible loss of green spaces, as towns expanded and Westgate, with only a rural authority to protect its interests, might have lost both the open space and the benefit of having a golf course. In 1937 Eastbourne Corporation, under clause 7 of the Town Planning Scheme, was empowered to purchase compulsorily the Royal Eastbourne Links if the Cavendish Estate decided to develop, for as the Borough Engineer said, 'It would be a calamity if the Golf Links were built on'.¹³⁵

The Folkestone course, in the town near to Radnor Park, was required for development as a Sports' centre in the 1960s, but the town was fortunate in that Lord Folkestone was prepared to lease other of his property on the outskirts of Hythe for a course.¹³⁶ Frinton, firmly established as a resort by the 1890s, concentrated on providing first-class outdoor amenities.¹³⁷ In 1898 the private West Clacton Estate was planned to include a golf course and tennis and croquet lawns.¹³⁸ Lord Suffield in *My Memories* reflected that the links and hotel at Overstrand (Cromer) had added value to his land, but swallowed up a lot of capital, but 'The Golf Links bring a great many people and the big houses contribute to society'.¹³⁹ Such was the importance attached to good courses in the competition to attract the 'best people' that, in the inter-war years, in addition to advertising its own links, Westgate Guidebooks made much of its proximity to several well-known courses, such as the Royal St George's.¹⁴⁰

Westgate had the traditional sports of the country gentleman on its doorstep and early guidebooks refer to the possibility of riding with the Thanet Harriers.¹⁴¹ Set up in 1813 by local farmers, the pack would not at first have appealed to the metropolitan gentlemen and professionals who came to Westgate, but Rosemary Quested says that it was taken out of farmers' hands in 1873 by a landowner with 'mansion and deer park' and by 1887 was almost entirely supported by non-farmers.¹⁴² By 1895 it appears that Westgate gentlemen had hi-jacked the Hunt; one was Master, another Secretary and several were present amongst the hundred and fifty guests at the sumptuous hunt breakfast.¹⁴³

Other sports were popular. Archery could be practised at the Tennis Club grounds.¹⁴⁴ Westgate Hockey Club, founded by the brothers Bull, was the oldest in Kent outside the London area and matches were played frequently against teams such as Bromley, Surbiton and Wimbledon.¹⁴⁵ Membership was from a wider cross section of society than in other sports and a number of tradesmen, including Arthur Read and Frederick Bessant, played for Westgate.¹⁴⁶ As like coursing, it is a winter pastime, it was clearly for residents rather than visitors.

Thanet's suitability for the new fashionable pastime of cycling was pointed out in a land-sale advertisement of 1899, although it did not go as far as Cromer, where cycling was permitted on the promenade at any time out of season and between 6 a.m. and 9 a.m. in season.¹⁴⁷ From 1910 skating at the Town Hall was available and a Miniature Rifle Club, including a ladies' section, was formed the same year.¹⁴⁸ All these facilities were provided by private enterprise. Fishing, both fresh water on the River Stour at Grove Ferry seven miles away and at sea for codling and whiting in the season, was available and the post-amalgamation Guides even advertised 'the exciting sport of tope-fishing'.¹⁴⁹

Bowls were not available for either visitor or resident until after amalgamation. When Coutts' sold the lawns of Adrian and Ethelbert Squares to the Rural District Council in 1922, the Council wanted to establish a bowling green, but was told that Coutts' could not grant it and that it was not worth the time of their solicitor to search through old documents to ascertain details of easements and restrictive covenants.¹⁵⁰ Soon after amalgamation, Margate Borough Corporation laid out a green on the former Hospital land at Westbrook.

CONCLUSION

When looking at the whole picture formed by these various strands of activity, Westgate did not present the conventional face of a resort for, even as late as the inter-war years, there was little of what might be called entertainment. Those facilities which might attract the visitor were provided almost exclusively by private enterprise with the Parish Council exploiting its difficulties in providing on the rates. There was much and varied leisure activity, but it was primarily for the resident and mostly 'homespun'. The attitude was that if visitors did not like what they found, they could go elsewhere. Even the early town guides were aimed more at attracting new residents than short-term visitors.

However, between the wars there was a growing demand from the tradesmen and hotelkeepers for more amenities to entice visitors and to lengthen the season.¹⁵¹ A six-week season was not profitable and the best times of the year, spring and early summer, were wasted because the schools would be affected. Despite the encouraging words of some later guides which pointed out the absence of frost and the mild temperature, Westgate could never compete as a winter resort - the air was, in fact, so bracing that it could be actually harmful for some complaints.¹⁵²

P.J. Waller says that late season holidays were the prerogative of the middle and upper classes and to attract that type of clientèle a resort had to be able to offer creature comforts and the right tone.¹⁵³ The right tone was still there, thanks to the presence of the schools, but a lack of indoor amusements meant Westgate had little to offer in the winter and even creature comforts might be lacking. Louis Wain, writing from his Westgate home in 1913, said that for winter visitors, 'hotels needed to be more welcoming with palms and flowers and warm bedrooms'.¹⁵⁴

After amalgamation, when the Chamber of Commerce had a greater say and the new Borough Councillors were more willing to adapt to change, the stress was laid, as it had been in its infancy, on Westgate's outstanding suitability for family holidays. The 1939 Guide, with its delightful drawings of children making sandcastles, shrimping and playing beach-ball, with its advertisement for its paddling pool, its emphasis on the fact that prams could be wheeled down to the sands from the cliffs by gentle graduated slopes and that there was no pier nor beach-amusements, could have been written sixty years earlier. As the war-clouds gathered the wheel had come full circle. Perhaps Westgate, after all, did not need to adapt to survive.

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CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have examined evidence which helps to establish the uniqueness of Westgate on Sea and which allows me to justify the implications in my chosen title - 'fashionable watering-place and London satellite, exclusive resort and place for schools'. In so doing I have tried to unravel the complexities of the features which were responsible for the way in which resorts' histories were fashioned and to answer a question posed by Harold Perkin two decades ago in relation to the resorts of the north-west, namely why some succeeded in remaining exclusive, whilst others had to succumb to the demands of the universally-disliked excursionist.¹

In fact each resort is unique in that its geographical position, topography and geology, for example, are pre-determined, thus affecting its development in a manner over which man has no influence. Resorts could not change their climates; they could only put the best possible 'spin' upon them. For example, in September 1880 the editor of the *Walton and Clacton Gazette* claimed that, 'The superiority of the climate of the Essex coast over the Sussex for restoring the tone and vigour of the system is now felt very generally by the Medical profession'.² The fact could not be disguised, however, that such climates were not suited to the invalid or the much sought-after, long-stay, winter-visitor from the 'better classes', who did so much for the prosperity of towns like Bournemouth and Torquay. *The Illustrated Guide to Lyme*, on the other hand, described its climate as relaxing, but hastened to add that, whereas in some places the air was saturated with moisture, 'It is not so at Lyme where the air feels less enervating and delicate constitutions feel their respiratory powers much relieved'.³ Bognor, meanwhile, could smugly claim the ideal 'Goldilocks' compromise - 'peculiarly fitted for the invalid - equally removed from the chilling influence of the northern, and the enervating warmth of the southern, winds'.⁴

Nor could a resort do much about its geographical position or its topography. If it were situated on a remote headland, slow to be reached by what Geoffrey Best called the 'iron fingers' of the railway, then it had to make the most of the fact that the less accessible it was, the more exclusive it remained.⁵ A pre-railway guide to Cromer stated that, 'The undisturbed quiet has rendered it a paradise for the clergy and old ladies whose never failing theme of mutual congratulation is the difficult access, which preserves them from being overrun with excursionists'.⁶ Rowland Brown, in extolling the *Beauties of Lyme Regis*, on the other hand, referred to the time, when it would have taken 'as many days, subjected to every species of fatigue and delay, as it will now take hours to accomplish the journey from the metropolis. Such is the complete change wrought by the wonder working locomotive'.⁷ Promoters of resorts were no less astute in their marketing then, than are their counterparts today. Pimlott wrote, 'Nature pre-disposed; man disposed'.⁸ It was what man did with the materials over which he did have mastery, that was important.

It was not unusual for a budding watering-place to claim to be fashionable; indeed most would have liked to be considered so. Fashion, however, was in the eye of the beholder and what might have regarded as fashionable in Southport, Swanage or Scarborough would have been derided as such in Bath or the capital. For example, a report in the *Eastbourne Chronicle* of 27 February 1875 referred to the undesirability of building a fever hospital at the fashionable watering-place of Eastbourne, but in the same issue an article 'Opinions of Eastbourne' in the *Queen* was quoted, in which the writer opined that there was not much society in the way of balls and dinner parties, but there were friendly visitors among the residents ...'decidedly not fashionable, unless for six to eight weeks in the season when the residents go away and let their homes'.⁹

Cannadine says that 'the town [Eastbourne] never acquired that reputation for raffish grandeur which Brighton kept until the twentieth century'.¹⁰ Brighton had succeeded Bath as the provincial capital of social life and, as E.W. Gilbert says, 'was large enough to absorb the new elements who crowded in and yet able to retain its aristocratic patrons'.¹¹ The season became shorter and moved from summer to autumn and winter, but, as late as Edwardian times, Brighton enjoyed 'a St Martin's summer as the fashionable resort of a social order that was to pass away in the two wars of the next forty years'.¹²

No other resort was ever able quite to match Brighton, but amongst those which were truly, for a short time, the venue for the fashionable of society was Westgate - the presence of the Weigalls, the Mitfords and the Orchardsons, the extended visits of the royal children and of such nobility as the Dukes of Newcastle and Norfolk, the Earl of Tyrone and the Marquis and Marchioness of Waterford, the popularity of the Beach House Hotel with Sarah Bernhardt and her friends and the fact that Westgate was in the vanguard of architectural fashion by popularising the 'Queen Anne' style, almost as soon as it appeared in the streets of Chelsea, can all be used as evidence.

It is the very nature of fashion that it is short-lived, as can be seen today - this year the 'jet-set' may head for the Seychelles, next year for the Maldives; certain restaurateurs must live in dread of the changing wind of the latest trends. It was ever thus - the only difference is that now dictionary definitions no longer refer to 'conforming with upper-class society'.¹³ Anthony Hern writes, 'As early as 1850, along the English coastline, the aristocracy was in full retreat from the advancing waves of the Victorian middle class'; Sarah Howell says that, 'By the second half of the nineteenth-century, the English seaside resorts had become so popular with everyone else that they had scarcely any attraction left for people in high society'.¹⁴ Westgate, which did not exist until 1865, was indeed fortunate, therefore, to have been deemed worthy of the attention of such people at all. Its ability to 'keep itself to itself' and provide both security and privacy must have stood it in good stead. Such assets, however, made it easy for it eventually to become 'something of a prig; [where] the Bohemian would probably perish of suffocation in its social atmosphere'.¹⁵

It would certainly not have appealed to the new leaders of fashion, the Prince of Wales and the 'Marlborough set', who, spending their whole year on a round of pleasure, found the German spas and the sophisticated Continental resorts more to their taste - in 1890 sixty members of European Royal families holidayed at Cannes.¹⁶ In Britain, the patronage of the Prince could put a resort on the map for a short time, as can be seen at Cromer, where he became patron of the Royal Cromer Golf Club, established by his friend Lord Suffield, and at Cowes where regatta-week became one of the great social functions.¹⁷ 'Where royalty went, the aristocracy inevitably followed', opined Hern.¹⁸ Elsewhere, English resorts became regarded by the truly élite as suitable only for children.

Westgate, however, was not just a fashionable watering-place. It had developed from the start as a London satellite, a little part of the capital, dropped, as it were, between the sleepy, agricultural village of Birchington and the noisy, vulgar resort of Margate. The ease of its residents with the London scene is evident - if some blot on the idyllic landscape seemed about to appear, they went straight to the top to plead or cajole. In 1885 the Rev. Lyne did not hesitate to go to town to discuss, with no less a person than the Secretary to the Department of Education of the Privy Council himself, the seemingly preposterous suggestion of a Board School in Westgate; in 1912 the Rev. Bull made his way to Whitehall to discuss with the Education Department the problems of extending St Saviour's School (see chapter seven); in 1889 the Local Government Board was approached secretly and directly by a small group of residents, with a view to obtaining a Local Government District of Westgate; in 1918 a deputation from the Parish Council went to the Strand to voice its protests to Coutts' concerning a proposed twenty-five per-cent increase in water charges; in 1934 the Minister of Health was bombarded with correspondence about the impending Armageddon of amalgamation with Margate.

Local authorities were treated with disdain. L.J. Bartley wrote that 'the almost exclusive growth of Bexhill as a seaside resort diminished its interests in the hinterland and county generally...new residents had no affinity with rural Sussex'.¹⁹ That Westgate residents had no affinity with rural Kent is well illustrated by the attitude of their Guardians in the dispute in 1903 over the administration of the poor rate.

The judgment of the editor of the first guide to Westgate was that it was a remarkable town - 'It is there in Thanet, but in many respects it is not of Thanet'.²⁰ The hopes of those present at the opening of the Westgate railway station that Margate would benefit from links with its new neighbour had soon been dashed; the evidence of those who spoke before the House of Commons' Committee in 1882 made it clear that they wished to have as little to do with Margate as possible.²¹ There is no doubt that Westgatonians regarded themselves as vastly superior to their neighbours - brash, noisy traders and cheap-entertainment purveyors on the one hand and straw-chewing country bumpkins on the other. They did not simply think it, they loudly proclaimed it.

F.M.L.Thompson says that the upper-middle-class wanted sufficient wealth to gratify an ambition to live in the country in style, while most likely remaining in business or professional life. They might meet the local gentry on the hunting field, 'but it did nothing to narrow the social gulf between new wealth and old landed-society'.²² When, for example, Westgatonians became involved with the Thanet Harriers they changed the image - few local farmers would have been able (or have wished) to match the hunt-breakfast provided in 1895 by the new Westgate Master, the recently-arrived Charles Percival, who served his one hundred and forty guests with such delicacies as roast and spiced beef, roast chicken, raised pies, hams and paté de fois gras and champagne in a marquee on his lawn.²³

In their fulfilment of their roles in local government, their high-handed behaviour and arrogant attitude cannot have endeared them to their neighbours, especially the minor gentry, who had held their estates for generations. Their frequent demands for Westgate to be granted urban status (see chapter two) were reasonable. I have been unable to find any resort of comparable size which was denied it under the 1894 Local Government Act. Its rateable value was greater than many larger developments, because of the size and value of the properties. Yet the County Council, advised by its Parliamentary Committee (whose Minutes are unhelpful) repeatedly stated that there was no *prima facie* case for granting it. There seems just a hint of vindictiveness in these decisions - a way of keeping those upstart incomers in their place. The result was that Westgate was indeed unique in the area of local government, increasingly relying on an oligarchy of articulate residents, who had their own agenda, to decide its future, at a time when local authorities were finding the balance of power, in even the most aristocratic resorts, moving in their favour.

It is not possible to fix a date when Westgate ceased to be fashionable - in 1890 the Duchess of Atholl, Lady Murray, Lady Chetwode and Lady Fitzmaurice were guests at St Mildred's Hotel; the Duke of Norfolk took Turret Court; the Leopold de Rothschilds were at Sea Grange; Lord and Lady Grantley at Sussex Gardens.²⁴ A decade later, when the Westgate population had reached a mere 2738, summer visitors included the Countess of Carnarvon, Lord Porchester and suite, the Comte and Comtesse de Villiers, the Earl and Countess of Faversham, the Dowager Marchioness of Londonderry, Lord Mostyn and the Comte de Monseau.²⁵ Cannadine reports that in 1902 the Visitors' lists for Eastbourne, (1901 population 43,344) included only twelve titles.²⁶ Westgate was obviously still benefiting from those who considered small to be beautiful.

Yet when sales of the mansions and marine residences had taken place in the 1890s, few found new private owners. Most changed their use; at the same time the number of land sales fell steadily (see chapter one). The second phase of Westgate's history had, in fact, imperceptibly begun and the 'fashionable watering-place and London satellite' was giving way to an 'exclusive resort and place for schools'.

As the number of places offering accommodation increased, it is obvious that they did not all enjoy a titled or wealthy clientèle; the middle classes were gaining ground. Writing of Eastbourne, Cannadine says that it was a success 'because it collaborated with middle-class needs and aspirations' and catered for the 'middle-class demand for exclusiveness, which grew, rather than diminished, as the century advanced'.²⁷ The dictionary definition of 'exclusive' as 'desirous of excluding others' or 'catering for a privileged minority' was certainly the ethos of Westgate's articulate upper-middle-class residents. It was they who, as 'frontagers', mounted the most determined opposition to the application in 1899 by the Isle of Thanet Light Railway Electric Company for an order to construct and extend their railway along the High Road to Birchington (see chapter eight). These 'frontagers' consisted of five gentlemen, five school principals, a retired solicitor, a London doctor and two widows. It was the upper-middle classes who were most vociferous about the undesirability of large buses coming into Westgate. It was they who complained most strongly about paying road rates to the local authority, for they realised that those paid to maintain the private roads gave them the privilege of a *cordon sanitaire*. It was they who wished to withdraw Westgate from the jurisdiction of the Margate School Board. As Cannadine says, in such developments, 'like minded people wanted to live with their own kind and not be mixed with their social inferiors'.²⁸

If there is any doubt about the validity of the description of Westgate as an exclusive resort it is in relation to 'resort', rather than to 'exclusive', for it is clear that its real desire was to remain a residential estate by the sea; visitors were admitted on sufferance rather than welcomed as boosters of the local economy. It was like Hampstead which, Thompson says, never fell into the hands of local shopkeepers and tradesmen and where 'local power continued to reside in the gentlemen of independent means and their close allies the professionals'.²⁹

There were (not very strenuous) efforts by the Westgate Improvement Society or the Band Committee to introduce genteel amusement in the form of a band in the season, but the Committee was unofficial and had to be chosen by those willing to support its aims with hard cash each year and there was often opposition (see chapter eight). Like the Southport fathers who, in an article in the *Southport Visiter* in 1870, were reputed to have cast 'a contemptuous glance across the estuary to Blackpool [and] said that they would never sully the fair expanse of Southport sands with such vulgar aids to amusement', the Westgate fathers, fearful of any possible comparison with Margate, kept such entertainments at bay. It was hard on small businesses, for as the same newspaper commented, 'pleasure seekers do not visit watering-places in order to ascertain their particular standard of ultra-respectability, but for amusement and recreation'.³⁰ It is not surprising, therefore, that there were so many bankruptcies in Westgate in the period leading up to 1914 (see chapter three).

Safe in the knowledge that they had the legal backing of covenants, which they would not hesitate to invoke, the Westgate élite could also make sure that only the chosen few of the establishments offering accommodation were licensed. Keith Parry, writing of the Lancashire resorts, said that at Lytham St Anne's, 'after the building of the St Anne's Hotel, the founding fathers built no more pubs - the respectable nonconformist early residents would not need them and the visitor could find them elsewhere if he wished'.³¹ Perkin's description of Lytham, where the residents of independent means and well-to-do commuters became more powerful in the local community than the holiday traders, leaving visitors to the town 'parasitic for more exciting amenities upon Blackpool', could well have applied to Westgate, where visitors with a yearn for amusement were reliant on Margate.³²

So far then, it might be said that Westgate, by the turn of the century, was much like other exclusive resorts, especially the smaller ones, around the coast of England and Wales, where the residents had settled down into a complacent, comfortable way of life, much as at Edgbaston or Hampstead, but with the health-giving properties of the sea air. Some, like Grange over Sands, were never much more than residential estates, created especially to encourage the retired; the 1887 *Guide to Southport* commented that 'most Southportians retired after making ample competence and, in some cases, princely fortunes'.³³ Westgate had never set out to woo the invalid or the retired - indeed, as was stated in the introduction, its first residents were remarkably young and until the Second World War, St Michael's was the only convalescent home (chapter four). It was much more interested in the wealthy commuter and made much of its excellent rail links with the capital.

It is the second part of the statement 'exclusive resort and place for schools' that sets Westgate apart from the others, as it became increasingly clear from the late eighties that those who held the purse strings were the growing number of school principals, for education was an all-year-round industry. The icy blasts off the north sea, a little too bracing for the winter holiday-maker, for whom no provision was made at Westgate, were regarded as ideal for young boys and girls; by 1897 there were about four hundred and fifty of them at some twenty establishments.³⁴ In 1902 at a public meeting to discuss the proposed bandstand, William Rogers said that Westgate depended upon two crops - 'a crop of schools and a crop of visitors'.³⁵ It is interesting to note which he placed first.

It was this dominance by the schools, dealt with fully in chapter five, that was one of the most important ingredients of Westgate's claim to uniqueness, for these were not just small educational establishments of no importance of which there were many in most south coast resorts. They included schools of national reputation, whose pupils went on to the most prestigious of the public schools. Alumni of Hawtrey's and Wellington House, for example, were to be found in the top echelons of politics, administration, the foreign, colonial and armed services, the professions and the worlds of sport and entertainment.³⁶

It has not been possible to find out the reason why the Rev. Hawtrey moved his school to Westgate in 1883 or why the Rev. Bull came to Wellington House three years later. Denys Jeston, in his long taped interview, said that his father came to found Grenham House at Birchington, because the healthy environment of Thanet was recommended by top doctors. There is a possibility that the 'network' helped to popularise Westgate. The Rev. Hawtrey had been the housemaster of A.B. Mitford at Eton; the Rev. Bull had been housemaster at Wellington College, where Mitford was a member of the Board of Governors. Once one or two well-known schools had arrived, others followed, especially after the foundation in 1891 of the Association of Headmasters of Preparatory Schools in which the Rev. Bull was heavily involved (see chapter five).

There was a hierarchy of prep schools and peers were needed, for example, for inter-school matches. Jestyn says that one problem for the boys schools after the Second World War was that there were not enough of the same calibre in Thanet, when Hawtrey's, Streete Court and Doon House did not return after evacuation. Whatever the reason for their coming, the fact remains that there were five highly successful boys' prep schools in Westgate before the First World War, four of which were still there in 1939 - Tormore, formerly Penrhyn Lodge, had outgrown its premises and removed to Deal. The best of the girls' schools, also had good reputations with some of their pupils going on to university - Jean Burton-Brown, pupil of St Margaret's in the 1920s, broke into the male-dominated medical profession to become a Fellow of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

In order to accommodate the wishes of the schools, Westgate's holiday season lasted little more than six weeks, which became a matter of growing concern amongst the traders and led to open discontent by the 1930s (see chapter two). No doubt some visitors came at other times, but, as Gerard Young says in his *History of Bognor Regis*, 'children *en masse* are not always appealing' and the frequent sight of even well-behaved crocodiles of children walking to their playing fields would probably soon have palled.³⁷ It was difficult for the traders, who numerically were actually losing ground in the Parish Council in the 1930s. [Appendix 4] As at Bognor, 'it was difficult to decide whose claims were the most important'.³⁸

Whether the school principals would have carried out their threats to leave Westgate if amalgamation took place is difficult to assess, as war broke out within four years of the event and it was obviously not logistically possible to re-locate a school overnight. What is clear is that it was the schoolmasters who were in the vanguard of the opposition. Ironically, their very presence in such strength may have affected the decision of the Minister of Health, for it was his official who designated Westgate as a 'place for schools' (see chapter two) and it was this unofficial title that contributed in so great a part to the uniqueness of Westgate.

It remains for me to try to answer Harold Perkin's question of why some resorts remained exclusive and some did not, and in particular how it was that Westgate was able to maintain so high a 'social tone', when it was so close to Margate, which had rapacious eyes on it from its inception. Perkin says that it is necessary to go back 'a surprisingly long way, to the origins of each resort, the original distribution of the land and the terms and conditions under which it was sold or leased'.³⁹ Despite the fact that there are exceptions to the rule that a unified system of landownership resulted in a higher 'social tone' and despite the arguments that there are other factors of equal importance, it does appear that landownership played a very great part in insuring Westgate's exclusivity. As long as the Hospital Governors farmed their two hundred acres and did not release them for building, Margate could not follow the historic wish to move west and an effective barrier existed between it and Westgate.

The first developers, Westgate's founding fathers, had carefully considered the type of development they wished to create and insured its future with restrictive covenants, which even today could be enforced, although Westgate did not conform to the accepted belief that leasehold was the preferred option. As John Walton opined, 'Westgate is a reminder that the freehold system was not incompatible with a very high 'social tone' indeed'.⁴⁰ As has been stated in the introduction, it was fortunate for Westgate that when it was taken into possession by its mortgagees, they were not interested primarily in maximising profit, but in maintaining prestige. Therefore, there was no likelihood that Westgate would go the same way as resorts like Swanage, Bognor or Clacton, where quick sales at low prices became necessary when financial disaster struck.

There is no doubt that the careful management of the Westgate Estate, which was in the hands of one firm for almost half a century, was of prime importance in its development. Cannadine says that,

Local agents remained men of weight and influence in the community. The formal evidence of their relationship with corporations and constituency associations, as revealed in minute books, correspondence and local newspapers, says little of the influence which men might still yield on behalf of the estate they served, by telephone calls, informal meetings and off-the-record conversations.⁴¹

The Westgate Estate papers at Coutts' have many pencilled memoranda, cryptic notes and reports which were obviously never intended for the public gaze and which reveal how well William Rogers served the partners, as their ears and eyes in Westgate, insuring that nothing was allowed which would in any way be detrimental to the bank's interests. He was well-respected in Westgate also, where he retired in 1905 to become a full-time resident and maintain his business interests. [Plates 92 and 93]



PLATE 92. The Estate Office immediately to the west of the station was Corbett's office. Davis called it the Manor Estate Office. Herbert Rogers was the first agent for Coutts', but it was his brother William who cared for their interests for almost half a century and a branch of his firm of Rogers, Chapman and Thomas was set up in this office in Westgate.



PLATE 93. The window in the north aisle of St Saviour's Church installed in memory of Captain Leonard Rogers of the Northumberland Fusiliers who was killed at Arras in 1917. The brass plaque also commemorates William and Ann Rogers.

The inter-war years were vital in the history of a resort, when it appeared that a lowering of standards was inevitable if it were to survive. Westgate was, therefore, indeed fortunate in that the residue of the Estate was purchased in 1919 by Arthur Read. Although by that time he could almost certainly claim to be a Westgatonian, having lived there for close on half a century, and although he had risen from carpenter's apprentice to Master Builder, he was in trade.⁴² There is no doubt that the Westgate élite looked down their elegant noses and were appalled at what had happened - little matter that no one else had come forward to buy the Estate. There is almost a studied insult in the way that Coutts' solicitors in their correspondence with Read always addressed him as Mr, instead of their customary 'esquire' for the non-titled.⁴³ Read chose to maintain the high standards of the early development - he was not tempted to create 'little boxes' in dreary ribbons along the main roads. Instead he chose to retain and upgrade the golf course, the Tennis Courts and Cricket Grounds and to lease out the farmland for cultivation. When Mr Heatherington opined in 1934 that Westgate and Birchington were only separated by the golf course, which would no doubt soon be built upon, he was wrong.⁴⁴ Today it is rumoured that Read's son, Ivor, has safeguarded the future of the links, ensuring that they remain an open space in perpetuity. In addition he has maintained Westgate's best 'Queen Anne', including Waterside, of which he is especially proud, as near as possible in their original condition.

Gerard Young said when Bognor's future was in question, that 'If [it] had been wealthy and capable of attracting capital, a strong influencing mind would have decided the question, a Continental type spa or an entertainment centre such as Southend or Littlehampton'.⁴⁵ Throughout its short history, there was in Westgate a group of strong, like-minded people as determined as the estate proprietors to keep Westgate exclusive. Aided by Westgate's topography which limited spatial growth, they succeeded between them in maintaining a high 'social tone' until the outbreak of the Second World War, long after the majority of resorts had been forced to open their arms to the new types of holiday makers or risk economic decline. It is interesting that Eastbourne, which, as late as 1938 was maintaining that it had never contemplated catering for the masses and was not likely to change a policy which had been eminently successful over a period of years, had, in fact, a declining population. Its population had decreased from 62,879 in 1921 to 58,452 in 1931.⁴⁶

In conclusion, I submit the claim that the little town of Westgate on Sea in North Thanet was a unique example of late-Victorian urban development - 'fashionable watering-place and London satellite, exclusive resort and a place for schools' - and, as such, is worthy of close examination and in-depth study, not only because of what is revealed about Westgate, but also because of what is revealed about the social order in a certain section of society and about the peculiarly English phenomenon of the seaside resort.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Perkin, 'The "Social Tone" of Victorian Seaside Resorts in the North West', p.182.
 2 *Walton and Clacton Gazette*, 1 September 1880, p. 2.
 3 *Illustrated Guide to Lyme and Neighbourhood* (Lyme, 1902), p. 30.
 4 Phillips, *Guide to Bognor* (Petworth, 1838), p. 6.
 5 Best, *Mid- Victorian Britain* , p. 205.
 6 Goodwyn, *Cromer Past*, p. 26.
 7 Rowland Brown, *The Beauties of Lyme Regis* (London and Lyme, 1857), p. 54.
 8 Pimlott, *Englishman's Holiday*, p. 111.
 9 *Eastbourne Chronicle*, 27 February 1875, pages un-numbered.
 10 Cannadine, *Lords and Landlords* , p. 361.
 11 Gilbert, *Brighton*, p. 176.
 12 *Ibid.*, p. 215.
 13 *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (London, 1911, 3rd ed., reprint 1942);
 Collins *New Concise English Dictionary* (London and Glasgow, 1982).
 14 Hern, *Seaside Holiday*, p. 19; Howell, *The Seaside*, p. 145.
 15 Arthur Montefiore, 'Isle of Thanet Rambler', p. 29.
 16 Howell, *The Seaside*, p. 149.
 17 Reid, 'Cromer and Sheringham', p. 2.
 18 Hern, *The Seaside Holiday*, p. 19.
 19 Bartley, *The Story of Bexhill*, p. 57.
 20 Dudley Clark, 'Homeland Guide' (1908), p.7.
 21 H.L.R.O., Evidence, H.C., 1882, vol. 72, Westgate and SE Junction Railway Bill.
 22 Thompson, *Respectable Society*, p. 164.
 23 *K.G.*, 9 November 1895, p. 5.
 24 *K.G.*, Visitors' lists, 7 June to 9 August 1890, p. 2.
 25 *K.G.*, Visitors' lists, 30 June to 28 July 1900, p. 2.
 26 Cannadine, *Lords and Landlords*, p. 364.
 27 *Ibid.*, p. 361.
 28 *Ibid.*, p. 400.
 29 Thompson, *Hampstead*, p. 396.
 30 John Liddle, 'Southport', *Patricians, Power and Politics in Nineteenth Century Towns*, David Cannadine, ed., (Leicester, 1982), p. 152.
 31 Keith Parry, *Resorts of the Lancashire Coast* (Newton Abbot and London, 1983),
 p. 77.
 32 Perkin, 'Victorian Seaside Resorts of the North West', p. 188.

- 33 Stephenson, *Guide to Southport*, 2nd edn (1887), p. 91.
- 34 Coutts' MSS, Box 1564, Bundle 471/58, Local Enquiry before the Board of Trade
re: Electric Light, report 20 April 1898.
- 35 *K.G.*, 14 June 1902, p. 8.
- 36 Names on Wellington House War Memorial Boards (St Saviour's Church);
Wellington House Admission Registers; Sir Michael Anson, *Soldier On* (1973) and
various sources.
- 37 Young, *Bognor Regis*, p. 199.
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 Perkin, 'Victorian Seaside Resorts of the North West', p. 185.
- 40 Walton, *English Seaside Resort*, p 126.
- 41 Cannadine, *Patricians, Power and Politics*, p. 11.
- 42 Braye, *Swanage*, p. 3.
- 43 Coutts' MSS, Box 1564, Bundle 471/60, Schedule of Deeds with correspondence,
1920.
- 44 PRO HLG 43 266, County Review, report to Minister, 11 May 1934.
- 45 Young, *Bognor*, p. 199.
- 46 *I.T.G.*, 'Round the Resorts', 12 March 1938, p. 4;
Alan Stephens, *Sussex Data : Sussex Studies No 10* (University of Sussex, 1988),
p. 43, Table 23 (a).

WESTGATE ON SEA POPULATION - CENSUS RETURNS

1871	135 [approximate]*		
1881	1002 [approximate]*		
1891*	1358 [Ecclesiastical parish]	Official figures given after creation	
	1847 [Civil Parish]	of civil parish in 1894.*	
1901	2061		
	2738		
1911	3538	1341 males	2197 females
1921	5096**	1895	3201
1931	4554	1658	2896

*There are no official figures for 1871 and 1881.

Those given are arrived at by counting the numbers in each house in the parts of the parishes, out of which the civil parish of Westgate on Sea was created in 1894 by Local Government Order 31744 - Acol, Minster, St John Margate, rural.

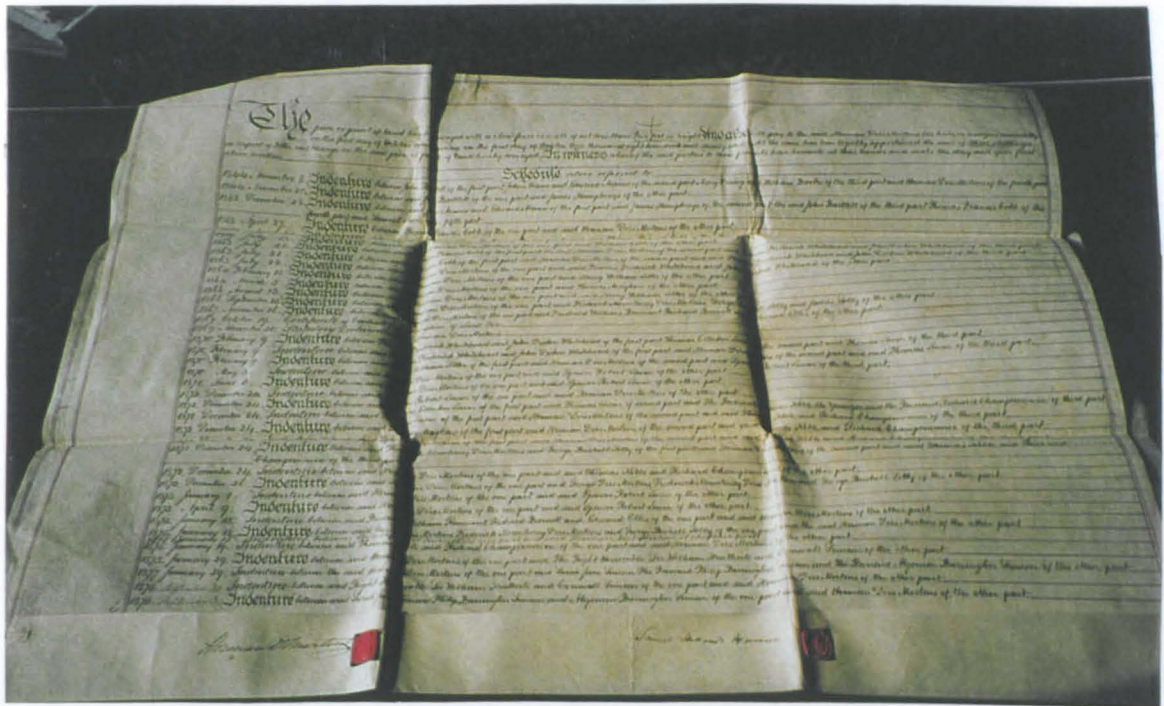
** Table 13 of the census extract for 1921 has a note that the increase was due to visitors. It was also, however, mid-term for the boarding schools.

Analysis of 1881 Census Returns in the areas which would become Westgate On Sea

Number of unoccupied houses			72	
Number of occupied houses			171	
<u>Age of heads of households</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>%</u>
Under 20	2	1.45	0	0
21-30	42	30.43	5	15.16
31-40	32	23.20	8	24.24
41-50	23	16.67	14	42.42
51-60	25	18.11	5	15.16
61-70	9	6.52	1	3.02
70+	5	3.62	0	0
TOTAL	138	100	33	100



Conveyance 4 October 1878 Herman Dirs Mertens to Samuel Hollands Munns.



These documents relating to 17 Canterbury Road Westgate, formerly part of the Street Lodge Estate, which only came to hand on 25 May 1999, provide the missing link between Herman Dirs Mertens and William Corbett in the persons of the Lewins, the firm of solicitors of Southampton Row which had financed Corbett in the development of the West Brompton Estate. Fixed to the indenture, which measures 30 ins by 22 ins, (top) by a seal is a Recital of Title from 1844 (bottom) in which their names figure frequently. Mertens' signature is at the bottom left.

APPENDIX 2(a)

Photographed by permission of Ron and Alexis Stone.

Westgate Estate Sales and Conveyances 1880 - 1921

Year	Number of sales by Messrs Parker.
1880	22
1881	16
1882	22
1883	26
	Number of conveyances by Coutts
1884	9
1885	14
1886	17
1887	5
1888	4
1889	0
1890	1
1891	2
1892	4
1893	2
1894	0
1895	1
1896	6
1897	13
1898	5
1899	19 + 8 acres of land for playing field.
1900	20 (major auction)
1901	7
1902	2
1903	3
1904	7
1905	5
1906	2
1907	2
1908	0
1909	0
1910	1
1911	0
1912	2
1913	1
1914	4
1915	3 plots and 3 shops in Station Road
1916	0
1917	2 shops in Station Road
1918	3 plots and Redcliffe Villa
1919	2 plots and 1-8 Quex Villas*
1920	21 plots and 20 houses *
	Tennis and Cricket Grounds*
1921	4 plots and 2 houses.

*After Grand Auction.

Source : Coutts' MSS, Box 1565, Bundle 471/112 and Box 1564, Bundle 471/56.

Composition of Westgate on Sea Parish Council 1895-1935.

<u>Year.</u>	<u>Gentlemen</u>	<u>Professional</u>	<u>Trade</u>	<u>Hotel</u>	<u>Artisan</u>	<u>Clerical</u>	<u>Other</u>
1895	0	3	5	1	0	0	
1896	2	4	2	1	0	0	
1898	1	4	3	1	0	0	
1899	0	4	4	1	0	0	
1901	0	3	3	1	1	1	
1904	0	3	3	1	1	1	
1907	0	4	3	1	1	0	
1910	0	4	3	1	1	0	
1913	0	5	2	1	1	0	
1916	0	5	2	1	1	0	
1919	0	4	4	0	1	0	
1922	2¶	2	3	1	1	0	
1925	3¶	3	3	0	1**	0	1§
1928	4¶	5	1	0	1	0	
1931	3¶	5	2	1	0	0	

¶ Retired from previous occupation, rather than of independent means.

** 9 Members increased to 11.

§ Housewife. Mrs Kenrick, the only woman to be elected, served for one term only

APPENDIX 4

Analysis of Census Returns for 1881 and 1891

Domestic Employment

	1881	1891
General Servants	46	73
Housemaids	28	60
Cooks	27	35
Nurses/ Nursemaids	23	27
Parlourmaids	5	16
Kitchenmaids	3	8
Scullery Maids	0	4
Ladies' maids	2	6
Laundrymaid	0	1
Housekeepers	5	7
Butlers	0	4
Footmen	1	4
Pages	2	3
Chambermaids (hotels)	0	5
Waiters	1	3
Porters	1	6
Coachmen (private)	4	6
Grooms (private)	2	4
Total	150	272

WESTGATE SCHOOLS 1874-1940

<u>Name</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>First Listed</u>	<u>Last Listed</u>	<u>Years</u>
Ethandene §	Girls	1874	1934	50
Ringslow College	Boys' prep	1877	1886	9
Dunalastair	Boys	1881	1885	4
The Elms (Ellymhurst)	Girls	1881	1906	25
Mrs Howlett	Girls	1881	1884	3
Madam Quispel	Girls	1881	1888	7
Miss Duff	Girls	1883	1897	14
St Michael's (Hawtreys)	Boys' prep	1883	1939	56
Miss Widnell	Boys' prep	1885	1901	16
Doon House §	Boys' prep	1885	1939	54
St Margaret's §	Girls	1885	1939	54
Misses Sowter	Girls	1885	1928	43
Wellington House	Boys' prep	1886	1970	84
Penryhn Lodge	Boys' prep	1889	1913	24
Streete Court	Boys' prep	1894	1939	45
The Eyrle	Girls	1897	1913	20
Cresswell House	Girls	1897	1900	3
Clevedon House	Boys	1897	1898	1
Waterside	Girls	1897	1939	42
Westgate College	Boys	1897	1907	10
Winchester House	Boys	1899	1901	2
The Briary	Boys	1900	1915	15
Lingfield	Girls	1900	1908	8
Villette House	Girls	1900	1900	
Hamilton House	N/K	1900	1900	
Dent de Lion	Boys	1903	1914	11
Ursuline Convent §	Girls	1905	1999	94
Convent des Oiseaux	Girls	1905		
Became Abbey School	Boys' R.C. High		1996	91
Worcester Park	Girls	1910	1923	13
became Ledge Point		1923	1931	8
amalgamated with Ethandene		1932	1939	7
St Jude's	Boys	1911	1915	4
Miss Martin	Girls	1920	1932	12
Comberton	Girls	1920	1923	3
Stanmore	Girls	1923	1934	11
Westgate House	P.N.E.U.	1923	1925	2
Westgate House	Boys	1928	1932	4
St Anselm's	Infants	1923	1934	9
Observatory	Boys' prep	1923	1924	1
became Flete House		1925	1934	9
Westgate Nursery School	Nursery	1923	1923	
Tareela	Girls	1924	1930	6
St Aidan's	Delicate boys	1930	1932	2
became St Alban's	Junior boys	1933	1936	3
Chartfield	Nursery	1930	1999	69
Punjab	Nursery	1930	1939	9
Kenilworth	Boys' prep	1931	1937	6
St David's	Boys' prep	1933	1934	1
St Teresa's	Girls	1935	1936	1

§ Moved from first site

Sources : 1881 and 1891 Census returns;

Kelly, *Directories* (not available for each year before 1900).

Destinations of the pupils of Wellington House School.

	<u>Those admitted 1922-29</u>	<u>Those admitted 1929-1939</u>	<u>Those admitted 1940-1944</u>	<u>Those admitted 1945 and 1946</u>
Eton	31	43	2	0
Harrow	15	6	0	1
Westminster	1	0	0	0
Winchester	9	6	0	1
Rugby	5	4	0	3
Wellington	3	1	1	2
Charterhouse	5	3	0	0
Lancing	3	0	7	3
Radley	5	17	1	3
Uppingham	2	1	0	0
Oundle	2	0	3	0
Marlborough	1	6	5	1
Stowe	10	3	0	0
Royal Navy	1	5	0	0
Abroad	4	4	1	0
Other	13	26	9	7

Analysis based on Ramsgate Library Heritage Collection, Ch/50/2,

Wellington House Admission Register. *

* Unfortunately there is only one available.

School pew rents. Rents were paid from Lady Day to Lady Day.

Year ending	Total number of sittings rented	Rented by schools	%
1885	318	85	26.73
1886	300	86	28.67
1887	258	59	22.87
1888	261	87	33.34
1889	261	64	24.52
1890	291	101	34.70
1891	277	91	32.85
1892	292	117	40.10
1893	293	129	44.02
1894	297	134	45.12
1895	304	149	49.01
1896	305	147	48.19
1897	311	144	46.30
1898	313	144	46.00
1899	297	145	48.82
1900	306	136	44.45
1901	316	138	43.67
1902	310	126	40.65
1903	310	119	38.38
1904	305	118	38.68
1905	313	118	37.69
1906	296	120	40.54

From 1907 the amount paid was recorded, but not the number of sittings rented.

Percentages are based on the nearest £.

1907	£147 12s 0d	£52 16s 0d	35.37
1908	£148 8s 0d	£52 15s 6d	35.13
1909	£151 17s 6d	£49 7s 0d	32.45
1910	£147 2s 3d	£51 13s 6d	34.69
1911	£149 0s 6d	£50 3s 6d	33.55
1912	£151 13s 0d	£62 15s 6d	41.04
1913	£146 17s 0d	£61 16s 3d	41.78
1914	£149 19s 9d	£63 11s 6d	42.28
1915	£147 8s 3d	£55 14s 0d	37.41
1916	£135 13s 6d	£57 15s 0d	42.22
1917	£124 2s 6d	£48 9s 0d	38.70
1918	£110 5s 6d	£32 16s 6d	29.09
1919	£64 19s 3d	£2 12s 6d	3.84
1920	£138 6s 3d	£65 9s 3d	47.10
1921	£156 13s 6d	£76 6s 0d	48.71
1922	£143 11s 6	£73 11 9d	51.04
1923	£150 5s 9d	£58 5s 6d	38.60
1924	£139 11s 3d	£50 8s 0d	35.97
1925	£126 19s 6d	£46 7s 0d	36.22
1926	£133 1s 0d	£54 19 0s	41.35
1927	£129 18s 0d	£58 2s 3d	44.61
1928	£123 17s 6d	£52 2s 6d	42.27
1929	£110 17s 6d	£42 5s 0d	38.19
1930	£118 9s 0d	£45 7s 6d	38.13
1931	£111 16s 9d	£38 9s 0d	34.23
1932	£102 14s 6d	£21 9s 0d	20.58
1933	£138 1s 6d	£51 9s 0d	36.96

After 1933 the recording system changed.

*** Subscriptions and Donations to National Schools. 1899 to 1900.**

J. Chapple Esq.	£2 2s 0d
Messrs Coutts	£5 5s 0d
Rev. and Mrs Storrs	£2 2s 0d
Col and Mrs Copeland	£3 3s 0d
Se & CD Railway Co.	£2 2s 0d
Col the Hon. C. Hubbard	£3 3s 0d
Sister Ethlelreda	£4 4s 0d
Mrs Stunt	£2 2s 0d
Miss Hammond	£1 1s 0d
Sir Frederick Burrows	£2 2s 0d
E.M. Hawtrey Esq.	£3 3s 0d
Miss Dundas	£1 0s 0d
Mrs Dundas	£3 3s 0d
W.B. Rogers Esq.	£1 1s 0d
The Misses Ackery	£1 1s 0d
The Rev. Birch	£2 2s 0d
Mr F.R. Bessant	£1 1s 0d
L.Armitage Esq.	£0 10s 6d
Mrs Holloway	£2 2s 0d
Miss Harrison	£1 1s 0d
G.H. Hitchin Esq.	£1 1s 0d
Mrs Allen	£0 10s 6d
The Rt Hon. Lord Forester	£2 2s 0d
Lady Ingram	£2 2s 0d
W.J. Jarrett Esq.	£3 3s 0d
H.Scott Esq.	£1 1s 0d
Mr Henry Minter	£1 1s 0d
G. Mayor Esq.	£1 1s 0d
J.Vine Milne Esq.	£1 1s 0d
G.R. Burge Esq.	£1 1s 0d
W.Gay Esq.	£2 2s 0d
Miss Etches	£5 0s 0d
Col Huddleston	£3 3s 0d
Dr Godson	£1 1s 0d
P.B. Neame Esq.	£1 1s 0d
Governors of Bridewell	£2 10s 6d
G.Chittenden Esq.	£1 1s 0d
Mrs Chittenden	£0 10s 6d
Messrs Campbell & Reece	£2 2s 0d
Tower House Co.	£1 1s 0d
Miss Spreck	£0 10s 6d
The Rev.H.Bull	£4 4s 0d
Mrs H. Bull	£1 1s 0d
Miss Poole	£0 5s 0d
Miss Hare	£1 1s 0d
H.S. Meyer Esq.	£1 1s 0d
Mr W. Minter	£1 1s 0d
Charles Knowles Esq.	£2 2s 0d
J.F. Reid Esq.	£1 1s 0d
Mr Venis	£0 10s 6d
Mrs W.J. Rogers	£2 12s 6d
W.J. Jarrett Esq.	£2 2s 0d (second donation)
Total	£94 8s 0d

Given by school heads and wives**£17 3s 0d = 18.86%**

Source : Records in St Saviour's School Box

APPENDIX 9

St Saviour's Church

Extract from the appeal leaflet sent out in June 1882

Funds are earnestly solicited towards the erection of the Permanent Church at Westgate-on-Sea. There is at present a small Iron Church only, which is totally inadequate for the wants of the place, hundreds of willing Worshipers being turned away during the summer months, owing to want of room.

The resident population of Westgate, beyond the Lodging House Keepers and tradesmen is very small and quite unable to meet the cost of such an edifice.

It is, therefore, found necessary to make an Appeal to the general Public for help in this good work; and the more especially so, because Westgate being noted for the remarkable salubrity of its air, is a favourite yearly resort of a large number of Visitors from all parts of England. It is, therefore, sincerely hoped that no one will turn a deaf ear to this application; and that not only those who have already derived benefit from a temporary residence at this place, but that all others who have Church interests at heart will help this work of God.

Taken from the leaflet in the Churchwardens' Box, St Saviour's Church

Christ Church Congregational Church Westgate

Extract from appeal

'Westgate-on-Sea is a rapidly rising, first-class watering-place on the Thanet coast, near to Margate. Congregational services have been conducted for some eighteen months at the Assembly Rooms...An attendance has been secured of about sixty adults in the winter and 200 in the season. A Sunday-School has been commenced which numbers sixty children and it is important that church and school accommodation should be provided as soon as possible....As the small number of persons comprising a congregation at a seaside resort varies from the small nucleus of permanent residents in winter to perhaps three times as many during the visitor season, special provision has to be made to meet this want...Add to these that of limited funds necessitating rigid economy, and the problem is by no means simple'.

The Congregational Year Book 1882-3, p. 409.

Supplied by the Dr Williams' Library

**THE FOLLOWING ARE THE TOTAL SUMS COLLECTED AND
EXPENDED ON CHURCH, SCHOOLS VICARAGE AND
PAROCHIAL WANTS MAY 1880 TO EASTER 1891**

Cost of temporary iron church	£517 4s 6d
Furniture and fittings	£137 4s 9d
Cost of Permanent Church with furniture and fittings and many items, which must be included under the head of extras	£8068 10s 8d
Gifts by parishioners such as east window, lectern, communion plate, altar hangings, frontals, font and all brass works etc at over	£820 0s 0d
Cost of organ with extras	£535 16s 0d
National School including site and playground	£1759 16s 10d
Building of Vicarage and purchase of site	£2574 6s 3d
Church expenses - 1880 to 1884	
Clerical stipends, fees, salaries, together with gifts to outside charities	£1609 0s 0d
Temporary Infants' School	
Salary to Mistress and other wants	£150 0s 0d
Expended from church offertories on church expenses, parochial wants and outside charities 1884-1891	£1062 9s 9d
Clergy stipends 1880-1891 from grants from Ecclesiastical Commissioners, pew rents, church offertories and curate's fund	£2920 15s 1d
Maintenance of National Schools 1886-89 including interest on loan	£1347 5s 11d
Expended on parochial wants, outside charities and schools 1886-91	£197 10s 1d
TOTAL	£21,690 13s 8d

Keble's Gazette, 18 April 1891, p. 2, cols f & g

**CHILDREN OF ARTISANS, TRADESMEN AND LABOURERS AT
THE TIME OF THE 1881 CENSUS**

<u>Home</u>	<u>Under 5 years</u>	<u>5-10 years</u>	<u>11-13 years</u>
Quex Park Villas	8	3	4
Hundreds Farm	3	4	2
Corbett's Cottage	2	1	0
Westgate Cottage	3	1	0
<u>Total</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>6</u>

The nearest school for those children was the Birchington National School.

Merten's Lodge	0	1	1
Doon Stables	1	0	0
Streete Cottages	9	3	2
<u>Total</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>

The nearest school for those children was St James's National School Garlinge

Princes Terrace &

Essex Road	21	16	5
Chester Road	7	5	3
<u>Total</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>8</u>

The nearest school for those children was also at Garlinge

Westbury Road	12	12	4
Station Road	16	18	11
Ethelbert Terrace	1	1	0
<u>Total</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>15</u>

Those children would have a long walk to Birchington or Garlinge

<u>Overall Total</u>	<u>83</u>	<u>65*§</u>	<u>33*</u>
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* Provision had to be made for these age groups under Forster's Act 1870.

§ Attendance was compulsory for children of this age group after Mundella's Act 1881

ST SAVIOUR'S NATIONAL SCHOOL WESTGATE ON SEA

(a) Building Account Easter 1888-Easter 1889

Note : the debt on these schools has been reduced since last year's statement by £145 and is now consequently £1050 11s 11d

'It is hoped by the strenuous efforts being made at the present time on behalf of the forthcoming Bazaar in August next that a considerable portion of this sum will be cleared off...It is earnestly hoped that no effort be as yet allowed to relax; but , on the contrary, that one and all may determinedly 'place their shoulders to the wheel' and that they may not only toil on themselves, but plead with their friends for all possible help : and so make this Bazaar, with the Blessing of God, a great success. Should this fall into the hands of any Visitors to Westgate, will they in the Name of Him who said, 'Feed my Lambs' help us on this our need towards the clearing of the above heavy sum of £1050'. **Augustus Lyne**
St Saviour's Church, Churchwardens' Box, Accounts Easter 1888-Easter 1889.

(b) 'The Westgate on Sea Schools'

These Schools, built some twenty five years ago and then known as St Saviour's Schools, supplied the needs of the parish for some years; and, when necessary, they were enlarged in the year 1894 to their present dimensions. During the past ten years, the Ecclesiastical Parish has increased from 2000 to 3000 inhabitants and the Civil Parish, which includes a part of St James's, has likewise increased. Added to this, some two years ago, the 'square foot' basis, as it is called, was altered by the Board of Education...The Managers are unanimous in thinking they will be serving the best interests of the Children and the Parish generally, by increasing the accommodation without delay...The Managers, however, feel their responsibility is too great to go further before consulting the ratepayers...For many reasons it would be unwise ever to allow the existing School Buildings to lapse to the Kent Education Committee. In many ways the children would pass out of our control : and definite Religious Instruction in the tenets of the Church would not be allowed...From every point of view, the Managers feel that a great and combined effort ought to be made to maintain the teaching of Religious Instruction as it has been imparted from the first. From the economic point of view, it will be much less expensive to meet the cost of enlargement of the existing building than to have to submit to a 'School Rate'...ratepayers would have to find a much larger sum by compulsion than they would have to meet by some form of Voluntary payment... **T.W. Mylne, Chairman on behalf of the Managers.**
Ramsgate Public Library, CES/245/ 7/2, Westgate School, Managers' Minutes, 1912,

ST SAVIOUR'S SCHOOL ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS 1900-1920

Year	Total subscribed	% subscribed by private school Principals	% value of Coutts' annual subscription of £5 5s
1900	£94 8s 0d	18.08	5.58
1901	£86 9s 6d	19.36	6.11
1902	£91 19s 6d	22.01	5.70
1903	£98 11s 6d	20.30	5.33
1904	£75 17s 6d	25.08	6.93
1905	£73 3s 0d	26.02	7.20
1906	Missing		
1907	£59 11s 0d	30.25	8.82
1908	£55 17s 6d	30.50	9.42
1909	£53 4s 0d	32.08	9.91
1910	£51 12s 6d	31.07	10.19
1911	£46 8s 6d	28.50	11.35
1912	£44 6s 6d	29.94	11.86
1913	£43 5s 6d	28.90	12.21
1914	£27 10s 6d	40.9	19.09
1915	Missing		
1916	£23 8s 0d	30.85	22.58
1917	£21 5s 0d	28.24	24.71
1918	Missing		
1919	£21 13s 6d	13.95	24.42
1920	£30 8s 0d	16.52	25
1921	£20 2s 0d	25	26.25

Percentages based on the rounding up of sums to the nearest pound.

Figures taken from St Saviour's Churchwardens' Accounts for years available by permission of the churchwardens of the day.

APPENDIX 14

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(c) Interviews

I am indebted to those who gave interviews, some of which are recorded on tape*

Joan Addison, pupil of West Bay School (1935-7)*

Alfred Bagley B.Sc, Mathematics' Master, Wellington House (1956-70)

Frank Burgess, Clerk to the Westgate on Sea Parish Council 1928-1935)*

Jean Burton-Brown F.R.C.O.G., pupil of St Margaret's Girls' School (1920s)

Denys Jeston M.A., son of the founder and headmaster of Grenham Bay Preparatory School Birchington (1901-1953), headmaster himself until 1981, also pupil of Flete House School Westgate*

Angela Newman, pupil of Waterside Girls' School (1935-39)

Ivor Read, grandson of Alfred Read who came to Westgate in 1872 to work with Alfred Lockwood.

The Sisters of the Daughters of the Congregation of Jesus who currently own Exbury House and invited me to see over it.

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