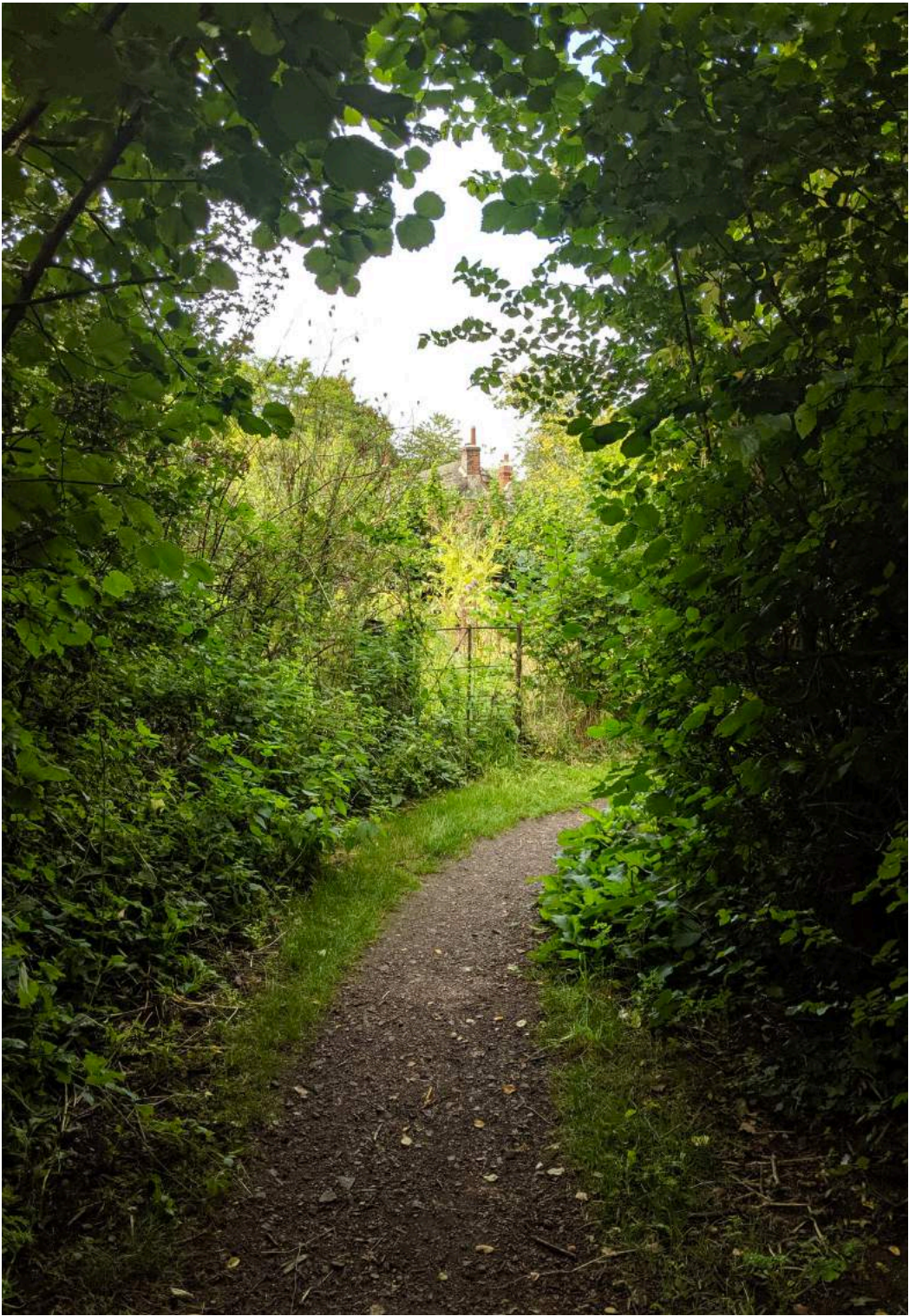


Gillingham

A Walking Trail



Gillingham Town Team
For a Greater Gillingham



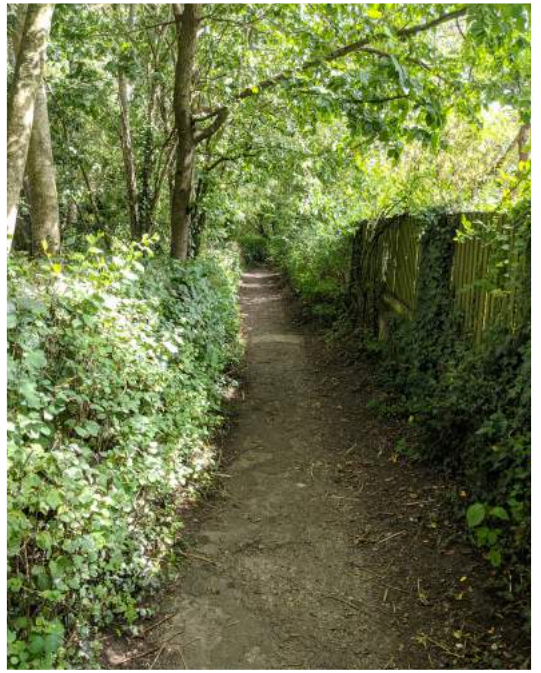
The walking tour of Gillingham brings the visitor into contact with hidden gems and unique features of the town



The trail begins in the Waitrose car park beside Gillingham Museum. The aerial photograph shows the location behind the supermarket and the inset is how the entrance to the trail looks as you approach the start.

The trail takes you along a wooded path, opposite page, which recalls the rural character of Gillingham in earlier centuries.





As you continue along the ancient pathway, you will pass two of the oldest houses in the town, the thatched cottages **Chantry Cottage**, *opposite page*, and **Chantry Ford**, left.



Having passed the cottages you will cross **Chantry Bridge**, a modern replacement for an earlier stone arched bridge.





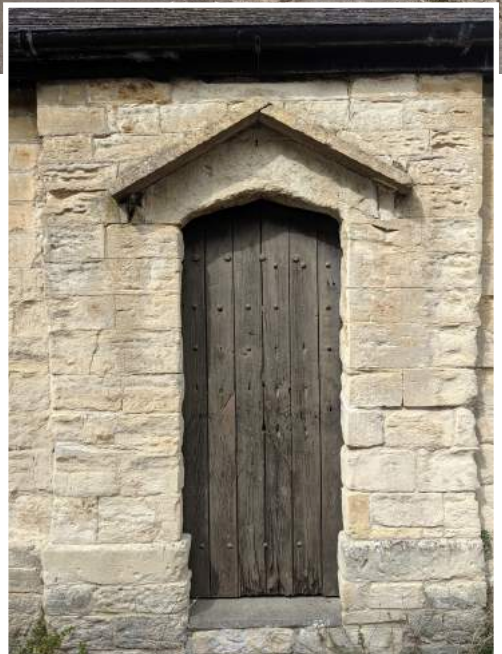
At the end of the path you will enter the Square, passing the round-cornered **Coachman's Corner**, *left*, on the junction with South Street.

As you enter the Square, behind you on the left is the **Farnfield Solicitors** building, below, which was once Gillingham's first bank, built around 1860.





Along South Street you will come to **The Old Town Lock Up**, above, Gillingham's smallest building, once known as the Blind House due to the lack of windows. It was built around 1750 and was used to detain felons until the opening of the Police Station in 1891.





Return to the Square and the house on the left, **Rorty Crankle**, was once the home of physician, Dr Theophilus Woods; his two doorbells for day and night calls are still to be seen. The inset shows the night bell in detail.



Further along on the same side of The Square is **The Slade Centre** which occupies a large Edwardian building once known as Slade & Sons. In 1904, when it was built by Mr William Slade, it was one of four department stores in the town.





The **Phoenix Inn**, *left*, just around the corner from the Square in the High Street, is one of Gillingham's oldest inns, dating from at least the sixteenth century.

Next door, further along High Street, a blue plaque identified the former **Free School**, *below*, founded in 1516. A former pupil of the school was Edward Hyde, who later became the Earl of Clarendon and minister to Charles II.

Detail of the blue plaque, *right*.





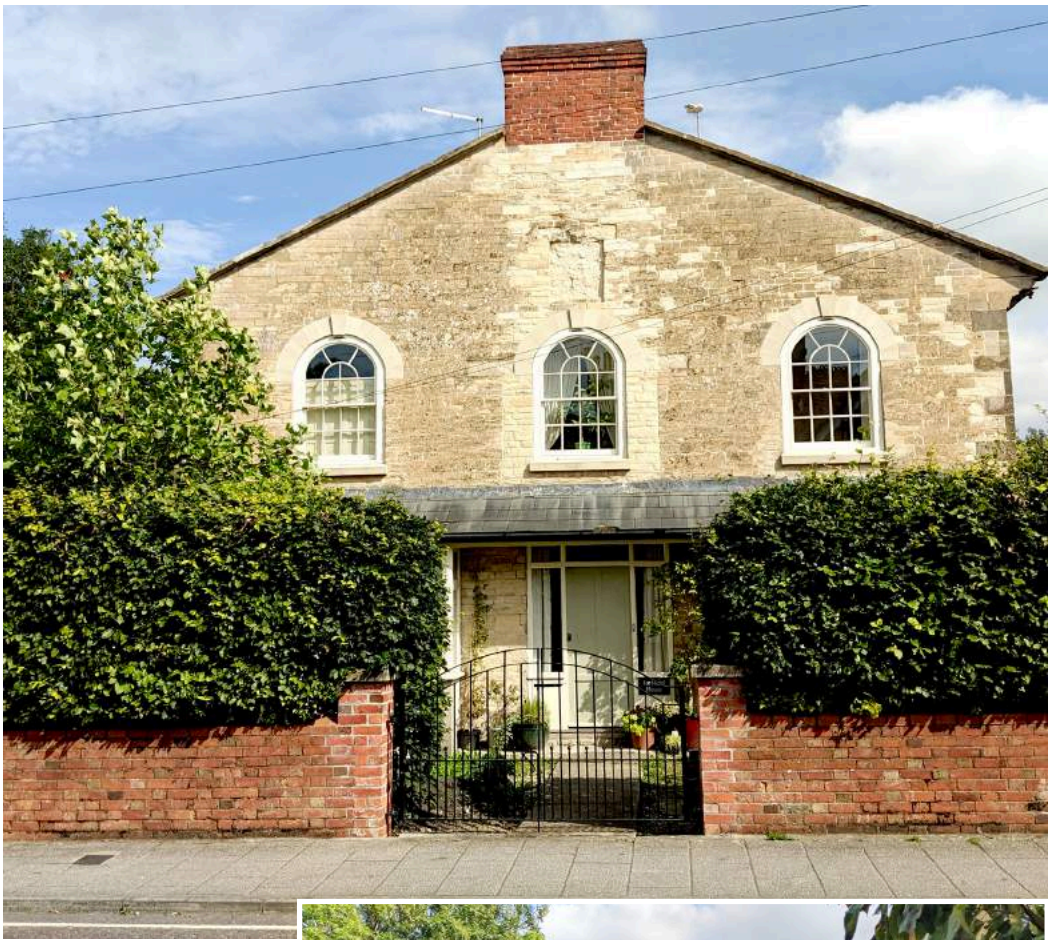
The parish church of **St Mary the Virgin** dates from the fourteenth century, although most of it was rebuilt in 1838/9. The oldest part is the chancel.



Some internal views of **St Mary the Virgin** church.



Leaving St Mary the Virgin church and turning left, the visitor enters **St Martin's Square**, part of Queen Street, *above*. Proceeding along Queen Street, you come to **Tower House**, *above*, of 1901, conspicuous by a windowed "lookout" on its roof.



Further along Queen Street, you come to **Portland House**, *above*, a converted chapel. This was the original Wesleyan Methodist church built in 1836.

The adjoining **Wesley Garden** was the burial ground, recently restored under a Millennium project.





Returning back along Queen Street, the visitor passes **Lime Tree House**, *above*, a handsome eighteenth-century house, which may be typical of many similar houses which were once found in the town. **The Barton**, *right*, adjoining Lime Tree House, was formerly used as a tailor's shop.





Opposite the church you will find the **Vicarage School Room**, once part of a range of buildings behind the Old Vicarage, altered and rebuilt in 1838. In the mid-nineteenth century it was used as a National School.



Further along Queen Street, you come to Spring Corner, *right*, where a plaque marks the site of the sinking of Gillingham's first well.



The building behind the well is **Rawson Court**, *above*, a distinctive “arts and crafts” building dating from 1883, originally built as a new vicarage and used as such until 1983.



Across the street from Rawson Court is the Red Lion, *above*, which was used from time to time as a meeting place of the manor courts.



Continue along the High Street to the Town Bridge, which crosses the Shreen Water. The parapet bears a datestone "County Bridge 1800", which is to be found on the outer(north) side of the north parapet, so is not immediately obvious. A plaque on the bridge identifies it as the scene painted by John Constable in 1823.

The nearby bus shelter, *right*, occupies a part of the wall that is depicted in the painting. Beyond the bridge is the **Wesleyan Methodist Church**, opened in 1877 to replace the Queen Street church.





Beyond the church is **Lloyd's Bank** with its frontage of classical columns. It was originally the Wilts and Dorset Bank built in 1875.





Further along High Street is **Crocker's** traditional ironmongers, *opposite page top*, which has been in continuous use since the 1880s. Turning up into School Road you pass Gillingham Primary School, *opposite page bottom*, once the Board School, opened in 1875. Next door is the **Police Station** and **Town Hall**, built in 1890 as the Magistrates Court. School Road loops back to High Street as School Lane.





On the corner of High Street and Station Road is the former **National Westminster Bank** building. This began as Stuckey's Bank in 1900.

Proceed along Station Road, cross Le Neubourg Way, and you will arrive at Gillingham **Railway Station**.



The house facing the station, *above*, was once the **South Western Hotel**, always busy and crowded with local farmers on market day.



Gillingham Station was built for the Salisbury and Yeovil Railway, which opened as far as Gillingham in 1859. The S&YR was later absorbed into the London and South Western Railway. A blue plaque commemorates the opening. The station was designed by the architect Sir William Tite, who designed many of the stations for the L&SWR.

The visitor will notice many enhancements in and around the station, thanks to the efforts by the Friends of Gillingham Station.





Leaving the station the visitor may return to Le Neubourg Way, turn left and arrive at a set of steps on your right leading down to the nearby car park and then to the Museum building on the right. Just beyond the Museum, at the rear of Waitrose, you may see where the Shreen Water and the River Stour join, *above*. In the Museum the visitor will find a wealth of unique exhibits related to the town. An example is the skeleton of a Romano-Britain dating from c. 200 A.D. In the museum a range of informative books and leaflets can be purchased. Also available is information on the history of the former royal Forest of Gillingham, well worth exploring.



Gillingham in the age of Global Warming a vision for the future

Naturally green (blessed by three river valleys) GILLINGHAM has the potential to be an exemplar for quality living combined with being planet friendly.

Gillingham is already served by the greenest form of long distance public transport, the railway.

It has the scope for even more high quality and affordable living within walking or cycling distance of the essential facilities - education, health, leisure, culture and shopping.

Town Team focuses on regenerating brown field sites in the Town Centre to supplement existing top class facilities.

Popular entertainment (live and on film) will attract casual dining facilities making the Town Centre a social hub.

Modern work places will attract cost conscious employers stemming the flow of educated talent from the Town.

Local further education will do the same.

And by keeping all this 'local' emissions caused by travel to existing far flung facilities will be reduced.

Ian Day, Chairman



Gillingham Town Team

NOTES

This walking tour of Gillingham brochure was created by the Gillingham Town Team to enhance the experience of visitors to the town by highlighting hidden gems and unique features.

Gillingham Town Team was launched in 2013 to promote the town and revitalise the High Street with a mix of community, cultural and retail activities. Working parties looked in more detail at areas like the town's appearance, event planning, promotion and enhancing the town conservation area as a destination. A High Street survey was undertaken in 2015 with local businesses, which has fed into the work of the Town Team.

To improve the town's appearance, a group was set up to focus on the heritage aspects of Gillingham, working with Historic England, the District Council (now Dorset Council), and others to look at the wider possibilities for heritage and aesthetic improvements. Public art, coherent signage, planting schemes and other aspects of the town's presentation are under consideration.

The town team would like to thank the Gillingham Local History Society and Gillingham Museum for the information on which the booklet is based.

The contact for the Town Team is Ian Day email: ian.day@3countiesproject.co.uk

*The painting detail on the front cover is from John Constable's Gillingham Bridge, Dorset
Information on Constable's connection with Gillingham can be found in the town museum*