

The History of Brompton

Although Brompton is often now referred to as ‘Old Brompton’, as a settlement its history is little more than 300 years. The name Old Brompton came about in the mid 19th century, with the arrival of the railways, and the growth of “New Brompton” around the ‘Gillingham and New Brompton’ station. Ironically, in the next few decades, the small settlement of New Brompton grew to engulf the older settlements of Brompton and Gillingham, eventually taking over the name of the latter.

Travelling back 400 years would present a completely rural landscape of hedged sheep-fields, orchards and woodland with few, if any, buildings. Earlier than this it had probably remained a rural landscape since Roman times, and before this a wilderness landscape. Prior to the Norman Conquest the story of Brompton is truly just the story of part of Chatham, but during the medieval period and beyond Gillingham begins to play a much larger part in the area’s history. Brompton’s development is also inexorably linked to the development of Chatham Dockyard and its defences.

Although in its strictest sense the village of Brompton is only a few streets, in general usage the name is often used to apply to all the land enclosed by Chatham Lines but outside the Dockyard, and now includes the 20th century army housing build just outside the southern end of the fortifications on the Brompton side of the Great Lines and parts of St Mary’s Island. As the development of the village of Brompton is so closely linked to the development of the various barracks, fortifications and the Dockyard some parts of this document stray into this larger area.

Early History

The early history of Brompton is one of rural tranquillity, at first wild woodland and open downs, later of fields and hedgerows. It is uncertain when the area first began to be used for agricultural use, but it is probable that this happened in the Roman, or more likely, Anglo-Saxon period. There are a number of old chalk pits in the area, but the date of these are uncertain. They may have been prehistoric, or could be related to lime production for the building of the Dock Yard in the 17th century.

Prehistory (to 43AD)

In prehistory it is known from local finds that Straight-tusked Mammoths and other creatures wandered the landscape, and these may well have been hunted by the early inhabitants of the area. There is almost no evidence, at present, of later prehistoric settlement or cultivation in Brompton in the Stone-, Bronze-, or Iron Age, although stone age finds from as close as St Mary's Creek and Black Lion fields shows there was human habitation close by.

Roman (43-450)

Remains of a number of Villas and other Roman buildings have been found within a few miles of Brompton, the most important being the walled city of Rochester. The only Roman discoveries within the Brompton area came during the building of Fort Amherst when the foundations of a small building were uncovered in 1782 during construction of Amherst Redoubt. In a paper Douglas suggested this had been headquarters for the commander of the Saxon Shore, although this is now claimed unlikely.

The remains of the building measured 12ft by 18ft and contained several small rooms, and remains of plaster were found on the walls. It may have had a military connection and was possibly a Roman Army outpost to provide some form of protection for the Medway crossing. A similar building was found on the far side of the river.

It is unknown if any of the land in Brompton would have been in agricultural use in the Roman era, but it seems unlikely if the nearby building was military rather than agricultural in use.

A 5th century grave found close to St Mary's Church, which may have been that of a Romano-Briton, or perhaps an early Anglo-Saxon settler. The remains of a woman were found, and alongside her were various items of jewellery and a coin of Anthemius, Emperor of the West, A.D. 467-72. A stone tablet 39" high and 19" wide depicting the Greek goddess Euphrosyne was also found near the church, although this would have arrived long before the church itself. It was originally discovered built into the Norman wall of the chapel which once stood on the site of the present porch. It has been suggested that it dates from when Greek traders travelled up the Medway, but an origin via the Roman trade routes seems more likely, or it may even have arrived with early crusaders returning from the east.

Anglo-Saxon (450-1066)

The origin of the name Brompton is uncertain, but place name studies of other Bromptons around the British Isles would suggest it is derived from the Old English (OE) "Brom tun" (the enclosure where broom grows). This field or enclosure would have almost certainly been associated with the Anglo-Saxon Settlement of Ceteham (Chatham).

Anglo-Saxon (and medieval) Chatham was not in the same geographical location as the modern town of Chatham, and was, in fact, much closer to modern Brompton. It was located around St. Mary's Church in what is now Dock Road and would have been situated the area around the church, including areas now occupied by parts of Fort Amherst, Gun Wharf and the council offices.

Parts of the Anglo-Saxon burial grounds were uncovered during the building of Fort Amherst and subsequently. The exact extent of this burial ground is unknown, but it seems to have covered much of the high ground the fort is built on and continued across the southern edge of Amherst Hill and into Kitchener Barracks. Over 100 burials, some in barrows or tumuli, have been excavated, dating from the fifth century onwards. Captain James Douglas recorded many of these in his work *Nenia Britannica* (1793). Many of the excavated grave goods have since been lost, but some remain today, primarily in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

It is likely that St Mary's Church in Dock road was built on the site of the original (probably wooden) Anglo-Saxon church of Chatham. It has been suggested that there might have been a pagan temple on the site before this, but as far as I am aware there is no physical evidence for this. In 1947 the church celebrated its millennium, but I am unable to find anything to prove its founding in 947.

The Domesday Book records two villages in the area - Chatham and Gillingham. As mentioned above, the village of Chatham was situated around St. Mary's Church, and the Brompton area probably belonged to this parish. The village of Gillingham was probably around the area of Gillingham Church (St Mary's) and Gillingham Green, extending down towards the Strand, but it may also have been located in the area now known as Grange. Domesday Book records two estates at Gillingham, so these may represent the two areas mentioned above.

It is the first entry that probably describes the Manor of Gillingham, which included Brompton. The second entry almost certainly refers to Grange. The first entry reads:

In Chatham Hundred

The same Archbishop [Lanfranc] holds Gillingham. It pays for 6 sulungs. There is land for 15 ploughs. In demesne there are 2 ploughs and 42 villeins and 16 bordars have 15 ploughs. There is a church and there are 3 slaves and there are 3 fisheries worth 42 shillings and 8 pence. There is a mill worth 15 shillings and 8 pence and there are 14 acres of meadow. There is woodland for 20 pigs. Of this manor a certain Frenchman holds land enough for one plough and there he has 2 bordars. Altogether the manor was in the time of King Edward £15 when the archbishop received it £12 and now £23. Nevertheless it pays £26 less 12 pence. What the Frenchman holds pays 40 shillings.

Baldwin (1998) suggests that the land described in the Domesday Book as being held by 'a Frenchman' was in fact held by Robert Brutin (whose familial name gave rise to Britton Farm and Britton Street in New Brompton), and that his lands were those that would later become the Manor of Westcourt. If he is correct it is possible that the medieval Manor of Westcourt may have taken over an earlier, Anglo-Saxon farmstead, a farmstead which had an enclosure where broom was grown perhaps.

Medieval (1066-1600)

Sometime after the Norman Conquest the (probably wooden) Anglo-Saxon church in Chatham was replaced with a Norman stone church, parts of which are still visible in the modern church. The Norman Church was destroyed by fire in the early 14th century, but was rebuilt later in the century. Brompton at this time was probably still only outlying fields and woodland associated with the villages of Chatham and Gillingham, and the Manor of Westcourt.

In 1540, during the reign of Henry VIII, the Royal Navy first came to the Medway and so the river below the church began to be regularly used as an anchorage. A royal dock was built on

the river edge below the church the area now known as Gun Wharf. This area is recorded as the site of the Royal Dockyard in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

It was probably at about this time that Chatham began expanding southwards (away from Brompton) down the hill and along the Brook. The low lying area adjacent to the river was generally marshland although an area was dammed to form a watermill shown on some 17th and early 18th century maps, but possibly there much earlier.

In 1202 Robert de Gillingham and his wife Margaret acquired the land around Brompton from Nicholas Fitz Joselin. Although this land is not named in the deed, when Hugh de Gillingham (Robert's son) held it "in half a knight's fee" from the Archbishop of Canterbury during the reign of Henry III (1216-72) it was known as Westcourt Manor. This manor seems to have included most of modern Brompton, the northern part of the Lines and Great lines and part of Gillingham near to the Docks and Gillingham Pier.

Adam de Gillingham then held Westcourt and in the rental of 1285 his heirs are shown holding 2 yokes of land (approximately 80 acres). Adam's son, Thomas de Gillingham was a prominent Kentish figure, and was three times member of Parliament for Rochester (in 1278, 1322 and 1323), and held Westcourt along with land in eastern Gillingham. In 1322 John Brutin held land for a knights fee, the major part of which was Westcourt. One of Adam's descendants, another Thomas, left his estates to be divided between his two daughters in 1447; Margaret and her husband, John Thorpe, inherited Westcourt whilst Isabella gave her share in eastern Gillingham the name of Eastcourt.

Hasted (1798) in his work on the History of Kent tells us:

A court baron is held for this manor, which extends over that part of this parish called Brompton, which is built on the demesne land of it. The tenants are all freeholders in free soccage tenure.

The above passage shows that Brompton was built on the demense lands of Westcourt Manor. Demense Land was all the land, not necessarily all contiguous to the manor house, that was retained by a lord for his own use - as distinguished from land "alienated" or granted to others as freehold tenants. In Brompton this land appears to have been primarily woodland, orchards and sheep-grazing land, with Westcourt Farm lying roughly in the middle of the United Services rugby ground on the Great Lines.

The location of the Manor House itself is uncertain; one location suggested by local tradition is the large red brick house at the northwest end of Wood Street known as Brompton House in the 19th century and shown on various 18th and 19th century maps and engravings. Ronald Baldwin (1998) suggests "*by tradition it was an old red brick house on the south-west side of Middle Street, in ruins by the 1920s.*" However, this building does not show up in the maps and engravings, so it may just be he slightly misidentified the location of the previously mentioned building. Studying 17th century maps shows no buildings in this location, so it seems likely this local tradition for the location of the Manor House is wrong, arising purely from the grandeur of the later building.

Oh his map in *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent: Volume 4*, Hasted (1798) shows the Manor House closer to Gillingham, near the river, whilst other 18th century maps show it somewhere in the vicinity of the sports grounds between Brompton Road and Sally Port Gardens. The exact location of the Manor House thus remains unclear, but presuming the lands at Brompton were primarily woodland (probably coppice wood), chalk pits and sheep grazing pastures, both Hasted's location and the location near the modern sports ground seem feasible. In light of the various maps surviving, the sports ground location seems the most likely, especially as it seems to have been on a fairly important crossroads.

The first record of the name Brompton being used for the area seems to be in the 1447 Survey of Gillingham, where it is spelt 'Brumpton'.

The Village of Brompton

The Dockyard Expansion (1600-1700)

It was under the late Stuart Kings that the village of Brompton began to grow, and to grow rapidly, in most part thanks to a decision of the first Stuart King. In 1622, James I, finding the single dock of Henry VIII's dockyard insufficient "*for the growing service of the navy*" moved the Dockyard north from its location just below Chatham Church to its present location. The lands on which this new dockyard were built seem to have been part of Westcourt Manor. The Old Dock (as it was probably referred to at that time) became a store and wharf for naval ordnance, later becoming known as Gun Wharf.

Hasted (1798) gives a good description of the Old Dock's new use

The guns belonging to the royal shipping in this river are deposited on this wharf in long tiers, and large pyramids of cannon-bails are laid up on it, ready for service; there is likewise a continued range of storehouses, in which are deposited the carriages of the guns, and every other kind of store, usually under the care of this office; in one of them is a small armoury of muskets, pistols, cutlasses, pikes, polaxes, and other hostile weapons arranged in proper order. This department of the ordnance is under the management of a storekeeper, who has a good house here to reside in, a clerk of the survey, and clerk of the cheque, who have each handsome salaries and separate offices to transact their business in, and two extra clerks, besides other inferior officers and labourers.

Although the Dockyard was officially moved by James I it is probable that his predecessor, Elizabeth I, had already ordered some docks built at the new location. King Charles I continued his father's work expanding the dockyard, enlarging it further and adding new buildings and "new docks for floating the ships in with the tide." After the Restoration Charles II visited the Dockyard in 1660 and viewed the Royal Sovereign, a first rate man-of-

war of one hundred guns. This same ship was famously captured by Admiral DeReuyter during the Dutch raid on the Medway in 1667.

The development of Brompton into a residential area began after this. It seems that as early as 1654 the Government was already considering dockyard defence works, for Richard Burlley reported on an area of 313 acres and one pole to be taken out of the manor of Westcourt for this purpose. At this time there were no buildings in Brompton apart from, perhaps, a teamster's yard and stables located in an old chalk pit close to the entrance to the dockyard, in recent years the site of a petrol station between the bottom of Westcourt Street and the New Cut. This teamster's yard is still shown as the only building in Brompron on maps from 1685-97. The Dockyard was further expanded in this period by William III, with the addition of more new buildings and docks.

At this time Brompton would still have presented a very rural view. Travelling to Brompton from Chatham in 1690 one would have seen a lane known as Dock Lane (it would not be known as Dock Road until well over a century later) leading north from the village of Chatham and its Church towards the new dockyard. As you approached the yard along Dock Lane towards the simple gate the long ropery buildings would be visible on the left (west) and the teamster's yard and orchard in the chalk pits to the right (east). The hills ahead, to the north-east would be crowned by a large area of woodland stretching to the north and east on the brow of the hill (the woods occupied most of the area of today's Brompton Barracks) and an occasional old chalk pit. To the east of Dock Lane hedged fields and grazing sheep stretched up and over the ridge, crossed by footpaths and tracks. On the level ground at the brow were occasional orchards and more fields, and clay quarries south of the orchards, maybe even a small brickworks. In front of the woods a road, Wood Street, led east towards Gillingham, and another (perhaps known as Garden Lane or something similar) ran parallel towards Westcourt Farm. Within only 20 years the view would be very different.

Much of the above description is based on maps, but the maps can be supplemented and supported with evidence from early deeds relating to Brompton. The area now occupied by the High Street, Middle Street and Westcourt Street frequently appears in old deeds and letters from the late 17th and early 18th centuries named as "Sheeplands". Brompton Wood is also well known from old documents as well as maps, and Wood Street sometimes seems to have been known as "Carpenter's Lane" suggesting the wood was used as a source of raw materials, perhaps for ship- and house-building. South of Wood Street and east of Sheeplands was an area of orchards known as Garden Ground, this name still appearing in deeds as late as the early 19th century. Garden Ground (sometimes called Brompton Garden) seems to have been bounded on the south by a lane or road running east towards West Court Manor/Farm, to which these orchards almost certainly belonged, and which is now known as Garden Street. The Garden Ground seems to have covered the area now occupied by Manor Street and Mansion Row across to the Inner Lines. The eastern half of this area was part of the land bought by the War Derartment in 1709 to build the Lines. To the south of Garden Ground one early 18th century deed refers to "Lomepit Bensteds" which seems to have occupied the area of the northern part of Prospect Row and the southern side of Garden Street across to about where the inner side of King's Bastion stands today. The name suggests that clay may have

been dug here for brickmaking, and it was probably the first of the Gillingham brickworks. Whether there was a brick kiln at the site is unclear, although by the first decade of the 18th century Thomas Rogers (the owner of Westcourt Manor) had a brickworks in operation just east of here. One of the most intriguing, but sadly unidentified, features appears on an early 18th century map in the area at the southern end of what would become Prospect Row (at this date it was just a hedge line), what appears to be some kind of pre-historic barrow or stone circle. Sadly there are no other records of this feature, so whether it was just the map-maker on a flight of fancy or if it represents a prehistoric monument destroyed and unrecorded during the building of Chatham Barracks or Prospect Row we shall never know.

The Building Boom (1700-1750)

The extension of the Dockyard bringing it closer to the manor and woods lessened its attraction as a residence for gentlefolk, but it greatly enhanced the value of the demense lands, which were sold out as building plots for the erection of dwellings for Dockyard officials and workers. By this time Westcourt Manor had changed hands many times, and was ripe for the land speculators. Hasted (1798) in his work on the History of Kent tells us:

WEST-COURT MANOR was sold by John Thorpe to Thomas Bradbury, who died possessed of it in the 2d year of king Henry VII. [1487] and one of his descendants passed it away to Nicholas Leveson, alias Lewson, of Whorne's-place, in Cookstone; from which name it passed by sale to Duling, of Rochester, whose daughter carried it in marriage to Mr. Stephen Alcock, and he alienated it to Cæsar, who dying without male issue, his five daughters, Alice, married to John Higgons, gent. Irene, Margaret, Mary, and Alice Cæsar, became his coheirs, and entitled to their respective shares in this manor. They in the 9th and 10th year of king William III. [1697/8] having procured an act of parliament for that purpose, alienated it to Thomas Rogers, gent. whose daughter Anna carried it in marriage to Christopher Searles, gent. of Hackslaple in Sutton-at-Hone; on whose death, in 1741, his widow became entitled to it for her life, and since her death, in 1774, their three surviving daughters, Anna wife of John Strover, of Rochester; Jane Arabella, married to George Weekley, gent. of Ware, in Hertfordshire, since deceased; and Elizabeth, wife of Joseph Poynton; are now become joint owners of this manor, and the lands belonging to it.

Anna Searle appears in many of the deeds of Brompton properties as lady of the manor, but by then her only remaining interests were the quit rents on the land which dated from the 1447 rental. The land had long since been sold and property was being divided up for building plots.

It seems that from about 1699 plots of land were being sold from the demense lands of Westcourt Manor, and the village of Brompton was born. James Fisher (1772) tells us that the first new building was the “Sun in the Wood,” a ‘place of entertainment,’ in 1695. This public house was built in ‘the late Elizabethan timber style’ and was a long low fronted hostelry situated in what is now the High Street. Presumably it got its name from being ‘The Sun’ public house situated in (by) the (Brompton) Wood. It eventually burned down and was

replaced by a new building which later became the Central Hotel. The deeds to the building, which survive in the Medway archives, show that the land was sold in April 1699 and two timber-framed dwelling houses were built on it soon after. Fisher is probably correct that these do represent the first building in Brompton, but it was not until 1704 that the two dwelling houses were converted into one and became the Sun In The Wood.

Following the 'Sun' came a whole spate of building on land now owned and sold off in plots by Thomas Rogers who had acquired Westcourt in 1697, it seems with a view to developing it as housing for dockyard workers. Early maps and deeds suggest the street plan of Brompton was carefully laid out in a grid pattern still recognisable today, with the plots then sold off for building, making Brompton an early example of a planned 'new town.' An example of one of the early 'developers' of this 'new town' was John Bigg, who in 1701 buys a parcel of land from the area known as 'sheeplands' from Thomas Rogers "to build a range of houses" located on the road known as Brompton Street in early documents, that later became the High Street, as the deed mentions the new road joining the King's Highway - presumably Wood Street. The name 'Sheeplands' appears on several other early deeds too, suggesting that much of Brompton was put to this use in the late 17th century. In 1703 John Bigg buys the "recently built Queen's Head public house" consisting of "the Queen's Head and washhouse, outhouse, yard backside, boards-and-room with the little room next and adjoining thereto." Over the next seven or eight years the rest of the High Street grew up, along with Lower Wood Street, Middle Street and Westcourt Street, as well as the beginnings of Garden Street. Most of the houses and shops at this time were probably simple timber-framed structures or simple Queen Anne style terraced cottages of brick construction.

In 1709, by an Act of Parliament, the Government compulsorily purchased the land in Westcourt which Richard Burlley had indicated in 1654, along with a part of Upberry Manor and some land in Chatham, for the building of the Dockyard defences. This sudden desire to fortify the Yard after over 50 years of inactivity seems to have been caused by the attempted landing of the Jacobite Old Pretender in Scotland in 1708, and the fear that the French might use the Jacobite cause as an excuse to invade. Thomas Rogers protested against the low price paid, claiming that he had purchased much land in the area in order to build houses for dockyard employees, considering how far away from the yard Chatham now lay. He explained that he had built housing for himself and let and sold land to other builders resulting in over 200 houses having been built in the previous 11 years (since 1698). Rogers also owned a brickfield in Brompton, probably the one on the site that later became the Sally Port and King's Bastion, which supplied the builders and he sold them at 18s. 6d. Per thousand. In many ways it could be said that Thomas Rogers was the founder of modern Brompton. It is probable that the grand house in Wood Street later known as Brompton House was the house Rogers built for himself, or perhaps his daughter Anna and her husband, Christopher Searle.

By about 1710 Brompton began its growth towards the newly purchased Government land, with Prospect Row being laid out and built over the next 50 years. Garden Street and Wood Street also began to expand westwards at this time.

As most of Westcourt Manor was sold off for the dockyard extension, defence works and housing, and it is only in the street names of Brompton that any signs of the original manor can be found; Wood Street, that ran along the edge of the woodland; Westcourt Street and Manor Street, named for the manor itself; Garden Street, named for the orchards and fruit gardens that once stood between it and Wood Street. The rural origin of the area is also reflected in the names of some of the older public houses; The Sun In The Wood, The Harrow, and The Shepherd and Shepherdess.

As the Jacobite threat receded the defence plans were shelved until 1715 when a Spanish force landed in Scotland, causing the Duke of Marlborough to order plans to be drawn up to defend Chatham. Once again, as the threat lessened, the plans were shelved. Various plans were drawn up for the dockyard defences after the land was purchased, but it was almost 50 years, when war with France began again, before the defences were finally started in earnest, and in the meantime much of the Government land (and buildings) was leased out, and other areas became treated as 'public' land by the locals. However, the existence of the reserved land constrained the growth of Brompton, keeping it very much to its original plan. An engraving of the Dockyard from around 1738 clearly shows that Brompton had already taken on much of its present form by that date, with Wood Street, the High Street, Prospect Row, River Street, Middle Street and Westcourt Street all clearly visible, although the latter seems to lead straight into the dockyard at this date. Other surviving documents show us that Brompton was also becoming a commercial centre with several new pubs and other tradesmen springing up in the village, one of the more notable being the public house "At The Sign of the Chatham Dockyard" in Middle Street.

Fortress Brompton (1750-1850)

The land around Brompton which the Government had bought in 1709 remained empty for almost half a century after it was purchased, over a century after the first plans had been drawn up. No actual defences were built until 1756, when war with France threatened again, and the possibility of French invasion led to the hasty construction of field works. The French began massing troops near the channel ports, and in response Lt. Hugh Debbieg of the Corps of Engineers was given the task of implementing a plan drawn up the year before by a Board of Ordnance architect named Col. John Desmaretz. The plan consisted of a bastioned line, with a 9m wide ditch and a 3m parapet, running from Gun Wharf below Chatham Church, following the high ground above Chatham and enclosing the village of Brompton and the Naval Dockyard before returning to the river at St. Mary's Creek, demolishing most of what remained of the old village of Chatham in the process. There were eight bastions and 4 drawbridges in the line of defence, with simple earthen ramparts and unlined ditches. The actual construction work was carried out by troops housed in nearby tented encampments. These initial fortifications were completed in 1758, and defended with 14 42-pounders, 10 9-pounders, 8 6-pounders and 2 4-pounder guns. This building was not always popular with the locals as they had become used to having the run of the open land to the east of Brompton. On 14th of June 1758 Captain George Brisac was threatened with murder if he did not restore the cricket pitch on the open area in front of the Lines.

The arrival of the dockyard defences caused an increase in the military presence in the area with the building of Chatham Barracks (now Kitchener Barracks) on the land between old Chatham Village and Brompton. Chatham Barracks appears clearly on the Chatham Lines Plan of 1756, but work did not begin on building until 1757 and continued until 1778. The barracks were constructed to house the infantry units required to man the defences in case of hostilities. Before the barracks were completed troops would have been billeted on local homeowners and inns. During the mid and late 18th century the village's military connections grew stronger with the building of Mansion Row as housing for Military Officers at about the same time as the construction of the Lines.

The building of the defences had also seen the demolition of most of the original village of Chatham around the Church, although the church remained to serve the dockyard and the ordnance wharf, along with about 20 houses and three public houses to the north, between the Church and Red Cat Lane, and a house just north of Red Cat Lane known as Hill House. This was a large house which had been bought by the Navy in 1623 (it had been rented for a few years previously) for the use of its senior officers (including Samuel Pepys, who records staying there several times) when visiting the dockyard, and which later became the Navy pay office. This clearing of old Chatham and the building of the Lines effectively cut Brompton off from its neighbouring parishes of Gillingham and Chatham, giving it its own distinct identity. From this time until the mid 19th century the small cluster of buildings north of the church, surviving from old Chatham were often (mistakenly) classified as part of Brompton even though they were firmly within the parish of Chatham. This shows that the modern tendency to include all the settlement inside the Lines but outside the Dockyard as Brompton began very soon after the Lines were built.

At the direction of Lt. General William Skinner, some improvements were made to the Lines in 1770, including their extension to a point further down St. Mary's Creek. Lt. Hugh Debbieg continued in his posting at Chatham after the initial construction, and he oversaw the revetment (lining) of the ditches and ramparts in brick and the construction of a pair of redoubts (strong-points), one at each end of the line; Townsend Redoubt at the northern end and Amherst Redoubt at the southern end. At this time the 'barrier' between Brompton and Gillingham was increased by government land purchases, extending the open zone from the old Gillingham-Chatham road known as Spray Lane across to Fox Lane (Mill Road) and what would become Marlborough Road.

The fortifications caused several changes to the topography of Brompton, cutting or re-routing old established paths and roads, notably Wood Street which now developed a drastic 'kink' in order to take it through the gate between bastions. Much of the woodland was cleared in the mid-late 18th century, and the fortifications seem to have encroached on the old brickfields. It is quite likely these same brickfields supplied many of the bricks used in the building of the Lines.

Brompton's military ties grew even stronger in 1777 when the Navy Board bought Hill House and field, an area north of Chatham Church, west of Dock Lane and south of the

Commissioners Gardens for the construction of the Royal Marines Barracks. These barracks were first occupied by His Majesty's Marine Forces on 2nd September 1779.

Brompton was plagued with many serious fires throughout its history, and the deep wells made the acquisition of water to fight them difficult. An example of this was reported in the Derby Mercury, 8 Jan 1779:

This morning about three o'clock a dreadful fire broke out at the house of Mr Wolsey of Prospect Row Brompton which entirely consumed the same and adjoining houses but by the vigilance of the shipwrights and the soldiers in barracks it was extinguished without doing any further damage though a want of water was for some time a universal complaint the wells being remarkably deep. Unhappily a Mrs Collier, sister to Mr Wolsey, Mr Wolsey's daughter and the maid servant perished in the flames. Mr Wolsey lost upwards of £800 in the ruins great part of it paper and upwards of £300 in gold in pieces of 5s 3d each. It was quite calm here during the whole morning or most probably the great part of Brompton would have been destroyed so great for some time was the scarcity of water.

1779 also saw renewed hostilities with France, and as a consequence further improvements to the defences were made. This included building casemated barracks at the northern end of the Lines and a series of defensive batteries and bastions on the high ground around Amherst Redoubt, forming Fort Amherst, the strongest part of the Lines. By 1785 it was recorded that the Chatham Lines now had 102 cannon and carronades. It was during this series of improvements that Lt. James Douglas of the Chatham Militia, a keen amateur antiquarian as well as soldier, carried out and recorded a series of excavations on important archaeological finds before the defense work destroyed them. These included opening and excavating a large number of graves belonging to Chatham's first inhabitants, the Anglo Saxons on the hilltop and a substantial Roman building near Amherst Redoubt. In 1793 Douglas published his findings in a book entitled "Nenia Britannica." After his death most of the objects he excavated here ended up in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

At this time, the building was not all military in nature. In around 1753, Wesleyan Methodism, which had gained much popularity amongst military personnel, gained a footing in Brompton when John Wesley began preaching there. He and his brother Charles both visited from time to time, and record preaching in the barracks, under the walnut trees on the Inner Lines and also in a house in Garden Street. In 1788-9 a chapel was erected in Manor Street, and was enlarged several times over the next century. It is still there today, although it is now a Catholic Church. John Wesley often preached there in the last years of his life, and in his journal he referred to it as an "elegant structure."

At this time the Wesleyan chapel was probably the only religious building in Brompton. There was no Anglican church in the Village, and the residents would have relied on the parish churches at Gillingham and Chatham for their spiritual needs.

A little less than a century after the Sun in the Wood was built, Brompton was a thriving and ever growing settlement as this description from Universal British Directory of 1790 shows:

This is a place of some trade, though not a market town. It has a fair on the 22 May. It is partly in the parish of Chatham and partly in that of Gillingham. It is situated on an eminence and commands a pleasing view of the river, in its various directions. One row of houses, in particular is called, from its agreeable situation Prospect Row. Brompton, from its vicinity to the yard has much increased of late years in population and extent. The streets are wide and clean, for, lying on a declivity; the water is soon carried off. Behind and on each side of Brompton is a tract of land called the Works on which had formally been redoubts and a line of circumvallation was in the last war thrown up, by way of security to the Dockyard: which is now under very comfortable improvements; several out works are also erected for the more essential security of that important arsenal. Near Brompton are very commodious barracks for the reception of soldiers, which are reckoned the most healthy in England. In the summer of 1778 barracks were also erected for the reception of the marines. It owes principal support to the officers residing here and at Chatham; and is much resorted to by genteel company, having balls, assemblies, etc. in abundance. There are two castles on the shore near Brompton, opposite to each other, the one at Upnor, the other called Gillingham castle. Both designed to guard two reaches of the river; besides, at a place called The Swamp, a fort now, known by the name of Birds Nest Fort, and another at Cockham Wood, all which (though they might be made of great service in times of war, in case of such another daring attempts as the Dutch made upon the Royal Navy in this river on the 22nd of June 1667) are now quite neglected. It is 30 miles from London, and adjoining Chatham.

The directory then goes on to list the principal tradesmen in Brompton, listing: 3 Doctors, 4 butchers, 4 bakers, 1 pastry cook, 12 Victuallers (pubs), 3 Tailors, 1 linen draper (seller of fine fabrics and linens), 3 Bricklayers, 1 House carpenter, 1 Plumber & Glazier, 1 Blacksmith, 2 shoe sellers, 2 shoe makers, 12 Grocers, 4 chandlers, 8 Navy Clerks, 3 Navy Pay Clerks, 3 schools, 1 Peruke maker, 2 Perfumier & Hair Dressers and a bookseller & stationer. This list shows that Brompton was well provided with a wide variety of commercial premises, probably making it a more important commercial centre than Gillingham at this time.

In 1793, soon after the Wesleyan Chapel had been built, Catholic priests began to minister openly at Chatham for the first time since the Reformation, although in the days when Roman Catholics were “in hiding” prayers must have been said in secret there for there were many Catholics in the Navy. In 1798 a Roman Catholic chapel was built in Westcourt Street, making Brompton the oldest Roman Catholic parish formed since the Reformation. However, in those days there was still a lot of opposition to Catholicism, and often what the Catholics built during the day was pulled down by other members of the population at night! Despite this, the chapel, the first of a series of several built over the next hundred years, was eventually completed. From the new, tiny parish of Brompton much apostolic work was done over the next hundred years, leading to the founding of new Catholic Churches at Sheerness, Chatham and Gillingham.

Hasted (1798) describes Brompton as part of his entry for the parish of Chatham:

and further on, the Royal Dock, above which, on the chalk hill, lies the village of Brompton, situated partly in this parish, and partly in that of Gillingham, consisting of about four hundred houses, most of which have been erected within the memory of persons now living, and from its pleasantness and near situation to the dock-yard, is continually increasing. Near it are the barracks for the soldiers, which are surrounded by extensive lines of fortification, to defend the docks and stores, on any invasion of the enemy on the land side.

As invasion from France threatened again, due to Napoleon's Imperial pretensions (c.1803-12), the defences were upgraded and extended with the modification and strengthening of several redoubts and batteries in Fort Amherst on the southern side of Brompton. The Lines of fortification were also extended down to the river at Gillingham, enclosing more land for military use. An Act of Parliament in 1803 finally closed the old Chatham-Gillingham road (Spray Lane and Sly Kate's Hill) and it was probably at this time that the old Westcourt Farm (Manor), situated at the crossroads of Spray Lane and Brompton Road, was moved to its later location near the junction of Canterbury Street and Gillingham Road/Windmill Road.

Brompton Barracks was originally built for the Artillery who manned Fort Amherst and the Chatham Lines in the early 19th century, but soon became the home of the Royal Engineers and Sappers and Miners (the latter later being amalgamated with the Royal Engineers). The barracks was built on what, a century before, had been Brompton Wood. In his 'Topography,' Wright (1838) tells us:

The Artillery Barracks, which are situate in the parish of Gillingham, adjoining Brompton on the east, and for architectural elegance far surpass other establishments in the district. They were erected in 1804, form three sides of a quadrangle and are equal for the accommodation of 1,200 men, containing suitable apartments for the officers, also a handsome chapel for divine service, capable of containing about 900 troops, besides officers, their families, &c. In the rear are ranges of stables for horses. The locality is extremely healthy and pleasant, and commands a rich and extended prospect of the country around, with a view of the Thames in the distance, and the graceful meanderings of the Medway beneath. These barracks are now appropriated for the accommodation of the corps of Royal Sappers and Miners, officered by the Royal Engineers, the troops of the line, and those of the East India Company.

Military Road was a new road constructed by the Ordnance Board in c 1803-05 as part of the major refortification of Chatham and linking Chatham Lines to Fort Pitt. It was built to allow the speedy and safe movement of troops, ammunition and equipment along the length of the Lines and on to Fort Pitt. From the river in the north it ran south just behind the fortified line into Brompton Barracks and on to Wood Street. Crossing Wood Street it ran up beside Mansion Row and on up, passing Amherst Redoubt and then down behind Cornwallis Battery before passing through the gate and down the hill into Chatham. From there it turned and ran up what is now the Paddock, Military Road and Railway Street, passing through a defensible gateway at New Road. Near where Chatham Station is now it seems to have turned again for

a final time heading to Fort Pitt itself. The part of Military Road that ran through Brompton was instrumental in defining the eastern edge of the village for many years.

As well as the new Artillery Barracks and road, in 1809 a new hospital (the first of three that would be built in Brompton) was built in Military Road (now Maxwell Road), extending back towards the top of Prospect Row. Once again, Wright (1838) gives us a brief description and history:

The Ordnance Hospital (formerly known as the Artillery Hospital) is situate to the north-east of the Upper Barracks (Chatham Barracks) on an agreeable elevation. It is a brick edifice of respectable exterior, was erected in 1809, and comprises wards for 100 patients, with suitable offices and apartments for the medical attendants and servants. The open space of the quadrangle admits some beautiful views of the Medway and the Thames.

Soon after the hospital had been built for the Army, it was the Navy's turn. The Melville Hospital for Seamen and Marines, situated nearly opposite the entrance gates of the dockyard, was begun in 1827 and completed in the following year. The hospital was built, at an expense of £7,000, on the orders of William IV when he was Lord High Admiral, with room for about 340 patients. The hospital buildings comprised three main blocks joined by a colonnaded walkway; the southern block consisted of wards and stores, the centre block was officers' rooms and the northern block contained wards. Between the main blocks were 2 lower blocks containing an operating room and chapel to the north and a cookhouse and issuing room to the south. There was also a separate washhouse and dispensary on the site, along with residences for the Matron and senior medical staff.

The Royal Engineers had arrived in Brompton in 1812, and their numbers steadily grew until by about 1828 they had taken over Brompton Barracks completely. At this time a small red brick barrack block with stables was built on the corner of Garden Street and Military Road (now Mansion Row) for the Artillery officers. Almost opposite this small barracks was the Volunteer Artillery Depot, which served as a drill hall and would, about 30 years later, give the neighbouring public house its name - The Cannon.

The proximity of so many barracks and the dockyard helps to explain the abundance of public houses in the area, but they also brought with them an increase of that oldest of professions, prostitution. By 1829 the justices' clerks ordered a notice published, directed against prostitutes and collaborating alehouse-keepers, stating:

it having been represented to this sessions that there has of late taken place a great increase of open vice and immorality in the Town of Chatham and village of Brompton through the great number of women of ill fame and their associates.....ordered....that upon complaint being exhibited and due proof made before the said justices against any loose and disorderly women of any immorality lewdness or indecency committed by them such women will be punished as the law directs.

Whether this notice had any effect on said trade is not recorded!

As the Dockyard continued to expand the need for water to supply it increased and in 1832 a reservoir was built between Prospect Row and Brompton Hill. For over 50 years this remained the main water supply for the Dockyard. The reservoir did not supply water to the residents of Brompton who relied on the village's many wells for their water supply.

The mid 1830s also saw another water related development, an attempt to turn it into a Spa resort. 'Taking the Waters' and bathing were popular remedies for all kinds of ailments in the 18th and early 19th centuries, with both hot-spring spas like Bath and Tunbridge Wells and Sea-Spas or bathing resorts like Brighton. It seems that some Brompton and Gillingham entrepreneurs decided to get in on the act too. Once again, the best description that we have of this enterprise comes from Wright (1838):

An effort has for some time past been made to convert this and the neighbouring village of Gillingham into a watering-place, and when we consider the numerous advantages and attractions which these places possess for carrying out such a prospect, we shall not be surprised to find them, in due course of time, rank amongst the most celebrated watering-places in the county of Kent. Various reasons may be adduced for contemplating so favourable a result. The locality possesses interest of no ordinary character; its contiguity to the populous town of Chatham with the celebrated Dock-Yard, and extensive line of fortifications; the ancient City of Rochester, with its venerable castle and cathedral; the beautiful windings and diversified scenery of the Medway; the saline properties of its waters, so necessary an adjunct to the merits of a watering-place; the salubrity of the air; its situation on an elevated tract of land; the shortness of the distance from the metropolis, together with coach and steam facilities, all combine to make up a strong recommendation in its favour. Here the invalid, as well as the visitor in pursuit of temporary relaxation, may at pleasure mingle in the animation of the neighbouring towns, or abstract himself wholly from this scene of bustle to enjoy the more quiet attractions of the surrounding country. "To the lover of military parade and pomp," to use the words of a county journalist, "there are during the summer months frequent opportunities of gratification. Some part of the large garrison at Chatham may be seen every day engaged in the performance of military evolutions on the *Lines* (which are in immediate neighbourhood of the proposed site of the Baths), and occasionally the whole garrison is engaged in escalading or carrying on other arts of war. In the field-works of the Royal Engineers, may be contemplated all the operations practised in besieging fortified places, and usually one or two experimental mines are exploded during the period of these operations; and scarcely any summer passes without the animated scene of a sham-fight, or an attack and defence of one of the redoubts. At such times, and indeed daily, may be heard the marine band, always so highly and deservedly commended."

The Brompton and Gillingham Bathing Establishment comprises at present a FLOATING BATH, moored near Gillingham Fort, purchased in 1837, by a company of shareholders of £2 each; and which, it appears, has been so far a successful

speculation as already to yield a dividend of £10 per cent. This bath consists of ladies', gentlemen's, and children's bathing rooms; dripping, dressing, and attendants' rooms, with a railed walk all round the machine. This establishment has been highly patronized throughout the last season, the charges being moderate; and the proprietors have been encouraged to entertain a plan of extending the establishment next season.

As will have been seen in the previous paragraphs, one of our best sources for information on Brompton in the early 1800s is Wright in his *Topography* of 1838. This book also gives us a general description of the village to compare with that of the 1790 directory description half a century earlier:

Brompton is a hamlet in the parishes of Gillingham and Chatham, lathe of Aylesford. This village which is pleasantly situated on the chalk-hill, above the Royal Dock of Chatham, towards the south-east, consists of between 400 and 500 houses, most of which have been erected within the memory of persons now living; and it is continually increasing in size.

The first building erected here is believed to have been a house of public entertainment, distinguished by the sign of the 'Sun in the Wood,' which was built about the year 1695.

"The village of Brompton is principally inhabited by the artificers and others employed in the Dockyard. The entire neighbourhood is strongly fortified with the outposts connected with Chatham Lines, which were constructed for the defence of the arsenal, pursuant to an Act passed in 1758, and extended by a subsequent Act passed in 1782. It is celebrated for its fine barracks for the Royal Artillery, and the establishment of the Royal Sappers and Miners, under the command of Colonel Pasely, C.B., R.E., for initiating the officers and men in the practical duties of field fortification, sapping and mining, &c.

Brompton forms part of the Borough of Chatham, and the population is returned with that of the two parishes in which it is situate.

The impression Wright gives of Brompton is of a village that has grown rapidly in recent decades, and is, perhaps, not quite as refined or genteel as the earlier description implied. That it has become a bustling, thriving settlement is in no doubt when you compare the list of principal inhabitants and tradesmen Wright gives to those mentioned in the earlier directory. He lists: 7 Doctors/Surgeons, 2 Schools & 5 private tutors, 4 Clergymen, 1 Solicitor, 8 Bakers (one of whom was also a 'confectioner and dealer in British wines'), 6 Butchers, 8 Grocers, 3 Tea dealers, 3 Corn dealers (2 of whom were also coal merchants), 1 Fruitier, 1 General Shopkeeper, 1 Brewer, 18 Victuallers (Pubs), 3 Chemists, 2 Bootmakers, 4 Hatters/Milliners, 1 Stay-maker, 1 Tailor, 4 Drapers, 1 Hairdresser, 1 Army Outfitter, 1 Haberdasher and Hardwareman, 2 Ironmongers, 2 Builders (one of whom was also an undertaker), 2 Carpenters, 1 Leather Cutter, 2 Tallow Chandlers, 1 Timber Merchant, 1 Bricklayer, 2 Painters, 1 Plumber, 2 Furniture Dealers, 1 China Dealer, 1 Tobacconist, 3 Stationers, 1 Bookbinder, 2 booksellers, 1 Gun-maker, 2 Pawnbrokers, 1 Blacking

Manufacturer, 1 Coach Proprietor, 1 Wheelwright, 1 Livery Stables, 1 Farmer, 29 Military Officers and 50 Assorted Gentry. It seems the commercial centre of Brompton had indeed grown quickly in the previous half century.

Almost contemporary with Wright is Pigot's Directory of 1840, in which we get some more information. Within his description of 'Chatham, Brompton & Gillingham' we learn:

At a short distance from Chatham is "Melville" or the "Marine" hospital, erected in 1827-8 at an expense of £7,000; it contains apartments for the accommodation of three hundred and forty patients, who as its name implies must be attached to the navy. ... Situated a little distance NE of Chatham are the two villages of Brompton and Gillingham. The first named is a hamlet in the parish of Gillingham and lies at the extremity of the parish, on the brow of a hill that overlooks the Royal dock yard at Chatham and within the fortifications called the Lines. The inhabitants of both villages are persons principally employed on the fortifications, in the dock yard and in other avocations connected with the naval service. ... At Brompton is a place of worship for Wesleyan methodists. The parish of Gillingham contained in 1831, 6764 inhabitants.

The figure for the total inhabitants of Gillingham would have included the settlement of New Brompton and most of Old Brompton (Westcourt Street, River Row and Part of Wood Street came under Chatham's jurisdiction at this time). The figure is considerably lower than the 16,990 (505 in the part of Chatham within the jurisdiction of Rochester) inhabitants and 945 convicts (on hulks) given for Chatham.

The list of tradesmen in this directory is broadly similar to that in Wright's, showing the same kind of diversity of trades and services (although there seems to have been a sudden surge in bootmaking.) Pigot lists: 2 Surgeons, 9 Schools & Tutors, 1 Attorney, 10 Bakers, 6 Butchers, 6 Grocers, 3 Tea Dealers, 2 Corn Chandlers (1 of whom is also a coal merchant), 2 Fruitiere, 5 General Shopkeepers, 20 Pubs & Taverns, 3 Chemists, 11 Boot & Shoemakers, 5 Hatter/Milliners (one of whom is also a dressmaker), 1 Stay-maker, 1 Tailor, 3 Drapers, 2 Hairdressers, 1 Harwareman, 2 Ironmongers, 2 Carpenters, 1 Leather Seller, 2 Tallow Chandlers, 1 Timber Merchant, 2 Bricklayers, 3 Plumbers, Painters & Glaziers, 1 Cabinet Maker & Upholsterer, 1 China & Glass Dealer, 1 Tobacconist, 3 Booksellers & Stationers, 1 Bookbinder, 1 Gun-smith, 2 Pawnbrokers, 1 Blacking Maker, 1 Coach proprietor, 1 Wheelwright, 1 Blacksmith, 1 Brazier & Tin Plate Worker, 1 Eating House, 3 Insurance Agents, and 1 Toy Dealer.

An indication about how important and prosperous Brompton had become by the early 19th century can be found in Leeds (1906). In his section on High Constables of Gillingham he records the memories James Boyer Steadman, High Constable of Gillingham in 1852-3, concerning High Constables Mr Steadman remembered from his youth. Among these memories we learn:

One of the earliest High Constables that he calls to mind is Albermarle Tracey, who presided over the Court Leet in 1823-4. He was a bookseller at Old Brompton, from

which place the majority of the High Constables came at that time. New Brompton was unknown then, and Gillingham was little more than an important village. It was Old Brompton that was the centre of social life and commercial activity. In bygone days High Constable's Day was a big local event. The day's programme opened with a breakfast at the "Golden Lion," Old Brompton. Then came the business meeting at the Manor House, "Ye Old Five Bells," and in the evening a public dinner was held in Old Brompton. With the growth of what was termed "the Colony" over the Lines, it was deemed advisable to alter the programme. In place of the little groups of tradesmen and others who used to dine at the "Golden Lion," we had in later years the representative assemblies at the High Constable's banquets at the Public Hall.

From 1830 Old Brompton had a resident priest but no Anglican Church for services, the Anglicans had to go either to Chatham or Gillingham Churches. However, as mentioned earlier, there was a Wesleyan Chapel and a Roman Catholic Church in Brompton. By the mid 1840s the population of Brompton had become substantial, but the village was split between 2 parishes – Chatham and Gillingham. In 1847 the Parish of Brompton was formed out of Gillingham and Chatham Parishes. The church of The Holy Trinity, erected in 1848 at a cost of over £12,000, met entirely by the expense of the Rev. William and Miss Conway. It was a building of brick, with Bath stone dressings (one source says it was built of Kentish ragstone), to the design of Sir Gilbert Scot, RA. It was built at the corner of Garden Street and Military Road (now Maxwell Road), in the Early English style and was consecrated on 20th December 1848 by the Bishop of Rochester.

"Old Brompton" (1850-1910)

By the mid 19th century "the Colony" to the east of the Lines, known as New Brompton, was growing rapidly as this newspaper extract from the 1840s, in which the writer recalls his childhood in New Brompton, shows:

New Brompton was a long town, length but no breadth, stretching from Park Terrace [now Marlborough Road] to Steadman's Mill, including Park Place, Britton Street and Chatham Street. Eastwards from Britton Street there were cornfields as far as the eye could see... Children were warned not to wander [in Dark Lane, now Paget Street] for fear of being caught by gypsies. Dark Lane was flanked either side with tall elm trees. The East Kent Railway had not arrived and there was no Railway Street. Cottages were only on one side of the High Street from the Cricketers to Canterbury Street...

This description closely matches what is shown on Col. Mudge's map of the area from 1819. The growth was, in large part, due to the arrival of the railways and the building of a station at New Brompton. As this settlement grew ever larger, Brompton became known as "Old Brompton" to distinguish it from the new town east of the lines.

The 1850s saw the erection of several new buildings along the Military Road south of the church. School rooms were added to the Holy Trinity Church by 1851, between the church and the Garrison Hospital. The school was extended in 1856 to commemorate the end of the Crimean war and the death of Captain Hammond. Captain Hammond was an officer of the Rifle Brigade and a leading light in the creation of the Army Scripture Union while he was in Chatham.

1850s Brompton Convict Prison

1854 Garrison Church

1855/6 Queen Victoria visits Brompton four times to see troops wounded in the Crimea.

1856 Brompton Water Works

1858 Melville directory

1860 Lines declared redundant

1863 Garrison Gym Built

c.1863-6 Building of the Female Hospital near the Garrison Church.

1866 Town Planning map

1869 Creation of the Officer's Gardens

Kellys Directory Of Kent for 1882

OLD BROMPTON is an ecclesiastical parish, formed in 1847 out of the parishes of Chatham and Gillingham, adjoining Chatham on the north and north-west and Gillingham on the north and north-east; it is in the Mid division of the country, Medway union, Gillingham local board district, Rochester county court district, Chatham and Gillingham hundred, lathe of Aylesford and Rochester rural deanery, archdeaconry and diocese. The church of The Holy Trinity, erected in 1848 at the expense of the Rev. William and Miss Conway, is a building of brick, with Bath stone dressings, in the Early English style and consists of chancel, nave with clerestory, lighted by ten two-light windows, aisles separated from the nave by arcades of five bays, chantry, south porch, and a tower with spire containing a clock and 1 bell: in the chancel is a memorial window to Dr Henry Weekes, of this parish: the church will seat 1,000, 240 sittings being free. The register dates from the year 1847. The living is a vicarage, gross yearly value £300, with residence, in the gift of Hyndman's trustees and held since 1847 by the Rev. Daniel Cooke of Queens' College Cambridge, hon. Canon of Rochester (1881). There are Catholic and Wesleyan chapels.

In 1889 a parish hall was built next to the school in memory of Canon Conway and named after him.

1892 Wesleyan Garrison Church

During the latter half of the 19th century both Gillingham and New Brompton had expanded to the point where they had merged into one large settlement, the population mostly being employed in the expanded dockyard. In 1893 Gillingham and New Brompton had raised its status by becoming an Urban District Council. In 1901, with a population larger than its neighbours Chatham, Brompton and Rochester, and after several years of debating the issue, it was decided this new town would apply for a Charter of Incorporation as a Municipal Borough. This was granted in 1903. The decision to apply for this status led to an interesting argument over the name for the new borough. After some debate the ancient name of Gillingham was chosen over the name New Brompton by only 4 votes. This change of name saw the decline of the name New Brompton and within a few decades 'Old' Brompton was once again just Brompton.

1902 Trams arrive, Westcourt Street Crash

A Decline in Fortunes (1905-60)

1905 Melville Hospital becomes Melville Barracks

1906 Sally port demolition

WWI Air-raid Military Road/Holy Trinity School, September 1917

1912/3 Brompton House burns down

1919 Holy Trinity Scandal

1921 War Memorial

1925 Conserative Club

1926/7 Sally Port Quarters built

1920s & 30s British Legion, Service Benevolent, etc Manor House in Manor street

1920s-50s Army Housing

1940s Spitfire crash in barracks, Fire at holy trinity

1950s Marine Barracks closes. Sally port guardhouse demolished. Slum clearance and move to Twydall/Wigmore. Admiralty cutting factory. Inner Lines Mansion Row Quarters built.

1951 Marine Cadets Dock Road

A Forgotten Village (1960-?)

c.1960 Demolition of Holy trinity & Wesleyan church

1960s Melville Court & Army housing on lines & upper barracks. NAAFI in Sally port.
Reservoir becomes play-park

1970s last of old high street demolished for Flaxman's court

1980s Fort Amherst sold. Flaxman's Court/High Street redevelopment

1984 Chatham Dockyard closes

1984 closing and redevelopment of Holy Trinity School & Conway Hall

1988 Trinity School Fire

1990s Conway Mews & Hawkins Close/Prospect Row Developments

2000s Chatham World Heritage bid, Flats built on Wood Street

On 6th October 2002, after almost 150 years without a name, the Garrison Church was dedicated to St Barbara at a special service. St Barbara is the Patron saint of Artillerymen and Engineers.

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An effort has for some time past been made to convert this and the neighbouring village of Gillingham into a watering-place, and when we consider the numerous advantages and attractions which these places possess for carrying out such a prospect, we shall not be surprised to find them, in due course of time, rank amongst the most celebrated watering-places in the county of Kent. Various reasons may be adduced for contemplating so favourable a result. The locality possesses interest of no ordinary character; its contiguity to the populous town of Chatham with the celebrated Dock-Yard, and extensive line of fortifications; the ancient City of Rochester, with its venerable castle and cathedral; the beautiful windings and diversified scenery of the Medway; the saline properties of its waters, so necessary an adjunct to the merits of a watering-place; the salubrity of the air; its situation on an elevated tract of land; the shortness of the distance from the metropolis, together with coach and steam facilities, all combine to make up a strong recommendation in its favour. Here the invalid, as well as the visitor in pursuit of temporary relaxation, may at pleasure mingle in the animation of the neighbouring towns, or abstract himself wholly from this scene of bustle to enjoy the more quiet attractions of the surrounding country. "To the lover of military parade and pomp," to use the words of a county journalist, "there are during the summer months frequent opportunities of gratification. Some part of the large garrison at Chatham may be seen every day engaged in the performance of military evolutions on the *Lines* (which are in immediate neighbourhood of the proposed site of the Baths), and occasionally the whole garrison is engaged in escalating or carrying on other arts of war. In the field-works of the Royal Engineers, may be contemplated all the operations practised in besieging fortified places, and usually one or two experimental mines are exploded during the period of these operations; and scarcely any summer passes without the animated scene of a sham-fight, or an attack and defence of one of the redoubts. At such times, and indeed daily, may be heard the marine band, always so highly and deservedly commended."

The Brompton and Gillingham Bathing Establishment comprises at present a FLOATING BATH, moored near Gillingham Fort, purchased in 1837, by a company of shareholders of £2 each; and which, it appears, has been so far a successful speculation as already to yield a dividend of £10 per cent. This bath consists of ladies', gentlemen's, and children's bathing rooms; dripping, dressing, and attendants' rooms, with a railed walk all round the machine. This establishment has been highly patronized throughout the last season, the charges being moderate; and the proprietors have been encouraged to entertain a plan of extending the establishment next season.

Advertisement:

THE BROMPTON AND GILLINGHAM
BATHING ESTABLISHMENT,

Consists of an elegant and convenient Floating Machine, with Warm Baths on shore.

The Water here has been ascertained, by correct analysis, to possess the same properties at High Water as that at the Nore, and to be at all times equally pure and clear, a circumstance of material importance to all who Bathe, whether it be for the improvement of their health, or in pursuit of pleasure.

This newly Established Watering Place is situated on the Banks of the Medway, about 2 miles from Rochester, and nine from Gravesend, from whence coaches, vans, and other carriages, run almost every half hour during the day, while steam-boats, and other vessels, are continually passing and repassing the Bathing Establishment, and it is in contemplation to run vans, or other vehicles, to and from Rochester, Chatham, &c., and the Baths. The Inns and Lodging Houses in the vicinity, afford ample and reasonable accommodations to the visitor and lover of pleasure; while the beautiful walks and drives amid the enchanting and pleasing scenery of the neighbourhood, the continually varying scenes of amusement and interest to be found in the military evolutions of the extensive and well disciplined Garrison of Chatham, and the great variety of public works too numerous and too important to be mentioned here, combined with the well known salubrity of the air, and the superior efficacy of the water, so admirably adapted to the Valetudinarian, and Delicate Children requiring Sea Bathing, enable the Directors of the above establishment to anticipate, with confidence, an increased share of the public patronage.

The following is the Scale of Charges:-

	s. d.		£ s. d.
Warm Bath.....	2 0	each or	1 0 0 per doz.
Superior Plunging Bath, for Ladies..	1 0	“	0 10 0 “
Plunging or Swimming Bath.....	0 6	“	0 5 0 “
Ditto for children under ten years of age...	0 4	“	0 3 0 “

N.B. – A Waterman will be in constant attendance to convey the company to and from the Bath. – Proper attendance on board for Ladies.

Directions of individuals having apartments to let may be had at the principal Inns at Brompton and Gillingham, and likewise of any of the Directors, or at the Office of the establishment.

Brompton 1838