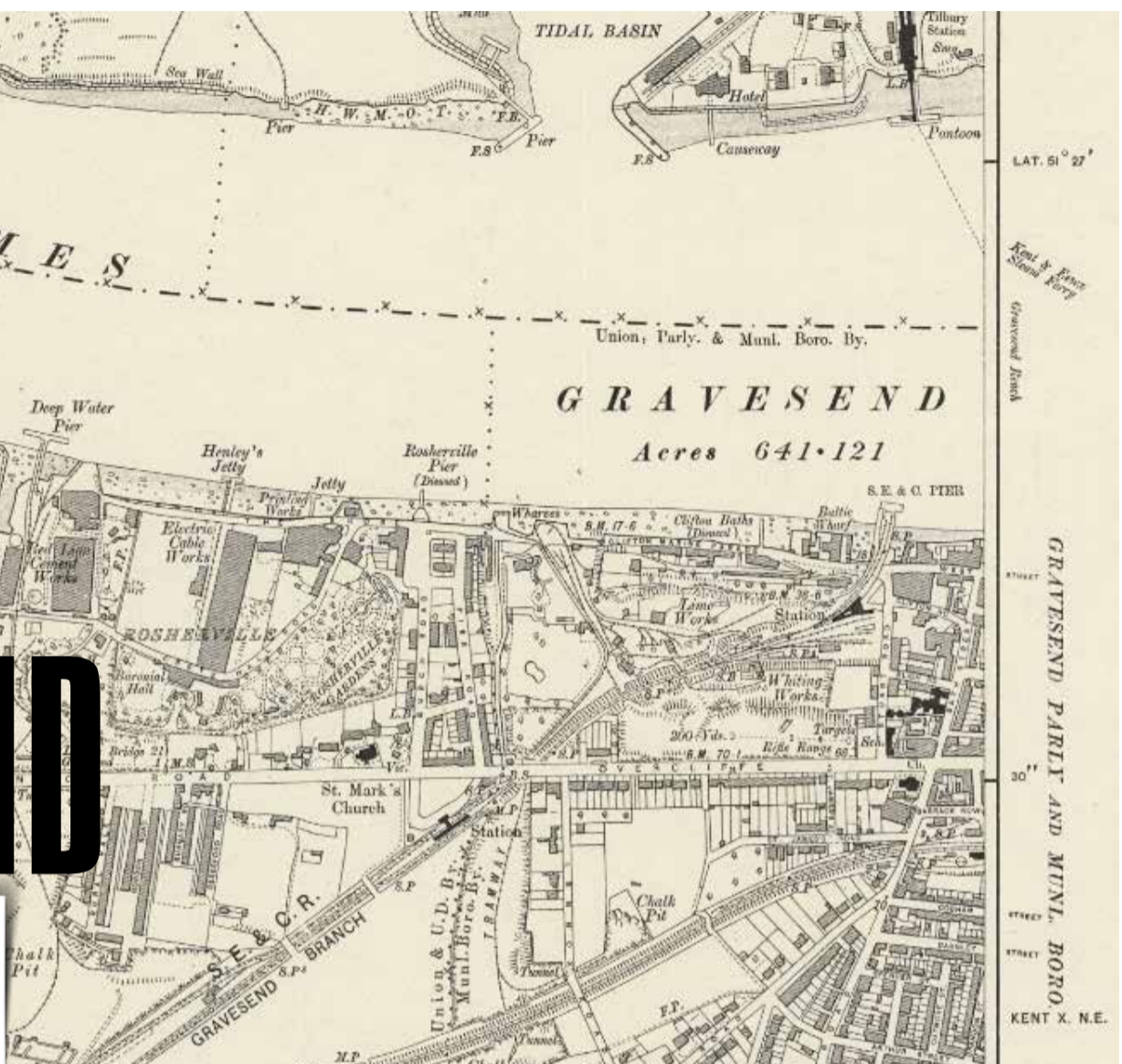


WHY GRAVESEND

? Gravesend, or Gravesend Riverside, as some posher locals call it, sits on the south side of the river Thames in Kent, opposite the busy Tilbury docks in Essex. A half-hourly Tilbury Ferry links the two sides. Thames Clipper will also soon be regularly taking folk to and from London via a more scenic route than the multiple train lines, which include the High Speed 1, reaching King's Cross St. Pancras station in 23 minutes.

Gravesend is an unpolished English gem that sits on the edge of other places. The town name, along with the name of the borough, Gravesham, have contested meanings and are possibly “a corruption of the words grafs-ham – a place ‘at the end of the grove’” (Wikipedia). The town certainly feels apart from London and distinct from all other towns in Kent – on the edge of all these places, giving it a unique personality. Gravesend is a town where innovation can thrive if the right conditions are put in place.

The architecture within Gravesend is often marvellous, with historic churches, Georgian terraces, and the oldest surviving cast iron pier in the world,



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built-in 1834. It was once a major holding point for ships from around the world awaiting border taxation before heading into London. These global connections meant a widely diverse population, with Sikhs from the Punjab to Brazilians from South America now calling the town home.

Many Sikhs came to Britain after World War Two to work in the multiple paper mills that lined the Thames until the 1980s. In 2011, the Sikh community opened one of the most impressive buildings in Gravesend, if not the whole country, the Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara, Gravesend (see page 07).

The distinct nature of the town, diverse population and location with extensive rail connections, M2 motorway and river services made Gravesend an attractive location to set up a Fourth Portal.

As was hoped, residents of Gravesend and wider Gravesham, whose interests include technology, environment, alternative culture and entrepreneurship, soon gravitated towards the Fourth Portal. They began meeting others from the borough with similar interests, stimulating conversations and ideas. Friendships are forming with new concepts emerging, collaborations are happening as ideas spark.

An important strand of the Fourth Portal is to be a central relaxed meeting point for open exchange. A location where residents, visitors, students, children, older people, entrepreneurs and those wanting to develop a creative practice can come together to swap thoughts, skills and advice – and it is working! Confidence within the town is rising, as the businesses featured opposite will attest. People outside the town are looking at Gravesend through a new lens, a place where things will happen; watch this space!

