

King's Court Lodge



This building, standing on Station Road at the corner with Buckingham Road, dates from c.1900. It was used first as a school, then later as a hospital, bank, and Freemason's lodge known as King's Court Lodge. In recent years part of it has also been the offices of the Gillingham and Shaftesbury Agricultural Society .

The frontages to both roads are much altered from their original appearance, when there were more upper floor windows and doors to the Station Road side. The main entrance (and address) was formerly in Station Road.

The building began life as a girls' school belonging to Sarah Dunn (1846-1935), who was also the owner of the Grosvenor House School in Shaftesbury. From 1905 to 1908 it became the girls' department of Gillingham Grammar School, before reverting to the ownership of Miss Dunn.

From October 1914 to March 1919 the building was used as a Red Cross Auxiliary hospital for war wounded. At its maximum use the hospital had 62 beds, and in total treated 792 patients. The hospital was extended into the building next door, where an operating theatre was set up. The Commandants were Mrs. Leatham (1914-17) and Miss S. Leatham (1917-19). The Station Road frontage has a circular blue plaque commemorating the hospital, placed there by the Gillingham Local History Society.

By 1920 part of the premises was being used as a branch office of the National Provincial Bank, at first open only on market days. The branch later moved to a new office on the corner of Station Road and the High Street.

In 1919 the building was acquired by local Freemasons as the **King's Court Masonic Lodge**. They had previously used premises behind the Phoenix Hotel. A King's Court Masonic Charities Association was established in 1956. In 1964 the premises were extended to the rear. In 1998 the Lodge

members celebrated their centenary.

From c.1980 the upper part later was occupied as the office of the Gillingham and Shaftesbury Agricultural Society. The Society moved its office to Shaftesbury in 2020.

Below: King's Court Lodge in the early 1900s when it was the school of Miss Sarah Dunn. The present-day building has fewer windows facing on to Station Road. The houses to the right, now used as shops, were known as Greystone and St. Audrie's.

