

5.4 Later Nineteenth–Earlier Twentieth Century Beaminster (1850-1945)

5.4.1 Historical Summary

Like many Dorset towns, the later 19th and early 20th century was a period of decline for Beaminster due to the dwindling of its industries and the general agricultural depression in the later 19th century. Beaminster was never served by a railway line, which helped to promote its increasing isolation and dependence on local agricultural trades and also hastened the decline in importance of its market. The market ceased sometime in the second half of the 19th century and the market house was pulled down in 1886. The population of the town fell from about 2832 in 1851 to 1915 in 1891 and by 1931 was only 1610.

The manufacture of sail-cloth and other flax and hemp products had almost died out in Beaminster in the mid 19th century. Beaminster pottery was perhaps the only significant industry in the 1850s. It produced earthenwares, tobacco pipes, flower pots, drain pipes, tiles, chimney pots and bricks (Hine 1914, 309-10). Production ceased in the 1880s. The West Surrey Central Dairy Company established a milk factory on a site between North Street and Prout Bridge in 1904, where they processed the milk to make dried powdered milk marketed under the Cow and Gate brand. A gas works was built in an old quarry at Clampits off St Mary Well Street in 1868.

State schools were established in Beaminster in the late 19th century. The Girls' Elementary School was in Hogshill Street from 1868 and the Boys' Elementary School in East Street from 1875. Beaminster Grammar School had premises in Hogshill Street, built on the site of the old pottery in 1897.



Figure 21: Late 19th century Red Lion Hotel, The Square.

5.4.2 Town Layout

The historic core of the town remained largely as it had done in the eighteenth and earlier nineteenth century. There was a number of new buildings and shops erected, but overall there were no great alterations within the central part of the town. The major changes to the town occurred largely after the First World War, when there was the beginning of middle class suburban expansion along Whitcombe Road, The Green, Newtown and Broadwindsor Road and also the first council housing estate was built at Pattle off Broadwindsor Road.

5.4.3 Later Nineteenth and Earlier Twentieth Century Town Plan Components

The main plan components of the later nineteenth and earlier twentieth century town are shown on Figure 23 and are listed below.

1. *Church.* St Mary's became the parish church of Beaminster after 1849. There was a major restoration of the building in the 1860s-70s.
2. *Market-place.* Large triangular medieval market-place. The market house was demolished in 1886, together with the town pump. The Robinson Memorial was erected in the market place in 1906 by Vincent Robinson, in memory of his sister Julia. A captured German field gun was erected in the market place in 1920 as a memorial to Lieutenant Rhodes-Moorhouse, the first airman to be awarded the Victoria Cross. The gun was removed in 1940.
3. *Historic plots.* Many of the plots probably remained largely the same as in the previous period. The former industrial uses largely ceased during this period, with most properties



Figure 22: Former Lloyd's Bank, 1 The Square, built 1872.

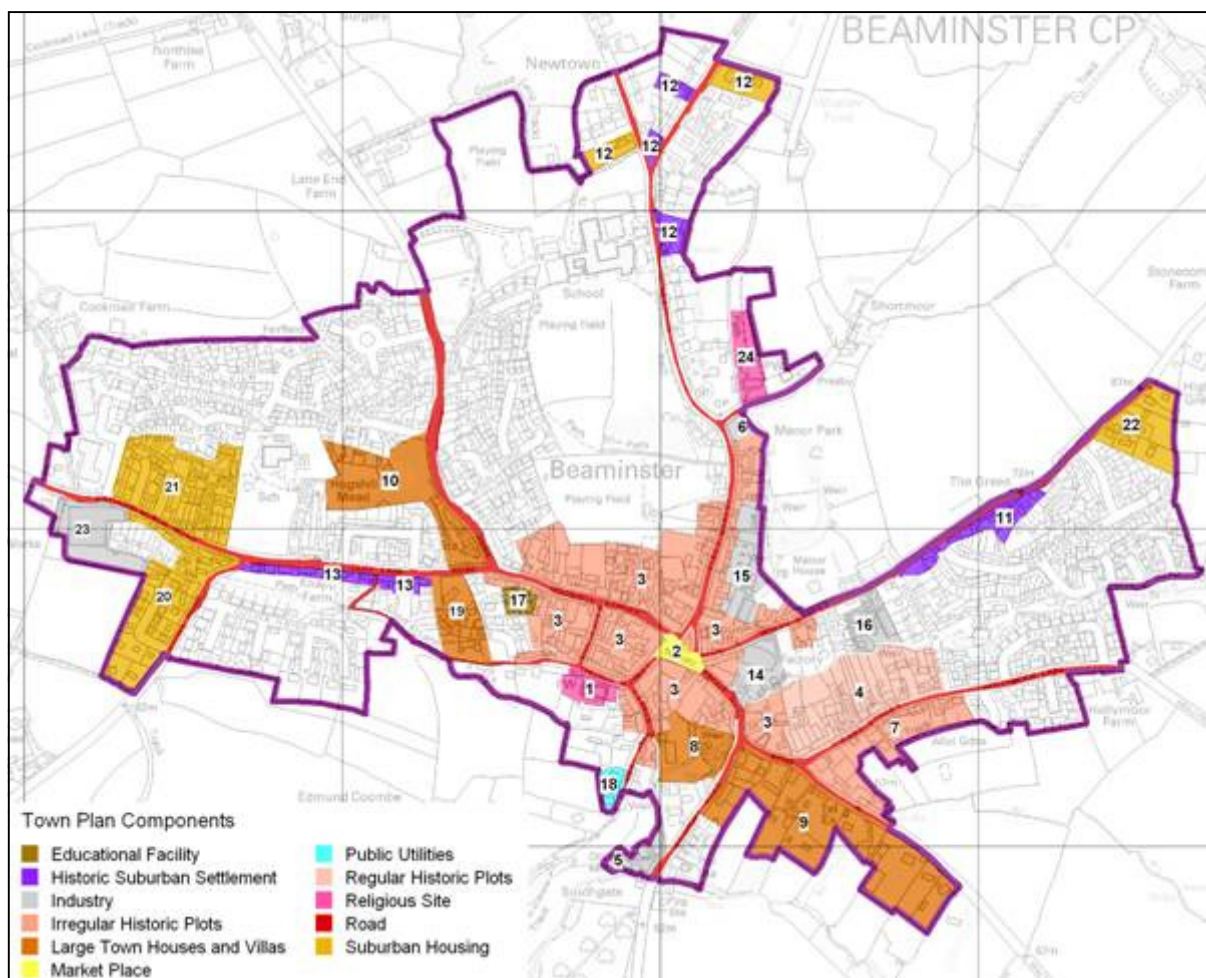


Figure 23: Beaminster Later Nineteenth and Earlier Twentieth Century Town Plan Components.

being used for domestic purposes with commercial uses close to The Square.

4. *East Street Suburb.* The suburb appears to have largely retained its medieval boundaries with few changes in this period.

5. *Beaminster Mill.* This is marked as a corn mill on the 1887 and 1902 Ordnance Survey maps.

6. *Town End.* The former fulling mills appear to

have become disused and the buildings demolished by the later 19th century.

7. *Historic Plots on south side of East Street.* There was little apparent change in the layout of the plots in this period. The Boys' Elementary School was built on the site of the former workhouse in 1875.

8. *Hams Plot.* A large 17th century house in extensive grounds, considerably altered in about 1830, remained unchanged during this



Figure 24: Former 19th century Police Station and Magistrates Court, 6 Prout Hill.



Figure 25: Beaminster Institute, built 1902.

period.

9. *Whitcombe Road*. There was a sawmill and timber yard behind the properties on the south side of Whitcombe Road in the late 19th and early 20th century. The 1920s-30s saw an expansion of suburban development along Whitcombe Road, with the construction of a small number of detached houses in fairly large grounds.

10. *The Lodge*. An early 19th century villa with large grounds remained substantially unchanged during the late 19th and early 20th century.

11. *The Green*. A suburban settlement of small cottages and plots along North Street. It included a smithy. There appears to be little change to the settlement in the late 19th and early 20th century other than the removal of the few houses that were originally on the north side of North Street.

12. *Newtown*. A small number of detached houses in relatively large grounds built in the 1920s-30s on the edge of the Newtown area.

13. *Clay Lane*. Some late 19th century buildings along the east end of Clay Lane, replacing and infilling some of previous development.

14. *Milk Factory, North Street*. West Surrey Central Dairy established a milk factory on this site in 1904.

15. *Yarn Barton*. The large sail-cloth factory of Cox and Co. closed in about 1870. The drying grounds were used as allotments.

16. *Saw Mill, North Street*. Robert Bugler started a saw mill and agricultural machinery manufacture here in 1851.

17. *Beaminster Grammar School*. School buildings constructed on site of pottery in 1897.

18. *Gas Works*. The gas works were transferred to a former quarry at Clampits off St Mary Well Street in 1860. A new gasholder was added in 1927.

19. *The Rectory*. Designed by William White and built in 1859-61 for the rector of St Mary's Church.

20. *South of Broadwindsor Road*. Some 1920s-30s detached suburban villa development.

21. *Pattle*. A council house estate, built in four phases, between 1925-1938.

22. *Gerrard's Green*. A small number of detached houses in relatively large grounds built in the 1920s-30s.

23. *Factory, Broadwindsor Road* A large indus-

trial building was constructed prior to 1947.

24. *Holy Trinity Church*. Built 1849-51 to designs of Carver and Giles of Taunton, to serve the northern part of the town.



Figure 26: Beaminster Milk Factory.



Figure 27: Inter-war mock-Tudor house, 4 Stoke Road.



Figure 28: Holy Trinity Church.

5.5 Later Twentieth Century Beaminster (1945-present day)

5.5. Historical Summary

The second half of the twentieth century saw a large increase in the size of the population and the built area of Beaminster, with the construction of a number of large suburban estates to the east, west and north of the town. The population increased from 1790 inhabitants in 1951 to 2920 in 2001 (DCC 2007).

There was a resurgence of light industry in the town after the Second World War. The milk factory in North Street continued in production and is now owned by Danisco, making various food products. The largest employer in the second half of the 20th century was Abbot Brown & Sons Ltd, engravers and printed plastic sign manufacturers, who established a factory at Town End, Fleet Street, in 1946, where they remained until 2004 when the factory was closed. The vacuum cleaner manufacturer Numatic moved into premises on Broadwindsor Road in 1974, where they remained until 1990. The site is now occupied by Clipper Teas. Francis Bugler Ltd, Agricultural Engineers continued trading from a site behind Hogshill Street until recently when they moved to a new out of town site.

The commercial centre retains an important local function with a good selection of local shops, though most of the traditional historic family businesses in the town are no longer trading.

5.5.2 Town Layout and Plan Components

The town retains its historic centre and street pattern. The major change is the large increase in suburban housing, largely concentrated to the north east and west of the town. The two modern schools are also a dominant element



Figure 29: St John's Roman Catholic Church.

in the town plan in terms of their area. Some of the modern housing estates retain traces of earlier field boundaries, but these are not prominent elements in the current urban townscape

5.5.3 Town Layout and Plan Components

The main plan components of the later twentieth century town are shown on Figure 31 and are listed below.

1. *Church.* St Mary's Church remains the parish church. The former Strode Almshouse was converted into the Strode Room in 1977.
2. *Market-place.* Large triangular medieval market-place with the Robinson Memorial in the centre. The market place is now used as a car park.
3. *Historic plots.* Many of the plots probably remained largely the same as in the previous period, but with some modern infill housing, particularly on some former industrial and school sites.
4. *East Street Suburb.* The suburb appears to have largely retained its medieval boundaries. There has been some modern infill housing, which has destroyed some of the rear plots at the eastern end of the area.
5. *Beaminster Mill.* Now converted to private housing.
6. *Town End.* Abbot Brown & Sons Ltd, engraver and plastic sign manufacturer, built a factory on a site previously an egg depot. The factory closed in 2004. Now redeveloped as a modern housing estate.
7. *Historic Plots on south side of East Street.* There is little change in the layout of the plots in this period, but there is some modern hous-



Figure 30: Modern housing estate, Barnfleet, Fleet Street.

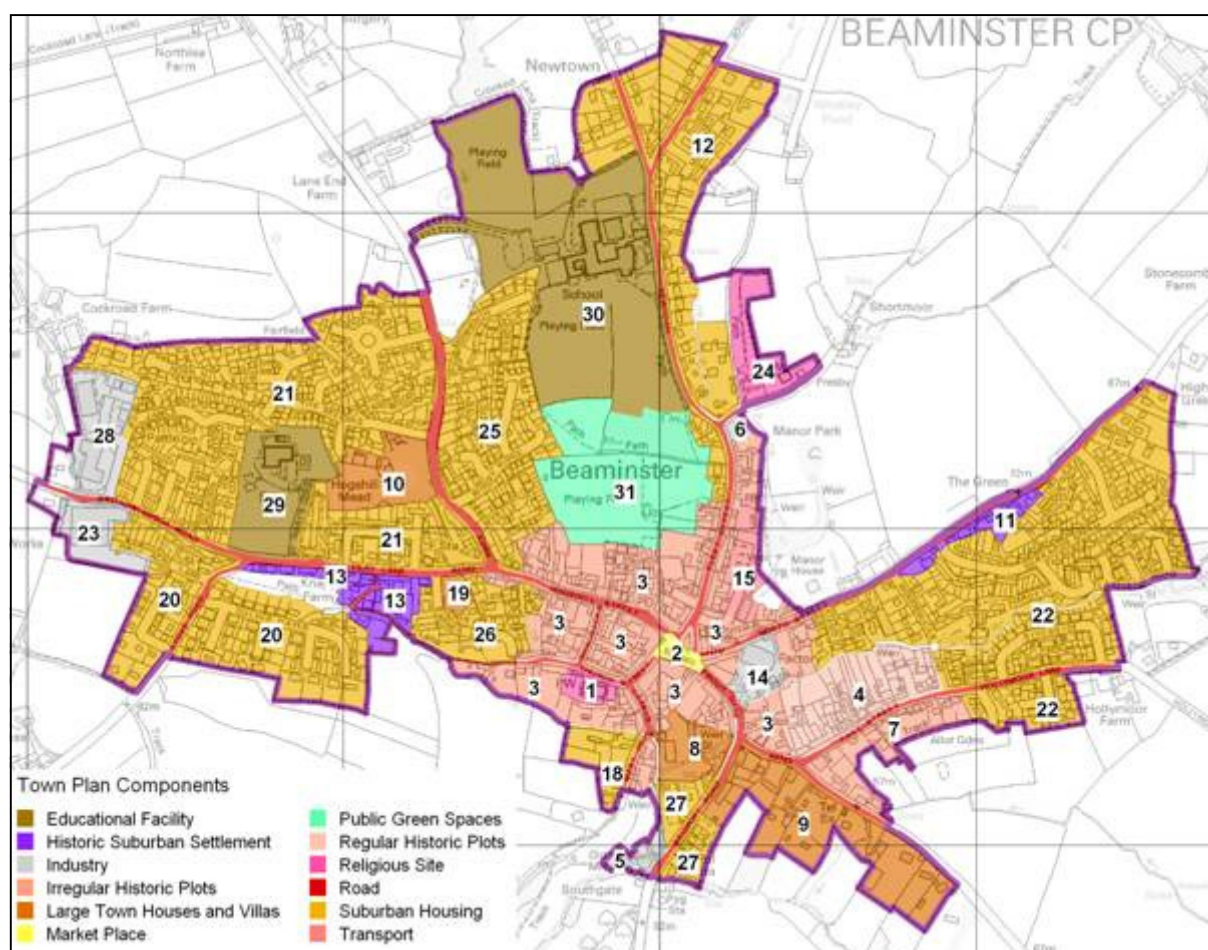


Figure 31: Later Twentieth Century Town Plan Components

ing infill.

8. *Hams Plot*. A large 17th century house in extensive grounds, considerably altered around 1830.

9. *Whitcombe Road*. There is little change to this area during this period, other than the closure of the sawmill and the building of a small number of relatively unobtrusive modern houses.

10. *The Lodge*. An early 19th century house, the grounds have been substantially reduced by surrounding suburban development.

11. *The Green*. A suburban settlement of small cottages and small plots along North Street, still largely retaining its original form, with some changes due to the building of the surrounding modern housing estates.

12. *Newtown*. The original suburban settlement has become subsumed in several large modern housing estates infilling this area.

13. *Clay Lane*. Some minor new building work and alterations to the historic street frontage, with some infill development behind along the

west end of Shorts Lane

14. *Milk Factory, North Street*. A Cow and Gate powdered milk factory from the 1960s, taken over in 1976 by Aplin and Barrett, producers of food preservatives, and now owned by Danisco.

15. *Yarn Barton*. The former sail-cloth works were demolished in 1998. The drying grounds are now a car park.

18. *Gas Works*. The gas works closed c. 1982 and were later redeveloped for housing. The gas works manager's house survives.

19. *The Rectory*. Built in 1859-61 for the rector of St Mary's Church, it is no longer used as a rectory and the grounds have been truncated by the Barnes Lane housing estate.

20. *South of Broadwindsor Road*. Some modern infilling of the area of inter-war housing (and occasional 19th century buildings) to the west of Stoke Road. A large modern housing estate to the east.

21. *Pattle*. A council house estate built between 1925-1938.

22. *Gerrard's Green*. A council house estate was built here in 1954. Subsequently a number of other housing estates has been built in this area.

23. *Factory, Broadwindsor Road*. Clipper Teas factory, rebuilt 2008.

24. *Holy Trinity Church*. The graveyard was extended in the early part of this period. The church was declared redundant in 1978 and is now a private dwelling, Trefoil House. St John's Roman Catholic Church was built adjacent to the east in 1966-7.

25. *Tunnel Road*. Post-war and modern housing estates along the west side of Tunnel Road.

26. *Barnes Lane*. A housing estate built largely in the former grounds of the Vicarage, with an extension to the west built in 1996.

27. *Bridport Road*. A number of small developments along both sides of Bridport Road, including telephone exchange, police station, and modern Regency style housing infilling grounds of Woodlands House.

28. *Broadwindsor Road Industrial Estate*. Established 1980s

29. *St Mary's Primary School*. Built in 1973.

30. *Beaminster School*. Built on the present site in 1963 as Beaminster Comprehensive School, by J Hurst.

31. *Beaminster Memorial Playing Fields*. Laid out in 1947 in memory of the 1939-45 war dead.