

# Dorchester

## Conservation Area Appraisal

Supplementary Planning Guidance



Adopted  
July 2003



## CONTENTS OF REPORT

1.	Approach & aims	page 3
2.	Setting	page 4
3.	Historical background, archaeological significance and potential	page 5
4.	Evolution, plan form, building uses and literary connection	page 8
5.	Townscape description of individual Sub-Areas	page 15
5.1.	Sub-Area 'a': Colliton Park area, The Grove & Friary Hill	page 16
5.2.	Sub-Area 'b': High Street	page 18
5.3.	Sub-Area 'c': Cornhill & South Street	page 22
5.4.	Sub-Area 'd': The Walks	page 24
5.5.	Sub-Area 'e': The South West Quadrant	page 26
5.6.	Sub-Area 'f': The South East Quadrant	page 28
5.7.	Sub-Area 'g': Fordington	page 30
5.8.	Sub-Area 'h': Victorian & Edwardian areas adjoining historic core	page 33
5.9.	General summary of assets	page 37
6.	Building materials and local building traditions	page 37
7.	Problems and detriments	page 40
8.	Summary of the Character Appraisal	page 45
9.	Review of Conservation Area boundary	page 49
10.	Bibliography	page 51
11.	Appendix	page 52

**Maps are reproduced from Ordnance Survey Material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. West Dorset District Council, Licence Number 100024307 2004.**

**The Ordnance Survey mapping included within this publication is provided by West Dorset District Council under licence from the Ordnance Survey in order to fulfil statutory duties to provide information to the public. Persons viewing this mapping should contact Ordnance Survey copyright for advice where they wish to licence Ordnance Survey mapping for their own use.**

## 1. Approach and aims

The appraisal of the Dorchester Conservation Area is intended to be a description of the "special architectural and historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".

The District Council is required by Section 71 of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas. English Heritage has provided guidance on the management of Conservation Areas that suggests that each should have an up-to-date appraisal followed by a more prescriptive study as a basis of action.

This character appraisal summarises Dorchester's special qualities by describing its historical background, the development of its current plan form and by setting out a more detailed analysis of the townscape qualities of the Conservation Area. Townscape embraces Listed Buildings; other buildings contributing to character; coherent groups of buildings; the character and relationship of spaces; details such as boundary walls and street furniture; and the landscape setting and its interaction with the built elements. The appraisal also examines building materials and any local building traditions. Problems and detrimental features are also summarised and, lastly, the Conservation Area boundary is reassessed to determine its validity and utility.

The overall aim of the appraisal is to describe the special interest in a lucid, comprehensive but reasonably succinct form. The Dorchester Conservation Area is large in area and includes about 350 Listed Buildings and is complex in terms of its character components and the practical issues that relate to its future stewardship. The appraisal will:

- provide a basis for monitoring and controlling change and threats to the special interest
- guide the assessment of planning applications for development in the area
- identify whether there is a need to review the Conservation Area boundaries
- provide the basis for further work on a framework for enhancement schemes.

It is realised that the views of the local community and other interested parties are important and should be fully considered before any additional planning controls or management prescriptions are sought.

In April 2003, the Community was consulted on this Appraisal, including the changes to the Conservation Area boundary.

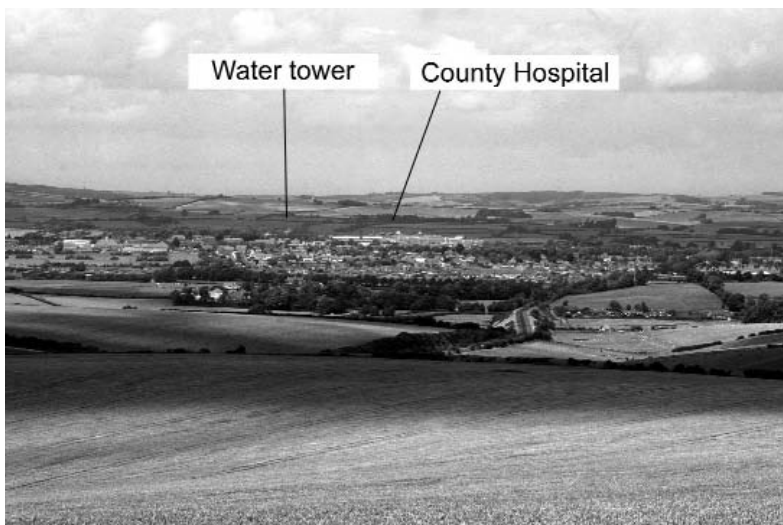
Following public consultation, the District Council's Executive Committee adopted the Dorchester Conservation Area Appraisal on the 29th July 2003 as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Adopted West Dorset District Local Plan.



*Fig 1. Former Pale Ale Brewery, High East Street*

## 2. Setting

Dorchester is situated in South Dorset about 8 miles from the coast at Weymouth. The town is situated on the eastern end of a chalk upland spur, which runs from Eggardon Hill in the west to Mount Pleasant in the east. The chalk valley slope landscape character area<sup>1</sup> 'wrap around' the town limits to the north and east, from where it drops down into the Frome Valley, characterized by its pasture and flood plain landscape and to the south east where it slopes down to the chalk valley floor landscape along the South Winterbourne. The settlement extends southwards from the river onto gently undulating terrain towards the rising ground of The Ridgeway's dip slope some 3 miles from the town. The Ridgeway, rising to over 150 metres in this area, separates the County town from the coastal slope and the ridge and vale landscape character areas. There are several outliers to the main chalk uplands nearer the town; Maiden Castle's elongated hill is one example of these features. The landscape to the south of the town is a mixture of water meadows, rounded chalk spurs and chalk valley slopes as well as open agricultural fields, landscape.



*Fig 2. View (left) looking north from Came Down shows the western part of the town straddling the chalk upland spur with open agricultural fields, - that are typical of the chalk landscape, - in the foreground. The county hospital is on the top of the spur in the middle of the view.*



*View (below left), again from Came Down, shows the eastern part of the town, including Fordington. The town is still seen sitting along the chalk spur, which is now clipping gently towards the Frome Valley in the east. In the distance is the chalk upland landscape.*

*In both views, key landmarks are visible: for example, St Peter's church tower, All Saints' spire, the Corn Exchange clock tower, the water tower and the brewery chimney. The abundant tree planting in and around the core is also evident.*

<sup>1</sup> Consult the West Dorset 2000 Survey of the Built & Natural Environment of West Dorset, Landscape Character Areas adopted by West Dorset District Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance on 12 February 2002.

The Frome river valley dominates the landscape to the north and east of the town with the meandering course of the river and its complex system of drainage channels across verdant flood meadows. The chalk upland landscape to the north and north west of the town forms an attractive backdrop. In distant views from the high ground, especially from the Ridgeway, the town appears to be compact without undue sprawl and the landscape seems to flow to the edge of the developed area. The only major designated area of growth in the town is at Poundbury along the northwest edges of the town. This may in time affect the current compact nature of the town unless the setting is satisfactorily assessed. The landscape setting for this part of the town is particularly important being in the chalk upland and therefore open to views, particularly from the north, northwest, west and southwest. Much of the landscape setting of the town is designated as part of the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and in addition other peripheral areas are designated as Land of Local Landscape Interest (LLLI's) because of their value as landscape features, as nature conservation habitats or green buffers to development.

The Frome's river valley dominates the landscape to the north and east of the town, with the meandering course of the river and a complex system of drainage channels across verdant meadows. Chalk hills rise to the north and north-west, forming an attractive backdrop to the town. In distant views from the higher ground, especially from the Ridgeway, the town appears to be compact, without undue sprawl, and the landscape seems to flow to the edge of the developed area. Much of the landscape setting is designated as part of the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and, in addition, other peripheral areas are designated as Land of Local Landscape Interest (LLLIs) because of their value as landscape features, as nature conservation habitats or green buffers to development.

The historic core of the town is sited on a spur of high ground above the Frome, with a steep escarpment towards the river and a pronounced fall from west to east, i.e. from Top o' Town to Grey's Bridge, from about 100 metres AOD to 60 metres. The core extends southwards on a relatively flat area, with a pronounced hillock at Fordington, around The Green, at the top of High Street. The influences of topography and drainage have created a clean, obvious boundary between the historic core (and thus the Conservation Area) and countryside on the northern and north-eastern edges of the town.

### **3. Historical background, archaeological significance & potential**

#### **3.1 Historical Background**

The area occupied by Dorchester, and its surrounding landscape, has a long history of occupation and settlement, stretching back to the Neolithic and Bronze Ages. The area of the later town and the surrounding countryside was of great ceremonial or religious significance, with three major Neolithic monuments: at Maumbury Rings, on a 12 acre site at Mount Pleasant and in the eastern part of the historic core. The chalk downland and river valleys around Dorchester have internationally significant evidence of Bronze and Iron Age settlement and agriculture, with hundreds of barrows on the Ridgeway and defended hilltop settlements at Maiden Castle and Poundbury.

The Romans arrived in 43-44 AD, first conquering the local Iron Age tribe called the Durotriges. About 30 years later, Durnovaria was built as the tribal cantonal capital (civitas) for the newly Romanised tribe. The town was over 70 acres in area and earthwork defences were provided at the end of the 2nd century, later strengthened by a stone facing and gateways. The street plan is not known for certain, but its overall form and some road alignments are inferred from the approach roads, the walls (and hence the approximate location of the gates) and archaeological discovery in the town itself. Of the known public buildings, the Maumbury Rings henge was converted to an amphitheatre; extensive public baths were provided in an area adjacent to Icen

Way; and a nine-mile long aqueduct brought water from the direction of today's Frampton. Chance finds and planned excavations have uncovered evidence of a prosperous settlement in the third and fourth centuries, with fine mosaics, wall paintings and elegant town houses, (one of which is excavated and displayed in Colliton Park).

Cemeteries have been found along the approach roads and the Poundbury hillfort area includes evidence of a Christian community. Outside the town, some ribbon development and villa or farmstead complexes (for example, at Olga Road) have been found.

After the formal end of Roman rule, there is scant evidence for the continued existence of a town but the name Dorchester contains the Roman prefix. There is documentary evidence of a royal residence and by the 10th century there were two mints. The Domesday Survey (1086) recorded 88 houses, 100 having been destroyed, possibly to make way for a royal castle on the site now occupied by the HM Prison. The medieval borough had up to twelve mills, a Jewish community and a Franciscan Friary. There were three churches on the High Street and a nearby market at the Bullstake (North Square). Dorchester was a cloth town of some importance in the late Middle Ages, evidenced by the impressive early 15th century rebuilding of St Peter's church and the similar tower at St George's in Fordington - an adjacent village whose manor virtually surrounded Dorchester.

Post-medieval developments included a Free School, several almshouses and a hospital. The Borough was incorporated in 1629, but a previous fire in 1613 had destroyed 300 houses and two of the medieval churches. The town continued as an important textile-trading centre, with a strong Puritan tradition, which generated emigration and settlement to the New World and support for Parliament in the Civil War.

There were several other fires in the 18th century, but Dorchester saw many civic improvements, consolidating its position as the county town. In the 1790s, the prison was established on the site of the Norman castle, the Shire Hall was built in the High Street and many fine town houses were also built in the High Street and South Street.

The 19th century also saw a remarkable provision of civic and religious buildings in the High Street, in the form of the County Museum, the Town Hall and Corn Exchange, and the rebuilding of All Saints and Holy Trinity churches. The County Hospital was established in Prince's Street in 1841 and the Eldridge Pope Brewery was begun in 1881 on Weymouth Avenue. The first mainline railway arrived in 1847.

The 20th century saw the development of Dorchester as a county town (County Hall was built within Colliton Park from 1938 onwards); tourism evolved around the area's antiquities and the literary connections of Thomas Hardy and William Barnes. The town expanded into the countryside of the Manor of Fordington, but its centre escaped large-scale redevelopment in the 1960s and 70s. In 1988, a bypass formed a new boundary to the town, which then allowed Cornhill and much of South Street to be pedestrianised. The last ten years have seen a continuing expansion on the Duchy of Cornwall's Poundbury Farm, a continuing debate on possible major development in the area of Charles Street and Acland Road and the large Eldridge Pope brewery.

Fordington dates back to Saxon times and until the mid 19th century, - when it and some of its farmland came within the borough of Dorchester, - remained a separate village. Most of the village and all its farmland formed the Manor of Fordington, which for several 100 years has been in the ownership of the Duchy of Cornwall. Both Fordington and Dorchester had a mutual dependency. Fordington needed Dorchester's markets and labour and Dorchester needed Fordington's food production and agricultural work. In 1874, the medieval management of Fordington's fields ceased and the Duchy regained full control of the use of the land. This allowed the Duchy to sell or develop land and Dorchester was able to grow beyond the bounds once designated by its Roman walls. This growth continues as the Duchy, in compliance with

the West Dorset District Local Plan, implements the 'Poundbury' masterplan adjoining the west side of Dorchester.

### 3.2 Archaeological significance and potential

In terms of archaeological significance, the wider landscape's pre-historic features are of international importance and it is evident that this complex of ceremonial and settlement sites extends under the developed area and the Conservation Area. There are many unresolved questions relating to the layout of the Roman town, the location of the forum and public buildings, the gates, entrance roads and the elusive early fort.

Post-Roman and Saxon Dorchester are virtually unknown and the medieval town's topography is only apparent from survivors of the various fires and from contemporary records. Archaeology might answer questions relating to the location of the Saxon royal residence and the better understanding of the medieval castle, friary and hospitals. The evolution of the town plan, from the possible Roman grid, would be of major interest, as would more information on the development of Fordington and its interrelationship with Dorchester.

Archaeological potential is constrained by the presence of a large number of listed buildings, which effectively seal Medieval and Roman features. The redevelopment of the Charles Street/Acland Road area could provide evidence of the Roman town centre and the baths complex might be re-excavated at some future stage. The Colliton Park precinct would undoubtedly reveal further Roman evidence and information on the medieval Hospital of Saint John. The Prison appears to occupy the site of substantial Roman buildings and the Norman castle. Street frontages and the details of medieval burgage plots could be examined as a condition of small redevelopment or extension projects. There is a definite need, in Dorchester, for a programme of archaeological recording of selected building types (for example, timber framed structures behind later façade rebuildings). Any building works at the Poundbury Industrial Estate, the Fairfield or the brewery site may yield evidence of Roman out of town development and cemeteries. At the other end of the historical continuum, modern historical aspects, such as World War II defences and social impacts, are fruitful areas for further research.



*Fig 3 The historic core of Dorchester, showing The County Museum, the Corn Exchange & the churches of All Saints & St Peter's*



*Fig 4 The Roman Town House in Colliton Park was discovered in the late 1930's. The cover building was erected after re-excavation in 1997-8 & designed by John Stark & Crickmay Partnership.*

The recent workings of Government Planning Policy (PPG) 16, Archaeology and Planning, 1990, have produced greater co-operation between developers, planning authorities and archaeologists in Dorchester, in mitigating the effects of development on known or suspected archaeological features and recording or preserving them. There is a need for an ever-improving

data and research base to guide this process of development. It must also be underlined that the provisions of PPG 16 are largely reactive, responding to the pressures for development. Protection, recording (through the Dorset County Sites and Monuments Record) and publication of excavation work are all areas that require adequate resources.

## 4. Evolution, Plan form & Building Uses

### 4.1 Roman Dorchester

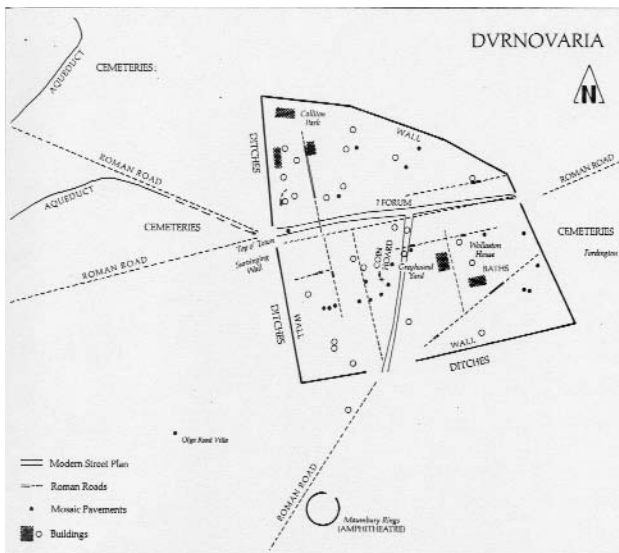


Fig 5. Map of Roman Dorchester from 'Dorchester Past' by Jo Draper - used with permission. Within the Roman walls, today's street pattern is quite different to the Roman.

The Roman town appears to have been laid out in a grid pattern, with the east-west *decumanus maximus* (main street) running up the spur of land above the river, linked to two roads from the west and north west at Top o' Town and to the main eastward road across a ford at the modern Swan Bridge. There appear to be a series of north-south streets running at right angles to the *decumanus maximus* and, also, at least one non-conforming street in the south east of the grid, on a west-south-west/east-north-east alignment. This anomaly may relate to an early feature such as a fort. The later walls seem to respect and reinforce the grid, with the main entrances at either end of the *decumanus* and a southern entrance somewhere in the centre of a pattern of north-south streets. The forum (public market/meeting place) was possibly in the vicinity of the present day junction of High Street and Cornhill, which is still a commercial and civic focus for the town.

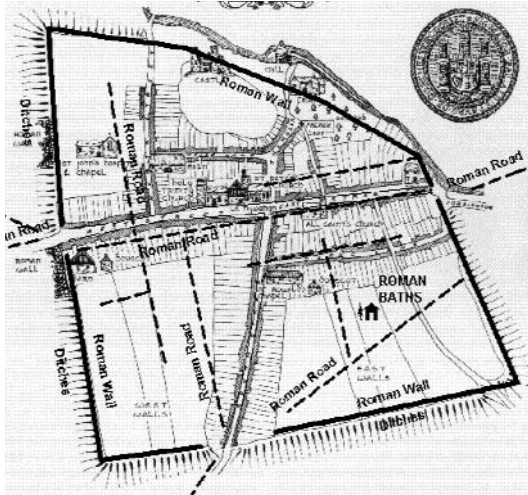
The walls form three sides of a near-right angle rectangle, to the west, south and east of the core but the northern boundary is more problematical, with no obvious evidence of defences, although the river and adjacent marshy ground may have served as a natural defence.

### 4.2 Medieval Dorchester

The Medieval and later street plan appears not to have been directly influenced by the Roman plan, but the walls and the entrances had a more obvious impact on development. The grid became distorted in that High Street only approximates to the *decumanus* and South Street wavers from the possible south gate to High Street and widens out, at Cornhill. The Medieval plan became a "T"-shape, with High Street forming the cross-member and Cornhill/South Street the upright or stem. The main market area was at the junction of three main streets by St Peter's church.

North Square, once known as Bullstake and The Shambles, was a secondary commercial focus





*Fig 6. Reconstructed Map of Dorchester around 1400 (drawn by Victoria Palmer) from 'Dorchester Past' by Jo Draper - used with permission. Overlaying the Map are the Roman walls and streets.*

and market place, possibly related to the main entrance to the castle. North Street/Glydepath Lane appears to coincide with part of the Roman grid and Pease Lane (Colliton Street) and Durngate Street may at least be influenced by it. The castle may have obscured part of the earlier pattern. Icen Way probably existed as a route but was not significantly developed. The Medieval plan was therefore a concentration of burgage plots along the main frontages of High, South and Durngate Streets, North Square, Colliton Street and Glydepath Lane. Much of the remaining open space within the Roman walls comprised gardens and fields, which helped support the townspeople and provided grazing for livestock. The Roman walls, which became ruinous over time, remained the boundary or limits of the town. Basically, the medieval plan is the basis of the modern town centre.

### 4.3 Dorchester of 17th and 18th Centuries



*Fig 7. Map of Dorchester, dated 1772, from Hutchins' History of Dorset - used with the permission of Dorset County Library. The Map covers only Dorchester and not neighbouring Fordington.*

Within the line of the Roman walls, Trinity and Princes Streets were laid out as back lanes probably in the 17th century and there was much development on the street frontages as a result of the severe fires of the 17th and 18th centuries. The three churches of St Peter's, Holy Trinity and All Saints survived and the building of the Shire Hall, Corn Exchange and County Museum reinforced the civic importance of High Street. The town's agricultural land and pasture, within the walls, is clearly shown on the Hutchins' Map above as well as the north-west parkland of Colliton House.

In the 18th century, the town borough, (not without opposition from the Manor of Fordington), created tree lined walks, - each length has its own name such as West Walks, South Walks and Salisbury Walks, - on the remains of the Roman walls, which became a popular and renowned (*The Mayor of Casterbridge* by Thomas Hardy) public amenity. A riverside path linked the Walks together in the north. The walks with their avenues of trees are clearly seen on the Hutchins' Map (figure 7).

In 1747, Grey's Bridge was built over the River Frome, allowing High Street to continue straight downhill and join the London Road on the water meadows instead of having to pass through neighbouring Fordington.

#### 4.4 Fordington up to the Victorian Period

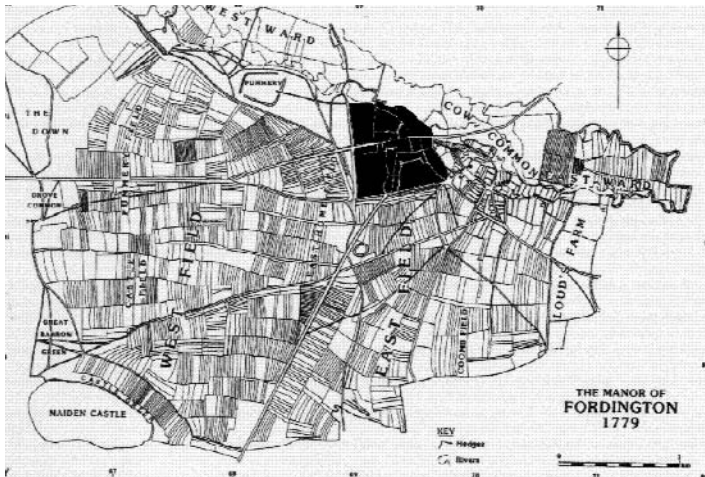


Fig 8. Map of the Manor of Fordington in 1779 redrawn from the Duchy of Cornwall original by Wessex Archaeology - used with permission. The Map has been amended with Dorchester marked out in black to emphasise its almost total encirclement by the Manor of Fordington.

It is possible that the pronounced area of higher ground upon which the modern settlement stands was the site of a prehistoric hillfort. There is certainly evidence of settlement and burial from the archaeological record. It is, with more certainty, known that the Manor of Fordington dates back to the Saxon period and throughout subsequent centuries constrained the growth of Dorchester because its medieval field system almost surrounded the town. The lands of Fordington Manor however fed the local populations and supplied the local markets for 100s of years.

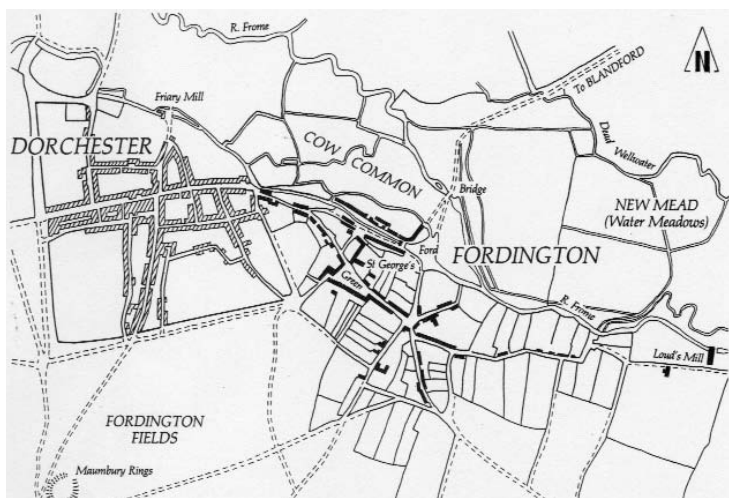


Fig 9. Map showing Fordington's relationship to Dorchester & the road system prior to the construction of Grey's Bridge of 1748 - used with permission from 'Dorchester Past' by Jo Draper.

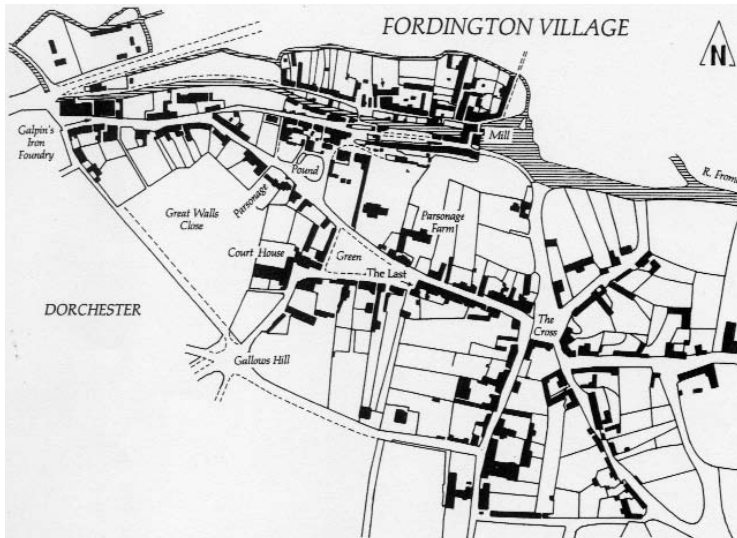


Fig 10. Fordington from the Tithe Map of 1841 showing the Grey's Bridge crossing & by the river, the densely populated Mill Street - used with permission from 'Dorchester Past' by Jo Draper.

Although adjoining one another, the maps above show the difference between the shape of Dorchester and that of Fordington, which stood above an important fording point of the River Frome.

Around The Cross, on which several of Fordington's roads converged, - prior to Grey's Bridge, it was the way to the fording point and the London Road, - were a collection of farms and their small pockets of attached land, whilst by another road convergence at the Green, the presence and influence of the Manor and church were represented by the parish church, the court house, the pound and parsonage farm. From The Green, High Street led back to Dorchester and its east 'gateway' and this proximity to the town encouraged roadside growth.

As a village, Fordington's growth was modest, that is, until its farm labouring population rose - due to an agricultural depression - from 888 in 1801 to 2,937 in 1841. This dramatic rise was mainly focused on the riverside area of Mill Street (not owned by the Manor), which became extremely over-populated. In her book *Dorchester Past*, Jo Draper states: "Fordington remained an agricultural village with an urban slum attached...."

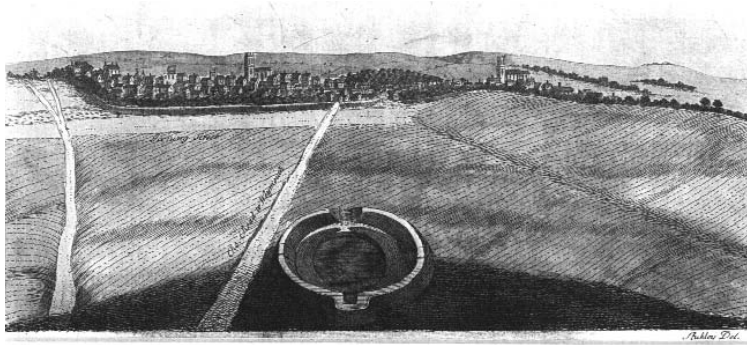


Fig 11. A view from Maumbury Rings over farmland owned by the Manor of Fordington towards Dorchester town (left) & Fordington village (right) & drawn by Stukley in 1723 - used with the permission of Dorset County Library.

Until the lands of the Manor of Fordington, were enclosed in 1874, the people of Dorchester had recreational use of the countryside around their town, including Maumbury Rings and Poundbury hillfort. This was to change, when the medieval system that managed the farmland of Fordington ended and the fields marked out by boundaries and the townspeople denied access.

## 4.5 Victorian Dorchester & Fordington



Fig 12. Ordnance Survey Map of 1903 shows the growth of Dorchester beyond the limits of the Walks and even the railway lines. Maumbury Rings has been drawn into the town's expansion. The water meadows to the north were too wet to develop. Within the historic town open space is being reduced in area. The creation of the Borough Gardens & Salisbury Field was to offset the town's much reduced access to the countryside following the enclosure of Fordington Fields in 1874.

In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Thomas Hardy aptly describes Dorchester's physical situation as: "Country and town met at a mathematical line." Yet in the early 1880s, a large barracks already existed on land (belonging to the Manor of Fordington), adjacent to the north-west edge of the town.

The overcrowding in Fordington remained however, and although there was housing development within the historic limits of Dorchester, - for example, the terraces of Frome Terrace, Alexandra Terrace and Wollaston Villas, - it was too limited to be of much help.

After 1835, the borough boundary of Dorchester was enlarged to include Fordington and an area of land around the town belonging to the Manor of Fordington. This incorporation of Fordington resulted in it becoming a part of Dorchester. In the 1850s, there were public health improvements and farmland acquired for a new cemetery on the Weymouth Road and a waterworks on the Bridport Road.

Despite the increase in the town's administrative area and the coming of the 1847 Southampton and 1857 Bristol railway lines, Dorchester's aspirations of growth were still hampered because the Duchy of Cornwall, (owner of the Manor of Fordington), could not regain full control of its land until 1874, upon which the Duchy made available 250 acres for the town's expansion.

The take up of development was gradual but started with the construction of the Eldridge Pope brewery, - which took advantage of the railway access, - followed by the nearby Prince of Wales and Great Western Roads, and Cornwall and Victoria Roads. Built mainly for the professional classes, the location of the detached and terraced houses was constrained and influenced by proximity to the two railway stations, the alignment of the railway tracks and their junction to the south of Fairfield and Maumbury Rings.

The Great Western Road development was the result of the town's purchase of Fairfield from the Duchy in 1876. For sanitary reasons, Fairfield was needed to supplant the markets held in the main streets and its position by the railway was ideal for a market place.

On the south-west side of the town, development extended beyond the railway lines and the borough boundary, when in 1897, the Victoria Park Estate was planned by the architect G R Crickmay. In the south of the estate, the prestigious Queens Avenue for "superior" homes was laid out, and in the north, streets for terraces of working class dwellings. "The development, even of smaller houses, proceeded...slowly... but Victoria Park developed through the early 20th century as a real suburb, with its own school... Post Office... church... shops and many tradesmen. The other estates...did not develop in the same way." <sup>2</sup>

In Fordington, the need for better labourer's housing continued, although the Duchy did sell land for development and built by-law housing in Duke's Avenue.

To compensate for the loss of recreational access to the countryside after the enclosure of Fordington Fields, the town borough secured public access to Poundbury hillfort and Maumbury Rings and in 1892 preserved Salisbury Fields, - an ancient field between Salisbury Walks and Fordington Green, - as a public recreational ground. In 1895, the borough also bought land to form a park, the Borough Gardens alongside West Walks.

#### **4.6 Dorchester of 20th and 21st Centuries**

The 20th century saw more infill in the old historic centre of Dorchester. At Colliton Park, the new County Hall was completed after the Second World War. In the medieval burgage plots, there was intensification of development with chain stores, banks, offices and other large structures like the cinema in Trinity Street. The rear of the plots has tended to be obscured by extensions to shops and offices and service yards and car parks. Two purpose-built shopping arcades were built off South Street in the 1950s and 1970s and Tudor Arcade was extended in the 1980s, including the redevelopment of the historic Greyhound Yard and a larger building form in the Waitrose supermarket. The last twenty years have seen demolitions in the Charles Street/Acland Road area for car parking and potential comprehensive redevelopment and other car parks in Trinity Street. Refurbishments, conversions and small retail and residential schemes at Antelope Walk, Napper's Mite, and in High Street, and a larger comprehensive redevelopment and conversion of the County Hospital site have generally respected the central area. Other than the Walks, very little of the historic centre's green open space now remains.

Within the development boundary once set by the main railway lines, there has been residential infilling of large, mature gardens in the Prince of Wales Road area.

Whilst the borough boundary has been extended to keep pace with the town's growth, it is the 1988 bypass that is now the new development boundary. To the east and south of the town, the bypass skirts the town's continual growth onto land sold by the Duchy of Cornwall, during the latter half of the 20th century, as evident in the residential estates of Cambridge Road, Manor Park, Maiden Castle Estate, Fordington Fields and St George's Road. Such growth along with trading estates and out-of-town stores are obscuring the sense of approach to and the limits of historic Dorchester and Fordington. The Stukley view from Maumbury Rings is long gone.

On the west side of Dorchester, the area of farmland that extends up to the bypass is subject to a master plan, which has been implemented, following public consultation, by the Duchy of Cornwall. Called Poundbury, this phased and mixed development is to meet the residential (including an important element of affordable homes) and business needs of the town until after 2011, whilst at the same time providing all the ingredients to form a successful community. In its final form, it will alter considerably the Bridport Road approach into Dorchester.

In Fordington, the Mill Street Housing Society started demolishing the old houses and building new ones from 1930 onwards. Also, the 20th century has seen the intensification of the village by new developments and redevelopment, which has resulted in the loss of historic boundaries and coherence.

---

<sup>2</sup>Quote taken from Morris, J & Draper, J 1995 'The Enclosure' of Fordington Fields and the Development of Dorchester, 1874 - 1903, Dorset Proceedings

## **4.7 Building Uses in the Conservation Area**

Providing continuity with the community and trading activities of Dorchester's past are today's general mix of uses, which underpin the historic character of the Conservation Area. Within the centre, the traditional scale of use and operation has largely been upheld. It is important that this mix of uses and the correct scale be retained and encouraged.

Much of the main street frontages of Dorchester are retail and commercial, with offices and shops at ground floor, - occasionally at first floor, - and often with storage and underused space above. Durngate Street has an interesting mix of uses in a variety of old buildings (shop, office and restaurant conversions of 19th century warehouses), whilst Prince's Street has seen a shift from mixed use to residential, since the redevelopment of the former county hospital. Trinity Street benefits from the continued presence of its cinema, which encourages evening activity, something which other streets, such as South Street/Cornhill, lack. Flats "over the shop" exist, - mainly in High Street, - but generally, the main streets have reduced activity and vitality after normal working hours, partly due to the lack of residential occupancy, which is contrary to the historic nature of such streets.

Both established and contemporary housing predominates in Glyde Path Road, Colliton Street, North Square, Friary Hill and Orchard Street and in a small enclave north of High Street in Greenings Court: a use which is likely consistent with an historic shift of trading activity to the main streets, but business uses are still to be found in these areas, for example, the dairy in Glyde Path Road.

Wollaston Road, Linden Avenue, lower Icen Way and adjacent 19th century roads around South Walks and Salisbury Walk have largely retained their residential character, apart from some commercial and school uses on South Walks Road.

In the Bridport Road, the significance of the former Barracks is still represented by its Keep, which is now the military museum.

The old employment and trading nature of the upper section of Weymouth Avenue remains in the form of Fairfield and its popular Wednesday market, the police station, and Eldridge Pope's brewery with its retail offices, bottling and distribution facilities.

Fordington High Street and The Green and surrounding roads, such as Duke's Avenue are also mainly residential, as is the Victoria Park area, including Queen's Avenue. At one time, Fordington and Victoria Park had a greater variety of uses being a separate village and a planned suburb respectively, which stresses the importance of retaining the business and community uses that still remain.

The varied uses and activities generated by the occupancy of the buildings in the various parts of the Conservation Area form an essential part of the evolution, identity and vitality of historic Dorchester.

## **4.8 Literary Connection of Thomas Hardy**

In and immediately around Dorchester, there are many locations and buildings associated with the works of Thomas Hardy. These associations encourage an individual's desire to discover Dorchester, which at the same time increases awareness of the town's built and natural environment. Attached as an Appendix to the Conservation Area Appraisal is an indicative list of the literary places associated with the poems and novels of Thomas Hardy.