

## 5.3 Victorian and Edwardian Blandford Forum (1850-1913)

### 5.3.1 Historical Summary

This history of the town in this period is really the story of the arrival of the railway in the 1860s and the economic effects it brought, stimulating the expansion of the town.

The Dorset Central line had reached Blandford St Mary by 1860 and a temporary station had been built there whilst negotiations for amalgamation with the Somerset Central Railway were completed and the joining section of track built between Blandford and Templecombe (Clapcott 2007). Blandford Station was built on the east side of Damory Street, approximately 150m north of the former Damory Court which seems to have been demolished to make way for the track. Blandford Forum station was opened in September 1863.

The completion of the line instantly boosted development, with new suburbs and industry appearing in the vicinity of the station, on both sides of the tracks, by the time of the Ordnance Survey 1885 edition. This effectively marked the beginning of suburban expansion to the east of the historic town, a process that continued throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and into the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Initial suburban development was arranged around a grid plan of streets aligned on and south of Salisbury Road. Buildings consisted of Victorian and Edwardian terraces intermixed with larger suburban villas, particularly from the turn of the century in the eastern part of the suburb. There was also a number of small industrial workshops and a Primitive Methodist Chapel. This period is also characterised by the proliferation of ribbon developments along the major radial routes into the historic town, most notably along Salisbury Road.

Button making continued to be an important



Figure 21: Alexandra Street railway bridge with the Station Master's House on the right — the only surviving part of Blandford station.

industry in the town (Hutchins 1874, 216). Gloving also continued to thrive until the start of WWII. At one time in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century there were two small workshops in East Street and another in White Cliff Mill Street, attached to Eagle House, which made gloves for the well known Milborne Port glovers. There was an iron foundry at the top of Orchard Street and a candle factory between Alfred Street and Edward Street (Lavington 1988, 30). Coach building was also an important industry in the town. Conyer's had a large coach builders' workshop on West Street from 1910 (Blandford Forum Town Council 2001, 33-4; Sackett 1984, 40). The greatest single industrial development of the late Victorian era in Blandford took place to the south of the River in Blandford St Mary. The new Hall and Woodhouse Brewery today represents a well preserved example of late Victorian brewery architecture.

These developments facilitated Blandford's continued success as a regional market town. The evidence from trade directories suggests that Blandford's retail businesses were thriving and multiplying during the later 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1875 for example the inhabitants of Blandford and the surrounding areas carried out more than 50 different trades; including 37 grocers and general shopkeepers, 31 drapers, tailors and cloth merchants, 17 publicans and hoteliers, 11 shoemakers, 10 blacksmiths and ironmongers, 10 beer and wine merchants, 10 bakers, 10 carpenters and funeral directors, 9 plumbers and decorators, 6 butchers, 6 watch, clock and gunmakers, and 5 builders, (Kelly 1875).

Many of these businesses were dependant on local produce for the raw materials of their trade. The surrounding region was particularly geared up for rearing sheep and cattle, a fact reflected in Blandford's weekly market and an-



Figure 22: Hall and Woodhouse Brewery, Blandford St Mary

nual fairs. The Saturday market continued to thrive during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and included a weekly sheep market well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Blandford was famed for its great wool fair, when buyers came from all over the world to buy sheep skins. To facilitate this trade the town had a tannery on East Street, opposite the church. The town council also held six sheep fairs a year in the Fair Field on Salisbury Road. A good sized cattle market also took place each week (Lavington 1988). Farmers also came to 'the Little Market' held on Thursdays during the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century which included a sheep market (Clark 1990 47).

The increase in population associated with the arrival of the railway and the suburban housing estates also stimulated significant growth in non-conformist congregations. The Independent Congregational chapel on Salisbury Street was enlarged in 1867 and a Primitive Methodist Chapel was built on Albert Street, in the new suburb east of the railway station.

The increase in the size of congregations across the town also necessitated the creation of a new cemetery on Damory Street with an associated Church of England mortuary chapel. The municipal cemetery, with its two neo-gothic chapels and entrance lodge, was established in the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century on Salisbury Road, about a mile outside the town on land purchased by Lord Portman (Hutchins 1874, 241).

Blandford had a number of schools by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The original Blandford Free School seems to have ceased by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Blandford Grammar School (originally Milldown Endowed School) was founded in 1862 and new premises erected on Damory Street in 1864. The original foundation was for a girls' school, but became mixed by 1869. The National girls and infants' school on Damory Street was enlarged before 1874. A British School was also held in premises on Whitecliff Mill Street. There was also a ragged school in Bryanston Street (Hutchins 1874, 241).

Other mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century urban institutions included the new union workhouse built on Salisbury Road in 1859. A new police station was erected in the same year. The Cottage Hospital opened in 1883. Gas was introduced in 1837 and the Blandford Waterworks Co. formed to supply the town with piped water in 1893-4 (Cox 2003, 25-7). An isolation hospital was built on Higher Shaftesbury Road, close to the municipal cemetery, some time between 1885 and 1901. A municipal recreation ground was established on Park Road by 1885, al-

though by 1901 the site had been developed for housing and the recreation ground moved to its current site adjacent to the Cottage Hospital.

### 5.3.2 Town Layout

The Victorian and Edwardian period was one of rapid expansion on a scale unprecedented in Blandford up to that point. It is pertinent to highlight the construction of the railway as the first change to the town layout in this process. The line skirted the eastern side of the then urban extent which was marked by Damory Street and Milldown Road. This led to the destruction of Damory Court and the construction of the station and goods yard 150m to the north (Figure 21). Following on from this a grid pattern of streets was laid out, mainly north and east of the station on the south side of Salisbury Road, but also between Damory Street and the railway line. These streets were lined with brick built Victorian terraces initially in the immediate vicinity of the station, although later developments included suburban villas and Edwardian terraces set back from the street frontages.

There was also significant development in terms of public and municipal buildings and institutions. Salisbury Road had substantial ribbon development comprising the new Union Workhouse, The Municipal Cemetery and Isolation Hospital, as well as isolated farmsteads and cottages.

Developments south of the Stour included the construction of a new late Victorian Brewery by Hall and Woodhouse (Figure 22); The new Bournemouth Road was built in 1846, possibly in preparation for the new railway line.

### 5.3.3 Victorian and Edwardian Town Plan Components

The main plan components of eighteenth and nineteenth century town are shown on Figure 23 and are listed below.

1. *The Church of Ss Peter and Paul.* In 1895 the apse was taken down and rebuilt slightly to the east in order to make room for a new chancel with an organ chamber on its north side (RCHME 1970, 19).

2. *The Market.* The importance of the weekly Saturday market for both produce and livestock continued into the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Clarke 1990 47).

3. *Burgages.* There was little discernible change to the town centre burgage plots during

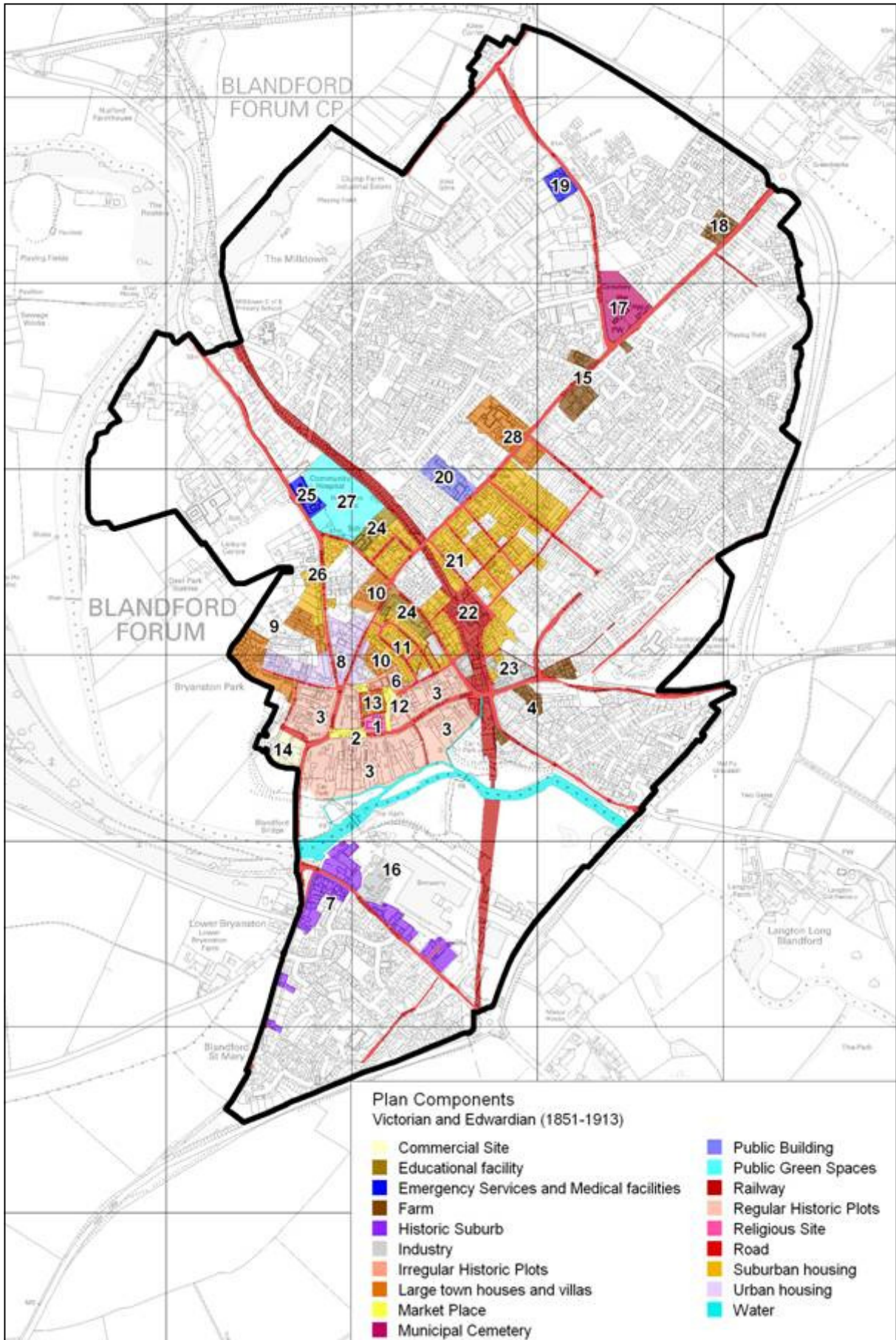


Figure 23: Victorian and Edwardian Plan Components



the Victorian and Edwardian periods.

4. *St Leonard's Chapel*. St Leonard's Chapel appears to have been ruined and roofless by 1885. As well as St Leonard's Farm, two other farms were in existence in the area, on Wimborne Road and Langton Road, by this time.

6. *Plots north of the Plocks*. The earliest surviving buildings in this area date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including 7 The Plocks and the Wesleyan Methodist Tabernacle. The tabernacle had a Sunday School built on its west side during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

7. *Blandford St Mary suburb*. Blandford St Mary School was established in 1846 at the junction of School Lane and the newly constructed Bournemouth Road. The old road from Blandford Bridge to Blandford St Mary church was closed at this time. There was little change to the remainder of the suburb during the Victorian and Edwardian eras.

8. *Bryanston, White Cliff Mill and Salisbury Street urban plots*. This area was fully developed by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and changed little during the Victorian and Edwardian periods. The King's Arms Hotel at the corner of Bryanston and White Cliff Mill Streets had a brewery at the rear during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

9. *Eagle House/Park House Ornamental Villas*. The stable block to Park House, at the west end of Bryanston Street, was built by the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. A glove factory was attached to the south wing of Eagle House during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

10. *Dale House/ Salisbury House*. There was little change to this cluster of large villas during the Victorian and Edwardian periods. Salisbury House became the schoolhouse for Milldown, later Blandford, Grammar School.

11. *Dorset/ Orchard Street Housing Estate*. The central square of this housing estate became

filled in during the later 19<sup>th</sup> century with further brick terraces and an Iron Foundry (Lavington 1988, 30).

12. *The Plocks and the Sheep Market*. Blandford retained a very lively Saturday livestock market during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Farmers also came to the 'little market' on Thursdays during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when a sheep fair was held on Sheep Market Hill (Clark 1990).

13. *Church Lane Townhouses*. This block of townhouses remained largely unchanged during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Parish Rooms were built to the north of the Rectory around the turn of the century.

14. *The Crown Hotel*. There was little change to the Crown Hotel during this period. Glasshouses were built within the walled garden on the south side of the hotel at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

15. *Damory Court and Cowards Farms*. Henry Tory built a house at Damory Court Farm in 1901 (Figure 24). He farmed the 500 acres of land here until he died in 1913. Some of the walnut trees planted by him still survive in the housing estate that was subsequently built on his land (Sackett 1984, 83).

16. *Hall and Woodhouse Brewery*. Hector's Brewery was acquired by Hall and Woodhouse of Ansty in 1882 and the Blandford site became their main premises. A new and larger brewery was completed in October 1900 (Figure 22); two months after the original brewery buildings were burnt down. The new complex survives to this day and is a fine example of late Victorian brewery architecture (Stanier 2006).

17. *The Municipal Cemetery*. The cemetery on Salisbury Road was established during the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century about one mile outside the town (Figure 25). The land was purchased by Lord Portman for £500. There are two gothic chapels and a lodge. The cemetery was built on



Figure 24: Damory Court Farm, Salisbury Road.



Figure 25: Blandford Municipal Cemetery, Salisbury Road

the site of the Blandford maze which had been destroyed in 1730 (Cox 2003, 14).

18. *Cemetery Farm*. It appears that this farm was established during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, although it is possible that it existed prior to the cemetery and was renamed at a later date.

19. *The Isolation Hospital*. The Blandford Isolation Hospital was built on Shaftesbury Lane, about one mile NE of the town, sometime between 1885 and 1901.

20. *Blandford Union Workhouse*. Blandford Forum had a workhouse at the end of East Street from at least 1761. Blandford Poor Law Union was formed in 1835. Initially the old workhouse was enlarged to accommodate 250 inmates. The new Union Workhouse was erected on a new site outside the town on Salisbury Road in 1856-7. The building comprised an entrance block (Figure 26), a T-shaped main block and some smaller ancillary buildings (Higginbotham 2006).

21. *Station Suburb*. A new suburb of Victorian and Edwardian terraced houses and suburban villas was constructed on a grid street plan in the vicinity of the railway station following its opening in 1863. The suburb lay between Damory Street in the west and Salisbury Road to the north. A new county police station was built on the corner of Salisbury Road and Edward Street in 1859 (Figure 27) and a candle factory was located on Alfred Street, close to the station.

22. *Blandford Station, Goods Yard and Railway*. Blandford Station was opened on 31 August 1863 on the Somerset and Dorset Railway. The station was one of the largest on the line and included large brick built and stone faced buildings with wooden canopies on both platforms. The platforms were linked by a subway. The goods yard adjoining the station had cattle pens, a corn store, loading docks, a goods shed and a 7 ton crane (Clapcott 2007).



Figure 26: Old Castleman, Castleman's Homes, Salisbury Road; the former entrance block to Blandford Union Workhouse.

Only the Station Master's House survives adjacent to Alexandra Street Bridge (Figure 21).

23. *Station Industrial Area*. A number of small industrial units were established in the vicinity of the Railway Station during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This included a gas works and a plant nursery on Damory Street, and a coal yard and various buildings of unknown function interspersed with terraced housing in the vicinity of the Damory Street and Wimborne Road junction.

24. *Damory Street Schools*. Three schools opened along Damory Street and Park Road during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Milldown Endowed School (later Blandford Grammar School) was established in Salisbury House at the junction of Salisbury Street and Damory Street in 1862. New buildings were erected in 1864. The National School was established in 1834, adjacent to the Recreation Ground on Park Road (Figure 28) and The National girls and infants school on Damory Street was enlarged in 1874 (Cox 1983c Hutchins 1874, 241).

25. *The Cottage Hospital*. The Cottage Hospital opened at Church House on Salisbury Street in 1883 as a small 5-bed establishment. It transferred to the present building on Milldown Road in December 1888. The new building was largely funded by the Portman family (Cox 2003, 27).

26. *White Cliff Mill Street Suburban Villas*. A row of detached and paired villas were built on the west side of White Cliff Mill Street during the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

27. *Park Road Recreation Ground*. A municipal recreation ground was established in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century on Park Road, bounded by Salisbury Road to the south, the railway to the east and the National School to the north. This land was developed for housing prior to 1901. The recreation ground was then moved to its current site at the north end of Park Road, adja-



Figure 27: Darcy Court; the former County Police Station, Salisbury Road.

cent to the Cottage Hospital.

28. *Nordon and Barnes Homes*. A large villa called Nordon was built before 1901 on the north side of Salisbury Road, approximately 150m east of the Union Workhouse. Barnes Homes, on the opposite side of the road, was built by John Barnes at the request of Philip Barnes to provide homes for retired business people of Blandford.



*Figure 28: Former National School building, Park Road*