

5.4 Victorian and Edwardian Wimborne Minster (1847-1913)

5.4.1 Historical Summary

This period begins with the coming of the railway to Wimborne Minster in 1847. In that year the *Southampton to Dorchester Railway* opened, as did Wimborne railway station. The line extended the London to Southampton Line as far as Dorchester but adopted a rather circuitous route; taking in all the larger settlements Brockenhurst, Ringwood, Wimborne Minster, Poole and Wareham. It had been promoted by the Wimborne solicitor Charles Castleman and soon received the nickname of 'Castleman's Corkscrew'. At this time Bournemouth was little more than a few seaside villas only becoming a major seaside resort in the later 19th century. The more direct route from London to Poole via Christchurch and Bournemouth was not opened until 1888, at which point the railway through Wimborne Minster became a minor branch line. The line closed to passenger traffic in 1964 and freight traffic in 1977 (Walmsley 2008).

Initially the construction of new suburbs on the east side of the River Allen took place in the immediate vicinity of the station and included significant commercial and industrial development. A new cattle market was built on the north side of the station, iron works on New Borough Road (Figure 29), Saw Mills and a new Gas Works were also established. The Griffin Hotel (now demolished) served the station itself. The earliest residential developments lay along Poole Road and Leigh Road as well as the newly laid out Old Station Road and New Borough. By 1873 plots had been laid out along the west side of Avenue Road and in 1876 the increasing size of the new suburb necessitated the creation of a new Ecclesiastical parish; St John's (Figure 30). From this

point a large number of Victorian suburban villas were built on Rowlands Hill and the newly laid out St John's Hill (EDDC 2006, 1). Large areas of heath land at Colehill, north of the Victorian suburbs, were also developed during the late 19th century as Country Houses set within extensive parkland estates. Between 1881 and 1891 census returns showed that the population of Wimborne Minster grew from 5,390 to 6,203 with most of the expansion occurring in the Victorian suburbs east of the River Allen. Apart from the industrial and commercial developments in the vicinity of the station, the suburban growth of Wimborne Minster also seems to have stimulated the gravel and clay extraction industries. Large gravel pits appear for the first time in the Colehill area and the substantial Stone Lane Brickworks were established at this time near Walford Bridge. These industries probably served the construction of the Victorian suburban estates and their roads.

These developments facilitated Wimborne Minster's continued success as a regional market town. The evidence from trade directories suggests that Wimborne Minster's retail businesses were thriving and multiplying during the later 19th century.

Many of these businesses were dependant on local produce for the raw materials of their trade. The surrounding region was particularly suitable for rearing sheep, cattle and poultry, a fact reflected in Wimborne Minster's weekly market and annual fairs. The weekly Friday market continued during the 19th century, as well as the annual fairs on Good Friday and September 14th. A monthly market for the auction of cattle and horses also took place in the market by the station (Harrod 1865).

A fire station was established in East Brook



Figure 29: Early 20th century ironworks, New Borough Road.



Figure 30: St John's Church, Leigh Road

during 1903, although this was moved to East Borough by the 1920's (Popham 1983, 94-5).

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 Ebenezer Chapel on Corn Market was enlarged in 1844 and the Independent Chapel on Chapel Lane was enlarged and a schoolroom erected in 1847 (Hutchins 1874, 230). By the end of the century, The Wesleyan Methodist Chapel had been built on King Street and the site of the Ebenezer Chapel on Corn Market had been turned over to a Masonic Hall. The increase in the size of congregations across the town also necessitated the creation of a new municipal cemetery, near Redcotts on the road to Blandford. It was laid out in 1856 along with two mortuary chapels (Figure 31). Later in the 19th century the continually growing congregations led to the establishment of two new churches within the new housing estates. St John's church on Leigh Road was built to serve the new ecclesiastical parish of St John's, created in 1876. A new Baptist Church was also built nearby on Grove Lane.

Wimborne Minster had three schools by 1865; Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School was listed as having six masters including an English Master a French Master and a Drawing Master. The Grammar School building dates from 1851 (Figure 32). The National School on King Street had a single Master and a Mistress. The schoolroom erected adjacent to the Independent Chapel on Chapel Lane in 1847 housed the British School, with a single Master in 1865 (Harrod 1865). Later in the 19th century it was styled a Sunday school. In 1877 a new First School was built adjacent to St John's Church on Leigh Road in order to serve the newly created ecclesiastical parish and expanding community there.

The Poole, Wimborne and Cranborne Turnpike Trust and the Wimborne and Blandford Trust both expired on the 1st of November 1882 (Good 1966, 128; 138).



Figure 31: Mortuary Chapel, Wimborne Cemetery, built 1856

5.4.2 Town Layout

The Victorian era saw rapid and widespread changes to the layout of Wimborne Minster. These changes did not directly affect the layout of the medieval town centre, but served to shift the centre of gravity to the east. The railway cut a broad sweep around the north and west sides of Leigh Common, east of the River Allen, bridging the river Stour 150m east of Canford Bridge. The station was built on a raised embankment 250m north of the river. The line then swept round to the east leaving the study area just north of Leigh Common. New Roads were built initially linking the station to Poole Road. Later suburban development was laid out along straight N-S aligned roads running north and south from Leigh Road. Ancient holloways linking Canford and Eastbrook bridges with Colehill were abandoned and replaced with newly built roads lined with Victorian suburban villas at Rowlands Hill. The fringes of Colehill common were enclosed and developed for country mansions with landscaped parkland estates. There was also an expansion of cottages and suburban villas around Colehill. Roads to the north of Leigh Common were diverted to accommodate the railway. At the turn of the century a row of suburban villas and allotment gardens were established along the southern edge of the Common.

There were also significant changes on the west side of the River Allen, mostly outside the medieval town centre to the north west. Fields west of Redcotts Lane were turned over to extensive allotment gardens, a large municipal cemetery was established on Cemetery Road in 1856. A large brickworks was established on the north side of Stone Lane. The Victoria Cottage Hospital was built next to St Margaret's Almshouses on Victoria Road and suburban housing grew up around the fringes of the medieval town at Walford, Victoria Road and Julian's Road.



Figure 32: Former Grammar School, Grammar School Lane, built 1851

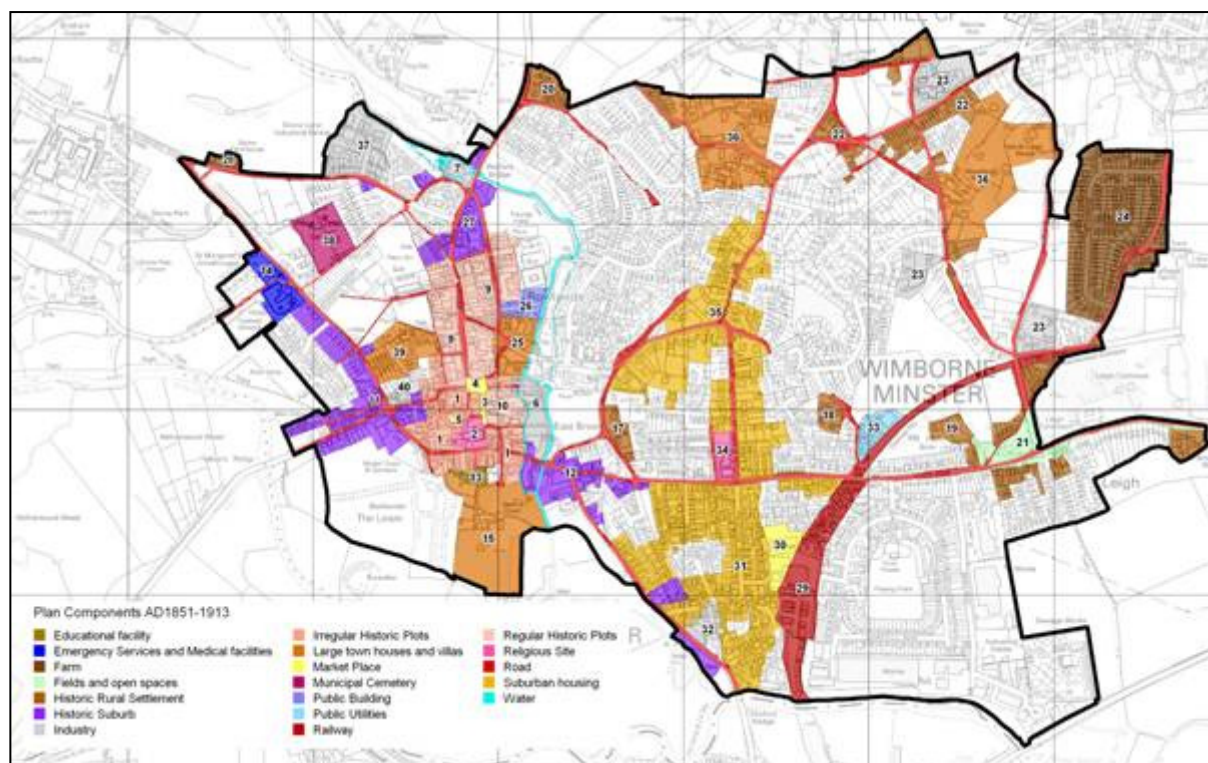


Figure 33: 19th and early 20th Century Plan Components

5.4.3 Victorian and Edwardian Town Plan Components

The main plan components of eighteenth and nineteenth century town are shown on Figure 33 and are listed below.

1. *Town Plots.* The town centre plots in general retained their post-medieval pattern during the later 19th century. A number of important buildings were constructed during this time notably the Gothic Church House, built in 1905; the classically designed Lloyds Bank built circa 1872; and the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel on King Street, built in 1869 and taken down in 1966.

2. *The College and Minster.* The North and South Chapels were almost entirely rebuilt during restorations in 1855. The nave clearstory was also rebuilt in 1857 (RCHME V 1975, 81). Church House was constructed during 1905 in a Gothic style from similar materials to the adjacent Minster (Willis & Willis 1990, no.80).

3. *High Street.* Despite the construction of a new Cattle Market adjacent to the station, High Street continued as the site of the town's weekly market during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

4. *The Square.* At the beginning of the 19th century the whole area formerly occupied by St Peter's Chapel and the later town hall was opened up as a square and market place.

5. *The Corn Market.* The Ebenezer Methodist Chapel was removed and replaced with a Masonic Hall during the late 19th century.

6. *Town Mill.* The complex of industrial buildings at the Town Mill brewery site were constructed during the mid-late 19th century. They survive largely intact to this day, although they have been sensitively converted into small retail outlets and offices.

7. *Walford Mill.* There was little change to the Walford Mill site during the later 19th century.

9. *The Borough.* The Borough changed little during the later 19th and early 20th centuries, except for the loss of 12 thatched houses in a single hour on East Borough during 1864. This event was caused by one of the worst fires in Wimborne Minster's history. The National Westminster Bank building was built on West Borough around the middle of the 19th century.

10. *High Street Burgages.* There was little discernible change to the High Street burgage plots during this period.

11. *The Western Suburb.* The western suburb expanded considerably during the later 19th century. This included the construction of semi-detached suburban villas along Julian Road and Victoria Road. The Julian Brewery on Pye Corner was established and expanded during this period. A new Vicarage was also built on King Street.

12. *Eastbrook Suburb.* This suburb also saw significant developments during the mid-late 19th century; partly in response to the arrival of the railway. The Tanyard on the River Allen was converted to a malthouse and a second malthouse was built on Poole Road. The Minster Carriage

Works were established on or close to the site of the former Gas Works, which were themselves moved to a larger site close to the railway. A Police Station was built on Poole Road and a new building and shop built in the Georgian Style at the corner of Leigh and Poole Roads.

13. *Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School*. The current school building dates from 1851. It was designed by Morris and Ebson in Red Brick and Bath Stone. It is a large building with a symmetrical and imposing frontage in the Tudor Style, chosen because the school was founded during that period (Newman and Pevsner 1972, 466).

14. *St Margaret's Hospital*. The Victoria Cottage Hospital was built adjacent to St Margaret's Almshouses in 1887. The land had been given at a peppercorn rent by Sir John Hanham and built at a cost of £1250 (Willis & Willis 1990, no. 75).

15. *Deans Court*. The medieval hall and the room adjoining it to the south were rebuilt in 1868 along with a West Hall and the West Front (RCHME V1975, 86).

17. *Lewens*. There was little discernible change to Lewens during the later 19th and early 20th centuries. A single storey lean to building was added to the rear of the main wing of Lewens House during the 19th century.

18. *Green Close Farm*. There was little discernible change to Green Close Farm during this period.

19. *Old Manor Farm*. There was little discernible change to Old Manor Farm during this period.

20. *Walford Farm*. There was little discernible change to Walford Farm during this period.

21. *Leigh Common*. A short row of semi-detached suburban villas were built during the late 19th century, fronting on to the south side of Leigh Common (numbers 164-194 Leigh Road).

22. *Colehill*. A small group of detached and semi-detached suburban villas were constructed within the triangle formed by Wimborne Road, Beaucroft Road and Beaucroft Lane during the late 19th century.

23. *Colehill Clay and Gravel Pits*. The expansion of the clay and gravel extraction industry in the Colehill area during the early to mid 19th century may be linked to the development of the railway and Victorian suburbs. Old gravel pits are recorded on late 19th century Ordnance Survey maps at the south end of North Leigh Lane and on Wimborne Road. Old clay pits are also recorded on the west side of Beaucroft Lane. Brick-making was recorded as an occupation within Colehill parish during the late 19th century (Divall 1996, 2)

24. *Leigh Vinery*. Cottage Farm was transformed into a commercial vinery with grapes grown under extensive green houses around the turn of the century. They were in existence by 1903 when they are listed as a commercial concern in Kelly's Directory.

25. *Allendale and East Borough Town Houses*. There was little discernible change to these buildings during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

26. *The Workhouse*. The workhouse buildings were added to during 1868 and demolished in 1958 (Higginbotham 2006).

27. *Walford Suburb*. The late 19th century saw the further subdivision and development of plots within the Walford area. Much of this development was in the form of cottages, although a commercial plant nursery grew up on the west side of East Borough.

28. *Stone Farm*. Some outbuildings appear to have been added to Stone Farm during the later 19th century.

29. *The Railway*. The *Southampton and Dorchester Railway* was built in 1847 and later formed part of the *London and South West Railway*. It formed the main line from London to Dorchester and Weymouth until 1893. The track was raised up on an embankment for much of its route through Wimborne and Leigh Common and the area around the station also included a large raised goods and marshalling yard. The main station buildings were built in brick and lay on the western platform on the up line to London. The large goods yard was on the eastern side of the station. The line was also open to trains from the *Somerset and Dorset Joint Railway* between 1860 and 1920.

30. *The Cattle Market*. At the northern end of the up platform of Wimborne Station there were sidings to take cattle to and from the cattle market built on the north side of the Station. Harrods directory of 1865 records that there was a monthly market for the sale of cattle in Wimborne Minster; suggesting that the new market by the station was open by that time. The market comprised two main buildings, byres and several rows of sheep pens by the end of the 19th century.

31. *New Borough Suburb*. The construction of the railway created a triangular area bounded by Leigh Road on the north side, Poole Road on the west and the railway to the east. This was largely developed for suburban housing during the late 19th century, although there are also areas of inter-war and modern infill. The earliest developments were along Old Station Road and New Borough and included a significant number of terraced houses as well as semi-detached villas.

Later development was along two newly laid out parallel roads called The Grove and The Avenue (Figure 34), as well as along established routes such as Leigh Road, Poole Road and St Catherine's Road. The plots along the west side of The Avenue were laid out for development by 1873 and large suburban villas were built here. Thomas Hardy lived at 16 The Avenue for two years in 1881-3.

32. *The Station Industrial Area.* A saw mills and an iron works were established on the south side of New Borough Road during the late 19th century. The Iron works were expanded and refaced in 1905 (Figure 35).

33. *Green Close Lane Gas Works.* The 1865 Harrod's Directory notes that the Wimborne Minster Gasometer had been enlarged at a cost of £350 in order to increase the supply of gas to the town, which had formerly been deficient. This probably records the construction of a new gas works adjacent to the railway at Green Close Lane visible on late 19th century Ordnance Survey maps.

34. *St John's Church and School.* The growing population of the suburbs east of the River Allen, following the opening of the railway, led to the creation of a new ecclesiastical parish of St John's in 1876. St John's Church at the junction of Leigh Road and St John's Hill was built in that year and St John's School was built adjacent to it in the following year. The church is red brick built in the Neo-Gothic style.

35. *Rowland's and St John's Hill.* The development of these areas for Victorian suburban villas followed on from the creation of the separate ecclesiastical parish of St John's in 1876. These large detached houses were built in orange-red brick, sometimes in the neo-gothic style and were located within large plots. They were occupied by retired officers and the professional classes.

36. *Colehill Country Houses.* Following the arrival of the railway, sites on Colehill became highly desirable for the wealthy to build large country

villas. The hill slope was south facing, commanded fine views and the air was clean and fresh. The initial spate of country house building occurred in two separate areas; Northleigh and Beaucroft (built in 1862 and 1876 respectively); and Bells, Onslow and Highlands built in 1883-4.

37. *Stone Lane Brickworks.* Substantial brickworks were established on Stone Lane, close to Walford, north of the town centre during the mid-late 19th century. This is likely to have supplied a large quantity of the bricks used for the various Victorian suburban developments around the town. Towards the turn of the 20th century a short brick terrace and a pair of semi-detached houses had been built on Stone Lane.

38. *Wimborne Cemetery.* The expansion of the town's population following the arrival of the railway necessitated the construction of a new, larger cemetery. The new cemetery was opened in 1856 together with two identical chapels, one for non-conformists and the other for the Church of England congregation. The lodge on Cemetery Road is probably contemporary.

39. *Westfield.* Westfield was built during the mid 19th century on land off Redcotts Lane, with improved access along a former alley to West Borough. The house does not appear on the Tithe Map of 1847, although people are recorded as living there.

40. *Julian's Brewery.* This brewery was located at the back of the Three Lions Inn on Pye Corner. The business seems to have expanded during the late 19th century when Julian's brewery, owned by George Habgood and Son, also owned the Malt and Hops pub in Pokesdown.



Figure 34: View north along the Avenue



Figure 35: Former iron works, New Borough Road, enlarged and refaced in 1906.