Large print guide

People's Dorset
Part 2

Please do not remove from the gallery and return it back to the holder

Dorset
Museum

Visitor Journey

Hello and welcome to People's Dorset. This guide will help you navigate around the gallery and contains large print introductory texts and object captions for each of the sections you will pass through.

We apologise if some of the objects have been removed from display or they have changed. Manuscripts fade if exposed to too much light so we rotate them and replace with facsimiles when required.

This gallery explores key themes of land, sea and community that have shaped the county's history for thousands of years. It is divided into six spaces, which are described below:

People Stories – a selection of objects from different time periods link the different sections through themes of land, sea and community in Dorset. Many tell stories of events and people who have made an impact on the social, cultural and rural history of the county.
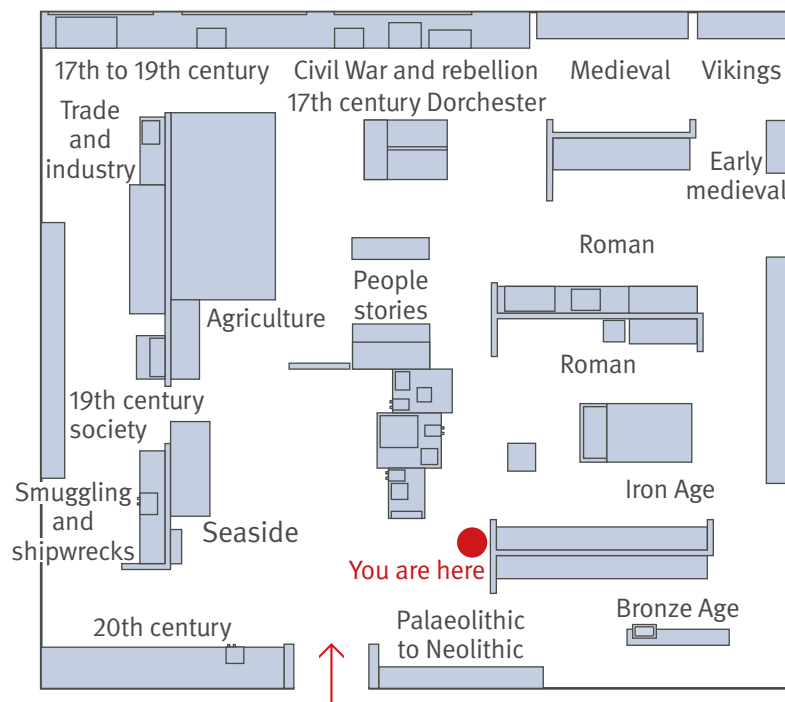
Archaeology – be amazed by some of Britain's most valuable archaeological treasures, stretching back to the Palaeolithic including hand axes, gold neck rings from the Bronze Age, Roman coins and fine jewellery.

Sound point   Please touch

17th to 19th century
Trade and industry

Civil War and rebellion
17th century Dorchester

Medieval   Vikings

Early medieval

Agriculture

People stories

Roman

Roman

19th century society

Smuggling and shipwrecks

Seaside

You are here

Iron Age

20th century

Palaeolithic to Neolithic

Bronze Age

Medieval – meet some of the earliest named people in Dorset, find out about objects from castles, manors and churches and discover treasures including the beautifully preserved Wool altar frontal.

16th, 17th and 18th centuries – objects and paintings on display tell stories about significant people and events including the defence of Corfe Castle during the Civil War, Dorchester's Puritan movement led by John White and landowners involved in the slave trade.

18th and 19th century – a sweep through the history of some of the most significant transformations that affected Dorset people from mechanisation and the railways to law and order and education. You can also find out about smuggling and shipwrecks.

20th century – Discover some of the inspiring people, inventions, creativity and enterprise that helped shape Dorset's history in the 20th century.

We hope that you enjoy your visit, which starts here:
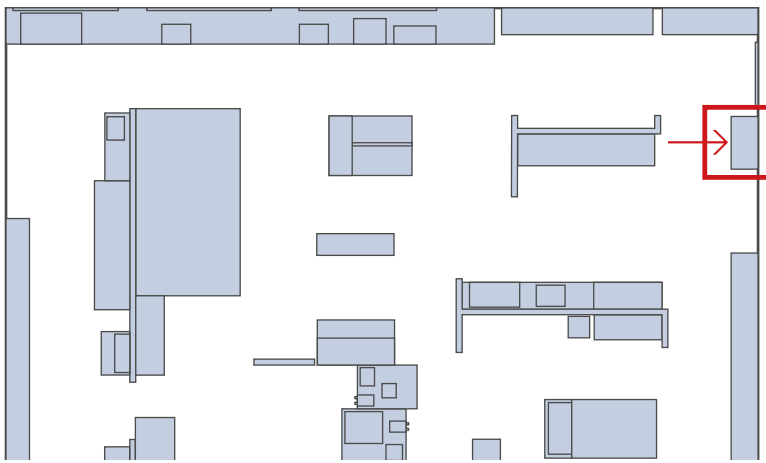
In the showcase:

Early medieval

c.410–1066 CE

After Rome

After the end of formal Roman rule in 410 CE 'Roman' objects disappeared from circulation.

Change was gradual. Fewer recognisable artefacts does not mean fewer people, but it is more difficult for us to find where they lived. There are glimpses of continuity into the 5th century and beyond. People continued to be buried in the Dorchester cemeteries and there was settlement at Alington Avenue. Newly made cemeteries dating from the 6th and 8th centuries were organised in ways that harked back to the Roman era.

Unlike neighbouring areas, Dorset does not generally have typically 'Saxon' burials. This implies that local people made up most of the population.

The kingdom of Wessex

From the late 7th century Dorset became part of the growing kingdom of Wessex. This influence is seen in the new monasteries and churches that appeared.

King Ine set up a monastery for his sister at Wimborne in 705 CE. Fordington at Dorchester became a royal estate. In the early 9th century King Brihtric was buried at another nunnery at Wareham, which had been created as a burh, a defended early town.

Coinage reappeared. Minting was controlled by kings, generally within burhs. The economy was changing, with laws on landholding, evidence of a watermill at Worgret near Wareham and iron working at Bestwall. Many of the villages in today's landscape have their origins in the 9th and 10th centuries.

External threats from neighbouring kingdoms affected the development of Wessex. After 840 CE the county suffered Viking incursions. The Great Army of Guthrum wintering in Wareham in 879 CE was one of the lowest moments of the reign of King Alfred the Great.

On the back panel and in the showcase:

The kingdom of Wessex

Documentary evidence increases from the late 7th century onward, largely because of land transactions. At the same time, the number of recognisable objects also grew.

1
Charter of King Edgar

A charter granting a retainer of around 90 acres of land in Cheselbourne. The main body of the text is in Latin but the boundaries and extent of the land are recorded in Old English.
695 CE

D/FSI/ASC/1
Loaned by Ilchester Estates Archive at Dorset History Centre

2
The Wareham Sword

Made from silver, bronze and horn, this sword was found in the River Frome. The name engraved on it begins 'Aethel...', a name only associated with the aristocracy.
Wareham
10th to 11th century CE

1927.6.1

3
Silver ingot

Ingots like this one were used as bullion for making payments or as raw material for working into finished metal goods.
Over Compton
Late 8th to 9th century CE

2002.53

4

Silver penny of Coenwulf

Coenwulf was king of Mercia, and this coin found in Winterborne Kingston demonstrates the influence of Mercia in Wessex in the early 9th century.
c.796–821 CE

2006.8

5

Penny of Aethelred II 'The Unready'

Shaftesbury mint
c.979–1016 CE

RD.1993

6

Silver pennies of Cnut

Winchester Mint and Cerne Abbas
c.1016–1035 CE

M.1213, 1943.19.1

7

Silver penny of Edward the Confessor

The son of Aethelred the Unready, Edward is usually considered the last king of the House of Wessex.
1042–1066 CE

RD.1963

8
The Knowlton Jewel

A gold jewel of domed circular section decorated with beaded wire, centred by a blue glass cabochon stone. The tapering short socket terminates in similar beadwork. The narrow socket would have held an ivory or wood rod or pointer. It was most likely a pointer used in reading, and therefore probably associated with a monastery. It was possibly a product of the court workshops of Alfred the Great.
Knowlton
9th century CE
On loan from the British Museum
1993,0102.1

Post-Roman burial

The Black Burnished ware industry continued into the 5th century. Some imports also came in.

9
Stone anchor used as a pillow in a grave

This is the only anchor of this type from an excavated context in Britain. The overlying burial was radiocarbon dated to 625–663 cal AD.
Worth Matravers
1997.54

Saxon style

'Saxon'-style objects from this period are rare. They are mainly found in the north-east part of Dorset. This group of weapons from Hardown Hill, dating from the 6th century CE is what one might see in Germanic burials to the east of Dorset, but the fish pattern on one spearhead is almost unique.

10
Iron axe, spearheads and shield boss

1947.7.13, 1947.7.2, 1947.7.4, 1947.7.1

11
Pyramidal strap fitting

Used on the leather strap securing a weapon, this gold, garnet and blue glass fitting was a high-status object of Germanic origin.
Puddletown
7th century CE

2006.3 (RD.1991)
Purchased with support from the Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund

12
Saxon-style copper alloy buckle

This buckle was of western British manufacture.
Corrosion preserved an imprint of fabric, probably linen.
Worth Matravers
7th century CE

2012.18

13

Bronze buckle, found at the waist of a man buried in a Bronze Age barrow

Launceston Down, Long Crichel
7th century CE
1962.8.44

14

Silver proto hand pin

4th to 6th century CE
2019.19

15

Germanic style glass bowl fragment

A low drinking vessel with molten glass trailed around it for decoration, it is rare outside the south-east of England.
Olds Garage, Dorchester
6th to 7th century CE
2014.32

16

South East Dorset Orange Wiped Ware

Elements of the Black Burnished Ware industry continued into the 5th century. These strange pots often had open bases and pierced sides.
Dorchester
Mid-4th to 5th century CE
RD.1990, RD.2907

17

The Charminster Grave Group

Graves with Saxon-style objects are very rare in Dorset. The items in this group are more like those seen in graves in south-east and eastern England.

Silver crescent-shaped object, probably an earring

Annular blue glass bead

Disc-shaped gold pendant with filigree cruciform ornament and garnet

Fragments of bone comb

Charminster
7th century CE

2019.14.1-4

18

Lead pendant with red glass setting

The design of this pendant is similar to the one in the Charminster Grave Group.
Alington Avenue, Dorchester
5th to 8th century CE

1991.89

In the drawer:

Becoming part of Wessex

Objects in the latest styles spread across Dorset. There are many more late Saxon objects known than those dating to the earlier period.

1
Buckle plate

Tarrant Hinton
8th to 9th century CE

2019.13
Purchased with support from the Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the Headley Trust

2
Silver hooked tag

With zoomorphic and plant decoration.
Owermoigne
9th century CE

2019.17

3
Silver and niello mount

An incomplete mount originally cruciform in shape, inlaid with niello (metal sulphide) decoration.
Pimperne
9th century CE

2019.11

4

A silver penny of Edward the Confessor modified as a brooch

Minted in Wareham this coin was modified as a religious symbol.
Bere Regis
Mid-1060s CE

2019.15

5

Gold strip brooch

A closed loop and an open hook represent the remains of a pin mechanism, decorated with a border of triangular notches.
Blandford
8th century CE

2019.10

6

Silver ring with animal decoration

An animal and interlace pattern is typical of Trewhiddle art. This sophisticated decorative style was popular throughout the 9th century.
Winterborne Whitechurch
9th century CE

2002.51

7
Silver hooked tag

This tag for fastening clothing was engraved with a flower and stem motif. Inlaid with niello, which has worn away.
Tarrant Hinton
9th century CE

2006.28

8
Bronze strap-end for leather belt

This strap end was decorated with an animal head design. It would have been attached to a leather belt or strap to prevent fraying.
Bestwall, Wareham
9th century CE

2013.52 (RD.2003)

9
Bronze mount

The pattern on this mount is a Scandinavian style known as Ringerike.
Bestwall, Wareham
11th century CE

2013.52 (RD.2000)

10
Silver ring

Four rows of triangles are punched into the metal, a typically Scandinavian decoration. There are two metal testing nicks in the folded end, suggesting the ring was deliberately compressed as bullion.
Shaftesbury
9th to mid-10th century CE

2012.33

In the drawer:

Spetisbury Rings

Weapons of Germanic type are not common in Dorset. These came from Spetisbury Rings, an Iron Age hillfort, which may have been reused in the early medieval period. However, they were not systematically excavated so their full context is not understood. The spearheads have angular, sword-like blades. Traces of the original wood can be seen inside the shafts. The scramasax was the typical 'Saxon' weapon of the 6th or 7th century CE, a short single-edged slashing and stabbing weapon.

1
Iron spearhead

2005.4.5

2
Iron scramasax

2005.4.2

3

Iron scramasax

2005.4.1

4

Iron spearhead

2005.4.7

5
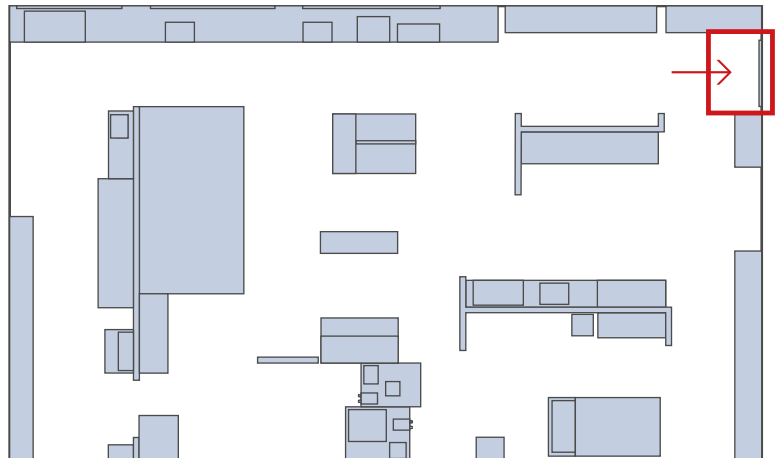
Iron spearhead

2005.4.6

6

Iron spearhead

2005.4.4

On the wall:

Early Medieval

c.410–1066 CE

The Ridgeway Vikings

During the construction of the Weymouth Relief Road in 2009, a mass grave was discovered. It was located where the original Roman road crossed the highest point of the South Dorset Ridgeway. The remains displayed here represent a group of more than 50 men buried there.

The men were beheaded. Their bodies were thrown into a disused quarry pit and their heads placed in a separate heap. They suffered excessive violence at the end, the injuries showing that in most cases it took more than one blow to kill them.

Radiocarbon dating has shown that they died in the late 10th or early 11th century CE. Chemical analysis revealed that they came from Scandinavia. They were Vikings. There is no obvious historical event to link these deaths to, but there were several Viking attacks on the Dorset coast.

Watch the film to your left to find out more about the discovery and excavation of the Viking remains. Ongoing scientific research is giving us more insight into who they were and what happened to them.
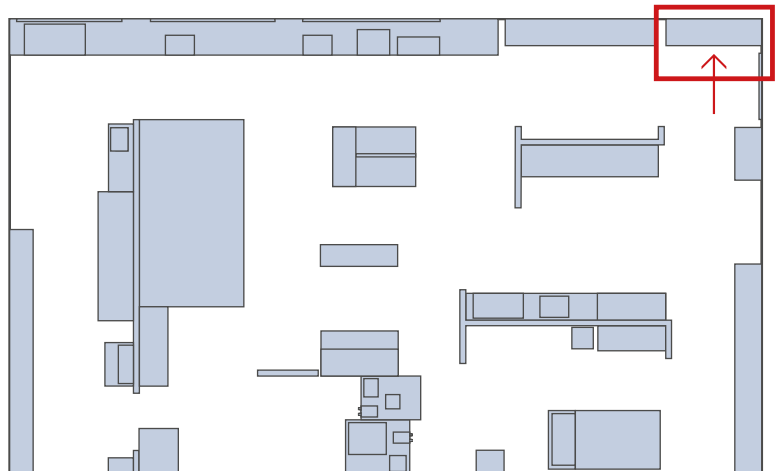
In the showcase:

Studying the Vikings

Analysis of the Vikings' skeletons helps us understand who they were and what happened to them. Most were young men in their late teens and early 20s. Chemical analysis shows that they did not all come from the same place.

They were all from the Arctic and sub-arctic areas of Scandinavia, Iceland and the Baltic. Several men were in poor health. This challenges our view of Viking warriors as strong and fit, but we know many Vikings were merchants rather than fighters.

Continuing research is helping explain how they died. No objects were found with them, which indicates that they were naked when they were killed. The bones show the results of heavy cuts, probably from a sword used to behead them. This was not neat or systematic. 3D scanning technology is also revealing that some of the men had their throats slit.

Viking remains

Here are a selection of the human remains found in the mass-burial. Analysis by researchers at Bournemouth University is helping us to understand more about the men who were killed.

1
Remains of a 30–40 year old man

He had lived with slight spinal curvature (scoliosis) and had an infection in the sacrum, possibly tuberculosis or brucellosis. There are cuts to his neck and collarbone.

2015.26/3715

2
Remains of a 17–20 year old man

He was already showing degenerative changes in his spine, and had developmental abnormalities in his hands and feet. He had suffered an infection in his leg. There are numerous cuts to the neck and collarbone.

2015.26/3763

3
Remains of a 35–45 year old man

He had osteoarthritis in his spine, and had previously injured a finger and rib. He suffered numerous cuts to his right arm and hand, possibly whilst trying to defend himself, as well as cuts to his neck and collarbone.

2015.26/3778

4
Skull and jaw of a 25–30 year old man

Cuts on the underside of the jaw were caused when he was decapitated. The completeness of his skull allowed a reconstruction of his appearance.

2015.26/3761

5
Skull and jaw of a 24–27 year old man

He suffered four blows to the head from above. Irregularities in the edges of the cuts show the blows were delivered with a sword that had a nick in the blade.

2015.26/3738

6
Skull and jaw of an 18–25 year old man

Two cuts on the skull and several to the lower and back parts of the jaw were caused when a blade passed through this man's neck.

2015.26/3704

7
Neck vertebra of a 17–18 year old man

There are multiple cuts across these three neck vertebrae, showing that there were several attempts to decapitate this young man.

2015.26/3742

8
Cervical vertebra from a 25–35 year old man

Two fine cuts on the front of the bone are probably the result of the man's throat being cut.

2015.26/3764

9
Left femur from an adult

The shaft of bone is swollen by an internal infection.
The rounded holes formed when pus escaped from inside.
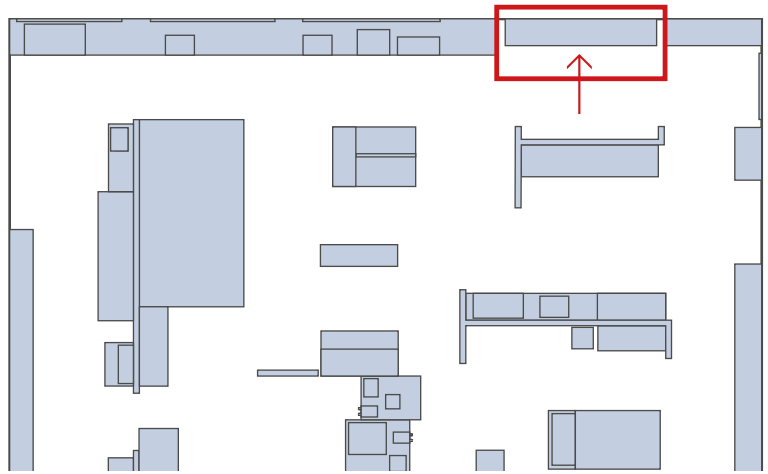This infection was long standing, and would have been
very painful.

2015.26/3681

10
Cervical vertebra from a 25–35 year old man

Several fine cuts across the front of the bone are the result of three slices across the man's neck.

2015.26/3707

In the showcase:

Medieval

1066–1539

Land and power

After the Norman invasion of 1066, William I and his barons seized most of Dorset's land from the English elite. The Church kept two fifths of it. The Normans built castles, churches and manors. Estates were large, based on early medieval boundaries. Peasants were tied to the land through the feudal system.

From the 12th century the population grew and more of the land was farmed. Sheep and crops dominated economic life. Towns expanded and trade through Dorset harbours increased. Then came the plague, which entered England through Weymouth in 1348. It caused devastation and a decline in the population. Many farmers turned to grazing livestock because it needed less labour than growing crops.

The Church played a major part in medieval life. Monasteries were endowed with land so they could offer prayer, education and hospitals. Parish churches stood at the centre of local communities, which supported priests to pray for the souls of their dead.

Norman castle building

The Normans built an extensive network of castles across England, including at Sherborne, Dorchester and Corfe. They were used for military and administrative purposes, as well as homes for barons. Sherborne Castle was built in the early 12th century by Bishop Roger of Salisbury.

On the back panel and table top:

1

Dorset and Domesday Book

Between 1086 and 1087 the Normans compiled Domesday Book. It includes the first survey of economic life in Dorset. It shows that the county was made up of large estates, and that sheep were the most important livestock. More than 300 settlements and towns were recorded – Sherborne was the wealthiest. Some county boroughs were allowed to mint coins.

Reproduction from original manuscript
The National Archives, ref. E31/2/1 f.75r

2

Silver pennies minted across Dorset

Mints were needed to supply coins for the trading that took place in towns. They also spread the image of the monarch. These William I silver pennies were minted between 1066 and 1087 in Shaftesbury, Bridport and Wareham.

1066–1087

RD.1964-1968

Above on wall

Carved hamstone heads from Sherborne Castle

Heads like these are a typical feature of other Bishop Roger buildings too, including Old Sarum in Salisbury. The stone was quarried from Ham Hill in Somerset.

12th century

1986.208

Above on wall

South view of Sherborne Castle

The original Sherborne Castle was destroyed in the 17th century during the English Civil War. This engraving shows a romantic view of its ruins. A new castle was built a few decades after the war ended and became the home of the Digby family.

Samuel and Nathaniel Buck

1733

1961.37.6

3

Ceramic jug from Sherborne Castle

If you look closely at this jug you can see an illustration of a steelyard balance. Balances were used for trading steel, and the image highlights the castle's economic role.
13th to 14th century

1986.296

4

Jug fragment from Sherborne Castle

The human face pictured on this piece of ceramic may have been part of the decoration on a jug. It was possibly one of four faces, fixed just below the rim.
Probably Laverstock kilns, Wiltshire
13th century

1986.208

Christianity in medieval Dorset

The Normans developed the existing structure of the Church in Dorset. The Benedictine abbeys set up in the early medieval period still dominated religious and economic life, but they had new abbots and bishops from Normandy.

New religious orders arrived from the second half of the 12th century. They founded religious houses, schools and hospitals to meet the needs of a growing population. The most important were orders that emphasised preaching, including the Franciscans and Dominicans. New parish churches in the Romanesque style replaced the early medieval 'minster' churches. An integral part of medieval life, they were richly decorated with colourful wall paintings.

On the back panel and table top:

Above on wall

Stone corbel from Bindon Abbey

A Cistercian monastery at Bindon Hill was founded in 1149.
It moved to a new home near Wool in 1172.
Mid-12th century

RD.1970

1
Magus from the *Adoration of the Magi*

Three wise men, or magi, are said to have visited Christ soon after his birth. This one is shown carrying a vessel containing his offering, and is made of carved walrus ivory.
Mid-12th century

1901.2

2
Limoges figure

Discovered in Tolpuddle in 1999, this small bronze figure with gilding and blue enamel decoration was probably originally attached as decoration on a casket or box. It was made in Limoges in central France, known for producing religious objects with enamel decoration in the 12th and 13th century.
13th century

1999.41

3
The Coombe Keynes chalice

This silver parcel-gilt chalice is one of the finest examples of pre-Reformation church silverware in Britain.
Probably 16th century

Loaned by the Church of the Holy Rood, Wool
LI.2014.14

4

The Chideock censer

The censer (incense burner) was found buried in a wall of the Priest's House in Chideock in 1810. Chideock belonged to the Arundel family, who remained Catholic after the Reformation.
Probably 16th century

On loan from the Trustees of Chideock Manor Chapel
LI.2014.12

5

Seal matrix and impression from Wimborne Minster

The pelican is pecking her breast to feed her young with her own blood. This image was often used from the 12th century onwards to symbolise the Passion of Jesus – his crucifixion and death. The inscription is in Lombardic lettering. It translates as 'Jesus me smite smart deep into the heart'.
Late 15th century

DNHAS.1887

6

Mosaic fragment

Saint Cuthburga, sister of King Ine of Wessex, founded Wimborne Minster around 700 CE as a monastery for monks and nuns. This mosaic fragment is thought to come from her shrine in the abbey. It is in the Italian Cosmatesque style, which was used on mosaic pavements and church furnishings from the 12th to 14th century.
Mid-13th century

2016.3

Changing society

Dorset's wool, flax and hemp industries made cloth, ropes and nets. Their products supported other industries, such as fishing and sailing, which helped expand the county's medieval towns and ports.

Town charters gave citizens of these places the right to certain privileges, including holding a market for trading. The markets and seasonal fairs encouraged more people to travel from the countryside to towns. A new port opened at Poole in the 13th century and trade increased through Lyme Regis, Weymouth and Melcombe Regis. Peasants and urban labourers worked hard to survive, while the wealth of the county's merchant and landed classes grew.

On the table top:

1
Charter of King Edward I

Only a few hundred people lived in Dorchester at the time of the Norman invasion. The town grew slowly over the next few centuries. This charter gave the town the right to have a prison.
1305

Reproduction from original manuscript
Dorset History Centre, ref. DC-DOB/A/1/1

Pottery

From the 13th century more people could access goods from Dorset and beyond. Local potteries produced practical vessels for cooking and serving food and drink.

2
Baluster jug

Dorchester
13th to 14th century

1992.36.20

3
Cooking pot

12th to 14th century

1976.7

4
Seals for labourer passes

After the plague devastated Dorset, many peasants left their homes to find better-paid work. From 1388 they had to produce a letter explaining why they were leaving. The letters, or passes, were authenticated with a seal showing where the labourer had come from. These seals were issued by the estates of Bindon Abbey and Dorchester.
14th century

RD.2883-2884

5

Poole admiralty seal impression

The one-masted sailing vessel on this impression from a seal matrix highlights Poole's importance as a busy port. From 1433 the town controlled the collection of customs duties along the whole Dorset coast.

14th century

RD.2882

Floor tiles from the church of Dorchester Friary

Dorchester Friary was founded by the Franciscan order in the mid-13th century. It stood on the banks of the River Frome. Its friars lived simply and preached directly to the poor who lived in the growing towns nearby.

6

Tile decorated with a lion

c.1280

1987.79.7

7

Tile decorated with church façade and cinquefoil flowers

c.1300

1987.79.15

Left

Jousting helm and sword

Jousting was a popular spectator sport. Tournaments were held on special occasions to give young nobles a chance to display their fighting skills. This helm and sword were used by a knight of the Browning family. Until the Second World War they were displayed in the private chapel of the Melbury Sampford estate.

1480–1483

On loan from The Ilchester Estate
Ll.2019.14

Symbols of wealth

These small items of jewellery and clothing accessories point to the wealth of a section of Dorset society in the 15th and 16th centuries. Opportunities to demonstrate riches went beyond standard jewellery to dress fittings, embellished weapons and even horse equipment.

1
Silver scabbard chape

Owermoigne
15th to 17th century

2019.21
Purchased with support from the Arts Council England/
V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the Headley Trust

2
Silver-gilt iconographic ring

Tarrant Crawford
15th century

2019.18

3
Gold gem-set finger ring

Osmington
15th to 16th century

2019.12
Purchased with support from the Arts Council England/
V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the Headley Trust

4
Silver-gilt dress hook with filigree decoration

West Knighton
16th century

2019.16

The Reformation

The English Protestant Reformation of the 1530s dramatically altered religious life and wider society in Dorset.

Henry VIII had broken with the Church over his divorce from Catherine of Aragon. All monasteries were dissolved from 1539 onwards. Some wealthy families established themselves further by buying land that had been owned by the Church.

Abbeys and churches around the country were devastated, as wall paintings, ceremonial silver and stained glass with obviously religious images were destroyed or repurposed. Parish churches stayed in use, gradually adopting Protestant theology and becoming part of the Church of England.

On the table top:

Above on wall

Altar frontal

This embroidered panel used to hang on the front of an altar. It is thought to have been made from at least three medieval vestments that were hidden after the Reformation and sewn together later. The vestments may have come from Bindon Abbey and were probably made from Italian velvet and embroidered in England. The panel was used at Wool Church for many years before being placed in the Museum for safekeeping in 1886.
15th century

On loan from The Vicar and Parochial Church Council (PCC)
of Holy Rood Church
LI.2014.15

1
The Sturminster Marshall chalice

Creative thinking helped protect some precious items during the Reformation. This one escaped destruction because the stem was modified to make it smaller and less decorative.
It is one of the latest surviving pieces of Church silver made in England before the Reformation.
1536

On loan from Salisbury Cathedral with the permission of the Vicar and
PCC of St Mary's Church, Sturminster Marshall
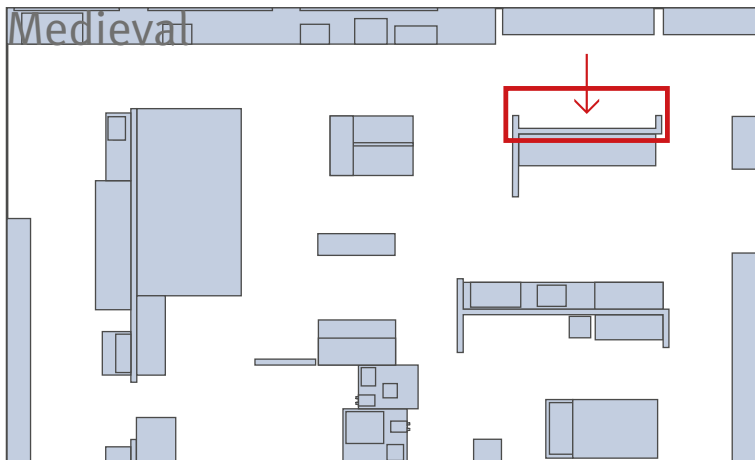LI.2015.1

2

Altar panel fragment

The alabaster altar panel that this piece is from probably showed Christ appearing to the apostles after the Resurrection. It may have come from Milton Abbey and been damaged during the Reformation.
Nottingham School
Late 14th century

1967.5

On the wall:

Medieval People

6th to 13th century CE

The earliest named people we know of in Dorset were associated with the royal court or the Church. This was because the church and government produced the only written sources that record names.

Dorset was the home of several early saints. There was a strong relationship between the royal families of Wessex and the Church. Many early abbesses and abbots of monasteries were members of the royal family.

People's names were also recorded because they were involved in the key events of the time, including invasions and murders.

St Witta
(possibly 6th or 7th century CE)

Very little is known about Witta. Her name means white. She may be St Gwen, a 6th century Breton hermit, whose name is Welsh for white. During the 9th century King Alfred founded a church at Whitchurch Canonicorum, which was already named after her. Her bones are the only saint's relics still in their original shrine in an English parish church.

St Aldhelm
(c.639–709 CE)

Aldhelm started life in Malmesbury, and studied in Canterbury with teachers sent by the Pope. A skilled scholar, he took part in the most controversial religious disputes of the day. He became abbot of Malmesbury's monastery in 675, and the first Bishop of Sherborne in 705. He travelled around Dorset, and founded a church – possibly St Aldhelm's chapel at Worth Matravers.

St Juthware
(possibly 7th century CE)

In legend, Juthware was a pious girl. Her stepbrother was tricked into believing she had given birth, and cut off her head in a rage. The head called to Juthware's body, which then rose, carried it to a church and laid it on the altar. Juthware is linked with Halstock, and her relics were housed at Sherborne Abbey from the 10th century.

Ine, king of Wessex
(c.670–after 726 CE)

Ine became king in 689. He is best known for one of the earliest sets of English laws, covering land, property, and crimes such as murder. These laws were applied differently to English people, who were of Germanic descent, and his British subjects. Ine was a Christian king, and abdicated in 726 to make a pilgrimage to Rome.

St Cuthberga
(died 718 CE)

Cuthberga was the sister of King Ine, who founded the double monastery at Wimborne Minster. She and her sister Cwenburh were the founding abbesses. Cuthberga had been married to Aldfrith, the king of Northumbria, but left him to become a nun. To preserve her reputation for chastity, she would only speak to visiting priests through a small hatch.

Beaduheard
(died 789 CE)

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle says that the first three Danish (Viking) ships landed in England in 789, at Portland. Beaduheard was the king's official, who rode to the harbour with his men to take the strangers to the 'king's town' – Dorchester. It is not clear if this was a raid, or there was just a misunderstanding, but Beaduheard was killed.

King Brihtric

(died 802 CE)

Brihtric became king of Wessex in 786. He was an ally of the powerful King Offa of Mercia and married one of Offa's daughters, Eadburh. After Offa's death in 796, Brihtric seems to have gained greater independence, establishing a coin mint. He died in 802 and was buried in Wareham. One story was that Eadburh accidentally poisoned him and fled to a nunnery in France.

Guthrum

(died 890 CE)

This Danish (Viking) warlord brought part of his army from northern to southern England. He attacked King Alfred's forces, sailing into Poole Harbour and taking over the defended town (burh) at Wareham. His forces marched deep into Dorset, up the Frome Valley, on their way to Exeter. Guthrum was defeated in 878, converted to Christianity and became king of East Anglia the next year.

Aethelgifu

(c.875–896 CE)

Aethelgifu was King Alfred's second daughter. He made her Abbess of the nunnery he founded at Shaftesbury in 888. Very little is known about her life, but apparently she chose to be a nun because of her poor health. Her life was probably comfortable, because Shaftesbury Abbey became one of the richest in England, as home to the daughters of nobles.

Aelfthryth
(c.945–1001 CE)

Aelfthryth was King Edgar's wife, and the first-known crowned queen of Wessex. Her reputation as the classic wicked stepmother began with the story of her servants murdering her stepson, King Edward, at Corfe Castle. This meant her son Aethelred – later known as the Unready – became king. Edward was recognised as a martyr, and his relics are at Shaftesbury Abbey.

King Cnut (Canute)
(995–1035 CE)

Cnut was a Danish (Viking) prince who led a force of 10,000 men and 200 ships into England in 1015. Sailing from Kent, his impressive fleet entered Poole Harbour, and his forces invaded Wessex though the Frome Valley. After many battles, Cnut was crowned king of England in 1017. He died in Shaftesbury, but was buried in Winchester.

Empress Mathilda
(1102–1167 CE)

Mathilda was the daughter and heir of King Henry I. After his death in 1135 the succession was disputed by her cousin Stephen of Blois. The resulting civil war was known as the Anarchy. Mathilda's invasion of England began in 1139. Her forces landed at Wareham but were driven into Devon and Cornwall. A fortification near Corfe Castle dates to this time. After a conflict that lasted years, her son became King Henry II in 1154.

King John

(1166–1216 CE)

John became king of England in 1199. The royal castle at Corfe was a secure retreat during his troubled reign, and one of John's favourite castles. It was also a prison for high-profile prisoners. John spent most of the last few months of his life at Corfe, after the confrontation with barons that led to the creation of Magna Carta in 1216.

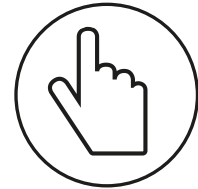## Object on the plinth:

Anchor of Purbeck stone

Many different goods were traded through Dorset's harbours, from French wine to local stone being shipped along Britain's south coast. This anchor was found on the seabed south of Chapman's Pool and Emmetts Hill, near Worth Matravers.
11th to 16th century

RD.2498
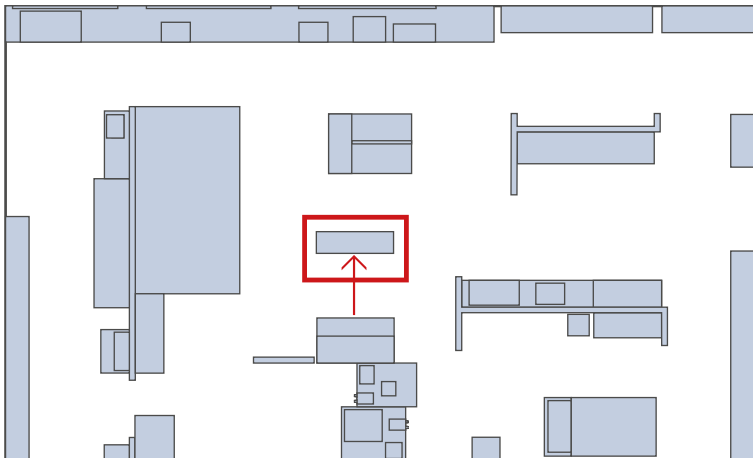
Please touch

The handling objects on your right are replicas of originals in the gallery. Please touch them and explore their shapes and stories.

Replica hourglass

The original of the hourglass on your right came from the *Halsewell*. This sailing ship sank in a violent storm off the Dorset coast in 1786.

Hourglasses helped to measure journey times, so they were an important navigation tool at sea. Feel the convex curves of the two glass bulbs and the neck that regulates the flow of sand between them.

Replica Iron Age mirror

The original of this bronze mirror on your right
dates from the mid-1st century CE and came from
a woman's grave near Portesham. Run your fingers along
the incised swirling patterns on the mirror's surface.
The detailed decoration tells us the owner was a person
of high status.

Replica beaker

The original of this beaker on your right was made
around 2,450 to 1,800 BCE, during the Early Bronze Age.
Its curved shape is decorated with geometric patterns
and markings made by fingernails, combs or cord.
Feel the zig zags, dots and dotted lines with your fingers.
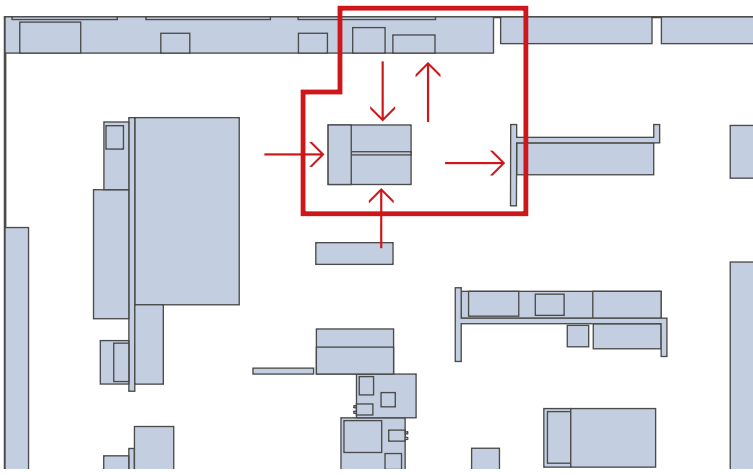
On the wall:

A growing county town

17th century

Following a period of disease and famine in the 1590s, England's population grew dramatically. The number of people living in Dorset also increased.

Dorchester became the largest town in the county and was home to the assize court and county prison. A weekly market and popular annual fairs attracted visitors from across the county. The town had wealthy merchants, many involved in the local cloth and brewing industries. They built large estates in the surrounding countryside and had significant political influence.

Many people lived in poverty. Town and religious leaders, often members of the Puritan movement, feared what they saw as an increase in immoral behaviour. They used both discipline and charity as they tried to guide certain parts of the town towards self-improvement.

In the showcase:

1

Pewter flagon

Edward Lester gave this to St Peter's Church in Dorchester on the day he married Mary Lamoth in 1676. The inscription says it 'is to remaine for ye use of ye ringers of Dorchester forever'. Until 1992 it was taken to the bell tower each year on open days such as Ringers' Sunday, when visitors can climb the church's tower.

1676

On loan from the Rector and St Peter's Church wardens
L.2019.15

2

Scale plate

A pewterer's or engraver's apprentice used this pewter plate as a practice sheet. The words record Dorchester traders of the late 18th century.

c.1780–1790

1945.55.1

3
Fire from Heaven

A ferocious fire destroyed Dorchester in 1613. This appears to be an eyewitness account from the time, the only one known to exist. Some believed that God had punished the town, and turned to Puritanism.
John Hilliard

Reproduction from original manuscript
By permission of the British Library
C.27.b.36

4
Standard bushel measure

Each week traders made their way from the countryside to Dorchester to sell their goods at its busy market. Town officials used this measure to check the accuracy of amounts of corn being sold. It is inscribed with a crown motif, portcullis and ER monogram, linking it closely to Elizabeth I (1533–1603).
1601

1884.4.1.1

John White and the Puritans

For some, the Protestant Reformation of the 1530s did not go far enough. During the early 1600s the growing Puritan movement aimed to keep purifying the Church of England from within. Its political influence increased.

Dorchester was a centre of Puritanism, led by John White, the rector of Holy Trinity and St Peter's churches. He was backed by a number of influential merchants.

White was part of a movement to build Puritan communities in America. He recruited passengers from Dorset, Devon and Somerset to travel there. His recruits established a colony in Dorchester, Massachusetts – now part of Boston. They were among the 20,000 English colonists who settled in New England during the 1630s. Their arrival contributed to the decline and displacement of the indigenous Neponset population through a combination of violence and disease.

In the showcase:

Model of *Mary and John*

The 400-ton merchantman ship *Mary and John* sailed from Plymouth in 1630 carrying 140 passengers, many of them recruited by John White. It was the third of four voyages the ship made to the new American colonies. This model made by Graeme Hayfield and Kevin Ingram shows the cramped and crowded conditions on board.
c.1990–1996

2021.2

Crime and punishment

Justices of the Peace, also called magistrates, administered justice for criminal offences in 17th-century Dorset. They were usually landowners, clergy or merchants. Punishment depended on the crime.

Offenders were executed for the most serious crimes – murder or robbery. Petty felonies such as assault and forgery were punishable by the pillory or stocks, whipping, branding or a fine.

Antisocial or 'immoral' behaviour, such as sexual relations outside marriage, drunkenness and idleness, was frowned upon, particularly in Puritan Dorchester. People reported on their neighbours and were rewarded with a share of the fines.

Hugh Baker, Currier, of this Borough, was complaynd of to Mr. Maior that he went out of church yesterday at Morning Prayer before prayers were ended, and confesseth the same, and is censured to sit in the stocks two houres for his misdemeanour.
Dorchester Offenders' Book, 1629–1630

Dorchester town stocks

Every town had stocks from the 14th century. They were typically used to punish crimes such as drunkenness. The offender was restrained in them as local people threw insults and pelted them with rotting vegetables. There are references to stocks standing in Dorchester's marketplace from the 17th century.
17th to 18th century

1884.4.1.3

On the wall:

Dorset and the English Civil War

1642–1651

Dorset's loyalties were divided during the English Civil War. Dorchester, Weymouth, Poole and Lyme Regis supported the Parliamentarians, many of whom were Puritans. Sherborne and Corfe Castle were Royalist.

Thousands of farmers joined together to try to protect their land and livelihoods as troops from both sides moved through the countryside. The farmers were known as clubmen because they used heavy sticks as weapons. Up to 4,000 fought Oliver Cromwell's New Model Army in August 1645 at Hambledon Hill, but were defeated.

The Parliamentarians won the Civil War, but the monarchy was restored in 1660 by Charles II.

In the showcase:

Left to right

Badge worn by supporters of Charles I (1600–1649)

A supporter of Charles I probably wore this badge after the king was executed in 1649. It shows him wearing the royal crown. Owning it demonstrated loyalty to the king during the years of the Commonwealth of England, the republican government which replaced the monarchy immediately after the Civil War.
17th century
RD.1159

Spike from St Peter's Church

Judge Jeffreys sentenced 251 of the Monmouth Rebellion rebels to death, though only 74 were actually executed. Another 175 were transported. As convicted traitors the prisoners were hung, drawn and quartered. Their heads were then cut off and displayed around Dorchester.
This spike is reputed to be one of those used to display the heads on the railings of St Peter's Church.
17th century
RD.1210

Civil war breastplate

Sherborne was strongly Royalist during the Civil War. Its Norman castle was destroyed by parliamentary forces in 1645. This breastplate was reportedly dug up in the castle grounds. At the beginning of the war, some soldiers re-used old armour, but most wore new armour like this, mass-produced in the 1640s to meet demand.
c.1642–1651
M.1342

On the wall:

Above right

John Browne of Frampton (1581–1659)

The drab colours and plain collar of John Browne's clothing suggest his Puritanism. This portrait was painted in the last year of the English Civil War, in which Browne supported the Parliamentarian cause. He also took part in the trial of King Charles I, but did not sign his death warrant. Browne had inherited the Frampton estate in 1627, and represented Bridport in the House of Commons.
Unknown artist
Oil on canvas
1651
1974.9.5

The Monmouth Rebellion

Charles II was succeeded by his brother James II in 1685. That year, Charles II's illegitimate son James Scott, 1st Duke of Monmouth, attempted to capture the throne by landing at Lyme Regis and rounding up an army of local supporters. The Monmouth Rebellion failed and many of the rebels were tried at the assize court in Dorchester and executed.

On the wall and the plinth:

Above

Portrait reputed to be of Judge Jeffreys (1645–1689)

George Jeffreys was born in north Wales and became Lord Chancellor in 1685. That year he was sent to Dorchester to oversee the trials of the Monmouth rebels. He became known as the Hanging Judge after sentencing 251 men to death at trials that were called the Bloody Assizes. This portrait was painted long after Jeffreys died, probably based on an earlier engraving.
Unknown artist
Oil on canvas
19th century
ART.2415

Right

Chair reputed to have been used by Judge Jeffreys

Local tradition says that this oak chair was used by Judge Jeffreys at the Bloody Assizes of 1685. The trials were held in the Oak Room of the Antelope Hotel, just across the road from the Museum. Investigations into the chair show that it was probably made at least 50 years later. Before coming to the Museum it was used at Shire Hall, Dorchester's courthouse from the 18th century.
18th century

1907.1.1

On the wall:

The siege of Corfe Castle

In 1643 Lady Mary Bankes (1598–1661) successfully led the defence of Royalist Corfe Castle against Parliamentary troops.

Sir John Bankes had joined the king in 1642, leaving his wife and daughters at the castle. This relief shows the dramatic siege, which lasted a number of weeks. During that time the Parliamentarian army would have killed and eaten most of the livestock in the area. They finally took the castle in 1646. It was later blown up, leaving it in ruins.

The original relief is part of a bronze pedestal under a statue of King Charles I at the Kingston Lacy home the Bankes family moved to. It was commissioned by William John Bankes in the 1840s.

Cast of original relief by Carlo Marochetti
1868
1906.2.1
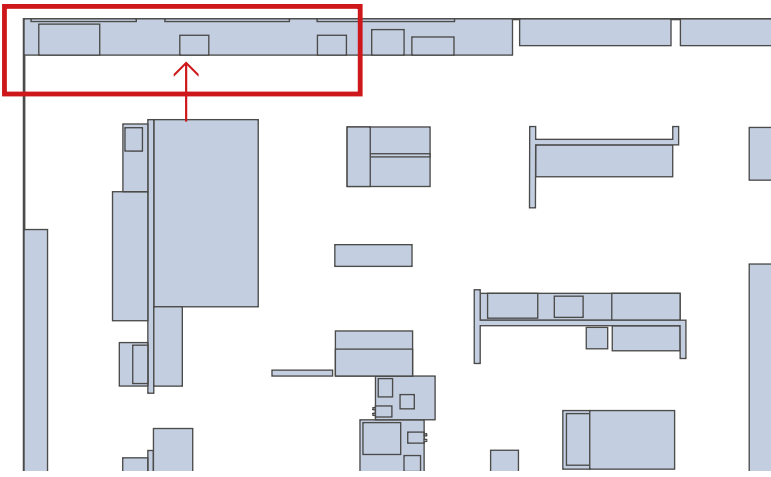
On the wall:

Dorset and the slave trade

17th to 19th century

Many Dorset merchants and landowners were involved in the slave trade, and much of the county profited financially.

Dorset owned ships sailed from local ports, exporting manufactured goods to West Africa. They traded them for enslaved people who were taken to the West Indies to work on plantations. Some people of African descent were forcibly brought to Dorset to work as unpaid servants.

The plantations exploited enslaved labour to produce goods such as sugar, which fetched high prices in Britain. Dorset landowners, such as the Drax, Pitt Rivers and Pinney families, owned plantations in the West Indies, and the middle classes profited from the sale of goods.

In 1833, an Act of Parliament abolished slavery in most British colonies. Enslavers received compensation from the government, and a loan taken out to fund this was not fully repaid until 2015. Neither those freed following abolition nor their descendants have ever received reparations.

On the plinth:

Who was the Waddon Man?

For almost 400 years the skull of an unknown person, of which this is a replica, was kept at Waddon Manor. Local folklore said that an enslaved man at the manor raised a fire alarm and was mistakenly killed by the owner.

Recent forensic analysis confirms the skull probably comes from a man of African descent, who lived around the mid-17th century. Six deep indents in the skull indicate the attack that killed him was more aggressive and purposeful than accidental. Nobody knows why his skull was kept or what happened to the rest of his body, and his full identity has been erased.

Attempts to extract DNA from the skull in 2020 proved unsuccessful. It is hoped that it might be possible to find out more information about this individual as techniques progress.

Left

3D print of man's skull

2021.1

In the drawer:

Campaigning for slavery justice

In July 2021, protesters marched around the boundary of a country estate belonging to Richard Drax, Conservative MP for South Dorset. They raised placards, including this poster, demanding that Richard Drax give a working Barbados sugar cane plantation he inherited to the people of the Caribbean island. For 200 years Drax Hall plantation enslaved, exploited and dehumanised black people. This protest was part of the international Stand Up To Racism and Black Lives Matter movements.

Card poster
2021
R.2021.5

In the drawer:

Thomas Fowell Buxton and the anti-slavery campaign

Thomas Fowell Buxton (1786–1845) was MP for Weymouth from 1818 until 1837. He used his position in Parliament to campaign alongside William Wilberforce (1759–1833) for the end of the slave trade. They built on the work of other campaigners, including black abolitionists such as Olaudah Equiano (1745–1797) who was part of the London-based Sons of Africa group.

When Wilberforce resigned from Parliament due to ill health, he asked Buxton to take his place as the head of the

anti-slavery campaign. Buxton led the movement until the Slavery Abolition Act was passed in 1833, steering the legislation through Parliament against widespread opposition.

1

The African Slave Trade

Britain abolished the slave trade in 1807 and slavery in 1833, but both kept growing internationally. Buxton found that the number of people sold into slavery around the world doubled between 1807 and 1839. He wrote books about how Britain should do more to end the slave trade everywhere.

Thomas Fowell Buxton

John Murray, London

1839

On loan from James Buxton
LI 2021.1.2

2

Thomas Fowell Buxton Esq MP

James Thomson after Abraham Wivell

Engraving

1821

On loan from James Buxton
LI 2021.1.2

On the wall:

Powerful families on the land

18th and 19th centuries

The wealth and power of Dorset's landowning families became increasingly visible from the 18th century. Many built large country houses and landscaped their gardens. They decorated the interiors of their homes with luxury textiles and furniture, and portraits of family members.

Landowners managed huge areas using the labour of tenant farmers. Some took an interest in land management and investigated new technological innovations to improve crop production.

Families had a strong political influence, with a number of generations serving as Members of Parliament. Male owners of large estates were among the few people who had a right to vote until the Reform Acts of the 19th century started to change the political landscape.

The Bond family of Purbeck

The Bond family can trace its connection to Dorset back to the 14th century. John Bond was a prosperous woollen draper in Dorchester and mayor of the town in 1635. His son Nathaniel bought Tyneham House in Purbeck in 1683, and a few years later bought the nearby estate of Creech Grange.

Nathaniel's youngest son John inherited Tyneham House. It stayed in the Bond family until they and their tenants in Tyneham village were compulsorily evacuated during the Second World War so the land could be used for military training. You can see panelling from the house in the Dorset Story Space.

Creech Grange was inherited by Nathaniel's eldest son Denis. It was owned by the family until 1978.

Object on the wall:

Above

The Bond family

Dressed in fine clothes, this wealthy Dorset family stand outside Creech Grange, the Dorset manor house their ancestors had lived in since 1691. At the doorway leans Reverend Nathaniel Bond (1804–1889) who altered the house in the 19th century. He commissioned this painting to hang on the main staircase, probably to celebrate restoring the architecture to its Elizabethan grandeur. Behind the

family group, the iron gates lead into the parkland and countryside beyond, showing the extent of their estate.
William Beetham (1809–1888)
Oil on canvas
1848

On loan from Michael Bond
Ll.2019.16

In the showcase:

Raised-work box

This box belonged to the Bond family of Creech Grange. Raised, or stump, work was a popular 17th-century embroidery style. It often featured biblical motifs, animals and plants, which were padded or worked around wire to produce a three-dimensional effect. The figures on this intricately crafted box probably depict Charles II (1630–1685) and his wife Catherine of Braganza (1638–1705), suggesting the family's loyalty to the monarchy.
c.1695

1955.2.9

On the wall:

Powerful families at sea

18th and 19th centuries

The Dorset coast provided rich opportunities for trade and also acted as a line of defence from invasion. Towns grew wealthy, merchants made fortunes and people helped defend their county from the enemy.

Making a living from the sea became very profitable in the 18th and 19th centuries. Trading vessels sailed from Weymouth to Newcastle, Ireland and the French coast. Portland and Purbeck stone were exported by sea for the building trade. Many Poole merchants created successful trading links with Newfoundland – a large island off the east coast of North America – and started fisheries on its coast.

The Napoleonic Wars, a series of conflicts lasting from 1803 to 1815, brought the threat of invasion to the coast. Dorset-born Vice Admiral Hardy (1769–1839) served under Admiral Lord Nelson (1758–1805) fighting the French at sea. At home Dorset's landed families helped with military preparations and planning by raising militia forces to defend the coastline.

On the wall:

Above left

Newfoundland trading

The house, ships and warehouses in these paintings belonged to Benjamin Lester (1724–1802). Lester was a Poole merchant with a successful trading business in Newfoundland. After moving to Trinity at the age of 13, he worked in the fishing industry. He later established his own cod business and was also involved in the fur trade.

By 1793 Lester had built up a fleet of 30 ships trading with Europe. He commissioned the first brick house in Trinity, using bricks imported from Dorset. He also owned these paintings, which record the processes involved in managing his company, from catching and drying the fish to loading the ships.

Top

The Old House, Shipyard and Outhouses at Trinity, Newfoundland, Canada

Unknown artist
c.1770
Oil on canvas
1974.8.2

Bottom

The Old House at Trinity with Wooded Hills, Newfoundland, Canada
Unknown artist
c.1770
Oil on canvas
1974.8.1

Above

Amy Garland (1759–1819), *George Garland* (1753–1825)

Amy was born in Newfoundland where her father, Benjamin Lester, built up the family fortune in overseas trade. Amy married George Garland who managed the company from its Poole headquarters. The ships went out to Newfoundland loaded with salt and other supplies, then transported salted cod and fur to Spain and Portugal. They returned to Poole with wine, fruit and skins.
Unknown artist
Oil on canvas
c.1780
1974.8.5, 1974.8.6

In the showcase:

1

Writing box belonging to Vice Admiral Sir Thomas Masterman Hardy (1769–1839)

Vice Admiral Hardy kept this writing box on HMS *Victory* when he fought with Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. It opens to form a writing slope. He would have used it to write orders, official correspondence and dispatches, as well as letters home. The box originally contained ink bottles, paper, pens and other items. The playing cards were found in his sea chest.

c.1805

RD.2380, 1942.12.1

2

Mourning brooch with lock of hair

Vice Admiral Hardy died on 20 September 1839 at the age of 70. In the Victorian era people sometimes wore brooches like this one to remember those who had died. It is inscribed with the date of Hardy's death, and a lock of his hair is woven into the centre. Pearls often represented the tears of loved ones. Hardy was not buried in his home county of Dorset, but in the cemetery of Greenwich Hospital where he was Governor.

c.1839

RD.2376

3
Vice Admiral Hardy's Nile Medal

Hardy was awarded the Nile Medal after fighting in the Battle of the Nile in August 1798. It was presented according to rank – gold for Lord Nelson and his captains and silver for lieutenants and warrant officers. Even though Hardy was in command of a ship, he was not ranked as a captain at the time, so he received this silver medal. Nelson's admiration for Hardy was so great that he awarded him a gold medal too.

1798

RD.2372

4
Napoleonic invasion map

People took the threat of French invasion along the Dorset coast very seriously. Maps like this one enabled officials to calculate Dorset's capacity to provide essential reserves if it was invaded. These included the number of troops available in each major town, as well as the number of mills, bakers, carters and even sacks of flour.

c.1803–1815

RD.2922
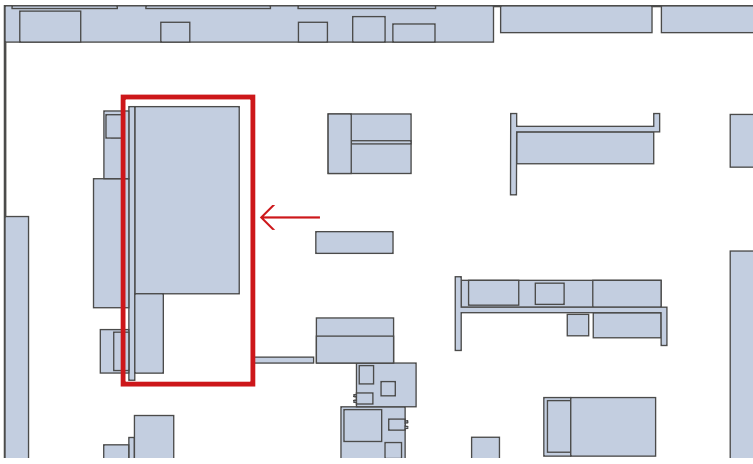
On the wall:

Agriculture

18th and 19th centuries

For generations, Dorset's flinty rolling downs supported shepherding, its lush valleys fed dairy herds and the valley slopes were ploughed for crops.

But this way of life was at the mercy of weather, disease and competition from overseas imports. The 'Hungry Forties' (1840s) saw national starvation alongside a series of bad harvests, followed by foot-and-mouth disease in the 1870s.

Landowners needed to become more efficient to survive. The Inclosure Acts gave them the legal right to enclose common land from the 1840s onwards. The new technologies of the Industrial Revolution also opened up possibilities. Steam-powered ploughs allowed the hard, flinty hilltops to be ploughed and fertilised by vast amounts of guano, bone meal and coprolites (fossils). In the valleys, engineered ditches turned boggy water meadows into sheep grazing.

Productivity improved, but the changes brought huge job losses and deprived people of the communal land they had used for grazing and crops. With no local industrial centres, many left the county to survive.

On the plinth:

Farming tools

Agricultural labourers carried out a wide range of tasks on all kinds of challenging terrains. They used tools like these for cultivating and harvesting crops, and maintaining buildings, fields, water meadows and rivers.

Tools were traditionally crafted by tradesmen such as carpenters and blacksmiths for a range of tasks. They included milkmaid's yokes that fitted over the shoulders for carrying pails, and root choppers with cross-shaped iron blades.

Farmers and labourers sometimes modified other objects to create implements for a particular task. New machinery and mass production began replacing these hand-crafted agricultural tools during the second half of the 19th century.

On the wall:

1

Milkmaid's yoke

Milkmaids wore a yoke over their shoulders with two pails suspended by chains at either side of their body. This distributed the weight evenly and made carrying fresh milk easier.

Late 19th century

R.1971.183

2

Two-person cross saw

Sawing wood was easier with two people, each holding one end of a saw like this. They were used for a variety of work, including making fencing and shelters.

19th century

T.1971.1033

3

Eel spear

Eels were trapped between the prongs of this spear. It was made by a blacksmith from Bere Regis.

c.1890

R.1971.386

4
Dutch hoe

Sharp on all three sides, the Dutch hoe could be pushed or pulled under the surface of the soil to cut weeds and roots.
c.1850

R.1991.612

5
Root chopper

Rural workers used this tool to cut up root vegetables for animal feed. They applied pressure to the cross-shaped iron blade, which chopped the swedes and turnips into manageable chunks.
Early 19th century

R.1971.739

6
Brushing hook

Out on the Dorset heathland, workers used brush hooks to clear heavy undergrowth and gorse.
c.1880

R.1971.1076

7
Ridge hoe

Having an angled tool helped farmers with planting seeds or making ridges between furrows of field crops.
c.1860

R.1971.793

8
Thatcher's fork

Thatching is the craft of building a roof with dry vegetation including straw, water reed and rushes. Thatchers moved reeds from the ground to the roof using forks.
c.1870

R.1971.105

9
Pitchfork

Rural workers used pitchforks to load hay or corn sheaves onto a wagon or a hay rick. This was the common way of loading before baling machines were introduced in the 20th century.
c.1880

R.1971.1099

10
Fork

This fork originally had a central third prong and the handle was made from a boat oar.
c.1880

R.1971.258

11
Curd separator

As part of the cheesemaking process, people dipped separators into vats to break the lumpy curds and let the liquid whey rise to the top.
Late 19th century

R.1984.1.40

12
Traction engine stoking shovel

During the 19th century machines such as steam ploughs replaced agricultural workers. This shovel was for loading coal into the plough's boiler to make the engine run.
c.1880

R.1971.387

13
Turf cutter

Dairy farmers needed good quality pasture land. Turf cutters helped maintain the water meadow system of pasture grazing. They were used for cutting out and cleaning water races, gullies and water channels to irrigate and then drain the grassland for livestock.
c.1850

R.1971.892

14
Hay rake

Workers raked hay into windrows – long lines running the length of a field – so it could dry out before it was gathered into stacks or ricks.
c.1880

R.1971.300

15
Scythe

When harvesting, workers cut grass, corn and other crops by hand using scythes. The invention of the reaping machine in the mid-19th century made harvesting less arduous.

c.1840

RD.1414

16
Horse hand measurer

A hand is equal to four inches. This tool would have been used to measure a horse up to its withers, the highest part of its back.

c.1850

R.1971.727

17
Hay knife

A long-bladed knife for cutting turf or sections of hay from stacks or bales.

c.1850

R.1971.455

18
Barley humbler/hummler

Rural workers used this tool to beat down onto the barley spike. This action separated the grain kernel from the chaff (husk), which could be used for animal feed.

c.1850

1939.50.1

On the plinth:

The Yetminster wagon

Each county had a distinctive style of wagon. Those made in Dorset were among the most ornately decorated in England, with intricate front and rear panel designs. This rare Dorset box wagon was made in Yetminster by Lashbrook carriage builders, a family firm. Horses pulled wooden wagons like this until the late 1940s, when tractors and trailers gradually replaced animal labour.
1912

RD.2494

Above

Cheese press

Cheesemaking transformed milk into a longer-lasting product. Presses were used in the final stages of the process, to extract the last of the liquid whey from the cheese curds. This press, made by Messrs Pond of Blandford, probably came from a dairy farm.
Late 19th century

R.1974.48

Left, on the wall

Tolpuddle trade show sign

The Fowl and Fatstock Show was a traditional event, with farmers coming to town to show off their market-ready birds and animals. People travelled from around the local area to buy goose or other meat for Christmas. Modern setwork sign, possibly based on an original.
20th century

RD.2497

Left

Butter churner

The barrel churn was invented in the 18th century and became popular in homes and dairies from the 19th century onwards. Dairymaids poured cream into the barrel and hand-cranked it to make light, fluffy butter.
c.1880

R.1971.560

In the showcase:

Working the land

18th and 19th centuries

Dorset landowners were land-rich, but its agricultural labourers were among the lowest paid in Britain.

Some rural workers were lucky enough to get positions with good accommodation, but many lived in run-down lodgings or poorly maintained cottages. Itinerant workers followed seasonal labour – turnip hoeing, lambing and harvesting. It was a difficult life. Women's labour in the 'field gangs' was notorious for bad pay and back-breaking work. Young children worked in the fields to supplement their family's income. Some labourers were forced to migrate, while others turned to stealing and poaching.

Communities created celebrations to mark the time of year. Young people dressed in white for 'club walking' in May and 'harvest home' suppers were shared in autumn. Christmas was announced by carol singing, known as 'going the rounds'. These events connected people to the land and to each other.

Gamekeepers and poachers

In the 18th and 19th centuries landowners employed gamekeepers to maintain healthy populations of game and wildfowl. They also protected the animals from poachers, with their dogs trained to attack.

Many poachers lived in poverty and only hunted illegally on private land to feed their families. If they were caught, punishments ranged from fines to the death penalty.

Objects on the back panel, table top and floor:

Public notices of execution

In the early 19th century people were sentenced to death for crimes including stealing sheep and poaching. In 1823 the Judgement of Death Act enabled judges to decide whether to pass a lesser sentence for all crimes except treason and murder. Instead of being executed, many were transported to Australia.

1
Cattle raiding and robbery

1819–1820

RD.1337

2
Sheep stealing

1818

RD.2499

3
Deerstalker hat

Poachers often waited until evening to hunt deer, and some wore hats made of straw and bramble strips for camouflage. They also wore thick quilted coats to help protect them from the deer's antlers, or the gamekeeper and his dogs if they were caught.
Early 18th century

T.2362

4
Game bird carrier

Gamekeepers could load up to 20 birds on this carrier by threading their heads along the slots. It was part of a range of equipment made by G & JW Hawkesley.
c.1900

R.1971.65

Traps

There was a booming market for traps in the 19th century. Most were for pests, but people also risked being snared by man traps, which had enough power to break a leg. They were laid out by gamekeepers to capture poachers hunting illegally on private land.

5
Rat trap

Late 19th century

R.1974.37

6
Mole trap

c.1880

R.1977.8.4

7
Swingle

Poachers and gamekeepers often carried a swingle to defend themselves. It was also called a poacher's mallet.
c.1860

R.1999.14.4

Below

Man trap

Late 19th century

1884.1.1

Rural clothing

Rural workers wore different types of clothing depending on whether they were out in the fields or working inside. Children also worked the land and wore smaller versions of adult dress, including hobnailed shoes and hats.

As well as protecting people and keeping them warm, clothing identified the work they did. Shepherds wore smocks and dairymaids dressed in white aprons. Sunbonnets and hats were essential when working outside.

Smocks and sunbonnets became old-fashioned by the late 19th century as people preferred to dress in clothes that did not set them apart.

Objects on the back panel and plinth:

Shepherding tools

Shepherds and farmers looked after their livestock with simple tools. Drenching horns were used to give animals medicine. Branding irons marked ownership of livestock to help farmers keep track of them. Shepherds used their crooks to hook the rear legs of sheep to herd them in. Crooks like this with an upturned hook could also support a lantern when the shepherd was out in fog or darkness.

1
Drenching horn

c.1840

R.1971.804

2
Branding iron

c.1900

R.2017.1

3
Shepherd's crook

c.1870

1964.13.2

4
Jug

At harvest time agricultural labourers worked from sunrise to sunset. Ale and cider were popular refreshments that they carried to the fields in 'harvest bottles' like this. Labourers often had a meagre diet based on bread, water, potatoes and cheese. Bacon, cabbage and seasonal vegetables were occasional luxuries.
c.1800

1943.22

Working clothes

These were usually homemade, mended, adapted, passed on or recycled, so not many survive. Accessories are more common partly because they were not as easily modified. Cotton bonnets that shielded faces and necks from sun and rain had patterns or colours similar to the women's dresses. Men often wore straw hats for field work, and sturdy hobnailed footwear with tough wooden and iron soles.

5
Sunbonnet

Late 19th century

1958.52.2

6
Straw hat

Mid-19th century

R.1994.62.3

7
Shepherd's smock

Thomas Hardy described the 'whitey-brown' colours and 'honeycomb-work' on workers' smocks in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. This one belonged to Dorset shepherd Job Green and it still has seeds in the pocket.
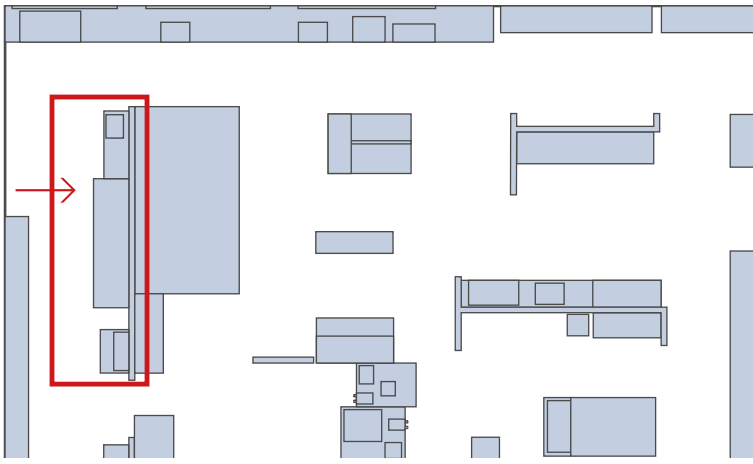Late 19th century

1972.51

8
Clogs

Late 19th century

1991.831

On the wall:

Trade and industry

19th and 20th centuries

Dorset's industries have drawn on the natural raw materials of the county. This has shaped the types of trades and industries that flourished, and the ways many Dorset people have made a living.

Today Dorset is not seen as a manufacturing area, but it has been home to some important heavy industries from the Bronze Age onwards. By the 19th century the county was famous for quarrying Portland stone, Purbeck marble and ball clay. These materials were transported around the world by sea, and later by train, to be used in building, pottery and as the basis of medicines.

Smaller-scale light industries such as button making, rope making, pottery, brewing, glove and lace making were also important local employers. The markets, specialist traders and industries that supported them contributed to the development and unique character of towns such as Dorchester and Bridport.

Button, net and rope making

Dorset's manufacturing historically consisted of small-scale cottage industries. Buttons, gloves, ropes, nets and other items were made from locally sourced materials such as hemp, flax and leather.

From the 18th century these industries began to offer people employment at home, rather than in factories or mills. These employees were called outworkers. Depots were established and outworkers were organised into increasingly specialised trades. These trades began to give individual towns their specific character.

Bridport was a centre for rope and net making. The industry began in the 13th century, but developed significantly after Joseph Gundry's factory opened in 1665. It supplied rope and nets to the Royal Navy and fishing industry. By the 20th century it also made nets for high profile sporting events, including Wimbledon Centre Court matches and the 1966 football World Cup Final at Wembley.

In the showcase:

Dorset button making

Abraham Case of Shaftesbury first began making cotton Dorset buttons in 1622. Production grew rapidly in the 18th century. Women made the buttons in their homes, threading the cotton over a disc or ring.

Dorset buttons

By the 19th century over 100 different types of button were made in Dorset, including the High-Top, Birds-Eye, Crosswheel, Blandford Cartwheel and Honeycomb.

1
High-Top Dorset buttons

c.1830

1982.6.3

2
Lytchett Minster handmade buttons

Mid-19th century

RD.1293

3
Plaited straw

Just as Dorset was linked to button making, other counties had their own cottage industries. This braid probably came from Bedfordshire, East Buckinghamshire or Hertfordshire. Women and girls living in these rural areas plaited straw to supply hatmakers with materials for bonnets.
19th century

T.2013.28

4
Netting needles

Outworkers, often women and children, made nets
using wooden needles. This set belonged to Robert Willy.
He supplied nets to Joseph Gundry on a seasonal basis,
using the work to supplement his family's main income
from agriculture.
c.1900
R.1972.62.4.A-E, R.1971.860

5
Netting needle

Mr M E King, an outworker, was issued this needle by
a Bridport net-making firm.
c.1943
R.1979.10

In the drawer:

Dorset buttons

Buttons were sold mounted on card. Pink cards were used
for the best quality buttons, blue for standard quality and
yellow for seconds. Only buttons on pink or blue cards were
exported. The seconds were sold locally at reduced prices.
19th century
RD.1292, 1952.79.1, T.492, 1972.50d, T.494, 1978.11.16a, RD.2931,
RD.2933, T.486, T.491, RD.2932, 1982.6.9, 1982.6.10

In the drawer:

Olivia Pass (1890–1973) and Dorset button making

Olivia Pass was a self-taught embroiderer who helped circulate the art of Dorset button making internationally. During the 1950s she revived traditional Dorset crafts at the Charmouth Women's Institute and created Dorset Feather Stitchery, which combined smock patterns with Balkan designs. She used buttons as decorative features and published simple instructions to help people make their own Dorset Crosswheel buttons.

Working with her colleagues, Pass sent boxes filled with samples, fabrics and information to send to Women's Institutes in Commonwealth countries across the world. She provided detailed instructions on how to create embroidery and buttons, keeping alive the traditional skills of Dorset's 19th-century rural workers.
c.1955
2007.409, 2007.416, 2007.412

On the wall:

The coming of the railways

Dorset's economy was transformed by the arrival of the railways in the 19th century. It began when demand for Purbeck ball clay led to the construction of the county's earliest industrial railway, the Middlebere Plateway, in 1806.

The first passenger trains in Dorset ran on the Southampton and Dorchester Railway in 1847. Over the next 20 years the county's rail network grew rapidly until almost every village had its own station.

This revolutionised travel and encouraged mass tourism, with more visitors coming to Weymouth and the new resort of Bournemouth. The railways also helped Dorset's stone, fishing and other industries by transporting products quickly to large towns and cities.

In the showcase:

Stone quarrying

Stone has been extracted from Portland and Purbeck since the Bronze Age. Industrial-scale quarrying on Portland began in the early 17th century, after Portland stone was used for St Paul's Cathedral and became a fashionable building material.

As Britain's cities grew rapidly in the 19th century so did Portland quarrying. By 1851 almost a quarter of the island's men were employed in quarries, with many more working in supporting trades.

Quarrying work was very skilled. Small holes were drilled in the rock and filled with gunpowder. Igniting the gunpowder produced a heave that dislodged the rock, which was then cut and dressed into blocks for sale.

1
The Huge Block

Swanage artist Alfred Palmer was fascinated by the expertise of workers in Purbeck's marble quarries. He painted them straining under the effort of working the huge stone blocks. They are led by Victor Bowe (left), who came from an established family of quarrymen.
Alfred Palmer (1877–1951)
Oil on canvas
c.1942
2012.37.1

Below

2
Stonebreaker's hammer

Hammers like this were used to break large pieces of stone into aggregate for road mending and construction.
19th century
1964.13.6

3

Goggles and tin case

Quarrying work could be extremely heavy and dangerous, but safety equipment, like these stonebreaker's goggles, was very basic.
19th century

R.1972.55.4

4

Stone hammers

Quarrymen on Portland and in Purbeck worked in a harsh environment, often in exposed locations. Until the 20th century most of the work was done with hand tools. Special hammers were used for cutting and dressing the extracted stone ready for sale.
19th century

R.1991.420, R.1991.425, R.1991.42

5

Millwright's stone peck

An important part of quarrying work was restoring old stone. Originally belonging to J Gifford at Dorchester's West Mill Iron Works, these tools were used to re-cut worn grooves in flour-grinding stones.
19th century

R.1971.1087

Clay and local potteries

East Dorset's yellow clay was first used to make ceramics in the 3rd and 4th centuries. With easy access to this clay and plenty of New Forest wood for firing kilns, Verwood became a major centre of pottery production by the 14th century.

Large potteries using Purbeck ball clay opened in Poole during the 19th century. Carter's Industrial Tile Manufactory was the most significant, and the origin of the famous Poole Pottery. Known for its striking Art Deco designs by Truda Carter (1890–1958) it supplied much of the decorative tilework used in 1930s London Underground stations.

6
The Blue Pool

The Blue Pool is a flooded clay pit near Wareham.
Ball clay was extracted there between the mid-17th and early 20th centuries. The water's vivid turquoise colour comes from minute particles of clay suspended in it.
Elsie Barling (1883–1976)
Oil on canvas
c.1950
ART.2214

Below

Verwood pottery jugs

Over nearly eight centuries the Verwood potteries produced mainly domestic earthenware, which was sold widely across southern England. Demand for Verwood dwindled as lighter cups, jugs and plates and metal enamelware were developed. The final producer, Crossroads Pottery, closed in 1952.

7
Budden kiln jug

This jug came from the Budden kiln, run by Charles Budden and his son. Even in the 19th century, Verwood production was unmechanised, using techniques that had not changed for centuries.
c.1850
1937.85.1

8
Jug
19th century
1937.30.1

9
Costrel

The most famous of the pots produced at Verwood was
the Dorset Costrel, a flask with ear-like lugs. Labourers used
them to take cider or cold tea to the fields. This very wide
costrel was found at Cerne Abbas in 1910, hidden with
39 other Verwood costrels. It is surprisingly light for its size.
19th century
1910.2.1

10
Sylvan Ware jar, Poole Pottery

Designed by Truda Carter (1890–1959) Sylvan Ware is a
range of ceramics decorated with a mottled glaze to create
a marbled effect. Sylvan Ware vases were commissioned
by Cunard for RMS Queen Mary.
1931
R.2008.8.2

11
Clay spade

Very heavy spades like this were used to extract ball clay
from Wareham clay pits. The straight shaft gave maximum
leverage when digging. The blade is stamped GRIFFIN.
It is not clear whether this was the name of the blacksmith
or the spade's owner.
19th century
R.1971.965

Brewing

Beer has been made in Dorset since medieval times. Before the 19th century most villages had their own brewhouse. As brewing became more mechanised, these cottage breweries were gradually displaced by a few larger brewing companies. Based in Dorchester, Weymouth, Poole and Bournemouth, they served the growing urban population.

Dorchester's most important brewer was Eldridge Pope & Co, which had its roots in the early 19th century. In 1881 it opened an impressive new brewery near Dorchester South station and immediately became the largest employer in the town. Such excellent transport links made its India Pale Ale one of Dorchester's most important exports.

1
Poster for Dorchester Bitter

Eldridge Pope used the long history of brewing in Dorchester to promote itself and its products. Dorchester Bitter was the first Eldridge Pope beer to be canned for supermarket sales. c.1955

RD.2906

2
Huntsman promotional ashtray, jug and tray

From the mid-1930s Eldridge Pope used a smiling huntsman to promote its beer and launch a new brand called

Huntsman Ales. The image was designed by William Barribal (1873–1956), a leading commercial artist.

c.1938

R.2002.10.6-8

3

Hardy Ale barrel cover

Hardy Ale was a special barley wine brewed by Eldridge Pope to mark the 40th anniversary of the writer's death. This cover was used in the ceremony to mark the tapping (opening) of the first barrel.

1968

R.2002.10.4

4

Beer crate

Eldridge Pope used crates like this to transport bottled beer to its pubs.

c.1960

R.1992.41

5

Eldridge Pope brewery model

This model of the brewing process was made by apprentice coppersmiths at the Eldridge Pope brewery. It is so accurate it can be used to brew a thimbleful of beer.

c.1950

R.2002.10.12-13

A commercial town

Dorchester in the 19th century became focused on providing commercial services to rural communities.

It supported farmers by supplying equipment, machinery and tools, many made in the town. Dorchester was also home to the professional services that agriculture and industry needed. Williams Bank was one of the most important, based opposite the Museum from 1835.

With direct rail connections to London, Dorchester also established itself as a thriving retail centre for a wide range of goods. The central shopping area around South Street grew rapidly, especially after gas lighting extended opening hours in the 1880s.

Commercial printing

Printing books, posters, notices and pamphlets for local businesses became one of Dorchester's most important 19th-century service industries.

1
Advertising sign

Founded in 1806, Henry Ling was one of the commercial printers to open in the Cornhill area. This hand-painted sign hung outside its offices at 23 High East Street.
Late 19th century

RD.2489

Iron founding

Forges and casting works engineered and repaired iron tools and equipment for agriculture. Lott and Walne was the largest of several foundries in Dorchester. Originally agricultural engineers, they acquired an established iron foundry in 1875. The company then expanded and diversified into making a wide range of farm machinery, as well as carts, drains and street furniture.

2
Lott and Walne's foundry sign

c.1932

RD.1125

3
Clocking-in machine

At Lott and Walne's iron foundry every worker clocked in and out. The times were recorded on a revolving paper drum, changed daily.
1905

R.1995.70

4
Casting pattern

An example of the hardwood patterns Lott and Walne used to form moulds in sand for casting iron.
Late 19th century

R.1992.191

5
Patternmaker's tool chest

Inside the chest are over 100 individually made hand tools that belonged to Mr A Strange, the last patternmaker at Lott and Walne. They were used for shaping and smoothing two and three-part sand pattern moulds.
Mid-20th century

RD.1131

On the wall:

A haberdasher's shop

As towns like Dorchester expanded, local markets, traders and shops sprang up to support the needs of the local population. They included printers, hairdressers, grocers, butchers, drapers and haberdashers.

Made-to-measure clothing was expensive, so many people wore homemade clothes, hats and underwear. Haberdasher's shops sold the tools and materials needed to make them.

Open the drawers below to discover items found in an early 20th-century haberdasher's shop like Wrights. Wrights Haberdashery opened in the 1920s, and provided locals with buttons, fabrics and trims until the business closed in 1963.

In the drawer:

Designing your dream wardrobe

Haberdasheries sold all kinds of sewing tools, from essentials such as pins, thread and buttons to colourful trimmings. Small changes like using different buttons could improve the look of an outfit. Most of these items are from the 1940s to 1960s.

In the drawer:

Head to toe

As well as sewing equipment, haberdashers sold fashion accessories, from hats to stockings. They also stocked household essentials, including menstrual products, nappy pins, and handy gadgets to help zip up the backs of dresses.

In the drawer:

A stitch in time

People used knitting and sewing patterns to make their own clothing. Patterns were influenced by the latest fashions, with new ones released each season. Haberdashers also sold a range of threads and tools to create embroidery and trimmings.

In the drawer:

Bills, bills, bills

In the 19th and 20th centuries shopkeepers used ledgers and stock books to manage orders and purchases. Haberdashers like Wright's also sold paper goods and stationery, including greetings cards, pencils and crayons. Some even stocked painkillers.
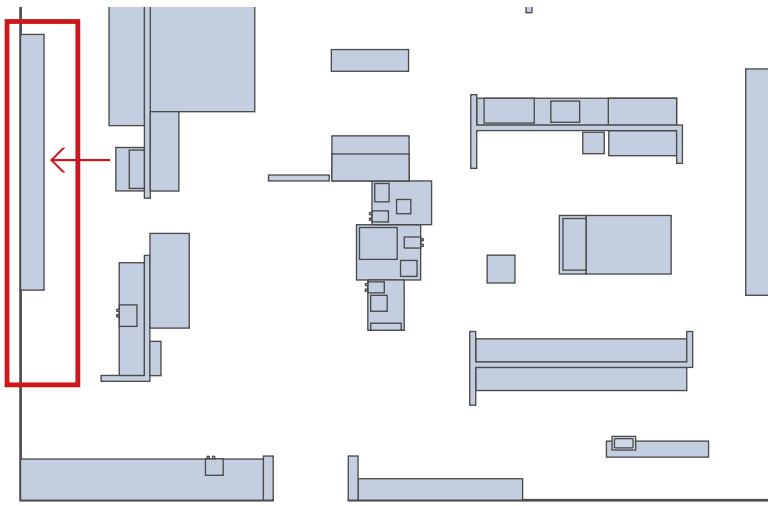
In the showcase:

Changing society

19th century

Dorset's population was affected by wider changes in British society as industrialisation took hold.

Most people still lived in villages, enduring some of the worst housing conditions in England. Labourers saw their traditional skills threatened by mechanisation and were also affected by economic fluctuations.

Even after the political reforms of the 19th century, most working people did not have the right to vote. Some turned to protest and trade unions to bargain for better conditions, or joined mutual aid societies which supported families facing ill health or death. Others entered the workhouse to receive poor relief as a last resort.

Some politicians, members of the Church and charities fought to reform and improve education, health and also the criminal justice system. Their work slowly started to make prospects and conditions better for some people as the century progressed.

Struggle and protest

Many years of poverty took their toll on Dorset's population, leading some to protest.

In 1816 there were riots in Bridport about high bread prices, after the government restricted foreign wheat imports. Some agricultural labourers took part in the Swing Riots of 1830, a protest against the new threshing machines that were depriving them of employment. Machinery was broken and ricks of grain set on fire.

Trade union membership was legalised in 1824. A decade later, six agricultural labourers from Tolpuddle, concerned about falling wages, swore a secret oath as members of the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers. For that they were tried and convicted. Known as the Tolpuddle Martyrs they were transported to Australia, but pardoned after protests.

On the table top:

1
Union workhouse wooden platter and spoon

Until 1834 parishes had a responsibility to look after the poor who could not work. The Poor Law Amendment Act removed that responsibility and introduced the workhouse union system across Britain. There were 12 workhouses in Dorset's major towns. Conditions inside them were kept as poor as possible to ensure people only went there as a last resort.
Mid-19th century

R.1971.891.1-2

2

The Wimborne Workhouse scandal

Overcrowded and unsanitary conditions at the Wimborne Workhouse, with 13 inmates sleeping in five beds, led to a rapid outbreak of smallpox. The scandal was revealed in 1839 after several people died. This poster advertises a public meeting about measures to prevent the disease from spreading.

1839

RD.2891

3

The Song of Freedom

100 years after the Tolpuddle Martyrs were arrested, the Trades Union Congress had this song printed on the back of its Christmas card. The words originally came from a song called *The Gathering of the Unions* by George de Bosco Attwood. After the Tolpuddle labourers were sentenced, their leader George Loveless wrote the words down on a scrap of paper. The song became strongly associated with the men's story.

1934

RD.2892

4

Brass dog collars

Reverend Thomas Warren, the Anglican vicar of Tolpuddle's St John the Evangelist church, used these collars to identify his dogs. In the early 1830s Warren witnessed an agreement between the Methodist Tolpuddle labourers and landowners to resolve an ongoing dispute over wages. He then sided with James Frampton, the local landowner responsible for those same labourers being arrested.
Early 19th century

2014.60.1-2

In the drawer:

Apprenticeship indenture (contract) for John Sherwood

John Sherwood from Affpuddle was 16 years old when he was apprenticed to a carpenter called George Sansom. In exchange for a sum of money, a master trained an apprentice in their craft or trade, as well as providing food, clothing and lodging, normally for seven years. A charity paid for Sherwood's apprenticeship. Census records show that he worked as a carpenter for many years after finishing it.
1837

R.1972.11.1

In the drawer:

Education for all

The Education Act of 1870 made schooling compulsory for children between the ages of five and 12. Before this, poorer families could sometimes access education through organisations such as Sunday schools, private Dame schools or National schools. National schools were run by the Church of England and offered basic reading, writing, arithmetic and Christian teaching. Many families still relied on children to earn an income, and girls were particularly at risk of missing out on education.

1
Sampler

Ten-year-old Elizabeth Watson stitched this sampler at Frampton School. Girls often sewed biblical quotes and letters of the alphabet into samplers. It was part of their education rather than a creative activity.
1840

2003.9

2
Certificate for hemming

The working classes were encouraged to 'improve' through hard work and education. This certificate was presented to Ada Clark for 'the third best specimen of hemming done by a girl at school between the age of five and seven years'.
1897

R.1994.75

Law and order in Dorset

During the 19th century people began to be employed professionally to administer law and order. Criminals were still treated severely.

Dorset County Constabulary was formed in 1855 to professionalise policing. Before this, volunteer constables and watchmen had kept order.

Justices of the Peace dealt with offences. Also called magistrates, they were all landowners or merchants. They sat in Petty Sessions courts for minor offences, or at the Quarter Sessions, which rotated around the county. Crimes that could result in the death penalty were tried by a judge and jury at the assizes court, held twice a year in Dorchester. The county prison was also in Dorchester. Another prison opened on Portland in 1850.

On the wall and the table top:

1
Cast of the head of Jonah Detheridge

Detheridge was an inmate at Portland Prison when he murdered Joseph Trevett, a warder. He was sentenced to death and executed on 12 August 1869 at Dorchester Prison. It was the first to be carried out in private there. This cast is thought to have been made for the prison's doctor and surgeon, Dr Good, for his studies into criminals' physical appearance.
c.1869

2001.87

2
Weights inscribed 'Mercy'

It is believed these were used to ensure instant death for 16-year-old Silvester Wilkins, who was hanged at Dorchester prison in 1833. Wilkins had been convicted for setting fire to a shop in Bridport. He was very slight, so his own weight might not have been sufficient to break his neck.
Early 19th century

1893.5.1-2

3
Hand-painted truncheon

Chettle

1844

1960.5

4
Waist belts

The county prison was in Dorchester. A new building was opened in the 1790s and these belts were used to restrain prisoners there. That prison building was replaced in 1885.
Early 19th century

1908.3.3-4

5
Rulebook for the Dorset Constabulary

Compiled by the Chief Constable of Dorset, Captain Amyatt
E Amyatt.
1887

R.2007.3

6
Reward poster

A £20 reward was offered for information leading to the
conviction of the offenders who 'attacked' and 'unhorsed'
George Colby Loftus's groom in Dorchester.
1831

RD.2893

7
Teapot with Portland Prison scene

Portland Prison opened in 1850, mainly to provide convict
labour for building the Breakwater in Portland Harbour.
Mid-19th century

R.1956.20.1

Helping each other

Around 200 friendly societies are thought to have been set up in Dorset's towns and villages during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Village friendly societies acted as a kind of financial protection for families before modern insurance and the welfare state arrived. Working people made regular financial contributions, which could be paid out if they fell ill or died.

The societies also had a strong community element. In Dorset and Somerset they held annual celebrations in June on Whit Monday. There was a church service, feasting and a village procession with members carrying banners, or staves headed by a brass finial and decorated with ribbons.

On the wall and the table top:

1

Dorset Friendly Society banner

For centuries, organisations with a marching tradition have made banners to identify themselves. Carried at annual processions, friendly society banners often symbolised peace, fairness and union. This one shows clasped hands and the blindfolded Roman goddess Justitia, representing justice.
c.1900

RD.1056

2

Stave from the Stoke Abbot sick club

Stoke Abbot's sick club held an annual parade and feast from 1870. Members marched to church behind a local band, carrying banners and wooden staves like this, while drinking cider. The tradition has recently been revived.
Late 19th century

R.1973.57

3

Sturminster Agricultural Society certificate awarded to William Ridout

Agricultural societies gave their members financial and professional support. Certificates and cash awards for tasks such as hoeing, hedging and ditching helped top up agricultural workers' low wages.
1864

R.1996.41

4

Dorset Masonic apron

Like the friendly societies, Dorset Freemasons were involved in charitable activities including raising money and caring for the sick. They shared similar values of supporting others and charity within the community. Part of the masonic regalia they wore stemmed from the leather aprons used by stonemasons to carry their tools.
c.1890

R.2895

5

Sick pay account book

The Bridehead branch of the Dorset Friendly Society kept a record of sick pay given out to members in this account book. The society was based around the Williams family estate at Little Bredy.
1848–1884

RD.2936

On the wall:

Improving healthcare

Infant mortality was high and life expectancy low in early 19th-century Dorset. The poor were hit hardest.

Agricultural labourers did dangerous and tiring jobs in the wet and cold, often developing rheumatism. Poor sanitation in overcrowded cottages also led to diseases such as tuberculosis.

Philanthropists set up charities to help provide health care. Dorset County Asylum (later known as Herrison Hospital) opened in 1832. Next came Dorset County Hospital, established as a charity in 1840 and funded by subscription and donation. Cholera outbreaks in Dorchester's Fordington area during the 1840s and 1850s led local vicar Henry Moule to invent a simple composting toilet, which reduced the risk of waterborne diseases.

In the showcase, left to right:

Surgeon's cabinet

The equipment inside this cabinet from Bridport hospital is for cupping. The glass cups would have been used to create suction on the skin, to draw blood and 'toxins' from the body. Cupping originated in ancient Chinese and Middle Eastern medicine and was popular across Europe in the 19th century.

19th century

1952.15

Surgeon's saw

Before antibiotics were discovered in 1928, injuries often led to gangrene and death. To prevent infection, surgeons cut off wounded limbs with saws like this. It probably belonged to Dorchester-born Sir Frederick Treves (1853–1923). He made his name as a war surgeon and looked after Joseph Merrick, known in popular culture as the 'Elephant Man'.

c.1900

1994.114

On the wall:

Above

County Asylum certificate for proficiency in mental nursing

Matilda Batch Pitcher was awarded this certificate after training as a mental health nurse at Dorset County Asylum. Like other nurses she lived within the hospital and was on call at all hours. At the time, many mental illnesses were not understood and no psychiatric medications were available.
1899

RD.2885

Dorset County Lunatic Asylum

Dorset County Asylum treated patients who had been certified as 'lunatics'. The term was broad and included people with a range of mental and physical illnesses.
A second site, Herrison Hospital, opened in 1863 in Charminster. This drawing shows plans for expanding its wards and adding a recreational area.
c.1895

ART.946

William Barnes and education

Farmer's son William Barnes (1801–1886) became a schoolmaster and parish rector, and built a reputation as a poet in the Dorset dialect.

Barnes's poetry draws on the changing relationship between the Dorset landscape and the culture and customs of its people. He set up several schools for the rural poor, including one in Dorchester.

His teaching methods were progressive and covered a wide range of subjects. He encouraged students to spend time outside the classroom collecting fossils or exploring the countryside for butterflies and wild flowers.

Adult education was another interest and he regularly lectured at institutes and reading rooms in towns and villages. While rector of Winterborne Came between 1862 and 1886, he set up a night school in his rectory to teach farmworkers to read and write.

On the wall:

Above

Lecture posters

Travelling across the countryside to give lectures, Barnes never asked for payment, believing everyone should have access to education. He gave talks on economics, science, archaeology and languages as well as his poetry. His lecture Labour & Gold showed sympathy for rural labourers, and the impact of capitalism on their freedom and welfare.
1861, 1859
2009.47.9 and RD.2611

The Schoolmaster

Book in hand and finger pointing downwards, Barnes is looking at one of his pupils or teaching a class. The Hebrew book represents his knowledge of philology – he taught himself to read over 60 ancient and modern languages. The telescope in the background suggests his interest in science.
Attributed to John Thorne (active 1838–1864)
Oil on canvas
1845
Ll.1958.26.2

In the showcase:

Above

'Linden Lea – A Dorset Song'

An' brown-leav'd fruit's a-turnèn red,
In cloudless zunsheen, auver head,
Wi' fruit vor me, the apple tree
Do leän down low in Linden Lea.

Written in Dorset dialect, Barnes's poem 'My Orcha'd in Linden Lea' is about an apple tree in an orchard. Composer Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958) later set it to music and it became a popular song for school assemblies and choirs.

Boosey & Hawkes, London
1901

B.430

Below, left to right

Book of handwritten poetry

Barnes wrote poetry in Dorset dialect about local rural life. In his later years, people travelled far and wide to hear him perform his poems at public recitals. He captured the sound of people's voices and recorded a traditional rural way of life, which changed as a result of the Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions.

c.1867

B.189

Maquette for statue of William Barnes

Barnes walked for miles every day to visit his parishioners, wearing his distinctive hat and carrying a hedgerow stick. This is one of two maquettes (models) for a statue of him in St Peter's churchyard, Dorchester. The Barnes Memorial Committee selected the version showing Barnes with a beard and bowed head.
Edwin Roscoe Mullins (1848–1907)
Bronze
1886
B.566

Civic pride

Throughout Dorset's towns, new buildings and public spaces opened up for a growing population and were a source of local pride.

As the state recognised the benefit of leisure time to its citizens' wellbeing, new parks and other places were created to offer opportunities for relaxation. Street lighting, piped water and drains for sewage were other important contributions to town life and health.

Better communications and transport helped connect Dorset's isolated towns and villages to the rest of the country. As Britain's empire grew, communities demonstrated their patriotism by taking part in national events and celebrations.

On the wall:

Top left to right

High East Street, Dorchester

The just-finished Town Hall clock turret by the architect Benjamin Ferrey is to the left of St Peter's church tower in this view. Together with the spire of Ferrey's All Saints on the right, the turret transformed the architectural landscape of Dorchester.
Unknown artist
Oil on canvas
c.1860–1870

1945.24.1

A homecoming dinner

Local men who served in the Second Anglo Boer War between 1899 and 1901 were honoured with a homecoming dinner in Beaminster. This poster advertised the public event.
1901

RD.2895

Bottom left to right

The opening of Borough Gardens, Dorchester

Dorchester's Borough Gardens opened to the public in
1896. They were landscaped on ground the Corporation of
Dorchester bought from the Duchy of Cornwall 'for the health
and recreation' of Dorchester's inhabitants. This photograph
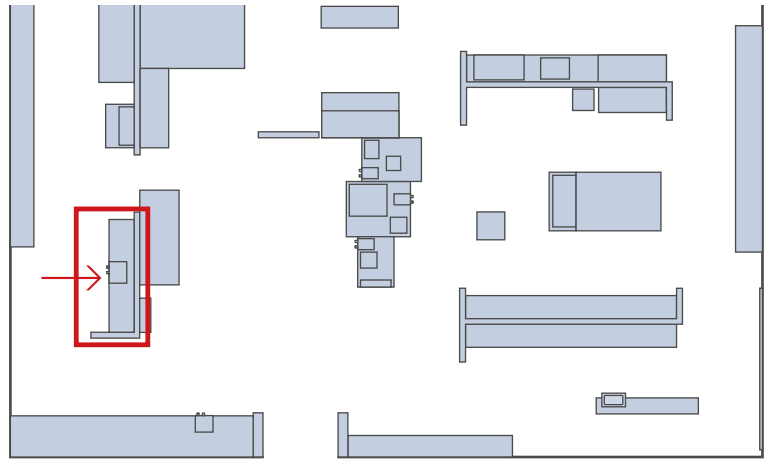shows the formal opening of the park's fountain.
1898
P.25951

Celebrating the coronation of Queen Victoria

Notice calling a meeting to discuss practical arrangements
for Dorchester's residents to mark the anniversary of Queen
Victoria's coronation.
1851
RD.2896

On the wall:

Smuggling and shipwrecks

18th and 19th centuries

Dorset is famous for both smuggling and shipwrecks.

Its cliffs, the Fleet tidal lagoon, sandy bays and pebble beaches offered local people plenty of places to transport and hide contraband. The dangerous coastline, storms and strong currents have also caused many ships to sink or run aground.

Find out about Dorset's sailors, smugglers and survivors, and discover objects recovered from the bottom of the sea. Listen to songs and stories that bring the past to life, and hear a first-hand account of a famous shipwreck.

Dorset smuggling

Local people took advantage of the rugged Dorset coastline to hide their smuggled goods. They concealed their contraband of tea, tobacco and spirits in wooden kegs known as tubs.

Most local smugglers were ordinary people making a bit of extra money by supplying illegal or heavily taxed goods. Some were also property owners and professionals. Isaac Gulliver (1745–1822), one of the most famous, owned several farms and became a wine merchant.

Popular smuggling locations included quarries in the cliffs along the Purbeck coast. People sank their tubs at the bottom of remote bays and returned for them later in small boats, fishing the tubs out with grappling hooks. Some locals plundered shipwrecks on Chesil Beach, where many boats ran aground in the dangerous seas around Portland.

On the wall and the plinth:

Above

Smugglers' grappling iron

After smugglers stashed their goods at the bottom of the sea, 'tub men' would come along and retrieve them when the coast was clear. Charles Cooper of Kimmeridge used this grappling hook in the early 19th century to scour the seabed and retrieve sunken booty.

19th century

RD.2872

Below

Smugglers' keg

Kegs have been used to store alcohol for centuries and their design has hardly changed. Smugglers would have sunk these in the sea or rivers, coming back to get them when it was safe. This keg was found stored in a house in Blandford. 19th century

1964.13.9

The *Halsewell* shipwreck

In 1786 an East India Company ship called the *Halsewell* was at the start of a voyage from London to Madras with 240 people on board. A violent storm in the English Channel severely damaged the ship, and drove it onto the rocks below Purbeck's Winspit cliff. There were only 74 survivors.

Some men managed to escape the ship, but many died on the rocks as they tried to reach safety. Local quarrymen rushed to help and used ropes to haul survivors up the cliff. The Captain stayed on board with the remaining crew, passengers, Indian servants and his two daughters. They were all drowned when heavy seas washed over the ship.

Sound point:

Sea tales

Listen to songs and discover stories about the sea. *Roll the Old Chariot Along* is a sea shanty that was sung on board sailing ships and by workers in the Portland stone quarries. Hear the tragic story of a ship called the *Halsewell*, which sank in a violent storm off the Dorset coast in 1786. The story of the men and women who drowned and the moment the ship went down are brought to life here in words and music.

Roll the Old Chariot Along, performed by Tim Laycock, Alastair Simpson, Tatterdemalion and members of the New Hardy Players.

Recorded by Andy Worth at St Michael's Church, Stinsford.

Halsewell, performed by Ninebarrow, Jon Whitley and Jay LaBouchardiere.

© www.ninebarrow.co.uk

The Unfortunate Captain Peirce and the Wreck of the Halsewell, East Indiaman, **1786,** by Philip Browne, 2015, chapters 18–19 (abridged). Introduced and read by Freddie Fox.

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In the showcase:

Halsewell shipwreck objects

Objects found in the wreckage of the *Halsewell* give us clues about its cargo and daily life on board. Furniture fittings such as handles were shipped for trade, while chess pieces show how people passed the time on long voyages.
Most of the objects displayed here were recovered by diving groups in the 1980s and 1990s. Some items were washed up on the shore or found still intact between rocks.

1
Hourglass

Hourglasses – or sandglasses – measure short periods of time with falling sand. They were used at sea to help calculate journey and watch times. The glass kept the sand dry, so it never froze in cold conditions. This hourglass would measure about four hours.

RD.1093

2
Metal buttons

2004.76.2.1

3
Lead shot

2004.76.4

4

Pair of drawer handles

1975.41

5

Chess pieces

R.1996.40

6

Spanish pillar dollar

Also known as pieces of eight, pillar dollars were the first global currency.

c.1775

2004.76.3.1

7

Silver buckle

2003.76

8

Spoon

2003.76.3.15

9

Knife with mother-of-pearl handle

RD.2873

10

Silver button engraved with TB

2003.76.13.6

11
Navigational dividers

2004.76

12
Vase

RD.2377

Left, above case

The *Halsewell* shipwreck

Terrified women are stranded onboard while sailors swim and crawl onto rocks, some climbing to safety. This print was published just six weeks after the *Halsewell* was wrecked. The artist based the scene on survivors' accounts and newspaper reports. They informed him about the cave in the cliff where many were rescued, and how the women remained on the ship with Captain Peirce.
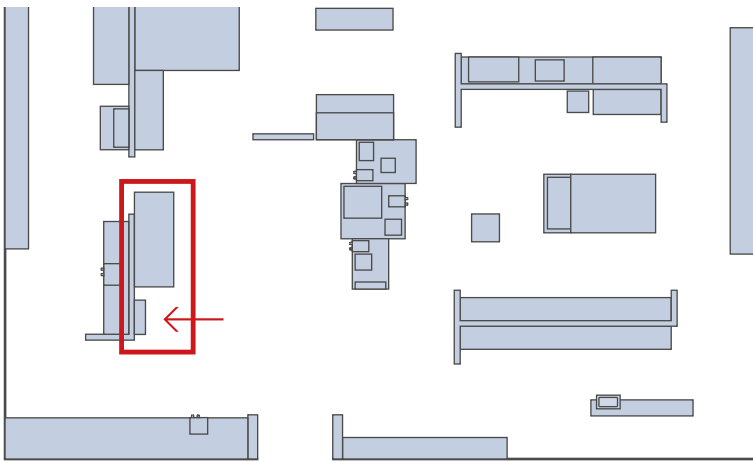Robert Dodd (1748–1815)
Aquatint on paper
1786
LI.2021.5
On loan from Philip Browne

On the wall:

The seaside

Sandy beaches, donkey rides, ice cream, sunlit seas, piers and white cliffs. These are just some of the things that make the Dorset seaside special. Find your own piece of seaside here – sit in a Weymouth promenade shelter and hear sounds of the sea or write a postcard and look through the telescope.

George III helped put Dorset on the holiday map in 1789. He first visited Weymouth to recover from illness, bathed in the sea and liked it so much he spent many holidays there. Rich visitors followed him and the coastal town grew into a fashionable resort.

When the railways reached Dorset in the 19th century they brought more sightseers and holidaymakers to seaside towns such as Weymouth, Swanage and Bournemouth. These became popular holiday destinations with esplanades, hotels, beach huts, amusements and boat trips. Today the seaside might have changed but its traditional attractions and features still draw crowds.
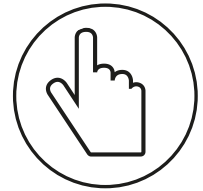
Beside the sea

If you stroll along Weymouth's traditional
promenade you can see the sandy beach, soaring
seagulls, white cliffs and visitors enjoying ice creams.
Before long you come across the blue and white
Victorian shelters built in 1899. For crowds of holidaymakers
they still provide a welcome place to rest, shelter from
the wind or eat fish and chips.
Take a seat and imagine being by the sea...
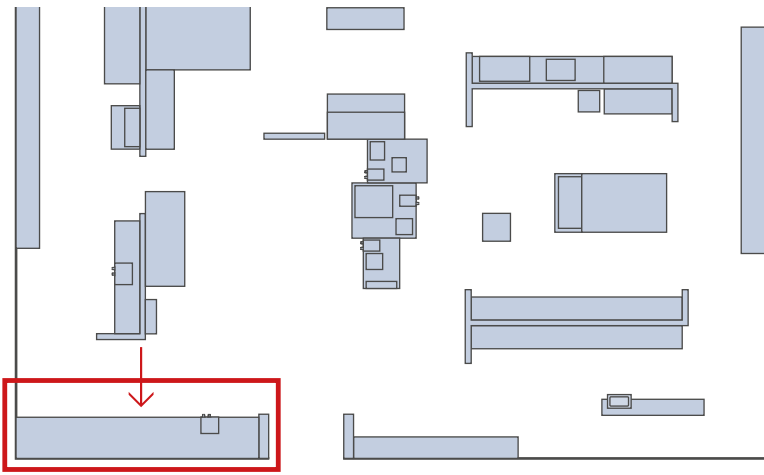
On the wall:

Dorset in 10 stories

20th century

Inspiring people, inventions, creativity and enterprise helped shape Dorset's history in the 20th century. Explore stories from each decade here through objects and images that bring them to life.

Every story is connected to someone who has lived here and influenced science, technology, literature, art, design, agriculture, industry or popular culture. They include suffragist and aid worker Mabel Stobart, military officer and writer TE Lawrence, and sculptor Dame Elisabeth Frink.

In the showcase:

1900–1910
Edith Prideaux's dress

What can clothes tell us about a person? This is a maternity dress that belonged to a local woman called Edith (Edie) Prideaux (1887–1959). Not many outfits like this survive from that time because people tended to keep pregnancy hidden. Prideaux gave birth to her daughter Anstis in 1911 and may have kept the dress for sentimental reasons or for another pregnancy. Married to a Dorchester dental surgeon, she wore fashionable clothes and bought the cotton dress in the photograph in Ireland. Her brother-in-law Charles was Curator of of this museum.
c.1910

2018.30

On the table top, left to right:

**1910–1920
Mabel St Clair Stobart's medical kit**

Mabel Stobart (1862–1954) carried this medical kit with her in the First World War, treating her patients in mud, freezing rain and driving snowstorms. Before the war she had set up a medical training camp in Dorset to teach women how to treat the sick and wounded in battle.
In 1914 she formed the National Service League and created field hospitals in Belgium and France. She was head of a hospital unit on the Serbian front line in 1915. When they had to evacuate, she led sick and wounded Serbian soldiers and refugees to safety.
c.1915

R.2007.6

**1920–1930
TE Lawrence's lock of hair**

Archaeologist, diplomat, military officer and writer,
TE Lawrence (1888–1935) is best known for his part in the 1916 Arab Revolt. He was known as Lawrence of Arabia and wrote about his experiences in Seven Pillars of Wisdom. After losing his first draft at Reading station, he rewrote the book and it was published in 1926. At the time he was living at Clouds Hill, a small cottage in Dorset, which he called his 'hut in a wood'. He visited Thomas Hardy and his wife Florence, to whom he gave this lock of his hair.
c.1925–1929

RD.2689

1930–1940
Harry Grenville's spoon

13-year-old Harry Grenville (1926–2018) carried this spoon with him in 1939 when he boarded a train in Nazi Germany for a new life in Britain. It was given to him at his circumcision and engraved with his birth name, Heinz. His parents later died in concentration camps, but both Harry and his sister Hannah escaped on the Kindertransport (Children's Transport). This British government scheme helped 10,000 Jewish children from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia to settle in Britain. After the war Harry made Dorset his home.

c.1926

On loan from the Grenville family
LI.2019.17

In the showcase:

1940–1950
Miss M Jenks's uniform

This uniform with its shirt, jumper and dungarees was part of regulation wear for a Second World War land girl like Miss Jenks. As part of the Women's Land Army (WLA) she wore it when she worked for Mr Maltby on Kingston Russell farm in Dorset. Land girls helped boost Britain's wartime food production, replacing male agricultural workers who joined the army. Like other land girls, Jenks worked hard in all weathers and conditions. Some women enjoyed the experience, but others found rural life hard. Their jobs included working in the dairies and controlling pests. The land girls in the photograph on the left are making work fun, taking part in a rat-catching championship.
1939–1945

1981.4

On the plinth:

1950–1960
Winfrith and the Dragon Reactor

The Atomic Energy Establishment at Winfrith was established in 1959 to build and test experimental nuclear reactors. Donald Fry (pictured on the left) was its first Director. This is a model of Dragon, a high-temperature gas-cooled reactor. It was built as part of a collaboration between several nations. Cooled by helium gas, and fuelled

by coated ceramic particles, the 26-metre-high reactor looked like an enormous bottle. It operated until 1976. Of the nine experimental reactors at Winfrith, only the Dragon Reactor and the Steam Generating Heavy Water Reactor remain. They are in the process of being decommissioned.

c.1960

LI.2020.1
On loan from Magnox Ltd.

On the table top:

1960–1970
Rena Gardiner's guide to Purbeck

Coast, castles, quarries, houses and landscapes are radiant with colour in this guidebook to Dorset. It is one of a set of three exploring the region produced by Rena Gardiner (1929–1999). She worked from her thatched cottage in Tarrant Monkton, running a one-woman publishing house called the Workshop Press. Influenced by artists including John Piper and Eric Ravilious, Gardiner created over 45 titles in her individual style. She managed everything herself – from the artwork to writing and production.

Dorset: The Isle of Purbeck

1969

RD.2890

Sound point:

1970–1980
Plessey in the 1970s

Some of the world's most significant electronic innovations were created by Plessey Telecommunications in Poole. It was where the bar code was invented and where traffic light signals for many of the world's major cities were developed.

Find out more about Plessey from Richard Bailey, a development engineer who worked there in the 1970s. Richard describes the projects he was involved in, and talks about his colleague Tim Berners-Lee, the computer scientist who went on to invent the World Wide Web.

1980–1990
Dame Elisabeth Frink's *Dorset Martyrs Memorial*

These figures have a political element, because I am preoccupied with the human rights situation in the world. Elisabeth Frink (1930–1993)

Frink created this maquette before making the full-size *Dorset Martyrs Memorial*, which was unveiled in 1986 at Gallows Hill in Dorchester. The two prisoners standing side by side and facing a robed executioner commemorate Dorset Catholics martyred for their faith in the 16th and 17th centuries.

These sculptures are among a body of work Frink created in Dorset that includes *In Memoriam* (1981) and *Prisoner's*

Head (1982). They pay homage to all men and women who suffer for their beliefs. Frink was an active supporter of Amnesty International.

Standing Group maquette
Bronze, edition of 8
1983
RD.1101

On the plinth:

1990–2000
John Makepeace's *Trine* chair
Furniture maker and designer John Makepeace OBE (b.1939) created his *Trine* chair from yew and bog oak. Early experiments revealed that a single leg at the rear combined with a curved back could provide excellent lumbar support. In constructing the chair, he applied the principles of material science, using stainless steel and epoxy resin to achieve high performance. During the 1990s Makepeace worked from his studio at Parnham House in Dorset. He had moved there in 1976, setting up the *School for Craftsmen in Wood* alongside his studio, to offer designers an alternative to university education.
1992

LI.2020.8
On loan from John Makepeace © John Makepeace, 1992.