

Large print guide

People's Dorset Part 1

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

Dorset
Museum
& Art Gallery



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.

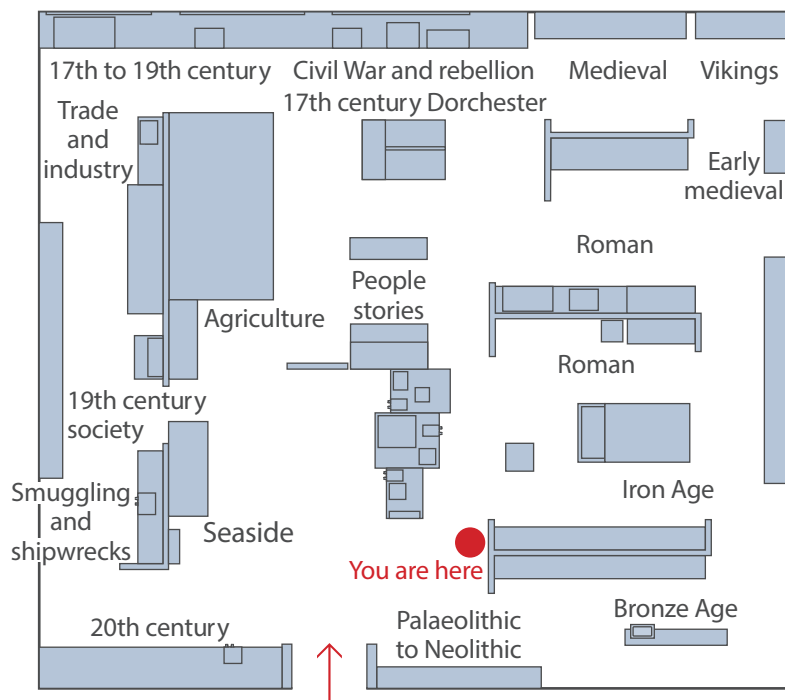
Archaeology – be amazed by some of Britain's most valuable archaeological treasures, stretching back to the Palaeolithic including hand axes, gold neck rings from the Bronze Age, Roman coins and fine jewellery.



Sound point



Please touch



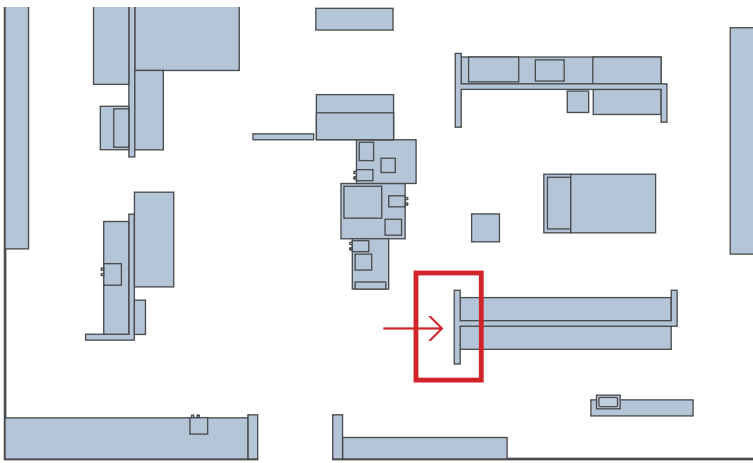
Medieval – meet some of the earliest named people in Dorset, find out about objects from castles, manors and churches and discover treasures including the beautifully preserved Wool altar frontal.

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:



On the wall (at the start of the gallery):

People's Dorset

People have lived in the place we call Dorset for over 500,000 years. Its landscape and coastline have influenced and shaped the work, lifestyles and communities of every generation to have lived here.

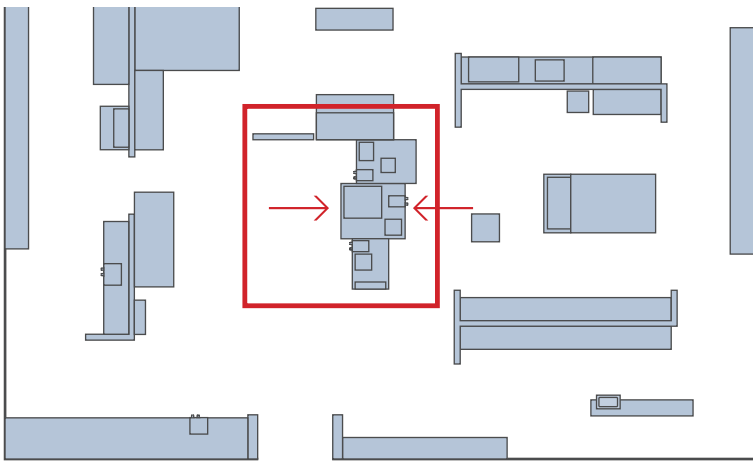
Some of Britain's most valuable archaeological treasures, stretching back to the Palaeolithic, are in this gallery. They tell us about high-status lives and distant connections in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, and how communities became more organised through the Iron Age and in Roman Britain.

Dorset's rural character was set in early medieval times when the land was divided into large estates governed by the Church and the rich. Wealthy people's lifestyles contrasted sharply with those of the poor, who worked on the land or at sea and suffered some of the worst poverty in the England.

19th-century industrialisation had a limited impact on this rural county, but it did open connections with the wider world. Many migrated in search of better opportunities in cities or overseas. Immigration into the county however was limited. Seaside resorts and the picturesque landscape attracted more visitors as traditional industries declined or were mechanised, and tourism created new economic opportunities.

Human remains

Please be aware that this gallery contains human remains. We understand that many people have concerns about the excavation and display of the remains of people. Human bones have been included in our displays only where we feel they are a key part of the story. Dorset Museum has the utmost respect for the remains of individuals in our care. They are a unique and direct way to understand the past, and ourselves.



On the central plinth:

People stories

Land, sea and community

Land, sea and community have been themes of Dorset life for thousands of years. Each object here has a story that connects it to Dorset and to the people who inspired, created or used it.

Some of them relate to the land and the people that farmed, inhabited, influenced or wrote about it. Others show how the sea affected work and leisure, or inspired the imagination. Many are linked to Dorset's community and tell stories about people who made a difference or enhanced local lives.

We are collecting 21st century objects, audio and film about Dorset for future displays here. Do you have ideas about what we might collect or show? Please tell us on the message board in this gallery.

On the central plinth:

Palaeolithic hand axes

Palaeolithic people made hand axes in different shapes including oval (ovate), heart-shaped (cordate) and pointed (ficron). These hand axes date from around 350,000 to 250,000 years ago and were found in Dorset gravels.

Broom, Warmwell, Corfe Mullen, Little Canford

1922.11.1, 1966.24, 1948.10.2, 1922.19.14, 1922.19.9, 1956.64, 1943.7.2, 1987.14.1, 1932.44, 1949.10.2, 1933.64, 1935.157, RD.1631–1640, RD.1643–1644, RD.1417

Leaving an impression

These shoes belonged to William Barnes (1801–1886). He was well known and respected in Dorchester as a writer, teacher, rector and one of the founders of this Museum.

On Saturday mornings Barnes walked from his rectory at Winterborne Came to visit the market, setting his pocket watch by the clock of St Peter's. His friend, the writer Thomas Hardy, described him as 'quaintly attired in capel cloak, knee breeches, and buckled shoes'.

c.1880

1946.29.1



Sound point:

William Barnes (1801–1886)

Follow in William Barnes's footsteps and find out more about his poetry and the Dorset dialect. Listen to one of his poems, called 'My Orcha'd in Linden Lea'. In it he describes an open-woodland scene through the seasons.

'My Orcha'd in Linden Lea'

Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect by
William Barnes, 1879.

Introduced by Tim Laycock and read by Brian Caddy.

Recorded by Andy Worth.

A new look for Dorset

Window dresser Billie Brown modelled this dress in a shop fashion show and later bought it for her honeymoon. She was employed in the Parkstone and Bournemouth Co-op drapery department.

With its nipped-in shape and full skirt, her dress celebrates the 1950s romantic look. After the austerity of clothes rationing between 1941 and 1949 British fashion was ready for a change. Inspired by the New Look style, dressmakers created their own dream designs.

1958

T.2205

Saving lives

Dorchester vicar Henry Moule (1801–1880) worked for better sanitation in the squalid slums of his Fordington parish. Conditions were so bad that sewage swept past doorsteps to a local pond. Infected water spread cholera in the epidemic of 1854.

To reduce the risk of disease, Moule invented a simple but effective composting toilet. Earth, ashes or charcoal were placed in a triangular-shaped hopper, then released by a pull handle to mix with human waste in the bucket below.

1873

RD.2456

Sound point:



The Dorset Ooser

Uncover the mystery surrounding the giant wooden head on display in the showcase to your left. Dr Peter Robson traces the history of the original Ooser mask in Dorset folklore. He also describes how one of the Wessex Morris Men made this replica for local celebrations.

Dr Peter Robson

© Music performed by the Wessex Morris Men

Weymouth Punch and Judy show

Discover more about Mr Punch and this British seaside tradition with 'Professor' Mark Poulton. Hear about the 'magical' childhood experience that inspired him to

People stories

become a Punch and Judy professor, performing shows on Weymouth beach.

'Professor' Mark Poulton

© Punch and Judy performed by Mark Poulton

Beside the seaside

Love him or loathe him, Mr Punch has entertained generations of Dorset's seaside visitors. He and his wife Judy feature in the traditional show performed by a single puppeteer.

Punch has his roots in 16th-century Italy, as the thuggish character Pulcinella in the street theatre *commedia dell'arte*. Italian puppeteers brought him to Britain in the mid-17th century and Punch soon made himself at home.

2003

RD.2495

Collecting sacred words

Fossil collector and scientist Mary Anning (1799–1847) handwrote prayers, poems and texts she valued into this commonplace book. Simple books like this were a way for people to keep copies of poems or passages they had read.

Anning included works by writers considered radical at the time, including the slavery abolitionists James Montgomery (1771–1850) and Amelia Opie (1769–1853).

c.1840–1847

NHMSXXXVII.2



Sound point:

Mary Anning (1799–1847)

Best-selling author Tracy Chevalier considers the personal and social barriers Mary Anning overcame to become one of the world's greatest fossil hunters. Find out more about Anning's life and see her commonplace book to your left. Chevalier is the author of *Remarkable Creatures*, a novel that reimagines Anning's life, struggles and relationships.

Vice Admiral Hardy

This bust is of Sir Thomas Masterman Hardy (1769–1839) who was born in Dorset and raised a family in Portesham.

Hardy was a famous Vice Admiral who commanded HMS *Victory* at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. When Admiral Lord Nelson (1758–1805) received a fatal gunshot wound, eyewitnesses reported that he said 'Kiss me, Hardy'. Hardy obliged, kissing him once on the cheek and forehead.

Early 19th century

RD.2876

In the showcase:

1

Chess pieces

The Vikings introduced a chess-like game called Tafl into Britain. These chess pieces are replicas of an original set of whalebone Tafl gaming pieces, excavated at Dorset's Witchampton Manor. The originals date from the 10th to the 12th century and are at the British Museum.

1927.7

2

Shipwrecked

Salvage expert John Braithwaite used his diving machine to recover this silver cream jug from Weymouth Bay in 1806. It had probably belonged to someone travelling on the Earl of Abergavenny, a ship that sank in a storm off Portland on 5 February 1805.

c.1800

LI.2019.12

3

A scary mask

This monstrous mask has its origins in Dorset folklore and became known as the Christmas Bull in the 19th century. Until recently Morris dancers used this replica Ooser for their annual May Day celebrations on a hillside near Cerne Abbas.

Reproduction of original

1973

On loan from John Byfleet

LI.2019.13

Above

'Sea Fever'

I must down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by.

Poet John Masefield (1878–1967) spent many years on board ships where he heard stories about the sea. His maritime poems capture his experiences as a sailor. He made this model ship and named it The Triumph, before gifting it to the writer Thomas Hardy.

c.1921

RD.2333

4

A Boy on a Horse

Sculptor Mary Spencer Watson lived for much of her life at Dunshay Manor near Corfe Castle. Best known for her stone carvings, she also produced fine terracotta, bronze and wood sculptures.

Mary Spencer Watson (1913–2006)

Ceramic

c.2000

2019.9

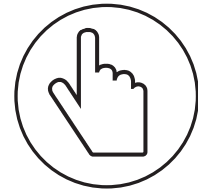
5

Home education

This Noah's ark was used to teach Dorset children the bible story through play.

c.1890

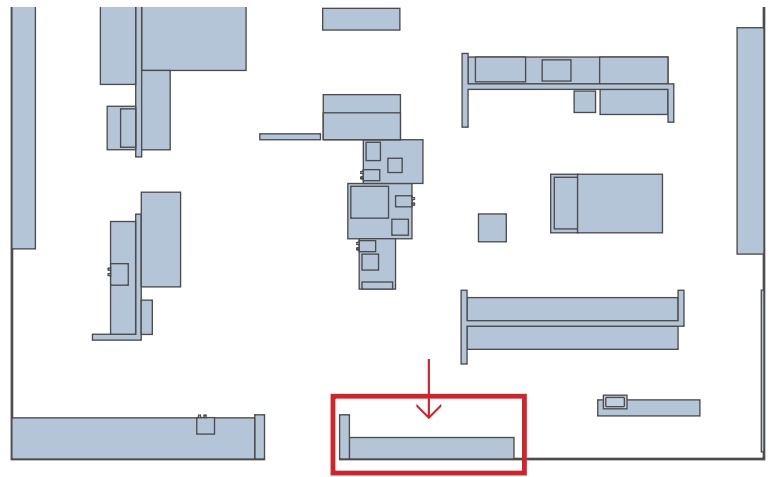
1986.310.1



On the wall:

Impress yourself

Mark a moment in time in Dorset by leaving your impression in the pin wall. All the pins are made of plastic. See and feel the shape your hand makes as it presses into the pins. Then try with your arms or legs.



In the showcase:

Palaeolithic

c.500,000–10,000 years ago

The first people

The first people, probably members of the early hominin species *Homo heidelbergensis*, lived in the Dorset area from around 500,000 to 400,000 years ago. The only evidence of hominins are hand axes from the gravels of river valleys, such as at Broom in the Axe Valley and Corfe Mullen on the route of the ancient Solent River.

Like most of Britain during the last Ice Age, the area was deserted much of the time. Around 40,000 years ago, during a warmer period, Neanderthals, *Homo neanderthalensis*, were present. Very few of their tools, which used flakes of flint, have been found in Dorset. These include a rare 'tortoise core' (so called because it looks like a tortoise shell) which was only made by Neanderthals.

Modern humans, *Homo sapiens*, first arrived during a warm period around 15,000 years ago. Hengistbury Head, at that

Palaeolithic

time on a ridge between two rivers, was a hunting camp. Deer Park Farm near Wimborne St Giles also had scatters of flint artefacts, showing a similar use of the area.

On the back panel:

Palaeolithic hand axes from around 350,000 to 250,000 years ago

These hand axes are from Dorset gravels. They are of several forms but all were made using the 'Acheulian' technique, which worked inwards to the core of the flint to create the tool. As they were worked from both sides, they are often referred to as bifaces.

1

Ovate hand axe

Corfe Mullen

1987.12.57

2

Pointed hand axe

Briantspuddle

1922.9.2

3

Cordate hand axe

Hand axes from a site at Broom come from a deposit dated to around 300,000 years ago.

2005.35

Neanderthal tools

These tools were made in the 'Mousterian' tradition (named after the site in France where it was first recognised) using the 'Levallois' technique for producing flakes. This advance meant that many more blades could be produced from the flint nodule.

4

Tortoise core

So called because it is shaped like a tortoise shell.

Briantspuddle

c.40,000–20,000 BCE

1922.9.3

In the drawer below:

Palaeolithic hand axes from around 350,000 to 250,000 years ago

These axes have distinctive oval, pointed, or heart-shaped forms. They were probably used for many purposes involved in hunting and preparing meat and plant foods, as knives or for crushing. The technology had originated in Africa more than a million years earlier.

1

Pointed chert hand axe

Broom

RD.1637

Palaeolithic

2

Chert hand axe

Broom

1922.11.5

3

Part-worked flint flake (unfinished hand axe)

Sturminster Marshall

1951.17.2

4

Pointed chert hand axe

Kinson

1939.53.1

5

Chert hand axe

Broom

RD.1641

6

Chert flake

Broom

RD.1642

7

Ficron chert hand axe

Broom

1932.82

18

In the showcase:

Mesolithic

c.10,000–4,000 BCE

People return

At the end of the last Ice Age about 10,000 years ago, the warming climate led to the spread of woodlands and woodland animals. Britain was still part of the continent, and people followed the woodland animals north.

Small numbers of people moved around the landscape, hunting game and fishing on the coast. This new environment needed new equipment, including arrows. Shelters were rare, but there was one at Culverwell on Portland, where a midden (rubbish dump) containing limpet and periwinkle shells was found. Elsewhere in Dorset, we know where people passed by from the scatters of flint they left behind.

Over time the sea level rose. Around 5,400 BCE Britain finally became an island, cutting off the people living here from the continent.

Mesolithic

On the back panel:

Mesolithic flint tools from Winfrith Newburgh

These small slivers of flint (microliths) are Mesolithic tools. They would have been mounted on wooden shafts to make arrows. Other flint tools were designed for cutting, scraping and making holes in materials such as leather or wood. The rich scatter of flint at Winfrith Newburgh probably represents a camp where tools were made around the 5th millennium BCE.

1

Microliths

RD.1647.1-5

2

Axe

RD.1647.15

3

Scrapers

RD.1647.12-14

4

Denticulated blades

RD.1647.6-7

5

Blades

RD.1647.8-11

In the drawer:

A Mesolithic site on Portland

At Culverwell, Portland people used shellfish from the coast. Over time they created a dump of limpets. They also built a shelter and made a cooking pit. The site is known for the large number of 'pick' tools found there. They may have been used to remove limpets from rocks.

1

Picks

2020.11

2

Limpet shells

2020.11

3

Flint blades

2016.5

Neolithic

In the showcase:

Neolithic

c.4,000–2,300 BCE

Farming – a new way of life

New people came to Britain around 4,000 BCE, bringing with them new crops and livestock.

Plants, including cereals, and animals such as cattle, sheep, goats and pigs had been domesticated in the Middle East and their use spread throughout Europe. This new farming way of life began the clearing of some woodland for grazing and growing. Communities were reliant on their domestic animals and plants for food and clothing, but continued to gather wild foods such as hazelnuts.

We don't have much evidence in Dorset for people creating settlements, but they did build monuments and began to use pottery. They also had a distinctive set of new flint and stone tools.

On the back panel:

Special axes from the Early Neolithic (c.4,000–3,300 BCE)

Axes were important for clearing woodland, but they also became special objects. Making them smooth took hundreds of hours of grinding, yet many were never used as tools. They may have been objects that reflected a high status because they used distinctive stone from hundreds of miles away.

The remoteness of some sources of stone added to their specialness.

1

The Newton Peverill jadeite axe

Fewer than 20 such axes are known from Neolithic Britain and this is one of the finest examples ever found. The axe came to Britain around 3,800 BCE. It had been made from stone taken from the foothills of the Italian Alps then polished and finished in southwest France or Brittany. Rare and beautiful, as it travelled across Europe it would have acquired its own life story, and was perhaps also seen as having magical properties.

Newton Peverill

2008.39

Purchased with support from The V&A Purchase Grant Fund

2

Ground stone axe

Made from porcellanite from County Antrim, Ireland.

RD.1655

3

Ground stone axe

Made from greenstone from Cornwall.

Bere Regis

1896.2.1

Neolithic

4

Polished stone hammer head

Made from a type of stone found in Budleigh Salterton,
Devon.

Preston

1911.1.1

5

Polished stone axe

Made from greenstone sourced from the stone axe
'factories' of Great Langdale, Cumbria.

Wareham Forest, Bloxworth

1965.13

6

Mace

Made from amphibolite found in Cornwall.

Winterborne Stickland

1938.25.1

In the drawer:

Farming and changing the land

Neolithic tools included distinctive new styles. Blades and scrapers and other small tools were made for food preparation and craft working. These flint tools were excavated from Neolithic sites at Winterborne Monkton, Maumbury Rings, Dewlish and Maiden Castle.

1

Scrapers

1908.29.4-5, 1939.55 (RD.1658 and RD.1660)

2

Chisel with worn tip

Winterborne Monkton

1987.23.212

3

Polished flint axe

Maiden Castle, Winterborne St Martin

RD.1661

Deposition of animal remains

People relied on their domesticated livestock rather than hunted animals. However the remains of wild animals, such as these neck bones of an aurochs, were sometimes included in special places. One of the best-known Dorset long barrows, Thickthorn Down, did not include human burials in its earliest phase, but contained these instead. Elongated oval mounds of earth with flanking ditches of this type were normally places for human burial. The lack of human remains tells us the barrow had a wider social significance.

4

Aurochs bones

Thickthorn Down, Gussage St Michael

c.4,000–3,300 BCE

1934.44 (RD.1682-1683)

Neolithic

In the showcase:

Early Neolithic

c.4,000–3,300 BCE

Building together

Farming meant a new way of thinking about the land – it could be changed. Marking the space you lived in by building monuments together was important.

The Early Neolithic is marked by the appearance of long barrows over a couple of centuries around 3,800 BCE. These often contained the remains of members of the community and were placed in prominent locations.

Early Neolithic

c.4,000–3,300 BCE

Causewayed enclosures

Causewayed enclosures are so named because of the gaps or 'causeways' in their surrounding ditches. They were contemporary with long barrows and generally positioned on hilltops.

Like long barrows, they were created by the community working together. They were gathering places, for feasting, trading and ceremonies, which sometimes involved burying deposits of human remains.

These enclosures were built singly, like Maiden Castle (near present-day Dorchester), or in a group, as at Hambledon Hill

(near present-day Blandford Forum). Not all gatherings may have been peaceful. Hambledon Hill shows evidence for violence where the body of a man was found with a leaf-shaped arrowhead embedded in his chest.

On the back panel and table top:

Early Neolithic pottery, flint tools, axes and animal bones

These finds demonstrate domestic activities within Neolithic causewayed enclosures at Maiden Castle and Hambledon Hill. They also show long-distance connections with other places. Some objects, such as the polished axe from Hambledon Hill, were deliberately placed. Large pottery vessels and the remains of livestock animals suggest communal feasts.

1

Ceramic bowl

Maiden Castle, Winterborne St Martin

1939.55 (RD.1676)

2

Open plain ware bowl

Hambledon Hill, Iwerne Courtney

2006.31 (RD.1673)

3

Gabbroic ware bowl

Gabbroic pottery originates from the Lizard in Cornwall.

Hambledon Hill, Iwerne Courtney

2006.31 (RD.1674)

Neolithic

4

Polished stone axe

The placing of special objects like this indicates ceremonial activities. Made from stone from Great Langdale, Cumbria.

Hambledon Hill, Iwerne Courtney

RD.1665

5

Leaf arrowheads, flint scrapers and fabricator

Maiden Castle, Winterborne St Martin

1939.55 (RD.1663)

6

Mortar and stone ball

Used to grind corn or other foodstuffs.

Probably Hambledon Hill, Iwerne Courtney

RD.1667-1668

7

Polished stone axe

Made from a stone originating from the Camborne district of Cornwall.

RD.1664

8

Flint axes

Found within the site of the causewayed enclosure at Maiden Castle.

Maiden Castle, Winterborne St Martin

RD.1669-1670

9

Ceramic bowl

Maiden Castle, Winterborne St Martin

1936.12.3

10

Ceramic bowl

Maiden Castle, Winterborne St Martin

1939.55 (RD.1672)

Late Neolithic

c.3,300–2,300 BCE

New monuments

In the later Neolithic people marked the landscape in different ways. There is little evidence of settlements but community effort building monuments was still important and some of them remain visible in the landscape today.

The great Dorset Cursus on Cranborne Chase is the largest cursus in Britain. It consists of two parallel lengths of ditches and banks, closed at the end in an elongated rectangle. It is over 10 kilometres long and incorporates natural rivers and ridges as well as earlier long barrows. Parts of the route line up with the sun at midwinter.

Referencing the land and sky was also common in circular monuments, which started to come into being at this time. Some were built of earth – henges – but there were also timber circles, in a variety of sizes and forms. They often

Neolithic

occur in groups, marking special places, such as the group of henges at Knowlton. There are also henges beneath modern Dorchester, including Maumbury Rings, the huge henge at Mount Pleasant, and large timber circles between them at Greyhound Yard and Flagstones.

On the back panel and table top:

Maumbury Rings

The group of monuments along the Fordington ridge (now beneath Dorchester) included Maumbury Rings, an unusual henge that was rebuilt into an amphitheatre in the Roman period.

1

A view of Dorchester Amphitheatre from the South West

William Stukeley (1687–1765)

1723

ART.688.4

2

Model of Maumbury Rings made for Charles Warne

In his book *Ancient Dorset* Charles Warne described Maumbury Rings as '... the most perfect of its kind in Britain'.

1858.13

Tools for making

Continuity of ceremonial habits from the earlier Neolithic can be seen in patterns incised into the chalk at henges and other carved chalk objects. A range of flint tools were used to make these objects and for other uses.

3

Fragment of Grooved Ware

During the Late Neolithic a new style of pottery, Grooved Ware, was adopted. It is highly decorated with incised lines and often found in monuments or pits.

Maumbury Rings, Dorchester

1908.29.7

4

Plaster casts of scratch marks in chalk

Maumbury Rings, Dorchester

1910 (III) (RD.1687)

5

Flint hammer stones

Maumbury Rings, Dorchester

1908.29.3

6

Antler bone chisel

Mount Pleasant, West Stafford

1972.56 (RD.1690)

Neolithic

7

Bone spatula

Mount Pleasant, West Stafford

1972.56 (RD.1689)

Chalk art

A small number of objects were made out of chalk and deposited at monuments across southern Britain. As most do not appear to be functional, it is likely they had particular meanings.

8

Chalk figure

Mount Pleasant, West Stafford

1972.56 (RD.1688)

9

Fragments of chalk phalluses

Maumbury Rings, Dorchester

1908.29.8-9

10

Chalk fragments

Decorated with a pattern of lines heavily scratched into the surface.

Maumbury Rings, Dorchester

1908.29.13

11

Chalk ball

Maumbury Rings, Dorchester

1908.29 (RD.1686)

12

Fragment of chalk phallus

Maumbury Rings, Dorchester

1908.29.14

13

Chalk balls

Mount Pleasant, West Stafford

1972.56

Digging tools

Ditches and banks were constructed using tools such as antler picks. The shoulder blades of cattle were used as shovels.

14

Antler bone picks

Mount Pleasant, West Stafford

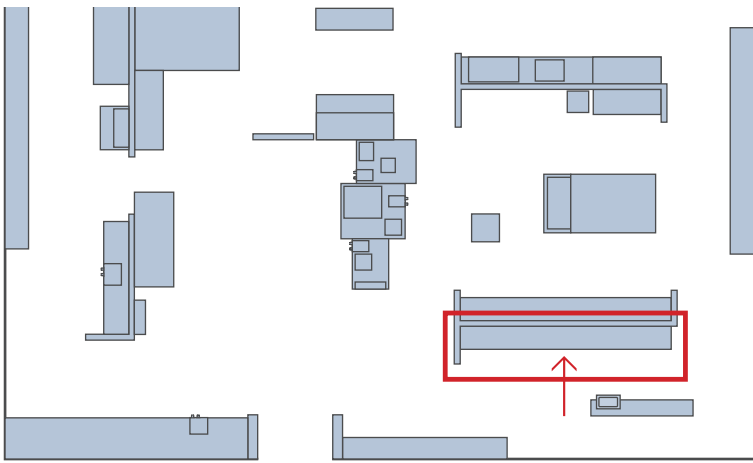
1972.56 (6:6i.1-2)

15

Cast of grooves in chalk

Maumbury Rings, Dorchester

1908.29.11



In the showcase:

Early Bronze Age

c.2,300–1,700 BCE

Barrows

The earlier Bronze Age in Dorset is mainly understood from burials, which still took place in round barrows, often placed near Beaker mounds. Barrows now commemorated individuals or sometimes groups or families.

The South Dorset Ridgeway has the highest concentration of round barrows anywhere in Britain other than around Stonehenge, and they come in a variety of forms. New styles of objects in graves were accompanied by more widespread use of metals. Bronze, an alloy of copper and tin, became more widely used.

Not everyone had a rich burial, but those who did had objects which demonstrate long-distance connections between people, such as sourcing exotic materials like amber. We currently have no archaeological evidence for settlements in this period.

Early Bronze Age
c.2,300–1,700 BCE

The Beaker People

Around 2,300 BCE new objects appeared in Britain and across northern and western Europe. The 'package' of objects and practices included individual burial, metal objects and highly decorated fine and distinctive pottery, the Beaker. These objects could be personal or could be tools.

Burials below round earth mounds became the norm. The body was usually crouched and often accompanied by grave goods. These might include copper or gold objects, and items associated with archery, such as arrowheads and wristguards.

DNA research shows that these new objects probably meant new people. Genetic information indicates to us that most of the first people using Beakers were not the descendants of the Neolithic inhabitants.

On the back panel:

1

Stone wristguard

Often found in Beaker burials, stone wristguards were used in archery. They were worn on the inner face of the wrist of the arm holding the bow to protect it from the rebounding bowstring.

Thomas Hardy School, Dorchester

c.2,500–2,200 BCE

2006.30.7

2

Bronze dagger

Thomas Hardy School, Dorchester

c.2,500–2,200 BCE

2006.30

3

Bronze awl

Thickthorn Down, Gussage St Michael

1936.67

4

Flint blades, arrowheads, barbed arrowheads, scrapers and a 'toolmaker'

Conquer Barrow, Mount Pleasant,
West Stafford

c.1,800 BCE

1972.56 (RD.1691-1703)

On the back panel and table top:

Beakers

These thin-walled pots have a distinctive sinuous shape. They were decorated with geometric patterns in lines zones or panels, made by pressing combs or cord into the surface of the fine clay. They were in use from 2,450 to 1,800 BCE during the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age.

Earlier Beakers

These Early Bronze Age Beakers are associated with the first metal objects in Britain.

5

Beaker

Crichel Down, Tarrant Launceston

1945.23.8

6

Beaker

Frampton

1937.82.4

7

Beaker

Launceston Down, Long Crichel

1962.8.5

Bronze Age

8

Beaker

Thickthorn Down, Gussage St Michael

1936.67.1

9

Beaker

Thickthorn Down, Gussage St Michael

1936.67.2

Later Beakers

These Beakers are associated with the first objects made from bronze. They were made after the first tin deposits were discovered in the southwest of England.

10

Beaker

Broadmayne

1966.2

11

Beaker

Broadmayne

1969.11.1

12

Beaker

Crichel Down, Tarrant Launceston

1946.23.6

13

Beaker

Crichel Down, Tarrant Launceston

1945.23.9

14

Bowl Beaker

Bincombe

1922.1.1

15

Handled Beaker

Bincombe

1922.1.2

On the back panel and table top:

The Clandon Barrow burial assemblage

A little way west of Maiden Castle is the large Clandon Barrow. It contained one of the richest groups of exotic items in southern Britain dating from the Early Bronze Age. Raw materials and influences came from Ireland, Yorkshire and northern Europe. Some objects had been broken before being buried whilst others were intact, hinting at the complexity of burial practices at this time. No human bones were present.

Bronze Age

1

The Clandon Barrow Lozenge

Decorated with a series of six deeply incised diamonds of diminishing size, punched dots and chevrons. The gold may be from Ireland.

1884.9.36

2

Armorico-British type bronze dagger

Found in the remains of a wooden sheath, traces of which still adhere to the blade.

1884.9.26

3

Jet, shale and gold mace head

This rare mace head has decorative gold caps mounted on shale inserts. On the underside there is a triangular hole for the reception of a wooden shaft.

1884.9.39

4

Amber cup

Originally carved from a single block of amber, this has a flaring rim, concave neck and conical base. The handle is missing.

1884.9.37

5

Ceramic funerary cup

Decorated with incised horizontal lines and diagonal strokes, this cup was broken before burial.

1884.9.40

6

Edward Cunnington's notebook

Clandon Barrow was one of 46 Dorset barrows excavated by Edward Cunnington (1825–1916) in the late 19th century. Cunnington wrote up reports of his finds in this notebook. The 1882 Clandon Barrow excavation is illustrated by pencil drawings and watercolours of his discoveries.

Late 19th century

LIB.3287

In the drawer:

A Beaker burial

The objects here are from a Beaker burial grave, radiocarbon dated to 2,460–2,190 cal BC. The grave is one of a series of Beaker and Early Bronze Age graves and burial monuments excavated on the site of Thomas Hardy School in Dorchester.

Four Beaker burials were found, the crouched bodies buried with pots. In three cases they had daggers. These burials were followed by at least 10 Early Bronze Age cremation burials, placed in or with Collared Urns in barrows.

Dorchester

2006.30

Bronze Age

1

Barbed and tanged arrowheads

2

Beaker fragments

In the drawer:

Cowleaze Down, Winterbourne Steepleton

Cowleaze Down is an Early Bronze Age bowl barrow with what was possibly a rare 'saucer' barrow next to it. A number of deposits containing cremated human remains were found within the saucer enclosure.

Other cremated human remains came from two pits on the south-east side of the barrow. None of the deposits represent all of the bone from an adult person, and some comprise very small amounts. Each pit may represent a single person, or some more complex practice. A radiocarbon date from the remains of one of the pits was 1,935–1,756 cal BC, the first reliable dating of a saucer barrow.

1

Camerton-Snowhill type bronze dagger

1992.25 (RD.1709)

2

Perforated whetstone

1992.24.13

3

Knife dagger from central robbing pit

1992.25 (RD.1354)

4

Shale and amber beads

1992.25 (RD.1707, RD.1708)

5

Cremated adult remains

It was not possible to determine their sex, but the remains are consistent with a single individual. The bone is white showing that it was burned at between 700 and 900 degrees Celsius or for a long time.

1992.25

In the drawer:

Barbed and tanged arrowheads

These barbed and tanged arrowheads were excavated from a barrow on Conygar Hill at Winterborne Came near Dorchester in the late 19th century. This type of arrowhead is only seen during the Bronze Age. Being able to create the barbs without the flint breaking displayed the skill of the maker.

1884.9.43-48

In the drawer:

Early Bronze Age burial

Items in Early Bronze Age burials included small pierced vessels and a range of personal jewellery made of exotic materials.

Accessory vessels were very small pots which were often found with, or inside, Collared Urns. Some were very finely made.

Types of decoration included incised chevron patterns, twisted cord impressions and vertical piercings.

Some show signs of burning and may have been used to produce smoke from ritual substances. The perforated one may have been used as a lamp, producing magical optical effects.

1

Faience beads

Long Ash Lane, Frampton

1938.87.1

2

Cornish dolerite stone battle axe

Winterbourne Steepleton

1885.16.10

3

Accessory vessel

Steeple, Purbeck

1892.31.3

4

Accessory vessel

Burleston Farm, Dewlish

1885.16.40

5

Accessory vessel

Long Ash Lane, Frampton

1937.82.6

6

Accessory vessel

Culliford Tree, Whitcombe

1884.9.68

In the showcase:

Middle Bronze Age

c.1,700–1,200 BCE

A landscape of fields

Recognisable boundaries, fields, and trackways appeared during the Middle Bronze Age around 1,600 BCE.

Houses and settlements such as Rowden, Middle Farm, and Bestwall give us much more information about everyday life. Animal bone shows that people were keeping a mixture of cattle, sheep and some pigs. There is also evidence for crops such as emmer wheat and naked barley.

Fields have been preserved as banks and ditches, which probably supported hedges. Houses were round and made from timber with upright posts and thatched roofs. Round barrows became less important, with burial gradually changing to cremation deposits buried in flat cemeteries.

On the back panel:

Bronze Age pottery

Most pots found intact were burial urns. These were often discovered within round barrows and contained cremated human remains.

Early Bronze Age

The first Early Bronze Age pots were Food Vessels. These were shouldered pots with pronounced angular rims, and were generally smaller than Collared Urns, which had a strong deep collar above a shouldered body, tapering to a small base. All these vessels tended to be made from clay containing small pieces of stone and/or pieces of broken pottery (grog).

Decoration included geometric designs made with twisted cords, sticks or bones. Towards the end of the Early Bronze Age a new style of Biconical Urns emerged, with clay containing much larger and angular pieces of rock.

1

Food Vessel

Long Crichel Barrow 5

1962.8.4

2

Food Vessel

Lord's Down, Dewlish

1885.16.41

Bronze Age

3

Food Vessel

Long Crichel Barrow 5

1962.8.7

4

Collared Urn

Bincombe

1885.16.13

5

Biconical Urn

Later Early Bronze Age

Sutton Down, Weymouth

1885.16.31

6

Collared Urn

Long Ash Lane, Frampton

1937.82.1

7

Biconical Urn

Later Early Bronze Age

Fordington, Dorchester

1885.16.38

8

Hybrid urn

Corfe Castle

1954.3.1

9

Food Vessel

South Dorset Ridgeway

1902.1.22

10

Collared Urn

Long Ash Lane, Frampton

1937.82.5

Middle Bronze Age

Middle Bronze Age pots are most often found on settlement sites. Medium-sized Globular Urns were a new form, decorated with wide grooves or wavy combed designs, while the larger Bucket Urns were encircled by cordons, often embellished with rows of finger-tip impressions.

11

Bucket Urn

Rimbury, Preston

1885.16.23

12

Small knobbed cup

Milborne St Andrew

1884.15.1

Bronze Age

13

Bucket Urn

Milborne St Andrew

1901.2.8

14

Bucket Urn

Rimbury, Preston

1885.16.24

15

Globular Urn

Near Hellstone, Portesham

1894.4.1

16

Bucket urn

Rimbury, Preston

1885.16.29

17

Globular Urn

Knighton Heath, Canford Magna

1998.25

18

Globular Urn

Upwey

1899.4.1

50

19

The Saturday Magazine

One of the first popular illustrated accounts of the Dorset urn discovery made by WA Miles at The Deverel Barrow in 1825.

10 August 1839

L.1986.177

On the back panel:

Middle Bronze Age jewellery

The availability of metal enabled the creation of more objects that people used to change their appearance – bronze razors and jewellery of bronze and gold.

1

Bone pin

Milborne St Andrew

1846.4.2

2

Disc-headed bronze pin

Dorchester

1858.4.5

3

Bronze torc or neck ring

1902.1.18

Bronze Age

4

Bone pendant

Milborne St Andrew

1938.21.1

5

V-perforated bone button

Cranborne Chase

1848.4.3

6

Bronze bracelet

Stratton

1963.15.4

7

Penannular bronze bracelet

Albert Road, Dorchester

1900.1.1

On the back panel:

Middle Bronze Age pottery

Bestwall Quarry, Wareham, is a nationally important site for dating changes to Middle Bronze Age pottery. Firing floors and wasters (pots broken during manufacture) show pottery was made there. Burnt material on different styles of pottery was radiocarbon dated, which helps accurate dating of other sites.

8

Globular Urns

Bestwall, Wareham

1,150–950 BCE

2013.53

On the table top:

New tools

The availability of bronze led to a new range of tools, such as bronze awls, used to make holes in leather, wood and other materials. These objects tell us about craft working and how textiles were produced.

9

Paddle-shaped wooden implement, possibly a laundry beater

Trigon, Wareham

1934.10.4

10

Bronze knife blade

Rowden, Winterbourne Steepleton

1992.24 (RD.1349)

11

Bronze awl

Rowden, Winterbourne Steepleton

1992.24 (RD.1348)

Bronze Age

Evolution of metal in the Bronze Age

Bronze is formed when copper is mixed, or alloyed, with another metal, often tin. It is tougher than copper on its own, which is very soft, so bronze is better for making tools and weapons.

The composition of bronze changed over time. At first, small amounts of arsenic or antimony were used, but tin quickly became the additive of choice.

The types of objects, their style and how they were made also changed over time. This makes them very useful for dating Bronze Age sites.

Early Bronze Age

Earlier Bronze Age metal objects such as axes or daggers were flat, because they were cast as one piece. Any handle was attached with rivets, or later around a metal tang. Early casting was carried out in two-piece stone or clay moulds.

Middle Bronze Age

By the Middle Bronze Age axes and spearheads could be cast with a socket and have a wooden handle inserted into them. Later advances in two-piece moulds enabled casting around a suspended clay core. These techniques are called hollow casting. Bronze objects were also used as tools to make other items of bronze or precious metals.

Late Bronze Age

The use of hollow casting continued into the Late Bronze Age, with many objects made this way. Hollow axes, which could have a wooden handle inserted into them were typical.

On the back panel and table top:

Early Bronze Age

1

Bronze Camerton-Snowhill dagger

With line and dot decoration.

Winterborne St Martin

1934.37.2

2

Bronze butt-riveted flat dagger

Herrison House, Charminster

1938.81.1

3

Flat bronze axe with side flanges

Mount Pleasant, West Stafford

1972.56 (RD.1357)

4

Barbed and tanged flint arrowheads

Winterborne Came

1987.59.1

Bronze Age

5

Bronze tanged spearhead

Pilsdon

1931.7.1

6

Bronze Camerton-Snowshill dagger with rivet holes for attaching a handle

Laurence Barrow, Dorchester

1885.17.1

7

Bronze Camerton-Snowshill dagger with rivet holes for attaching a handle

Lord's Down, Dewlish

1885.16.7

Middle Bronze Age

8

Bronze socketed spearhead

Bradford Peverell

1934.40.1

9

Bronze leaf-shaped sword

Market Street, Abbotsbury

1945.3.1

10

Bronze rapier

Clifton Maybank

1921.1.1

11

Bronze palstave axe

Winterborne St Martin

1987.101.2

12

Bronze anvil

This complex beaked type of anvil, used in the Middle or later Bronze Age, offered a range of working surfaces. It would have been mounted in a wooden block. The surface shows traces of gold, which it would have been used to work.

Wimborne

c.1,200–800 BCE

2020.5

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

13

Bronze spearhead with side loops to lash it to the shaft

Hambledon Hill, Iwerne Courtney

1945.13.1

Bronze Age

Late Bronze Age

14

Bronze socketed spearhead, ornamented with lines and dots

Jordan Hill, Preston

1885.16.4

15

Bronze socketed axe with attachment loop

Fifehead Neville

1896.3.1

Late Bronze Age

c.1,200–750 BCE

Hoards in the later Bronze Age

Many Bronze Age objects were deliberately collected and buried together, and are known as hoards.

There are several explanations for why people did this. Hoards could be collections of metal for recasting into new objects, objects collected and buried in times of insecurity, or buried as part of rituals or ceremonies.

The number of hoards increased from around 1,500 BCE and later hoards include large quantities of axes. Control of the changing metal supply may have increased hoarding behaviour over time, as metal became scarcer.

On the back panel and table top:

The Winfrith Newburgh Hoard

Perhaps the stock of a bronze founder who had collected broken objects for re-smelting, this hoard was discovered and donated to the Museum by the Weld Estate in the 1930s.

1934.12

1

Bronze flesh hook

The most important item in the hoard is an extremely rare pronged object known as a flesh hook. Their exact use is still debated, but it is suggested they were used to extract food from cauldrons as part of a feasting ritual.

2

Bronze hoard items

Items in hoards were gathered together, and are often found in a tight group. The items in this group include a socketed axe, spears, a gouge, scabbard fittings, casting waste, a pin, a buckle, a bracelet and ring.

Bronze Age

The Langton Matravers axe hoard

This hoard contained 373 intact or broken bronze axes of three different types (Blandford, Hybrid and Portland), and 404 fragments of bronze. It is one of the largest hoards found in Britain. The axes had high levels of tin, which would have made them brittle, so they were probably never meant to be used.

800–600 BCE

2009.88

Acquired through the Portable Antiquities Scheme with support from Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the Headley Trust.

1

Blandford-type axe

2

Hybrid-type axe

3

Portland-type axe

4

Axes of variety of types, displayed as found

5

Stone mould for casting a socketed axe

The holes on the face of the mould are for dowels to pin the two halves together. It was found at Melcombe Horsey.

1902.1.9



On the central plinth:

Bronze Age

c.2,300–750 BCE

The power of gold

The sight of these objects affects us now, and it would have been the same in the Bronze Age. They span more than a thousand years, but they have in common their shining appearance, the skill that went into making them, and the long-distance connections needed to obtain the gold. These would all have built a sense of the power of the people wearing them.

In the showcase:

The Chickerell neck rings

These two Late Bronze Age neck rings are constructed of solid gold bar. They were influenced by plain designs from Spain, western France and Ireland.

Chickerell, Weymouth

1,100–800 BCE

2000.94.1-2

Purchased with support from The V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the National Heritage Memorial Fund

Bronze Age

The Tarrant Valley lunula

Named after the shape of a crescent moon, lunulae were first produced in Ireland of gold beaten to a foil from a single ingot. The incised designs appear to copy jet or amber bead necklaces produced around the same time. Lunulae are very rare in mainland Britain and this is the only one from Dorset.

Tarrant Valley

c.2,200–1,950 BCE

2015.44, 2017.49

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

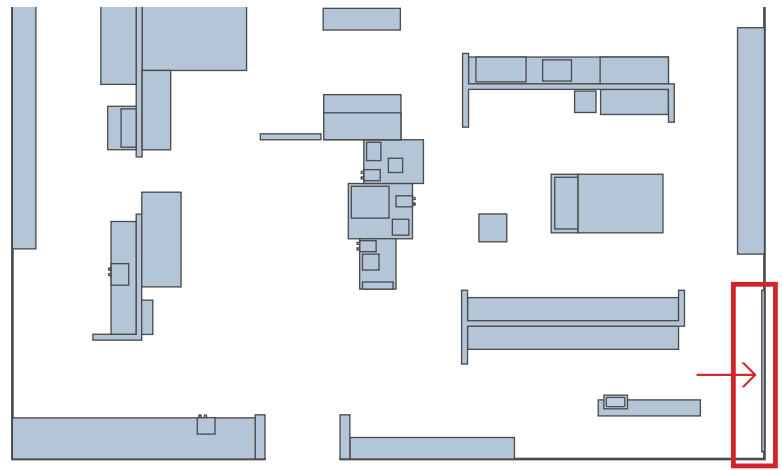
The Clandon Barrow Lozenge

Replica of an Early Bronze Age gold lozenge from Clandon Barrow. The precision displayed in the decoration suggests a sophisticated tool kit and sound knowledge of geometric form. Attached to a wooden mount, the lozenge would originally have been slightly domed. The original gold lozenge is in the case opposite you, with other items from the burial.

Replica

2015

2020.25



On the wall:

Early Dorset

A timeline of early Dorset

Use this timeline to help orientate you around our displays of Dorset's archaeology and early history, covering hundreds of thousands of years.

Palaeolithic

c.500,000–10,000 years ago

The first people who gathered and hunted across this area between successive ice ages were early hominins. They were followed by Neanderthals and finally modern humans. We know about their presence from the stone tools they used.

Mesolithic

c.10,000–4,000 BCE

The climate warmed, which meant forests could grow. New groups of hunters, fishers and foragers were attracted by the forest's resources. Britain became an island during the Mesolithic period.

Early Dorset

Neolithic

c.4,000–2,300 BCE

Groups of people came to Britain, bringing crops and livestock animals with them. They were the first to farm the land. They also made pottery, began to clear woodland and constructed large burial and ceremonial monuments.

Bronze Age

c.2,300–750 BCE

People began using metals for the first time, starting with gold and copper, and then bronze. Dorset's many round barrows were built in the Bronze Age. More land was cleared and houses, settlements and fields appeared.

Iron Age

c.750 BCE–43 CE

More fields and farms covered the land, as people began making tools out of iron. The great hillforts of the county were built, and industries such as shale working and pottery making grew.

Roman

c.43–410 CE

When Britain became part of the Roman Empire, new influences arrived. The upper classes created villa farm estates, and towns appeared for the first time, linked by roads. Local people adopted mosaics, water supplies, and new ways of dressing and being buried.

Early Medieval

c.410–1066 CE

With Britain no longer part of the Roman Empire, money went out of use, and the supply of some goods dried up. At first everyday life seems to have mostly stayed the same. People still farmed the land and used similar burial practices. In time influences from the Saxon kingdoms to the east grew, and Dorset became part of the kingdom of Wessex.

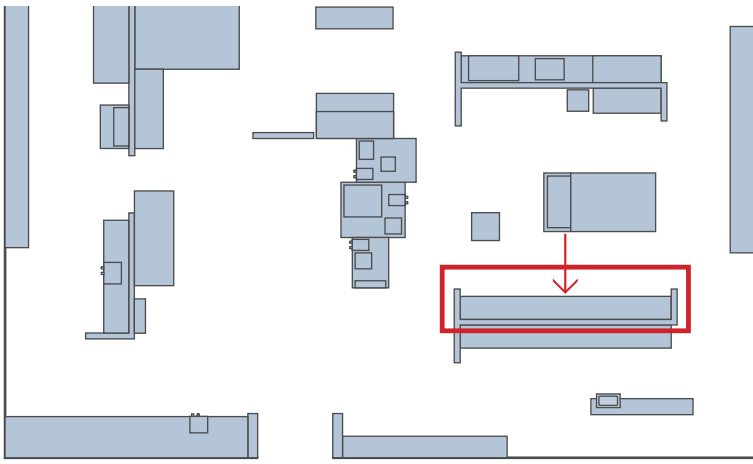
Medieval

c.1066–1539 CE

By the time of the Norman invasion, the pattern of manors, farms and towns had been established. After the conquest castles were constructed. Landowners built up their estates, often constructing churches and endowing monasteries. Villages grew up around estate centres and towns expanded.

Find out more in the touchscreen on your left.





In the showcase:

Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age

c.800–600 BCE

Changing times

Around 800 to 600 BCE was a time of change. People continued living on some sites, but abandoned others and created new settlements. They started using new forms of pottery and a new tougher metal, iron.

Like other areas of southern Britain, some locations attracted a lot of activity – and a lot of rubbish. These accumulations of refuse are referred to as middens. One was excavated at Worth Matravers.

Middens seem to have accumulated over a long time, probably from repeated gatherings of people and animals in one place. Trading and craft working were part of what went on.

On the back panel and table top:

The Worth Matravers Midden

In common with other middens, the one at Worth Matravers was a dense dump of pottery, animal bone, waste from craft activities such as shale working, some metal and exotic objects, and even human remains.

Worth Matravers

c.700–600 BCE

2018.12

1

Glass ring

This very rare fragment of a glass ring was probably made in Poland.

2

Bone antler comb

3

Bronze socketed axe head

This axe head was deliberately made as a miniature. It comes from Armorica, north-western France.

4

Shale spindle whorls

5

Shale ring

6

Worked bone needles

Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age

7

Shale armlet

8

Animal bone, including sheep, cattle and pig

9

A selection of pottery sherds from the midden

Iron Age

c.750 BCE–43 CE

Settlements and farms

New kinds of settlement appeared throughout the Iron Age. There were also more settlements than there had been before.

Round houses were built singly or in small groups. Some had banks and ditches enclosing them in various forms. In many cases they were associated with fields, but sometimes not, indicating people farming in different ways. The largest and most defensible enclosures are known as hillforts.

Settlements had a similar range of objects, animal bones and remains of crops, attesting to their daily life as hillforts. The way settlements were arranged also changed over time. This happened at Gussage All Saints.

On the back panel and table top:

Gussage All Saints

This settlement started as an Early Iron Age enclosure with a modest ditch and bank, and simple entrances. In the Middle Iron Age it was enlarged, entrances were blocked and the main entrance elaborated with banks. Finally, in the Late Iron Age, three smaller enclosures were inserted inside the settlement. Evidence for daily life included pottery and animal bones – sheep were the most common livestock, with cattle and a few pigs. Crops changed over time from barley to wheat. Crafts included bone and antler carving, shale working, bronze casting and weaving.

1

High-shouldered pottery jar

c.1,700–1,200 BCE

1985.30 (RD.1789)

2

Carved shale debris

1985.30 (RD.1843)

Metalworking at Gussage All Saints

Both iron and bronze metalworking were carried out. One pit contained hundreds of clay mould fragments for making horse and chariot fittings, with more than 30 crucibles (containers for smelting metals) and modelling tools.

Iron Age

3

Clay crucible fragments

1985.30 (RD.2897)

4

Fragments of clay 'lost wax' mould

1985.30 (RD.2898)

5

Bone tools used to shape wax casting moulds

1985.30 (RD.2899)

6

Slag from smelting iron ore

1985.30 (RD.2900)

7

Bronze horse bridle bits

From a site in Dorchester, but similar to items that would have been produced at Gussage.

Dorchester

1846.2.8

8

Iron socketed spear head

1985.30 (RD.2901)

9

Bone combs for weaving and weaving shuttle

1985.30 (RD.1847, RD.1848, RD.1849)

10

Bronze brooch

1985.30 (RD.1850)

11

Iron weight

1985.30 (RD.2902)

12

Bronze weighing balance

1985.30 (RD.2903)

13

Bone toggle or belt fastening

1985.30 (RD.1851)

Iron Age pottery

Distinctive new forms of pottery mark the changes at the end of the Bronze Age.

In the Early Iron Age this includes pottery decorated with finger nail impressions or washed with an iron mineral called haematite. In the Middle Iron Age these styles were replaced by quite plain pots, often with upright or rounded sides and simple upright or out-turned rims.

After about 100 BCE a new style began to emerge, being produced in the area around Poole Harbour. It is called Durotrigian after the tribe thought to have inhabited the area, the Durotriges. It is distinctively black, often had a 'bead rim', and was made in more shapes. It spread

Iron Age

throughout Dorset and into Somerset, and is often found in graves as well as in settlements.

On the back panel and table top:

Middle Iron Age

1–3

Shouldered bowls

Bucknowle

2013.44.4

Late Iron Age

4

Tall jar with everted rim

Gussage All Saints

1985.30 (RD.1904)

5

Cordoned bowl with pedestal base

Gussage All Saints

1985.30 (RD.1903)

6

Bead rim bowl with footring

Maiden Castle, Winterborne St Martin

1939.55 (RD.1902)

7

Handled tankard

Gussage All Saints

1985.30 (RD.1905)

8

Cordoned bowl with pedestal base

Maiden Castle, Winterborne St Martin

Early to mid-1st century CE

1939.55 (RD.1907)

9

Ceramic jar

Maiden Castle, Winterborne St Martin

1st century BCE to 1st century CE

1935.51.86

10

High-shouldered jar with straight rim and countersunk lugs

Maiden Castle, Winterborne St Martin

1st century BCE to 1st century CE

1939.55 (RD.1908)

11

Bead rim bowl with footring

Maiden Castle, Winterborne St Martin

Early to mid-1st century CE

1939.55 (RD.1901)

Iron Age

12

Decorated jar

Maiden Castle, Winterborne St Martin

1st century BCE to 1st century CE

1939.55 (RD.1896)

13

Ceramic lid

Maiden Castle, Winterborne St Martin

1939.55 (RD.1899)

Hillforts

There are more than 30 hillforts known in Dorset. The earliest enclosures, with a single rampart, like Chalbury and Poundbury, appeared in the Early Iron Age after about 600 BCE. They may have been temporary refuges, places to store crops, or somewhere to come together to trade animals, goods or even people.

Maiden Castle (near present-day Dorchester) began around 600 BCE as a single rampart enclosure with one entrance. Around 450 BCE it was expanded, doubling in size to 47 acres, gaining a circuit of three earth banks and ditches of huge scale, and elaborate entrances at the east and west ends. Other Early Iron Age hillforts nearby went out of use.

Maiden Castle seems to have become the most important settlement in south Dorset. It contained round houses, 'four-post structures' – probably granaries – and grain storage pits.

74

On the back panel and table top:

Above

Southern Face of Maiden Castle

Norman Lupton (1875–1953)

Oil on canvas

1933

ART.2245

Defence at Maiden Castle

Hillforts were more than just forts, but they were clearly used for defence at times. A stockpile of 22,000 slingstones was found at the east entrance to Maiden Castle. Most of these missiles were pebbles but some were of baked clay. Horses were both ridden and used to pull carts and chariots.

1

Iron sword

1939.55 (RD.1776.1)

2

Iron spear

1939.55 (RD.1776.2)

3

Iron sickle

1939.55 (RD.1776.5)

4

Iron knife blade

1939.55 (RD.1776.4)

Iron Age

5

Iron socketed spear

1939.55 (RD.1776.3)

6

Iron knife blade

1939.55 (RD.1776.4)

7

Cheek piece from a horse's bridle made from bone

1935.51.42

8

Bronze scabbard fitting

Early 1st century

1939.55 (RD.1778)

9

Slingstones (on table below)

1939.55 (RD.1768)

Below

Maiden Castle dog

Dogs were common on Iron Age domestic sites. They had roles herding livestock, as guard dogs and pets. Most were a similar size to this one.

1936.12.1

Textile production at Maiden Castle

Hillforts and settlements all produced textiles, mainly from sheep's wool.

10

Bone combs

These were probably used in carding wool.

1939.34.13, 1939.55 (RD.1745–RD.1749)

11

Bone shuttle for weaving on a loom

1935.51.30

12

Bone and shale spindle whorls used for spinning yarn

1939.55 (RD.1756-1760)

13

Chalk loom weights

These would have been used to tension yarn hanging vertically in a wooden-framed loom.

1939.55 (RD.2904, RD.2905)

Farming, food, trade and craft at Maiden Castle

Storage of crops was important, and grains of spelt wheat and barley have been found. Livestock, particularly sheep, were the basis of the animal economy. There is also evidence for metal working, textile production, and exchange in goods from further afield.

Iron Age

14

Neck fragment of shale jar

1939.55 (RD.1744)

15

Bronze cart fitting

1939.55 (RD.1774.2)

16

Iron cart wheel lynch pin

1939.55 (RD.1775)

17

Iron cart fitting

1939.55 (RD.1774.2)

18

Charred bread

1939.55 (RD.1771)

19

Iron sickle blade used to harvest crops

1939.55 (RD.1772)

20

Charred wheat grains

1939.55 (RD.2920)

21

Chalk carving

The spiral – a common decoration in Iron Age art – suggests a human face. This carving was found in the south ramparts of Maiden Castle.

1974.5.1

Adornment at Maiden Castle

The Iron Age inhabitants of Maiden Castle were interested in their personal appearance. They used brooches, toggles and pins to arrange and decorate clothing, and wore rings and beads.

22

Bronze bow brooches

1939.55 (RD.1781-1784)

23

Antler toggles

1939.55 (RD.1765), 1935.51.41

24

Bronze finger or toe rings

1939.55 (RD.1779)

25

Bronze penannular brooch

1939.55 (RD.1780)

26

Bone pins

RD.1764

Iron Age

27

Bronze and glass enamel disc

1939.55 (RD.1786)

28

Bronze pendant

1939.55 (RD.1787)

29

Bronze wrist strap

1939.55 (RD.1788)

30

Organic coral bead

1939.55 (RD.1767)

Special things and making things special

A common phenomenon on almost all Iron Age sites is the deliberate burial of objects. Some of them are run of the mill, others unusual.

They are found in specific places such as the ditch of a settlement, a gate or a pit. Sometimes the specialness is obvious from the type of object, sometimes because of the volume – such as dozens of pots. In other places it is both, with deposits often including human remains or articulated whole or partial animals. Particular buildings devoted to ritual or religion are difficult to identify.

On the back panel and table top:

Currency bars

It is possible that these were a type of ingot. They are often found in groups placed in particular features on archaeological sites.

1

Four iron currency bars

Weatherbury Castle, Milborne St Andrew

RD.1883-1886

2

Iron currency bar

Hod Hill, Stourpaine

RD.1882

Gold staters

Staters were the earliest coinage in Britain. Hoards of these coins seem to have been sometimes treated in similar ways to other deposits that were seen as special.

3

Hoard of gold Durotrigian staters

Tarrant Valley

70–50 BCE

2002.55.1

Acquired through the Portable Antiquities Scheme with support from the Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the Morse Fund of the DNHAS

Iron Age

4

Hoard of bronze staters

These coins were made by the Atrebates tribe in Hampshire.

Hengistbury Head

0–60 CE

RD.1889

5

Hoard of gold staters

Four Iron Age gold coins, two globular staters and two quarter staters. They are all early uninscribed types thought to have been produced in the first half of the 1st century BCE in southwest Britain (Dorset, Hampshire and surrounding areas).

2020.22

6

Hoard of gold staters

These staters show an abstract wreathed head and, on the reverse, an abstract horse with numerous large pellets, and an 'eye' with pellet border behind. Probably the earliest British gold coinage.

Piddletrenthide

c.80–50 BCE

2019.2

Purchased with support from the Arts Council England/
V&A Purchase Grant Fund

7

Silver Durotrigian stater

Hambledon Hill, Iwerne Courtney

Early 1st century BCE

RD.1890

8

Bronze pig figurine

Duncliffe Hill, Shaftesbury

1st century BCE to 1st century CE

1990.66.1

9

Gold 'bullet' coin

This coin was made by the Suessiones tribe in Gaul.

Pilsdon Pen

2nd century BCE

RD.1892

10

Sacrifice or feast?

This material is from a stone-lined pit. It contained more than 2,000 sherds of pottery, as well as a cattle skull and the remains of several entire sheep, three or four newborn piglets, four young dogs and a puppy. This may have been the result of a social or ritual event such as a feast.

Worth Matravers

1st century BCE

2018.12

Iron Age

Late Iron Age

c.100 BCE–43 CE

Trade with Gaul

At the end of the Iron Age, people in Dorset were trading with people in France. Poole Harbour and Hengistbury Head were centres for this activity. Wine and olive oil jars and fine pottery were imported, possibly in exchange for foodstuffs such as salt and meat.

The Bulbury anchor is evidence of sophisticated shipping entering Poole Harbour in the Late Iron Age. Potentially the earliest metal anchor yet discovered in Britain, it has a chain around 6.5 metres long. Similar anchors from the middle of the 1st century BCE have been found on Roman sites in western Europe. It was buried with several other objects, including a bronze tankard handle and a pair of fittings in the form of bulls. These were possibly from a chariot. Altogether, these objects may have been a 'special' deposit with some ritual meaning.

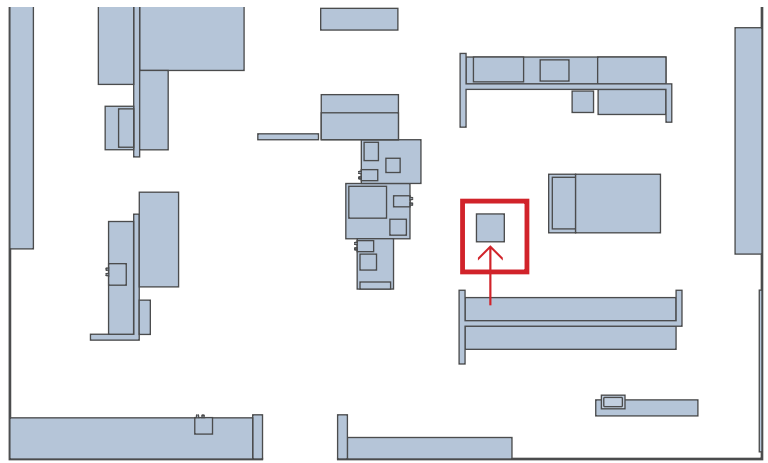
Right

The Bulbury anchor

Bulbury Hillfort, Lytchett Matravers

Mid-1st century BCE

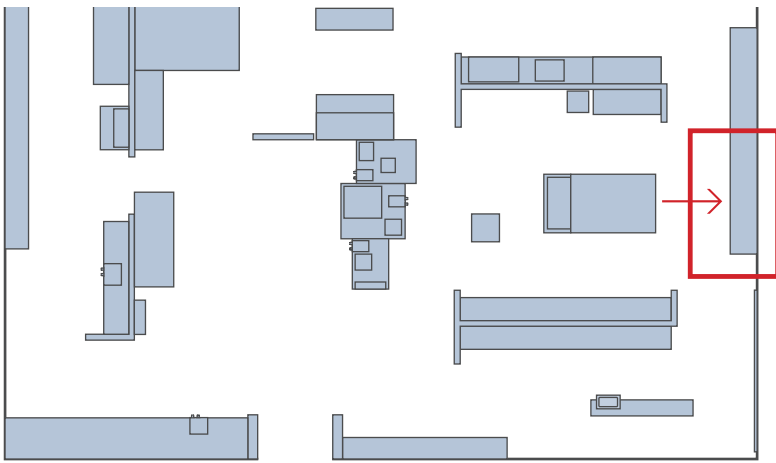
1884.9.116



On the column:

Model of a roundhouse

The model is typical of the types of houses built across southern Britain during the Iron Age. The illustration below shows a reconstruction of an Early Iron Age settlement at Hengistbury Head.



In the showcase:

Late Iron Age

c.100 BCE–43 CE

Burial in the Late Iron Age

Formal burial was rare in the Iron Age. Sometimes small parts of people were included in deposits on settlement sites, but whole bodies only began to be buried towards the end of the Iron Age.

Formal burial started in Dorset from around 100 BCE. It is often called 'Durotrigian', after the local tribe, the Durotriges. Bodies were placed in a crouched or flexed position, lying on one side in a shallow oval or rectangular grave. Burials could be alone or in cemeteries. Bodies may sometimes have been wrapped, others were in their clothes. Some people were buried with pottery and some with a joint of meat, normally a piece of pork.

A few people were buried with more objects – often unusual or exotic ones. They mark out these people as different, perhaps emphasising their social status, wealth or role in the community.

The writing of the poem Portesham Mirror

In 2019 the former Children's Laureate Michael Rosen was commissioned to write three poems for an AHRC funded project called 'Grave Goods'. One of them, the Iron Age Portesham mirror, is displayed here. Rosen's poem emphasises the clues the mirror gives us about the woman's powerful status in her community.

'Portesham Mirror' by Michael Rosen

The power is in me
The power is me
I am the power
I am the one and only
that sees it all
for now and for ever.
It looked like you looked in me
like people look in rivers
but you weren't looking for you.
You wanted my power
to see beyond yourself,
to see what it is
we will be.
The power is in me
The power is me
I am the power
And now you are there
beyond yourself
in the company of what

Iron Age

you let people see
mattered to you most:
the tastes on your tongue
the shine of your show
the blood on the blade.
But I saw that look
to see yourself beyond yourself
And see:
I am
in the time beyond yourself
I am
in the time you looked for
when you looked in me.
The power is in me.
The power is me.
I am the power.

“The Portesham Mirror” by Michael Rosen (© Michael Rosen)
is reproduced by permission of United Agents
(www.unitedagents.co.uk) on behalf of Michael Rosen.

On the back panel and table top:

Portesham and Langton Herring mirror burials

Both of these groups of material came from women’s graves, which were situated close to the coast. The mirrors are both unusual objects – there are only about 60 known nationally. They and the other objects found with them indicate long-distance connections. Women clearly commanded power and respect.

Portesham mirror burial group

The objects in this group were found at Portesham. They belonged to a woman who was between 26 and 45 years old, had arthritis in her spine and hands and poor teeth.

c.Mid-1st century CE

1996.10 (RD.1910-1915)

Acquired through the Portable Antiquities Scheme with support from the V&A Purchase Grant Fund, The Art Fund, Members of the DNHAS and the National Heritage Memorial Fund.

1

Bronze mirror

2

Three bronze brooches

3

Pig bones, some with butchery marks

These animal remains may be offerings or from a funeral feast.

4

Long-handled bronze pan

5

Bead-rim bowl with rib decoration and foot ring

6

High-shouldered jar with bead rim

Fragments of at least four other Late Iron Age pots were also discovered in the grave.

Iron Age

Langton Herring mirror burial group

The objects in this burial from Langton Herring belonged to a woman of 20 to 24 years of age. She had experienced some malnutrition as a child, and suffered from sinusitis – probably from the smoky atmosphere of the houses.

A combination of artefacts and radiocarbon dating gives us a date range for the burial of approximately 25–53 CE.

2013.3.3

Acquired through the Portable Antiquities Scheme with support from the Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, the Headley Trust, Members of the DNHAS

7

Copper alloy mirror

8

Stone and glass beads, both local and imported

9

Bronze bracelet and bracelet fragment

10

Denarius Serratus coin

This Republican Roman coin, dating to 83–82 BCE, has very little wear. It was probably not in circulation long before it was pierced to be worn as part of a necklace.

11

Bronze tweezers

12

Bronze brooch

90

On the plinth:

The Whitcombe Warrior

This man was buried in an Iron Age cemetery excavated in the village of Whitcombe. He was between 20 and 35 years old when he died.

The cemetery contained 11 graves with typical Durotrigian pottery, remains of meat and some other objects. This burial with a sword is one of a very limited number known in Britain at this period. Whether the sword was for practical use or not, it sent a message about the power of this man or the way others saw him. It is notable that the objects he was buried with also included a spindle whorl, an apparently female object.

Below

The Whitcombe Warrior burial

The individual was buried with a number of objects. They included an iron sword spearhead, chalk spindle whorl, brooches, metal tools and bronze scabbard rings.

1st century CE

1994.24

Iron Age

Tankard burials

Iron Age burials with more unusual items are rare, but can include a wide range of objects. Sometimes large tankards, used for communal drinking, were buried with people.

A tankard found in Maiden Newton and made from sheet metal is a particularly unusual example. Tankards might be assumed to be associated with men, but ancient DNA analysis on the human remains in the burial show that in this case the person was a woman.

On the table top:

Tankard burials

Burials with more unusual items are rare, but can include a wide range of objects. Sometimes large tankards were buried with people. They were probably for passing around rather than individual use.

1

Handled tankard of Durotrigian pottery

Pottery clay was a simple material for a tankard, but this is still an unusual item. It was found with a skeleton in a circular cist.

Wynford Eagle

Mid-1st century BCE to mid-1st century CE

1885.20.1

The Maiden Newton Tankard Burial

Included in a grave with a crouched burial, a rare tankard with a decorated handle indicated the status of its owner.

Tankards might be assumed to be associated with men, but ancient DNA analysis shows this person was a woman.

The tankard consisted of two bands of copper alloy sheet which bound together a vessel made from wooden staves.

Xrays have showed that some of the wood has survived.

It is hoped that new techniques will allow us to fully conserve and reveal the entire object in the future.

Maiden Newton

2019.20

2

Tankard handle decorated with punched dots

Mid-1st to mid-2nd century CE

3

Colchester derivative brooch

1st century CE

4

Durotrigan strip-bow brooch

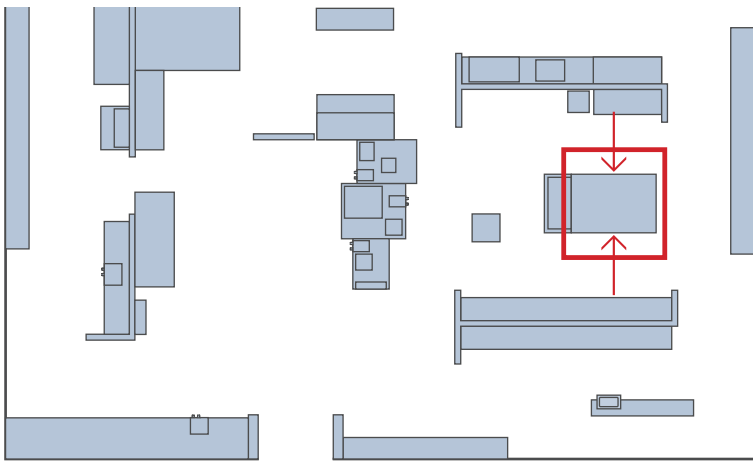
Mid-1st century CE

5

Bladed iron implement with a curved back and straight blade

Mid-1st century CE

The Maiden Newton tankard burial was purchased and conserved with the support of The Arts Society Dorset County



In the central plinth showcase:

Late Iron Age

c.100 BCE–43 CE

‘War’ Cemetery

Within the eastern gateway of Maiden Castle was a Late Iron Age cemetery. The graves were in the Durotrigian style, with many containing distinctive pottery – one type called a ‘War cemetery bowl’ – and other items.

Many people show signs of violence, including the famous examples here, one of whom has an iron projectile head embedded in their spine. The excavator Sir Mortimer Wheeler (1890–1976) interpreted this as evidence of a Roman attack on Maiden Castle during the invasion of 43 CE. However, there is now a lot of doubt over whether the projectile is a ballista bolt from a Roman weapon. It is probably a local spearhead. The style of the burials is typical of the Late Iron Age.

Maiden Castle had been in decline for a long time before the Roman invasion, as shown by the position of the cemetery in the gateway. New theories are being

Iron Age

suggested which take into account Late Iron Age society and the effect of the Roman invasion.

The Maiden Castle skeletons

This Late Iron Age burial is from the cemetery at the eastern entrance of Maiden Castle. The two young men received multiple injuries around the time of their death. One had been partially decapitated. The remains of what might be a Roman-made ballista bolt, or more likely a locally made spear, are embedded in the spine of the skeleton on the left.

Maiden Castle

Mid-1st century CE

1939.55

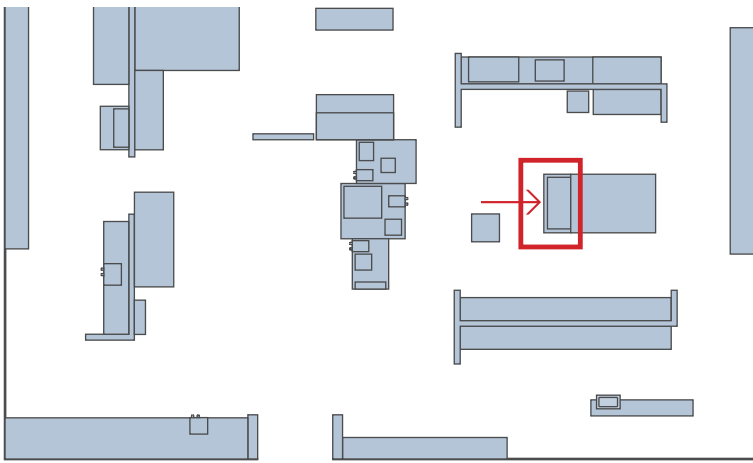
Pottery bowls

Like other burials in the cemetery, the individuals were accompanied by locally made pottery bowls.

Maiden Castle

Mid-1st century CE

RD.2099-2100



In the central plinth table top showcase:

The Roman invasion

There is limited evidence in Dorset for the Roman invasion of 43 CE. There are forts in strategic locations built in the standard rectangular style used throughout Rome's empire. These include Lake Gates near Wimborne, Waddon Hill, and within the hillfort at Hod Hill, where there is some evidence that the hill may have come under attack.

It is thought that there should be a fort at Dorchester upon which the Roman town was founded, but this has not been found. However, recent evidence from a tombstone indicates the presence of the main invasion legion, the Second Augusta, which was led by the future Emperor Vespasian.

Reusing hillforts

Military objects found within hillforts often relate to reuse of the sites rather than attack. The Romans built an auxiliary cavalry camp in the north-west corner of the original Iron Age fort at Hod Hill. It was occupied by a mixed force of 700 legionaries and auxiliaries, but had passed out of use by 50 CE.

1

Iron ballista bolts

Maiden Castle, Winterborne St Martin

1st century CE

1939.55 (RD.2911-2912)

2

Iron hinge which allowed the armour plates of a cuirass to move

Maiden Castle, Winterborne St Martin

Mid-1st century CE

RD.2913

3

Tinned bronze belt fitting and pendant

These were often added to armour-like medals.

Dorchester

3rd century CE

1912.38.1

4

Bronze hook to create a clasp at the front of a cuirass

Waddon Hill, Stoke Abbott

Mid-1st century CE

1963.41.79

5

Iron ballista bolt

Pilsdon Pen

1st century CE

1991.84.1

Roman

6

Fragment of bronze chain mail armour

Maiden Castle, Winterborne St Martin

1939.55 (RD.2914)

7

Bronze belt plates

Waddon Hill, Stoke Abbott

Mid-1st century CE

1963.41 (RD.2915)

8

Iron sword

Waddon Hill, Stoke Abbott

Mid-1st century CE

1963.41 (RD.2917)

9

Iron spatha-type sword

Waddon Hill, Stoke Abbott

2nd to 4th century CE

1963.41 (RD.2918)

10

Shield boss

Maiden Castle, Winterborne St Martin

1st to 4th century CE

1884.9.161

11

Shield boss

Charminster

1st to 4th century CE

1936.32.1

12

Bronze mess tin

Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

RD.2385

13

Bone sword grip and pommel

Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

1886.9.133

Arms and armour

Evidence from forts includes weapons and armour.

Most armour relates to lorica segmentata, constructed from segmented plates, which was common in the 1st century CE.

14

Bronze armour fitting

Maiden Castle, Winterborne St Martin

1st to 4th century CE

1939.55 (RD.1936)

Roman

15

Bronze buckles

Hod Hill, Stourpaine

Mid-1st century CE

1936.30.3-5

16

Bronze spur

Colliton Park, Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

1937.70.C2180

17

Iron caltrop

Used to create a hazard underfoot for attackers.

Colliton Park, Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

1937.70 (RD.2919)

In the drawer:

Mortimer Wheeler and the Maiden Castle excavation

The excavation of Maiden Castle by Sir RE Mortimer Wheeler (1890–1976) and his wife Tessa Verney Wheeler (1893–1936) between 1934 and 1937 was a seminal project in both the development of British archaeology and understanding of the Iron Age.

Wheeler's records reflect the best methods of the day. He generated notes which can be reinterpreted today, and drawings which are often works of art in themselves.

Mortimer Wheeler's excavation notebook

Wheeler completed ten notebooks during the excavations of Maiden Castle.

c.1934–1937

1939.55.28.1.58.6

In the drawer:

Excavating Maiden Castle

Led by Mortimer and Tess Verney Wheeler and Lieutenant-Colonel C D Drew (curator of Dorset Museum) around a hundred people, including assistants and students, were involved each year in the excavation of the site between 1934 and 1937.

1

Sketches of archaeologists excavating at Maiden Castle

1939.55

2

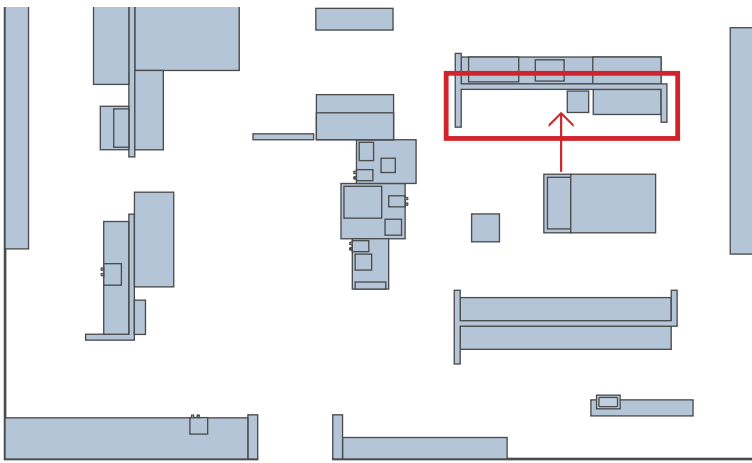
Paint swatches used to capture the colour of the wall plaster of the Roman temple built at Maiden Castle

1939.55.28.1.62.4

3

Postcard showing human remains excavated at Maiden Castle

1939.55



On the wall:

Roman

c.43–410 CE

All roads lead to Durnovaria

Following the Roman invasion of 43 CE, daily life seems in many ways to have carried on as usual, rather than having been disrupted. The pottery industry of Poole Harbour continued. People remained living in many settlements, but over time buildings were constructed in a more Roman style. Villas were built on larger estates of land.

The biggest change was in the construction of roads and towns. Roads were built to enable the army and people to move around. Settlements and villas were positioned in relation to these routeways.

Dorchester, or Durnovaria, was the principal town in the county from approximately the mid-1st century CE. Positioned at a major crossroads, it was the administrative centre of the southern part of the Durotriges tribal area.

On the plinth:

Section of Roman road

This is a section through the Roman road that ran through the centre of Durnovaria, excavated from under this building. It was very carefully constructed with steeply sloping sides, a core of flint to aid drainage, and a hard-wearing gravel and clay surface.

High West Street, Dorchester

Mid-1st century CE

2020.3

In the showcase on the back panel and table top:

Left

Roman military tombstone

Dating to the 1st century CE, this tombstone was discovered near the eastern gate of Roman Dorchester.

The inscription reads 'Lucius Diddius Bassus, son of Lucius, of the Fabian voting tribe, from Heraclea, veteran of the Second Legion Augusta, aged 55, in his will ordered this to be made...'

Originally from Macedonia, Bassus had probably been retired for about 10 years when he died. His presence at Durnovaria seems to confirm that it was an early main base for the Second Legion, perhaps between 49–55 CE.

Dorchester

c.65–70 CE

Anonymous loan

LI.2020.4

Roman

Roman administration

Reading and writing were required for the administration and business of the local area. Evidence of these skills is seen in the objects needed for formal writing, and in objects marked by their owners and in graffiti. Metal styli were used to write on wax-filled wooden tablets.

1

Part of spade

These spades were part of the additional equipment for a legionary.

Colliton Park, Dorchester

1st to 2nd century CE

1937.70.1716

2

Part of a saw as carried by a legionary

Colliton Park, Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

1937.70.C434

3

Bronze compasses

Roads were laid out by the Roman army, using surveying and drawing equipment familiar today. Distances were also marked with roadside milestones.

Corfe Castle

Early 4th century CE

1884.9.148

4

Inscribed plaster

Roman Town House, Dorchester

3rd to 4th century CE

1937.70 (RD.2360)

5

Bronze and iron writing styli

Colliton Park, Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

1937.70 (RD.1929-1930, RD.2359.1-2)

6

Intaglio ring

3rd to 4th century CE

1896.7.3

7

Bronze steelyard weight

Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

1903.4.1

8

Bronze seal boxes

Boxes like this may have kept document seals safe, or been used for general valuables.

Colliton Park, Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

1937.70 (RD.2082-2083)

Roman

9

Intaglio from a ring

Dorchester

3rd to 4th century

RD.2071-2072

Buildings under the museum

You are standing in the heart of Durnovaria, just to the north of the forum, the commercial and social centre. Part of one of the town's streets ran through the Museum site, and confirms that the road system was laid out early in the life of the town.

An excavation of this site in 2018 during the Museum's redevelopment showed that beside the road was a series of timber framed buildings dating from later 1st and 2nd century CE. In the later 2nd century the area seems to have been used for more industrial purposes, with a series of ovens and a cesspit. The pit was filled with demolition rubble from a higher-status building, which had been decorated with painted plaster.

Under the Museum

Objects found on the excavation site included personal items as well as cookware and dinnerware, and decorative building fabric.

Dorchester

2020.3

1

Cattle skull

From the base of a deep pit or well, probably placed deliberately when it went out of use.

4th century CE

2

Cattle radius (leg) bone

4th century CE

3

Black Burnished Ware

Deliberately placed at the base of a deep pit or well.

4th century CE

4

Terra Nigra pottery from Gaul with maker's stamp

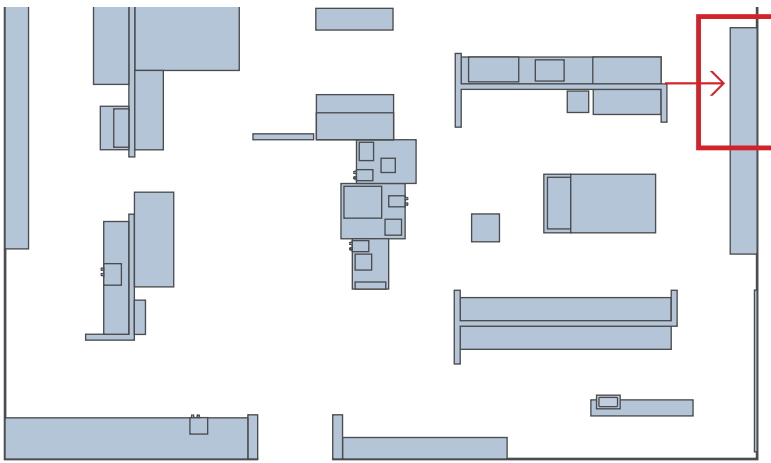
The inscription is not actually a real word. It has been invented by someone who could not read.

Mid-1st century CE

5

Bone hair pins

1st to 4th century CE



In the showcase:

Roman

c.43–410 CE

Industrious people

Dorset's raw materials were all exploited at an industrial scale and were exported widely during the Roman period. Sheep wool from farms enabled textile production, and spinning and weaving were still important.

The unique Dorset shale industry continued from the Iron Age but made new products – luxury items for the upper-class home. Salt was produced along the Purbeck coast and on Poole Harbour. At Owre, near the harbour, it seems to have played a part in a thriving industrial and trading settlement.

Stone was used for many purposes, from limestone roof tiles to tesserae for mosaic floors and decorative carved finials and pillars for building. Stone bowls and mortars were made from Purbeck marble, particularly at Norden near Corfe Castle, where shale was also worked.

On the back panel and table top:

Left above

Wider connections

A variety of different types of pottery from continental Europe have been found in Dorset. They demonstrate the extent of the area's trading connections with the Roman Empire.

1

Continental pottery beakers

Colliton Park, Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

1937.70.2675, RD.1984, RD.1982, RD.1987

2

Samian ware bowl

Colliton Park, Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

1937.70.C3779

Left

Shale

Kimmeridge shale was used for many objects. Bangles and spindlewhorls were made on a wooden lathe and carved with flint. Furniture panels and trays were made by hand.

Roman

3

Shale table leg

Norden, Corfe Castle

1st to 4th century CE

1939.54.1

4

Shale spindle whorl

Norden, Corfe Castle

1st to 4th century CE

1919.2.10b

5

Flint tools used with lathe

Langton Matravers

1st to 4th century CE

1950.16.1

6

Flint tools used with lathe

Norden, Corfe Castle

2nd to 4th century CE

RD 1974.1-7

7

Shale panel or tray

Askerswell

1st to 4th century CE

1959.50.1

8

Shale stool leg

Frampton Villa, Maiden Newton

1st to 4th century CE

1902.1.55

Pottery

A major industry around the Poole Harbour area was pottery manufacture. Continuing from the Iron Age, huge amounts of Black Burnished Ware cooking and serving pots were produced at sites like Bestwall. They were traded across Dorset and the whole of England, up to Hadrian's Wall. Finer pottery was brought in from elsewhere in England and mainland Europe. These examples date from the 2nd to 4th centuries CE.

9

Black Burnished Ware bowl

Chickerell, Weymouth

1907.3.9

10

Black Burnished Ware jar

Dorchester

1886.9.14

11

Black Burnished Ware pedestalled jar

Dorchester

1886.9.17

Roman

12

Black Burnished Ware jar

Dorchester

1846.2.10

Stone

The Romano-British stone industry in Purbeck and Portland supplied many building items, such as tesserae for creating mosaics.

13

Chalk tesserae

Norden, Corfe Castle

1st to 4th century CE

1972.140

14

Purbeck burr-stone mortars and pestle fragment

Rough Purbeck burr stone was an ideal material for this type of Roman kitchen vessel used for mixing or pounding food.

Norden, Corfe Castle

1st to 4th century CE

1946.41

15

Briquetage

The remains of a clay container used for heating sea water to extract salt. Some industrial sites suggest a link between salt extraction and pottery production.

Norden, Corfe Castle

1st to 4th century CE

RD.1986

Making a living from the land

The Roman countryside was important because people relied on the agricultural economy.

Towns consumed foodstuffs which the countryside produced, some of it on villa estates, elsewhere in more modest settlements. Cattle were probably traded into the towns on the hoof, and chickens became more common, used for eggs and meat. Cereals and livestock were staples, but fish and shellfish, such as oysters, became important.

Hunting may have contributed some meat to the diet, but this was mainly at villas where hunting was a leisure pursuit. There were imports of more exotic food and drink, such as wine, fish sauce and olive oil.

On the table top:

Farming tools

Many agricultural implements found are similar to those used in more recent times, such as shears for clipping

sheep fleece. Horses became important for transport, both riding and pulling vehicles. Hipposandals provided protection for their feet. Farriers used buttresses when cutting and shaping horses' hooves to protect them from damage.

1

Pottery amphora neck

Dorchester

1st to 3rd century CE

RD.2361

2

Purbeck burr-stone mortar

Dewlish Villa, Dewlish

2nd to 4th century CE

RD.2362

3

Iron farrier's buttresses

Colliton Park, Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

1937.70.2108, 1937.70.2233

4

Iron shears

Colliton Park, Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

1937.70.871

5

Iron hipposandal

Woodyates

1st to 4th century CE

1875.1.10

6

Iron horse bits

Colliton Park, Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

1937.70.1715 (RD.2363.1-2)

Textiles

Small-scale fabric production seems to have happened everywhere, in towns and the countryside.

7

Purbeck limestone loom weight

Bucknowle

Late 3rd century

2013.44.654

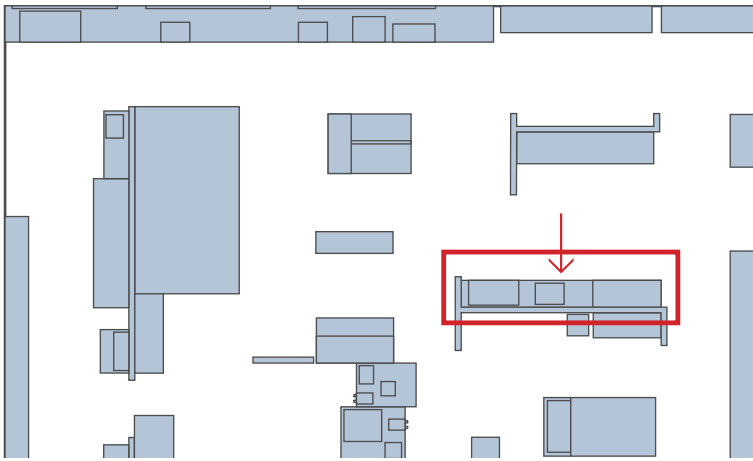
8

Bronze shears

Colliton Park, Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

1937.70.2272



In the showcase:

Roman

c.43–410 CE

Town and country living

Buildings in both towns and the countryside were constructed in a variety of ways. Some were grand, built of durable materials like stone and decorated with paintings and mosaics. Others were more humble and practical buildings, often timber framed.

We know more about the higher-status buildings, such as villas, as more of these have been excavated. High-status homes had all the equipment of everyday life, such as cooking pots, but were also furnished to a luxurious level. In the richer home, the materials used were of higher value, better quality and greater rarity – bronze and glass instead of earthenware, imported tableware instead of local coarse pottery.

The average home probably did not go without, with well-made pottery and the building lit with oil lamps.

On the back panel and table top:

1

Floor mosaic

This round central section of a mosaic floor shows the head of the Roman sea god Neptune, with crab legs and claws growing from his forehead. The marine theme is typical of designs referred to as the Dorchester School, which were made during the 4th century.

Hemsworth Villa, Witchampton

4th century CE

1929.17.1

Home furnishings

High-status buildings had glass windows, decorative stone trimmings, painted plaster and mosaics, as well as indoor plumbing. Tegulae (flat tiles) lay on the roof and imbrex (curved tiles) covered the join to make them waterproof. An antefix (ornament) was then attached to the ends of the eaves of a tiled roof to hide the joint.

2

Sandstone carved roof finial

Dewlish Villa, Dewlish

1st to 4th century CE

RD.2098

Roman

3

Terracotta roof tiles

Maiden Castle Roman Temple,

Winterborne St Martin

4th century CE

1939.55 (RD.2921)

4

Three fragments of painted wall plaster

Bucknowle Villa, Corfe Castle

3rd to 4th century CE

2013.44 (RD.2096)

5

Bronze and iron key

Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

1902.2.3

6

Terracotta antefix decorated with the face of a male Medusa

Dorchester

3rd to 4th century CE

1890.2.2

Cookery and crockery

All homes needed pottery to cook with and serve from, and this came in a wide range of different types. Lighting the home was important to everyone, so oil lamps with wick

trimmers were common. Those who could afford them had glass cups, bowls and jugs.

7

Samian ware bowl

Made in Gaul, this bowl is typical of the tableware used in high-status homes.

Colliton Park, Dorchester

2nd to 4th century CE

1907.3.12

8

Glass bowl shaped like a sea urchin

Colliton Park, Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

1937.70 (RD.2089)

9

Glass jug

A large, oval-shaped glass jug with distinctive chain handle. A rare survivor, this is one of the finest examples of Roman glassware ever discovered in Britain.

Bucknowle Villa, Corfe Castle

Mid-3rd to mid-4th century CE

2013.44 (RD.2358)

Roman

10

Oil lamp

Adding oil through the central hole, and burning a wick placed into the small nozzle provided Roman homes with light.

Symondsbury

1st to 4th century CE

1948.5.1

11

Sherd of Black Burnished Ware

Decorated with a design of running deer scratched on the surface.

Colliton Park, Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

1937.70 (RD.2084)

12

Replica of a shale table leg from a three-legged table

The original object was found at the Roman Town House and dates to the 3rd century CE.

RD.2085

13

The Colliton Park glass bowl

Glass bowl engraved with followers of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine.

Colliton Park, Dorchester

4th century CE

1937.70.1235

120

On the wall:

Villas and town houses

The remains of a Roman town house at Colliton Park, Dorchester, were discovered in 1937. It was built in a secluded part of Durnovaria, the elegant residence of someone able to impress their guests and business contacts with heated rooms and tasteful decoration.

Most people lived in buildings made with timber frames and wattle and daub walls. However, the upper classes built more substantial houses in both the town and countryside. These had walls of local stone, stone or ceramic tile roofs, and used under floor heating and mosaic floors. Decorative stone pillars and painted plaster walls were ways of showing your importance and connections.

Peek inside our Roman Town House



Carefully lift the roofs to explore the rooms in our Roman Town House. Who do you think might have lived here?

Imagine walking over the splendid mosaic floors, enjoying the colourful walls and the cosy atmosphere of lamp-lit rooms. Parts of the house had a special underfloor heating system called a hypocaust. It helped hot air from a fire flow below the floors to heat the rooms. You can find one beneath the floor of the Winter dining room.

Roman

Ornate furniture and sumptuous fabric added colour and luxury, and there were rooms to entertain and impress visitors. Servants kept the house running smoothly.

Explore the real thing at Colliton Park

Get a sense of the scale of the original Roman Town House, surrounded by landscaped grounds. It sits in a quiet spot of what was Dunovaria (Roman Dorchester), just a few minutes' walk from the Museum.

Roman

c.43–410 CE

On the table top:

Coins and hoards

Like the hoards of earlier periods, wealth was probably gathered and hidden for a variety of reasons.

Roman period hoards are generally coins, but can include the containers they were collected in. They may comprise a few coins – a labourer's wages – or a huge accumulation of wealth, maybe someone's life savings. Unstable times would have encouraged people to hide money.

The Piddletrenthide Hoard dates to a time when the province of Britannia was a rebel breakaway state under the usurper Carausius at the end of the 3rd century.

The Marks and Spencer's hoard

Found in South Street in Dorchester in 1936, the hoard included a yew wood keg with bronze hoops, a bronze bowl and a bronze jug all filled, at the time of the discovery, with over 20,000 antoniniani and denarius coins.

1

The Piddletrenthide Hoard

Made up of 2,114 later 3rd century CE base radiates, including coins of Carausius and Allectus, this is the largest hoard of its type from Dorset. Carausius was from humble beginnings and became Admiral of the Northern Fleet before declaring himself emperor in 286 CE. He was assassinated by his finance minister Allectus in 293 CE, who in turn was murdered three years later.

Top

Coins of Carausius

286–293 CE

Bottom

Coins of Allectus

293–296 CE

Piddletrenthide

2019.1

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

Roman

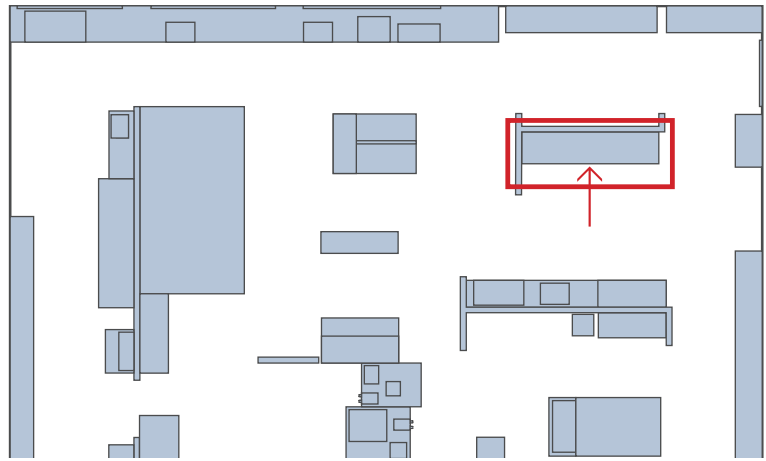
2

Bronze jug from the Marks & Spencer hoard

Dorchester

Early 2nd century CE

1936.5



In the showcase:

Roman

c.43–410 CE

Gods and temples

The religion of the first centuries of Roman rule combined local Iron Age traditions with Roman deities and practices.

No formal temples have been found yet, and religious actions would have taken place in the home or in public buildings in the town.

Temples such as those at Maiden Castle or Jordan Hill only appeared at the end of the Roman period as part of a revival of pagan religion.

On the table top:

Belief and religion the Romano-British way

Some objects were more overtly related to religion and belief, with most ceremonies performed in the home or as part of civic life. Different gods had different responsibilities and powers. Minerva was the Roman goddess of wisdom

Roman

and sponsor of arts, trade, and strategy. Mercury the patron of financial gain, commerce the poetry and communication, travellers, boundaries, luck and trickery. Mercury was also thought to be the guide of souls to the underworld.

1

Bronze plaque fragment, with engraved figure

Maiden Castle Roman Temple, Winterborne St Martin

4th century CE

1939.55 (RD.1945)

2

Fragment of a marble figurine

Possibly related to the Roman god Mithras.

Maiden Castle Roman Temple, Winterborne St Martin

4th century CE

1939.55 (RD.1951)

3

Fragment of a tinned bronze figure

Maiden Castle Roman Temple, Winterborne St Martin

4th century CE

1884.9.164

4

Wrought iron figurine

The figurine possibly depicts the Roman god Mercury.

Poundbury Cemetery, Dorchester

3rd century CE

1994.5 (RD.2349)

5

Tinned bronze figure of a bull

Maiden Castle Roman Temple, Winterborne St Martin

4th century CE

1939.55 (RD.1944)

6

Tinned bronze figure of the Roman goddess Minerva

1st to 4th century CE

RD.2353

7

Bronze household votive of Mercury

Greyhound Yard, Dorchester

3rd to 4th century CE mounted on an 18th-century plinth

RD.1123

8

Iron circular box with silver and gold inlay

This was a high-status object that represented a significant votive offering to the gods.

Maiden Castle Roman Temple, Winterborne St Martin

4th century CE

1939.55 (RD.1952)

Roman

Personal appearance

All members of Roman society seem to have adorned themselves, either simply or elaborately depending on what they could afford.

Jewellery was common and included rings, bracelets, necklaces and earrings, made from cheap materials such as bronze and glass, or costly gold and precious stones.

Pins and brooches would have been needed to arrange clothing and keep it in place, while pins were also used for both simple and elaborate hairstyles. Children wore small versions of adult jewellery.

On the panel:

Right

Female adornment

Women's clothing offered a wide range of opportunities for adornment. Pins were used in elaborate hairstyles and clothing, and brooches to fix dress in various styles. Necklaces, earrings, bracelets and rings were common, ranging from cheap materials to the most opulent.

1

Bronze and glass pin

Former County Hospital, Dorchester

3rd to 4th century CE

2013.9 (RD.2046)

2

Glass and coral bead necklace threaded on a bronze chain

Poundbury Cemetery, Dorchester

4th century CE

1994.5 (RD.2346)

3

Bronze bow brooch

Poundbury Cemetery, Dorchester

Mid-1st century BCE

1994.5 (RD.2354)

4

Bronze bow brooch, decorated with glass enamel

Poundbury Cemetery, Dorchester

Mid-1st century BCE

1994.5 (RD.2343)

5

Bronze bracelet with openwork metal dolphin decoration

Former County Hospital, Dorchester

2nd century CE

RD.2030

Roman

Personal grooming

Toilet sets were increasingly common as grooming became part of everyday life. Looking good meant clean teeth and nails and using perfume, as well as shaving and plucking hair. A ligula was a tool for cleaning out ears or extracting ointment, powders or medication from bottles or boxes.

6

Bone comb

Poundbury

1st to 4th century CE

RD.2044

7

Glass phial for scented oils or perfume

Bucknowle Villa, Corfe Castle

Late 2nd to 3rd century CE

2013.44 (RD.2032)

8

Bronze ear scoop

1st to 4th century CE

RD.2039

9

Bronze tweezers

Somerleigh Court, Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

RD.2041

10

Bronze ligula

Dewlish Villa, Dewlish

3rd to 4th century CE

RD.2035

Male adornment

Both men and women used brooches on their clothing and wore rings. These were both aesthetic and practical. For example, carved gemstones in rings may have been used as seals on documents.

11

Bronze rings with intaglio

Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

RD.2020

12

Bronze twisted-wire ring

Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

RD.2024

Children's adornment

Children wore similar pins, jewellery and brooches to adults. This indicates that they also wore similar clothing.

Roman

13

Child-size expanding bronze bracelets

Poundbury Cemetery, Dorchester

4th century CE

1994.5 (RD.2344.1-3)

14

Child's gold ring which has lost its precious stone setting

Poundbury Cemetery, Dorchester

3rd century CE

1994.5 (RD.2345)

In the drawer:

Roman adornment

1

Cylinder jet bead necklace

Poundbury Cemetery, Dorchester

3rd century CE

1994.5 (RD.2347)

2

Penannular brooch

1st to 4th century CE

RD.2017

3

Glass beads

Dorchester, Winterborne Houghton and Portland

1st to 4th century CE

1932.9 and RD.2006-2010

4

Bronze bow brooches

1st to 4th century CE

1901.2.31.153, RD.2015

5

Bone pins

Dewlish Villa and Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

1886.9.73

6

Bronze pins

Former County Hospital, Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

RD.2047

7

Glass pins

Fordington, Dorchester

3rd to 4th century CE

1846.2.16-21

Roman

8

Bronze rings with intaglio

Dorchester

1st to 4th century CE

RD.2020-2023

9

Bronze brooch plates

Animal designs for brooches were popular, with a huge range of designs made. These examples include fish, birds, hares and bees.

Dorchester

RD.2011-2014, 1938.86.58

In the drawer:

Votive offerings

Late Romano-British temples often have evidence of religious practices which took place there. This included making offerings of objects. Some of these related to the specific deity being worshipped, but other objects had a personal connection to the worshipper. Found at Maiden Castle Roman Temple, these personal objects may simply have been lost by worshippers, but are more likely to be votive offerings.

1

Bronze and glass finger ring

1st to 4th century CE

RD.1956

134

2

Bronze ear scoop

1st to 4th century CE

1935.51.101

3

Bronze pin

1st to 4th century CE

RD.1955

4

Bronze bracelet

1st to 4th century CE

RD.1959

5

Bronze ligula

1st to 4th century CE

RD.1953

6

Bronze spatula

1st to 4th century CE

1935.51.104

7

Bronze nail cleaner

1st to 4th century CE

1935.51.87

Roman

8

Bronze penannular brooch

1st to 4th century CE

1957.1.35.144

9

Fishing hook

1st to 4th century CE

RD.1954

In the showcase:

Burying the dead

In the first couple of centuries of Roman rule, burial continued in a similar way to that which had developed in Dorset in the Late Iron Age.

This often meant burial with grave goods in organised cemeteries. Some clearly Roman practices were adopted, alongside changing types of grave goods, such as a coin placed in the mouth to pay the Ferryman. Tombstones were also occasionally used.

On the table top:

1

Military tombstone of Portland stone

The carving of the figure on horseback indicates that this tombstone was for a military horseman.

Whitcombe

2nd century CE

1964.27.1

Grave goods

Some grave goods were included deliberately, while others were merely on the deceased's clothing. They may reflect the identity or profession of the person, or what those who buried them wished to communicate.

2

Necklace made up of 168 glass, amber and bone beads

Fordington, Dorchester

3rd century CE

1846.2.15

3

Bronze bowl

Poundbury Cemetery, Dorchester

3rd to 4th century CE

1947.16.1

Roman

4

Bronze fittings and key for a wooden box

Poundbury Cemetery, Dorchester

3rd to 4th century CE

1994.5 (RD.2351)

5

Bronze coins of Constantine (306–337 CE)

Found in mouth of a male skeleton, following a classical Roman practice.

Fordington, Dorchester

c.330–350 CE

1846.2.25

6

Shale spindlewhorl

Found with the remains of a middle-aged woman, this shale spindlewhorl would have been used in textile production.

Fordington, Dorchester

1846.2.24

Christian burial and Christianity

Later Roman cemeteries grew along the roads out of Durnovaria. Poundbury Cemetery was particularly large and highly organised.

By the 4th century burials were laid out east-west in rows. They could be without or with few grave goods. Status was often shown by the type of coffin or structure of the grave.

Whilst babies were often treated differently, children were fully included. Changes to east-west burial orientation and the declining use of grave goods may be associated with Christianity, which was spreading across the Empire and became the official religion under the Emperor Constantine in 313 CE.

On the back panel and table top:

Christian burial

Some bodies were packed in gypsum which may have been intended to preserve the body for the resurrection. Some people also had mausolea, in which a whole family might be buried. A variety of objects which can be directly associated with Christianity have been found around the county. They include the Hinton St Mary mosaic which depicts the head of Christ.

1

Copper alloy compasses inscribed with chi-rho

The chi-rho was a Christian symbol consisting of the combined Greek letters Chi (X) and Rho (P). These are the first two letters of 'Christ' (ΧΡΙ ΣΤΟΣ, Χριστος).

Dorchester

4th century CE

1893.2.16

2

Plait of red human hair

Hair was preserved in several graves at Poundbury because bodies were packed with gypsum. Men seem to have worn their hair close cropped. Women wore their hair long, often plaited and arranged on their head. Plaits were made of up to six strands, suggesting the help of a maid or hairdresser.

Poundbury Cemetery, Dorchester

4th century CE

1994.5 (RD.2033)

3

Silver spoon inscribed with early Christian fish symbol

The decoration of this spoon with a fish suggests that it was used in Christian worship. In Greek, the word for fish (ΙΧΘΥΣ, Ichthus) created an acronym which translates as 'Jesus Christ son of God, Saviour'.

Somerleigh Court, Dorchester

4th century CE

1920.4.4

4

Silver spoon inscribed 'AVGUSTINE VIVAS' (Long life to Augustinus)

Somerleigh Court, Dorchester

4th century CE

1920.4.2

5

Fragment of painted wall plaster from a family mausoleum

This reconstructed group depicts four male figures, who may have been family members, gathered round a grave.

Poundbury Cemetery, Dorchester

4th century CE

1994.5

6

Fragment of gypsum packing from inside a lead coffin

The surface shows impressions of the fine woven linen shroud used to wrap a body for burial. High-status burials were given lead coffins and burnt powdered gypsum was poured around and over the tightly wrapped body.

The gypsum set into a moulding plaster, capturing the shape and texture of the Roman fabric.

Poundbury Cemetery, Dorchester

4th century CE

1994.5 (RD.2005.1-2)

7

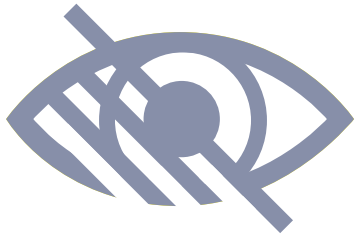
Child-size coffin

Lead coffins were associated with wealth and the highest social status.

Poundbury Cemetery, Dorchester

4th century CE

1994.5 (RD.2357)



Large print guide

People's Dorset Part 2

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

Dorset
Museum
& Art Gallery



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.

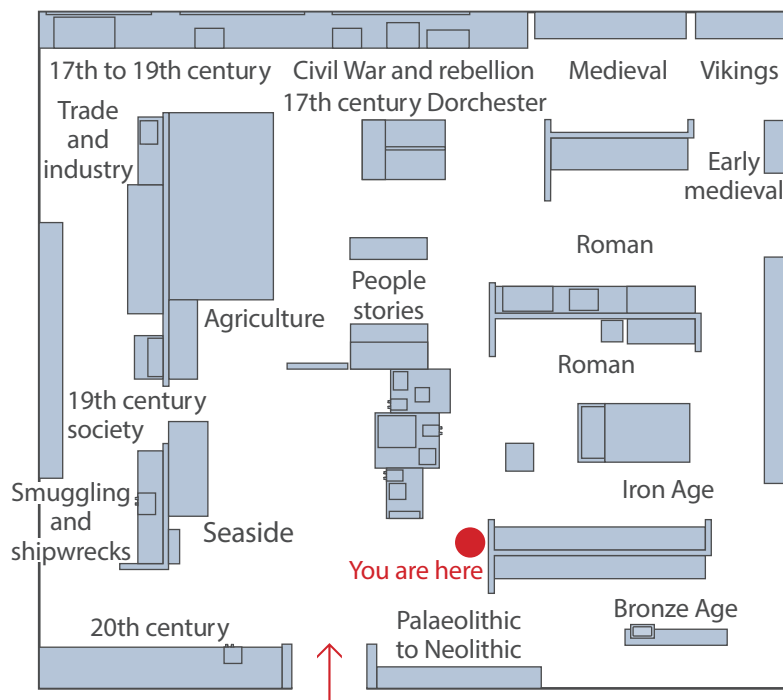
Archaeology – be amazed by some of Britain's most valuable archaeological treasures, stretching back to the Palaeolithic including hand axes, gold neck rings from the Bronze Age, Roman coins and fine jewellery.



Sound point



Please touch



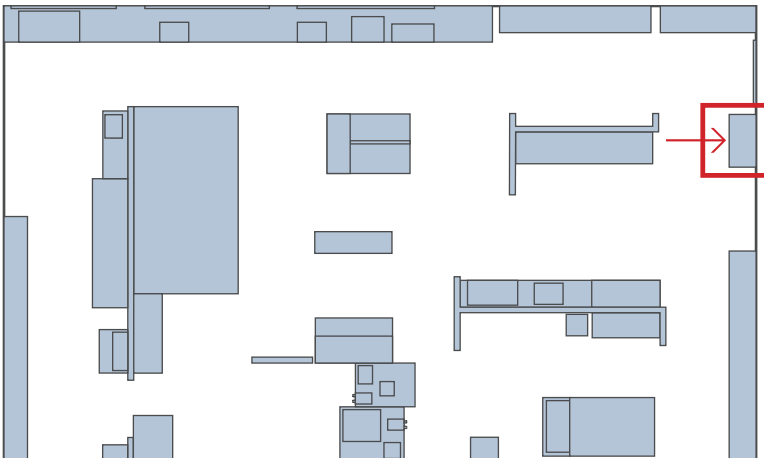
Medieval – meet some of the earliest named people in Dorset, find out about objects from castles, manors and churches and discover treasures including the beautifully preserved Wool altar frontal.

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.

Early medieval

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

6

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

Early medieval

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

8

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

Early medieval

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

Early medieval

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

Early medieval

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

Early medieval

3

Iron scramasax

2005.4.1

4

Iron spearhead

2005.4.7

5

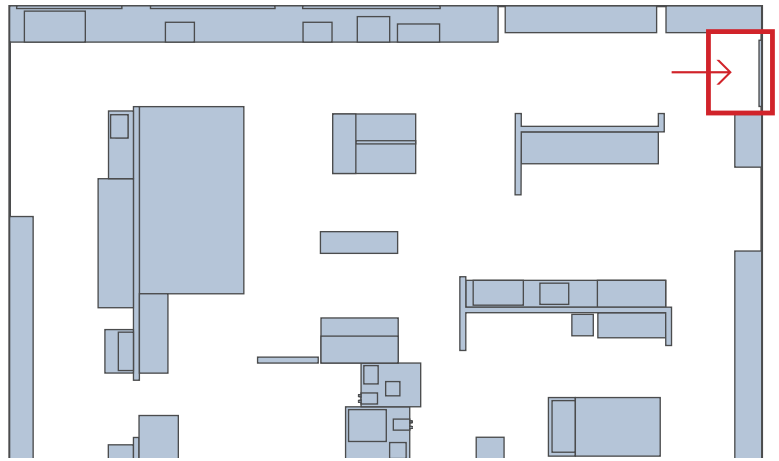
Iron spearhead

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.

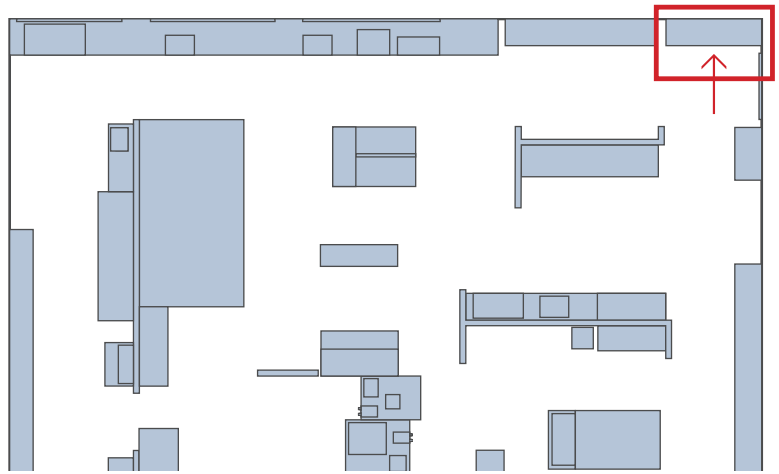
The men were beheaded. Their bodies were thrown into a disused quarry pit and their heads placed in a separate heap. They suffered excessive violence at the end, the injuries showing that in most cases it took more than one blow to kill them.

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.

Early medieval

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.

Vikings

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

Vikings

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.

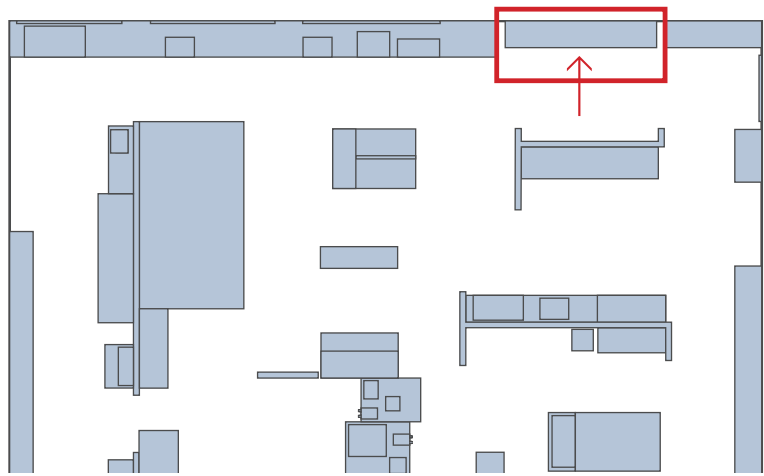
2015.26/3681

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.

Medieval

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

Medieval

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

Medieval

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

Medieval

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

Medieval

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
LI.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

Medieval

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

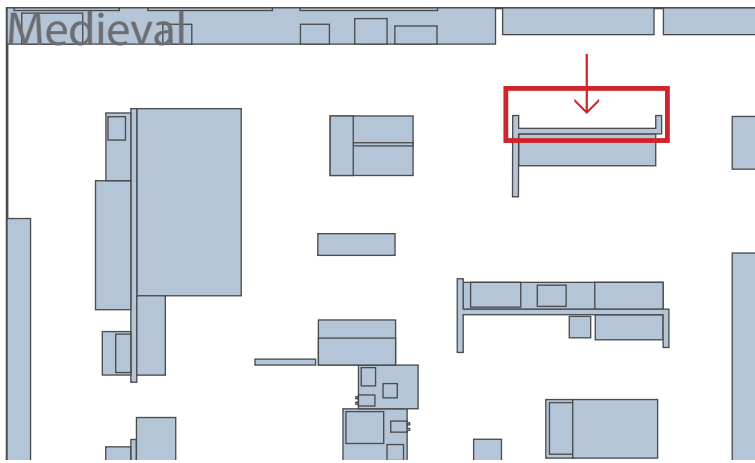
Altar panel fragment

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 Canonorum, 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.

Medieval

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.

Medieval

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 through 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.

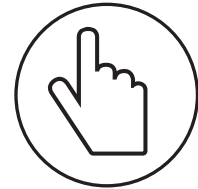
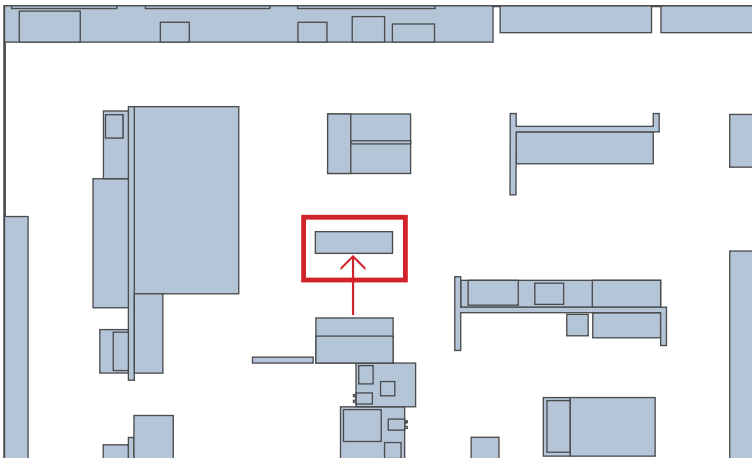
Object on the plinth:

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.

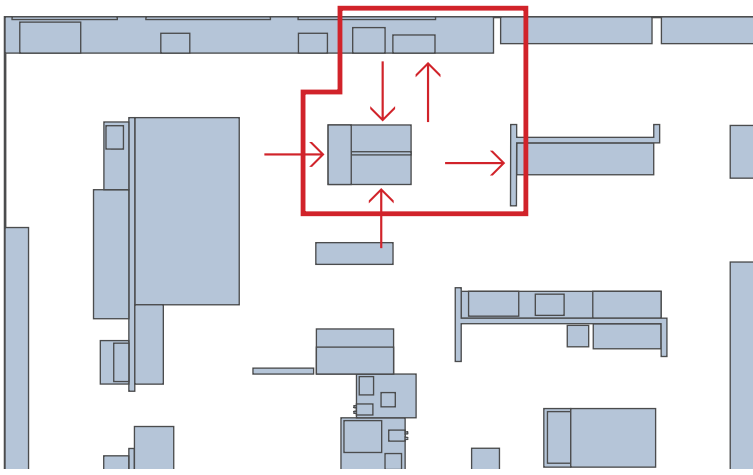
Hourglasses helped to measure journey times, so they were an important navigation tool at sea. Feel the convex curves of the two glass bulbs and the neck that regulates the flow of sand between them.

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

17th century

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

17th century

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

17th century

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

17th to 19th century

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 Parliamentary 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

17th to 19th century

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.

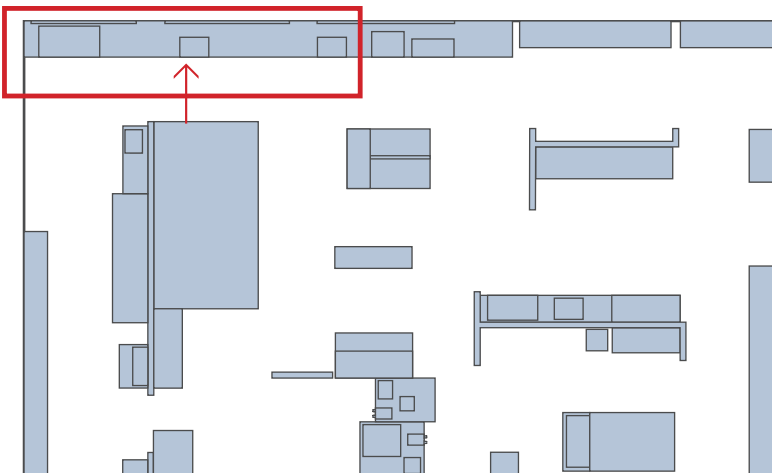
Sir John Bankes had joined the king in 1642, leaving his wife and daughters at the castle. This relief shows the dramatic siege, which lasted a number of weeks. During that time the Parliamentarian army would have killed and eaten most of the livestock in the area. They finally took the castle in 1646.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

17th to 19th century

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

17th to 19th century

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

17th to 19th century

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

LI.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.

17th to 19th century

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

17th to 19th century

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

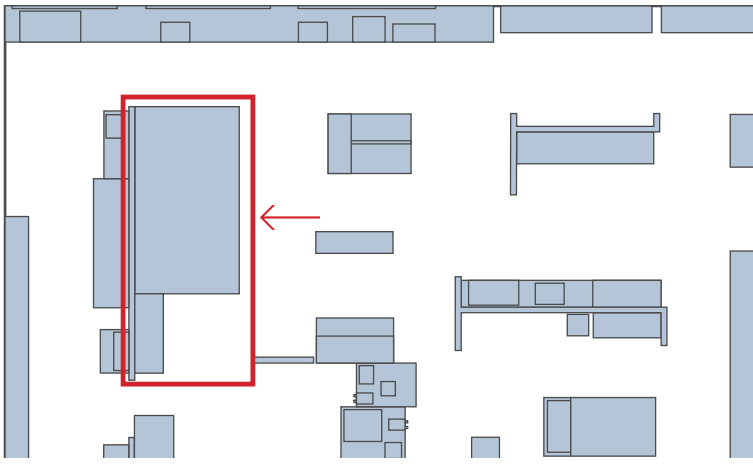
4

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

Agriculture

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

74

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

Agriculture

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

76

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

Agriculture

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.

Agriculture

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

Agriculture

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

Agriculture

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

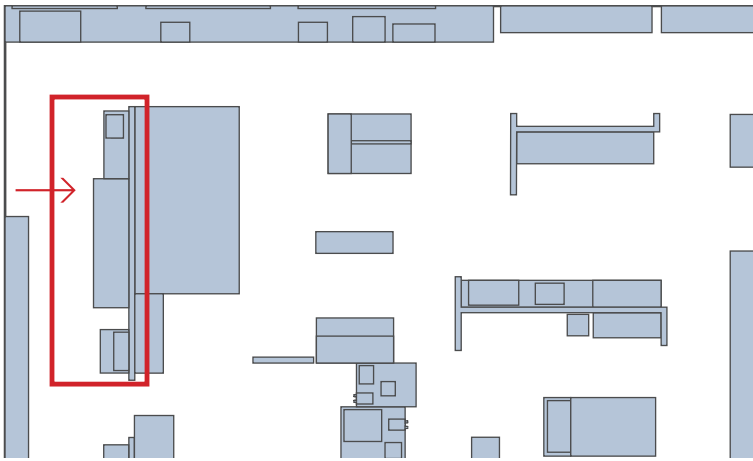
1972.51

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.

Trade and industry

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.

Trade and industry

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

Trade and industry

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

Trade and industry

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

Trade and industry

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

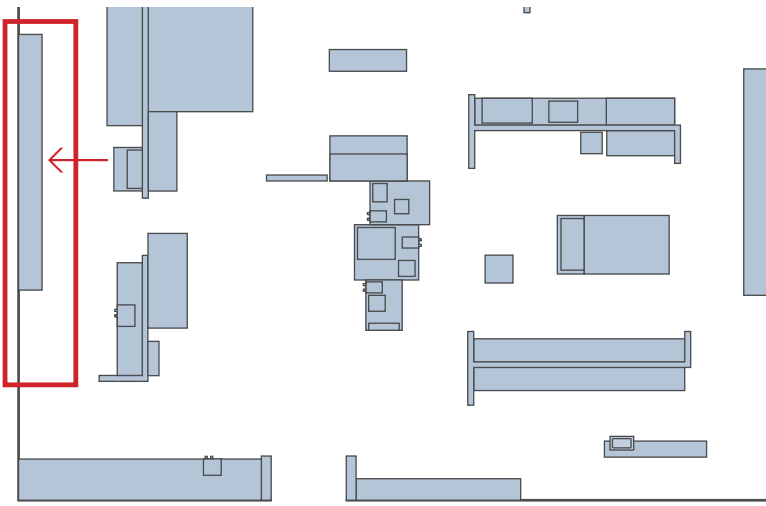
People used knitting and sewing patterns to make their own clothing. Patterns were influenced by the latest fashions, with new ones released each season. Haberdashers also sold a range of threads and tools to create embroidery and trimmings.

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

Changing society

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

108

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

Changing society

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

Changing society

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

Changing society

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

LI.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

Changing society

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

Changing society

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

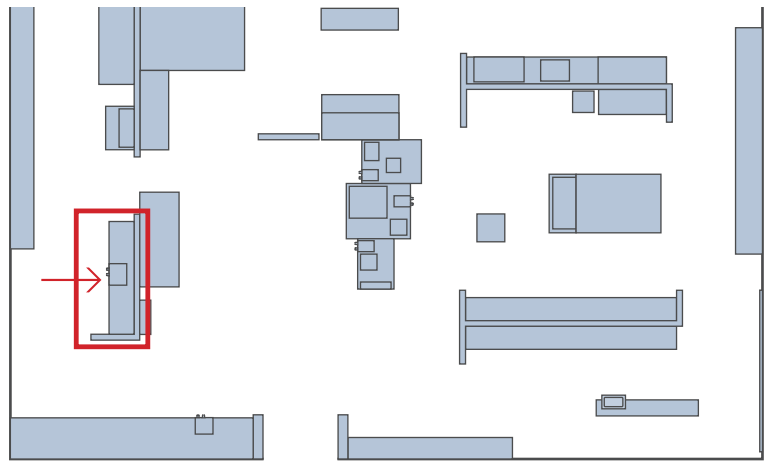
P.25951

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.

Smuggling and shipwrecks

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

124

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.

Smuggling and shipwrecks

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.

© Reproduced with kind permission of Hobnob Press, Warminster.

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

Smuggling and shipwrecks

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.

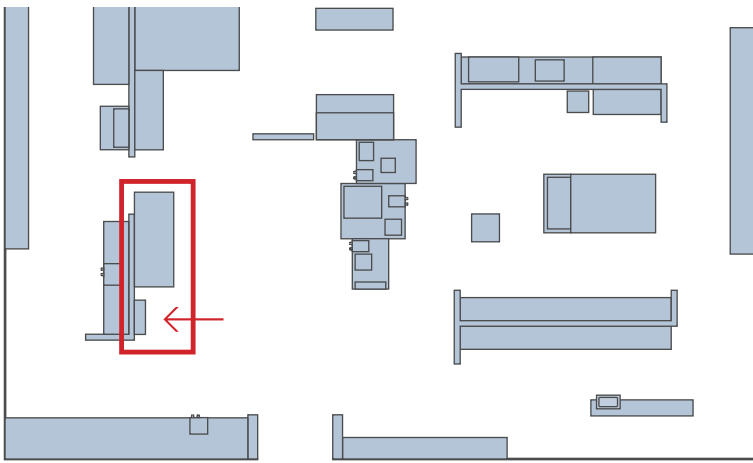
Robert Dodd (1748–1815)

Aquatint on paper

1786

LI.2021.5

On loan from Philip Browne



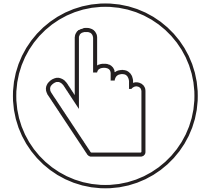
On the wall:

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.

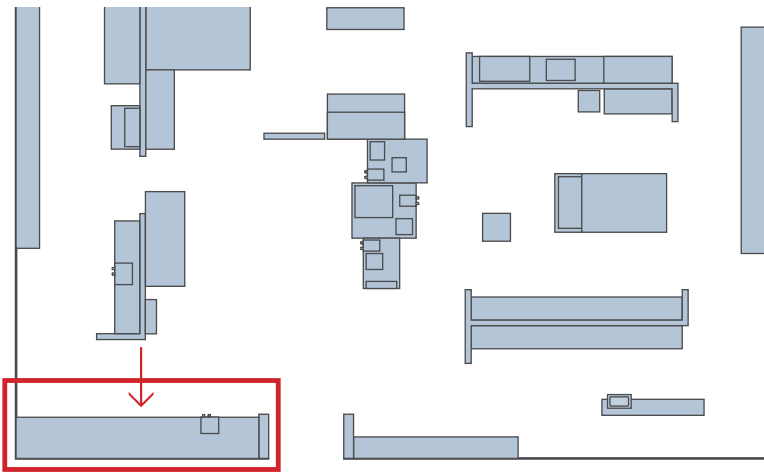
George III helped put Dorset on the holiday map in 1789. He first visited Weymouth to recover from illness, bathed in the sea and liked it so much he spent many holidays there. Rich visitors followed him and the coastal town grew into a fashionable resort.

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

20th century



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.