

Welcome to DORCHESTER BOROUGH GARDENS

ROMAN DORCHESTER

Originally called *DURNOVARIA*, Dorchester was the capital of the district. The town was settled in around 60AD, first as a military garrison and later as a full civilian settlement between 70 and 80 acres in size with civic buildings, public baths, several miles of aqueduct and an amphitheatre adapted from a neolithic henge at Maumbury Rings.

Originally the town was defended with earth embankments and timber constructions. Over time the military presence in the town was reduced and the town's defences were strengthened with high walls constructed in stone. As the Roman empire declined most troops were withdrawn in order to defend the northern frontier from the Saxon hordes; therefore as there were a limited number of troops left the town's physical defences were built up. When the Romans finally left the walls were over 3m tall. Only fragments of the Roman town are left now. The only built structures remaining are the well preserved townhouse in nearby Colliton Park and a section of the rubble core of the town wall opposite the main gate to the gardens in Albert Road. The facing stones of the wall would have been scavenged for construction in the Middle Ages.

The wall was arranged with an array of earth banks, which altogether would have been nearly 100m across. The gardens lie along the lines of the defensive ditches alongside the Roman wall. The foundations of the old wall still remain approximately under the line of the boundary fence and are now recorded as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The town walks follow the line of the wall and were laid out and planted with trees in the 18th Century.

It was not until the 19th Century when the Great Western Railway reached Dorchester that it actually outgrew the bounds of the old Roman town.

At the North end of the park there were many burials. 52 were unearthed in 1942 underneath where the new kiosk now stands. The bodies found were thought to be the remains of both Romans and local inhabitants. It is quite possible that there were other graves cleared from the site when the gardens were levelled in the 19th Century. Further burial sites were discovered during the park's restoration but it is thought that they were from a later period in history.



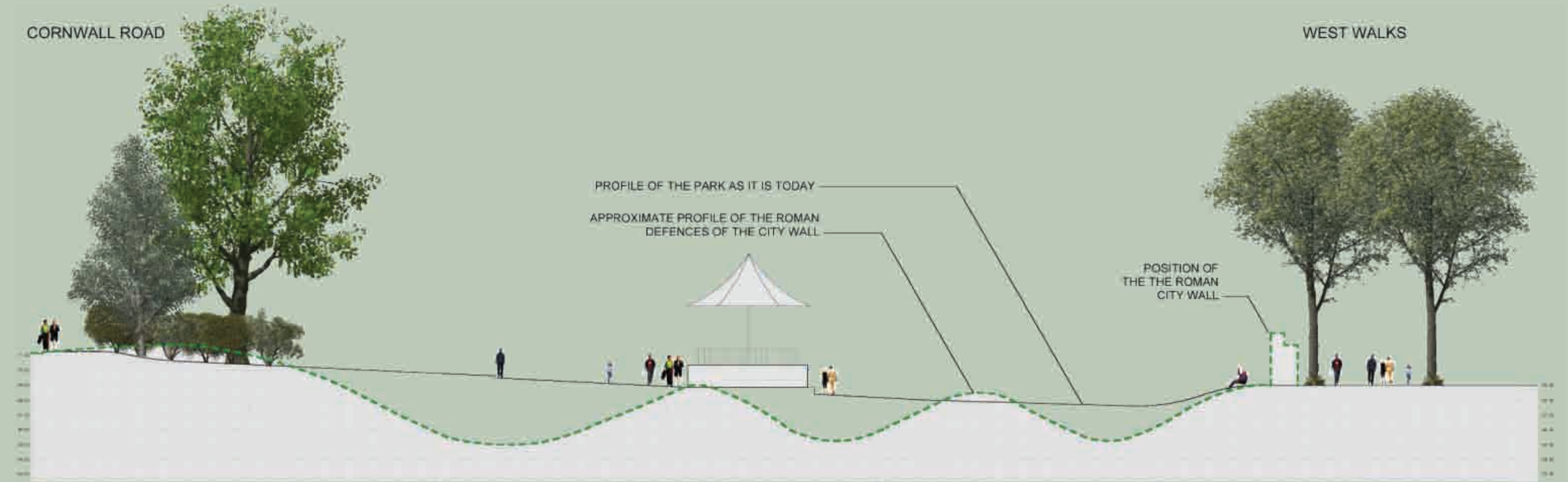
West Walks circa 1922
(Dorset County Museum Collection)



West Walks today



The remains of the city wall today opposite the north entrance to the park, otherwise known as 'Top o' the town'
(Photo courtesy of the Dorset Gardens Trust)



SECTION A - A'



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