



DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

Council Offices, 19 North Square, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1JF

Telephone: (01305) 266861

Steve Newman, Town Clerk

14th January 2026

You are invited to a meeting of the **DORCHESTER HERITAGE JOINT COMMITTEE** will be held in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, HIGH EAST STREET, DORCHESTER DT1 1HF** on **TUESDAY 20th JANUARY 2026** commencing at **5.30pm**.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading 'Steve Newman'.

Town Clerk and Secretary to the Committee

Declaration of Interests

Members are reminded that it is their responsibility to disclose interests where appropriate. A Member who declares any interest must leave the room. A Member who declares a registerable interest as a Council nominee to a partner organisation may first address the meeting as a member of the public.

Membership

Dorset Council: R. Biggs, A. Canning, L. Fry, R. Major and R. Tarr.

Dorchester Town Council: S. Biles, S. Jones, F. Kent-Ledger, G. Jones and D. Taylor.

The following Members may attend and speak but not vote:

I. Gosling & J. Doak (Dorchester Civic Society), R. Hattersley (Dorchester Chamber for Business), M. Woodgate (Dorchester Heritage Magazine), E. Metcalfe (The Keep Military Museum), L. Poulsen (Dorchester Local Nature Reserve), C. Dixon (Dorset Museum & Art Gallery), J. Wallis (Blue Badge Tourist Guides) M Rice (Dorchester Association), M. Gayton or S. Johnson (Dorset History Centre), R. White (National Trust (for Max Gate and Hardy's Cottage)), V. Smith (Shire Hall), A. Worth (Keep 106 Community Radio), M. Chutter (Thomas Hardy Society), S. Wallis (Dorset Council – Archaeologist), Giles Keating (Athelhampton House), and Anthony Harrison (Town Crier).

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. **MINUTES**

To read, confirm and sign the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 14th October 2025 (**enclosed**).

3. **BUDGET UPDATE**

To receive a report from the Finance Officer (**report enclosed**).

4. **HERITAGE TOURISM STRATEGY - UPDATE**

To receive an update on the work of the Tourism Partnership and Strategy (**report enclosed**).

5. **THOMAS HARDY VICTORIAN FAYRE 2026 - UPDATE**

To receive a report from the Assistant Town Clerk (**report enclosed**).

6. **THE STORY OF DORCHESTER**

To receive a presentation from Joe Doak of the Dorchester Civic Society.

7. **POTENTIAL EVENTS IN DORCHESTER LINKED TO BAYEUX TAPESTRY EXHIBITION**

Discussion on initial ideas from Claire Dixon, Director of Dorset Museum & Art Gallery.

8. **HERITAGE INFORMATION SIGNS & BLUE PLAQUES**

To receive a report from the Assistant Town Clerk (**report enclosed**).

9. **ROMAN BATHS INTERPRETATION PROJECT**

To receive a report from the Assistant Town Clerk (**report enclosed**).

10. **ONGOING PROJECTS**

To receive update reports on the following matters:

- a) Sylvia Townsend Warner project and funding for bench (M. Chutter) – **report enclosed**.
- b) Town Pump enhancement - update from Civic Society (I. Gosling).
- c) Moule Project (M. Chutter).
- d) Dorchester / Boston 400 (Claire Skinner).
- e) Hardy 100th Anniversary project – update from Matilda Manley.

11. **UPDATE FROM MEMBERS**

To receive updates from members and partners.

12. **QUESTIONS**

To receive questions submitted by Members in writing to the Dorchester Town Clerk and in respect of which the appropriate notice has been given.

13. **URGENT ITEMS**

To consider any other items that the Chairman decides are urgent.

ITEM 2: MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

DORCHESTER JOINT HERITAGE COMMITTEE - 14th OCTOBER 2025

At a Meeting of the Dorchester Joint Heritage Committee held on 14th October 2025:

PRESENT:

Dorchester Town Council	Councillors:	G. Jones (Chair) F. Kent-Ledger S. Jones
	Officers:	N. Hayes M. Manley
Dorset Council	Councillors:	R. Biggs R. Tarr L. Fry
Dorset Museum & Art Gallery		C. Dixon
Dorchester Association		M. Rice
Local Nature Reserve		L. Poulsen
Dorset Council - Archaeology		S. Wallis
Dorchester Civic Society		I. Gosling & J. Doak
Dorset History Centre		M. Gayton
Thomas Hardy Society		M. Chutter

13. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Taylor and S. Biles (Dorchester Town Council), Councillor R. Major (Dorset Council), M. Woodgate, J. Wallis, R. White, A. Harrison and V. Smith.

14. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd July 2025, a copy of which had been circulated, were confirmed and signed.

15. **DECLARATION OF PREDETERMINATION**

None were declared.

16. **BUDGET UPDATE**

An update report on the committee's budget was presented by the Nigel Hayes. Councillor G. Jones gave an update on the Friends of Dorchester West grant and the event that ran alongside it in the Borough Gardens House. The event was covered by the Dorset Echo.

Councillor Tarr thanked Friends of Dorchester West and partners for their work on the project.

RESOLVED

That the budget update be noted.

17. HERITAGE TOURISM STRATEGY - UPDATE

Matilda Manley presented an update on progress with the Heritage Tourism Strategy and the work of the Tourism Partnership.

Tourism Partnership are re-doing the Hardy trail signs, making Dorchester the base for Hardy visitors, better walking routes from Dorchester to Hardy Cottage and Max Gate. Councillor Tarr highlighted Hardy's love for cycling, the National Trust have shown an interest in signposting Hardy cycling routes. Councillor Tarr to liaise with Matilda Manley.

Members raised questions about the footpath adjacent to the household recycling centre and if improvements could be made. Members requested better signage. Matilda Manley to contact Dorset Council Rights of Way.

RESOLVED

That the report on the activities of the Tourism Partnership was noted.

18. PROPOSAL INFORMATION PLAQUE FOR SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER

Mark Chutter reported a revised version of the information board wording is being worked on this week with less text and a better structure. This will be a freestanding board in between the two benches, and it has planning permission. The statue will be unveiled at the Christmas Cracker. Councillor S. Jones advised the board should not overshadow the Hardy board.

Councillor G Jones suggested the Hardy sign on the side of Hotter Shoes needs to be improved. The Thomas Hardy Society will investigate.

M Chutter thanked the committee and J Doak for all the work.

RESOLVED

That the Committee lends its support to the creation of the information panel regarding the Sylvia Townsend Warner statue subject to revised wording.

19. PROPOSED BLUE PLAQUE FOR 51 HIGH WEST STREET, DORCHESTER

Mark Chutter presented a request from the owners of 51 High West Street for the Committee to fund the fabrication of a Blue Plaque for the building to commemorate its association with Thomas Hardy and the house to be called 'Thomas Hardy Town House'

Councillor S. Jones requested the dates Hardy lived at the property are included on the plaque.

M. Chutter to review text for sign and bring back to committee for approval.

Members raised questions on the number and location of blue plaques in Dorchester. Dorchester Association to investigate.

RESOLVED

That the Committee agrees to fund the fabrication of a Blue Plaque for 51 High West Street to commemorate the property's links with Thomas Hardy.

20. PROPOSAL FOR THOMAS HARDY VICTORIAN FAYRE 2026

A proposal from the Assistant Town Clerk for holding the biennial Thomas Hardy Victorian Fayre was consider by the committee.

Councillor G. Jones, M. Chutter, and J. Doak requested to be involved with the event planning.

RESOLVED

That the Committee:

- a) agrees the date of 31st May 2026 for the Thomas Hardy Victorian Fayre.
- b) allocates £10,000 to the event from the Committee's events budget.
- c) agrees the procurement of the services of an event organiser to oversee the planning and implementation of the Fayre.

21. ON-GOING PROJECTS

Updates on the following were received:

- a) **Heritage Open Day 2025**, was deemed a success. The walks and visits worked well. Councillor Fry raised an issue with people booking on Eventbrite and not turning up, suggested raising the capacity. Councillor G. Jones considered it a success. Mark Chutter felt it went well. Matilda Manley questioned if it should be a two-day event based on feedback received. Dorset Museum was full to capacity for the events. History Centre numbers were low they would not do it in the same format in the future, possibly just tours in 2026. Thanks for support were noted to J Doak and Civic Society, and the Kings Arms. The date for 2026 was noted as likely the 13th September 2026.
- b) **Town Pump enhancement project**. Ian Gosling stated that the project is progressing, stonemasons (Tudor Rose) have been consulted and looked at the project with architect. X-Ray results recommended not lifting the column in one piece or trying to get mortar in. It has been agreed it will be dismantled allowing the pipework to be installed inside. Cost c.£42,000 inc VAT plus cost of scaffolding and work site, total c.£50,000.
- c) **The Dorchester Story project**. Joe Doak updated, a rolling program of work focused on sections at a time, starting with Roman Dorchester, working with 3rd Year History students at Bournemouth University, material handed over to Matilda Manley. A meeting to be arranged with Discover Dorchester website provider to upload the Roman section. Preview of work to be shown at next committee meeting. Going forward the Civic Society is looking to work with BU students again.

- d) **Thomas Hardy statue.** M Chutter updated to say it will be cleaned by Tudor Rose. It cannot be turned around due to cost. More information on the statue was requested. THS have images of the unveiling, request for an information board. Matilda Manley stated that the statue cleaning will be photographed. Members agreed information was needed. L Fry suggested William Barnes statue also needed information. Thomas Hardy Society to investigate information boards.
- e) **Moule Project.** A meeting has taken place; they will come back to Heritage Committee when more details are available.
- f) **Roman Baths interpretation project.** Gareth Jones put forward his aspiration of the better interpretation of the Roman Baths. Joe Doak felt it would be well supported. Steve Wallis reported a lot of the baths were under the trees, but he backed the idea. Matilda and Gareth to meet with Tony Hurley to move forward.
- g) The Civic Society water meadows assessment is ongoing.

22. UPDATES FROM MEMBERS

Councillor R Biggs: Dorset Council asset disposal going to Cabinet. Amongst other items the old library and All Saints Church are assets under consideration in Dorchester. The Civic Society raised concerns about disposal of All Saints Church.

Dorchester Association: Michael Rice provided an update on the Association's event on the 1 November at the Dorford Centre, marking 40 years since the last excavations at Maiden Castle. Tickets are selling well, with over 100 sold.

The Dorchester Association have been working with a podcaster from the USA enquiring about John White's house and the movement of people to USA including visits to the History Centre and Dorset Museum. With the 400th anniversary of sailing to USA approaching, Michael Rice requested this item goes on the next agenda.

Maria Gayton followed up by requesting Jo Loosemore gives a presentation on what they have done in Plymouth (Plymouth 400). Maria Gayton to investigate.

Thomas Hardy Society: Mark Chutter reported on the war poets conference coming to Dorchester for Remembrance weekend, based at Dorford Centre, bringing c.200 people into town.

Dorset Museum & Art Gallery. Claire Dixon reported digital guide set to go live to access content and stories. Digitisation of publications will save on printing costs. The Jane Austin exhibition was a success. Open Art Exhibition opens on 17th October in partnership with Dorset Visual Arts. The 2026 treasure exhibition is already generating interest.

Dorset History Centre – Maria Gayton reported on capital project bid is due to be submitted on 7th November, results in March. History Centre now has an events page on its website with many events coming up.

Dorset Council archaeology service – Steve Wallis reported that excavation took place in West Walks on old tennis courts in August. Previous research suggested it was likely to be have been built on pits that were dug to build the Roman defences, this was confirmed. A number of objects were also discovered.

Dorchester Civic Society: Several events coming up, including running a joint event on the 28 October event with Crickmay Architects about the restoration of buildings in Dorchester.

Shire Hall: The Committee Clerk read out an update on behalf of Shire Hall: A new exhibition entitled 'Fabrics of Protest' opens in November, showcasing historic banners from the Unite Union. The museum is also in the process of recruiting consultants to draft options for the future of Shire Hall with support from National Lottery and in partnership with Dorset Council and the National Trust.

23. **QUESTIONS**

None were raised.

24. **URGENT ITEMS**

None were raised.

CHAIR.....

ITEM 3:

DORCHESTER JOINT HERITAGE COMMITTEE – 20th JANUARY 2026 BUDGET UPDATE

1. The table below sets out the Committee's income and expenditure to date since 1st April 2025.
2. For the current financial year 2025-26, Dorchester Town Council has allocated to the Committee £3,000 for activities and £8,000 for events.

		Activities	Events
		£	£
	Balance Brought forward as at 1st April 2025	6,257.19	11,908.78
Income in year:			
01/04/2025	DTC Contribution for activities	3,000.00	
01/04/2025	DTC Contribution for events		8,000.00
		3,000.00	8,000.00
Expenditure in year:			
01/04/2025	Rowena Taylor Graphic Design - DD Passport + Poster Design	150.00	
14/05/2025	Advantage Digital Prints Ltd - museum postcards	621.54	
27/05/2025	Wallis Agency - Website hosting for town trail mini-sites	410.00	
06/08/2025	Rural Services Partnership Ltd - Membership	143.85	
13/08/2025	Friends of Dorchester West Station - Grant	500.00	
30/09/2025	Tudor Rose Masonry & Conservation - cover meter survey for the Town Pump	580.00	
06/10/2025	Heritage Open Day		1,834.12
10/12/2025	Ward Signs cast aluminium plaque (51 High West Street)	925.00	
17/12/2025	Friends of The Borough Gardens <i>Carols in the Gardens</i>		40.00
		3,330.39	1,874.12
Balance		5,926.80	18,034.66
	Total Balance		23,961.46
Outstanding commitments			
	Thomas Hardy Victorian Fayre		10,000.00
	Refresh of Barracks & Marabout sign (panel only)	288.00	
	Available Balance	5,638.80	8,034.66

3. The report for item 8 of this agenda, seeks Committee approval for additional expenditure on heritage information signs, in addition to the commitment shown above. This additional expenditure (£2,123 for Barracks panel and stand, and £420 for Poundbury Camp panel) will total £2,543 and can be accommodated within the Activities budget.

Assistant Town Clerk
Dorchester Town Council

ITEM 4:

DORCHESTER JOINT HERITAGE COMMITTEE – 20th JANUARY 2026 DORCHESTER TOURISM PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

The last Tourism Partnership meeting on 13th January was very well attended despite being held on a very wet January morning. Switching to morning meetings worked well. The partnership agreed that this is something they would like to continue.

The Tourism Development Officer provided an update - the key points were:

- Website hits are down again. Especially in December. This is something that the tourism partnership will be keeping an eye on. Most popular pages continue to be “what’s on”, pages relating to markets, shopping and free parking.
- Social media channels are continuing to grow. Most popular posts were about welcoming the Sylvia Townshend Warner statue to town (reach of over 12,000) and about the Thomas Hardy Victorian Fair coming back in 2026 (reach of over 10,000).
- New Annual events poster for 2026 is live and proving popular.
- Autumn Campaign has now ended. Our blog on Visit Dorset about visit Dorchester and exploring the area without a car has proved popular. The competition with Visit Dorset Tourism Partnership was also successful and had 5,331 entrants.
- The Tourism Development Officer is working with Cllr William Gibbons, Simon Connibear and Duchy of Cornwall to develop a new self-guided architectural and urban planning walking leaflet for Poundbury

The Tourism Partnership discussed the proposed Marketing Action Plan for 2026. Minimal amendments were made and the action plan was agreed.

The Tourism Partnership welcomed Laura Avant who talked about the Resort Magazine and shared a proposal for Dorchester. The Partnership agreed to go ahead with an advert in Resort Magazine in 2026. This will be funded from the annual marketing budget.

Daryl Chambers, Dorchester Markets Officer was introduced to the tourism partnership and shared some of the plans developing for markets in Dorchester.

All notes and slides from the last meeting can be found online at: <https://discoverdorchester.co.uk/about-us/>

**Tourism Development Officer
Dorchester Town Council**

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<https://discoverdorchester.co.uk/about-us/>

**Tourism Development Officer
Dorchester Town Council**

ITEM 5

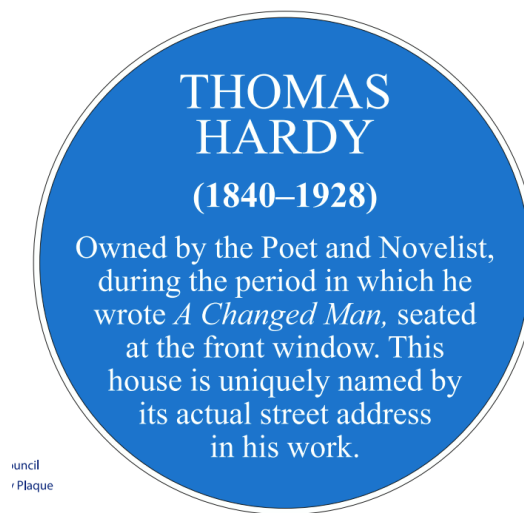
DORCHESTER JOINT HERITAGE COMMITTEE – 20th JANUARY 2026 THOMAS HARDY VICTORIAN FAYRE 2026 – UPDATE

1. As agreed by the Committee at its meeting, the Thomas Hardy Victorian Fayre will take place on Sunday 31st May 2026 and a budget of £10,000 was agreed to cover all costs, although this should be offset by some sponsorship.
2. **Event organiser:** £3,000 of the budget was set aside to commission an event organiser to lead on the planning and running of the Fayre. A brief was advertised in December 2025 but by the deadline of 5th January, no applications for the role of event organizer had been received. It is proposed, therefore, it is proposed to pay the Town Council's part-time Tourism Development Officer to undertake additional hours to support the Assistant Town Clerk in the organisation of the Fayre. This arrangement is likely to cost less than the proposed £3,000 budget.
3. **Location:** In previous years, the Fayre has mainly been held in High West/East Street – with the road closed between Top o' Town roundabout and Fordington High Street. However, this does result in the event needing to spend c. £2,500 on road closure permissions and diversion arrangements, along with the cost of additional security to supervise road closure points. Although this arrangement does provide a lot of space of entertainment, activities and stalls, it does result in quite considerable disruption to traffic in the town.
4. Officers would like the committee to consider, therefore, holding the Fayre along South Street with stalls and entertainment at locations from the Town Pump to the War Memorial. The benefits of this arrangement would be to bring more footfall to South Street businesses, reduce disruption to town centre traffic on the last Sunday of the half-term holidays, and involve less costs in terms of diversion signage. However, the council would still need to barrier off and marshal every point of entry to South Street.
5. **Recommendation:** It is recommended that the Committee support the proposed arrangements as set out in this report for the organisation/co-ordination of the Fayre and the South Street location.

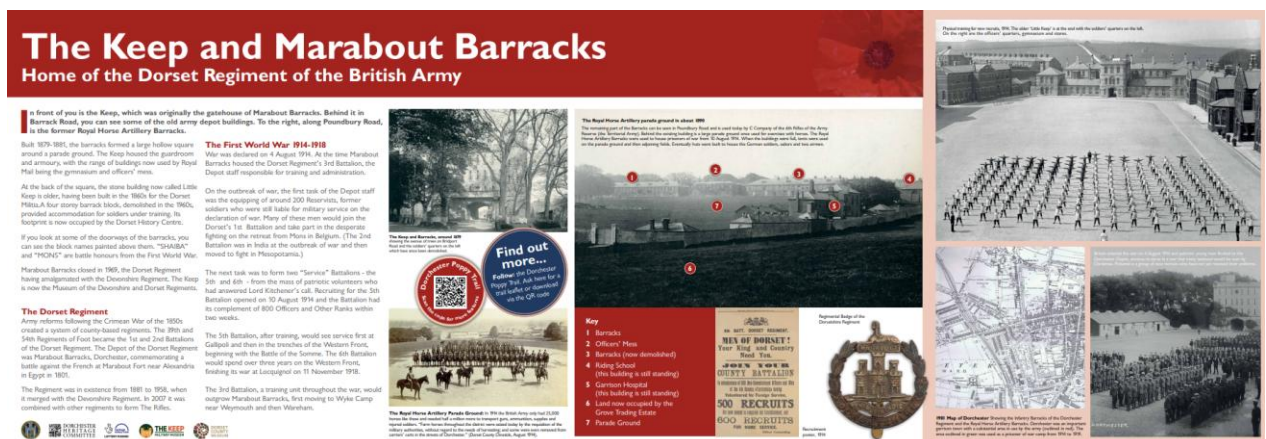
ITEM 7.

DORCHESTER JOINT HERITAGE COMMITTEE – 20th JANUARY 2026 BLUE PLAQUES AND INFORMATION PANELS - UPDATE

1. At its last meeting, the Committee agreed to fund the fabrication of a 'blue plaque' to be mounted on the front of 51 High West Street to commemorate the buildings links to Thomas Hardy.
2. The final design of the plaque is set out below and fabrication is now in progress with delivery expected soon – the cost is £925. It is anticipated that the plaque will be unveiled as part of the Thomas Hardy birthday weekend celebrations at the end of May.




3. At its July meeting the Committee allocated £288 plus VAT for the refabrication of the badly-worn Poppy Trail information sign outside The Keep Military Museum, relating to **The Keep and Marabout Barracks** (see image below):



4. However, on closer inspection, it is clear that the metal stand for this sign is heavily corroded and in need of replacement. A quote of £1,835 plus VAT has been provided for the creation of a new lectern style stand, in addition to the £288 plus VAT cost for the replacement panel. The total cost for the replacement of the entire unit (panel and stand) is, therefore, £2,123.

5. The third panel that is need of replacement, as previously highlighted by the committee, is the Poundbury Camp information board produced by Dorset County Council many years ago and located on the side of Poundbury Road adjacent to a pedestrian entrance to the sort (see below). The original artwork no longer exists but Swift Signs have been able to digitise the panel, erase all blemishes and graffiti, and enable amendments to the text. The cost of digitizing, amending and fabricating a new panel is £420. New wooden posts and frame for the panel will be fabricated and installed by Town Council staff.



Poundbury Camp

This Iron Age hillfort overlooks the River Frome to the north and is sited on the edge of a landscape which was of extreme importance in the prehistoric period. Poundbury, first recorded in 1333 as *Ponebury* takes its name from *burh* (old earthwork) and probably the personal name *Puna*. The earthworks are the major feature but the site has a long and complex archaeology. The use of the site over several thousand years has been elucidated by excavations carried out on the hillfort by Miss K.M. Richardson in 1939 and to the east between 1966 and 1980 by Mr C.J.S. Green and Mr A. Graham. Parchmarks visible in the drought of 1976 provided additional information.

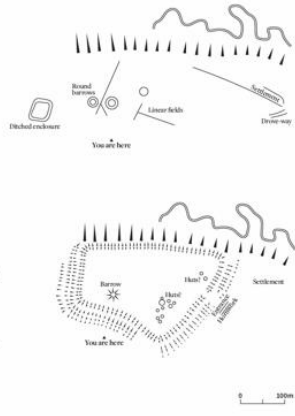
BRONZE AGE (2000 to 600BC)
While a small settlement existed to the east of the later hillfort, the hilltop itself attracted three round barrows (burial mounds) associated with a linear ditch-field system and perhaps a driveway leading to it. In the Middle to Late Bronze Age (1500 to 600BC) a ditched enclosure was built to the west, see only in parchmarks.

IRON AGE (600BC to AD43)
Early in the Iron Age or perhaps the Late Bronze Age (1000BC to 600BC), an enclosure/hillfort defended with a single bank and ditch was constructed on the hilltop with a small settlement to the east. By this time only one of the three round barrows remained visible, the other two having been ploughed away. In the Late Iron Age (100BC to AD43) the hillfort was strengthened by the addition of a second (outer) bank and ditch, the remodelling of the inner rampart, and a hornwork outside the eastern entrance. During the 1939 excavation a section was excavated across the western defences and this demonstrated the structural development. Of special interest is the replacement of the original timber-fronted rampart with a higher one protected by a stone wall higher up the bank. In the interior of the hillfort parchmarks probably represented huts and storage pits. To the east there was a settlement and inhumation cemetery.

ROMAN (AD43 to 450)
The prominent ledge along the north side of the hillfort contains the remains of a Roman aqueduct. This important engineering work brought water from a dammed lake near Littlewood Farm, Frampton, eastwards to the town of *Durnovaria* (Dorchester), a distance of some 15km. It was constructed by the Roman army in the earlier years of the 1st century AD for the fort at Dorchester, being converted later to civilian use. The aqueduct was abandoned by about AD150. Its construction involved the east side of the hillfort and the infilling of the ditches. A new entrance was forced through the southern defences. In the later Roman period the inside of the hillfort was occupied. The defences may have been refurbished at the same time or a century or two later. A square parchmark next to the surviving barrow may represent a temple. Outside the hillfort, to the east, settlements and a small group of burials were superseded by a large cemetery with stone-built mausolea.


POST-ROMAN (AD450 to 550)
The Late Roman cemetery was abandoned and replaced by an extensive settlement with timber buildings; some of the standing Roman mausolea were re-used in the settlement. The hillfort may have been occupied at the same time.

MODERN
The hillfort was occupied for military purposes during the Napoleonic Wars. In the mid 19th century Isambard Kingdom Brunel's proposals to drive his railways through the hillfort in a cutting caused local outrage, led principally by William Barnes. The outcome was the foundation of the county archaeological society and, in 1855, the railway being put in a tunnel. The hillside to the east was the site of a prisoner-of-war camp in World War I (1914-18). In World War II (1936-45) a Royal Observer Corps bunker was inserted into the hillfort defences and the area to the east used as a camp.



TEXT:
Laurence Keen 1999

SOURCES:
Antiquaries Journal, 20 (1940), 429-46;
RCHMEJ, Dorset, II (1970), 487-49;
C.S. Green, Excavations at Poundbury, I (1967);
W.G. Platman, Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, 114 (1992), 229-46, 115 (1993), 152-23, 116 (1994), 123-25, 117 (1995), 126-30, 118 (1996), 129-43, 119 (1997), 165-68.



DORCHESTER
HERITAGE
COMMITTEE

The hillfort is owned by the Duchy of Cornwall and is a Scheduled Monument. The use of metal detectors is prohibited.

This board has been financed by the Dorchester Heritage Committee. Finds from the site are in Dorset Museum & Art Gallery.

6. The wording of the Poundbury Camp panel has been reviewed by Dorset Council's senior archaeologist and the following revised wording for the Roman section is proposed:

ROMAN (AD43 to 450)

The prominent ledge along the north side of the hilltop is the remains of a Roman aqueduct. This important structure brought water to the Roman town of Durnovaria from the River Frome just downstream from Maiden Newton.

The aqueduct was probably constructed by the Roman army in the 1st century AD for the fort at Dorchester, being converted later to civilian use.

Its construction involved the destruction of some of the hillfort's defences on its north and east sides – perhaps to compensate for this, a new entrance to the hillfort was added on the south side.

The aqueduct was abandoned by about AD150.

During Roman times a farmstead was built inside the hillfort, and there is evidence that there may have been a temple here too. The hillfort's defences may have been refurbished in late Roman times or just after.

Outside the hillfort, to the east, where there is now the Poundbury industrial estate, there was an extensive Roman cemetery. Some of the finds from this cemetery are on display in Dorset Museum & Art Gallery – these include a plait of human hair that survived within the gypsum packing of a coffin.

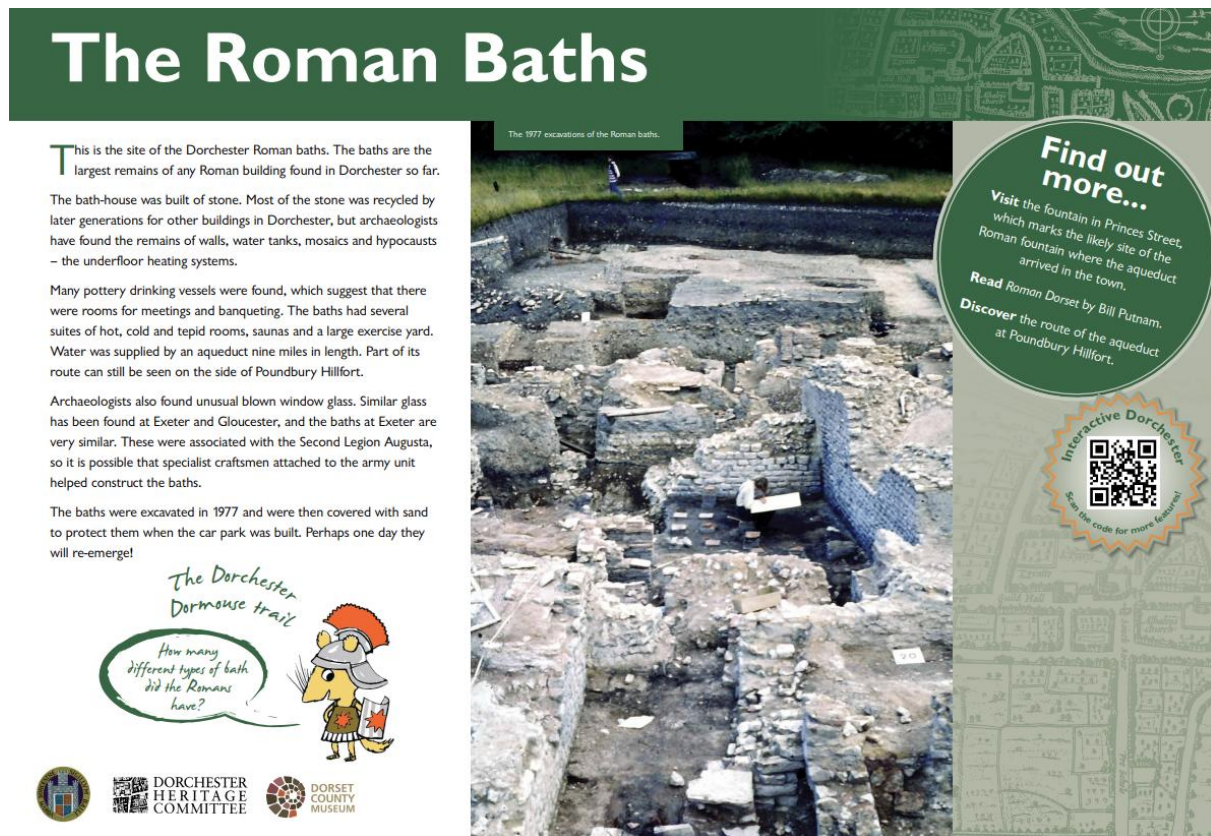
7. **Recommendation:** That the Committee agrees to fund the following:
- a) the purchase of replacement panel and new lectern stand for 'The Keep & Marabout Barracks' panel at a total cost of £2,123;
 - b) the purchase of a replacement panel for the Poundbury Camp information panel at a cost of £420.

**Assistant Town Clerk
Dorchester Town Council**

ITEM 8.

DORCHESTER JOINT HERITAGE COMMITTEE – 20th JANUARY 2026 ROMAN BATHS INTERPRETATION PROJECT

1. In order to progress improvements to the on-site interpretation of the site of the Roman baths, the Chair of the Committee (Cllr Gareth Jones) convened a small working group to look at options. The meeting was attended by Jon Marrow (DM&AG), Joe Doak (Civic Society), Steve Wallis (Dorset Council), Cllr Stella Jones and Tony Hurley (both DTC). The notes of the meeting are set out in Appendix A below.
2. At the meeting it was agreed that Steve Wallis and Tony Hurley would review the wording on the previously designed (but not installed) interpretation panel – see below:



3. As a result, the following revised wording is proposed:

The Roman Baths

This is the site of Dorchester's Roman Baths. The baths are the largest Roman building complex found in Dorchester so far.

The baths were constructed in the 1st century AD, probably initially for the nearby fort of the Second Legion Augusta but they later served the whole Roman town of Durnovaria.

The baths were supplied with water either from the aqueduct (the earthwork remains of which can still be seen near Poundbury Camp) or a nearby spring.

Although built in the 1st century AD, the bath complex was adapted over several centuries. The complex was similar to a modern day leisure centre and was used for exercise, washing, socialising and health.

The baths were excavated by archaeologists in 1977-8 with the help of many local volunteers. The excavation revealed the remains of a suite of hot, cold and tepid rooms, underfloor heating, saunas, and a large exercise yard. Following the excavation, the remains were covered over and still lie partly beneath this car park.

Find out more...

Visit Dorset Museum & Art Gallery in the centre of Dorchester to find out more about Roman Dorchester.

4. If this new wording is agreed by the Committee then the panel can be printed at a cost of approximately £80-£100 and this can be accommodated within the Committee's activities budget. Dorset Council has previously agreed to the positioning of the panel on the wall around the car park, on the Acland Road side.

ITEM 8 - APPENDIX A

Dorchester Roman Baths - Interpretation Project Meeting Notes – 2nd December 2025

Present:

Cllr Gareth Jones – Dorchester Joint Heritage Committee chair
Cllr Stella Jones - Dorchester Joint Heritage Committee
Joe Doak – Dorchester Civic Society
Steve Wallis – Dorset Council archaeologist
Jon Marrow – Dorset County Museum & Art Gallery
Matilda Manley – DTC
Tony Hurley – DTC

Joe Doak reported that the Civic Society's online resource (the Story of Dorchester) is being developed with Bournemouth University for inclusion within Discover Dorchester and will include a section on the Roman baths.

Jon Marrow thought that some of the finds from the excavation were probably in All Saints but he would investigate.

Information about the 1977-78 excavation, including the Open Day leaflet and recollections of locals who took part have been collected by the History Centre.

Steve Wallis noted that there were two draft reports from the excavation which had not yet been finalised and published.

Jon Marrow indicated that the newly refurbished Victorian Hall at DM&AG may include displays specifically about the history of Dorchester.

Gareth Jones was keen for improvements to the on-site interpretation of the Baths to be a coherent project with defined stages. These could potentially be 4 information panels looking at the overall layout / history, the role of the baths in the life of the town and variety of activities that took place. Steve Wallis highlighted the problem with locating interpretation / information within the car park was the risk from moving vehicles.

As a first step, Tony Hurley and Steve Wallis would meet to revise the wording of the existing draft information panel.

The potential to develop a digital model of the baths, and the wider town, which could be hosted online and enable viewers to move through the town/building.

Joe Doak mentioned that an ex-colleague of his at Reading University (Professor Nicolls) had produced a virtual model of Rome in the fourth century (see: <https://youtu.be/dVBG4axOJDl>). There may be the potential for Bournemouth University's National Centre for Computer Animation to assist.

END

ITEM 10 (a)

DORCHESTER JOINT HERITAGE COMMITTEE – 20th JANUARY 2026 SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER - FUNDING REQUEST FOR BENCH

At its meeting in January 2025, the Committee received an update report on the project to create a statue of Sylvia Townsend Warner in South Street and agreed the following:

That a decision on any financial support for the Sylvia Townsend Warner statue project be deferred until more details are available and the design has secured planning consent.

The statue was installed in December 2025 accompanied by a new public bench to replace an existing bench - although the statue is not actually attached to the bench thereby enabling it to be replaced in future, if needed, without disturbing the statue.

A request has now been received from Mark Chutter of the project team responsible for the statue, asking the Committee to make a retrospective contribution to the project by helping to cover the £700 cost of the bench.

**Assistant Town Clerk
Dorchester Town Council**