

# The Old Hospital Site

**The Dorset County Hospital was here between 1841 and 1998.**

## Roman town houses

In 2000-2001 archaeologists discovered the remains of several buildings – grand Roman town houses with mosaics, metalworkers' workshops, agricultural buildings and stone ovens.

Roman rubbish tips and cesspits revealed that residents ate grains, lentils, grapes, olive oil, all sorts of shellfish, sheep and goats, cattle, pigs, domestic fowl, game and deer, nuts, apples and sloes. Some foods were imported from the Mediterranean, along with wine, pottery and glass.

They also found evidence that allec – a fish sauce – was made here. This is the furthest west that it has been found in the Roman empire.

## The Dorset County Hospital

The earliest hospital recorded in Dorchester is the Hospital of St John in 1324. A hospital and orphanage for children was established in 1617, and workhouses were built in the 18th and 19th centuries. The County Hospital was established here in 1841 on land given by Robert Williams.

The main building was designed by Benjamin Ferrey (1810 – 1880), who was one of the first members of the Royal Institution of British Architects. The first operating theatre was on the top floor, and there was no lift. The first matron was trained by Florence Nightingale.

Somerleigh Court, behind the main building, was originally the private residence of the banker Robert Pearce-Edgcumbe. When the Weymouth Old Bank collapsed in 1897 the bailiffs took the house and it was sold to the hospital for a maternity wing and nurses' home.

The largest of the mosaics found on the site  
Mosaics were made locally and researchers think there are more Roman mosaics in Dorchester than any other British town.



Onofrio's Fountain, Dubrovnik, Croatia, built 1438  
This is just inside the main gate of the city walls and is a public water supply at the end of an eight mile aqueduct. Perhaps Dorchester had a similar one in Roman times. The modern fountain to your right is inspired by the Roman one.



A Roman bone hairpin found here in the excavations of 2000-1.



Reconstruction of Roman buildings on the site

**Find out more...**

Visit other Roman mosaics in the Dorset County Museum.

Read *Suburban Life In Roman Durnovaria* by Mike Trevarthen.

Discover recipes for Roman sauces online – or try Worcestershire sauce as a modern version!



Roman gold ring, copper rings and a brooch  
Metalworkers' tools were found here.  
Several counterfeit coins were also found.



DORCHESTER  
HERITAGE  
COMMITTEE



DORSET  
COUNTY  
MUSEUM