Cornhill and the Corn Exchange

This has been the centre of Dorchester since Roman times.

Near here was the site of the Roman forum, the administrative centre of the district. The market was also held here from very early times.

Dorchester became the county town in 1305 and in 1629 a charter enabled it to have a mayor, bailiffs and aldermen. In 1630 five guilds were set up to regulate trade – Merchants, Clothiers, Ironmongers, Fishmongers, Shoemakers and Skinners. Cloth was then the most important trade.

The Town Pump obelisk was built of Portland stone in 1784. The water pump was removed in the 1930s (1940s?), but the Town Pump is still very much the heart of Dorchester - particularly on New Year's Eve.

The Corn Exchange and Town Hall across the road replace an earlier Town Hall which had an arched passageway into North Square. The present Town Hall was designed by Benjamin Ferrey, who also designed All Saints' Church and the old County Hospital. It was built in 1847-8.

The clock tower was added to the Town Hall in 1864. It was known as 'Galpin's Folly', after Mayor Galpin who partly paid for it and who approved Benjamin Ferrey's designs for a tower on a slender pillar. There was public concern that the tower would fall off. It hasn't yet!

Interactive Dorchester

Scan the code for more features!

Find out more...

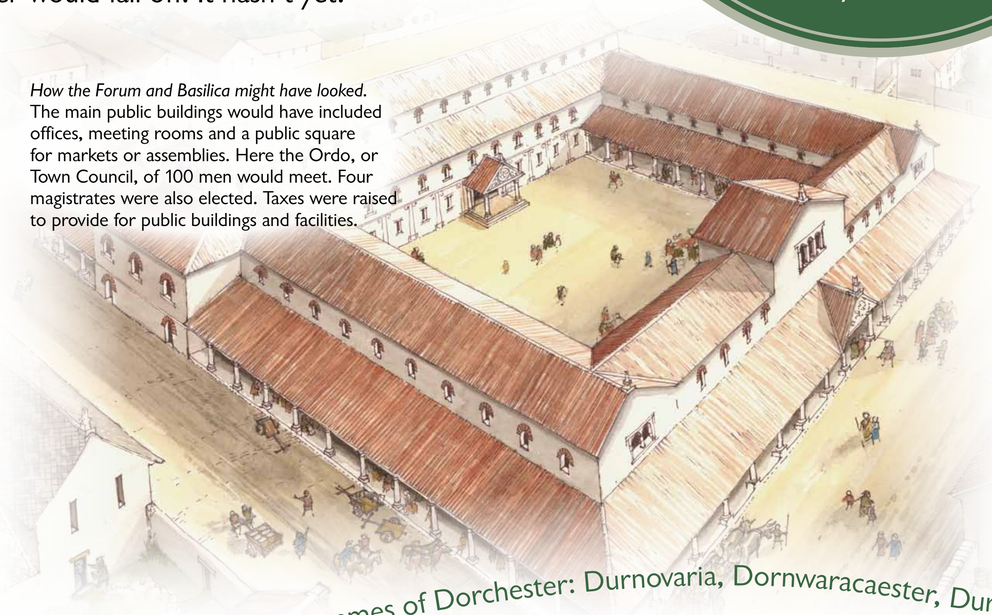
Visit the Corn Exchange and Town Hall, where events of all sorts are held.

Read Dorchester Past and A Dorchester Camera by Jo Draper.

The Town Pump and market, 1835

The Corn Exchange before the clock tower was built.
The photograph also shows the upholsterer's shop where Sir Frederick Treves was born. He described the Town Pump as the Arc de Triomphe of Dorchester.

Interior of a corn exchange in the 1900s
There is no photograph of the Dorchester Corn Exchange in operation. This one is in Hitchin, Hertfordshire.



How the Forum and Basilica might have looked.
The main public buildings would have included offices, meeting rooms and a public square for markets or assemblies. Here the Ordo, or Town Council, of 100 men would meet. Four magistrates were also elected. Taxes were raised to provide for public buildings and facilities.

The names of Dorchester: Durnovaria, Dornwaracaester, Durngueir, Duriano, Durotrigum, Dorchester, Casterbridge.

DORCHESTER HERITAGE COMMITTEE

DORSET COUNTY MUSEUM