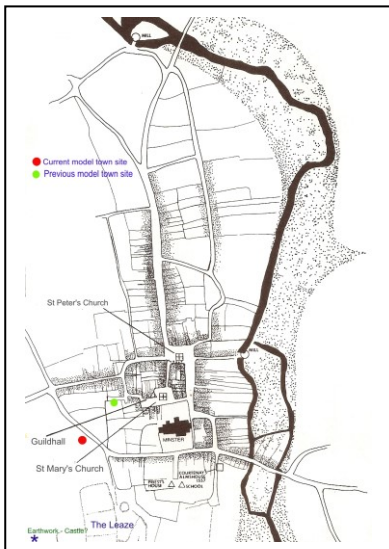




The Wimborne Model Town – an easy way to tour the town !

Wimborne Model Town has been an attraction for seventy years and is a **1/10th scale** version of Wimborne as it was in the 1950s, which was the time the attraction first opened in August 1952. The layout is easier to see here of course, the streets in reality laid out as the town evolved from the time of the Minster and the time of the Leaze and the plagues that perhaps saw the disappearance of some part of the town. The model town gives a great overview of the layout and applying the same approach to an overview of the history, gives an opportunity to sense what Wimborne has lived through.

If we use the idea of the 1/10th scale of the models and apply that to the span of time of Wimborne's becoming what we now see; relating it to the 70 years of the Model Town: 700



years before now we get back to 1322 – around the time of the rise of the Leaze and less than 200 years after 'The Anarchy'; the battle for the crown between Stephen and Maud (1135-1155) following Henry I's death in 1135.

The Leaze [<https://www.wimbornehistorytrail.uk/page18.html>] is very close to the current site of the Model Town and a little further towards the river is the site that may have been an earthwork castle – perhaps dating from the time of Stephen and Maud's battle for the English throne. [***"A castle is documented at Wimborne in 1138 - although in a list which is suspect (King 1983). (PastScape)" "The mention of a castle built by the Earl of Gloucester at Wimborne in 1137 probably refers to Castle Hill in Cranborne (Penn 1980, 124). (Dorset Historic Towns Survey p. 29)"***] A report featured in Dorset Life stated; ***"Robert of***

Gloucester 'fortified Wimborne' in the 12th century. Some consider this a reference to a castle and its remains may lie in the fields alongside the River Stour four hundred yards south of Julian's Bridge. On maps it only merits the description 'tumulus', the ringwork once evident on its western side now all but invisible."

The Wars of the Roses are also linked to our town through Lady Margaret Beaufort – whose parents' tomb is in the Minster - and her son Edward the Seventh who defeated Richard of York at the battle of Bosworth in 1485. Edward also therefore had links with Wimborne and consequently the town is linked to the Tudor dynasty (1485-1603) that ended with Elizabeth 1st. As Richard Russell of Wimborne wrote in the early 1700s – and using some of his father's notes from the mid 1670s ***" Few towns in this kingdom can boast of so much greater Antiquity, or produce greater Instances of Royal Bounty and Magnificence than this town of Wimborne, tho' now of small repute and of no Estimation in the Eyes of some"***

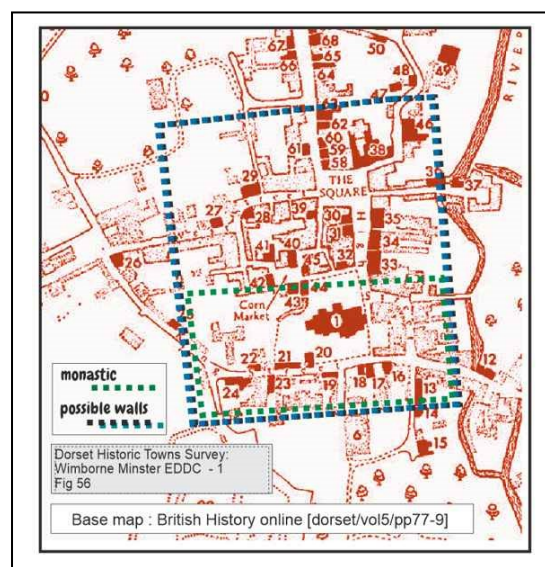
A glimpse at the map shown here (from: K J Penn – Historic Towns of Dorset. 1980) shows a bend in King street and field/plot boundary lines running North to West Street. Evidence has also suggested a boundary to the North of the Square – a boundary that wouldn't have included West Borough, so perhaps with the Eastern boundary of the River Allen and the Mill, this may have been the line of a wall of the settlement when the Monastic Colleges were first founded. Was there ever a boundary wall or embankment enclosing the town ? The Anglo Saxon Chronicle recorded that in 899/900 AD “ all the gates of Wimborne were barred against King Edward by the rebel Ethelwold.... “

Perhaps this just means the doors of a religious house? ... or perhaps not. That AD 899 entry in the Anglo-Saxon chronicle clearly describes Wimborne Minster as a walled town. The town in Saxon times would have been small and have developed mainly to the north of the 'minster' church as well as being possibly bounded to the east by the River Allen (Taylor 1968) and so easily contained within a wall.

One other interesting and supporting suggestion that the town may have been enclosed comes from a document written in 1224. In the second year of Henry II (1217-18) the market day was changed from Sunday to Monday and in 1224 the sheriff of Dorset proclaimed :

“ ...that the market and fair formerly held within the cemetery of Wimborne should in future be held outside under the walls, on land belonging to the dean on the same days and with the same liberties and customs as formerly.”

This seems to be fairly firm evidence that the early town was walled – and indeed even though the current Minster building has been extended several times, it is an interesting thought that the oldest Saxon part of the original church – the Saxon Turret in the western wall of the North Transept would have witnessed all of this change.



View more of the Trail >> <https://www.wimbornehistorytrail.uk/index.html>

View more on the different periods of the building of the Minster >> <https://www.wimbornehistorytrail.uk/page36.html>