

Dorset Historic Towns Project

# Cerne Abbas



Historic Urban Characterisation





**Dorset Historic Towns Project**

# **Cerne Abbas**

**Historic Urban Characterisation**

February 2011

Historic Environment  
Environment Directorate  
Dorset County Council  
County Hall  
Colliton Park  
DORCHESTER  
DT1 1XJ

## **Acknowledgements**

This report was produced as part of the Dorset Historic Towns Survey, undertaken by Dorset County Council, in partnership with West Dorset District Council and funded by English Heritage.

The report was written by Peter Bellamy and John Davey and subsequently edited by Peter Bellamy with assistance from Gordon Le Pard and Claire Pinder.

The maps in this report are based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of the Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Unauthorised reproduc-

# Contents

List of Illustrations .....	ii
<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Part 1: Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1 Background to the Project .....	5
1.2 Rationale.....	5
1.3 Aims .....	5
1.4 Report Structure.....	5
1.5 Who is this document for? .....	6
<b>Part 2: Overview of Approach.....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Guiding Principles .....	9
2.2 General Approach .....	9
2.3 Historic Urban Character Types.....	9
2.4 Town Plan Components .....	9
2.5 Historic Urban Character Areas .....	10
2.6 Extent of Study Area .....	10
2.7 Definition of Terms.....	10
<b>Part 3: Town Context .....</b>	<b>13</b>
3.1 The Setting of the Town .....	15
3.2 Topography.....	15
3.3 Geology .....	16
3.4 Landscape Character .....	16
2.5 The Present Town.....	18
<b>Part 4: Sources .....</b>	<b>19</b>
4.1 Previous Research.....	21
4.2 Historic Maps .....	21
4.3 Documentary Evidence .....	21
4.4 Archaeological Evidence .....	21
4.5 Historic Buildings.....	21
<b>Part 5: Historical Analysis.....</b>	<b>23</b>
5.1 Late Saxon Cerne Abbas (AD 900-1065).....	25
5.2 Medieval Cerne Abbas (AD1066-1539) .....	27
5.3 Post-medieval Cerne Abbas (1540-1799) .....	30
5.4 Nineteenth Century Cerne Abbas (1800-1899) .....	34
5.5 Twentieth Century Cerne Abbas (1900- Present Day) .....	37
<b>Part 6: Historic Urban Character Appraisal .....</b>	<b>41</b>
6.1 The historic urban character of Cerne Abbas .....	43
6.2 Historic Urban Character Areas of Cerne Abbas.....	44
Cerne Abbas Historic Urban Character Area 1:The Abbey.....	45
Cerne Abbas Historic Urban Character Area 2:The Town .....	51
Cerne Abbas Historic Urban Character Area 3: Acreman Street.....	57
<b>Part 7: Historic Environment Research Framework .....</b>	<b>63</b>
7.1 Pre-urban Activity.....	65
7.2 Origins of the Town .....	65
7.3 Medieval town .....	65
7.4 Post-medieval and Modern town .....	66
Appendix 1 References.....	69
Appendix 2 Chronology.....	71
Appendix 3 Archaeological Investigations in Cerne Abbas.....	72
Appendix 4 Historic Urban Character Types.....	73
Appendix 5 Archaeological Potential .....	78

## List of Figures

1.	Vertical aerial photographic view of Cerne Abbas, 2005 .....	2
2.	Map of Dorset showing the location of Cerne Abbas and other towns in the Dorset Historic Towns Survey.....	6
3.	Cerne Abbas' topographic setting.....	15
4.	Geology of the Cerne Abbas Area.....	16
5.	Cerne Abbas in its landscape character setting .....	17
6.	View of St Augustine's Well.....	25
7.	View SE along the deep hollow way of Piddle Lane from the junction with Back Lane ....	25
8.	Cerne Abbas Late Saxon Town Plan Components .....	26
9.	View of St Mary's Parish Church from the south .....	27
10.	View of the Tithe Barn from the east.....	27
11.	View of the Market Place from the east.....	28
12.	Late medieval half-timbered and jettied tenements, 3-9 Abbey Street .....	28
13.	Cerne Abbas Medieval Town Plan Components .....	29
14.	Earthwork remains of the monastic precinct boundary, with enigmatic earthwork enclosures showing in the left middle distance.....	30
15.	The Porch to the former abbots hall, built under Abbot Thomas Sam (1497-1509). .....	30
16.	South front of Abbey Farm House .....	31
17.	The 18 <sup>th</sup> century Mill House, Mill Lane .....	31
18.	Cerne Abbas Post-medieval Town Plan Components .....	32
19.	Abbey Farm outbuildings looking south .....	33
20.	Mid-18th century Barton Farmhouse and attached barn .....	33
21.	View of the 17 <sup>th</sup> century Old Forge and attached schoolhouse, with 18 <sup>th</sup> century re-fenestration.....	33
22.	View of the former tan house, The Folly.....	33
23.	View of the Old Police Station, 8-12 Long Street .....	34
24.	Cerne Abbas CE VC First School, Duck Street.....	34
25.	Cerne Abbas Nineteenth Century Town Plan Components .....	35
26.	View of The 19 <sup>th</sup> century Market House.....	36
27.	View NW along Duck Street .....	36
28.	The south front of The Lodge, Alton Lane.....	36
29.	The south front of Barton Lodge, The Folly.....	36
30.	The Old Saddlery at the junction of Long St and Duck St, with its 19 <sup>th</sup> century shop frontage .....	37
31.	View east of Chescombe Close with houses on Abbots Walk in the background .....	37
32.	Cerne Abbas Twentieth Century Town Plan Components.....	38
33.	Beauvoir Court, the former north barn of Cerne Abbey.....	39
34.	View of The Maltings, Acreman Street .....	39
35.	View of the new Village Hall, Kettle Lane.....	39
36.	View of the post-war housing estate at Chescombe.....	39
37.	Map showing the major periods of development in Cerne Abbas .....	43
38.	Cerne Abbas Historic Urban Character Areas in relationship to the Conservation Area ..	44
39.	Map of Historic Urban Character Area 1, showing current historic urban character type ..	45
40.	View of Abbey Farm House (right), the former Abbey gatehouse and the former Abbey guesthouse.....	45
41.	View of the Abbot's Porch in its garden setting.....	45
42.	View of the 17 <sup>th</sup> century or earlier Kettle Bridge, Kettle Lane .....	46
43.	View of the Mill Mead 18 <sup>th</sup> century water meadow.....	46
44.	View of the Abbey Guesthouse (1458-70) from the east .....	47
45.	The 15 <sup>th</sup> century churchyard cross.....	47
46.	View of the brick barn adjacent to the Duck Pond, Abbey Street.....	47
47.	Archaeological Investigations and features in Historic Urban Character Area 1.....	48
48.	Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 1.....	49
49.	Map of Historic Urban Character Area 2, showing current historic urban character type ..	51
50.	View south along Abbey Street.....	51
51.	View east along Long Street.....	51

---

52.	View west along Long Street showing 19 <sup>th</sup> century shop fronts .....	52
53.	View of the New Inn, Long Street .....	52
54.	Abbey Cottage and the Pitchmarket; late medieval timber-framed tenements at 3-5 Abbey Street.....	53
55.	Old Congregational Chapel, Abbey Street.....	53
56.	The Old Bell, Long Street .....	53
57.	Archaeological investigations and features in Historic Urban Character Area 2.....	54
58.	Listed Buildings in Historic Urban Character Area 2.....	55
59.	The Old Manse, Long Street.....	55
60.	Map of Historic Urban Character Area 3, showing current historic urban character type.....	57
61.	View north along Acreman Street.....	57
62.	Barton Farm House.....	57
63.	The Tithe Barn .....	58
64.	View of Francombe Farm and Barn, Acreman Street .....	58
65.	13-17 Acreman Street, a row of brick and flint cottages attached to Francombe Farmhouse .....	59
66.	19 Acreman Street .....	59
67.	3 and 5 The Folly .....	59
68.	Archaeological features in Historic Character Area 3.....	60
69.	Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 3.....	61



# Summary

This report contains the results of a consideration of the historical, archaeological, architectural and map evidence relating to the developmental history of Cerne Abbas. It has focused on the understanding of the overall development of the town from its earliest beginnings to the present day. This work has been conducted in order to achieve a better understanding of how the historical dimension has influenced the modern townscape, identify what historical features and structures survive within the modern town, and understand the contribution this has made to the present character of Cerne Abbas. This will enable an informed approach to the management of change and conservation of the urban environment.

## *Historical Background*

Cerne Abbas appears to have originated as a late Saxon settlement attached to the monastery founded by AD 987, adjacent to the spring of St Augustine's Well. The parish church of St Mary was established by 1291 adjacent to the market place, which was located on Long Street. The Abbot had been granted market rights in the vill of Cerne by Henry II (1154-1189). The town had an annual fair by 1356 and a further five day fair was granted to the Abbot John Vanne on the feast of St Augustine in 1459. By 1617 the town had three annual fairs. The Abbey was the wealthiest in Dorset at Domesday, although by the time of the dissolution in 1539 it had slipped behind Sherborne, Milton and Abbotsbury. The town suffered a downturn in economic fortunes after dissolution, but by the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was a thriving market town with substantial industries in brewing and leather-working. The population of the town reached a peak of over 1300 inhabitants during the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the economy had already stalled. The town entered terminal decline with all its industries closing by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Cerne Abbas is now considered a large village and modern housing estates reflect its status as a dormitory settlement of Dorchester.

## *Town morphology*

Cerne Abbas has a tightly-packed nucleated settlement centred on the T-shaped junction of Abbey and Long Streets. The former market place and parish church are both located close by. However, an earlier settlement pattern based on a grid of pre-urban streets can be discerned in the lines of Long Street, Piddle Lane and Duck Street. The late Saxon monastery was established on one of these lanes with a

secular settlement adjacent to it. The market and church may have been located on the edge of this early settlement. Only in the late medieval period, under the auspices of the Abbey, did the present street pattern arise. Regular medieval burgage plots survive along the south side of Long Street and along Abbey Street with back lanes at Back Lane and Mill Lane. The medieval Tithe Barn was established on the west side of the River Cerne, separate from the main medieval settlement, although earthworks to the south of it may indicate a failed medieval suburb here. Settlement seems to have spread along Duck Street in the post-medieval period. Regular plots on Acreman Street may represent a late medieval or early post-medieval planned suburb. The present town layout was established by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and changed very little until the construction of modern housing estates in culs-de-sac and infilled plots behind the historic street frontages.

## *Built character*

Cerne Abbas has a large number of historic buildings within the area of the medieval and post-medieval town. The majority date from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and there are also at least nine standing medieval structures, including several monastic structures, the parish church of St Mary, the tithe barn, and two pairs of late medieval half-timbered and jettied tenements on Abbey Street. The historic buildings make an important contribution to the character of Cerne Abbas and are typified by their use of local flint and chalk block interspersed with brick and oolitic limestone for walling, thatched roofs, and survival of historic fabric such as windows, doors, chimneys, iron work, 19<sup>th</sup> century shop fronts and boundary walls. Cerne is also notable for the large number of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings built during the town's economic heyday, providing coherence to the built character. Built elements of Cerne's industrial past still survive within the town, but are much altered and poorly understood.

## *Landscape Setting*

Cerne Abbas sits astride the Cerne River in the upper reaches of the Cerne Valley, at a point where the valley opens up into a relatively wide plain due to the juxtaposition of the side valleys of Yelcombe and Cerne Park. The town was established along the spring line at the base of the valley slopes and may have always comprised a dual settlement on either side of the river. Nevertheless, the major part of the town



Figure 1: Vertical aerial photographic view of Cerne Abbas, 2005 (© Getmapping.com, 2005).

lies on the east side of the valley at the foot of Giant Hill.

#### *Historic Urban Character*

The character of Cerne Abbas is derived from its well-defined historic town layout and the number and quality of historic buildings. It is perhaps ironic that Cerne's economic failure in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and decline into a rural village has helped conserve its former market town layout. The nucleated medieval town plan survives virtually intact and exerts a strong influence on the character of the town in terms of street and plot layout, though the relative importance of the streets and the market place has changed. The relationship of the town to the surviving remains of the Abbey is a major contributing factor to its distinctiveness and reflects the importance of the ecclesiastical aspect in the history and development of the town.

Perhaps the greatest contributor to the character and local distinctiveness of Cerne Abbas are the historic buildings. It is not only the high quality and quantity of medieval buildings (which include former abbey buildings, the parish church, and some houses) but the large number of post-medieval buildings (many of 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century date), forming unbroken groups in the streetscape with little disruption from modern development, that give Cerne

Abbas its character. The consistent use of local flint and chalk block building materials and vernacular building details provides strong local character and emphasises the linkage with the surrounding landscape.

The fine landscape setting in the river valley framed by dramatic steep swooping chalk valley slopes adds a major positive visual component to the town and provides the context for the chalk hill figure of the Cerne Giant, which is arguably the most famous element of Cerne Abbas today.

#### *Further Research*

This report has highlighted many aspects of the historical development of Cerne Abbas and how this has shaped the modern town. It has also indicated gaps in our knowledge and areas which would repay further research.

The main areas of suggested further research include:

- Research into the origins and form of Cerne Abbey.
- Research into the origins and form of the late Saxon and early medieval town.
- Research into the medieval and post-medieval development of the town, its economy, industry and secular buildings.

## Part 1: Introduction





## 1.1 Background to the Project

The Dorset Historic Towns Survey forms part of a national programme of urban surveys of historic towns, launched by English Heritage in 1992 (English Heritage 1992) and subsequently modified in the light of approaches developed as part of English Heritage's Historic Landscape Characterisation programme (Thomas 2005).

The 23 places selected for inclusion in the Dorset Historic Towns Survey are shown on Figure 2. For the purposes of this project, Dorset is defined by its post-1974 boundary and includes the present administrative county of Dorset and the area of the Unitary Authorities of Bournemouth and Poole.

## 1.2 Rationale

Town centres have always been a focus for trade, industry and housing, consequently there have been many different pressures on their development. This has led to both the creation of a potentially rich, complex, deeply-stratified urban archaeological resource through past development of the town and, on the other hand, to serious threats to the survival of this archaeological resource and to other elements of the historical townscape through modern developmental pressure. Without knowledge and understanding of the historic urban environment it is too easy for significant elements to be damaged or removed through modern redevelopment.

The potential for the historic environment to play a complex and highly significant role in economic regeneration was outlined in *Power of Place* (English Heritage, 2000) and its value is highlighted in the government's response *The Historic Environment: A Force for our Future* (DCMS 2001). The potential of the historic environment is particularly significant in towns, where a high quality historic urban environment and the resulting distinctiveness and sense of place that this brings, has been shown to be a primary asset in promoting regeneration. The effect may be direct – through heritage tourism, for example – or more subtle, promoting a strong sense of identity and pride of place, thus creating new confidence and a positive climate for investment and growth.

Before we can build upon the potential positive effects of the historic urban environment, we must understand it. Characterisation provides a means of understanding the diverse range of

factors which create distinctiveness and a sense of place. However, in order to make the characterisation of the historic urban environment relevant and meaningful, it needs to be based on a thorough assessment of the nature, quality and quantity of the historic resource of each urban centre. It is to this end that the Dorset Historic Towns Survey has been undertaken.

## 1.3 Aims

The aim of the project is to present a review of the existing archaeological, historical and urban morphological evidence and set out the historic character and development of Dorset's Historic towns:

- to produce a useful and flexible tool to aid in the understanding and management of the town.
- to inform archaeological and historic environment research.
- to inform the management and interpretation of historic urban buildings and land use.
- to provide an evidence base to feed into the Local Development Framework.
- to encourage the integration of urban historic characterisation into the wider process of protecting and enhancing urban character.
- to address a number of research aims set out in the South West Archaeological Research Framework into developing understanding of urban settlement from the Roman to the post-medieval periods (Webster 2008).

## 1.4 Report Structure

The Historic Urban Characterisation Assessment reports all have a similar structure, divided into six major sections. These are briefly described below to enable easy navigation to the various elements.

**Part 1: Introduction** is a general introduction to the Dorset Historic Towns Project and to this report.

**Part 2 : Overview of Approach** is a brief methodological section outlining the guiding principles and approach, together with an explanation of the main technical terms used in this report.

**Part 3: Town Context** is a consideration of the wider natural setting of the town. It includes a summary account of the geology and



Figure 2: Map of Dorset showing the location of Cerne Abbas and the other towns in the Dorset Historic Towns Survey.

topography and makes reference to any Landscape Character Assessments undertaken in the area. It includes a summary of the present town, its population, economic base, etc.

**Part 4: Sources** is an outline of the main sources of historic, cartographic, archaeological and other information used in the report, together with a summary of previous research in the town.

**Part 5: Historical Analysis** provides a summary account of the chronological development of the town from its origins to the present day, and is a synthesis of the available documentary, archaeological, topographic and morphological information, based largely on a review of published sources. This provides the context for the consideration of Historic Urban Character.

**Part 6: Historic Urban Character Appraisal** presents the details of the historic urban characterisation work, identifying the physical remains of the past in the present day townscape. It includes a summary of the overall historic urban character of the town and a description of the Historic Urban Character

Areas defined as part of this work.

**Part 7: Research Framework** provides a short research framework outlining the major research questions which could be used to guide and inform future research into the town and how these fit into the South West Archaeological Research Framework.

## 1.5 Who is this document for?

The information in this report is aimed at the public bodies, organisations and groups that play a role in the planning and management of the urban and historic environments. Additionally anyone who has an interest in the historic urban environment, including community groups, developers, architects and academics, may find aspects of this work of interest and relevance.

## **Part 2: Overview of Approach**





## 2.1 Guiding Principles

Historic Urban Characterisation is a method of defining and mapping the historic dimension of modern townscapes. The approach used by this project has been developed and adapted from Historic Landscape Characterisation studies. The guiding principles of historic urban characterisation are as follows (adapted from Clark *et al.* 2004, 6):

- Present not past: it is the present-day townscape that is the main object of study.
- Townscape as history not geography: the most important characteristic of the townscape is its time-depth; change and earlier townscapes exist in the present town.
- All aspects of the townscape, no matter how modern, are treated as part of the urban character, not just 'special' areas.
- Characterisation of the urban landscape is a matter of interpretation not record.
- Urban landscape is and always has been dynamic: management of change, not preservation is the aim.
- The process of characterisation should be transparent, with clearly articulated records of data sources and methods used.

## 2.2 General Approach

In order to characterise the distinctive historic dimension of the present day urban landscape, the systematic identification of the historic attributes of the contemporary townscape is undertaken using a number of cartographic, historic, archaeological and standing building sources. These sources are used to identify 'Historic Urban Character Types' which are mapped onto the modern Ordnance Survey MasterMap base. These character types are used to inform the identification of a series of town plan components for the major periods of development for each town from its origins to the present day. The character types are also used to define a series of 'Historic Urban Character Areas' within each town. The character areas form the basis of a more detailed assessment of historic urban character.

## 2.3 Historic Urban Character Types

The identification of the historic urban character is based on the collation and analysis of a large quantity of information, including town

plan form, building form, historic map evidence, aerial photographic evidence and archaeological data. This information has been used to define specific areas of single character type within the modern town plan, based on the current settlement character, but taking into account previous uses and settlement history. These Historic Urban Character Types form the basic building blocks for analysing the historic urban character.

The methodology and terminology of these Historic Urban Character Types has been developed from that of Historic Landscape Characterisation and comprise a series of ten Broad Types each sub-divided into a number of more specific Historic Urban Character Types. The list and description of the character types is set out in **Appendix 4**. The Historic Urban Character Types used are a standardised classification across all the Dorset Historic Towns. This enables direct comparisons to be made between towns across the county and allows consistency in analysis of the historic environment of the different towns.

The Historic Urban Character Types are mapped onto the digital map base using a Geographical Information System (GIS), linked to a table containing data on the settlement attributes of the current Historic Urban Character Type, the period from which it derives, and data on all previous Historic Urban Character Types. This enables the character of the town to be displayed for all periods and allows a comprehensive picture of the development of the town through time and the time depth of the current urban character to be presented.

## 2.4 Town Plan Components

Town Plan Components are a series of recognisable morphological units with a definable time depth within an individual townscape. These plan components have been identified through the analysis of the town plan and building fabric, together with their historic urban character types, to form a series of larger units (on a street or block scale rather than on a plot scale) that illustrate the composition of the town within a specific chronological period. These town plan components have been used to identify and illustrate the historic development of each town, as set out in Part 5 of this report. A series of twenty seven standard types of town plan component have been identified.

## 2.5 Historic Urban Character Areas

The historic urban characterisation of the Dorset towns produces a large quantity of detailed data recorded within individual Historic Urban Character Types. This information is at a too fine-grained scale to enable easy understanding of the character of the town. Therefore, the information has been used to define a smaller number of larger areas of distinctive character within the town known as Historic Urban Character Areas. These can be used as a means of understanding the past and the present character of the town, simplifying the large quantity of data presented by the Historic Urban Character Types and enabling a more detailed appraisal of the historic urban character to be undertaken.

The Historic Urban Character Areas are recognisable distinctive areas which have meaningful coherence within the modern townscape. They are defined by one or more of the following attributes

- consistent historic urban character
- common historical development
- similar topographic location
- similar degree of archaeological and/or historic building preservation.

Each character area will have its own individual 'biography' that has defined its present character. Consequently, the Historic Urban Character Areas can be used as a tool to help maintain and reinforce the historic character and individuality of these areas and the town as a whole.

## 2.6 Extent of the Study Area

The Dorset Historic Towns Project Study Area for Cerne Abbas is taken as the present-day urban extent as shown on the 2009 Ordnance Survey MasterMap digital mapping and partly informed by the Defined Development Boundary set out in the West Dorset District Local Plan (adopted July 2006). It comprises only part of Cerne Abbas parish. The urban extent includes areas of recreational open space, school playing fields, etc. around the fringes of the settlement. Where practicable, the boundary to the Study Area is along boundary lines marked on the MasterMap base.

## 2.7 Definition of Terms

### 2.7.1 Characterisation Terms

#### *Historic Urban Character Area*

See section 2.5 above.

#### *Historic Urban Character Type*

See section 2.3 above.

#### *Sensitivity to Large Scale Development*

The assessment of sensitivity to large scale development has been developed from that included in the landscape character assessment undertaken by West Dorset District Council (WDDC 2008). Large scale development is taken to mean any form of development that is on a scale much larger than the existing plot pattern and building size.

#### *Strength of Historic Character*

The strength of character in each area is determined by judging the survival of historic urban elements in the modern townscape, together with its distinctiveness and recognisability. The strength of character is assessed as Strong, Medium or Weak.

**Strong** character is where there is widespread survival of historic boundaries and buildings reflecting considerable time depth, where modern development remains unobtrusive.

**Medium** character is where there is survival of historic boundaries and buildings, but modern development is more evident.

**Weak** character is where there may be some historic elements present, but there is little time depth evident in the visible structures, which comprise mainly modern buildings and street and boundary layouts.

#### *Town Plan Component*

See section 2.4 above.

#### *Urban Structure*

This is the framework of routes, plots and spaces and the way they relate to one another, which forms the basic plan on which all other aspects of the built environment and historic development and use are based.

#### *Housing Density*

Low Density = < 30 dwellings per hectare (dph)

Medium Density = 30-50 dph

High Density = >50 dph

### 2.7.2 Archaeological Terms

#### *Archaeological Intervention*

A general term for any type of formal archaeological recording.

#### *Archaeological Potential*

Archaeological potential is an assessment of the probability of discovering archaeological finds and features, the likely amount and com-

plexity of the archaeology, and the level of survival. See **Appendix 5** for more detail.

#### *Building Recording*

Building recording refers to any survey and recording of the structure of a building.

#### *Evaluation*

An archaeological evaluation is a limited programme of fieldwork to determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits or remains within a specified area or site. It can include trial trenching, test pitting, geophysical survey, etc.

#### *Excavation*

An archaeological excavation is a programme of controlled fieldwork exposing, investigating and recording an area of below-ground archaeology.

#### *Watching Brief*

A watching brief is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons.

### **2.7.3 Historical Terms**

#### *Hundred*

A hundred was an administrative subdivision of a shire based notionally on a grouping of 100 hides. They originated in the Saxon period and had their own courts and jurisdiction usually held at a meeting place close to the geographical centre of the administrative area, or at a point easily accessible from any part of the hundred.

#### *Hide*

A hide was an area of land defined for tax assessment purposes and was based on the amount of land required to support a family. The size of land unit covered by a hide varied according to its productivity but is generally thought to equal approximately 120 acres. Hides originated in the Saxon period but may be based on an earlier system of land holding.

#### *Borough*

A borough was a town or part of a town upon which a degree of self governance had been conferred through the granting of a charter. Boroughs held their own courts, markets and were often subdivided into burgage plots held by burgesses (freemen of the borough) for cash rent rather than by feudal service.

#### *Lay Subsidy*

The Lay subsidy is a term given to a tax levied

on the general populace (as opposed to the clergy or military) and was calculated as a proportion of their moveable wealth. The poor were exempt. The tax was levied occasionally as the king demanded in order to raise money for military campaigns from the late 13<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The lay subsidy rolls are documents recording the names of each person in a village or tithing within a specific hundred and the amount of tax payable by them. The rolls are particularly useful in the context of the Historic Towns Project because during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, surnames tended to reflect either occupation or place of habitation. The documents thus provide information on the size of the taxable population within a town, the range of crafts within a particular town or tithing, the names of the individual tithings and boroughs within a hundred and the names of other dispersed settlements within them.

#### *Hearth Tax Returns*

The Hearth Tax was a tax introduced in 1662 and abolished in 1689. It was payable by householders on the number of hearths or fireplaces within a household. The tax amounted to 1 shilling per hearth or stove payable twice a year. The Hearth Tax Returns generally date from 1662-6 and 1669-74; periods when the tax was administered by royal bailiffs rather than private firms. They include a list of householders eligible for the tax per parish and the number of hearths in each household. The documents are used in this report to give an estimate of the population of the town during the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.