

IN THE PAST

Early History

The Study Area comprises an area of Christchurch with a documented history dating back to Saxon times. In consequence, it is an area of high archaeological significance containing the remains of Saxon and mediaeval walls and ditches ¹. Hence part of the area's designation as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Figs 10 / 11).

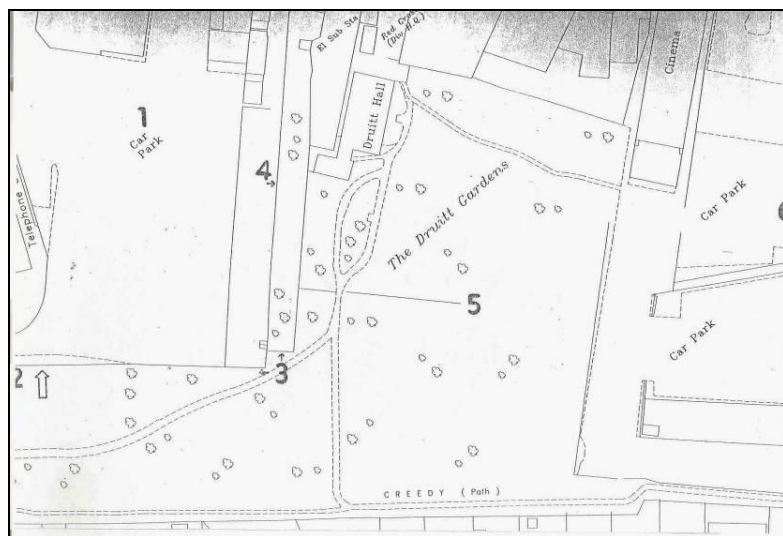


Fig. 02 Remains of Saxon and Medieval walls and ditches
(Source – *The History of Druiitt Gardens*, Red House Museum)

1. Bank Close car park – constructed 1980
2. Ironstone boulder wall
3. Stone rubble wall – Grade II Listed (18th / 19th Century)
4. Boundary wall built in 1817 reputedly with stones from Waterloo Bridge
5. The 'Ridge' – feature of Druiitt House gardens

¹ See *Historic Christchurch*, Christchurch Local History Society, 1995; and *The History of Druiitt Gardens*, Red House Museum.

It is evident from looking at historic maps (Figs 05 – 08) that much of the area experienced relatively little physical change between the mid nineteenth and the late twentieth centuries. The majority of property boundaries remained in tact throughout this period and it was not until the construction of the Bank Close and Wick Lane car parks in the 1980's that any significant redevelopment occurred.

Acquisition of land to form Druiitt Gardens

Much of the land which now forms Druiitt Gardens was accumulated piecemeal by James Druiitt during the late nineteenth century and then later by Herbert and Charlotte Druiitt in the 1930's.

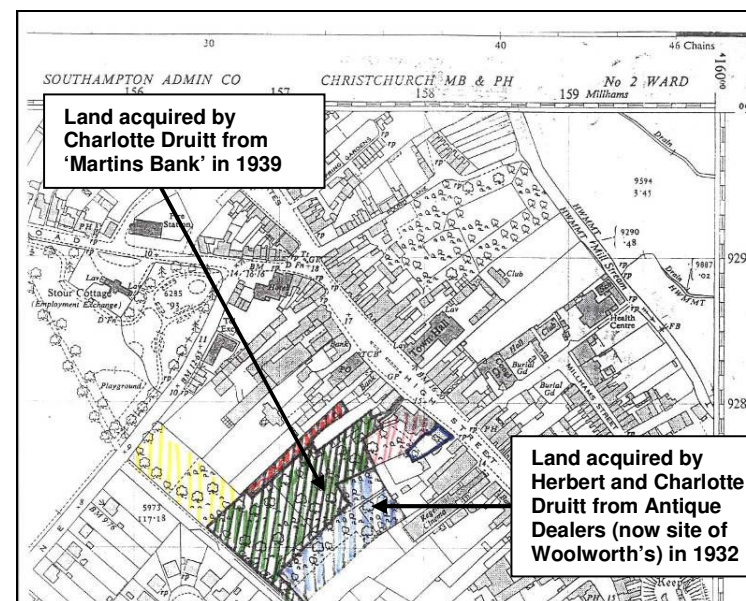
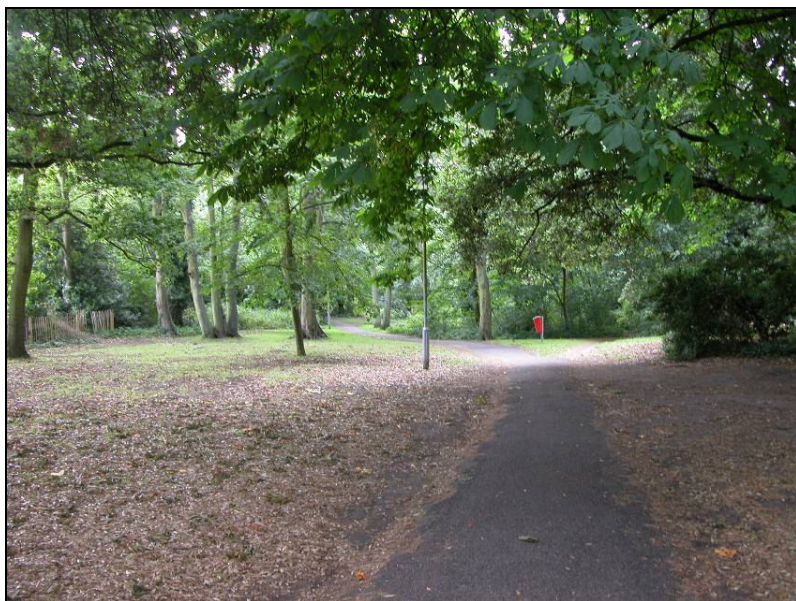


Fig. 03 Land acquired by Herbert and Charlotte Druiitt in 1930's
(Source - *The History of Druiitt Gardens*, Red House Museum)

James Druitt's house, built in 1844 and extended in 1870 (through the acquisition of the adjacent *National School*), is now the Christchurch Library (Grade II Listed). The Library was opened in 1952 following its transfer to Hampshire County Council in 1946, as a gift from Miss Charlotte Druitt. Included in the gift was a large area of land to the rear of the house, laid out as a garden. It is evident that part of the garden, fronting Sopers Lane, was gifted by Miss Druitt in order to establish a Welfare or Health Centre for Christchurch. However, this was never built, although some may consider that Druitt Hall (constructed on the site of a greenhouse and opened in 1953) has, to an extent, fulfilled that role.



Pic. 02 Entrance to the Gardens from Sopers Lane – the original site chosen for the Community / Welfare Centre. Note visual prominence of bin.

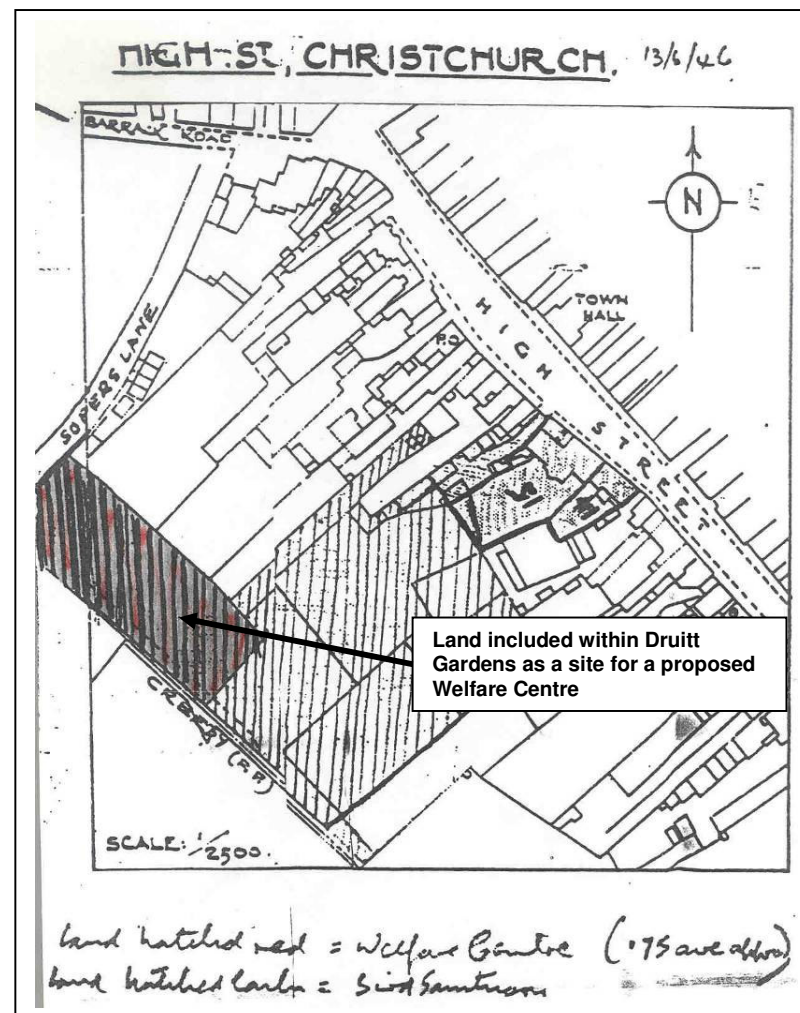


Fig. 04 Site of the proposed Welfare Centre
(Source – *The History of Druitt Gardens*, Red House Museum)

The total amount of land gifted by Miss Druitt was 3.07 acres. Excluding those parts of the gift associated with establishing 1) the Library and 2) the Welfare / Health Centre, it is evident that Miss Druitt wished the remainder of the garden to be retained as a Garden of Rest and Bird Sanctuary. The Gardens were formally opened as a memorial to the Coronation in 1953.

Public Ownership of Druitt Gardens

Since the Gardens have come into public ownership, various attempts have been made to secure plans for development in and around them. At various times between the 1940's and 1960's, proposals have come forward for a new Civic Centre (1946), a Health Centre (1955), shopping, car parks and new service roads (1966/68 Town Plan)². All these proposals generated strong objections from townsfolk who wished to see the Gardens retained as Miss Druitt had intended, i.e. as a woodland area within the town centre where people could enjoy natural surroundings and a degree of peace and tranquility.

Proposals in the early 1990's to sell part of the Garden to create a *Garden for the Disabled and Blind*, failed following strong public objection. However, much of that objection related to the Council's proposal to include some of the Gardens within the development area identified for the Lanes shopping development. Subsequently, amendments were made to the draft Town Centre Local Plan minimizing the land-take for development. At that time, the decking of Bank Close car park was also being proposed, the principle of which was endorsed by the Planning Inspector at the Local Plan Inquiry. The Inspector also recommended that a Planning Brief be prepared prior to development taking place. This was done and consulted upon in 1995 (see page 54). The policies and proposals of the Town Centre Local Plan have been carried forward into the Borough of Christchurch Local Plan (2001 – 2011).

The retention, management and maintenance of the Gardens have been a thorny issue ever since they came into public ownership. Understandably, many townsfolk have been at pains to ensure the

Gardens are kept, used and managed as Miss Druitt intended. Unfortunately, the outcome of this is that the Gardens have not been effectively managed but have become a back-water wilderness which at times, feel threatening and hostile (see Town Centre Strategy, 2003). Various attempts have been made in the past to improve management arrangements, including the formation of a local Trust in 1995³ together with negotiations to hand over the Gardens to the Dorset Wildlife Trust (1999 / 2000). To date, all such initiatives have failed.



Pic. 03

Parts of the Gardens have become inhospitable and degraded with litter being strewn about. Not an inviting place to either walk through or sit and relax in.



Pic. 04

² *The History of Druitt Gardens*, Red House Museum.

³ The Trust would have been made up of the Mayor of the Borough Council, Members of the Borough and County Councils together with representatives of the Chamber of Trade and Commerce, Residents' Associations and Environmental groups.

The 1844 Tithe Map clearly indicates the property boundaries and curtilages of that time. The area outlined in green indicates the extent of the Druiitt family's property accumulation between the mid 19th and 20th Centuries i.e. the area which has become the site of the Christchurch Library, Druiitt Hall and Druiitt Gardens.

Druiitt Gardens 1844 - The Tyne Map Shows James Druiitts New house - here coloured red - and the land outlined in green which was to become the

Fig. 05 Tithe Map (1844)

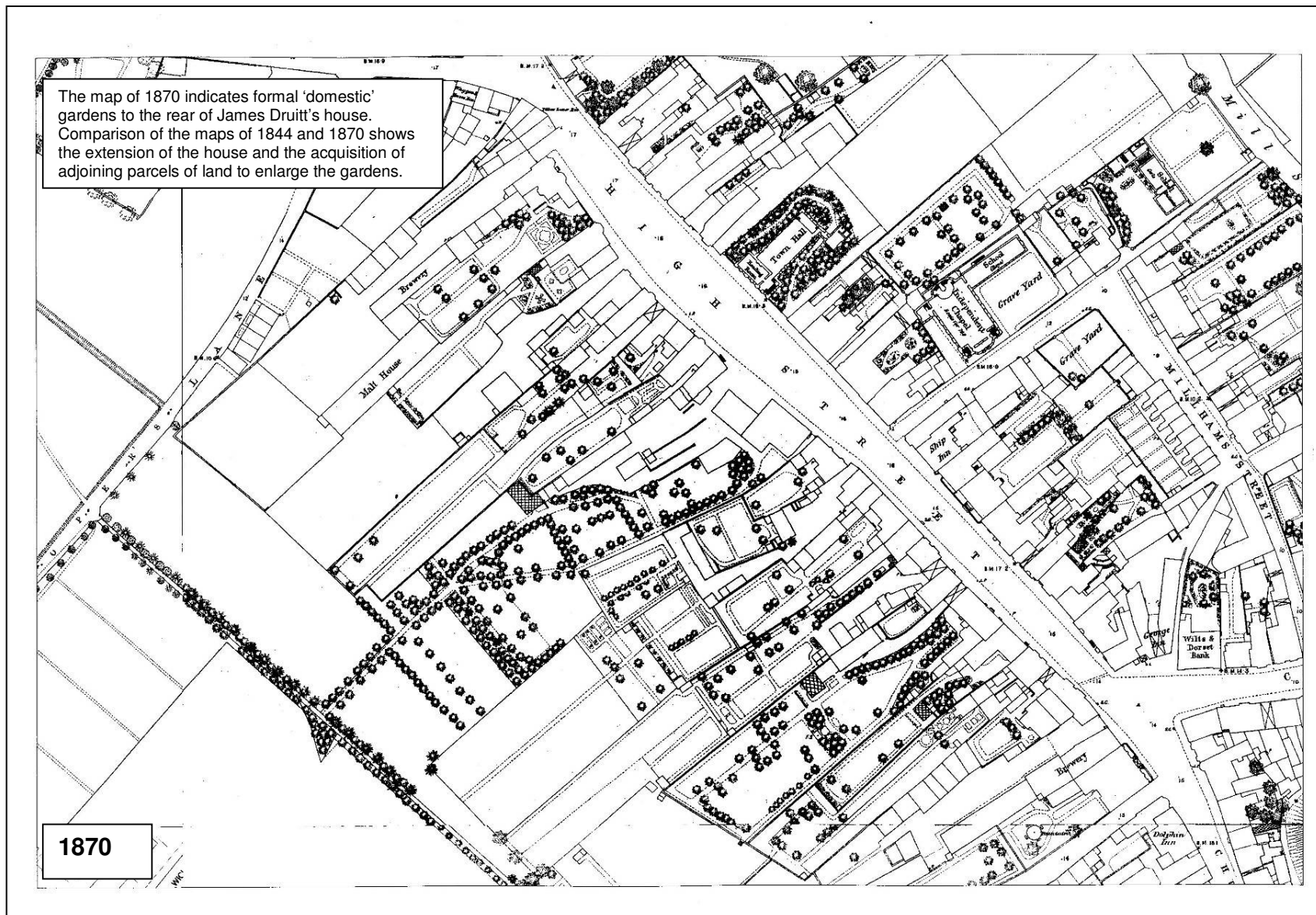


Fig. 06 Map of 1870



Fig. 07 Map of 1925

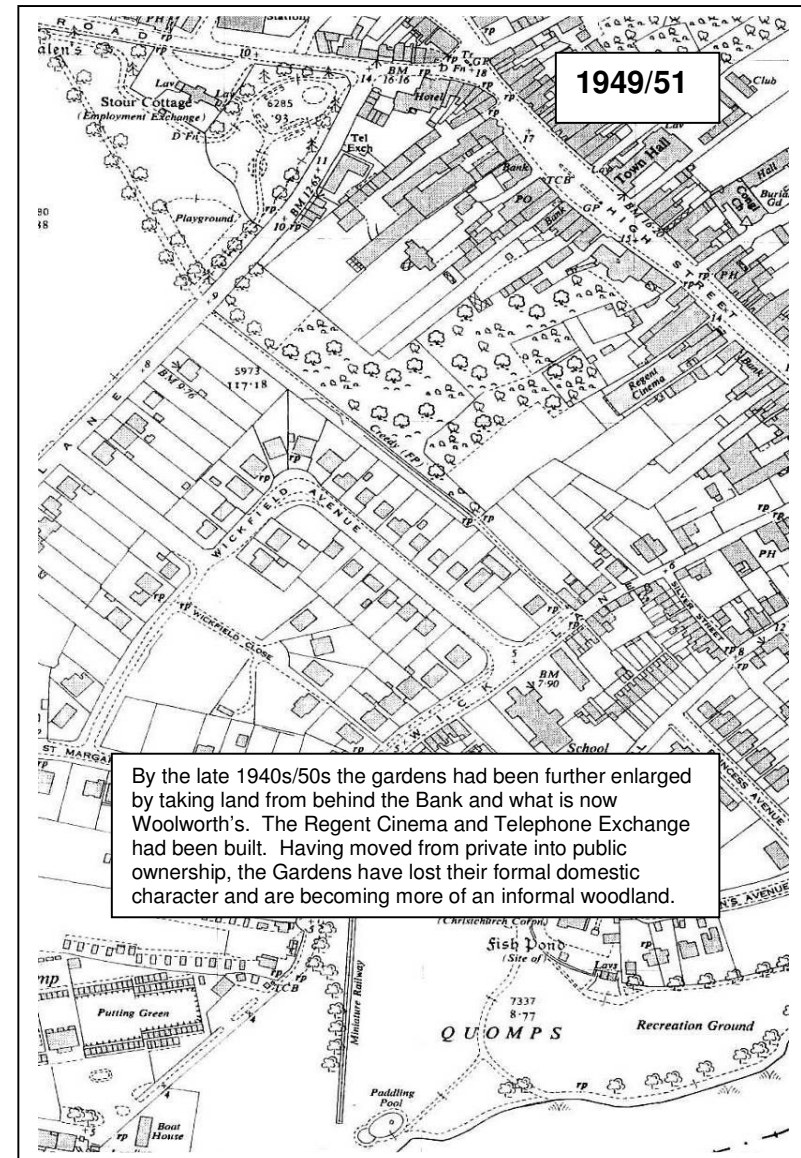
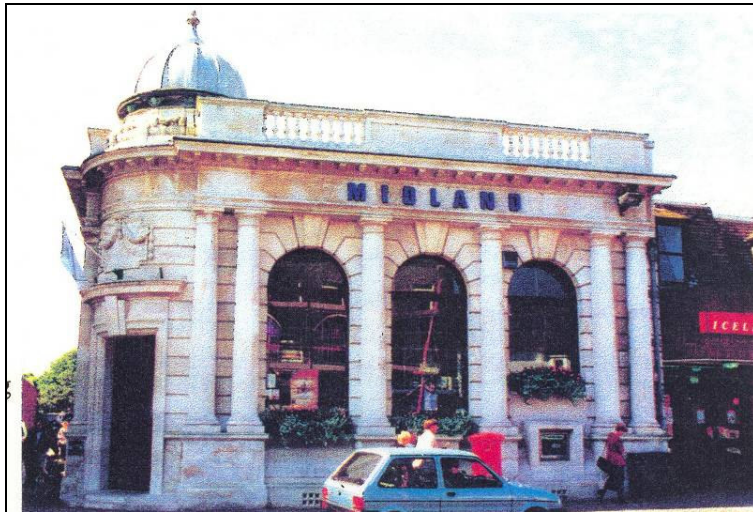


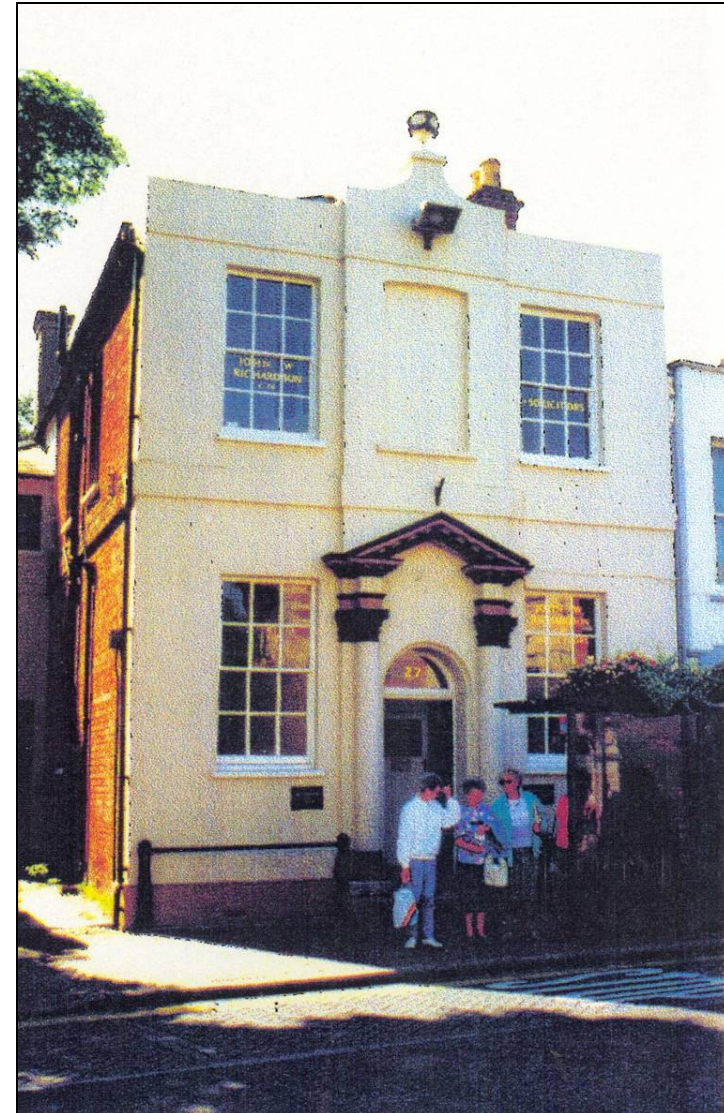
Fig. 08 Map of 1949 / 1951



Pic. 05 Bow House (11 High St) Grade II Listed Building



Pic. 06 Midland Bank (15 High St) Grade II Listed Building



Pic. 07 27 High St Grade II Listed Building



Pic. 08 The Library (29 High St) Grade II Listed Building



Pic. 10 The Library Wall Grade II Listed



Pic. 09 Baggies (43 High St) Grade II Listed Building

Scheduled Ancient Monument

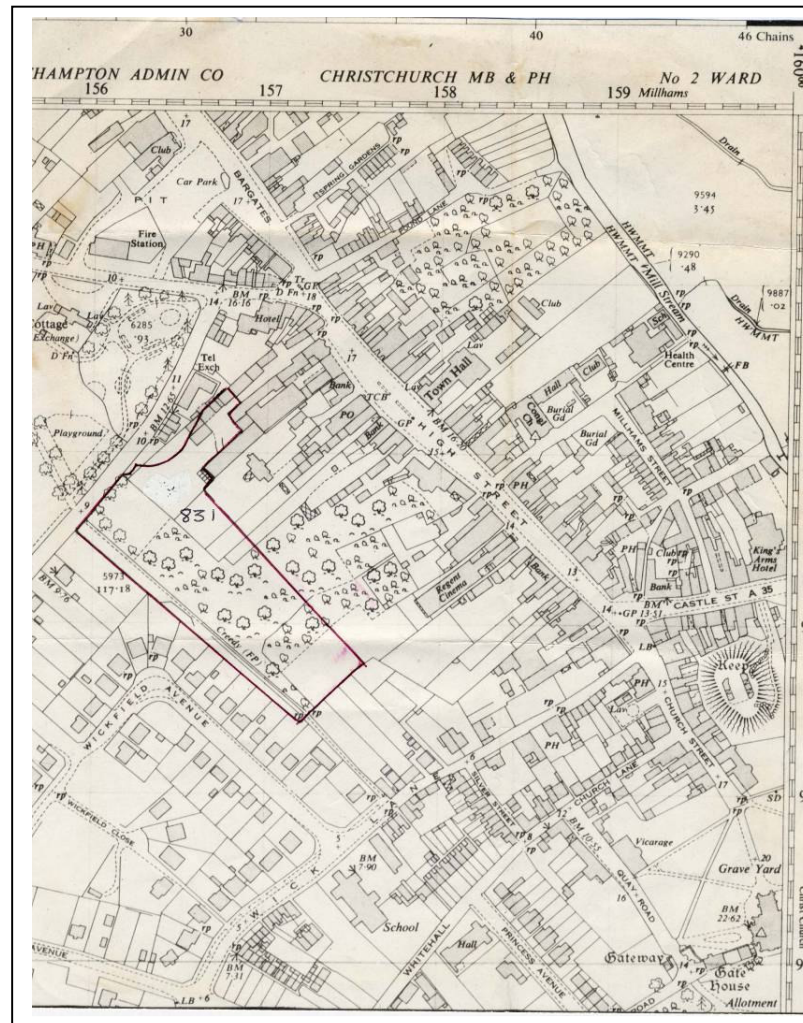


Fig. 10 Extent of Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 831
(Source – Dorset County Council Sites and Monuments Record)

The Department of the Environment's Monuments Record Form, dated June 1973, indicates that the area shown within the red line is the ... *SITE OF TOWN WALLS IN AND EAST OF DRUITT GARDENS*. The description of the Monument states ... *Site of the East corner of the town walls of "Twynham", a late Saxon fortified town. The SE arm is under municipal park; the NE arm is in the back yard of a garage and may be threatened by development. A rise in the ground there suggests something of the actual wall may survive several feet high. The description goes on ... A section of the wall to the NE was excavated in 1971.* It should be noted that any development or other works (inc. those that merely interfere with the ground such as soil moving, laying of pipes or cables etc) within the designated area may require Scheduled Monument Consent.

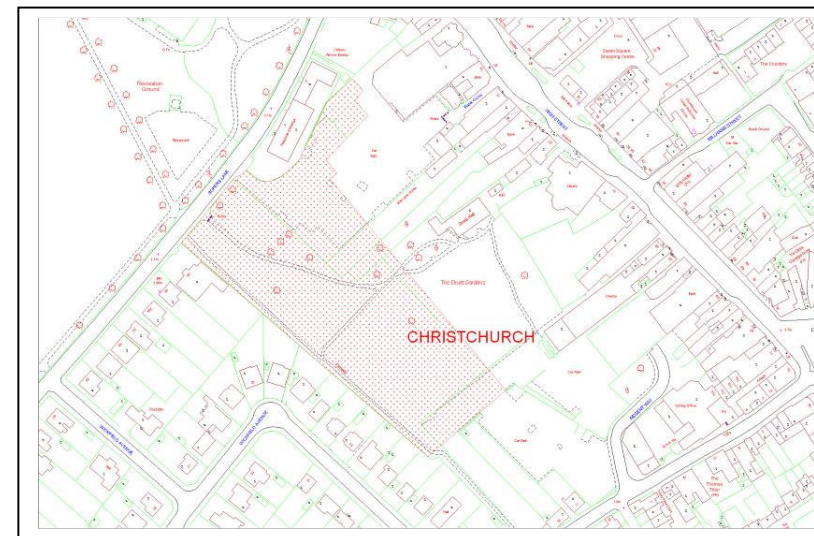
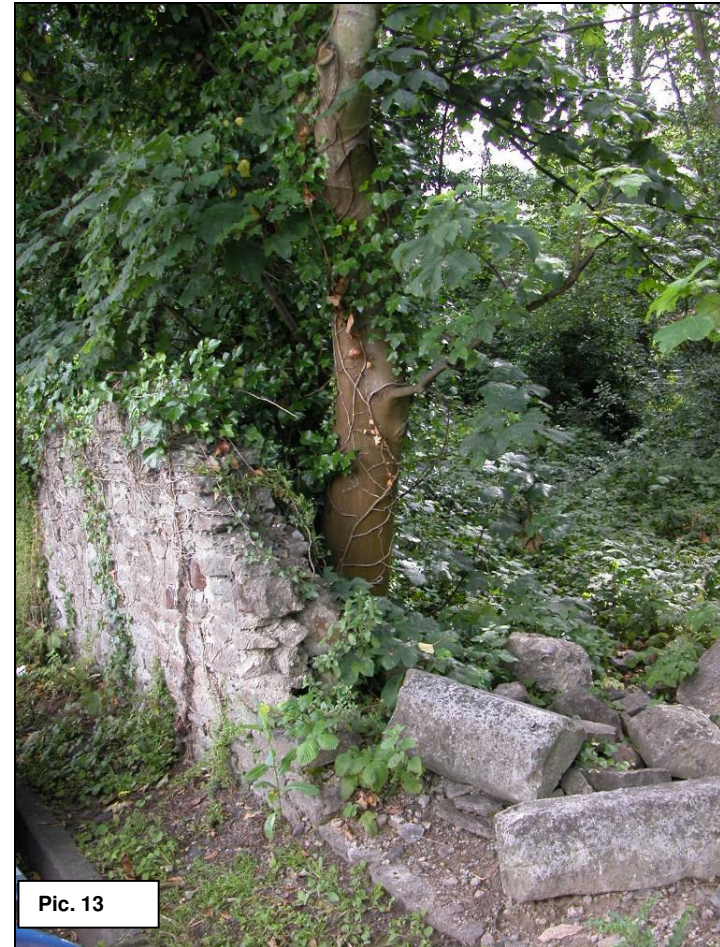
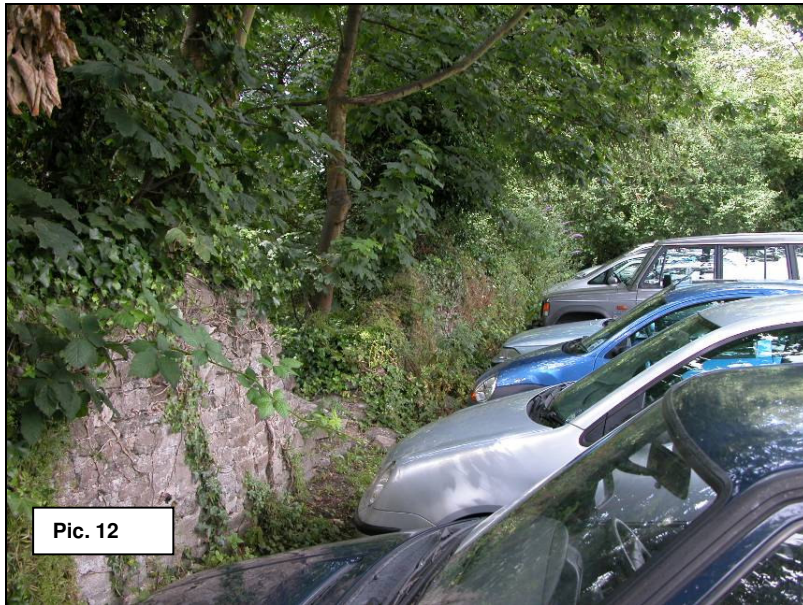


Fig. 11 Area of Scheduled Ancient Monument transferred onto contemporary O.S. Map (Source – CBCs G.I.S.)



Pics 12 and 13 Wall along south eastern boundary of Bank Close car park



Pic. 14 Photograph taken from above the Grade II Listed wall towards The Creedy. Litter is deposited in several areas – a haven for anti-social behavior ? Even though this part of the Gardens are a little more open and better naturally lit, they still do not exhibit a friendly, safe place to be – particularly to the vulnerable. Could this elevated area be improved to create a viewpoint across the Gardens (see Drg NAD / A / 202).

Planning Policy history

With respect to the Lanes development, its history can be traced back to Policy SH2 of the Town Centre Deposit Local Plan (Jan. 92) which proposed a planning brief for a mix of uses on land to the west of High Street. The uses envisaged at that time included shopping, residential, public open space, community facilities and car parking. Following a Public Inquiry, a revised policy was included within the adopted Town Centre Local Plan (May 95) which was further carried forward into the Consultative Draft of the Borough of Christchurch Local Plan (June 95). In conformance with the policy, a Planning Brief for the area was published in September 1995 and consulted upon. The results of consultation were reported to a special Planning Committee in May 1996 where it was resolved ... *“That the Lanes scheme and development of the Woolworth courtyard should be accepted as a stimulus to the vitality of the shopping centre and community facilities, a means of introducing additional residential property into the town centre and a way of upgrading the environment of the links between the High street and the car parks”*. The policy of the Town Centre Local Plan was carried forward in the deposit version of the Borough of Christchurch Local Plan. However, following consultation it was determined that the policy had already served its purpose and was therefore amended to be more specific (see Policy ES 5, page 32).

Development history

The Study Area and its surrounding environs form an integral part of the town centre. Straddled between the residential neighborhood of Wickfield Avenue to the south west and the commercial core of the High Street to the north east, the area has been subject to countless minor development proposals involving extensions and alterations to both residential and commercial properties; applications for new shop fronts and advertisements together with change of use applications particularly involving commercial properties in and around the High Street. The most dramatic changes affecting the Study Area and its environs include the construction of the Wickfield Avenue neighborhood in the 1930s/40s and the construction of the A 35 ‘Christchurch By-pass’ in the late 1950’s.



Pic. 15 Northern part of the High Street (1955) prior to the construction of the A 35 (Source – Red House Museum)



Pic. 16 Northern part of the High Street (1970s) prior to the construction of Bank Close and Wick Lane car parks, Saxon Square, Saxon Centre and Pioneer development (Source – Red House Museum)

The Saxon Square development, the Saxon Centre / Pioneer development together with the construction of the Bank Close car park, all completed in the early 1980s, heralded another wave of dramatic change to the character and development of the northern part of the town centre while the loss of the 'Square House' and its replacement with the Post Office Arcade in the late 1950s, the construction of the Wick Lane car park in the mid – late 1970's and the P.O. Sorting Office built in the early 1980s brought about significant change to the southern part of the area.



Pic. 17 Northern part of the Town Centre, 2000
(Source – Red House Museum)

Smaller scale changes have also had an effect on the area's visual appearance and character. The opening of the Regent Centre in the late 1930s, the conversion of James Druitt's house to a Library and the opening of Druitt Hall in the early 1950s, introduced more community and cultural uses within the area. More recently, development interest has centred on the old Woolworth's courtyard site (otherwise known as the Cornfactor site). Although submitted in 1995, proposals for a mixed use development, including residential, retail and restaurant uses, were not finally granted consent until 2002 (subject to a Planning Agreement). Since then, further amended development proposals have been resisted by the Borough Council (see pages 27 - 31).