

## Part 5: Historical Analysis





## 5.1 Pre-Urban Swanage (AD1066-1799)

### 5.1.1 Historical Summary

The area of what is now the town of Swanage was a collection of villages, farms and quarries until the later 19th century. The various settlements and farms have their origin in Saxon land holdings, as recorded in the Domesday survey. The earliest mention of Swanage (Swanawic) is in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle of 877 (Lewer and Smale 1994). There are two entries for Swanage in Domesday, as well as entries for Herston, Moulham and Whitecliff (Thorn and Thorn 1983). The two manors in Swanage were probably Godlingston and Carrant's Court, the former to the north of Swanage brook and the latter largely to the south. Herston lies in the western part of the study area, Whitecliff is to the northeast and Moulham appears to be to the northwest, beyond the study area (Lewer and Smale 1994). Newton, first mentioned in 1299, lay between Herston and Carrant's Court. Although it is difficult to distinguish all the early manors in the records (Hutchins 1861, 658), it is clear that there was no dominant manorial centre and the area comprised a number of small dispersed agricultural settlements. The land to the south of Swanage brook on the limestone plateau is divided by a series of long parallel boundaries running down to the coast to the south, demarcating a series of long rectangular properties. The date of these boundaries is not certain, but may be Saxon in origin.

Swanage was a small settlement, probably largely reliant on agriculture and fishing in the medieval period. The name Swanage comes from *Swanawic*, which probably means 'dairy farm of the herdsmen or peasants' (Mills 1977, 52). It was a detached part of Worth Matravers parish and St Mary's Church was a chapel-of-ease dependent on Worth Matravers until about AD1500, when the parish of Swanage

was created. From the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the quarrying of Purbeck stone, in particular Purbeck Marble, becomes more important to the economy of Purbeck. There is some suggestion of the quarrying of Purbeck marble from Peveril Point during the medieval period, though the earliest documentary evidence for this dates to the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Blair 1990, 42; Hinton 2002, 97). There is little evidence for widespread exploitation of stone from the Swanage area in the medieval and early post-medieval period.

The settlement at Swanage was focused around the church and the mill. The date of origin of the mill is not known, but is possibly medieval, though the present mill house appears to date from the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. Settlement also developed along the line of the present High Street, initially as a cluster of farms. Herston in the medieval period was probably no more than a collection of cottages and farms.

There was a Thursday and Friday market at Swanage, but it is not known when it started (Pigot's Trade Directory 1844).

The early 18th century saw a change in the economy of Swanage with quarrying becoming much more important. There had been earlier quarrying in Swanage and Herston, but not on the same scale as that of the 18th century onwards. The stone was quarried in a number of small quarries along the limestone plateau to the south of Swanage and the stone brought down to be stored in stone 'bankers' on the coast, prior to shipping. Before 1710, the chief port for exporting stone had been Ower in Poole Harbour, but Swanage took over the trade after this date (Hutchins 1774). Fishing was still a major element of the economy in the 18th century. There were at least two small brickworks at Godlingston and Elwell in the



Figure 6: Church Hill, the centre of medieval Swanage.



Figure 7: Swanage Mill Pond.

vicinity of Swanage by the beginning of the 18th century (Young 1971). By the 18th century, knitting of woollen stockings had become the chief female employment, but was a minor element in the overall economy of the town. In the late 18th century the women were also employed in spinning flax.

There was an increasing non-conformist community, particularly amongst the quarrymen in Swanage, largely started due to the efforts of William Clarke, the minister of Wareham in the late 17th and early 18th century. Initially preaching was in private houses, but in 1705 a Presbyterian meeting-house was built on the High Street. John Wesley visited Swanage in 1774 and preached in a nearby meadow and he returned in 1787 and preached in the Independents' Chapel. He is reputed to have stayed in a house on the High Street, later known as 'John Wesley's Cottage'. In 1787, two Sunday schools (apparently one for boys and one for girls) were established in the town (Emms 1991).

In the medieval period the main roads from Swanage were probably the Priest's Way to Worth, the road to Corfe Castle along the base of the valley, following the course of the High Street (then through Langton Matravers and Kingston) and another road to Corfe which passes by Godlingston (Good 1966). In 1765-6, a number of roads were turnpiked as part of the Wareham Trust. This included the Swanage to Wareham road along the High Street, with a toll house at Herston and the road to Ullwell along what is now called Northbrook Road (Good 1966).

### 5.1.2 Pre-urban Settlement Layout

The medieval settlement layout is likely to have been centred around the church and along the line of the High Street. There is unlikely to have been a substantial settlement nucleus and many of the houses are likely to have been dispersed along the line of High Street. The medieval layout of Herston is not known, as the settle-



Figure 8: View of St Mary's Church.

ment saw many changes during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Isaac Taylor's 1765 map of Dorset is the first map to show the settlement in any detail. The High Street, Church Hill, Court Hill and Northbrook Road are depicted, together with a road from Battle Mead Gate to Ullwell. A series of roads and tracks are shown leading south from the High Street down towards the quarries. The church is shown, together with what may be the rectory (Swanwic House), what may be Carrant's Court Manor House and the Great House. A scattering of houses are shown along the length of the High Street from Newton to the coast and along Bell Street in Herston.

### 5.1.3 Pre-urban plan components

The main plan components of the medieval town are shown on Figure 10 and are listed below.

1. *Church*. The church of St Mary was probably constructed in the 13th century as a dependent chapel of Worth Matravers – it did not become a parish church until about AD1500. The West Tower was added in the 14th century and heightened in the 17th century. The nave was also widened and a south transept added in the 17th century (Pitfield 1985). Some repair work was carried out in the 18th century.

2. *Historic Plots, High Street*. These are the main areas of houses and cottages shown on Taylor's 1765 map and essentially represents the extent of settlement along the High Street in the late 18th century. The plots are irregular and the buildings are mainly along the street frontage, but some are set back from the road.

3. *Mill*. The mill house is dated 1754, but this is probably the rebuilding of an earlier, probably medieval, mill. It is unclear whether the mill pond was formed at this date or is much earlier. It was fed by a spring above Church Hill. There was a series of 18th century and earlier cottages around the mill pond.



Figure 9: The Old Rectory (Swanwic House).



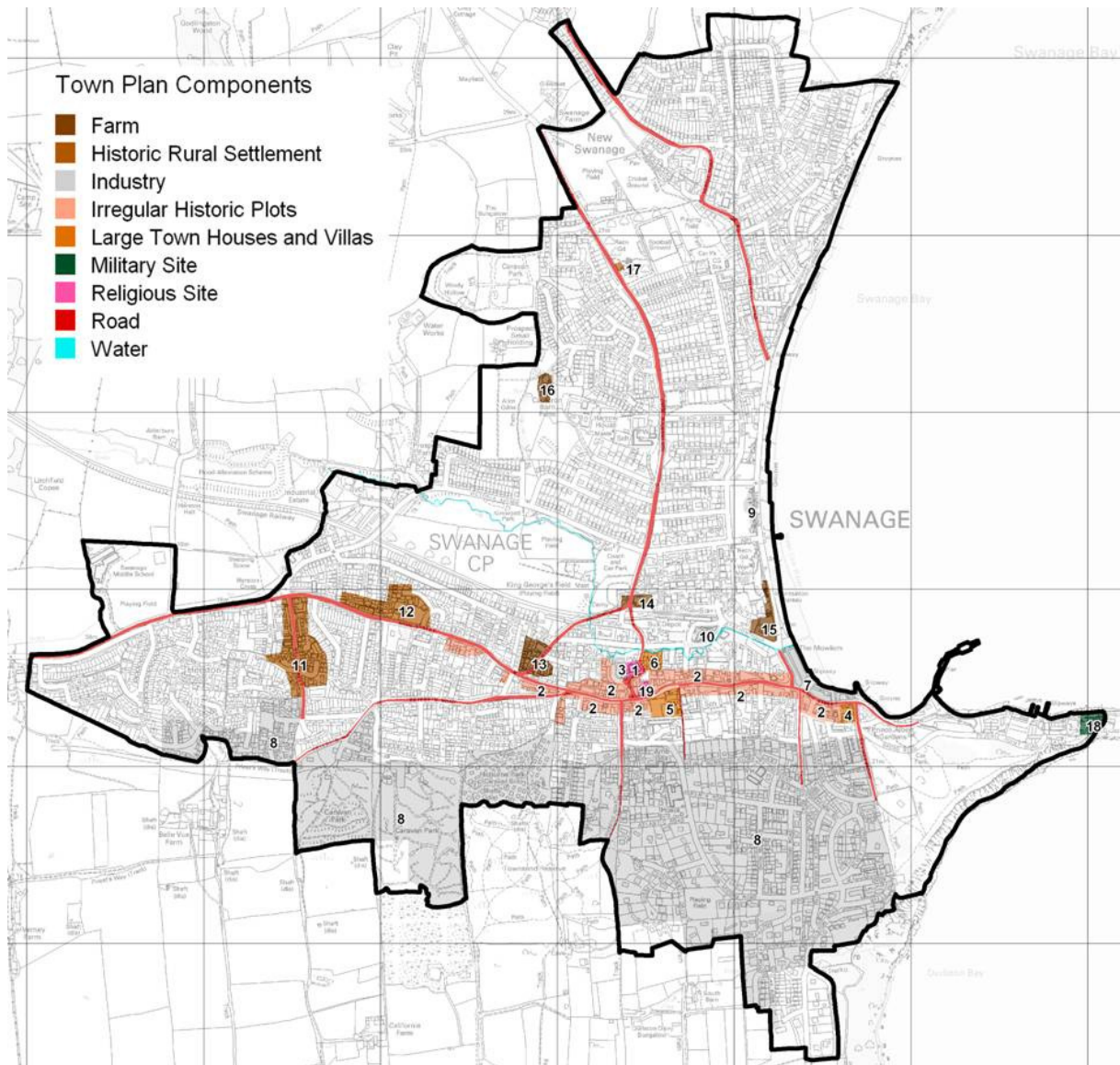


Figure 10 Pre Urban plan components

4. *Great House*. The Great House, or Mansion House, was a large town house built by John Chapman, stone merchant, soon after he purchased the land in 1721. Two large wings were added to the house in about 1777. Adjacent was the White Hall Farm.

5. *Magnolia House*. An 18th century house at right angles to the High Street with extensive gardens to the east and stables and coach house to the south. It may be on the site of an earlier house. It was known as the New House and was owned by Rev John Chapman in the 18th century.

6. *Rectory*. The old rectory was built in the mid 17th century, incorporating some reset medieval masonry. It may have been built as the replacement for an earlier house. It was enlarged and altered in the 18th century. The tithe barn adjacent to the house was probably built in the mid 17th

century.

7. *Bankers*. From the early 18th century the area along the foreshore south of the mouth of the brook was used to store stone in 'bankers' prior to being shipped out.

8. *Quarries*. A large part of the area to the south of the town was covered by quarries. The date quarrying started in this area is not known, but the early 18th century saw a large increase in the number of quarries. They comprised many small individually owned quarries with shafts sunk down from the surface to reach the stone.

9. *Sandpit*. A sandpit is marked on the 1839 Tithe Map immediately behind Swanage beach. This sandpit also appears to be marked on Taylor's 1765 map.

10. *Brewery*. The date of the establishment of the brewery is uncertain, but was owned by the Ed-

monds family in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The brewery was sited to take advantage of a nearby spring.

11. *Herston*. This was a Domesday manor and consisted of a collection of cottages set within their own paddocks or closes. It was initially an agricultural settlement, but by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was largely occupied by quarry workers. It had one main street, Bell Street, which ran along the line of one of the long field boundaries to the south of Swanage.

12. *Newton*. Newton is first recorded in 1299, but is likely to be much earlier in origin. Newton Manor includes part of a late 17<sup>th</sup> century house and barn and was enlarged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was acquired by the Cockram family in 1597. To the west of Newton Manor house lay Herston House.

13. *Carrant's Court*. Carrant's Court was a medieval manor and was probably one of the Domesday manors of Swanage. The Carrant's Court manor house may have been on the site of the present 6 Court Road. The Court Farm buildings and Great Barn were on the opposite side of the road.

14. *Northbrook Farm*. This lay on the north side of the brook. Its date of origin is not known. It is marked on Isaac Taylor's 1765 map.

15. *Eastbrook Farm*. This lay on the north side of the brook, close to its mouth. Its date of origin is not known. It is marked on Isaac Taylor's 1765 map.

16. *Cauldron Barn Farm*. This was called New Barn in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

17. *New House*. New House is marked and named on Isaac Taylor's 1765 map.

18. *Peveril Point Battery*. A battery was established on Peveril Point in 1558. It held eight guns and was depicted on a 1762 map by Samuel Donne. It was rebuilt in 1774 into a semi-circular arc of six guns (Legg 1995).

19. *Presbyterian Meeting House*. A Presbyterian Meeting house was built on the High Street in 1705.