

5.3 Victorian and Edwardian Swanage (1851-1913)

5.3.1 Historical Summary

This period sees the transformation of Swanage into a seaside resort. There is major expansion and significant rebuilding of the town. This transformation was in no small part due to the works of three men, John Mowlem, Sir John Charles Robinson and, most notably, George Burt. Mowlem was born in Swanage and made his fortune as a contractor in London, before retiring to Swanage in 1844. His nephew George Burt followed him into the firm and between them they acquired large parts of Swanage and proceeded to develop the town into a successful seaside resort. Robinson was art advisor to the Victoria and Albert Museum and bought Newton Manor. He acquired large areas on the south side of the town which he proceeded to develop.

Both Mowlem and Burt contributed a number of public buildings and works, as well as acquiring large areas of land for development to the north and south of the town. Mowlem built the Mowlem Institute in 1863 as a reading room for the improvement of the working classes. He also built the adjacent Alfred Monument and the Albert Monument at Court Hill. He laid much of the Purbeck stone paving along the roads in the town. In the late 1850s- early 1860s he acquired a large tract of land to the north of Swanage brook, known as the Moulham or de Moulham estate. This was developed mainly from the 1880s onwards (following the construction of the railway in 1885), with the construction of a series of large villas. George Burt had much more of a physical impact on the town, not least in the large number of architectural fragments and street furniture he brought from London and re-erected in Swanage. He was instrumental in providing water and gas to the town. He had grand plans

for developing the area of Durlston which did not reach full fruition. However, he laid out a number of new roads and crescents, including Park, Durlston, and Peveril Roads and built a number of large villas off them from the 1860s onwards. Development of this area continued during the Edwardian period with the construction of further large villas and houses. Adjacent to the west of Taunton Road, from about 1875, Robinson started to develop the area in a similar fashion to Burt, laying out a number of new roads, with one road, Bon Accord Road, linking the two developments.

The population of Swanage increased markedly during this period from 2104 in 1851 to 4689 in 1911. The rapid expansion of the town led to severe problems in sanitation and in 1873, the Swanage Board of Health was founded to tackle the problems of public health (Emms 1985). In 1894, the Swanage Urban District Council was formed to administer the town, in recognition of the significant changes and growth of the town.

Communication links by road, rail and sea were improved during this period, aiding the growth of the town as a seaside resort. In 1862, a new road from Townsend, Corfe Castle to Leeson Gate (the present A351) was built, bypassing the earlier turnpike road and avoiding Kingston Hill. Within the town, a new road (the present Victoria Avenue) was built in 1865 from Herston Cross to the sea to avoid the narrow High Street and the stone industry traffic. A new pier was constructed in 1862 for both the stone trade and for pleasure steamers. Numerous attempts had been made to build a railway to Swanage from 1847 onwards, but these only came to fruition in 1885 when a branch line from Wareham was built, with a terminus at Swanage. This enabled the stone to be transported from Swanage via rail



Figure 16: Purbeck House, the former home of George Burt.



Figure 17: Houses and guest houses along Park Road.

rather than by sea, thus paving the way for the shore and beach to be used primarily for leisure purposes and the construction of a sea-side esplanade. The steamer traffic from Bournemouth increased markedly during the 1880s, as a consequence of the increasing importance of Bournemouth as a resort. A new parade pier was constructed in 1895, specifically for bringing visitors to Swanage. The promenade was built in 1904-5.

There was considerable new building of shops and esplanades in the centre of the town, particularly along the east end of High Street, Institute Road and Station Road. The Parish Church was also rebuilt and enlarged during this period and a new municipal cemetery was created adjacent to Northbrook Farm. Both the Methodist and Congregation Churches were also enlarged. A new church, St Aldhelm's, was built in the Durlston Down suburb in 1892 and a Roman Catholic Church was built on Rempstone Road. A new hospital was built in 1895 at Mount Scar, replacing an earlier cottage hospital in the High Street.

With the increasing population and with the requirements of the Education Acts, there were changes to the educational provision of the town. A new National school was built in Herston in 1855 for the education of the poor children of Herston. In 1897, a new Board School was built at Mount Scar, replacing the earlier British school in the High Street. There was also a number of private schools in the town, attracted by its healthy seaside location.

As Swanage grew, there was a chronic shortage of housing, both for the inhabitants and for the accommodation of visitors. An increasing amount of speculative house building was undertaken from the 1890s onwards. Many of these new houses were built in brick rather than the more traditional stone. Terraced worker's houses were built behind the High Street frontages, along the newly constructed King Street and at Herston. Larger suburban

villas were being built on the slopes towards Durlston, in the Moulham estate to the north of the station, and along Ulwell Road in New Swanage. Smaller semi-detached houses were being built along King Street West and on the lower slopes of Durlston. Many of the houses were used as guest houses for the accommodation of visitors during the season.

The stone industry was still important to the economy of Swanage in the later 19th century, but many of the quarries close to the town became disused as suburban development spread southwards from the town. The export of stone became much easier following the construction of a new pier and tramway in 1861, though the proposed rail link to the quarries was not realised. After the railway was built in 1885 a large stone yard with a rail link was constructed to the south of Station Road, to enable the stone to be transported out by rail. Fishing was also still a significant industry in Swanage and straw plait manufacture still continued on a small scale. Brickmaking continued at Godlingston.

Herston was still a separate settlement at this date and largely occupied by poor quarry workers. The village saw some major changes during this period, with a new road, Jubilee Road, and the construction of new houses and some new suburban development to the south. It was provided with a school in 1865, a Methodist chapel in 1861 and an Anglican Church in 1869.

5.3.2 Town Layout

The main focus of the town was still along the High Street, but with the arrival of the railway (running parallel and to the north of the High Street) a number of new roads were constructed to link with the railway and to by-pass the narrowest parts of the main street and give access to the new housing developments on the north side of the town. Victoria Road was



Figure 18: Swanage Station.



Figure 19: The Parade, built on the site of the former stone 'bankers'.

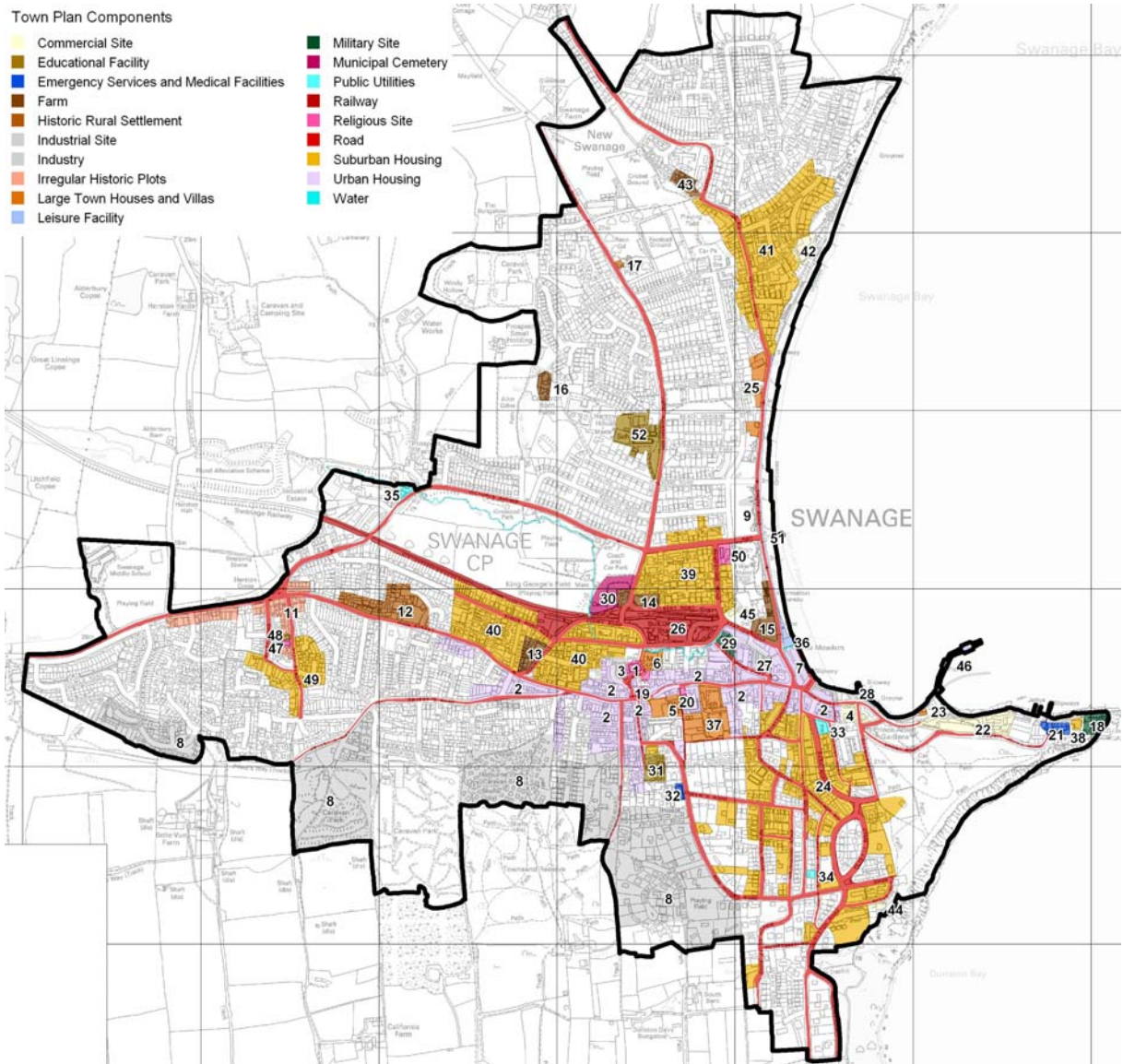


Figure 20: Late 19th-early 20th century plan components

built from Herston Cross to the shore north of the station. Closer to the centre of the town, the road down Court Hill was remade to join Northbrook Road after the railway had been built. It was also extended to link the newly made Kings Road running south of the railway line to Northbrook Road. Additional roads linked the station and the High Street. A series of new roads were laid out to form the suburban estates on Durlston Down, some of which followed earlier, probably medieval boundaries, but others were curving crescents newly laid out.

Building development continued to increase along the length of the High Street, and this was largely in the form of ribbon development. Elsewhere the housing tended to be built along a loose grid of linear streets and culs-de-sac. A new suburban development at New Swanage lies physically separate from the rest of the town to the north of Swanage Bay.

5.3.3 Late 19th – early 20th century Town Plan Components

The main plan components of the late nineteenth-early twentieth century town are shown on Figure 20 and are listed below.

1. *Church.* The church of St Mary was rebuilt and enlarged in 1859-60, removing all the earlier fabric other than the west tower and adding a north aisle amongst other alterations. In 1907-8, the church was enlarged once more to almost double its size with the construction of a new nave and north transept (Pitfield 1985).
2. *High Street.* There was considerable new building along the length of the High Street, particularly in the area towards the coast. Many of the earlier property boundaries survive in this period, but there are a number of new roads (Stafford Road, King's Road East) which cut across some of the earlier boundaries. A number

of new houses and shops were built along the street frontage and some terraced housing behind the frontage the south side of the High Street. As the development gradually extended further behind the street frontage, there was the removal of some rear boundaries.

3. *Mill*. A number of houses were built around the mill pond in the late 19th century. The mill wheel was replaced by a turbine in the early 20th century.

4. *Royal Victoria Hotel*. The hotel continued to function as one of the premier hotels in Swanage throughout this period and saw its second royal visitor, when the future King Edward VII stayed in 1856.

5. *Magnolia House*. There appears to have been little change to the house during this period.

6. *Vicarage*. There was little change to the house during this period.

7. *Bankers*. The stone 'bankers' along the shore were removed in the late 1880s and 1890s, following the construction of the railway and stone yard in 1885. They were cleared to make way for the construction of the east side of Institute Road and the Parade in 1898-9.

8. *Quarries*. The extent of the quarries in the study area was further reduced as quarrying moved away from the growing .

9. *Sandpit*. The sandpit immediately behind Swanage beach may still have been in use at this period. The Ordnance Survey maps show it to have been enlarged slightly between 1889 and 1902.

11. *Herston*. There were some major changes in Herston during the second half of the 19th century, as it started to become a suburb of Swanage. A new road, Jubilee Road, was constructed along the line of an earlier field boundary and there was significant new house building, mainly small terraced houses along Bell Street, either replacing earlier cottages or infilling the street frontage between them.

12. *Newton*. In 1876, Newton Manor House was bought by Sir John Charles Robinson, Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, who carried out considerable works to the house. Newton Manor Farm was built to the north of the house.

13. *Carrant's Court*. The Great Barn was demolished, probably some time before the First World War to make way for some new terraced suburban-style housing.

14. *Northbrook Farm*. There do not appear to

have been any significant changes to the Northbrook Farm buildings during this period, but the property was truncated and altered by the construction of the railway and new roads.

15. *Eastbrook Farm*. Eastbrook Farm became vacant before the First World War and was acquired by the Swanage Urban District Council soon after the war and was demolished.

16. *Cauldron Barn Farm*. A number of new farm buildings and outhouses were built adjacent to the farm house during this period.

17. *New House*. The house was still marked on the 1889 and 1902 Ordnance Survey 25-inch maps.

18. *Pevenil Point Battery*. A new battery with four guns was built following the re-occupation of the site by the Dorset Volunteer Artillery in 1868.

19. *Congregational Chapel*. In 1901-2 a new Congregational Church, designed by Tom Stevens of Bournemouth, was built adjacent to the existing one, which became the church hall (Newman and Pevsner 1972).

20. *Methodist Chapel*. A new Methodist church was built in 1886 by Bucknell and Jennings (Newman and Pevsner 1972). The old chapel became the school room, but was demolished in 1907 and replaced by the Centenary Memorial Hall.

21. *Coastguard Station*. A lifeboat station with slipway was built next to the coastguard station by William Masters Hardy in 1875.

22. *The Grosvenor Hotel*. The Grove was bought by Thomas Docwra in 1866. It was acquired by the Williams family in 1890 and was extended in 1892. Two large red brick houses were built in the grounds. The house was substantially extended in 1901-5 to become the Grosvenor Hotel.

23. *Marine Villa*. The house was divided into two in 1881.



Figure 21: Swanage Methodist Church.

24. *Durlston Down Estate*. There was significant new suburban development in this area. A network of new roads was constructed and some large villas and other suburban houses built.

25. *Shore Villa*. The gardens of Shore Villa, Beach Cottage and Cliff Cottage were truncated by the construction of the promenade in 1904. Ivy Cottage was built cut back into the cliff on the new boundary line.

26. *Railway and Railway Station*. The branch line from Wareham to Swanage was operated by the London & South Western Railway and was opened in 1885. A brewery originally stood in the southeast corner of the station yard. It had been seriously damaged by fire in 1854, then was rebuilt, but closed in the 1880s, and was demolished in 1899.

27. *Stone Yard*. A short branch of the railway was continued east of the station (along what is now Commercial Road and Commercial Lane) to service a large stone yard owned by William Grove White.

28. *Pier and Tramway*. A new working pier was opened in 1861 and a tramway laid along the pier and the sea front, through the area of the former 'bankers'. The proposal to continue the tramway to the quarries was abandoned in 1862. The track was originally standard gauge but was later reduced to narrow gauge (in about 1902). Trucks were hauled by horse or manpower. The pier was badly damaged by storms and was substantially rebuilt in 1886. The loading cranes were removed in the 1880s. After the construction of the new pleasure pier in 1897, the old pier continued to be used for coaling and cargo. It was repaired in 1902.

29. *Drill Hall*. The Drill Hall was built probably in the late 1880s for the No. 7 Battery of the 2nd Volunteer Brigade, Southern Division Royal Artillery (Kelly's Directory 1889).

30. *Cemetery*. A new municipal cemetery was consecrated in 1855 and the first burial took

place in 1856.

31. *Swanage Board School*. This elementary school was built in 1897, replacing an earlier National School on the High Street.

32. *Swanage Hospital*. This cottage hospital for 14 beds opened in 1895. It was built in a picturesque style in memory of George and Elizabeth Burt. The architect was Walter J Fletcher of Wimborne. The hospital was extended in 1912.

33. *Water Works*. George Burt built a circular waterworks and other buildings for the Swanage Water Works in Marshall Row in about 1864. It was fed by a deep artesian well.

34. *Water Tower*. This stone structure in a medieval military style was built in 1886 for the Swanage Water Works.

35. *Gas Works*. The gas works were constructed near Prospect Farm in 1867-8.

36. *Mowlem Institute*. The Mowlem Institute was built by John Mowlem in 1863 as a reading room. It was designed by G R Crickmay.

37. *Purbeck House*. Purbeck House was built by George Burt as his own residence in 1875. It replaced an 18th century house on the same site. The house was designed by Crickmay in a 'baronial' style and incorporates many fragments of London buildings.

38. *Peveril House Hotel*. A large house built in the 1890s.

39. *De Moulham Road Villas*. The land in this area was bought by John Mowlem between 1857-61 and development north of the Brook, began with the construction of the de Moulham Villas on the newly built de Moulham Road (later Victoria Avenue). In the 1890s and the early years of the 20th century, increasing numbers of suburban villas and boarding houses were built in this area between Northbrook Road and Rempstone Road.

40. *Kings Road West*. Kings Road West was



Figure 22: Swanage Water Works, Marshall Row.



Figure 23: The Grand Hotel.

constructed during the 1890s, when the Police Station was built. There was some suburban development along it before the turn of the century, but this increased substantially during the Edwardian period.

41. *Ballard Down Housing Estates*. There was substantial development of late Victorian and Edwardian suburban villas along Ulwell Road to the north of Battlemead from the 1890s onwards.

42. *Grand Hotel*. This purpose-built hotel opened in 1898 on top of the cliff overlooking the beach and Swanage Bay.

43. *Durlston Dairy Farm*. Durlston Abattoir was built before the late 1880s off Ulwell Road. By the turn of the century it had become Durlston Dairy Farm.

44. *Belle Vue Restaurant*. The Refreshment Cottage was built in about 1875. It later became the Belle Vue Restaurant.

45. *Railway Hotel*. The Railway Hotel was built adjacent to the station in the 1880s.

46. *Pleasure Pier*. A new pleasure pier was built in 1897 to attract the steamer and day tripper trade. It was designed by R St George Moore.

47. *St Mark's Church, Herston*. Construction of the Church of St Mark was started in 1869 but was not completed until 1872 due to a lack of funds. It is a simple design with chancel and nave under one roof surmounted by a small bell cote and with a small south porch and north aisle.

48. *Herston School*. The school was built in 1855 by Rev D Travers as a National School. Originally an infant school, it was enlarged in 1865 to become a mixed school. The school buildings were further extended in 1888.

49. *Herston Suburbs*. The late 19th and early 20th century saw the gradual expansion of housing southwards from the historic core of Herston. This included a mixture of terraced and

semi-detached houses and cottages with one large detached villa.

50. *The Church of the Holy Spirit and St Edward*. This Roman Catholic church was built in 1904 and the adjacent priory in 1907.

51. *Seafront*. A sea wall and promenade was constructed by Burt and Burt in 1904-5. The first shelter was constructed in 1908.

52. *Brookfield House School*. This prep school was established in Victoria Avenue in 1910, but moved to this larger site on Northbrook Road in 1913. The school was built by George Hardy to the designs of Hart & Waterhouse.



Figure 24: The 1897 Pleasure Pier.