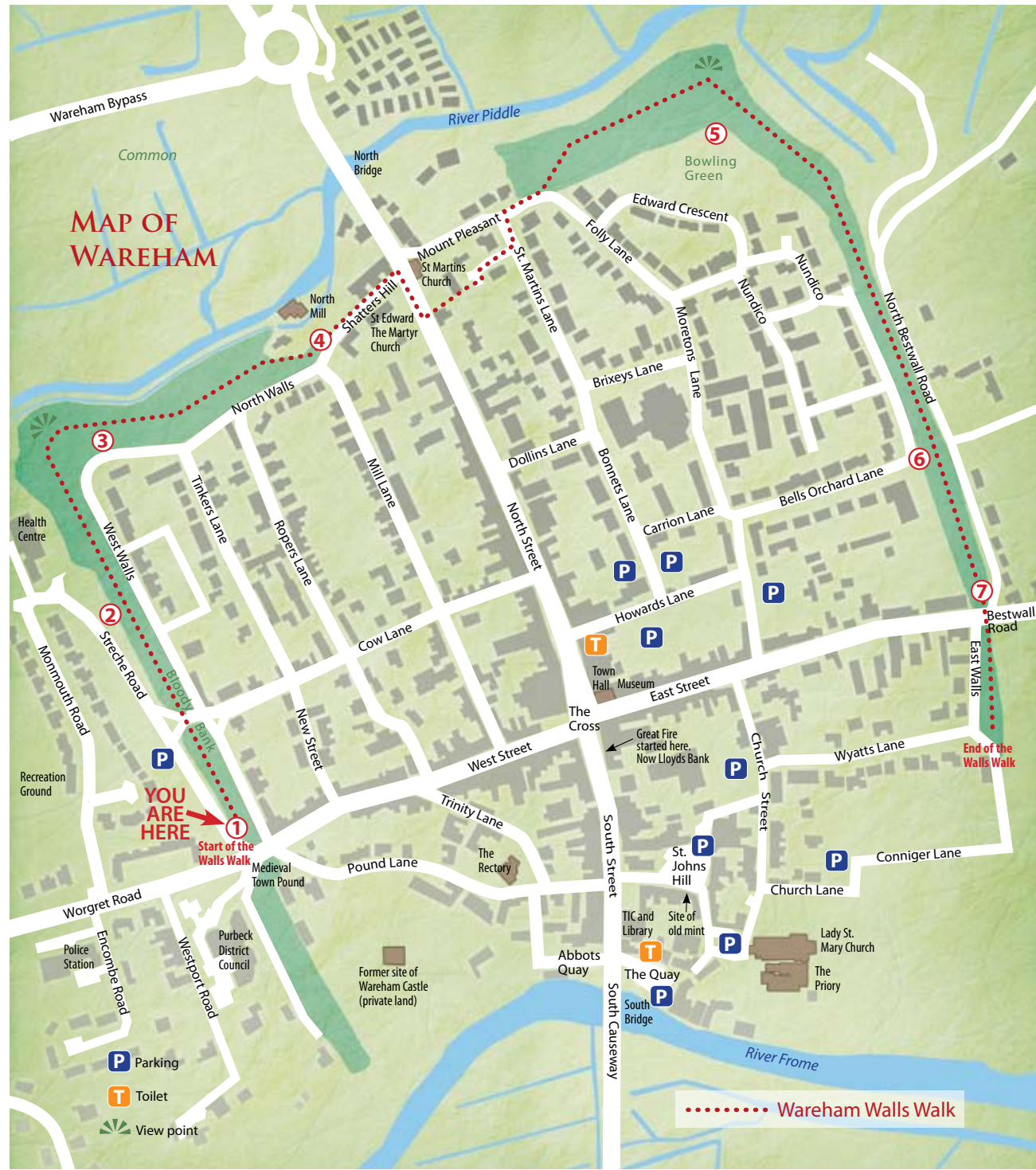


WAREHAM WALLS WALK ~ POINT 1, WEST WALLS



WELCOME TO WAREHAM WALLS

Wareham is famous for its monumental Saxon earth 'walls', constructed on three sides of the town to defend against Viking invaders. Follow the walk, read the boards – find out about the town's colourful past and appreciate its amazing natural history...

WAREHAM THROUGH THE AGES

Situated between the Rivers Frome and Piddle, at the head of Poole Harbour, Wareham's history stretches back over 2000 years. It was involved in a vibrant Roman pottery industry, became Dorset's most important Saxon town and later a thriving medieval market town. Its development has been marked by fire and bloodshed.



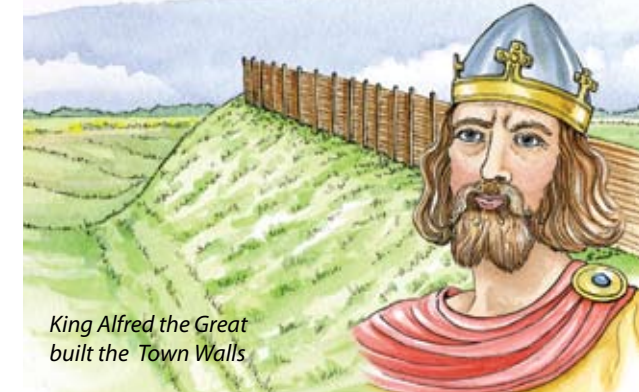
THE EARLIEST INHABITANTS

In the town, pottery and coins are evidence of Roman activity. Outside, kilns produced huge numbers of pottery jars, bowls and dishes which were then shipped out, and are found all over Britain and northern France. A church was established by the River Frome probably in the 600s and five of its gravestones survive. A century later, this was replaced by the church of Lady St Mary. Wareham (Werham) is a Saxon word and means 'homestead by a weir' – the town was first recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in AD 784. A fish trap on the River Frome was a very early feature.

KINGS

King Alfred the Great (AD 844-899) spent most of his reign at war with the Vikings and the building of the town's massive earthen banks was a response to this threat. Wareham's earthen walls are a 'Scheduled Monument' and are of national importance. The monumental scale of the walls' construction is best seen where the ditch still survives. Earth and gravel were moved by hand using primitive tools such as wooden shovels and wicker baskets.

By 1066, Wareham was the largest town in Dorset, but 20 years later half of its houses had been destroyed to make way for William the Conqueror's impressive castle. Constructed of alternate bands of red and white stone, the building and its precinct dominated the south-west corner of the town. It was the focus of much fighting during the 12th century when the Conqueror's grandchildren Stephen and Matilda battled for the crown. By the 14th century the castle had been abandoned and rapidly fell into decay.



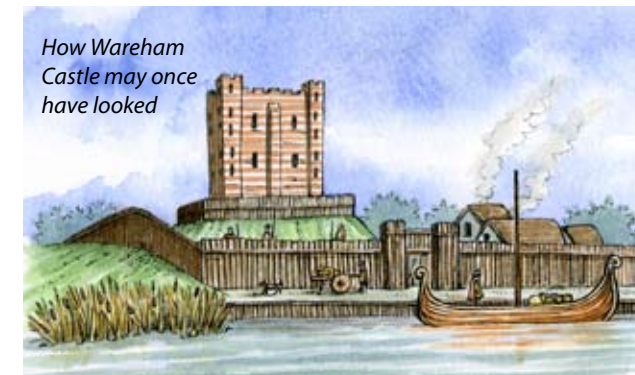
King Alfred the Great built the Town Walls

CIVIL WAR AND FIRE

During the middle ages, Wareham declined in importance as the developing town of Poole grew dramatically. Civil War between the crown and parliament erupted in 1642 and several fierce skirmishes took place in the streets – at one time, over 4000 troops were billeted within the walls. The last dramatic event to mark the town was a devastating fire in 1762 when two thirds of its buildings were burnt to the ground. The Georgian rebuilding is still apparent today and gives Wareham its pleasing character.



Residents flee the Great Fire of Wareham 1762



How Wareham Castle may once have looked



An Augustus Moore clay pipe fragment

VICTORIAN INDUSTRY

During 2011, evidence for a clay (smoking) pipe kiln outside the high wall of Purbeck District Council offices was discovered. It only operated for four years, ceasing when its owner, Augustus Moore was transported to Australia in 1834 for stealing.

MEDIEVAL TOWN POUND

Wareham's medieval town pound is situated to your right across the road.



Kings Arms in North Street

BUILDINGS THAT SURVIVED THE FIRE

A few thatched houses that survived the Great Fire of Wareham still remain today.



Cottage in Cow Lane



Cottage by Lady St Mary's Church

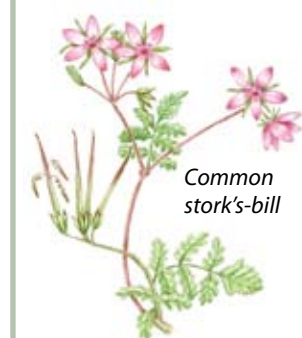
ECOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT OF THE WALLS

The overall management aim for the Walls is to balance and enhance the archaeological and ecological interests of the monument whilst maintaining their recreational value – they are the only public open space in Wareham.

As you walk around the Walls, you will notice that the grass is longer in some places. The grass is not cut until the wildflowers have stopped flowering and dispersed their seeds. The wildflowers and grasses in these areas provide cover and sources of food for butterflies, insects and birds.

Here on the West walls you will find wild carrot, mouse-ear hawkweed, ribwort plantain and lesser trefoil as well as spring annuals like parsley piert, cornsalad, common stork's-bill and common whitlowgrass.

Ribwort plantain



Common stork's-bill



Ladies bedstraw

There is also a large colony of wild clary. Look out for heath bedstraw, ladies bedstraw and common cat's ear.



Common cat's ear



Wild Clary

