

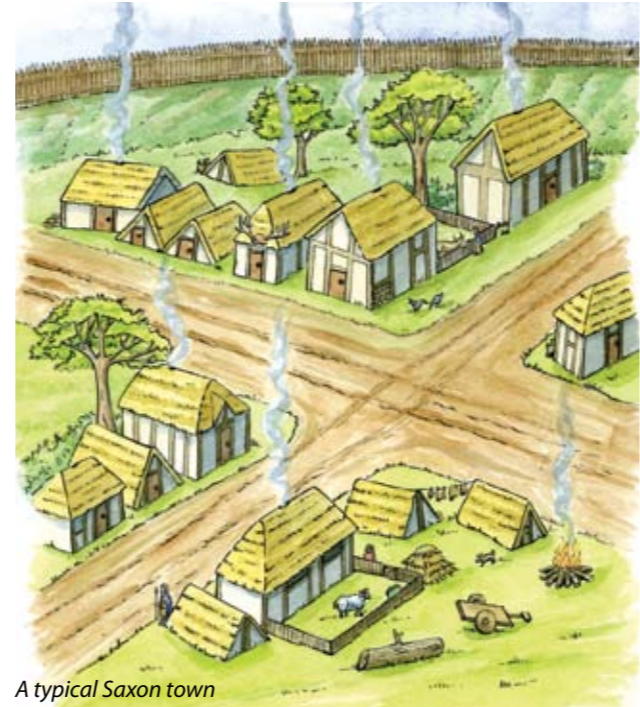
WAREHAM WALLS WALK ~ POINT 7, EAST WALLS



SAXON WAREHAM

The grid-like pattern of streets was probably laid out shortly after the walls were constructed in the late 9th century. North Street, South Street, West Street and East Street were the wide main roads and the earliest houses would have been clustered along these. The back lanes were only half the width of the main roads.

The roads out of the town led to settlements in the Bere Regis area, to Purbeck and to Dorchester which developed into the county town. East Street is on the line of an ancient cattle droveway which came from the east end of the Bestwall peninsula, and which dated from before the Roman Conquest. A market place would have been sited at the crossroads, and the Quay was of huge economic importance. As well as the convent church of Lady St Mary, there was a small church 'All Saints' by South Bridge and another, 'St Martins', by the north gate.



A typical Saxon town

WAREHAM MINT

On the present St John's Hill, were two 'mints' producing coinage – a silver penny. One side of the coin displayed the king's name, the other that of the minter and the town of issue.



Coin of Aethelred, minted in Wareham 978-1016

THE SAXON SWORD

When South Bridge over the River Frome was rebuilt in 1927, part of a prestigious sword was found in the river gravels. The iron blade was corroded and broken but the horn grip was intact. Upon it had been inscribed an ownership formula dating the weapon to 10th century. It may have been lost by a Saxon nobleman during the turbulent years of Viking attacks.



Wareham's Saxon sword found in 1927

THE CHURCH OF LADY ST MARY

Founded on the site of an earlier Celtic church and monastery, the church of Lady St Mary and an associated nunnery were built about 700 AD. Two Saxon kings were buried here but their remains were removed shortly after burial. King Beorhtric died in 802 and his body was taken to the newly-founded Tewkesbury Abbey and the remains of Edward the Martyr who was murdered at Corfe Castle in 978 were reburied at Shaftesbury Abbey. Until 1535, the church had always been associated with either a nunnery or priory but during the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the priory was suppressed and the church was acquired for the townspeople.

The present building has been much altered over the years. The chancel was extended in the early 1300s and around 1500 a tower was added to the west end. In 1842 the nave was pulled down and rebuilt, destroying what was one of the earliest Saxon buildings in the country.



Lady St Mary Church and The Priory Hotel



New west window, Lady St Mary's Church

A new west window designed by master glazier Andrew Johnson was installed in Lady St Mary in 2011. The window highlights the town of Wareham – with the rivers Piddle and Frome either side of the cross.



Reverend John Hutchins

THE REVEREND JOHN HUTCHINS

Born in 1698, John Hutchins was rector of Wareham from 1742-73. During this time he researched the history of the county, accumulating enormous amounts of information. This was published as The History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset, one year after his death. Memorial plaques can be seen in the parish church and on the Rectory wall in Pound Lane.



The Rectory, Pound Lane.



Part of an archway, probably from Wareham Castle, has been incorporated into the Rectory wall in Pound Lane.

WAREHAM CASTLE

In 1066, Wareham was the largest town in Dorset and the main county port. Twenty years later, Domesday Book records that 130 houses (which was over half of the town's total), were either destroyed or derelict, many had probably been forcibly seized to make way for the construction of a castle for William the Conqueror. The building was sited in the extreme south west quadrant of the town and work was completed by 1110.



How Wareham Castle may have looked.

An Edwardian house now covers the remains of what had been an important and high-class royal castle. Measuring 70 feet square and with walls up to 13 feet thick, the exterior of the keep had alternate bands of large blocks of white Purbeck or other pale coloured stone contrasting with local red-brown heathstone.

During the 12th century Civil War, the castle was the focus of much fighting; its defensive position was insecure and ultimately led to its decline and abandonment. It was last used by Edward I and ultimately sold by Elizabeth I in 1584. The land has been in private hands since that time.

END OF WALLS WALK

You have now reached the end of the Wareham Walls Walk. We hope you have enjoyed your trip back through the history of this fascinating town and have seen the fauna and flora that makes this area so special.

If you would like to learn more of Wareham's history you may like to visit the Town Museum situated by the Town Hall on East Street (check opening times). The Discover Purbeck Information Centre is located within the library on South Street.

A visit to the The Quay and Priory Meadow is also recommended.



South Bridge and The Quay

