

# Town Centre Heritage

## Part I: Background & History



Planning & Regeneration Services inc Building Consultancy, 2012

*Striving for Excellence*

# Contents

This document is the first report of the Town Centre Conservation Areas Appraisals. Further details on the aims, objectives and methods used are in Part 2 of the Town Centre Heritage Character Statement along with the sources of information consulted.

## Part I Background & Historical Development

I.1	Introduction	3
I.2	Topography, Setting and Early History	4
I.3	Archaeology	7
I.4	The Great Quay	11
I.5	Tudor Period - 16th Century	11
I.6	17th Century Development	12
I.7	Georgian Pride: 18th Century	13
I.8	Victorian Growth	14
I.9	20th Century Transformation	16
I.10	Word War II and Early Planning	18
I.11	Housing and Commercial Renewal	18
I.12	Town Centre North	20
Maps:		
	Map IA: Norman and Development to 1700	10
	Map IB: Development from 1700 - 1900	17

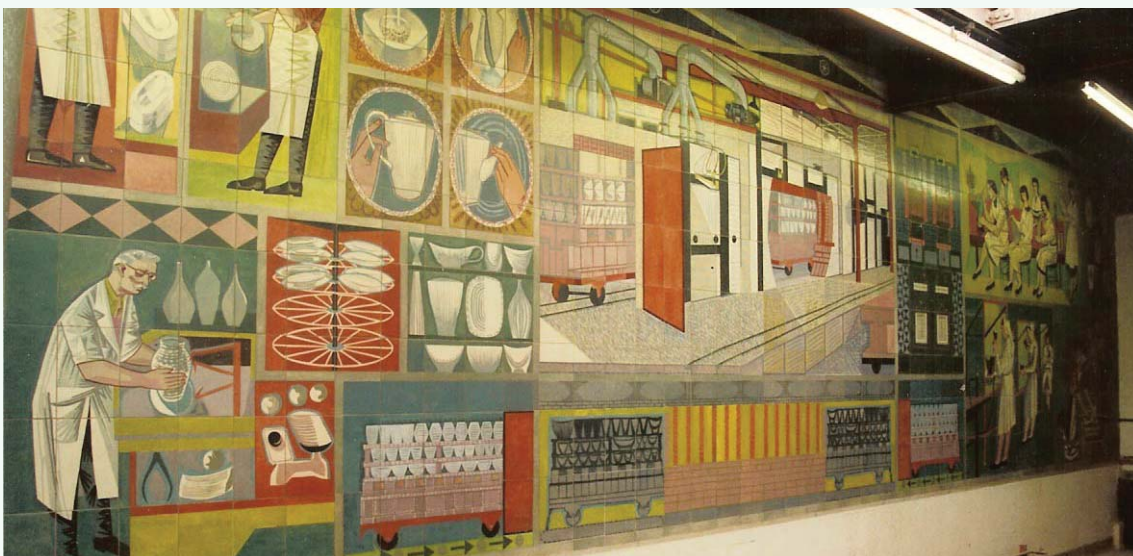
# Background & Historical Development

## 1.1 Introduction

This background report provides evidence to support the Town Centre Heritage Character Statement which is part of the appraisal of the three Conservation Areas. A brief summary of key events in the history of the oldest part of the town, that is within the level crossings, is necessary to inform an understanding of the forces that have shaped and re-shaped the form and buildings of the town that has survived centuries of change to the present day.

To plan for the future it is essential to understand the town's morphology (the way it has changed over time) as the layout of the town has changed dramatically from its early origins around the Great Quay and St. James church. The old parish of St. James, within the level crossing, is located in the original pre-1835 part of the town, before its extension of that year, on what was mainly an island surrounded by mud flats, reached by sea and/or by land through the medieval towngate that joined it to the mainland. By the time the peninsula was fully developed in the late 19th century the ditch that cut through its top end had been filled and laid out for the railway and industries and businesses competed for space within a complex layout of narrow streets of shops and houses. Damage inflicted by World War II bombings was dispersed on small sites across the peninsula though many buildings and the west end of the quay was never quite the same as if were before the war. By the 1960s advocates for modernising the densely populated peninsula were set against shopkeepers and those in favour of more gradual changes. The government over rode the objections and approved the 1963 Plan for the new shopping centre, road network and Baiter park reclamation area.

Whole streets such as Towngate Street and Fish Street were re-developed for new road bridges and, the latter, for offices. Little lanes lined with terraced houses were cleared to provide modern housing terraces and blocks of flats, east of Lagland Street and on the back plots south of New Orchard between the High Street and Market/Church Streets. Industrial sites were re-developed for housing, offices and a hotel, in the case of the gasworks on the quay.

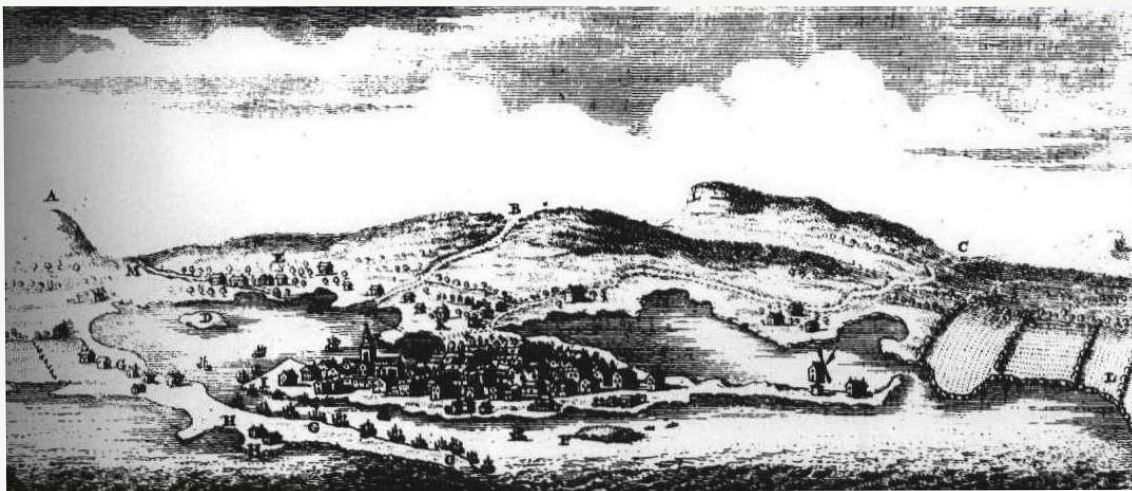


*Ledger panel from Poole Pottery*

## 1.2 Topography, Setting & Early History

### Topography and Setting

Poole town centre is located within the largest urban conurbation of Dorset within the Poole basin lowlands. With Bournemouth it is the most densely developed area of Dorset. The coastline was formed during the Mesolithic (middle stone Age 10,000-8,000 BC) period following the post-glacial rise in sea-level when a series of storms finally broke through the chalk ridge joining the isle of Purbeck with the Isle of Wight eventually forming the needles and Old Harry Rocks. The upper reaches of the Solent River were flooded to form Poole Harbour. The Poole trough has the Isle of Wight at its western edge, a line of chalk running through Purbeck from near Corfe to Studland to the south within about 15 miles of plastic clay. The clay level descends from the northern boundary between Wimborne and Hinton Martell and sinks at Poole Harbour below sea level and rises again on the Purbeck coast leaving large patches of clay and sand and a great diversity of soil and rich flora.



*"A Prospect of the Town of Poole from the West End of Branksey Island", John Hutchins 1774*

Poole harbour is considered one of the best and largest examples of the natural harbour type of estuary in Great Britain. The harbour is almost enclosed from the sea by the double sandspits formed by the Studland and Sandbanks peninsulas with the harbour mouth formed by the Swash Channel. The harbour resembles a large lake or lagoon with deep indentations following a shallow shoreline, roughly 100 miles around, although as an estuary it displays certain characteristics of coastal lagoons. Poole benefits from receiving the impact of four high tides that reach the coast between Portland and the Solent giving the impression of a large inland sea when the tide is in.

The town is built on an alluvial peninsula flanked on the north west by Holes Bay and on the south by Poole Harbour. Before the extensive reclamation work to Baiter, the Quays and West Quay Road, the entire peninsula was enclosed by mudflats. Pre-development the peninsula would have had a predominantly heathland landscape with poor, acid, sandy, infertile soils. The Tudor topographer John Leland visiting Poole around 1536 wrote that "pole is not town of auncient occupying in merchandise; but rather of olde tyme a pooe fisshar village. There be men alyve that saw almost all the town of Pole kyvered with segge and rishhes..." The land forming much of the peninsula today was created by dumping town waste onto mudflats, by the extension of wharves and quays and the infilling of shallow creeks.

Prior to 1700 the town was developed on the peninsula south west of the present railway (see Map 1A). The medieval town was built around the parish church of St. James extending through to Stand Street. Though there is little archaeological evidence it is thought that the meeting of Paradise Street

with Strand Street formed the natural shore line prior to the quay developments. Alleyways built from Strand Street to the waters edge were later developed into warehousing for the New Quay between 1751 and 1774 and the amalgamation of the three quays in 1788. The reclamation of the mudflats to form West Quay Road in the 18th century completed the north-west shore though pockets of them remained into the 19th century. The late 19th century construction of the New Quay (or East Quay) which provided the ground for Poole Pottery completed the present quayside areas.

Today the topography remains relatively flat, being very close to sea levels, with no marked natural changes. Skyline views of the verdant Purbeck Hills, Brownsea Island, Holes Bay and Upton shores are all important and attractive. Brownsea Island blocks views of the harbour mouth from the central quay to the south though it also provides a densely treed, attractive view connecting the town to the harbour islands. Views of the quayside are important when travelling by boat. Views of the Old Town and west quayside are particularly important from the Hamworthy regeneration area and Twin Sails bridge gateway site under construction where the land levels are being raised 1.5 metres to allow for sea level changes.

## Geology

The Poole Basin lowlands are enclosed by chalk on the north, west and south. The transition from chalk to the heathland landscapes is consistent through the lowlands. The hinterland is composed of a large tract of bagshot Beds which were left as open space at Broadstone and Canford and are still viewed as rolling heathland. No lands are much more than about 200 feet above sea level. Reading beds separate chalk from the more acidic and gravelly Bagshot and Brackelsham Beds which occupy the middle of Poole Basin. The land was quarried for brick earth and pipe clay used extensively in the pottery industries of Poole.



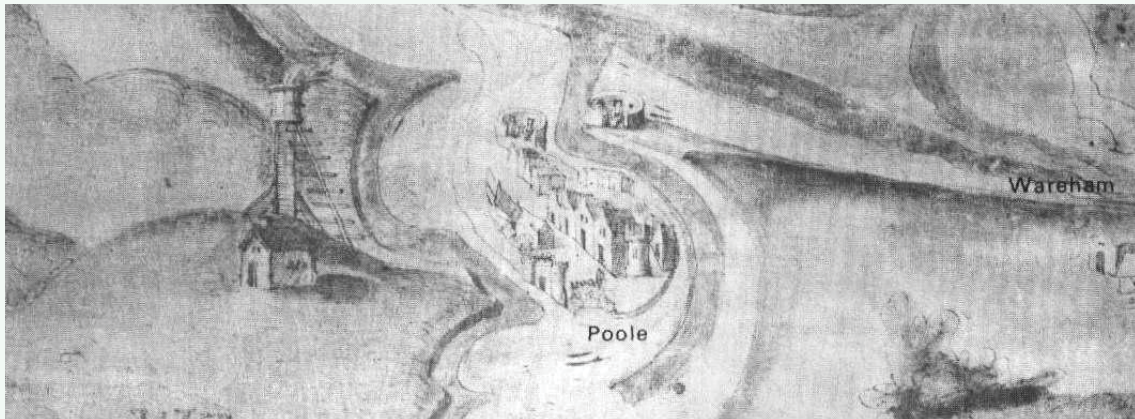
*Penninsula looking to the harbour mouth, showing the harbour setting*

*"A Borough, Town and Seaport, is 113 miles from London, 27 from Dorchester, 16 from Blandford and 6 from Wimborne. It takes its name from the bay, on the north side of which it is situated; and is a peninsula, adjoining the parish of Canford, connected by an isthmus or neck of land. This is the most considerable port, and the most populous town in the County. In general the buildings are respectable, and many very handsome".*

*National Directory, 1830*

## Early History

Poole has been shaped and constrained by its maritime history. The historic town centre has been built on a peninsula, on what was a marshy area of land, within the large inland sea that forms Poole harbour. Not favoured by the ancient tribes, or the Romans and Danes who favoured Wareham and Hamworthy, Poole peninsula was bypassed until about the time of the Domesday Book. At that time Poole formed the southern shore of the very large manor of Canford held by Edward of Salisbury. The residents may have contributed to the manors income from salt workings and oysters also attracted people to the shore. The silting up of the western reaches of the harbour gradually reduced access to Wareham Harbour. When the Lord of the Manor of Canford decided he wanted a prosperous seaport of his own Wareham's port had declined and Poole's ascent had begun.



*Beacon Map, 1540 (British Museum)*

It is likely that Poole existed as a Town by the 12th century as a small fishing port and village within the Manor of Canford. The discovery of large oyster middens dating to 1050-1100 confirms the occupations of the residents of 'La Pole'. After acquiring the port the Lord of the Manor, William Longespee, decided to sell the shipping rights and rental levies to the burgesses of Poole to raise funds for his crusading campaigns. The Longespee Charter of 1248 granted freedom from manorial burdens to 'La Pole' to spread its influence from rural Dorset to Europe. The role of the port of La Pola in the strengthening of Corfe Castle was a further indication of its important status at the end of the 13th century. From then through the next three centuries Poole developed into a prosperous town. Economic progress was guaranteed when Henry VI issued a Royal Charter in 1433 allowing the borough to "wall, embattle and fortify the town" and granted trading rights equal to those of Southampton. Poole then became Dorset's Port of Staple with similar rights to only six other 15th century towns with customs control. Despite its status the town never had fortifications and remained vulnerable.

## 1.3 Archaeology

### Background

The complex harbour shoreline and topography of Poole have given it a rich archaeological resource from the past and potential for finds in the future. As much of the archaeological record dates from sites explored for development there is much left to be discovered from the standing structures, roads and little lanes, back of plots and open spaces in the town centre. The potential for archaeology remains very high in some pockets of the town and particularly in the Conservation Areas.

The need to investigate the archaeology of Poole Town Centre became increasingly important once the 1963 approvals for the creation of an historic precinct and clearance of Towngate Street for a pedestrianised shopping area in the upper town were granted. The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments (now English Heritage) had been recording historic buildings in the Town Centre since the 1950s. About 300 buildings had been dated and identified as key sites though over half of those had been demolished by 1976. Salvage archaeology led by the Poole Archaeological Unit had the benefit of the RCHM building surveys and dating on which to build its interpretations of salvage archaeology, although many questions remain unanswered a short window of opportunity taken to explore the archaeology of Poole in the 1960s through the 1980s produced an intriguing repository of finds and reports. The archaeological finds were significant in revealing that the town had considerable post medieval, European trading links worthy of recognising.



*Old Orchard Plaza site under excavation, Castle Street (Poole Museum)*

Archaeological research was focussed on answering important questions about Poole's past such as the dating of the original waterline, later phases of reclamation, the purpose of the wool house on the quay and origins of the medieval town. Key excavations that exposed sites of national and international importance in the Borough were later carried out at the Foundry site south of Barbers Piles, the oyster middens at the Woolhouse, the Roman fort at Lake Farm, in the north of the Borough, and the c.1500 Spanish merchants ship in Studland Bay (1984).

### Foundations and Origins

The landmark discovery of the Iron Age log boat now exhibited in Poole Museum, is indicative of the activities of early itinerant travellers in Poole Harbour. As it was easy to land boats onto the mudflats and the harbour is easy to navigate Iron Age people were attracted to it and archaeologists claim there is evidence to demonstrate the harbour provided Britain's first cross-channel port.

The important Horsey reports on the oyster midden provide evidence of farming on Poole's original shoreline gives a starting point for dating the earliest settlements in the Borough from the 10th/12th

centuries with radio-carbon dating. The pre-conquest/ Norman dating of the middens and the shoreline settlements accords with the fact that Poole was not mentioned in the Domesday book as the oyster fishermen were likely only seasonal visitors. By the 1220's Poole's appearance on royal records accords with the 12th century date of occupation and other records suggesting that the lord of the manor, William Longespee, granted a weekly market and yearly fair in 1239.

Other questions remain over the foundations and role of the early church of St. James. Excavations at the Foundry site indicate the sea once came up to within 40 metres of the west end of the church and up to Salisbury Street where oyster deposits were found and likely pushed it back to Paradise Street. Strand Street was also considered to be the continuation of this shoreline by Horsey. West Street may mark the early shore line on the north-west side of the peninsula though few finds indicate where the actual shoreline was in this area. The parallel layout of Church and Lower High Street are similarly not substantiated by excavations though it's clear that Church Street opened out into a market area and the west shore by the church was favoured for landing as it was more sheltered.

## The Medieval Port and Defences

The medieval port and defences of Poole were two areas that challenged archaeologists in the 1970s and 1980s as few structures survived to examine for evidence. Perhaps one of the most important reports and findings of Horsey relate to his reanalysis of the Town Cellars (Woolhouse) that re-establishes it as one of the most important existing buildings in Europe representing port history. At 36.5 metres it was among the longest early port buildings in Europe. Excavations at the Woolhouse also exposed a beach level of a 13th/14th century contemporary with large stone buildings indicative of the Great Quay construction from this date.

With its double tide and storage facilities Poole harbour had an advantage over Wareham for sailing boats with trade goods to unload. By the c13th Poole was a rising port for building materials for the work at Corfe Castle, a landing place for the king's wines and a loading place for Purbeck stone. Excavations at Old Orchard Car Park revealed that Fish Street (now Castle Street), Old Orchard and the High Street were being occupied.



*Original site of East Quay Road pre-reclamation, 1841 (Poole Museum)*

The town's rise to a thriving staple or head port for Dorset in 1433 was gradual as the Black Death and the Hundred Years War left it somewhat decayed by 1370. As trading fortunes rose more structures were constructed, few of which are known to survive today, despite some archaeological recording. The demolition of the towngate in 1971, which may have dated from the license of 1433 was not recorded though it was described as a "massive stone structure" and likely the only substantial defensive structure built during the Borough's history. The ditch related to it was excavated when the Station Hotel was demolished revealing that it was in fact dug across the peninsula making it in effect an island at highwater tide and more defensible as a staple port.

## Archaeological Assets and Planning

Archaeological remains are an important non-renewable resource that have made a considerable contribution to the understanding of the past in Poole. Designated sites are protected by national legislation. Records of past excavations in the town centre have been recorded but many sites are not mapped and records are not comprehensive.

Further information on the town's history remains to be discovered as and when opportunities for investigations arise when development is being planned. Many historic buildings and structures within the Conservation Areas contain earlier structures and materials. The quayside, Poole Arms has early 17th century remnants that indicate a date for the reclamation period. High Street buildings and rear boundary walls indicate original burgage plot layouts. Timber frames, stone walls and original plaster work survive embodied in buildings in the High Street.

The protocol for establishing the nature and significance of archaeological potential in the Town Centre Conservation Area should be as follows:

- consult The National Heritage List for England and the BoP List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest for designated sites and emerging Heritage Assets Local List for non-designated sites
- consult the County Archaeologist and the Dorset County Historic Environment Record
- weigh up the scale of any harm or loss and take all reasonable step to avoid loss before development (NPPF, 2012, 136)
- treat archaeological finds associated with Scheduled Monuments as significant as the designated monuments (NPPF, 2012, 139)
- *“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance. ... the heritage assets [should be] assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed included or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation”. (NPPF, 128).*



*Scaplens Court as a ruin, 1920s*



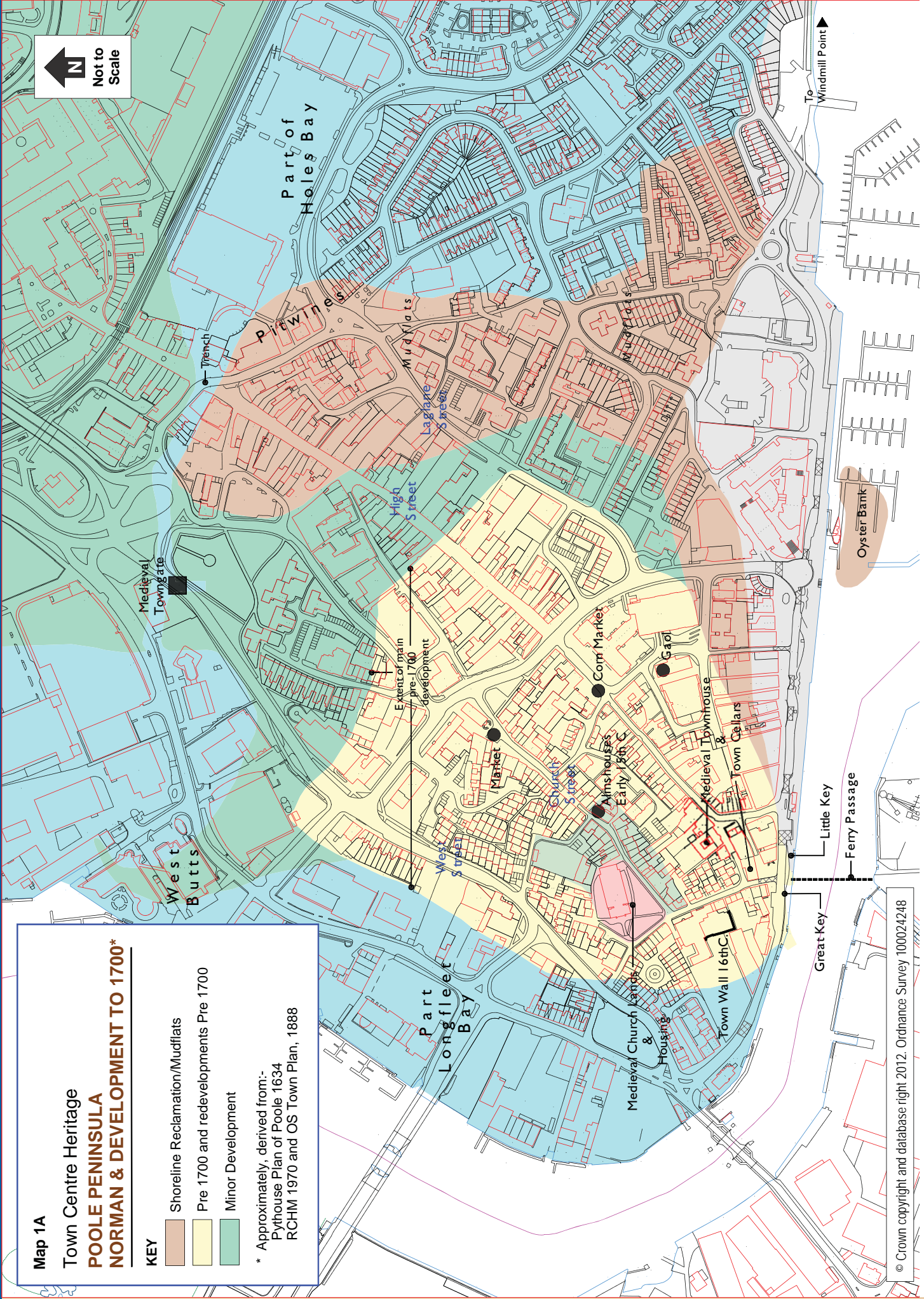
Map 1A

**Town Centre Heritage  
POOLE PENINSULA  
NORMAN & DEVELOPMENT TO 1700\***

**KEY**

- Shoreline Reclamation/Mudflats
- Pre 1700 and redevelopments Pre 1700
- Minor Development

\* Approximately, derived from:-  
Pythouse Plan of Poole 1634  
RCHM 1970 and OS Town Plan, 1888



## 1.4 The Great Quay

From medieval times Poole was in the manor of Great Canford, created by William the Conqueror by giving and combining the Saxon Manors of Canford and Kinson to the Earl of Salisbury. The Manor of Canford served as the administrative and judicial seat of the town until 1248, when some courts were held in the town under an approved mayor.

By the 15th century Poole had become one of the largest towns on the south coast, defended from the land by a large tidal ditch, which guarded crossings and from the sea by manpower. As no town walls had been constructed it relied on a dyke, gate and mudflats for its defense and the Great Quay was fortified with cannon. The Towngate stood strategically on a narrow neck of land at Hunger Hill, near the demolished Railway Hotel, under the Towngate Bridge.

Defensible land on the peninsula was much narrower than it is today. The line from Thames Street along Strand Street and its continuation along Paradise Street forms the approximate line where the southern medieval shoreline may have been. West Street forms the approximate line of the western shoreline. The town's surviving medieval architecture reflects its important port status from this period. The core of medieval buildings constructed on the oldest part of the Quay at the Great Quay, as it was known, date from circa 1300 and extended around the church at the south-west end of the High Street. The Town Cellars, also known as the Woolhouse or the King's Hall, were erected around that time to store "commodities of the staple" and large stocks of wool for shipping. Originally the longest such building known in northern Europe of that date, Thames Street was constructed through its western end in the late 18th century. With foundations dating from 1300 the Woolhouse is the centrepiece of a special group of buildings that together with the Custom House, King Charles Inn and Scaplens Court form the medieval core of the Quay Conservation Area.



*Thames Street, 1907 (T. Snook, Poole Museum)*

## 1.5 Tudor Period - 16th Century

The stability of the Tudor period brought prosperity and more permanent houses designed for comfort and entertaining. Poole men began crossing the Atlantic to fish for cod off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, after it was discovered by John Cabot in 1497. Merchant families such as the Havillands who served as town mayors and officials began securing and providing facilities for the community in the early 16th century. A windmill was built on waste ground at 'Bayter' and a conduit head was set at Tatnam

to provide the towns fresh water supply. In 1524 major repairs were carried out on the town gate. In the 16th century the peninsula remained an island, entered by a Towngate, across the narrow neck of land that linked it to the mainland, roughly where the Hunger Hill roundabout is today. By the mid-16th century the Great Quay had been constructed in the area where Thames Street meets Paradise Street. In 1524 Quay stairs were being repaired and a wooden platform was constructed for mounting guns on the quayside, ornamented with posts carved with the Royal Tudor griffins and lions. By the late 16th century the area south of Strand Street had been reclaimed from the waters of the channel.

Leland records that this prosperity came quickly to Poole. In his itinerary c.1538 he notes that Poole “is no town of ancient occupying in merchandise; but rather of old time a poor fisshar village... [that men alive remembered almost all the town covered with sedge and rushes and that “it is in hominum memoria much increased with fair building and use of merchandise”. (Cullingford, p.20). Lelands comments appear well founded as the RCHM recorded over twenty surviving buildings of the 16th century in its 1970 landmark publication. The King Charles public house with its timber front to Thames Street is one of the best survivors of this period. By this period a substantial stone church had taken the place of what was likely a small wooden chapel (from the mid 12th century) on the site of the present Parish Church of St James. Some Market Street buildings date from the 16th century, though they have been restored.

Despite the relatively small size of Poole, with less than 1,400 inhabitants, Elizabeth I granted a Charter in 1568 to the Town which made it a county corporate separate from the County of Dorset and naming it the ‘County of the Town of Poole’. The Charter enabled the Mayor and Bailiffs to “purchase and possess all manner of goods, lands, tenements, liberties and hereditaments whatsoever”. A Sheriff was appointed and made responsible for the town gaol and executing punishments. The Charter also freed the Town from the Manor of Canford and established a Mayor elected by the burgesses.



*Lower Thames Street looking towards the channel (Poole Museum).*

## 1.6 17th Century Development

By 1688 the Town had an unfinished character. The Quays stretched from where Hamworthy Bridge is today to the Museum. The town was still reached through the old stone Towngate which was positioned on a narrow neck of land between thirty and fifty yards wide at high water tide. Beyond the quays were the mudlands reaching to Baiter with the saltworkings further along the shore. In Hamworthy the Corporation's new ballast quay was in operation near some small shipyards dotted along the (now

Backwater) channel edge. The Passage House public house was a landmark on Ballast Quay for many years serving as the terminus for the only boat ferry that carried passengers to Poole from Hamside (Hillier, *Pride of Poole*, 1974).



*Town Quay from Hamworthy 1840*

The second boom in Poole's development occurred in the late 17th century spurred by the North Atlantic trade in fish and associated products. No substantial buildings survive intact in the historic town core from this period. The most important building work of this period was the construction of the Little Quay in the early part of the century and the New Quay in the later decades.

## 1.7 Georgian Pride: 18th Century



*Skinner Street, Chapel, circa 1821 (Grade II \* listed)*

The wealth from the fisheries trade created extensive building in the town in the 18th century (see Map 1B). Many of the best surviving buildings date from this period. With this rise in trade came the regaining of the Borough's ancient liberties and rights, with new families and merchants rising to prominence to dominate the power and political structure over the next two centuries. In 1750 Dr Pocock observed "There are several quays at the end of the town and on each side of the merchants yard go to the water and some have quays to them. They have some Newfoundland trade and a considerable business in building

ships and bringing the materials; they are also employed in fishing, having beside the common sea fish plenty of soles and John Dory and very large oysters...".

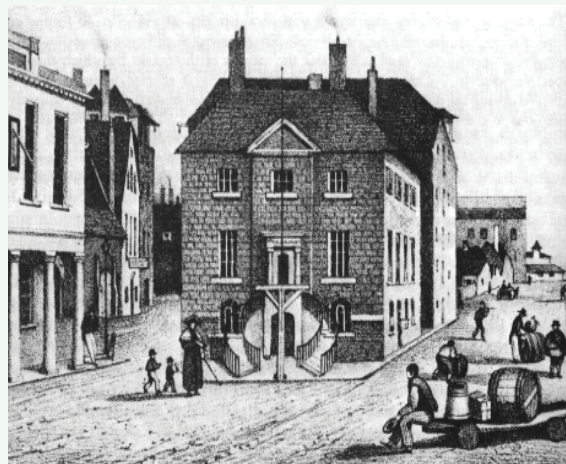
The merchants built their estates and large houses in the Town and on the north shore of Holes Bay at Upton. A series of about a dozen important merchants houses with the earliest being 87 High Street (dated 1704) surviving as good examples of this prosperous century. Sir Peter Thompson House (1746-49), West End House and 20 Market Street are the best period examples. A number of good smaller Georgian Houses survive from the 18th century with 60 examples noted in the 1970 RCHM publication. The single fronted houses tend to date from the later 18th century. The Skinner Street Congregational Chapel of 1777 is another noteworthy Georgian period building and remarkable survivor which forms the essential historic core of the south Lagland Street area.

The construction of the Guildhall in 1761 on Market Street reflected the affluence of the day. The rebuilding of St James Church that was begun in 1819 was the other major public building constructed in the late Georgian period though not all building was of such a high quality. By 1802 Poole's Newfoundland trade was at the peak of its prosperity and the town's population increased substantially between 1811 and 1821. As a result many poorly built cottages were constructed after the Napoleonic wars as piecemeal, speculative developments that would not be durable enough to survive into the later 20th century.

Other improvements such as the opening up of road access onto the still lengthening quays were made to accommodate the all important port activities. The New Quay was built south of Strand Street between 1751-74. Later in the 18th century the Great Quay and Little Quay were extended southward with the construction of a new quay wall and jetties. Generally the town met the needs and the architecture expressed the aspirations of Georgian society with a Guildhall, market-house, prison, large parish church and non-conformist chapels, free-schools, almshouses, merchant houses with views of the bay and a London coach with daily postal deliveries. The Directory of 1830 described Poole as the town with the most considerable port and most populous town in the country ... with many handsome buildings.



*Market Street view to the Guildhall*



*The Custom House, nearest the Quayside and facing the Harbour Masters Office, about 1822*

## 1.8 Victorian Growth

Decline progressed rapidly from the collapse of the Newfoundland fisheries and the obstacles presented by the compacted sandy "bar" in the harbour that prevented the development of the port for big ships. By the time of Queen Victoria's accession in 1837 distress had set into the town with 6,500 people crammed onto the peninsula of 160 acres along with shops, breweries and warehouses. The larger mansions had been converted to flats, new terraces were built along the back gardens of existing terraces. East of the towngate houses were thrown up on lands occupied by the Napoleonic soldiers on new roads like Trafalgar and Nile Row.

Despite the many economic setbacks of the period the major infrastructure of the town was largely put into place by the Victorians after the passing of the Municipal Corporation Act. By 1833, the Muncipal Borough was created by amaganting Longfleet, Parkstone and Hamworthy. The land reclamation and quay developments which essentially re-shaped the peninsula into the heart shape it has today were constructed by 1900. The first

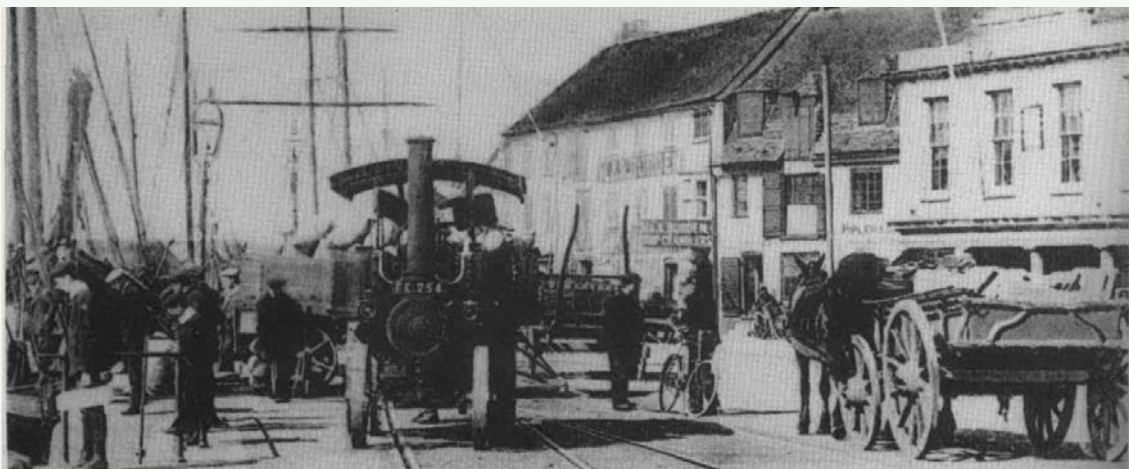


*Poole Railway Station 1960  
'Arrival from Waterloo',  
(copyright Rodney Legg Collection)*

wooden bridge from the west quay to Hamworthy was built by 1834 and its iron replacement was constructed by 1885. The Turnpike Trust was dissolved in 1882 after it had extended the High Street into Longfleet in 1837. By 1847 Hamworthy Quay Railway Station had been built by Castleman on a branch of the London to Dorchester Railway and a wharf was built above the bridge to take cargoes. When the railway line from Poole to Bournemouth was constructed Towngate Street and Poole High Street were cut across and the railway was constructed only slightly above sea level. By 1872 the main passenger railway station was built near the High Street with a two level crossings. A single footbridge is still in place dating from the period.

By 1850 Bournemouth was becoming the more fashionable location to develop and live in. The completion of the railway into Hamworthy Junction Station in 1847 contributed to the decline of the port as rail transport replaced coastal shipping as the most up to date mode of transporting goods.

Even though Bournemouth's suburban growth outstripped Poole at this time, Poole businesses like Sydenhams and Nortons contributed and benefitted by supplying timber shipped and imported from the Baltics and Quebec to and from their wharves along West Quay. Slates were brought into Poole from North Wales. An abundance of clay on both sides of the harbour provided raw material for bricks, floors, wall tiles and pipes. George Jenning's South-Western Pottery Co. was established in Parkstone to produce bricks, drainpipes, sanitary ware and later architectural terra cotta. By the mid-1880s Jesse Carter's pottery (later the internationally known Poole Pottery) had expanded to cover part of the East Quay, near the gasworks, up to the harbour's edge. G. and T. Belben in the central Quay (now demolished but where Dundees is today), milled grain for the hinterland taken off its own vessels. The Poole foundry established at 1841 on Baiter Green, between Green Road and South Road, produced the threshing machines as well as steam launches and locomotives that served the industrial revolution in the countryside to the north and on the sea. The owner of the foundry later went on to establish the Dorset Foundry on West Quay Road. The town's shops and businesses served the maritime and agricultural industries from the region.



*Quay Railway lines circa 1900*

Few large Victorian houses were built in Poole's town centre as the leafy green suburban locations were more desirable and the old town was densely built up with little scope for new development. The lower portions of several grand Georgian houses on the High Street were converted to meet the need for shops. Despite economic difficulties some good Victorian public buildings were built in styles exhibiting the last great burst of 19th century civic pride that inspired them. The Old Library, non-conformist churches and chapels and some shopfronts, survive to represent the values and architectural aspirations of the Victorian townspeople.

The century ended with the council establishing ownership over the reclaimed lands behind the new quays and the Harbour Commissioners retaining a lease over a 30 foot strip along the waters edge.

The Corporation built a new Fisherman's Dock at the eastern end of the new quays and extended it outwards so that a much greater depth of water along the quay was secured.

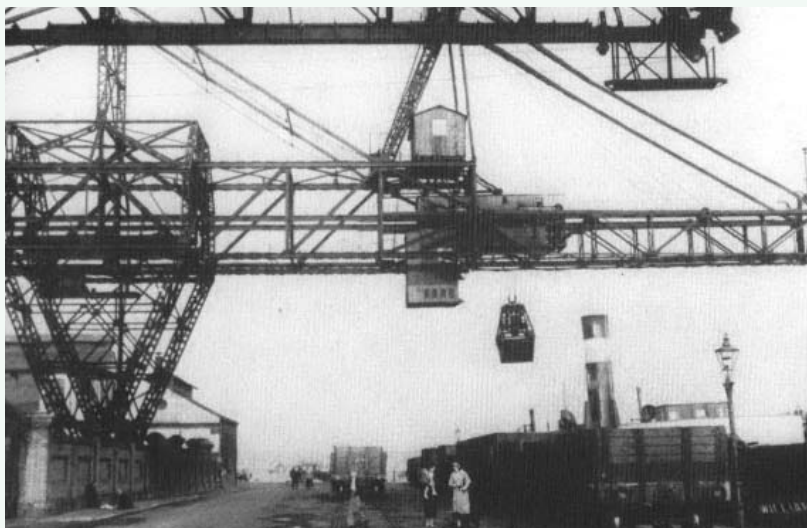
## 1.9 20th Century Transformation

In 1900 the Poole and District Electric Traction Co. laid tramlines and overhead wires linking the Old Town at Poole Station to the new suburbs and to Westbourne. The company was then taken over by the Corporation in 1905 and operated for the next 30 years as the main public transport system in the Borough.

Other improvements in education led to the construction of the South Street School in 1912 to replace the British Schools on Lagland and Skinner Streets and the Borough's first secondary school was built on Kingland Road and later renamed the Grammar School. The South Street School is the only one to survive to this day in the peninsula.

Building in the early 20th century was interrupted by WWI which ushered in a transitional period in architectural design and gradual breaking out from traditional built forms to the suburban styles favoured by speculative builders. New mass-produced, building materials offered a wider palette of cost-effective choices for architects and surveyors to select from. The suburbs of Poole developed rapidly but the town centre continued to suffer from poor investment and transport problems.

The opening of the third Hamworthy bridge in 1927 freed up the flow of traffic through the Old Town. A revival of interest in Poole's past and heritage occurred in the 1920s. The headmaster at South Road School, HP Smith, led the excavation of an Iron Age/ Romano-British site on the Carter tile site at Lower Hamworthy. A storm exposed the medieval origins of Scaplens Court. The introduction of motorbuses led to the closure of the electric trams in 1935. Between the wars the large gasholder became a landmark on East Quay where it was linked by a bridge transport to the reclaimed land at Pitwines (from the Quay Thistle site to Sainsburys). By 1935 135,000 tons of coal were being unloaded every year from the quay. Major employers such as the gas company and the internationally reknown Carter, Stabler and Adams Pottery were located on the east quay.







*East Quay Gasworks Coal Transporters (site of Quay Thistle Hotel)*

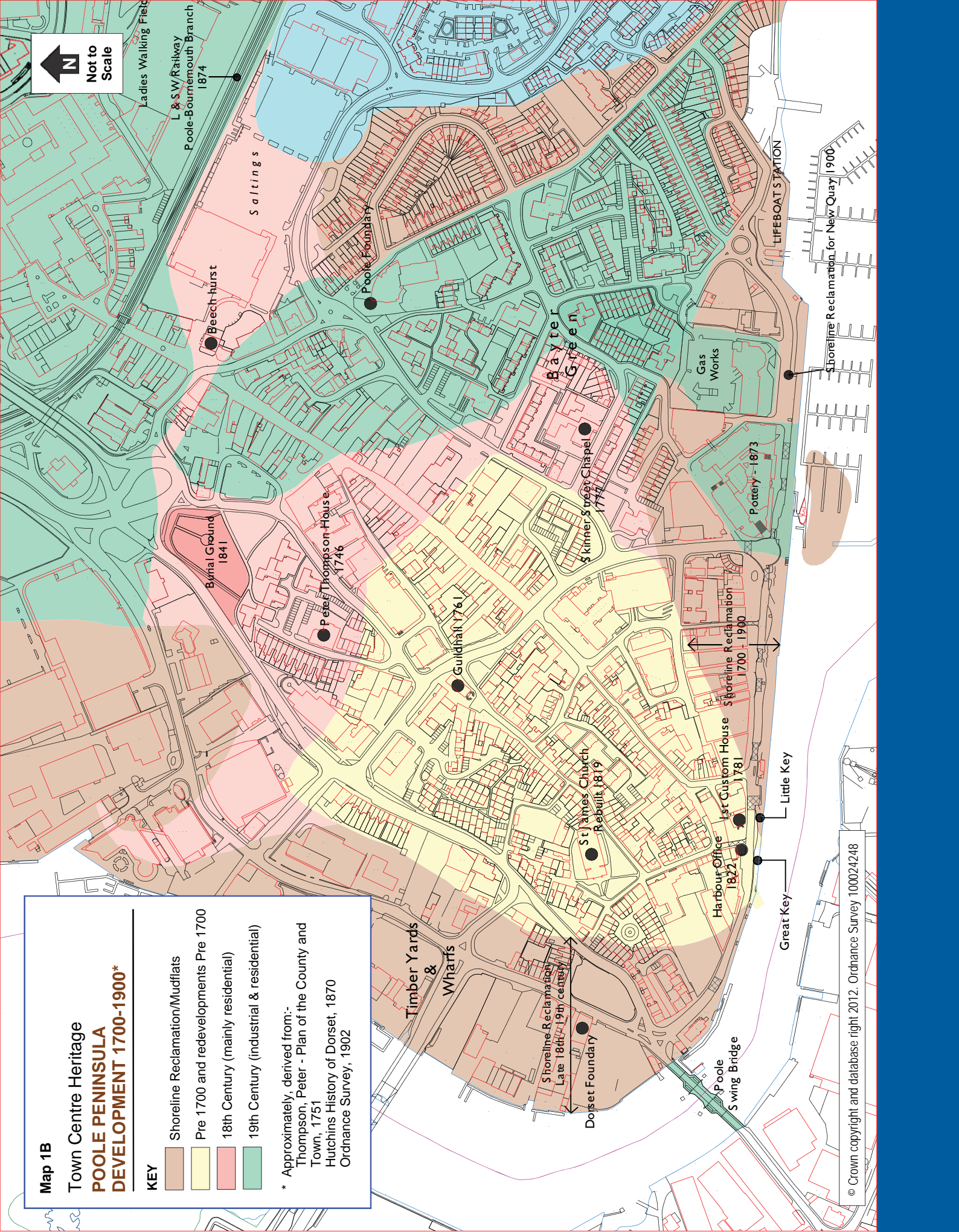
Map 1B

Town Centre Heritage  
**POOLE PENINSULA  
DEVELOPMENT 1700-1900\***

KEY

-  Shoreline Reclamation/Mudflats
-  Pre 1700 and redevelopments Pre 1700
-  18th Century (mainly residential)
-  19th Century (industrial & residential)

\* Approximately, derived from:  
Thompson, Peter - Plan of the County and  
Town, 1751  
Hutchins History of Dorset, 1870  
Ordnance Survey, 1902



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## 1.10 World War II and Early Planning

Poole played a major role during WWII as a key location within Churchill's plan to transform the south coast from a bastion of defence to a springboard of attack. The old town was already overcrowded with port installations, factories, petrol storage tanks and gasworks which made protecting and diverting attacks a priority. The town served as a base for the supplies to allied forces in Europe and the third largest embarkation point for the D-Day landings. The Quay became the busy centre of the Airways Marine Service and the Marine Department of Securities and Customs which took over part



*Soldiers marching past the Custom House (Poole Museum)*

of Carter's quayside pottery. Poole also became a hub for international air travellers using the Empire Services transferred from Hythe. Though Poole fared much better than some cities and towns the legacy of the war remains in evidence. Buildings such as the Sunday school opposite St. James Church, the High Street, Quayside buildings at Barbers Pile and Yeat's mill were also bombed.

## 1.11 Housing and Commercial Renewal

The housing renewal projects, construction of the Arndale shopping centre (now the Dolphin Centre) at the north end of the High Street and road and transport improvements were the most significant historic events to affect the peninsula in the second half of the 20th century. Anxious to move the Borough into the post-war era the official 1952 Town Map and accompanying Written Statement did not refer to any proposals for the Old Town. Planners were aware that land use conflicts were arising from the horseshoe of industrial warehouses, factories, and expanded gasworks surrounding a precinct of medieval and Georgian houses. The street pattern and widths were largely medieval and the population of the 177 acres of the Old Town development area was about the same as it was in 1801, at 4,665 residents. The two level crossings in the High Street and Towngate Street, lack of car parks and narrow roads disrupted the passage of vehicles and people through the Lower Town. The operations at the Generating Station, which began in 1951 at Hamworthy, meant that colliers carrying coal from Humberside had to pass through the town so frequently that the lifting bridge had to close to traffic 12 to 20 times a day making "Poole about as impregnable for road traffic as an ancient walled town"

The same year as the Town Plan was presented The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments reported on its year long survey of the Lower Town and recommended the Minister schedule 253 buildings as sites of architectural or historical interest. By 1960 the idea of designating the Old Town of Poole as a special garden precinct roughly between Thames Street, High Street and Market Street seemed to resolve some debates over the extent of the clearances. The area would become the precursor of the Old Town Conservation Area.



*Second Ed. O.S. Map, 1902 shows the built up character of the peninsula*

The Guildhall, Harbour Office, Town Cellars, Scaplens Court and Parish Hall of St. James formed the core of the garden precinct along with adjacent sub standard houses in need of restoration, a scrap yard, an iron foundry and various engineering works. In addition the area contained 30 shops, 6 public houses and three restaurants. In 1964 a condition assessment of the historic properties was carried out and a conservation policy was published. The Council took a lead role in purchasing properties and leasing them to tenants on the basis that the tenants would restore the buildings, using grants wherever necessary. New developments on industrial plots on Thames Street were considered high quality contemporary designs. Flat developments on New Orchard Street were designed by the Borough Architects and won Department of the Environment housing awards. Extensive restoration work was also carried out on Scaplens Court in 1960 and on the Town Cellars in the 1970s and 1980s.

By 1960 the Council's policy of providing as many new homes as possible in or near the Old Town, as high density blocks of flats, was well under way. The intention was to re-house the residents moved from the demolition sites. The council's Works Departments completed Lagland Court (50 flats) in 1960 and a private firm completed 14 flats on Skinner Street in 1961. In 1962 Nelson Court was completed (63 flats), and agreements for constructing Rodney and Drake Courts of 11 storeys (62 flats each). These tower block developments transformed the scale and physical environment of the east side of the peninsula in a dramatic way.

At the same time as the town centre renewal was being considered other plans were being made for addressing retail shortages in a town with a rapidly growing population. A shopping precinct north of the railway was envisioned as the two railway level crossings made it difficult to enter the Lower Town. The retail development was progressed with an offer to reclaim the mudflats of Baiter to compensate for the replacement of the Ladies Walking Field, with car parks for the new civic/shopping centre. The High Street that once extended into Parkstone and Wimborne Road was demolished for the Arndale Centre and Towngate Bridge.

After much debate the Council's resolution to re-house displaced residents with new housing in the historic core and on Hamworthy was largely achieved by 1968 when Grenville Court, the last multi-storey block, was completed. Poor access through railway level crossings and the narrow medieval streets and alleyways necessitated the design of a whole new road network to link the east and west sides of the peninsula.

The construction of the road network and related multi-storey car parks were achieved by demolishing old buildings mainly on Castle Street (now Fish Street), King Street (now Old Orchard), Lagland Street and West Street. The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments noted that of the 328 monuments standing in the central area over half were demolished by 1970. The work of retaining and renovating the Georgian Precinct which had been identified in the Poole Plan proved more problematic for officers who faced opposition from some members who considered the renovation option to be "impracticable". The debates that ensued around demolition and conservation are recorded by Hillier and Blythe in *Poole's Pride Regained*.



*Rear Thames Street & St Clements Lane 15thc,  
Boundary Wall, originally on shoreline*

## 1.12 Town Centre North



*Kingland Road demolition, 1960's*

Plans for the development of a new shopping area linked to a transport scheme for the north town above the railway tracks were delayed by appeals to the government as matters could not be resolved locally. The Minister's 1963 decision to allow a 43 acre reclamation of the mudlands between Baiter and Whitecliff would go some way in providing the green open space lost by building shops, a bus station and car park on the Ladies Walking field though many strongly objected to its loss. At the same appeal plans and approval for the area south of the railway, including the new roads, Hunger Hill roundabout and bridge over the railway, and the special historic precinct, were debated and approved. The Borough Engineer's landmark map of 1952 indicates the location of the new roads prior to the demolition work that cleared the way for them.

Some impacts from the 1960s plans that were implemented remain to this day affecting movement patterns between the old and "new" parts of the town. Tall buildings set back from the quayside punctuate the skyline and dominate views above the 18th and 19th century roofscapes. The demolition of Towngate Street with the old Poole railway station, which survived the Beeching cuts, and the Station Hotel left a blank slate for the new shopping precinct. The construction of Towngate Bridge in 1971-72 separated the railway from the pedestrian areas except where a road link was maintained under the raised bridge and the second level crossing met the High Street. The north High Street is a pedestrian precinct with Falkland Square forming a rear courtyard at the entrance to the Arndale Shopping Centre (now the Dolphin Centre). The Arndale Centre incorporated the functions of a library and sports centre, with the adjacent Dolphin Swimming Pool and Arts Centre (now the Lighthouse) completing the civic developments.

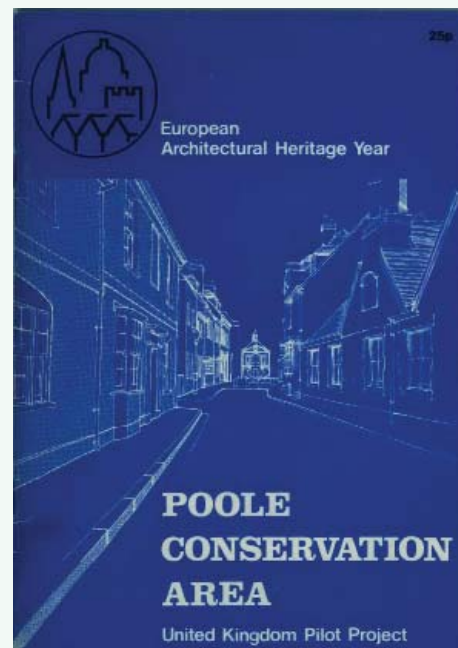


*Towngate Street prior to demolition (Poole Museum)*

Much of the restoration work in the Old Town was celebrated in 1972 with the opening of the refurbished Guildhall as a Museum. The Old Town Conservation Area was the first historic area to be designated in Poole in 1974. In 1975 Poole was chosen by the Council of Europe for Architectural Heritage Year as one of four pilots in the UK demonstrating a comprehensive approach to area conservation. The Town Quay and High Streets were designated in 1981 and 1986 respectively. A considerable amount

of engineering work to improve the quayside sea defences, promenade and yacht harbour was completed in the late 1990s. The aspiration to remove the last major industrial complex from East Quay led to the demolition of Poole Potteries late 19th century warehouses and kilns and to the development of Dolphin Quays. Dolphin Quays is the first tall building built in the Conservation Area not designed in the traditional warehouse style common to other quayside buildings. Future developments are planned for West Quay between the Old Lifting Bridge and new Twin Sails Bridge.

The tower blocks of flats and multi-storey car parks east of the High Street, and smaller blocks of flats and terraced housing which integrated more comfortably within the Old Town, all represent a specific response to address derelict housing and conditions that grew up in the 20th century. The salvage and restoration of the core of the Old Town in the 1960s and 1970s was a major achievement given the cultural values of that time. Quayside Conservation Area developments in the 1990s that have transformed a working port to a residential and leisure area were driven by the economic climate and international trends in port renewal.



*UK Pilot Project for 1975*

As challenges remain to shape new buildings, landscapes and infrastructure and integrate the present needs of the 21st century with the existing historic environment, it is important to look to the past to avoid repeating mistakes to pass onto future generations.



*St James' School Hall, Church Street was bomb-damaged but later re-built, 1942 (Poole Historical Trust)*



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### Further Information

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