

WALK 1

Blandford
Forum

Walk Dorset's History

🕒 90 minutes to walk, sit and enjoy
reading the information



Stepping
into
nature

Welcome! As part of the Stepping into Nature project led by the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty team, we have produced a series of self-guided walks.

These easy access routes highlight the local history, as well as other fun snippets of information that you will find along the route.

Further Information: www.stepin2nature.org



Distance

1.2 miles/ 2km



Suggested time

90 minutes to walk, sit and enjoy reading the information.



Difficulty

Generally level route on tarmacked paths. Slight incline around the church.



Facilities

Along the route you will find many places for refreshments. Public toilets are by the Information Centre in Marsh & Ham Car Park.



Transport

Car park and bus stop are within a 5-minute walk.



Route map



Suggested starting point

Stour Meadows Car Park (free), Blandford St Mary, Blandford Forum, DT11 9LS



Points of interest



Toilets



Seating



Suggested parking



Start on the path at the furthest point of the Stour Meadows Car Park from the entrance.

We are on the outskirts of the town centre. If you look to your left, you will see signs of its industrial past in the form of the Hall and Woodhouse Brewery.

This advert is over 100 years old and shows the Brewery in its prime. Whiskies, wines, champagnes, brandies...you name it, they're doing it!

The Brewery is still in operation today, though on a smaller scale as some of the less historic buildings have been redeveloped for housing.



Follow the path to stand on the blue bridge over the River Stour.

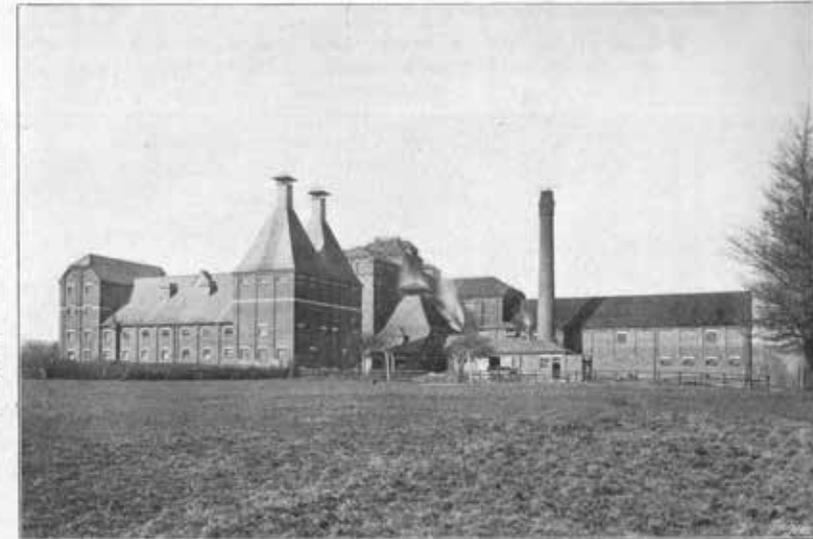
Established 1777.

Telegraphic Address—
"Woodhouse, Blandford."

District Agencies
for—

MARTELL'S BRANDIES.
MOET & CHANDON'S
CHAMPAGNES.
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN WINES
(Orion Brand)
(bearing Government Experts'
Certificate of Genuineness).

N.B.—Wholesale Traders supplied on very best terms.



HALL & WOODHOUSE, Ltd.

Branch Office—
9 & 10, THE BLOCKS.

Blandford Brewery, BLANDFORD.

Brewers, Maltsters, Beer Bottlers, Hop Merchants,

Importers and Bonders of Wines and Spirits,
and Aerated Water Manufacturers.



Other Agencies
include—

Morizet's, J. Roussillon & Cie's,
Destz & Gelderman.
Roper Freres and Ackerman-
Laurance's Champagnes.

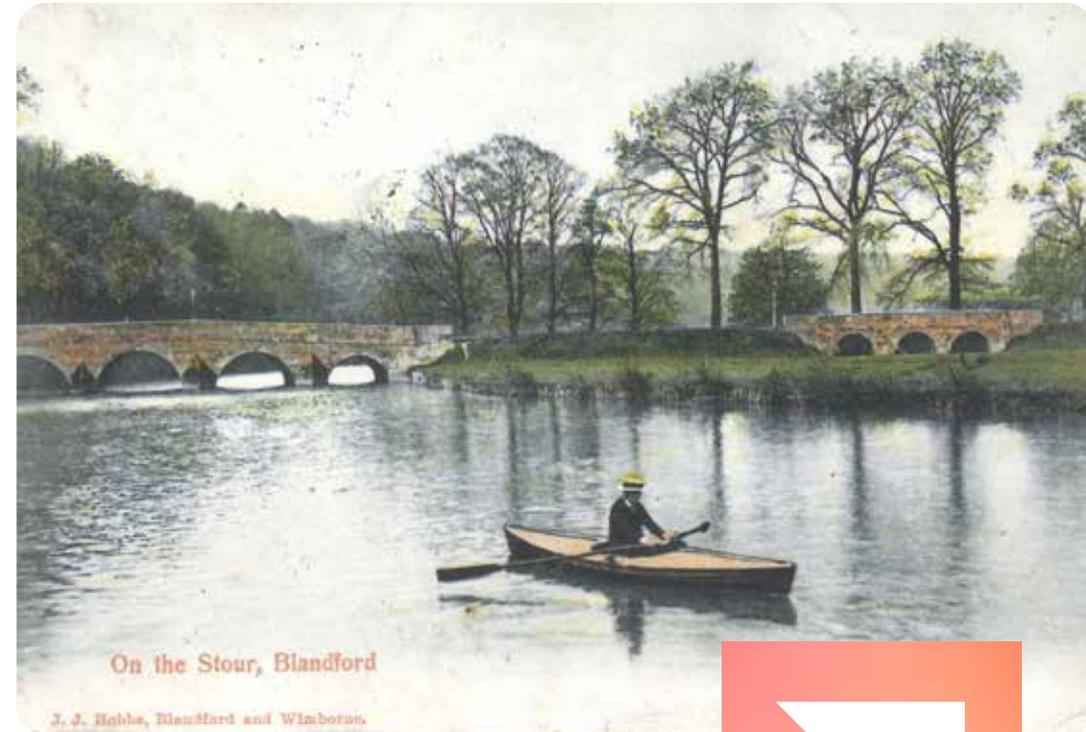
The River Stour



Compare the artificially coloured photo taken over 100 years ago to today.

The stone bridges were built another 140 years before this photo was taken, making the bridges over 240 years old!

Before the bridges were built people would use a ford to cross the river. The convenient crossing meant the town became a popular place to hold a market. The ford and the market, known as 'forum' in Latin, survive in the town's name today.



Continue across the bridges to Marsh & Ham Car Park. Take the exit right on West Street then cross the road at the first left to River Mews.



The river crossing was an important location to protect from German invasion during the Second World War. Read the information board to discover how it was defended.

Concrete defences were used back then, like the imaginatively named Dragons' Teeth pictured here, to stop the tanks. How many can you spot?



Can you imagine what it was like living in this town expecting an invasion at any time?



Cross back over the road and turn left. Follow the pavement as it bends right. Admire the buildings as you go. At the corner of the Market Place, use the zebra crossing to stand in the pedestrianised square.

Most of the buildings you see were rebuilt after a large fire swept through the town in 1731. In the years following, the town was redesigned by local architects known as the Bastard Brothers. Yes, they really did have this surname!

The result is that today we can see a fantastic town full of Georgian buildings. Look above the shop fronts and enjoy the decorative features on the buildings.



Use the photo to imagine how different the town would have felt 100 years ago. Think about all your senses.



Take a break here for refreshments. When ready continue along the left side of the street to the Town Hall.



The Town Hall

The Town Hall is one of the grandest Georgian buildings.



Read the inscription on a paving slab at its entrance. It explains the cause of the fire and its consequences very aptly!
A chandler is a candle-maker...



Continue and stop at the fountain outside the church.

This fountain was originally a water pump to supply the townsfolk. On the rear wall there is a monument to the fire.

Go into the church and admire the features.

We usually find historic parish churches have been added to and adapted over centuries. In this church however, we find a church built entirely in one style as the original was destroyed in the fire.



Exit the churchyard. Go up the slope on Church Walk. Take the path right that goes around the churchyard to the building shown.



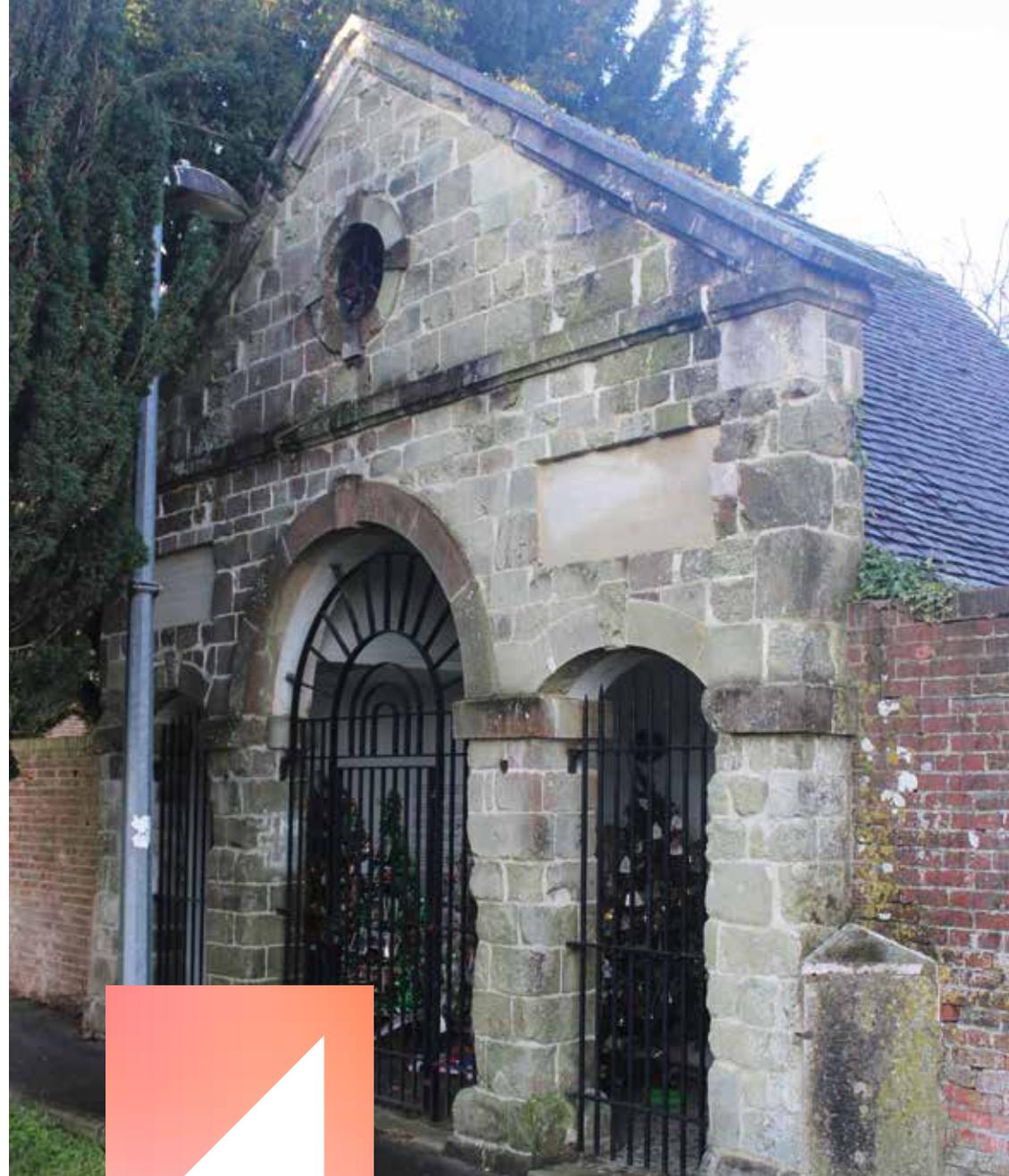
After the fire, the town's almshouses were built here. These were homes generally for older people and those on low incomes. In 1926, they were converted into a public bath house. Much of this was demolished about 20 years later, but the front of the building survives.



Read the information boards to find out about this building.



Continue on the path then turn left up Sheep Market Hill. At the top cross to Woodhouse Gardens.



Woodhouse Gardens



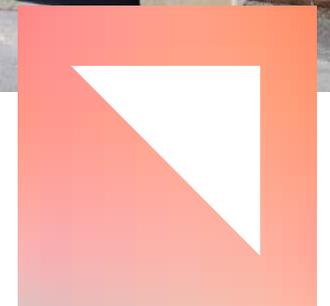
What do you think they would have used this open area for?
The clue is in the name of the road!

Enter Woodhouse Gardens. These originally belonged to Fields Oak, the now-demolished home of the Woodhouse family.

The family were one half of the partnership that owned the Hall and Woodhouse Brewery that you saw earlier. They joined the firm around 60 years after it was set up by Charles Hall.



Exit the gardens. Turn left onto Tabernacle Road. Continue until you reach The Old House on your right.

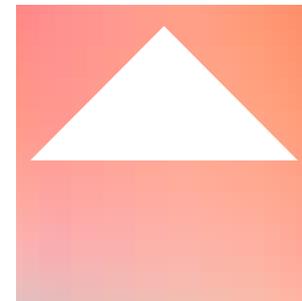
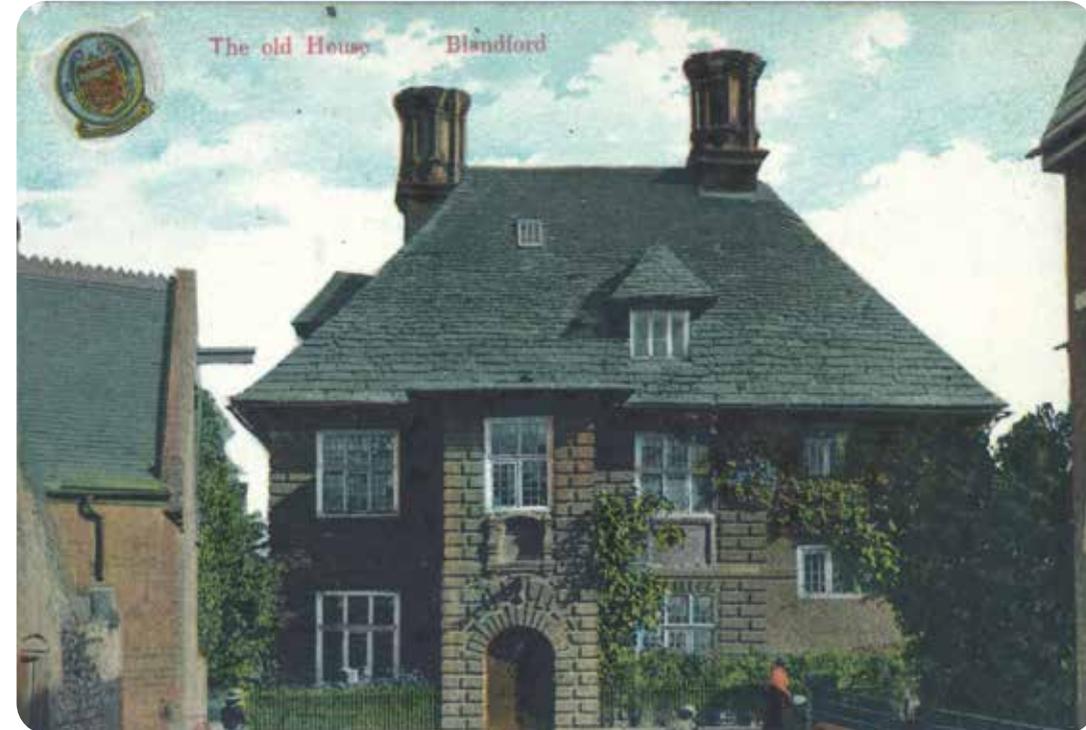


The Old House

The Old House was built 350 years ago. It may not be that old by comparison with buildings in some other historic towns but it is by Blandford's standards where so much was lost in the fire.



See if you can find the exact spot this photo was taken around 100 years ago.



Turn right down the narrow New Inn Lane next to The Old House. Go through New Inn Yard and turn left on East Street. Continue on East Street, crossing the road to walk on the right side of the road. Along the route enjoy the facts on the blue wall plaques put up by the Blandford Civic Society. Turn right to walk through the supermarket car park and continue to the far end. Take the path onto Langton Meadows.

Viaduct

To your left is the viaduct that took the Somerset and Dorset Railway towards Poole.

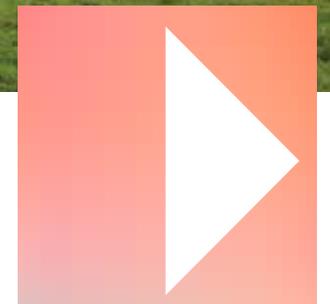
This line was one of many closed in the Beeching cuts to make the railways more efficient – its initials, and allegedly its performance, led to locals calling it the 'Slow and Dirty'!



Read the information boards under the arches for more on the railway and wildlife of Langton & Stour Meadows that we will be crossing next.



Continue along the path to go over the bridge. Follow the path across the meadows back to the car park. Admire the views and wildlife before heading home.



Looking for some more things to do?

Picnic in the Parks

Discover new experiences and enjoy fun health and nature-related activities at Picnic in the Parks.

You can access all of the other History walks from this series as well as lots of other activities, films and resources to help you live well and love nature.

picnicintheparks.org



Explore the unique, varied, and outstanding natural beauty of this AONB which underpins its designation as a nationally important protected landscape.

dorsetaonb.org

Find new places to go, learn new skills and meet like-minded people through nature-themed activities held indoors and out.

stepin2nature.org



Stepping into nature



Stepping into Nature

Stepping into Nature opens opportunities for people to connect with Dorset's fascinating landscape, wildlife, history and culture, helping people live happier and healthier lives for longer.

Using Dorset's natural and cultural landscape, the project creates activities and sensory rich places for older people, people living with long term health conditions, such as dementia, and their care partners.

The Stepping into Nature project is led by the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty team, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.





A series of easy access routes
highlighting local history and
the stories around them.

Other routes include

BLANDFORD FORUM

CERNE ABBAS

**EASTERN DORCHESTER
& FORDINGTON**

SHERBORNE

SWANAGE

WEYMOUTH

Further Information

www.stepin2nature.org