

The Roman West Gate

The western gate of the Roman town of Durnovaria stood near here, probably slightly further south towards the Borough Gardens.

From here ran Roman roads to other important towns; Ilchester - to your left - and Exeter - behind you. Ahead of you, down the hill, was the forum at the centre of the Roman town, possibly in front of St Peter's Church (the one with the tower on the left side of the road), and the road to London.

Durnovaria was a walled town. Dorchester's tree-lined walks follow the line of the walls, and you can see the remains of part of the Roman wall about 20 metres to your right.

Within the walls lay a carefully planned grid of streets. The main east, west, north and south routes are only very roughly the same as today's roads, and smaller Roman streets are buried beneath the medieval and later town.

We do not know the exact site of the West Gate, nor what it looked like, but using evidence from similar towns in Roman Britain, we can show what it might have been like in the fourth century. A timber bridge crosses the ditch and the road passes through a two-storey gateway, which has battlements and is built of the same stone as the walls.

The East Gate, down the hill, would have been the grandest gate, as it faced towards the capital, Londinium.

From *After the Fair* by Thomas Hardy

And midnight clears High Street of all but the ghosts
Of its buried burghes,
From the latest far back to those old Roman hosts
Whose remains one yet sees,
Who loved, laughed, and fought, hailed their friends, drank their toasts
At their meeting-times here, just as these!

Find out more...

- Visit the Roman Town House behind County Hall.
- Read *Roman Dorset* by Bill Putnam, and *Dorchester* by Steve Wallis.
- Discover items from the Roman town of Durnovaria in the Dorset County Museum.

How the West Gate might have looked. The gate led to the Decumanus Maximus, or High Street.

Interactive Dorchester



Scan the code for more features!

Dorchester was an army town from the time of the Romans until not that long ago. Can you see another army building from here?

The Dorchester Dormouse trail

