

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

TOWN WALKS, DORCHESTER

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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**TOWN WALKS, DORCHESTER**

Name:	TOWN WALKS, DORCHESTER
District:	Dorset (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Dorchester
label.localisation:	Latitude: 50.717819 Longitude: -2.4409200 National Grid Reference: SY 68969 91003, SY 69054 90329, SY 69470 90410 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001594 Date first listed: 18-Feb-2002

## Details

A group of early C18 public walks laid out on the course of Roman town walls.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Roman town of Durnovaria, which occupied the site of modern Dorchester, was protected by elaborate defences. An earth bank and ditch were constructed c AD 130, while after AD 300 a stone wall was constructed on the bank to increase the effectiveness of the defences. Following the Roman withdrawal the walls continued to be used to defend the medieval town, with the ditch being recut in the C14 or C15 (Colvin and Moggridge 2000). By the early C16 the Roman walls had been largely destroyed, but their alignment and associated embankments and ditches were shown on John Speed's Map of Dorsetshyre (1610) as 'The ruins of the ould wall'. During the Civil War in the mid C17 the earthworks were again used for defensive purposes, but c 1712 the tops of the embankments were flattened to form a series of walks or promenades on the west, south, and east sides of the town (RCHM(E) 1970). A prospect of Dorchester drawn by the antiquary the Rev Dr William Stukeley in 1723 (DRO) shows West Walks and Bowling Alley Walk planted with trees and separated from surrounding farmland outside the town by the remains of the Roman embankment. Hutchins' Map of Dorchester (1772) similarly shows the walks as tree-lined avenues on the course of the Roman defences to the west, south, and east of the town. In the late C18 and early C19 the areas immediately within the line of the Walks remained generally undeveloped, with detached town gardens separating West Walks and South Walks from the town (Hutchins, 1772; Map of Dorchester, 1848), while to the north-west Colliton Walk adjoined the grounds of Colliton House. During the C19 new houses were constructed fronting on to West Walks and South Walks, while in 1895 land to the west of West Walks was acquired by the Corporation for the construction of a public park, Borough Gardens (qv). To the south-east of the town, land adjoining Salisbury Walk was laid out as a recreation ground in the late C19. The Town Walks are mentioned in Thomas Hardy's novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), and today (2001) continue to form a prominent feature of the town.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** The site is divided into six tree-lined walks which are situated to the north-west, west, south-west, south, and south-east of the ancient centre of the town of Dorchester. The narrow rectangular sections which comprise the site here registered extend to c 7ha in total, and on plan describe three sides of a rectangular enclosure which represents the Roman settlement of Durnovaria. The promenades included in the registered site are North

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Walk, Colliton Walk, West Walks, Bowling Alley Walk, South Walks, Gallows Hill, and Salisbury Walk, together with the contiguous Salisbury Field.

North Walk runs parallel to Northernhay to the north-north-west of the town, while Colliton Walk runs parallel to and above The Grove to the north-west. North Walk and Colliton Walk are separated from the park (now, 2001, the site of municipal buildings) associated with Colliton House, a late C17 and early C18 town house built by the Churchill family c 50m east of the southern end of Colliton Walk, by high C18 stone and brick walls. Ornamental circular piers set into the wall on the east side of Colliton Walk retain remains of urn finials. West Walks are bounded to the east by early and mid C19 domestic properties, and to the west by metal fences and shrubbery separating them from Borough Gardens. Bowling Alley Walk to the south-west of the town is situated to the south of the grounds of the former General Hospital (now, 2001, laid out as a car park) from which it is separated by a C19 brick wall; to the south lie commercial properties fronting on to Great Western Road. To the south of the town, South Walks are bounded to the north by domestic and commercial properties and car parks, and to the south by South Walks Road, beyond which survive several substantial late C19 detached villas, together with C20 offices. At the eastern end of South Walks, Gallows Hill forms an open space bounded to the north by the former rectory and to the south by an extension of South Walks Road. To the west it is separated from South Walks by Icen Way, while to the north Gallows Hill adjoins Salisbury Walk, which is bounded to the west by domestic properties and to the east by Salisbury Field. Salisbury Field is in turn bounded to the north by Salisbury Villas and other mid C19 domestic properties, and to the east by the mid C19 Victoria Buildings. Constructed on the levelled summit of the Roman defensive embankment, the Town Walks form level promenades, with the exception of Gallows Hill which slopes gently from north to south. Town Walks are a prominent feature of the town of Dorchester, and form the setting for a significant number of listed structures.

**OTHER LAND** North Walk is raised above the level of Northernhay to the north by a north-facing grass slope. The tarmac promenade extends c 150m from east to west and is flanked by an avenue of limes and horse chestnuts of various ages. The walk turns sharply south to become Colliton Walk, which extends c 250m south along the western boundary of Colliton Park. Colliton Walk is planted with a mixed avenue of limes, horse chestnuts, and sycamores of various ages, and is similarly raised above the level of the adjacent road, The Grove, by a west-facing grass slope.

To the south of Colliton Walk lies West Gate, the western termination of High West Street. Commercial properties extend c 140m south, separating Colliton Walk to the north from West Walks to the south. West Walks are entered immediately to the south of the junction of Albert Road and Prince's Street. The promenade extends c 290m from north to south, and is planted with mature horse chestnuts set on grass verges. It is adjoined to the east by groups of early and mid C19 houses, some of which have stuccoed facades; a cottage c 190m south along West Walks bears a date stone inscribed 1705 (RCHM(E) 1970) which may indicate the date of the levelling of the defensive embankment. To the west the walk adjoins the late C19 Borough Gardens, from which it is partly screened by mature ornamental shrubbery. Pedestrian gates lead from West Walks into the public park, which was intended by the Corporation to form a pleasure ground extension to West Walks (inscription on Borough Gardens fountain, 1898). At their southern end West Walks turn sharply east to become Bowling Alley Walk. This promenade extends c 160m from west to east, where it is terminated by South Gate. The walk is planted with an avenue of sycamores and horse chestnuts of various ages and is flanked by wide grass verges.

South Gate at the eastern end of Bowling Alley Walk is today a major road junction which separates Bowling Alley Walk from South Walks to the east. South Walks extend c 400m from west to east, the wide tarmac promenade passing through an avenue of mature horse chestnuts and flanked to north and south by grass verges. To the west, South Walks are terminated by an early C20 stone war memorial of classical form, while to the east they are terminated by a late C20 sculpture group comprising three bronze figures set on a cobbled base which commemorate Dorset martyrs of the Reformation (inscription). The grass verge to the south of South Walks is separated from the public road immediately to the south by a chain supported on ornamental wrought-iron uprights of early C20 design. To the north, c 45m north-east of the war memorial, South Lodge, a mid C18 stuccoed villa, stands in gardens separated from South Walks by spear-headed railings set on a low brick wall. To the east of Acland Road, a group of mid C19 villas are separated from the promenade by brick walls surmounted by tall piers and railings. To the south of South Walks Road C19 and C20 offices and substantial villas are set behind brick and stone boundary walls and trees.

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To the east of South Walks, Gallows Hill comprises an area of lawn planted with mature specimen trees which is retained above the road to the south by a low stone wall. The lawn is crossed from south-west to north-east by a tarmac footpath which forms a link between South Walks and Salisbury Walk to the north. Salisbury Walk extends c 190m from south-east to north-west, and is bounded to the west by brick and stone walls; to the north the axis of the walk is continued by Salisbury Street, a mid C19 development of domestic properties. The tarmac promenade is flanked by an avenue of mature horse chestnuts, while to the east a gentle grass slope descends to Salisbury Field. Salisbury Field is laid out as a recreation ground with gravel walks running parallel to the north-east and south-east boundaries; spurs lead from the perimeter walks to provide access to the mid C19 terraces which overlook the field. The walks pass beneath mature specimen trees, while near the northern corner of the site is a group of late C20 children's play equipment. Salisbury Field was laid out as a recreation ground adjoining Salisbury Walk c 1900; its present plan closely reflects that shown on the OS map of 1903.

With the exception of Salisbury Field, the area here registered corresponds to the Dorchester Roman Walls Scheduled Ancient Monument.

#### REFERENCES

H J Moule, *Dorchester Antiquities* (1906), pp 21-5 RCHM(E), *An Inventory of Historical Monuments in the County of Dorset* 2, part I (south-east), (1970), pp 104-29 *Historic Landscape Survey and Management Plan*, Borough Gardens, Dorchester, (Colvin and Moggridge 2000), pp 5-8, 16-9

Maps J Speed, *Map of Dorsetshyre*, 1610 Hutchins, *Map of Dorchester*, 1772 (Dorset Record Office) *Tithe map for Dorchester parish*, 1840 (Dorset Record Office) *Map of Dorchester*, 1848 (Dorset Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1903 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1887 2nd edition published 1902 3rd edition published 1928 OS 10' to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1887

Illustrations W Stukeley, *View of Dorchester from the south-west*, 1723 (Dorset Record Office)

Description written: August 2001 Register Inspector: JML Edited: November 2002

## Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.