

DEANS COURT

WIMBORNE, DORSET

THE SITE of Deans Court has been inhabited for over 1200 years, with a continuous association with the Minster. Initially the location of a Saxon monastery and nunnery, it subsequently evolved into a Deanery, a Manorial Court, a farm and a family house.

THE GARDEN of 13 acres, once formal, was simplified at the end of the 18th century, and now consists mainly of lawns, trees, a semi-wild woodland, a walled kitchen garden, an orchard, rose garden and a herb garden. Situated on the River Allen, a stone's throw from the Minster, the garden surrounds a domestic building that has stood here in various forms since the mid-14th century, built upon the remains of Wimborne's Saxon monastery and nunnery.

THE RIVER ALLEN (formerly the River Wim), runs through the grounds and feeds the pond when water levels are high enough. Further on, a system of leats (water channels) feed water meadows, and the remnants of a mill first recorded in the Domesday Book.

THE POND is probably Saxon, and excavated as a monastery fishpond. Lined with puddle-clay and gravel, it would have been stocked mainly with carp. With its long, narrow design and shallow depth (4ft) it was essentially an early fish farm.

THE TREES include interesting mature and recently planted specimens. The Mexican Swamp Cypress (Map #11), 110 ft and the Tulip (12), 90 ft were probably planted by Thomas Hanham of Deans Court, who in 1606 captained a ship that made the return journey to New England to survey the area that was settled at Fort St. George the following year. Other trees include a Caucasian Wingnut (24), two Mulberries (28), Ginko (25), Catalpa (26), Walnut (27), Handkerchief (28), two Wellingtonias (29) and a Magnolia Grandiflora (30), planted against the house c.1870.

THE HERB GARDEN used to be a Victorian rose garden but with increasing numbers of deer in the grounds, it was redesigned for the cultivation of herbs, and the roses were replanted in a walled space off the Kitchen Garden. The herb garden at times contains up to 200 varieties of culinary and medical herbs.

THE KITCHEN GARDEN of $\frac{3}{4}$ acre is surrounded on two sides by a long serpentine wall, thought to have been built by Napoleonic prisoners of war, circa 1790. The kitchen garden was the first ever to be accredited by the Soil Association, and produces vegetables, fruit and flowers chemically-free. Produce is often for sale.

THE ROSE GARDEN is accessed through a gate in the north east corner of the kitchen garden.

THE HOUSE was originally the Deanery to the Minster and dates from the reign of King Edward III (1327-1377), when the first Dean was appointed. The Minster became a College of Secular Canons following its rebuild by King Edward the Confessor after its destruction by the Danes in AD 802. At the Dissolution of the Chantries in 1548 the college was closed and the Manor of Wimborne Deanery was granted to the Hanham family which has lived here ever since. Originally a single-room hall house, enlargements took place in the 16th century, and again in 1725 with the addition of the red brick facade to the North and East of the house, possibly by the Bastard brothers who rebuilt Blandford in the 1730s. In 1868 the old hall was rebuilt on the South and West side (by herb garden). Some of the 16th stained glass was reset in Victorian windows. At the same time the kitchen, which occupied the herb garden, was demolished and re-housed in the room formerly occupied by the Manorial Court. The Court sat until 1849, but complete judicial records exist.

WC A WC (with disabled access) is located off the herb garden. Please follow signs.