

Winchester: Thinking Ahead factsheet 6

History and heritage

“At times of turbulence and stress the past becomes more, not less important: it is a reassuring expression of continuity, a cultural resource, and a means of understanding the present.

“The public realm is the sphere where people enjoy the sense of belonging, where they can find common meaning and collective purpose, and where they can draw confidence from a sense of continuity between past and present. Such is the Cultural Value of heritage.”

Turbulent Times, the Prospects for Heritage, Robert Hewison and John Holden, 2014.

- c. 70 AD - c. 450 What is now Winchester was the Roman town of Venta Belgarum. Previously the settlement had been the home of the Belgae tribe. The walls were built c. 200.
- c. 650 Cenwealh, King of Wessex, builds the Old Minster.
- 686 - 927 Winchester is the capital of Wessex.
- 871 - 899 Alfred (later to be the only monarch known as The Great) rules as king of Wessex, defending the kingdom against the Vikings and becoming the dominant ruler in England. He promotes education in English (instead of Latin) and consolidated the language.
- 927 - 1066 Winchester is capital of England. Shortly after the Norman Conquest, the old Saxon royal palace is demolished and building of King William's palace begins.
- 1079 Building of the new cathedral begins. It becomes a site of pilgrimage to the shrine of St Swithun, second only to Canterbury.
- 1222-35 The Great Hall is built by Henry III
- c. 1300 A medieval court case in the Brooks area involving Juliana de la Floude, Sir John de Tytyng and King Edward I establishes the right to clean water that is now enshrined in UN Human Rights law.
- 1348-49 The Black Death leads to loss of about half the population.
- 1603 Sir Walter Raleigh is put on trial for treason in the converted Great Hall for his supposed part in the Main Plot.
- 1817 Jane Austen visits Winchester to consult a doctor, but dies and is buried in the cathedral.
- 1819 John Keats visits Winchester and composes Ode to Autumn.
- 1957 Plans to demolish the Brooks area lead to founding the City of Winchester Trust.
- 1959 Plans for the wholesale demolition of Canon Street are averted.

- 1964-66 Proposals for a comprehensive road and redevelopment scheme are made, largely abandoned, then revived in 1968 (for a three-quarter dual-carriageway ring road). The last remnant, for a dual-carriageway in North Walls, is finally abandoned in 1989.
- 1967 The Civic Amenities Act requires local authorities to identify “Areas of special architectural and historic interest ... which it is desirable to preserve and enhance”. Three conservation areas are established.
- 1974 Legislation is strengthened to control the demolition of unlisted buildings, or parts of buildings such as chimney stacks, in conservation areas.
- 1994 Peninsula Barracks saved and converted to housing and a cinema.
- 2003 WCC Conservation Area Review; by now the area extends to cover Oram’s Arbour, St Giles Hill, St Cross etc.

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