

Streets of Bournemouth Rich & Poor

At the beginning of the 19th Century, a small number of individuals owned much of the land in the Bournemouth area. Along the Stour valley, farms were small and depended on access to the surrounding heathland for grazing and fuel. The 1802 Enclosure Act allowed existing landowners to buy land for enclosure. Farmers petitioned for their access to land for fuel, turbary commons, to be preserved. As a result, these poor people provided Bournemouth with the land for its present-day parks.

Even in the new hamlet of Bourne, there was poverty. Wealthy landowners set up schools and hospitals to support the poorer people in the outlying areas of the town. The Depression of the 1920s left many people out of work, but the post-war period was one of general prosperity.

Nevertheless in 2009, unemployment and the number of people living in poverty in Bournemouth were both above the national average.



ABOVE

Unemployed Ex-Servicemen in about 1921

LEFT

Family in the garden of 'Uplands' in Gervis Road in 1870

Streets of
Bournemouth





RICH AND POOR

This Theme has the following Sub-Themes

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Living by the heath

Information about the lives of the landed and educated elite in society exists because printed and handwritten records of their lives survive. Details of their domestic lives, military campaigns, family history and pedigrees, the schools and colleges they attended, and parliamentary careers, are readily available. The first residents of Bourne were members of the aristocracy and their circle. As Bournemouth developed, the stories of the entrepreneurs, local government officials and people who made their mark on the town appear in the historical records. This comes down to us today in the written histories of the town and surviving documents. From what has survived it suggests that the town was only populated by the aristocracy, gentry and the powerful. But many people lived in the outlying villages of the parish of Holdenhurst, and as Bourne began to develop into Bournemouth more and more people came to the new town to find work.

The boundary of modern Bournemouth can be divided into three different areas bounded by Poole on one side and Christchurch on the other. The majority of the population lived in villages along the fertile floodplain of the River Stour, Holdenhurst, Throop, Iford, Wick Muccleshell and Muscliff. People worked in a land-based economy raising cattle in the meadows, gathering hay crops and cultivating arable fields. Individual members of a community were allotted sections of land for their own cultivation and had common rights of access to the heath nearby. The greatest extent of land was Poole Heath, also known as the Great Heath, consisting of poor soil but of great economic value to the community as a place to graze animals, gather wood and turf for fuel, bedding for animals, and an abundance of food for free to supplement diets. The third area was the coastal strip which would have provided fish and other seasonal resources.

The heath itself seemed uninhabited, but a few people chose to live there in temporary or semi-permanent accommodation. Early reports of the area mention mud huts: this would probably have

been cob, a traditional building material. Gypsies in horse-drawn caravans would cross the heath *en route* to the New Forest. Other Travellers lived in *benders* constructed of green saplings bent over and tied with leaves or brushwood or in more recent times canvas was used so appearing more like tents. Traditionally gypsies integrated with the local rural economy providing seasonal agricultural labour and by supplying other needs of the rural population. Although leading a nomadic lifestyle Travellers show up in the 19th century census returns. In 1861 a group of people each individually described as *unnamed gypsy* are living by the roadside in Kinson, although their ages are recorded there are no other details. The 1871 census for Holdenhurst gives several families of Travellers living in Sheep House Lane, which is now Woodbury Avenue just off Castle Lane West. First names or place of birth are not recorded. Another family living at Redhill Cross was James and Jane Burchell and their two nephews, who were born in Portsmouth.

The traditional view of agricultural society based on the great estates of a landowner, tenant farmers, and casual labourers in a descending scale of affluence is a useful simplification of a more complex structure, and agricultural labourers were surprisingly mobile. For many inhabitants it was a life lived in modest dwellings on the edge of poverty.

The landowners

In 1800 the principal landowners of the area were Sir George Ivison Tapps who lived at Hinton Admiral to the east of Christchurch. Although some distance from Bournemouth, Sir George was the Lord of the Manors of Hinton Admiral, Christchurch and particularly, the Liberty of Westover which was to become a large part of modern-day Bournemouth. It was through the marriage of his son, the second baronet Sir George William Tapps Gervis, that the family became linked with the ancient family of Meyrick and inherited the Bodorgan Estate on the Isle of Anglesey in Wales.

Heron Court, on the opposite side of the Stour was the family seat of the Earl of Malmesbury. The house belonged to the family until it was sold in 1952 by which time it was known as Hurn Court. The house became a boys' boarding school, Hurn Court School, until it closed in 1994. The house and outlying buildings were converted into individual apartments. The surrounding farmland is still part of the Malmesbury Estate while the family now lives at Greywell Hill House, near Basingstoke.

William Dean lived at Littledown House, his family having lived in Holdenhurst for 200 years. He was a prosperous Yeoman Farmer, a freeholder who cultivated his own land. Through luck and



good fortune, he had become the owner of Littledown House in 1798, which he demolished and built a house in a subdued but contemporary style. It was through William Dean and the enclosure of Poole Heath that the Cooper-Dean family became major owners of large tracts of Bournemouth. Littledown House is now dwarfed by the large buildings of the J P Morgan Company.

Nearby in Dorset was the Canford Estate, which included some parts of the future Bournemouth. The Lord of the Manor, Sir John Webb, died in 1797 and when his granddaughter died in 1844 the estate was sold to Sir Josiah John Guest, a South Wales iron-master, and his wife Lady Charlotte Guest. Their son, Ivor Bertie Guest, was created 1st Baron Wimborne of Canford Magna and married Lady Cornelia Spencer-Churchill, eldest daughter of the Seventh Duke of Marlborough and the aunt of Winston Churchill. Canford House was sold in 1922 and it too became a school. Canford School still exists

The 1841 census

In the 18th century, 90% of the rural population worked as agricultural labourers and this didn't change significantly in the first decades of the 19th century in the parish of Holdenhurst. The first realistic picture of the area can be seen in the 1841 census. The census was administered in districts broadly similar to the districts for the civil registration of births, marriages and deaths introduced in 1837. The areas recorded that would eventually become modern town of Bournemouth were the Stour villages, Kinson which was to join Bournemouth in 1931, and a small area in the parish of Holdenhurst simply called Bourne.

The 1841 census recorded the names of every person resident in each household on the night of 6th June 1841. For each individual the census lists age and sex, occupation, profession, or whether of independent means and whether they were born in the county or not, and identifying if they were born in Ireland, Scotland or *foreign parts*. The residents of Bourne mostly had private incomes and were accompanied by their servants. The people in the table below were staying at the Bath Hotel on the night of the census.

Name	Age	Occupation	Born in Hampshire yes/no
James Tuck	25	Post boy	Y
Mary Toomer	50	Landlady	Y
George Holloway	20	Assistant	Y
Emma Holloway	15	Assistant	Y
Charlotte Westlake	15	Assistant	Y
Catharine Barrow	50	Female servant	Y
Emma ?	20	Female servant	Y
Elizabeth Hawkins	45	Female servant	Y
William ?	45	Male servant	Y
James Coles	25	Male servant	Y
Charles Paice	25	Male servant	Y
Harriet White	25	Female servant	Y
Charles Clark	25	(visitor)	N
Harriet Thynne	20	(visitor)	N
Gertrude Thynne	1	(visitor)	N
Henry Bagot	30	Navy	N
Alexander Hay	50	(visitor)	N
Mary Hay	45	(visitor)	N
Thomas Smith	30	(visitor)	N
Eliza Sheppard	25	(visitor)	N
Hannah Barch	25	(visitor)	N

Georgiana West	9	(visitor)	N
Florence West	7	(visitor)	N
Cornwallis West	3	(visitor)	N
Jane Rivers	20	(visitor)	N
Elizabeth Sheppard	15	(visitor)	N
Charles Smith	25	Male servant	Y
Miriam Smith	25		Y
Charlotte Hogath	20	Assistant	Y
Mary Kent	15	Female servant	Y

Table 1: Residents of the Bath Hotel, 1841 census

Staying at the Bath Hotel on the night of 6th June 1841 is Harriet Frances Thynne (née Bagot) who is married to Charles Ernest Thynne. Their children Frederick Thynne age 3 and Gertrude Thynne age 1 are at the hotel with their mother. Charles Ernest Thynne's cousin was the late Lady Georgiana Stanhope, the first wife of Frederick Richard West. Frederick Richard West's second wife is Theresa John Cornwallis née Whitby, and their 3 children Georgiana age 9, Florence age 7 and Cornwallis West age 3 are also staying at the Bath Hotel. Another visitor is Henry Bagot, Harriet Thynne's brother.

Living nearby in Exeter House is the widowed Henrietta Tregonwell aged 71, and staying with her is her nephew Henry William Berkeley Portman age 40, the son of her brother Edward Berkeley Portman. He is accompanied by his wife, Harriet Emily Cavendish Sturt age 27 and their children, Edward W Portman, 6, Emily Lucy Portman, 4, William Portman, 2, and Augustus Portman, 1. Also staying with Henrietta are the previously mentioned Frederick Richard West, 42, and his wife Theresa John Cornwallis West née Whitby age 30, heiress to the Cornwallis fortune, and their baby daughter Theresa Lucy Sophia Elphinstone West age 1½ while their other children are staying at the Bath Hotel. Theresa West née Whitby is also the niece of Lucy Whitby, who is married to Henrietta's brother Edward Berkeley Portman.

The importance of this gathering of Henrietta Tregonwell's close and extended family is the links to many of the ancient and ennobled families of the day. These were some of the first visitors to Bourne and the pedigrees of the guests would be well known. Harriet Bagot is married to the Rev Lord Charles Thynne son of the 2nd Marquess of Bath and whose sister married the 3rd Earl of Harewood. Another sister married the 1st Baron Montague of Beaulieu. Frederick West's first wife was the daughter of the 5th Earl of Chesterfield. Frederick West himself is the grandson of John West, 2nd Earl De La Warr. and was to inherit Ruthin Castle in Wales from his mother, Maria Myddelton. The West family had not travelled far as they were currently living in Lymington. In her

own right Henrietta Tregonwell was the daughter of Henry William Portman whose family developed the Portman Estate in London. Lewis Tregonwell came from an ancient Dorset family, firstly via the Tregonwells of Anderson and before that of Milton Abbey. His mother was the cousin of Lord Ribblesdale.

Proceedings of the Old Bailey, Central Criminal Court, London

In the Proceedings of the Old Bailey there is a reference to the court appearance of George Collier who was tried for theft on 9th April 1829. He was indicted for stealing a silver spoon valued at 7s, belonging to *Frederick Richard West*. Collier denied having stolen the spoon but on the statements of 2 witnesses, including the butler, he was found guilty. Collier, aged 18, was sentenced to be transported for 7 years.

The theft took place at West's London home at 7 Upper Brook Street.

In the outlying villages most men give their occupation as agricultural labourers, dairymen or farmers. Apart from the occasional laundress it would seem that only the men and older sons had work. But agricultural families were dependent on work that could be done by women and children to bring in additional income. Seven and eight year olds could work as bird scarers out in the fields from four in the morning until seven at night. Older children worked in gangs as casual labourers. By comparison the Government passed the Mines Act in 1842 prohibiting the employment of women and girls and all boys under the age of ten in mines.

The 1841 census for Kinson includes the Legg family. Father and two sons are listed as agricultural labourers. It wouldn't be too long before 12-year-old John would be joining them if the work was available.

Name	Age	Occupation
Joseph LEGG	45	Ag. Labourer
Mary LEGG	45	
Hannah LEGG	16	Ag. Labourer
Richard LEGG	14	Ag. Labourer
John LEGG	12	
Harriett LEGG	6	
Eliza LEGG	1	

Table 2: The Legg Family of Kinson, 1841 census



One feature of agricultural life was the hiring fair. These were held twice-yearly in Christchurch, and similarly in the larger towns of Dorset. Farm workers would go to the annual hiring fairs where they would be contracted to work for one year. Although probably anachronistic, Thomas Hardy described the hiring fair in his novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* written in 1886 where Michael Henchard sold his wife while looking for a job as a hay trusser.

The population was increasing quite rapidly as the Industrial Revolution progressed and it was necessary to increase the amount of food grown. Low-intensity agricultural systems were replaced by a high-intensity system based on arable crops. More land was brought into cultivation but less people were required to work the land as intensive farming meant one person could produce more food. By 1850 only 22% of the British workforce was in agriculture. The development at Bournemouth increased the availability of work in all trades but especially the building trades for men and the service trades for women.

Bournemouth and Christchurch Union Workhouse

If a farm labourer did not work he would not get paid, through illness, accident, or simply old age. An additional cause of rural poverty was crop failure due to poor weather. Severe weather events occurred throughout the early 1800s. In particular 1816 is known as the *year without a summer* when frosts destroyed many of the crops and low temperatures and prolonged rain caused further crop failures. One contributing factor was the eruption of the volcano Mount Tambora in Indonesia in 1815 which poured tons of volcanic ash into the atmosphere. The effects were felt worldwide and continued until 1818.

A workhouse had existed in Christchurch since 1745. It was part of a Poor Law system which was administered haphazardly at a local parish level. The system characterised people as either the *deserving* or *undeserving* poor depending on whether their circumstances were caused through no fault of their own or by wilful laziness or drunkenness. In 1834 the system changed to one based on Poor Law Unions and the large-scale development of workhouses. The Christchurch Union was established in 1835. It was a union of several local parishes including Tuckton, Wick, Iford and Holdenhurst. Kinson was covered by the Poole Poor Law Union. The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act intended that relief from poverty would only be provided if the pauper was prepared to enter a workhouse where the conditions in the workhouse were lower than those of the poorest paid labourer. If a man entered the workhouse his wife and family were expected to go with him.

The occupations of the residents of the Christchurch Union workhouse are recorded in the 1841 census. This included the master, matron and workers as well as the paupers. Amongst the people claiming relief from poverty were a nurse, schoolmaster, fisherman, seaman, watch chain maker, bricklayer, farmer and servant. But the largest number was agricultural labourers.

The report of the Poor Law Guardians in 1859 lists people by whether they received assistance in their homes or were admitted to the workhouse. The table reproduced below lists people from the parish of Holdenhurst who were in the workhouse.

Holdenhurst Parish	Age	Days in workhouse	Condition
Ayles, Fanny	15	182	Deserted by father
Ayles, George	13	182	"
Ayles, Mary	9	182	"
Ayles, James	7	182	"
Miller, Sarah	55	172	Insane
White, George	46	28	Illness
Young, George	46	17	Illness

Table 3 Holdenhurst people in the workhouse in 1859

Many more were receiving poor relief in the community.

Until the advent of the Welfare State, the care of the underprivileged in society was undertaken by charitable welfare institutions, charities and benevolent societies funded by private donors, subscriptions and fund-raising events such as flag days. Many of the functions of modern social services, health provision, pensions, provided by the state were completely dependent on goodwill. People might join provident societies which would insure them for a small weekly payment.

The Sisters of Bethany opened a home for orphan children in Bournemouth in 1875 next to St Clements Church in Boscombe. In 1897 an infirmary was added together with a large kitchen garden, a poultry yard and a *'recreation meadow'* for the children to play in. The orphanage took children between 2-10 years providing them with nursery and school education while the older girls were trained for domestic service. The orphanage was maintained by

- * the private means of the Society
- * a number of small payments for a few of the children
- * a working laundry, and
- * public subscriptions and donations.

A Charity for Providing a Nurse for the parish of Holdenhurst in the County of Hants was set up in 1903 and known locally as the Nursing Charity. The trustees were the vicar and chairman of the parish council and three other people two of whom were required to be ladies. Meetings were to be held monthly and minute books of the proceedings were to be kept and to record receipts and expenditures. The trustees were to appoint a *'properly qualified person'* to give nursing aid *'to the persons who cannot afford or who can least afford to pay for such services.'*



A charity existed for endowing scholarships in connection with the Bournemouth Technical and Secondary School. The scholarships could be for up to three years and were for £6 - £15 per year. To be eligible the candidates had to be a boy educated in the public elementary school in the parish of Holdenhurst or boys from similar schools in the Borough of Bournemouth.

The committee of management of the Hospital Fund at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Bournemouth and the Royal Boscombe and West Hants Hospital provided that one bed would be reserved in either hospital for patients from the parish of Holdenhurst.

Bournemouth Old People's Welfare Fund was formed in August 1944. The purpose of the fund was to provide

- * home helps for the sick, maternity and aged
- * friendship visiting – once a week for half an hour
- * a meals-on-wheels service, although there was some difficulty initially with this in keeping the food warm, and,
- * hostels or homes for the elderly.

It was a principle of the Society that the accommodation of *guests* should be of a hotel standard. One of the most active supporters of this charity was Sir Alexander MacLean who donated some of the houses for older people to live in. The annual report stated that £299 18s 4d was raised during the 1946 flag day. Sir Alexander MacLean, who founded the manufacturing chemists of that name, retired to Bournemouth and was a great local benefactor. During the Second World War, he gave money to launch the National Services Club at the Lansdowne and provided mobile canteens for use by Civil Defence volunteers in Bournemouth and Poole. His charitable activities were formally recognised when he was made an Honorary Freeman of the town.

Each year the annual reports of the charitable organisations would list the names of the donors and the amount donated. Some of these were very poignant especially for hospitals such as The Firs, which was a hospital for people dying from tuberculosis, where donations recorded were 'In Memoriam F.V.I.' or 'In Memory of H.F.'. The 39th Annual Report of the Hahnemann Homeopathic Hospital issued in April 1918 is similar to that of the Firs Home, listing subscribers by name and the amount paid.



Throughout the 19th century, fortunes were being made in manufacturing and commerce challenging the established landed elite. Fathers of down-at-heel ancient families were not averse to marrying off their daughters to new money. The local newspaper *The Visitors Directory*, listed the arrivals and departures in the town each week and where they were staying. Among the arrivals in 1846 were the Duke and Duchess of Montrose, Lord and Lady Lytton and the Marquis of Westminster. But amongst this apparent affluence were some glaring instances of dreadful poverty.

Georgina and Marianne Talbot were some of the earliest visitors to Bournemouth, together with their father, Sir George Talbot, a London property owner. When he died the sisters inherited a considerable fortune and moved to Hinton Wood House, a large house on the East Cliff. Here they were disturbed by crowds of families shouting for food and begging for work. In 1850, Georgina Talbot bought 350 acres of land to the north of the town to build a small village with cottages and farms to provide work and homes for some of the poor. The cottages in Talbot Village were set in an acre of land with a pig sty and a water supply. The cottages were built by James McWilliam and completed in 1862. The residents did not always comply with the strict regulations of no overcrowding, no lodgers, and no trade to be conducted apart from selling poultry, eggs and bacon. The occupants were expected to be self-supporting, to abstain from alcohol and to move on when they had sufficient means.

Among the many upper class people who made their homes in Bournemouth was Lady Georgiana Fullerton, grand-daughter of the 5th Duchess of Devonshire. From very early she had been concerned with alleviating the sufferings of the sick and poor, at home, in London and in Europe. Her help was practical, scrubbing or sweeping floors, lighting fires and making beds and to finance this work she wrote novels, biographies and poetry. In Bournemouth, she founded St Joseph's Home in Madeira Road for poor Catholics from London suffering from tuberculosis. A group of ladies including the Duchess of Norfolk and Lady Kirwan supported her. The home closed after her death in 1885, but her husband funded the opening, in 1888, of another home in Branksome Wood Road and invited the Sisters of Mercy to run it. Among her many friends was Countess Pauline Von Hugel who established the Church of Corpus Christi in Boscombe.



A report appeared in the *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette* on 7th November 1833 headed

A Case of Extreme Distress.

The present Appeal is made to the Humane and Charitable, on behalf of The Widow & Ten Infant Children

It refers to the surviving family of the late Mr. Thomas Cave a surgeon of Poole, who was left without any financial support. Subscriptions received so far had amounted to £120 4s, of which a Mrs. Tregonwell had given 1 guinea (£1 1s.).

The report asks for further donations to help the family and ends

Full particulars of this distressing Case may be known by application to Mr. Cave, New-street, Salisbury, who has undertaken. In conjunction with several Friends of the deceased, to see the sums received applied for the greatest possible advantage of the Widow and Children.

Beneath the surface

A newspaper reported in 1904 of a homeless woman charged with *lodging in the open air* in Dean Park Road and was discharged on promising to go to the workhouse. In 1912, Clare Adams of Winton was charged at Bournemouth Police Court with *being a Lunatic wandering at large and not under proper control* in Queens Road, Westbourne. She was sent to the asylum in Salisbury.

Many people were unemployed in the 1920s and 30s. Among them was George Veal who described the queue at the Labour Exchange in Yelverton Road as four deep and stretching from there down to Old Christchurch Road and up as far as Dalkeith Steps. A gap was left outside the Cadena Café for the morning coffee trade. 'Signing on' was a twice weekly ritual. Walking back to Pokesdown, Mr. Veal and others would scour the roads for enough 'fag ends' to make a cigarette. At the Pokesdown Technical Schools, they could buy a cup of tea and a bun for a penny and if they were lucky get one free. This was a time when street singers, buskers and pedlars were a common sight

Some people were slightly better off but only just. Apprentices before the Second World War were often used for mundane tasks such as sweeping floors, making tea and cleaning machines *before* any craft training was given.

John Miles, a Boscombe boy, was apprenticed to a joinery shop where his main tasks were to make sure the glue pot was hot, sweep the floors and to paint with pink primer any wooden structure required for house building. Dissatisfied with this, he moved to become a 'bound' apprentice stone mason. His wages were 3d an hour for the first year rising to 7d an hour for the fifth and final year for a forty hour week. In 1938 the hourly rate for a fully qualified mason was 1/6d. Common practice in all building firms was not to pay 'wet time' – time taken for preparing materials. Also the hourly rate meant acceptance of an hour's notice of dismissal.

Charities continue to support disadvantaged people in Bournemouth today, people who are poor, disabled or aged, or those not provided for by public funds. These include The Alice Ellen Cooper-Dean Charitable Foundation, The Valentine Charitable Trust, St Martin's Trust, The Bisgood Charitable Trust and The Meyrick Charitable Trust. There are places such as Michael House which began as Bournemouth's night shelter in St Michael's Church which now has two houses in



Boscombe providing accommodation, meals and amenities for people who might otherwise be homeless.

The local authority produces statistics for the government on every aspect of modern life. These are readily available to people to read, in libraries or by those that have access to the internet. *The Lowdown* is an economic bulletin for Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole published three times a year. Data is also collected to enable the authority to measure deprivation within the authority based on a variety of criteria. Parts of Boscombe, Springbourne, Kinson and Townsend experience multiple deprivation and, what may be surprising to some people, are within the top 10% of deprived areas nationwide. Bournemouth has a particularly high percentage of people working in low pay sectors, 37% compared with 29% nationally. Equally it has an above average percentage of employment in the high pay sectors, 16% of total employment compared with 12% nationally.

One of the core aims of the Big Issue Foundation is to give homeless people the chance to earn a legitimate income by selling the weekly *Big Issue* magazine. It is a concept that the charitable people of bygone Bournemouth would agree with - *The Big Issue - a hand up, not a hand out...* But poor and vulnerable are still with us as evidenced by the tragic case of Ralph Millward, a *Big-Issue* seller and rough sleeper, who was brutally murdered in Westbourne in 2009. Three teenagers from Poole were convicted of his manslaughter on 21st May 2010. The number of rough sleepers in Bournemouth decreased from 45 in 1997 to 8 in 2006, with a few peaks and troughs in between.

Written by Louise Perrin and based, with permission, on original research by Eileen and John Barker