

Axminster's Growth over Time

**How the town's footprint has changed,
from the Victorian era to the 21st century**

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© March 2018

To the reader:

This remains a work in progress. There are bound to be errors and omissions, and they are entirely mine. If you find any mistakes, and if you draw them to my attention, I will happily correct them in later versions. If you have additional information which you would be happy to share, I will do my best to accommodate it.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose and structure of this document

The focus of this document is on housing and house building, and more particularly on Axminster's growth as a town.

When Queen Victoria's golden jubilee was celebrated in 1887, the physical footprint of the town had changed very little since she ascended the throne, and was only slightly larger than it had been 50 years before that.

From about 1900 the town began to spread, driven by larger-scale building than had been seen before. Instead of terraces of 4-7 houses, developments of 20 or more houses became almost the norm. The initial growth beyond the historic urban boundary was to the south, along and around Musbury Road, but this was soon followed by similar patterns of new building along North Street and Lyme Road.

Chapter 2 explains how the town came to be the shape it was in 1837, at the start of the Victorian era, and identifies several of the key buildings which would have been familiar to all residents of the town at that time.

Chapter 3 provides further details specific to the year 1838, drawing on two detailed and valuable sources from that year, and then goes on to outline the changes which affected the town over the next 50 years, and the stirrings of new building which can be observed, largely within the town's long-established urban boundary.

Chapter 4 then deals with changes since 1888, tracking how, when and where the town's growth occurred, and how far it has now expanded. It is broken into more or less arbitrary periods, though each one tends to show an increase in the size of the larger developments. The final section, which carries the story on into the 21st century, is inevitably a work in progress.

Key sources and references

I list here the main sources and document that I have used, and to which I refer repeatedly. Other sources which are used once or twice only are explained more fully in the text or in footnotes.

Deeds and residents' testimony

In 2017 Axminster Heritage Centre displayed an aerial photograph of the town dating from 1948, and asked visitors 'When was *your* house built?'. Responses were collected via paper survey forms and via a web-based survey. Although the number of responses was relatively modest (about 30), the quality and variety of the information provided was excellent, and formed the starting point for this research. Any references to deeds and to information provided by residents and former residents in the text which follows refers to information provided via this source.

The 1838 tithe map and older sources

Tithe apportionment was a process which was undertaken in the mid-19th century to modernise the system under which tithes were paid by many property owners to the parish church. Some other properties were exempt from tithes because they were associated with former monasteries. This was of particular relevance to Axminster, where Newenham Abbey had been a major landowner. The source documents can be found on-line. A scan of the 'Tithe Apportionment Map' is accessible on-line via the eastdevonaonb.org.uk website (search for 'tithe': the map is in the 'conservation' section of the website, under the 'Parishscapes' project). Although slightly damaged in parts, this gives each field a unique reference number which can be linked to a schedule of fields which can then also be accessed via the eastdevonaonb.org.uk website. The tithe apportionment work in Axminster parish was undertaken in 1838. The extracts from the tithe apportionment map used in this document have been taken from a partial copy which is held by Axminster Heritage Centre, and is restricted to the town itself and its surrounds.

I have also made occasional reference to a map prepared for the Petre Estate in 1776/78 showing its land holdings in the parish of Axminster, including large parts of the town. The original map, which is impressively large, is held in the Devon Heritage Centre in Exeter, along with an accompanying schedule recording who was occupying each plot. This is simply referred to as 'the 1776/78 map'.

Old OS maps

I have made considerable use of two large-scale early Ordnance Survey (OS) maps. The first is dated 1891, and was published at a scale of 25 inches-to-the-mile, based on a survey made in 1888. The next equally detailed (25 inch) map is the 1905 OS map, based on revisions to the 1888 survey which were made in 1903.

Both of these can be accessed via the nls.uk website. To get to both maps go through the following sequence from the nls.uk home page.

- Hover your cursor over 'Digital resources' and select 'Map images' from the list of options offered
- Click on 'Ordnance Survey maps'
- Scroll down and click on 'Ordnance Survey 25 inch England & Wales, 1841-1952'
- Click on 'Seamless zoomable layer (1890s to 1920s) side-by-side'.

By clicking and dragging on either the map or satellite image that you can now see you can navigate yourself to Axminster. The left-hand map should be the 1905 OS map. Check by looking at the station. If the branch line is shown heading off towards Lyme Regis, then this is indeed the 1905 map.

To change either of the two images (left or right) to the 1891 25 inch OS map:

- Click on the drop-down box next to the text saying 'Select a category', and choose 'England and Wales'¹
- Click on the drop-down box next to the text saying 'Select a map series', and choose 'SW England OS 25 inch 1873-1888'.

These maps are simply referred to in the text as 'the 1891 OS map' and 'the 1905 OS map'.

The 1958/59 OS map

A third OS map which can be accessed in full via the same source as above (the nls.uk website) dates from 1958/59 (1958 in the case of most of Axminster, but 1959 for the eastern part: the 'sheet boundary' runs through the town). In both cases the most recent survey updates used in the mapping date from 1957. It is nothing like as detailed as the 1891 and 1905 OS maps, having been drawn at a scale of 1:25,000, but it does provide a good overview of where development had reached a decade after World War II.

It can be accessed in the same way as the 1905 OS map, and then by switching to the option of '1:25,000 1937-61'.

The 1986 and 1994 Local Plan maps

Axminster Heritage Centre has paper copies of various large-scale maps, including two published in March 1986 and September 1994 by EDDC as part of the consultation process for the Axminster Local Plan (1986) and the East Devon Local Plan (1994). Both maps are based on OS digital mapping, and are called the 'Axminster Local Plan Proposals Map' and 'Axminster Urban Inset Map 3 and Town Centre Inset' respectively. Buildings can be individually identified, but the 1994 map appears to have been more comprehensively updated than the 1986 one.

It is not known precisely when these maps were updated, but it is assumed that all buildings shown on them were in existence by 1986 and 1994 respectively, and that any not shown were being built in those years at the very earliest, unless there is clear evidence to the contrary.

Other OS maps

I have used the EDDC planning website extensively (see below). Some of the planning applications detailed there include selected extracts from historic mapping, including extracts from OS map sheets from 1938, 1960, 1963, 1972, 1979, 1982, 1990, 1991 and 1999. These have all been scanned by EDDC from copies of copies, and several of them only cover part of the town. The maps

¹ For the 1905 OS map the 'category' in the first drop-down box is Great Britain. It is very easy to forget this distinction, and as a result not to be able to find one or other of the maps.

on which they are based were provided via a range of commercial sources (including Envirocheck), and are subject to copyright protection. They cannot, therefore, be made available on-line or via Axminster Heritage.

Aerial photographs

I have used a selection of aerial photographs. The earliest set, dating from 1928, can be accessed on-line via the britainfromabove.org.uk website. Simply put 'Axminster' into their search box to find 5 images. These provide limited coverage of the town, but what there is, is very helpful.

Four further sets can be accessed on-line via the devon.gov.uk website, the oldest dating from January 1948. To find them, follow the instructions below.

- Find the devon.gov.uk home page (or the new.devon.gov.uk home page)
- Click on the symbol for 'Environment and Landscape'
- Click on the link in the text list to 'environmental maps'
- Click on the text link in the main body of the page to 'Historic environment' (i.e. NOT on the link of the same name on the left of the page, which takes you elsewhere)
- Read and accept the website's 'Environment Viewer' Terms and Conditions
- Switch off all three ticks at the left-hand side of the screen (by clicking on them). For the avoidance of doubt, this instruction refers to 'Historic Environment' and the two categories immediately below
- Using the map that you can see on screen, zoom in so that you can see all of Axminster, from about Weycroft in the north to the by-pass in the south
- Using the options at the right-hand side of the screen change the base mapping to 'Aerial RAF 1946-49'.

You can now zoom in to any part of Axminster or the surrounds. We know that the Axminster photographs were taken in January 1948.

Using the options at the right-hand side of the screen you can switch to three other sets of aerial photographs, from 1999/2000, 2006/07 or 2010. The level of detail viewable using the 1999/2000 set is quite limited: if you zoom in too far, the screen will simply go blank. The other sets have a much better level of resolution.

As well as selected printed images from these sets, Axminster Heritage Centre has a selection of other aerial photographs, primarily of the town centre and its immediate surrounds. Those from 1961 and the early 1970s are among the most informative.

Old newspapers

I have made considerable use of old newspaper reports, and with the exception of Pulman's Weekly News, those which I have used can be accessed via the britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk website. In all cases I identify the newspaper concerned, and the date of publication. Most of the newspapers are identified by their initials (BN = Bridport News, CIN = Chard & Ilminster News, EFP = Exeter Flying Post, EPG = Exeter & Plymouth Gazette, PWN = Pulman's Weekly News, TCWA = Taunton Courier & Western Advertiser, WG = Western Gazette, WT = Western Times, WMN = Western Morning News). The reason why I have not made greater use of Pulman's Weekly News is that it is not (yet) one of the newspapers which has been digitised. Given George Pulman's opposition to all forms of external 'meddling', it is in any case unlikely that his newspaper would have provided a calm and dispassionate account of some of the controversies which arose during his lifetime.

Directories

Axminster library has a collection of extracts from historic directories covering the period from 1838 to 1939 (plus a few earlier ones). Many of these can be consulted in full at (among other places) the Devon Heritage Centre in Exeter. Such directories generally list all shops and manufacturers, together with those better-off residents who occupied the smarter houses. The directories are referred to in the text by citing the year of publication.

Voters' lists

I have made considerable use of the official voters' lists from the 1920s and 1930s. Whereas census returns can be very confusing, because within any street households may be reported in almost any order, the town's voters' lists are almost always arranged in true street order (running up one side of the road, turning round at the end, and returning the other way). From about 1932 the majority of houses are also given their name or number.

All such lists distinguish between Axminster Town and Axminster Hamlets, with the Hamlets' voters' lists being organized in alphabetical order by voter. For Chard Road beyond the cemetery it is necessary to check the Hamlets list separately.

All of these lists (plus those from earlier eras, which also hold useful information, but not in an immediately accessible format) can be seen at the Devon Heritage Centre. Axminster Heritage Centre has its own very delicate copy of the list for 1938.

EDDC planning website

EDDC's planning website contains a wealth of information covering the period since about 1975, though the details of that information are not always easy to find. When searching by map, it is possible to identify each property individually, and in many cases to find the planning history of the property, including details that do not come up via other searches.

In the case of large developments, the most detailed information is likely to be found by looking at No.1 (or the lowest number) of the development.

Rightmove.co.uk website

The rightmove.co.uk website allows searches to be run on historic sales values. Since about 1995 the resultant data distinguishes between 'new build' and all other sales, which is a powerful (though not 100% reliable) way of identifying when new houses were first occupied.

Chapter 2: Setting the Scene for the Start of the Victorian Era

A town shaped by water

Since the founding of the town in the Saxon era, and up until the first decade of the 20th century, Axminster's urban centre had been restricted to a handful of streets around the Minster. These streets occupied, and continue to occupy, a relatively flat bluff of land looking out over the valley of the river Axe, and its confluence with the Yarty.

Regular and serious flooding precluded building along the river's banks (with the exception of structures such as mills, which exploited the river's power). Those few farmhouses which can be found in the floodplain to the west of the town occupy slightly higher ground than their surrounds.

The second key water-related constraint on the spread of the town concerned supplies of drinking water. I have written elsewhere about the town's water supply, and in particular about the changes which took place in the 19th and 20th centuries, and will not repeat that fascinating history here, other than to observe that whereas most of the wealthier houses had their own wells, as much as two thirds of the population relied on a source of spring water known as 'the town leat' (a man-made channel). The source of the water delivered via the town leat was a pair of springs to the west of Cooks Lane, on land which always formed part of the various farms known as Furzeleigh. From there the leat carried the water to the top of the Lyme Road. After crossing the road it ran down the southern edge of Lyme Road, before dividing into two separate channels just above the junction with Stoney Lane. One of these channels carried on down Lyme Road and Lyme Street, while the other took part of the flow over to Chard Street. These two primary channels then divided further, to supply South Street, Church Street, Silver Street, Trinity Square, West Street, and Market Place. Once the water started to run down-hill, down Castle Hill, Castle Street, Musbury Road and by various ways from West Street, it soon found its way into the mill stream and the river Axe, either directly or via the Purzebrook stream. Those same down-hill routes also carried away the contents of the town's drains and sewers, dumping them into the Axe and the Purzebrook.

The Millbrook and Purzebrook streams supported outlying houses, farms and mills, but they were peripheral rather than central to the main town, and the Purzebrook stream in particular became increasingly polluted and unpleasant to live near.

The town was also shaped by its roads, being at the junction between long-established roads from Exeter to London, and from Axmouth to Chard. However, it is reasonable to conclude that they passed through the town centre because it was where it was, with that location having been determined by where people could settle and survive.

The urban boundary

Until the technology for pumping water up-hill had been developed (much later than the period under consideration²), the urban boundary was therefore primarily set by topography. There were always some bigger and wealthier houses close to town but outside the effective boundary, but they would all have had their own water supply. If a landowner wanted to build cottages for his workers, he had to make provision for their water supply too, and this acted as a real brake on urban sprawl.

In 1837, therefore, it is possible to define the urban boundary in a very practical way, as follows. Simply set out to walk along any of the roads or lanes leading out of town (clockwise from the north, these being North Street, Chard Street, Lyme Road (including Stoney Lane and Sector Lane), Musbury Road, West Street and Castle Hill); and once you can observe open fields on both sides of the road, you have passed the urban boundary.

By that simple rule of thumb the urban boundary was as follows:

- North Street: at the end of what is now Old North Street
- Chard Street: at Hilary House (now Hilary Gardens)

² The key was not just access to pumps, but the provision of a relatively leak-proof distribution network which could carry water under pressure. In the absence of such pressure, water could not be pumped up any serious incline. Iron pipes were only laid at Axminster from the late 19th century, and were not widespread until the early 20th century.

- Lyme Road: at Mount House (though the density of development dropped off appreciably to the north of the Lamb Inn³, and the adjacent toll gate; and a respectable argument could be mounted for defining the urban boundary as running between Prospect House and Loup House, through the forecourt of what is now Prospect Garage)
- Stoney Lane: before the road headed down-hill (i.e. before what is now the primary school)
- Sector Lane: the only urban development on Sector Lane was a row of about 4 cottages on the southern side of the road (now long gone) just up-hill from the toll house
- Musbury Road: at Purzebrook House
- West Street: arguably just above where the Guildhall now stands, and certainly by West House
- Castle Hill: at the mill stream (i.e. at ducking-stool bridge, and on the town side of the stream down-stream from there).

Landmark (and other) buildings

By 1800

By 1800 the 'landmark buildings' of the town would have included all of the following.

The Minster church had been built in Saxon times, and was the only building in Axminster to survive destruction by fire in 1642, during the Civil War. The town's other buildings were re-built in very much the same places as they had stood before that fire.

The Independent chapel had occupied a site on Chard Road since the late 17th century. The chapel in 1800 was smaller than the one that is there now.

Oak House, on Chard Street, was the first really well-built non-ecclesiastical stone building to be constructed in Axminster. It was built in 1758 for Simon Bunter, a lawyer.

The George Hotel was built a year later, in 1759, following a fire which had destroyed another inn on the same site.

Hilary House was built on what was then the very edge of town in 1761 for Amos Callard, a lawyer and the steward of the Petre estate (the owner of the Manor of Axminster). When he retired shortly thereafter he sold the house to his successor as steward, John Knight. The house was demolished in the 1970s and replaced by Hilary Close.

Castle Hill House was built in 1776 for Robert Hallett, a local wine merchant and manufacturer of cotton tapes. From 1935 it was used for a short while by the UDC and RDC for offices and meetings⁴.

In 1790 Henry Knight, by then steward of the Petre estate, had Terrace Lodge built on the corner of Lyme Road and Stoney Lane. It is now known as Pippins. At much the same time the Taunton family had Lea Combe House built on the other side of Lyme Road. It was demolished after being badly damaged by a German incendiary bomb in 1942.

In 1797 a new and much larger vicarage was built on Silver Street. This building now houses Abbeyfield and a dental surgery.

Despite this construction work, most visitors to the town in the late 18th century commented adversely on the general state of Axminster's houses and streets, though they all praised The George.

The Western Hotel was built (or more probably re-built) on the corner of West Street and Church Street in 1800. Previously this had been the site of Axminster's first Post Office, with the Green Dragon Inn on the western side of West Street. At the time this was very close to the edge of the town's built up area, with only a few buildings further down the hill leading towards the south west.

³ In 1838 the premises previously and subsequently known as the Lamb was called The Rose & Crown.

⁴ Source: WT, 28 June 1935.

There were, of course, several other buildings which have evolved into those that we would recognise today.

- The Old Bell still stands, though it is no longer an inn
- Just round the corner, facing Market Place, the Dolphin Inn had been re-purposed as a more general commercial building by 1800, and following two serious fires much later in the 19th century became Castle Mount
- Thomas Whitty's house on Silver Street would probably have been recognisable to a modern eye as the Law Chambers it is today, but had not at that stage undergone the renovations which were carried out by Samuel Ramson Whitty in the 1820s.
- Cedar House, on the corner of Silver Street and Musbury Road, was also clearly there by 1800, but was not as modern a structure as it is today
- Further down Musbury Road, Purzebrook House had stood for a long time, and although right on the edge of the town, was one of the more prominent local landmark buildings. Also on Musbury Road, but well outside the town at that time, was Furzebrook House (in about 1920 re-named Gamberlake House, and in the 1990s demolished to make way for the expansion of the carpet factory)
- Close to Terrace Lodge and Lea Combe House, on the Lyme Road, Loretto Cottage was in 1800 very recognisable as the building we see today
- One other building which has occupied much the same footprint since before 1800 is West House, the first building on the edge of Axminster which many travellers from Exeter would have encountered, on the eastern side of West Street, close to the foot of the hill.

Changes from 1800 to 1837

Only two really notable buildings were erected in Axminster between 1800 and 1830: the Independent Chapel in Chard Street which in 1826 replaced an earlier chapel which had been there for a very long time; and Samuel Ramson Whitty's carpet factory on Silver Street, built in 1828 to replace the original which had been badly damaged by fire. Whitty's factory comprised the full run of 3-storey stone building which now houses both Axminster Heritage Centre and the Conservative Club.

Then in 1831 a Catholic Church was built on Lyme Road. This is not the church we see today, thanks to the major expansion carried out in the 1860s.

On Trinity Sunday 1834 a major fire burned down 30 or so houses in front of the Minster church, allowing a very awkward road junction to be eased, and in the process creating Trinity Square. The old street, which had linked Lyme Street to West Street via three right-angle bends (one just south of The George, a second in front of the churchyard, and a third at the West Street corner of the churchyard) had been called Cross Street. Its name, which can be found in older records of Axminster, lived on in some property deeds for many years after 1834.

Another significant fire affected South Street in 1836. In common with many other Devon towns, Axminster suffered repeated and frequent fires, though mostly they resulted in modernisation via better re-building (from cob and thatch to brick and tile) rather than wholesale re-shaping of the town's footprint.

When the redevelopment of Trinity Square took place, it created more modern buildings where larger shops and institutions like banks could be accommodated. Some of these may still have been in the process of being finished in 1837. One of the new buildings, built in 1837/38, was the Register Office which linked the redevelopment of Trinity Square to the former carpet factory erected a decade before.

Well outside the town's then limits, another important event occurred in 1836. The new Axminster Union workhouse, catering to the poor of Axminster and 16 other parishes ranged in a semi-circle from Beer to Stockland, Thorncombe and Charmouth, was built in open fields to the east of the Musbury Road.

In terms of general housing, the early census returns show that in 1801 the parish of Axminster had 406 inhabited houses. By 1831 this had risen to 522, reflecting population growth over that

period. It is probable that about two thirds of these houses were in the town itself, with the rest in hamlets and on the many surrounding farms. If this assumption is deemed fair, we can estimate that by the 1830s there were about 350 houses in the town.

Wealth in the early 19th century

The bankruptcy of Samuel Ramson Whitty, the last of his family to make carpets in Axminster, had a considerable impact on the local economy when it occurred in late 1835. Largely due to the legacy of carpet making Axminster was quite a rich town, though with its abrupt ending that wealth became vulnerable. Nevertheless, the services (such as lawyers) that supported it had other clients as well, and Axminster remained both a market town, and host to the various courts of law that sat locally.

Some indication of this wealth can be drawn from a valuation undertaken for tax purposes in 1815, which allows comparisons to be made across all of the parishes in Devon⁵. In absolute terms, only 12 Devon parishes, out of more than 500, were richer than Axminster at that time. They were the three parishes which make up Plymouth, plus Stoke Damerel (Devonport), Bere Ferrers, Tavistock, Crediton, Plympton, Ottery St Mary, Brixham, Broadclyst and Tiverton. When the comparison is made on the basis of market towns (as opposed to parishes), and wealth per capita, only eight other Devon market towns were richer than Axminster: Bere Ferrers, Plympton, Colyton, Silverton, South Brent, Modbury, Uffculme and Ottery St Mary. On this measure the average resident of Axminster was richer than those of Tavistock, Crediton and Tiverton, and everywhere north of them, such as Barnstaple and Bideford.

The George had been by far the main coaching inn and hotel in Axminster over the previous 100 years, but by 1837 the glory days of the coaching trade, from which Axminster had benefitted greatly, were coming to an end. It was by then clear that within 2 years Exeter would be connected by rail to London, via Bristol. This changed for ever the economics of both personal travel and the carriage of goods between Devon and London. Whereas Axminster had enjoyed a highly advantageous location for both coaches and freight wagons compared to the rest of Devon, from 1840 those advantages were very largely lost as Exeter and Tiverton became much more significant gathering and distribution points. It would be 20 years before Axminster had a rail connection of its own, and in those 20 years some of the town's more entrepreneurial residents moved elsewhere.

⁵ The raw data can be found via the hathitrust.org website, in a document entitled 'Comparative account of the population of Great Britain; 1801, 1811, 1821, 1831'. Pages 68-77 cover Devon. The data can also be found in electronic format via the 'Census' page of the Devon section of the genuki.org.uk website.

Chapter 3: The Town in 1838, and its Growth over the Next 50 Years

The size and shape of the town in 1838

This snap-shot of Axminster at the start of the Victorian age comes from 1838 rather than 1837, because it is based on the tithe map and accompanying schedules, published in 1838.

As explained in Chapter 1, the footprint of the town had not changed greatly since mediaeval times, though the density of housing had increased. In 1838, a circle with a radius of a quarter of a mile centred on The George would have enclosed a very high proportion of the houses that could properly be considered to form part of the town. The main exception to this was Lyme Road, which was populated on the southern side for a further quarter of a mile (this being where the town's water supply ran).

Map 1: Section of the 1838 tithe map, showing the majority of the town of Axminster



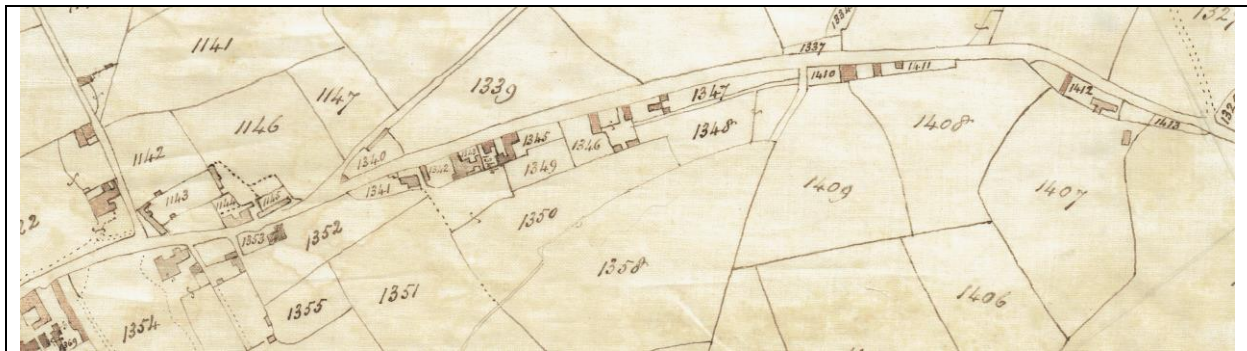
Note: This map (and the original from which it comes) is oriented approximately NE-SW. It covers an area of just under 1km (2/3 mile) square.

There were toll gates on Lyme Road just south of the junction with Sector Lane, and on Musbury Road just south of Widepost Lane, and others further from the town on the roads to Chard and Kilmington.

In 1838 there were no substantial manufacturing enterprises in Axminster. There was a small factory on North Street making cotton tapes, but apart from that all manufacturing was on a small domestic workshop scale. A directory from 1838 mentions those tapes, alongside broad and narrow cloths, druggets (another type of cloth), gloves and articles in leather as being the main local products.

Map 2, below, which overlaps with Map 1, shows the degree to which the town had spread along the London Turnpike Road (i.e. Lyme Road), but only on the southern side of the road, which was served by the town leat.

Map 2: Lyme Road, from the junction with Stoney Lane to the edge of Axminster



Chapter 1 explains how to find the full plot-by-plot details of who owned and who occupied each numbered plot on the tithe map. Only a few of the plots are mentioned below, mainly in connection with the approaches to the town.

In the case of Lyme Road, all of the buildings shown on Map 2 can reasonably be treated as forming part of the town in 1838, and as far as Sector and Stoney Lanes are concerned there were no other dwellings or commercial premises on them which lie beyond this map and within the town limits. However, most if not all of the houses to the east of the toll gate (which can be seen between plots 1340 and 1341 on the map) were smaller 'predecessor structures' of the houses that we see on Lyme Road today, albeit occupied for the most part by relatively wealthy citizens.

For example, plot 1346 was occupied in 1838 by Thomas Bonner, a corn factor who also occupied various nearby fields. According to a pamphlet written in 1892 by James Coate of Lea Combe House, entitled 'To the inhabitants of Axminster' (a copy of which is held by Axminster Heritage Centre), Prospect House had previously been known as Bonner's Cottage.

Although not named as such, the house on plot 1345 was almost certainly Adrienne Cottage (later re-built as Adrienne House, and now part of the property known as Magnolia Rise), where Colonel Macalister is known to have been living in 1844.

Just below Adrienne Cottage, plot 1342 belonged to George Henley, a stone mason, who later built 12 cottages there (see below).

Beyond the junction with Sector Lane, on the southern side of Lyme Road, plots 1353 and 1354 were occupied by the Roman Catholic church and Lea Combe House respectively.

The town's other approach roads

On the southern side of town were (and still are) two approach roads: West Street and Musbury Road.

In 1838, well before the changes to the road network necessitated by the arrival of the railway at Axminster in 1860 had been made, the Turnpike road from Honiton approached Axminster past the western end of Widepost Lane (between plots 1041, 1058 and 1054, at the bottom of Map 1) before running down-hill for a short distance and then up West Street, as it does today.

For the purposes of this document no distinction is made between West Street, Western Road, Anchor Hill and (in later times) Station Road / Approach. There is no reliable agreement on where each ended and the next began, so the name West Street is used throughout this document for them all.

Musbury Road approached the town one field to the west of the new and very obvious Union Workhouse (see plot 1391, in the bottom right corner of Map 1). Slightly to the north, the cottages in plots 1383 and 1384, along with those on Widepost Lane, although on the town side of the Turnpike Gate (which can be seen near the bottom of the map), were definitely beyond the main urban footprint in 1838. Just beyond Purzebrook House (plot 1062), on the other side of the road and up-hill, in plot 1378, was Penny's Terrace facing the road, and a cluster of houses and out-buildings set slightly back from it, including Purzebrook Cottage and the Long Cottage.

Travellers approaching Axminster from the north would first pass Weycroft and Millbrook (both off Map 1, and both definitely beyond the urban boundary at that time). The first buildings they would encounter within the town itself were Hilary House and its associated buildings (to the west of plots 1130 and 1127 on Map 1).

Drivers of change over the 50 years from 1838 to 1888

The focus of this document is on the town's footprint, and with two very obvious exceptions there were few changes to that footprint between the tithe map of 1838 and the 1891 OS map (based on a survey of 1888). Those exceptions were the cemetery to the north of the town, established in 1855, and the railway station, which was built in 1859 and opened in 1860 to the south west of the town.

Gaps were, however, filled in, and several houses were re-built and expanded with better construction materials. All of the building work identified below was carried out within the town's 1838 boundaries, or very close to those boundaries. Most commercial buildings remained close to the centre of the town.

The 1841 census shows that by then the population of Axminster (the parish, not just the town, which accounted for at least two thirds of the total) was 2,860. However, from 1841 until 1891 the population hardly changed. The lowest count (in 1851) was 2,769, and the highest (in 1861) was 2,918; but in each of 1871, 1881 and 1891 it was 2,840 plus or minus about 30: in effect the same as it had been in 1841, while that of most comparable Devon towns had grown strongly.

One other factor which influenced what did (and perhaps more particularly what did not) happen over this period was the existence of a long-running lawsuit over the ownership of the Manor of Axminster, because in effect the Manor was the entity which acted as landlord to much of the town and wider parish. This dispute started in 1842 when William Knight sued the estate of the late James Alexander Frampton. As far as William Knight was concerned they had jointly purchased the Manor some years before, but for some reason the only signature on a key document was that of James Alexander Frampton, who to complicate matters further had then borrowed money against the security of the Manor. The case was heard in the Chancery courts in London, and was not resolved until 1872, at which point the Knight family became the sole owners of the Manor. This made it possible for the Manor to buy and sell property, and to make necessary investments again.

On 1 November 1876 tolls on the London to Exeter Turnpike were abolished⁶. This will have influenced the way in which houses on Lyme Road in particular were viewed, by making road trips across the former toll bar more attractive.

In 1878 James Boon built two much larger mill buildings at the foot of Castle Hill, which he let to two London-based brush makers: James Coate and the Bidwell Brothers. The story of their businesses is documented elsewhere, but by 1882 their presence in the town was adding to the pressure for new housing, despite the fact that much of the work was carried out by out-workers in their own homes.

Evidence of change: actual buildings

The catalogue of selected changes to the town's built fabric over the period from 1838 to 1888 is as follows.

⁶ Source: CIN, 28 Oct 1876.

1850: West Street (National School)

In 1850 Rev William Daniel Conybeare gave a plot of land on West Street to allow a National School to be built. This was on or very close to the site now occupied by Belle View (beside the footpath access to Tesco).

1855: Chard Road (Cemetery)

In 1855 the churchyard was closed to further burials. The new cemetery on Chard Road was opened. Although not a mainstream construction, this would nevertheless have influenced thinking about how and where the town might expand over time.

1855: Church Street (Police Station)

The Devonshire Police Committee bought a house on Church Street, demolished it, and built the Police Station and cells, with a room for Court hearings above.

1859/60: West Street (Railway Station)

The building of the railway line, and the placing of the station on the south western side of the town, necessitated some re-alignment of the old Turnpike road from Honiton. Instead of heading towards the western end of Widepost Lane and dividing there into two routes (one reaching the town centre via Widepost Lane, Musbury Road and South Street; and the other entering Trinity Square via West Street), the main road from Honiton now crossed the railway line via a substantial embankment and bridge, which made West Street the natural gateway to the town for travellers from the west. It was at least 25 years before independent businesses started to base themselves in the station yard.

By 1861: South Street (Buckland House and Simpson House)

Evidence from a commercial directory shows that by 1861 Buckland House, one of the only 3-storey buildings on South Street, had been built, and was occupied by a private girls' school. On the other side of the street Simpson House has 'AD 1861' on its front, showing that it too was re-built at this time.

By 1866: North Street (Poplar Mount)

Evidence from a commercial directory shows that by 1866 the house known as Poplar Mount had been built between Oak House and North Street. It was accessed from the northern end of what is now Old North Street.

By 1866: West Street (The Lawn)

Evidence from a commercial directory shows that by 1866 the large house called The Lawn had been built at the upper end of the slope on the western side of West Street. It was demolished in about 1960.

By 1870: Lyme Road (Lyme House)

Evidence from a commercial directory shows that by 1870 Lyme House had become a desirable residence, though there had been a house there for many decades. It belonged to Robert Henley, a builder and (in his latter years) monumental mason. It was no doubt Mr Henley who was responsible for the stone balustrade and lions that decorate the front of the house (and which in pre-road traffic days used to project further into Lyme Road).

By 1870: Off West Street (The Shrubbery)

Evidence from a commercial directory shows that by 1870 the large house called The Shrubbery had been built in what is now the West Street car park, facing down-hill, and set back from the road, behind some other houses. The name The Shrubbery derived from this plot's former use as a commercial nursery. It was demolished in about 1970.

1872: Lyme Road (12 cottages)

In 1872 George Henley, a local stone mason and builder, erected 12 small cottages on the site of his former Lyme Road works yard, up-hill from, and adjacent to, the Lamb Inn. A 'clover leaf' logo with his initials and the year can be seen on the street-facing gable of No.1. By the 1930s these cottages were known as Nos.1 to 12 Retreat Cottages, but they have subsequently been consolidated into 6 cottages, known as Nos.1 to 6 Lyme Road Cottages.

By 1873: Lyme Road (Loup House)

Evidence from a commercial directory shows that by 1873 the name Loup (or sometimes Loupe) House was being used for a house which still stands on the southern side of Lyme Road. It may well have replaced a cottage or smaller house. Certainly, and as Map 2 shows, there was a house on that plot (No.1410) when the 1838 tithe map was drawn.

By 1878: Lyme Road (The Elms, Prospect House)

Evidence from a commercial directory shows that by 1878 the large house called The Elms had been built on the southern side of Lyme Road. The Methodist chapel was built adjacent to The Elms in the early 1890s (it opened in 1894). The plot on which these buildings were erected had long been occupied, including by a tanner's yard (at the time of the 1838 tithe map, as memorialised in the name of the adjacent Tanner's Cottage).

The same source also lists Prospect House for the first time in 1878. It is probable that this marked the re-building of Bonner's Cottage into a larger and more modern dwelling which can still be found a relatively short way up-hill from the Lamb Inn. It appears to have been known as Greystones for a while later before re-acquiring the name Prospect House.

By 1879: Lyme Road (Adrienne House)

Evidence from a commercial directory shows that by 1879 what had formerly been known as Adrienne Cottage had become Adrienne House. It was later used as a private hotel / guest house, and is now the principal building of the Magnolia Rise care home (i.e. the more down-hill of the two parts).

By 1883: Coombe Lane (Coombefield House)

Evidence from a commercial directory shows that by 1883 Coombefield House had become a desirable residence, though there had undoubtedly been a dwelling there for decades, if not centuries.

By 1883: Musbury Road (Brooklyn / Pit Orchard / Kerrington House)

Evidence from a commercial directory shows that by 1883 the substantial new house known as Brooklyn was occupied. It stood on the eastern side of Musbury Road looking away from town and out over the Gamberlake valley. When it was first built it was well outside the urban footprint, which did not reach it until the early 20th century. By 1926 it had been re-named Pit Orchard, and was later re-named again as Kerrington House, and used as a private hotel.

1887: Silver Street (Cottage Hospital)

Although not involving any significant building work, it is worth noting that in 1887 part of the former carpet factory on Silver Street was converted to accommodate a cottage hospital.

<p>A check on the town's footprint at this time can be obtained from the 1891 OS map, the survey for which was carried out in 1888. See Chapter 1 for details of how to find it on-line.</p>
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By 1888: Chard Road (Brookhill)

Evidence from the 1891 OS map (see box above) shows that by 1888 a large new house called Brookhill had been built beyond Hilary House, on the other side of Chard Road.

By 1888: Lyme Road (4 houses)

The 1891 OS map (see box above) shows that by 1888 The Laurels had been developed from an older building, which can be seen on the 1838 tithe map, up-hill from and adjacent to The Elms (see above). It was by 1888 deemed sufficiently significant to be named on the map.

Evidence from a commercial directory shows that by 1889 Mount House was a desirable residence, possibly having undergone some renovation or re-building. The 1891 OS map also shows that any such improvements had been completed by 1888 when the map was being updated. The same map shows Mount Cottage, slightly further out of town.

The 1891 OS map (see box above) also shows the first house to be built on the northern side of Lyme Road: Crabbswood Cottage, located just down-hill from Loup House, and opposite the lane which now leads to Fairacre. Crabbswood is sometimes shown as Crabb's Wood, Crab's Wood or Crabswood.

By 1888: North Street (Lynch Villa)

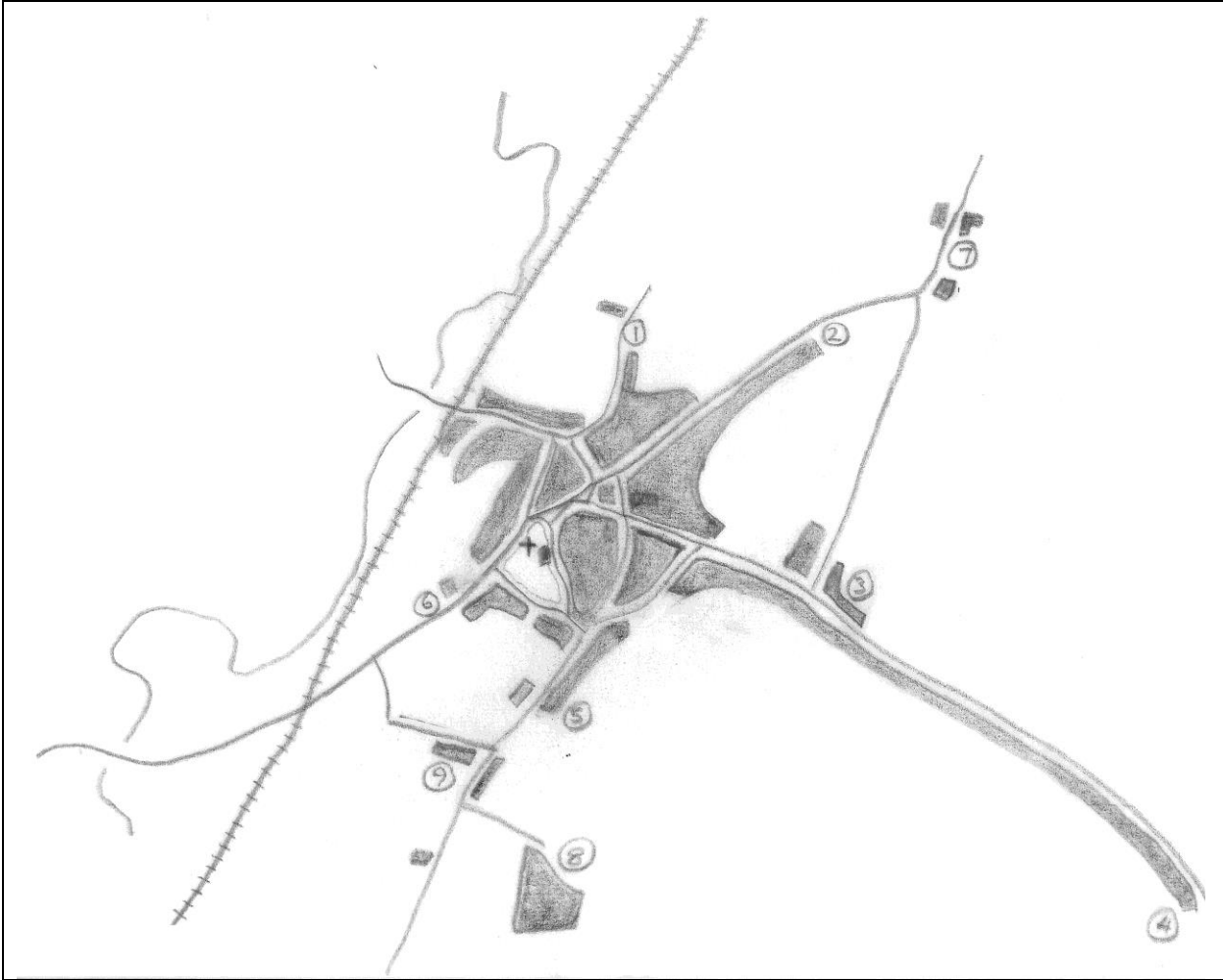
Evidence from the 1891 OS map (see box above) shows that by 1888 Lynch Villa had been built some way out of town (at that time), on the western side of North Street.

Chapter 4: The Town in 1888, and its Subsequent Expansion

The details of the town in 1888

Despite the changes which had occurred since 1838, by 1888 the overall footprint of the town was remarkably close to how it had been 50 years earlier (see Map 3 below). Some old houses had been replaced with bigger and better ones, and several town-centre properties had been expanded and gaps filled in, but nobody who had been away for 50 years would have had any difficulty finding their way around.

Map 3: Sketch map of the town limits in 1888



Note: This sketch map is based on the 1891 OS map.

Key:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1: End of Old North Street, with Willhayes Farm beyond. | 6: The Lawn and The Shrubbery, West Street. |
| 2: Hilary House, Chard Street. | 7: Millbrook, The Trout Inn and Millers' Cottages: well beyond the town limits. |
| 3: Loretto Cottage and adjacent cottages, Lyme Road. | 8: Axminster Union Workhouse, Boxfield Road: well beyond the town limits. |
| 4: Mount House, Lyme Road. | 9: Widepost Lane and cottages opposite: well beyond the town limits |
| 5: Purzebrook House and Cottage, Musbury Road. | |

A much more detailed appreciation of the scale and specific footprint of the town's footprint can easily be obtained by interrogating the on-line 1891 25 inch OS map, which was based on a survey undertaken in 1888. Chapter 1 provides full guidance on how to do this.

In tracing how the town changed after 1888, this chapter deals primarily with terraces and multi-house developments, though where it is known when a specific single house or small group of houses was built in a previously undeveloped area, this is also reported.

Axminster's main house-building developments, 1888 to 1918

1889: Coombe Lane (Coombe House)

Evidence from a commercial directory shows that by 1889 Coombe House was a desirable residence, possibly having undergone some renovation or re-building.

1892: Castle Street (Trinity Terrace) (4 houses)

The 4-house terrace at the West Street end of Castle Street has the date '1892' on the wall. It was built after six thatched cottages were destroyed by fire in 1889⁷.

By 1894: Lyme Road (The Bungalow)

A newspaper report⁸ on the death of a workman engaged in digging a well shows that by 1894 The Bungalow had been built on the northern side of Lyme Road, roughly half-way between Lyme Road and Sector Lane. It was located opposite Prospect House, roughly where Broadway now stands, and can be seen (though it is not named) on the 1905 OS map (see box below).

1896: Lyme Road (Loup Cottages) (4 houses)

The 4-house terrace above Loup House, near the top of Lyme Road, has the date '1896' on the wall.

1898: North Street (Albert Terrace and Willhay House) (4 houses)

What is now a 4-house terrace called Albert Terrace on the western side of North Street has the date '1898' on the wall. However, the 1905 OS map (see box below) suggests that in 1903, when the survey was undertaken, it comprised five houses.

Willhay House, not far to the south (i.e. on the town side) of Albert Terrace, was also built in about 1898 for Henry Tucker Patterson, the farmer at Willhays Farm.

By 1902: Woodmead Road (Railway Terrace) (8 houses)

By (or possibly in) 1902 the 8-house Railway Terrace at the northern end of Woodmead Road had been built⁹.

1902: Church Street (5 houses)

In early 1902 several old cottages on Church Street abutting the Axminster Inn were demolished¹⁰ and replaced by a 5-house terrace.

A check on the town's footprint at this time can be obtained from the 1905 OS map, the survey for which was carried out in 1903. See Chapter 1 for details of how to find it on-line.

⁷ Source: EFP, 7 Jan 1889, and EPG, 11 Jan 1889.

⁸ Source: WT, 12 Nov 1894.

⁹ Source: CIN, 11 Oct 1902.

¹⁰ Source: EPG, 23 Jan 1902, and CIN, 11 Oct 1902.

1903 to 1912: The Axminster Development Syndicate Ltd

The Axminster Development Syndicate Ltd was set up in about 1902 by a mixture of land owners, employers and prominent citizens to develop the Hakes Estate (named after Hakes Farm, and based on the land around the junction of Musbury Road and King Edward Road, which they also built to provide an improved link between the Musbury Road and the railway station).

The Exeter & Plymouth Gazette reported (on 9 October 1903) that a delegation from the syndicate (comprising Dr Langran, and Messrs R Southwood, R Snell, W J Harris and Madge) met the RDC to discuss issues related to local drainage. They had already started building Rougemont Terrace, and must have received satisfactory assurances, because construction started the following year on Hillhead Terrace.

Edwin Snell's directory of 1910 reports that the syndicate had by then built 45 houses, widened those stretches of Musbury Road where their houses were located, and handed the newly-built King Edward Road over to the RDC. The 45 houses referred to were almost certainly those in Rougemont Terrace (6 houses), Hillhead Terrace (22 houses) and most of Alexandra Road (still then in the process of being completed).

The on-line London Gazette of 4 June 1912 shows that the syndicate had been wound up at the end of May that year.

By 1903: Lyme Road (2 houses)

The 1905 OS map (see box above) shows that by 1903 the large house called Fairacre, which sits just off Lyme Road and behind Loup House, had been built, along with Fairacre Lodge.

By 1903: Musbury Road (15 houses, plus 3 more soon after)

The 1905 OS map (see box above) shows that by 1903 the first 5-house section of Purzebrook Cottages (sometimes known as Purzebrook Terrace) had been built, as had the 4-house terrace known as Pound Cottages.

By 1903 a building apparently stood where Nos.1 and 2 Mount Pleasant (adjacent to the three older cottages which are Nos.3 to 5) now stand. It is not entirely clear whether this was the building which can now be seen, or a smaller predecessor structure. However, by the time of the 1911 census the evidence points strongly towards all five dwellings being built (with four occupied and one empty).

Four of the houses which would eventually comprise the original 6-house design for Rougemont Terrace, apparently Nos.3 to 6, had also been built by 1903, which suggests that Nos.1 and 2 were probably built in 1904.

No.7 was added later (and was in evidence by the time of the 1911 census). By 1920 it had been extended, and was known as Rougemont Villa, and then later as Rougemont House. In 1982 planning permission was granted to divide Rougemont House into two dwellings, now numbered as Nos.7 and 8.

By 1903: West Street (2 shops with flats)

The 1905 OS map (see box above) shows that by 1903 2 substantial new shops, with living accommodation above, had been built on West Street, opposite the Western Hotel. The other two, in what is now a row, were built a few years later (see below).

1904/05: Musbury Road (Hillhead Terrace) (22 houses)

The deeds of No.1 Hillhead Terrace show that it was built in 1904, and it is very probable that the other 21 houses which make up the terrace were completed over the next year or so. It was originally known as Hakes' Terrace, but was soon re-named Hillhead Terrace.

1909/11: Alexandra Road (Terrace) (22 houses)

Unlike the nearby Hillhead Terrace, the 22-house terrace on the eastern side of Alexandra Road was built in several smaller blocks, and with different architectural details, almost certainly signifying that it was built by more than one builder.

No.22 has the date '1909' on its gable end, together with the initials WHGN, which stand for William Henry George Newbery, who built it (and several other houses on Alexandra and King Edward Roads). At the time of the 1911 census he was living in No.22 (which he called Bella Vista, the first of three houses to which he gave that name while he lived in them). No.21 (then called Hillside) was also occupied in 1911, as were Nos.1 to 16 Alexandra Road. The 4-house block which includes Nos.5 to 8 has the date '1910' on the front wall.

Nos.17 to 20 may have been built by early 1911, but not yet fitted out and ready to occupy when the census was held. If not, they were built very soon thereafter.

By 1910: Chard Street (Oak Lodge)

Evidence from a commercial directory shows that by 1910 Oak Lodge, next door to Oak House on the down-hill side, had been built or upgraded to a desirable residence. There had been a building there before, but it had never previously been identified as a private residence.

By 1910: King Edward Road (Newenham House)

The first house to be built on King Edward Road was Newenham House, on the corner with Widepost Lane. Originally built for Charles Snell, by then Lord of the Manor of Axminster, Newenham was occupied by him by 1910.

1910: Coombe Lane (3 houses)

The 3-house terrace on the northern side of Coombe Lane has the date '1910' on the wall.

By 1911: King Edward Road (4 houses)

Nos.1 to 4 King Edward Road, comprising two pairs of large semi-detached houses, had been built and occupied by the time of the 1911 census (in which they were described as 'maisonettes'). Whereas all of the houses on King Edward Road now have names rather than numbers, as late as 1938 the semi-detached house on the corner with Musbury Road on the town side of King Edward Road does not appear to have carried a name, and was referred to as No.1. The four houses referred to here are therefore the two pairs of large semi-detached houses now known as The Gables, Keppleway, Rodway and Stanzita.

In March 1927 it was reported¹¹ that the Ministry of Health had agreed to the sale of Nos.1 to 4 King Edward Road, showing that they had been built with the assistance of a public subsidy.

By 1911: West Street (2 shops with flats)

A second pair of substantial shops, with accommodation above, had been built on the western side of West Street, between Trinity Square and what is now the Guildhall, by the time of the 1911 census.

1912: King Edward Road (2 houses)

In July 1912 local builder William Newbery (previously resident at No.22 Alexandra Road: see above) purchased a block of land on the southern side of King Edward Road, running uphill from the corner plot opposite where The Manse now stands, but not as far as Musbury Road. The deeds from that purchase show that he was already resident on King Edward Road, and that he was allowed to build up to seven houses on the land that he was buying.

The first pair of semi-detached houses that he built were the ones now called Fernwood and Roseleigh. He lived in Fernwood, but when he lived there he called it Bella Vista (the same name that he had previously given to No.22 Alexandra Road). The name Fernwood applied from 1930.

Since his address on the 1912 deeds was given as Bella Vista, King Edward Road, we can deduce that he had already built the first two of his allocation of seven houses when he bought the land.

By 1914: Castle Hill (Gloucester House)

Evidence from a commercial directory shows that by 1914 Gloucester House, on the western side of Castle Hill, and facing towards Castle Hill House, was regarded as a desirable residence. There had been a dwelling on the site for many years, but it may have been recently improved.

¹¹ Source: EPG, 22 Mar 1927.

By 1914: Lyme Road (3 houses)

Evidence from a commercial directory shows that by 1914 Ivy House was regarded as a desirable residence. There had been a dwelling on the site for many years, but it may have been recently improved.

The voters' list for 1914 names two more properties on Lyme Road: North View (just up-hill from the group of cottages which themselves are up-hill from The Lamb, and now known as Green Acres); and The Nest (just up-hill from Adrienne House, and now part of Magnolia Rise). The Nest was at one time also known as Shorne House.

The inter-war years (1919 to 1939)

Public housing between the Wars

Between the two World Wars councils became increasingly involved in house building. On some sites Axminster UDC itself acted as developer; on others it allowed third parties to act on its behalf. However, the Council retained some degree of control because it was only through the Council that public subsidies were available. All such publicly-supported schemes had to be approved in advance by the Local Government Board, which also had some control over the rents which could be charged, and over whether the houses could be offered for sale to the tenants.

Over time the Local Government Board was absorbed into other departments, and responsibility for approving public housing was given to the Ministry of Health.

By 1920: King Edward Road (2 houses)

By the time that the 1920 voters' list was drawn up the large house known as The Beeches had been built for Joseph Harris, to the east of King Edward Road, next door to Newenham House (see above), looking out over the station.

Even though its name is not given on the voter's list for 1920, the house called Hillingdon, a detached house on the southern side of King Edward Road between Roseleigh and the 4-house terrace starting with Karagolia (see below), was almost certainly built and occupied by then, and quite possibly a few years earlier than that.

By 1920: Lyme Road (4 houses)

By the time the 1920 voters' list was drawn up 4 further houses on Lyme Road were named for the first time. Three of them were: Hillside (between Ivy House and Lyme House); Lea Combe Cottage (adjacent to Lea Coombe House); and Highfield (on the northern side of the road, opposite Prospect House). Highfield was located very close to The Bungalow (see above).

The fourth was a house sometimes known as East Gate (recognising the location of the former toll-gate, but not linked to the much newer house now known as East Gate). It was later a house and shop generally known as 'Granny Rockett's Cottage'. It stood on the plot in the fork created by the junction between Lyme Road and Sector Lane, and was demolished many years ago.

It is likely that Lea Combe Cottage and East Gate had been there for some years by 1920, but simply not identified by name.

1921/22: Boxfield Road (formerly Union Lane) (22 houses)

This scheme is described in greater detail than most others because it was the first Council-led scheme in Axminster, and as such attracted more attention from the local press than comparable later ones. At the start of the process what is now Boxfield Road was still called Union Lane.

In 1919 it was reported¹² that Axminster UDC's Housing Committee was having difficulty acquiring sites on Union Lane and Chard Street for housing. It was agreed that they would press ahead on the Union Lane site and inform the Local Government Board of the difficulties. A year later the scheme was described¹³ as comprising 22 houses, with the architect (Mr R W Sampson of

¹² Source: EPG, 21 Jan 1919.

¹³ Source: WT, 17 Feb 1920.

Sidmouth) developing the designs. By June 1920 advertisements¹⁴ were calling for brick layers to contact one of the main contractor, A N Coles & Co, on the site at Union Lane. It is clear that the 22 houses were the 11 pairs of semi-detached houses which still constitute Nos.1 to 22 Boxfield Road. It is equally clear from a simple inspection of the building styles that at least two architects and building contractors were involved in the project, one on each on the two sides of the road.

Construction continued through much of 1921. When rents were discussed¹⁵ the Housing Committee set the rents at 7/6d a week; significantly less than the Housing Commissioner's preferred level of 11/6d excluding rates. It was also agreed that the houses should be connected to the town water main, while a comparable decision on gas was deferred. By June problems with the quality of building were evident¹⁶ when two of the new ceilings collapsed. There were suggestions that the wrong sort of sand had been used; the contractor insisted that his plasterer was fully experienced. At least some of the houses were evidently occupied during 1921, because by January 1922 tenants were complaining¹⁷ about the windows.

By April 1922 the builder¹⁸ was demanding payment from the Council for work completed, complaining that he had more difficulties with Axminster than with any other Council. He blamed 'acts of God' for the loss of slates off the roofs, and threatened legal action to recover his money. The Council opted to pay, but also resolved to talk to the architect. The architect warned the Council that as well as the £1,300 just paid they should expect a further bill for £1,100, but that Messrs Coles would make good any defective work.

The voters' list for 1922 shows that all of the houses were complete by then, with all but one occupied by a registered voter when the list was compiled.

A further year on water was reported¹⁹ to be getting into some of the ceilings at Boxfield Road. Despite this at least one tenant wanted to buy his house, and in 1925²⁰ the Ministry agreed to a sale for £500.

1924/25: Chard Road (beyond the cemetery) (6 houses)

That section of the Chard Road which is now opposite Millwey Rise was still in the Axminster Rural District and in the Axminster Hamlets electoral district in the 1920s and 1930s. However, since it is now unequivocally part of Axminster it is worth noting that by the time that the 1925 voters' list was drawn up, what were then called Nos.1 to 6 New Buildings, Weycroft had been built and occupied. When the numbering of Chard Road was consolidated 10 years later, they became Nos.13 to 18 Chard Road.

Housing Needs Assessment of 1925

A report in the Western Times of 23 October 1925 tells us that Dr William Langran, Medical Officer to the UDC, had submitted a report to the Council which stated that Axminster needed "... at least 50 more houses to meet its needs".

1925/32: Paradise Row (demolition of 7 houses)

In the early 1920s there was disquiet amongst the members of the Axminster UDC about the very poor state of 7 small cottages known collectively as Paradise Row, including a report of a plague of rats²¹. These cottages (which can be seen on the 1905 OS map) had been built many years before in an alleyway behind what is now (in 2018) the former Axe Vale Social Club building. By 1923 the Council's conclusion was that they should be demolished²², though there appears to have been some delay in following through on this decision. The demolition was not done all in one go, and the voters' list for 1928 shows that by then two were still occupied by qualified voters. By 1931 only one remained occupied, and by 1933 it too had been demolished.

¹⁴ Source: TCWA, 16 June 1920.

¹⁵ Source: WT, 25 Feb 1921.

¹⁶ Source: EPG, 19 July 1921.

¹⁷ Source: EPG, 17 Jan 1922.

¹⁸ Source: EPG, 25 Apr 1922.

¹⁹ Source: EPG, 23 Feb 1923.

²⁰ Source: WT, 23 Oct 1925.

²¹ Source: EPG, 19 Aug 1921.

²² Source: WT, 25 May 1923.

1925: Castle Hill (3 houses)

In 1925 it was reported²³ that the Ministry of Health had sanctioned the building of 3 houses on Castle Hill. These could well be the group of three half-way down the hill on the northern side of the street, though this has not been confirmed.

1925: Lyme Road (4 houses)

In 1925 it was reported²⁴ that the UDC had fixed the price of 4 houses on Lyme Road in line with the Ministry of Health's recommendations, at £380 for the two outer dwellings, and £370 for the inner ones. This was evidently a terrace of 4 houses, and probably refers to the houses opposite and slightly up-hill from the Lamb Inn. These are now known as Highridge (formerly Fairview), Marsh View (formerly Mayford), Fayrefield and Fairway.

1925/26: King Edward Road (The Manse)

In July 1925 it was reported²⁵ that a site had been purchased by the parishioners of the Congregational church to allow The Manse to be built for their minister on the eastern corner of King Edward Road and Alexandra Road. Messrs Clarke & Moulding were expected to be the builders, and it can be confirmed that the house was finished and occupied by late 1926²⁶.

1925/27: Widepost Lane (6 houses)

In 1925 it was reported²⁷ that the Council was proposing to use its powers of compulsory purchase in connection with three sites, one of which was at the western end of Widepost Lane, on the northern side of the lane. The proposal for that site was to build two 3-house terraces. In due course the scheme was approved, and in 1926 a tender from Messrs Moulding & Sons was accepted²⁸. In 1927 it was reported²⁹ that the Council had received applications from 16 families for the 6 available houses, illustrating the demand for subsidised housing in Axminster.

1925/27: King Edward Road (9 houses in 3 groups)

At the same time that the Council was proposing to acquire the Widepost Lane site (see above), it was looking at two further sites, both on King Edward Road.

One of these was on the southern side of King Edward Road at the Musbury Road end, where part of Hakes Farm buildings had stood, and where a 3-house terrace was proposed. This was approved, despite the strong protests of Colonel Bayley, the owner of Gamberlake House (formerly known as Furzebrook) who lived to the south. Although the land was acquired via compulsory purchase, there is no evidence that the Council played much of a role as far as this group of houses was concerned once their construction and subsidy had been approved (i.e. they were sold rather than rented). The houses are now known as The Moorings, Chetwynd and The Nook, and they were occupied by the time the voters' list for 1927 was compiled.

The other compulsory purchase plot was in the corner of the sloping field to the west of Alexandra Road which belonged to William Joseph Harris, and was at that time being used for allotments. It was originally (in 1925) proposed to build seven houses on this plot plus adjacent ground³⁰, though it was noted at the time that this proposal was being developed that Mr Harris was already either planning or actually building on part of the land in his own right (his house was The Beeches: see above).

In 1926 the Ministry of Health approved financial support for the Council's proposal for nine more houses on King Edward Road³¹, which almost certainly included the three on the Hakes Farm site (see above) and the four houses immediately to their east (the site for which had not been compulsorily purchased). As regards that 4-house terrace, it was reported³² that the UDC had granted Mr W H G Newbery a subsidy of £100 each for four houses in a block on King Edward Road. Those houses are on a block of land which had been bought by William Newbery in 1912,

²³ Source: WMN, 17 June 1925.

²⁴ Source: WMN, 17 June 1925.

²⁵ Source: WT, 3 July 1925.

²⁶ Source: TCWA, 27 Oct 1926.

²⁷ Sources: EPG, 2 July 1925 and EPG, 27 Aug 1925.

²⁸ Source: WT, 19 Feb 1926.

²⁹ Source: EPG, 21 Jan 1927.

³⁰ Source: EPG, 27 Aug 1925.

³¹ Source: WT, 19 Feb 1926.

³² Source: EPG, 21 May 1926 and EPG, 21 Dec 1926.

and they share some of the design features evident on several other properties built by him. By Christmas of the same year, three of the four houses had been sold. The houses were initially called Twyford, Matson, Newlyn and Karagolia. Twyford and Newlyn were later re-named Happy Days and Valley View respectively.

It seems highly likely that the other two houses covered by the Ministry of Health grant were the pair of semi-detached houses on the northern side of the road, in a corner of the allotment field, which were (and are still) named Osborne and Hughenden. Their architectural style is very similar to the Widepost Lane houses, and others built for the Council on plots that they had acquired via compulsory purchase. In 1927 it was reported³³ that the Council was told that "... *two houses now completed still remain unsold in King Edward Road, and ... it was decided to let the houses*". This is likely to be a reference to Osborne and Hughenden.

c.1926: King Edward Road (2 houses, 2 bungalows)

As noted above, in August 1925 it was reported³⁴ that William Joseph Harris of The Beeches was either building or planning to start building on part of his land. This may well be connected to the construction of two houses and/or two bungalows, all of which face onto King Edward Road, at the other end of his plot from his own house (The Beeches).

Evidence from the voters' list for 1927 shows that all four properties (the pair of semi-detached houses on the western side of the corner of King Edward Road and Alexandra Road, called Sunnyside and Hendra; and the two bungalows known as The Bungalow and Axe View further down-hill and round the corner from them) were occupied by then. Furthermore, two 1928 aerial photographs of Axminster (see box below) show these properties at their very edges. The bungalows can just be seen on the photograph which shows the station, which also confirms that the bungalows on the other side of King Edward Road had not been built by then.

1926/27: Chard Road (beyond the cemetery) (2 houses)

By the time that the 1927 voters' list was drawn up two more houses had been built on Chard Road, opposite what is now Millwey Rise. They were originally called Nos.1 and 2 Weycroft Villas, but by 1935 had been re-numbered as Nos.22 and 23 Chard Road.

By 1927: Alexandra Road (2 houses)

It is just possible to see on one of the two 1928 aerial photographs of Axminster referred to above (also see box below), that the pair of semi-detached houses which are now Nos.23 and 24 Alexandra Road had been built by 1928. The voters' lists for 1927 to 1929 only show one (No.24) as being occupied by a registered voter by then, and called Coolfadda. It was from this house that the Ministry of Labour apparently ran a local employment office. By 1930 both houses were occupied by registered voters.

1927: Musbury Road (beyond Woodbury Cross) (Hillside / Cheriton)

In 1926 the UDC was reported³⁵ to have decided to ask Mr W J Harris (of The Beeches, King Edward Road: see above) to lay water mains and sewers to Gamberlake Field where he proposed to build 8 houses facing onto Musbury Road. The Council would pay a capped fee per house connected in this way, and if worthwhile would contribute additional funds to increase the capacity of the pipes, reflecting the further growth which was expected to the south of the town.

The first of these houses was built and occupied by the time that the 1927 voters' list was assembled. For some years it was called Hillside, but its name was evidently changed later to Cheriton. When Hillside and its neighbouring houses were built it was evidently not thought necessary to widen the road or to provide a pavement, even though road traffic had started to become a feature of local life by then.

1927/28: North Street (27 houses)

In 1927 the detached house known as The Latches was built to the east of the northern end of what is now Old North Street. It was occupied by Harry Cawley, owner of the Axe Vale Laundry (whose premises were at the far end of North Street) by the time that the 1928 voters' list was compiled.

³³ Source: EPG, 21 Dec 1926.

³⁴ Source: EPG, 25 Aug 1925.

³⁵ Source: EPG, 16 Feb 1926.

Early in 1927 it was reported³⁶ that the UDC had discussed using compulsory purchase powers to buy a plot of land on North Street from Henry Tucker Patterson of Willhays Farm suitable for 10 to 12 houses. The Chairman, Mr J N Webster said that "... *if they had to buy land to which roads had to be made to take sewers, the cost became prohibitive ... you can't buy in Axminster a square yard of ground that is close to sewers or water for any money*". It was resolved that the Council would apply for the necessary powers. That decision may have changed Mr Patterson's mind, because less than a month later it was reported³⁷ that the Council had bought 1½ acres at Willhays for £300 as a housing site³⁸.

What was then called Lynch Terrace is a 14-house terrace opposite Albert Terrace (see above), and what was then called Lynch Cottages is a row of 12 semi-detached houses (i.e. 6 buildings) immediately to the north of Lynch Terrace. These two groups of houses are now numbered 55 to 81 (odd numbers only); and 83 to 103 (odd numbers only) North Street, respectively.

Lynch Cottages were occupied by the time that the 1928 voters' list was drawn up, and Lynch Terrace was occupied soon thereafter. Both sets of houses can clearly be seen in an 1828 aerial photograph of Axminster (see box below).

A check on the town's footprint at this time can be obtained from a set of aerial photographs taken in 1928. See Chapter 1 for details of how to find them on-line.

1928/33: Chard Road (beyond the cemetery) (15 houses)

By 1927 8 houses had already been built on Chard Road opposite what is now Millwey Rise (see above). Over the next few years 15 more were built, in the form of 6 pairs of semi-detached houses (i.e. 12 houses in all) on the town side of New Buildings, and a 3-house terrace between New Buildings and Weycroft Villas. These three were originally recorded as Nos.7 to 9 New Buildings, and they were occupied by 1930. Some of the semi-detached houses were originally given names (e.g. Iona, which became No.7, had been built by 1930), but by the time that the 1935 voters' list was drawn up they had all been re-numbered as Nos.1 to 23 Chard Road. The 12 semi-detached houses were Nos.1 to 12, New Buildings were Nos.13 to 21, and Weycroft Villas were Nos.22 and 23.

1929/30: King Edward Road (1 house, 1 bungalow)

In late 1928 Henry Charles Hallett bought a narrow plot of land close to the corner of King Edward Road, on which he had a detached house built. Originally called It'll Do, it is now known as Saron House. He then purchased the adjacent plot on which he had a bungalow built, set well back from the road. Originally this was called Nestle Doon, then The Little House, and now Avonlea. After his death his widow moved from It'll Do to Nestle Doon.

1929/30: Musbury Road (beyond Woodbury Cross) (4 houses)

By 1930 Mr W J Harris had built 4 (possibly 5) more houses fronting onto Musbury Road beyond Woodbury Cross. As well as Hillside (see above), by the time the 1930 voters' list was compiled Oaklands, Nilgiris and Meldreth had been completed and occupied on the western side of the road, and Hardways (later re-named Blairhill) had been occupied on the other side of the road. Some of these had been finished by 1929, but the new house names are not given on the voters' list for that year. Hardways / Blairhill may well not have been built by Mr Harris.

1929/30: Sector Lane (Cridlake) (34 houses)

Cridlake was another Council-led development, built on land behind Loretto Cottage, which had been sold in 1928³⁹. The 34 houses were in the process of being built in 1929⁴⁰, and were all occupied by the time that the voters' list for 1930 was compiled.

³⁶ Source: EPG, 22 Feb 1927.

³⁷ Source: EPG, 25 Mar 1927.

³⁸ In fact the two fields on which houses were subsequently built totalled just over 2 acres according to the 1905 OS map, with the boundaries of Lynch Terrace filling one of the fields precisely, and those of Lynch Cottages fitting the other equally well.

³⁹ Source: EPG, 8 June 1928.

⁴⁰ Source: WT, 15 Mar 1929.

1930/31: King Edward Road (Bella Vista No.3 and Westway)

In 1930 William Newbery sold his semi-detached house called Bella Vista (see above), and bought the adjacent block of land. He immediately built a new detached house which he named Bella Vista (and which in 1959 was re-named Heene Croft), followed by Westway, a large detached house set well back from the road, which he built for Mr W J Harris, who had taken up residence by the time that the voters' list for 1932 was compiled.

By 1931: Off King Edward Road (The Alcove)

By the time that the 1931 voters' list was assembled, a bungalow called The Alcove had been built to the south of, and set well back from, King Edward Road, behind the 4-house terrace. It appears to have occupied the plot where the more modern bungalow called Gamberlake Lodge now stands.

By 1931: Lyme Road (1 house, 2 bungalows)

By the time that the 1931 voters' list was assembled there was a house and 2 bungalows on the north side of Lyme Road between the eastern end of Lyme Street and Stoney Lane. Working up-hill from the start of Chard Road, the house was (and still is) called Rosedale, and the bungalows were (and still are) called Dalhousie and Kylemore.

1931: Fairy Lane (demolition of 4 cottages)

Fairy Lane is now reduced to a narrow footpath leading eastwards from Musbury Road, almost opposite Lear Lane. In the 19th century it had a row of four cottages which were from time to time reported to the Council⁴¹ as being in need of serious attention. At the time of the 1911 census four households were living on Fairy Lane, but by 1931 only 3 houses were mentioned as being subjects of a proposed demolition order⁴². After their demolition, their plot was absorbed into the garden of Browhill House (see below).

By 1932: Lyme Road (26 houses and bungalows)

A comparison between the voters' lists drawn up in 1920 and 1932⁴³ show that over that period the following houses had been added to Lyme Road, to the east of the junction between Lyme Road and Sector Lane.

On the southern side of the road Lime Farm (now The Limes) had been added just down-hill from Adrienne House; and Prospect Cottages had been built adjacent to Prospect House and set back from the road. Further up the hill Sidleigh, Cambrian, Hayne Bungalow (later The Hayne) and Cowslip Villa had been added to the west of the lane leading to Fairacre. Loup Cottage (later The Retreat) had been built between Loup House and No.1 Loup Cottages.

On the other side of the road a significant number of houses and bungalows had been added. Between Fairway (the last of the four council houses built in 1925: see above) and Highfield, the following had been built by 1932: Hauteville, Danes View, Edgemont, Nos.1-2 The Limes (later re-named Trim Lea and Linden Lea), Stanbury View (later Bay Tree House), and Dunrovin (later The Foxes).

Working further up-hill, most of the houses and bungalows between (and including) Hillcrest and Arlington had also been built. Specifically, these comprised Hillcrest, The Haven, Avenel, Marsh View, Far-a-nuff, Hornshayes, Littlecroft, Meadowland, Shell Cot, Salway's Bungalow, Lymecourt and Arlington.

Several of this group of 12 houses have subsequently been re-named or re-built. Avenel and Marsh View appear to have been demolished and replaced by what is now Vine House. Hornshayes and Littlecroft appear to have become Lyndale and Hazelford respectively. Shell Cot and Salway's Bungalow became Ivedon and The Firs respectively. Lymecourt was later associated with a petrol station, and was eventually replaced by Nos.1-3 Loup Court.

⁴¹ Sources: BN, 8 Dec 1893; and BN, 19 Jan 1894.

⁴² Source: EPG, 23 Jan 1931.

⁴³ A more detailed year-by-year analysis would be possible by reference to each individual voters' list, but I have not (yet) had time to do that.

1932: Lyme Street (2 houses)

Just below Rosedale (see Lyme Road, above), and at the very eastern (up-hill) extent of Lyme Street, a pair of semi-detached houses (Tre-Ru and Sunny Bank) which were not in evidence in 1931 had been built by 1932.

1932/33: Sector Lane (Prestor) (24 houses)

Prestor was another Council-led development, comprising 24 semi-detached and terraced houses, some of which face northwards onto Sector Lane, and some of which are on either side of the cul-de-sac known as Prestor.

It was reported in 1931⁴⁴ that The Ministry of Health had written to the Council sanctioning the erection of 24 houses on a site that the Council had recently acquired, and based on the number of houses, this must be a reference to Prestor. A year later it was reported⁴⁵ that "... 24 houses in Sector Road are to be provided with electric light at a cost of 5s per house." The voters' list for 1932 shows that Nos.1 to 10 had been occupied by the time it was drawn up, and the list for 1933 identifies the adult residents of all 24 houses.

1934: Church Street (St Thomas' Court)

St Thomas' Court was opened as a Health Centre in 1934. Although not primarily residential, it constituted a significant landmark on Church Street.

1934/36: Musbury Road (beyond Woodbury Cross) (10 houses)

The voters' lists for 1934 to 1936 show that further houses were being built on Musbury Road beyond Woodbury Cross. By 1936 the new houses not already identified above included Brookfield, Cranmore, Chineways, Lakeside, Sou'west, Fernlea, Highfield and Pendennis (apparently later re-named Hillcrest) on the west of Musbury Road, and Browhill House on the other side of the road. The first four of these (Brookhill to Lakeside, plus Cheriton / Hillside which had been built earlier) may well have formed part of Mr R J Luff's development of Gamberlake rather than Mr W J Harris' houses. The property lines would certainly support that conclusion, which would also fit quite well with the total numbers of house that each had said he intended to build. One other house called Marma was built by 1936, and this may have been re-named soon thereafter. As well as the houses identified above as possibly part of the Gamberlake development, Browhill House may well have been built by others.

1934/38: Gamberlake (13 houses)

Before the carpet factory was built (in 1936/37) houses were being erected along both sides of Gamberlake, starting on the northern side. They were being built by or for Mr R J Luff, who owned the land, along with more beside the station yard. He was also a significant shareholder in the carpet factory.

The deeds of one of those houses, called Clayton, show that it was one of several semi-detached houses which had been built by different builders in or around 1934. By late 1937 Mr Luff complained to the Council as follows⁴⁶: "*Your Council ... I believe are taking rates which include street lighting from the owners or tenants of these properties, and you are also aware that I have an arrangement with your Council that when 25 houses are built on the land, and a rough road provided, you will take the same over. At present there are 11 houses occupied, and four in course of erection, and land sold for four more; in addition the carpet factory, which will be doubled in size before the end of this year ... is employing 67, and has paid since the middle of May last £3,000 in wages and salaries.*"

By the time the 1938 voters' list was being assembled, which would have been at much the same time as Mr Luff's letter was written, houses on both sides of Gamberlake had been completed and occupied, and the following house names appear on that list: Meads (actually fronting onto Musbury Road), No.2 Pit Orchard Cottages, Gambermead, Clayton (see above), an unnamed house, Kendal, Broadmayne, another unnamed house (probably now called Lee Green), Grantlea, Newhaven, Alumhurst, Homestead and Newlands.

⁴⁴ Source: WT, 21 Aug 1931.

⁴⁵ Source: EPG, 19 Feb 1932.

⁴⁶ Source: WT, 19 Nov 1937.

See also the notes above regarding Musbury Road for details of other properties which may well have formed part of Mr Luff's target of 25 houses.

1935/38: Beavor Lane (6 houses)

A report in 1935 of the marriage of Frederick Kett, who practised as an architect in Axminster for many years⁴⁷, stated that he would be moving to Prestoller, which had probably only just been built. It was not listed on the voters' list for 1935, but a year later Prestoller can be seen to have been the first 20th century house on Beavor Lane.

A year later Rodenberry and one other unnamed house had been added, and by 1938 the list names Two Trees and names the residents of one other house between Rodenberry and Two Trees (either Claremont or Penylan). A fifth house probably followed very soon thereafter, because it can be seen on the 1938 OS map. The 1938 map also shows Higher Millbrook, further up Beavor Lane from Prestoller, but it does not appear to have been occupied by the time the voters' list for that year was drawn up.

By 1936: Off Chard Road (Latchmount)

The large house called Latchmount which stands to the west of Brookhill had been built and occupied by the time that the voters' list for 1936 was drawn up. It belonged to Mr R J Luff, who was developing other housing at Gamberlake, and who was soon to become a founding investor in the carpet factory.

1936/37: Morton Way (formerly part of Boxfield Road) (10 houses)

In 1937 Mr Pincott reported to the Council⁴⁸ that 10 more houses either were in the process of being erected, or had just been completed, on Boxfield Road, but without the benefit of street lighting. This was a reference to the five pairs of semi-detached houses which were located beyond Box House, and which are now on Morton Way. The voters' list for 1936 shows that the first 4 houses were already occupied by then, a position which had not changed a year later: a delay which is consistent with the dispute about lighting reported above.

1936/37: Musbury Road (Purzebrook to Widepost Lane) (7 houses)

The voters' list for 1937 shows that two new pairs of semi-detached houses had been built on the western side of Musbury Road between Purzebrook and Widepost Lane: The Verne, Paramount, Preswylfa and Whitmoor. A year later Porthkerry and Triscombe (later re-named Alderley) and the detached house named Shirley had also been built and occupied.

1937: King Edward Road (Allwood)

The wooden bungalow known as Allwood, which in early 2018 still stands opposite Railway Terrace, was built by the Heal family, who also operated the adjacent sawmill on Woodmead Road⁴⁹. The first reference that has been found to it (in sales advertisements placed in the newspapers by Mr Heal) dates from 1937, which is also the first year that it appears as his address on the voters' list. Prior to that he had given his business address simply as King Edward Road. Permission to demolish it and re-develop the site (which had been derelict for several years) was granted by EDDC in 2018.

1937/38: Musbury Road (beyond Woodbury Cross) (1 house)

The voters' lists for 1937 show that one further house had been built. The new house names were Ramsdale and Oakbank, one of which may well have been named Marma in 1936 (and therefore have been counted above).

By 1938: Lyme Road (17 houses and bungalows)

By the time that the 1938 voters' list was drawn up, a further 17 individual houses and bungalows not already mentioned above (see 1932) had been built on Lyme Road, most of them on the northern side and well up-hill from the Sector Lane junction. Working up-hill, the first of these was Devonian, between Highfield and Hillcrest. Then east of Arlington the following had been added: Wentworth, Fairleigh, Highleigh (later Wildings), The Rowans (later Purbrook Cottage), Wee Too

⁴⁷ Source: Gloucester Journal, 25 Sept 1935.

⁴⁸ Source: WT, 19 Nov 1937.

⁴⁹ The access track to the saw mill actually ran between Allwood and its garage. From about 1924 to 1936 the timber yard belonged to Mr R J Luff.

(later Ewellyn), Sundown (later Heygate), Uphill (later Sunnyside then Sweetpea Cottage), Holmleigh, Fernicot (later Idle Hill Cottage), Wayside, Coach Rode, The Leat, Meadow Rue and Endfield. Meadow Rue is not identified on the 1938 voters' list, but being part of a 3-house terrace, it must have been built at the same time as the other two.

On the southern side of Lyme Road Greenhayes had been built well back from the road near Mount House, and Northernhay had been added just to the west of Cowslip Villa.

1938: King Edward Road (Sunnydene)

The bungalow called Sunnydene, next door to Allwood (see above) first appears on the voters' list in 1938.

1938/39: Far end of North Street (8 houses)

Although the Council initially accepted three tenders to build two 4-bed houses, 8 3-bed houses and 4 2-bed houses in April 1938⁵⁰ at the far end of North Street, the Ministry of Health caused them to change their collective mind⁵¹. By October of the same year it was reported⁵² that Messrs Moulding & Sons and Mitchell & Bailey were both making progress of their respective sites, despite the adverse weather. A further report in early 1939⁵³ shows that the number of houses being built was eight.

A simple indication of where the more desirable residences were clustered in 1938

The voters' lists to which frequent reference has been made above not only list voters, they also show who met the criteria to be called to serve on a jury. Looking at the roads where potential jurors lived at the time when the 1938 voters' list was drawn up provides a crude measure of where the more desirable and expensive houses were clustered at that time. In the count reported below, it is households that are counted, not persons (i.e. if two residents were qualified, they are counted here as one, not two).

The four streets / roads with the most jurors were Lyme Road (15), West Street (14), Musbury Road (14) and King Edward Road (12). Between them, these four accounted for 55 qualified juror households: well over half of those in the town (but not counting outlying houses and farms).

Next came Lyme Street (7), South Street (7), Victoria Place (5), Millbrook (5) and Chard Street (4). These five had a further 28 qualified households between them (i.e. just over half as many as the 'top four').

The remaining 15 juror households in the town were divided between Boxfield Road (3), North Street (3), Trinity Square (3), Castle Hill (2), Stoney Lane (2), George Street (1) and Silver Street (1).

This evidence should not be over-interpreted, but it does show: (1) the extent to which the historic dominance in local affairs of the residents of Lyme Road was being diluted; (2) how most of the new houses aimed at owner-occupiers were being built to the south of the town; and (3) how the simple fact of being developed via Council initiative (e.g. Boxfield Road) did not make houses undesirable.

⁵⁰ Source: EPG, 29 Apr 1938.

⁵¹ Source: WT, 24 June 1938.

⁵² Source: EPG, 21 Oct 1938.

⁵³ Source: EPG, 24 Feb 1939

Overview of the town's housing stock in 1938/39

The 1939 annual report from the Medical Officer of Health (see below) states that at the end of 1938 the population of the area administered by Axminster UDC was 2,355 persons living in 698 habitable houses. A year later, and a few months into the war, and therefore after evacuation had started, the population had risen to 2,731 without any increase in the housing stock. By 1944 the civilian population had fallen back to 2,435.

Of the 698 houses counted in 1938 very nearly half can be accounted for by the houses identified above as having been built since 1900. Well over 200 had been built since Dr Langran's housing need assessment of 1925 had said that at least 50 more houses were required.

None of these figures include the stretch of Chard Road which is now opposite Millwey Rise, which was at that time in the Rural District area.

The Medical Officer of Health's reports can be accessed on-line via the archive.org website. To find the reports, search the website for "No.2 sanitary area" (in quotes) and select 'full text of books'.

Post-war recovery: 1940 to 1965

Millwey Rise: A very special case

The name Millwey Rise reflects its position, on a piece of higher ground half-way between the Millbrook stream and Weycroft Mill, about a mile north of the centre of Axminster. At the end of World War II its location did not make it an obvious place to develop what was then the largest housing estate in East Devon, but what made all the difference was the presence there of a large ex-US army hospital, built in 1943 in preparation for the D-Day landings of June 1944, but then hardly used because casualty rates in Normandy were much lower than had been feared.

By 1946 there was a severe shortage of housing in the town as servicemen returned from the war, and in the absence of official action, local families took matters into their own hands and, starting in September 1946, they began to occupy the empty buildings⁵⁴. Initially there was no electricity or running water, but the first families to move in soon found a source of water nearby, and relied on oil lamps for lighting. Mr Harry Cawley, Chairman of the UDC was quoted as saying that he hoped that the presence of unofficial residents would not delay the Council's plan to develop much of the site for housing, which he believed stood a good chance of winning approval. Mr H Morrish, chairman of the RDC simply said "*I am very pleased to hear it. I am all in favour of them going there.*"

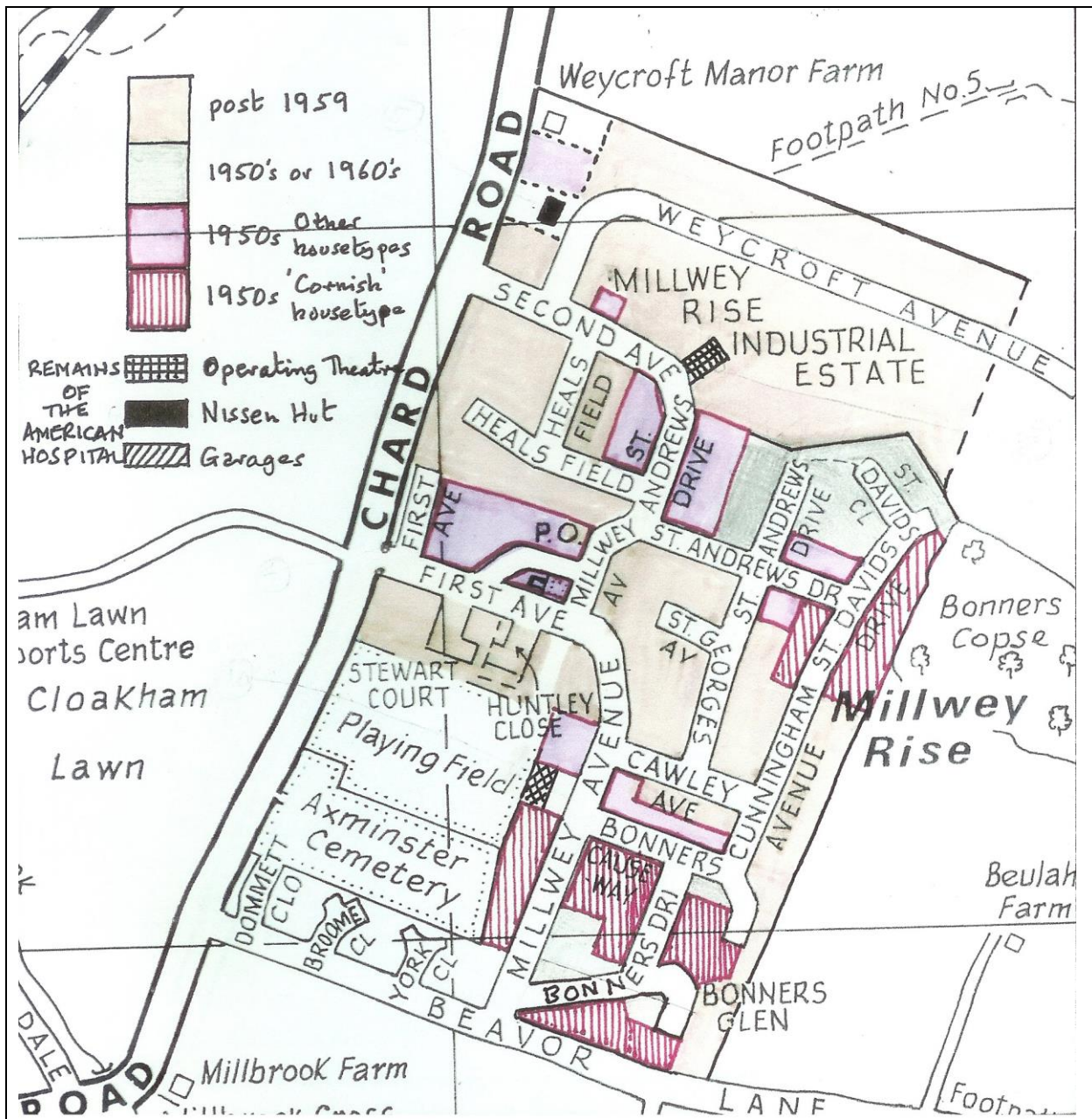
The best (and remarkably clear) evidence for the original layout of the US army hospital comes from aerial photographs taken in January 1948 (see box below).

The hand-drawn map reproduced below, which is held in the Axminster Heritage Centre, was drawn up in the mid-1990s, or possibly slightly later. I do not know to whom the credit for this should be given, but whoever it was did an excellent job of preserving local knowledge before it was lost. It also provides a very useful complement to all of the individual entries below dealing with the avenues, roads and closes which together comprise Millwey Rise.

A 1963 OS map shows that a large number of the original hospital buildings (some Nissen huts, but a much large number of single-storey buildings) still survived at that time, in a block where St George's Drive is now, and to the west and east of it, effectively separating the Millwey Avenue / Bonner's Drive section from the First Avenue / St David's Drive sections, which themselves were quite distinct.

⁵⁴ Source: PWN, 10 Sept 1946.

Map 4: Millwey Rise



A check on the whole town's footprint at this time, not just Millwey Rise, can be obtained from a set of aerial photographs taken by the RAF in January 1948. See Chapter 1 for details of how to find them on-line.

By 1948: Far end of Morton Way (formerly part of Boxfield Road) (11 temporary structures)

An aerial photograph from 1948 (see box above) shows 11 buildings, arranged as a crescent of 4 facing what is now the far end of Morton Way, with another crescent of 7 behind them. These were probably temporary structures built during the war and later used for housing. They can still be seen on another aerial photograph from 1961. They were later replaced by Ridgeway Court (see below).

By 1948: Lear Lane, off Musbury Road (Westover)

An aerial photograph from 1948 (see box above) shows a house standing at the end of Lear Lane where Westover is now, and very probably this was Westover itself. There is no record of a resident of Westover on the 1938 voters' list.

By 1948: Lyme Road (Nesta)

An aerial photograph from 1948 (see box above) appears to show that the bungalow called Nesta had been built by then on the northern side of Lyme Road, between Danes View and Edgemont.

1948/53: Dragon's Mead (20 Bungalows)

As their workforce returned from war service, Axminster Carpets Ltd set up a self-build scheme under which the company would provide the land and materials, and some qualified labour, while employees who wanted to participate would provide the bulk of the unskilled labour. The resultant T-shaped development was called Dragons Mead. An aerial photograph from 1948 (see box above) shows that building work was under way by then.

1949/51: Foxhill (38 houses)

A tender for the construction of 30 houses was issued in 1949⁵⁵. The site was described in the tender notice as Boxfield Road, but earlier reports⁵⁶ make it clear that this was actually the start of the development to be known as Foxhill. The 30 houses were identified as Nos.1 to 6 and 15 to 38.

A year later a press report⁵⁷ stated that construction had only recently got under way on the 30 houses. However, there was already discussion of a further 8 houses, and whether they should be built as council houses or privately. These would (presumably) be Nos.7 to 14.

1951: First Avenue (8 houses)

The first occupants of No.6 First Avenue (which faces out from Millwey Rise over a grassed area towards Chard Road) have reported that the terrace of 8 houses which runs round the corner along First Avenue and into the main body of Millwey Rise (see Map 4 above) were being built and occupied in 1951. These houses replaced some of the temporary structures of the former US military hospital, which had been occupied by civilians soon after the war.

1951/57: Horslears and Lear Lane (several houses)

The deeds to the house called Kennack, at the Lear Lane end of Horslears, shows that it was first occupied by 1951. Aerial photographs from 1948 (see box above) confirm that Horslears was still a green field at that time, and the 1958/59 OS map (which was based on surveys up to 1957) show that several other houses on both Horslears and Lear Lane had been built by 1957.

1952: Alexandra Road (West Ridge)

Sales details issued in 2017 show that the substantial red brick house known as West Ridge, which is accessed from Alexandra Road and looks out over the station, was built in 1952 by the Moulding family for their own use.

c.1953: Bonners Drive, Millwey Rise (c.24 houses)

Information from a resident of No.24 Bonners Drive (see Map 4 above) shows that it had originally been No.16, with subsequent re-numbering being carried out to accommodate further nearby house building. The original c.1953 development appears to have comprised 24 houses.

c.1956: First Avenue (3 shops and flats)

One of the first occupants of No.22 First Avenue (see Map 4 above), comprising one of three shop units with flats above, reports that they were completed in about 1956.

⁵⁵ Source: WMN, 5 Apr 1949.

⁵⁶ Sources: EPG, 29 Aug 1947, WMN, 14 Oct 1947 and WMN, 5 Nov 1948.

⁵⁷ Source: 26 May 1950.

A check on the town's footprint at this time can be obtained from the OS map of 1958/59, based on a survey in 1957. See Chapter 1 for details of how to find it on-line.

By 1957: Foxhill (about 40 houses)

The 1958/59 OS map (see box above) shows that Foxhill had been largely completed by then. The map is not sufficiently detailed to allow houses to be counted individually, but it shows that the large majority of current houses were in place. The odd-numbered houses from 79 to 87 (on the section of Foxhill which now leads to Kirby Close) were built later.

By 1957: North Street (9 houses at far end)

The 1958/59 OS map (see box above) shows 17 houses at the far end of North Street (opposite, and wrapping round the north-eastern corner of, the allotments), which means that 9 more had been added to the 8 pre-war ones (see above). These may have been built well before 1957, but this is the earliest firm existence so far found for their existence.

By 1960: Alexandra Road (1 bungalow)

An OS map sheet dated 1960 shows that the bungalow called Ashleigh, on the western side of Alexandra Road, had been built by then.

By 1960: King Edward Road (Farthings)

An OS map sheet dated 1960 shows that the detached house called Farthings had been built by then, on the southern side of the corner of King Edward Road and Musbury Road.

c.1960: Millwey Avenue (8 houses)

Information from a resident confirms that the 4 pairs of semi-detached houses which are now Nos.1-4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 Millwey Avenue (see Map 4 above) were built in about 1960 By Messrs Moulding & Sons.

A check on selected parts of the town's footprint at this time can be obtained from a group of aerial photographs held as hard copy by Axminster Heritage Centre.

By 1961: West Street (Western Parade) (3 flats)

An aerial photograph from 1961 (see box above) shows the newly-built Western Parade, comprising three shops with flats above, which had been built on the site formerly occupied by The Lawn on the western side of West Street, just down-hill from the Guildhall.

1962/67: Lyme Close (11 houses and a bungalow)

The land to the east of Lyme Close was developed by Devon County Council for a range of uses, including a police station, magistrates' court and fire station. The 5 houses closest to the police station were either occupied, or at least being built, by 1962 (as shown by the deeds of No.2), while Nos.6 to 10 were occupied by 1967 (as shown by the deeds of No.10). At the same time, the bungalow on the other side of the road (then called Shardamur, later rather optimistically re-named Yarty View) was built in 1966 (as shown by its deeds). No.11 was originally built (possibly a little later) as flats for nurses.

By 1963: Beavor Lane (2 houses)

The OS map published in 1963 shows that Greymare had been built by then. A new house just off Beavor Lane, linked to Prestaller Farm, had also been built by 1963.

By 1963: Off Chard Road (Axehill)

An OS map sheet dated 1963 shows that the large house called Axehill, which sits to the west of Chard Road, and a short distance north west of Brookhill, and which has a driveway just up-hill from the more recent cul-de-sac called Ingleside, had been built by 1963.

By 1963: Chard Road (2 houses built, 2 cottages demolished)

An OS map sheet dated 1963 shows that by then 2 houses called Millbrook View and Contay had been built above and to the south of the Chard Road / Stoney Lane junction, both looking north towards Millwey Rise. (Millbrook Cottage, which shares the same triangle of land, but is sited further down-hill, had been there for many years).

Not far away, and further from the town centre, a pair of cottages probably called Nos.1 and 2 Mill Cottages, which had for many years stood on the western side of Chard Road, and just south of the junction with Beavor Lane, had been demolished by 1963. They can be seen on old pictures of the Trout Inn (now Trout Cottage) on the other side of Chard Road. They also appear on the OS map of 1938 and on the voters' list of that year.

c.1963/64: Abbey Close (20 bungalows)

An aerial photograph taken in 1961 (see box above) shows that the road layout for the first phase of 20 bungalows at Abbey Close was being constructed at that time. However, Abbey Close does not appear on an OS map sheet dated 1963. However, the first bungalows were probably being sold and occupied a year or so later.

1964/66: Woodbury Park (91 houses and 6 bungalows)

An aerial photograph from 1961 (see box above) shows the start of site preparation work at Woodbury Park, but no buildings are shown on an OS map sheet dated 1963. The deeds of No.7 show that it was purchased in 1965 from the Axminster Development Co Ltd for £3,325. The original numbering ran from 1 to 88, but subsequent additions were made to this (e.g. Nos.1a, 1b and 19b). There are also 6 bungalows which are numbered separately.

c.1965: Millwey Avenue (14 bungalows)

The group of 14 old persons' bungalows on the bend of Millwey Avenue (see Map 4 above) was built in about 1965, possibly by Messrs Chubb, based on evidence from one of the original occupants.

1966 to 1984

There is a dearth of contemporary evidence from this early part of this period, though it is understood that building was actively taking place on Millwey Rise in particular.

1971/73: West Close (19 houses and bungalows)

An aerial photograph dating from 1971 shows the infrastructure for West Close being laid out, and an OS map sheet published in 1972 shows that some of the houses south of the access road had been built by then. Most if not all of the houses and bungalows were complete and being occupied by 1973 (as confirmed by the deeds to No.2). The builder was a firm called Mitchell.

By 1972: Alexandra Road (1 bungalow)

An OS map sheet dated 1972 shows that No.25 Alexandra Road had been built by then, adjacent to The Manse.

By 1972: Cedar Gardens, Musbury Road (10 houses and flats)

There was a protracted planning process before permission was granted to build Cedar Gardens, but they can be seen on an OS map sheet dated 1972, and it seems likely that that was the year when the resultant dwellings were first occupied.

By 1972: Lea Combe, Combe Close, Fairfield Close and part of Fosseway Close (about 50 houses)

An OS map sheet dated 1972 shows Lea Combe linking up with Lyme Close. When first built, the name Lea Combe was applied to all of the roads named above. In the case of what is now Fosseway Close, at that time it ended at the top of the livestock market, at the junction with Coombefield Lane.

Fosseway Close was re-named in the early 1980s; Combe Close (12 houses) and Fairfield Close (16 houses) had to wait until about 1991.

By 1972: Widepost Lane (1 bungalow)

An OS map sheet dated 1972 shows that the bungalow called Tregon on Widepost Lane had been built by then. The nearby Scout Hall had been built at least a decade earlier (it can be seen on an OS map sheet dated 1960).

1972: Church Street (Vicarage)

The current vicarage was built in the gardens of the original vicarage in 1971 (construction can be seen to be under way on an aerial photograph of that year), and had been finished by the time an OS map sheet dated 1972 was published. The church rooms were built at the same time.

1972/73: Brunenburgh Way (44 houses)

The deeds of No.7 Brunenburgh Way show that it was occupied by 1972. The original development comprised 44 houses (with Nos.15a and 15b being added later).

By 1973: Woodbury Way (about 48 houses)

Woodbury Way was developed at very much the same time as Brunenburgh Way (see above), and was also being occupied by 1973. Despite some eccentric house numbering (which goes into the 60s), it comprises about 48 houses in all.

1973: Morton Way (formerly part of Boxfield Road) (Ridgeway Court)

The 24 1- and 2-bed retirement flats which comprise Ridgeway Court were built in 1973⁵⁸, replacing what appears to have been a group of temporary war-time structures which had previously occupied the site.

1974/77: Chard Road (beyond the cemetery) (2 houses)

In 1974 planning approval was granted for a detached house called The Firs, originally identified as No.1 Elm Close. This house was built between the former site of Cloakham Lodge, and No.1 Chard Road. Its matching twin, called Meadow Vale, was approved in 1976, and probably⁵⁹ completed the following year.

Some years before there had been another house called The Firs on Chard Road, but much closer to Millbrook Farm and the town. That property is named in the voters' list for 1932, but was not in the same place as the modern Firs.

c.1975: Off Chard Road (Lower Axehill)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website shows that permission was granted in 1974 to build Lower Axehill (in the garden of Axehill: see above). The house was probably finished in about 1975.

1976: First Avenue, Millwey Rise (Stewart Court) (38 flats)

The 38 1-bed retirement flats which comprise Stewart Court were built in 1976⁶⁰.

c.1976/77: Abbey Close (9 bungalows)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website shows that the middle (second) section of Abbey Close was granted planning permission in 1974 and 1976. Nine bungalows (Nos.21 to 27, 29 and 31) are then shown as having been built on the 1986 Local Plan map.

1976/78: Willhayes Park (80 houses and bungalows)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website shows that after several failed planning applications and extensive discussions, not least about drainage, planning permission was granted on 9 April 1976 for a 98-house development to the west of the newly-opened section of North Street (first opened in c.1972). The applicant was Davis Estates (South West) Ltd of Honiton, and the name used on the planning application was 'Greatlands Park', though its correct name from the time it was built was always Willhayes Park, in recognition of the fact that it sat on land and the farmstead of the former Willhayes Farm.

⁵⁸ Source: housingcare.org website.

⁵⁹ Meadow Vale is not shown on the 1986 Local Plan map, but there are other instances where that map can be seen not to have been fully updated.

⁶⁰ Source: housingcare.org website.

The first advertisement for the houses appeared in Pulman's Weekly 4 days later, offering new homes later in the year priced from £10,350. Most of the bungalows were built and sold during 1977 and 1978. On 30 May 1979 there was a serious incident of flooding.

1978: Off Chard Street (Poplar Mount) (18 flats)

The 18 1-bed retirement flats which comprise Poplar Mount were built in 1978⁶¹, replacing housing which had previously occupied the site. The original houses had been accessed from North Street, but when the flats were built, the access was changed to be from the Chard Street carpark.

By 1979: Musbury Road (2 houses)

An OS map sheet dated 1979 shows that two more houses had been built close to the junction of Musbury Road and King Edward Road: Westways on the eastern side, and Tulipa House on the other side.

By 1979: Widepost Lane (1 bungalow)

An OS map sheet dated 1979 shows that the bungalow called Little Haddon had been built by then, between Tregon and the Scout Hall.

By 1980: Field End (3 bungalows)

A 1980 map produced for National Grid by the OS shows that the 3 bungalows on Field End, a short private road off Lyme Road, just down-hill from the Catholic primary school, had been built by then. They may have been built for a few years by then, but this is the first positive evidence for their existence which has been found.

By 1980: Heal's Field (c.50 houses and bungalows)

A 1980 map produced for National Grid by the OS shows that just over 50 houses and bungalows had been built on Heal's Field, Millwey Rise by then. They may well have been built earlier than that.

By 1980: Sector Lane (9 bungalows)

A 1980 map produced for National Grid by the OS shows that 9 of the 10 plots on the northern side of Sector Lane beyond the Axminster FC football ground had been built by then. They may have been built for a few years by then, but this is the first positive evidence for their existence which has been found. Given that planning permission was sought for the tenth bungalow, called Freshfields, in 1981, this suggests that the other bungalows were in fact quite recent.

By 1980: St Mary's Close (16 bungalows)

A 1980 map produced for National Grid by the OS shows that St Mary's Close had been developed on the southern side of Sector Lane by then. The 16 bungalows which comprise this development may have been built for a few years by then, but this is the first positive evidence for their existence which has been found.

By 1981: Beavor Lane 5 houses)

An OS map sheet dated 1981 shows that a new house had been built between Prestoller and Greymares by then, as had three more between Greymares and Higher Millbrook. A further house called Northfield had been built on the other side of the road (but it was demolished less than a decade later to make way for the development of Broome Close: see below).

By 1981: Hilary Close (4 bungalows)

Although Hilary House was demolished in 1972, it was several years before the site was re-developed. The 4 bungalows had been built by the time that an OS map sheet dated 1981 was published.

c.1981: Huntley Close (4 bungalows, 4 flats)

The EDDC planning website shows that in 1980 permission was granted to the Council itself for 4 bungalows and 4 1-bed flats for elderly persons in Huntley Close, just off First Avenue, Millwey Rise. The dwellings were probably ready for occupation the following year.

⁶¹ Source: housingcare.org website.

1981/82: Fosseway Close (17 bungalows)

The 17 bungalows numbered from 20 to 36 at the top end of Fosseway Close were built in about 1981 and were occupied by the following year. At the same time the lower end of the road changed its name from Lea Combe to Fosseway Close. The 12 houses and bungalows on that part of the street are numbered 1, 3 and 5, and 2 to 18 (even numbers). No.19 was built later (see below).

1981/82: Kirby Close (17 houses)

Information on the EDDC planning website confirms that the first 17 houses which form part of Kirby Close were built by Devon Lady Ltd in 1981/82.

1981/82: Cedar Close (4 houses)

An OS map sheet dated 1982 shows that Cedar Close had been built by then. Planning permission had been granted about 4 years before, but construction had been delayed over objections concerning the Purzebrook stream and flooding risk, and the houses were probably completed in 1981.

By 1982: Musbury Road (Rosemount Gardens) (3 houses)

An OS map sheet dated 1982 shows that the 3 houses comprising Rosemount Gardens had been completed by then (and they were not shown on an earlier 1979 map sheet).

By 1983: Dukes Way (24 houses)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website shows the first phase of development at Dukes Way was approved in about 1980, and that by 1983 No.22 Dukes Way and its immediately neighbouring properties had been occupied, and that the development as a whole was just being completed. (A further 3 houses were added in 1988/89: see below.)

c.1984: Off Chard Road (St George's)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website shows that the bungalow called St George's was built to the north west of Brookhill, probably in about 1984 (permission having been granted the year before). It is accessed from Chard Road, just above the cul-de-sac known as Ingleside.

1985 to 2000

A check on the town's footprint at this time can be obtained from the map produced by EDDC in 1986 as part of the Local Plan process. See Chapter 1 for details.

1985/88: Millbrook Dale (23 bungalows)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website shows that the first 13 bungalows at Millbrook Dale were finished by 1985, when planning permission was being sought for a further 10 dwellings. The others were probably completed in about 1988.

By 1986: Athelstan Close (12 bungalows)

The 12 bungalows which comprise Athelstan Close had been built by the time the 1986 Local Plan map was drawn (see box above).

By 1986: Off Chard Road (Ingleside)

The 1986 Local Plan map (see box above) shows a single house where the later development called Ingleside can now be found, just to the south of Millbrook Dale (see above).

By 1986: Morton Way (1 bungalow)

The 1986 Local Plan map (see box above) shows a bungalow called Overdale the top end of Morton Way, at No.11. It may well have been built some years earlier, but this is the first firm evidence of its existence. It was later demolished to make way for 11 houses (see below).

By 1986: North Street (14 houses and bungalows)

The 1986 Local Plan map (see box above) shows that by then 9 houses and bungalows had been built on the eastern side of North Street to the north of Alma House, together with three bungalows

(Rosecroft, Wynards Gap and Sideways) on the other side of the road, plus Kymore behind Willhayes House. These may all have been built some time before, but this is the first clear evidence of their existence that has been seen.

By 1986: Purzebrook Close (8 houses, 4 flats)

The 1986 Local Plan map (see box above) shows that Purzebrook Close had been built by then.

c.1986: Huntley Close (4 bungalows, 8 flats)

The EDDC planning website shows that in 1985 permission was granted to the Council itself for a further 4 bungalows (in a terrace) and 4 2-bed flats for elderly persons in Huntley Close, just off First Avenue, Millwey Rise. The dwellings were probably ready for occupation the following year.

1986/87: Salway Gardens (19 bungalows)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website suggests that building had started at Salway Gardens in 1985, and the site is shown on the 1986 Local Plan map (see box above) as 'recent development'. Many if not all of the 19 bungalows were occupied by 1987.

1987: Old North Street (Chestnut House)

The date on the wall of Chestnut House shows that it was built in 1987.

1987: Sector Lane (Valley View) (26 bungalows and flats)

The 26 2-bed bungalows and flats which comprise the Valley View retirement complex were built in 1987⁶². When originally built, they looked over the Axminster Town FC football pitch.

c.1987: Chard Road (Siletta)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website shows that permission to erect the bungalow known as Siletta in the grounds of Millbrook Close (see above) was granted in 1986, and construction may well have been completed in 1987. The site looks north over the Chard Road / Stoney Lane junction.

c.1988: Stoney Bridges (3 houses)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website shows that the small close of detached houses opposite Castle Hill Farm (just west of the river Axe, and on the northern side of Stoney Bridges) was being developed in 1986/88, comprising a barn conversion and 2 new houses.

c.1988: Kirby Close (10 houses)

Information on the EDDC planning website confirms that approval was granted in late 1987 for 10 more semi-detached houses to be added to Kirby Close, to be built on the plot at the far end of the main Close.

1988/89: Dukes Way (3 houses)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website shows that 3 more houses immediately below what is now Kerrington Gardens, were approved in 1988 and built soon thereafter, completing what would generally be regarded as the first phase of development on Dukes Way.

c.1990: Latches Walk (20 bungalows)

Latches Walk had been granted planning permission by the time that the 1986 Local Plan map (see box above) was published, and had certainly been completed by the time that the 1994 Local Plan map (see box below) was drawn. It seems likely that completion was closer to 1990.

1990/94: Beavor Lane (9 houses)

The EDDC planning website shows that Redrow Homes were granted planning permission for 29 houses on Beavor Lane and three closes (Dommett, Broome and York) on the northern side of the road in May 1989, with a further 2 houses being approved for Beavor Lane later. The resultant houses on Beavor Lane (Nos.2 to 18, even numbers) were built and first occupied over the period from 1990 to 1994.

⁶² Source: housingcare.org website.

1990/94: Broome Close (7 houses)

The EDDC planning website shows that Redrow Homes were granted planning permission for 7 houses on Broome Close in 1989 (in association with others on Beavor Lane: see above). The resultant houses were built and first occupied over the period from 1990 to 1994. An OS map sheet dated 1981 shows that there had been a single house (called Northfield) on the site, roughly where Broome Close is now, which must have been demolished.

1990/94: York Close (9 houses)

The EDDC planning website shows that Redrow Homes were granted planning permission for 9 houses on York Close in 1989 (in association with others on Beavor Lane: see above). The resultant houses were built and first occupied over the period from 1990 to 1994.

1991: Opening of the Axminster By-pass

The opening of the A35 east-west Axminster by-pass in November 1991 greatly relieved pressure on the town centre, making new residential developments on Lyme Road and West Street much more attractive than heretofore. The Co-op store off West Street had opened in c.1988.

By 1992: Shand Park (27 houses)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website shows that after the J H Shand engineering works closed there were applications to build over 80 houses on the site. In the end 27 were built, with the Tesco store beyond. The first of these houses were occupied by 1992, according to information from an early resident.

1993: Off King Edward Road (1 house)

In 1993 Heene Croft Lodge, originally a bungalow, now a house, was built in the garden of Heene Croft by JKS Homes Ltd.

A check on the town's footprint at this time can be obtained from the map produced by EDDC in 1994 as part of the Local Plan process. See Chapter 1 for details.

By 1994: Hilary Gardens (9 bungalows)

The 9 bungalows which comprise Hilary Gardens had been built by the time that the 1994 Local Plan map (see box above) was published, possibly a bit earlier.

1994: Willhay Lane (Bluebell Lodge)

The date on the wall of Bluebell Lodge shows that it was built in 1994.

1994/97: The Cricketers (87 houses and bungalows)

The large majority of the houses and bungalows comprising the Cricketers are shown on the 1994 Local Plan map (see box above), and evidence from the EDDC planning website and the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the houses which comprise The Cricketers were being certainly being sold by 1995, if not slightly earlier. The last houses to be built were in the north west corner of the site.

1995/96: Dommatt Close (4 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the houses on Dommatt Close were first sold in 1995 and 1996. They formed the final part of a Redrow Homes development on Beavor Lane (approved in 1989: see above).

1995/97: Loretto Gardens and Monkstone Gardens: (3 bungalows)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the 3 bungalows which constitute Loretto Gardens, and the 3 which constitute the neighbouring Monkstone Gardens, were built slowly (by Messrs A G Jessops), and first occupied between 1995 and 1997.

1996: Abbey Close (8 bungalows)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website and the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the third phase of Abbey Close's development, comprising Nos.28, 30, 32-35 (including both 33 and 33A) and 37, were being sold in 1996.

1997: North Street and Lynch Close (20 houses)

The 8 houses which comprise Nos.140 to 147 North Street, and the 12 which comprise Lynch Close, were first occupied in 1997.

c.1997: North Street (7 houses)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website and the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the seven houses on North Street which were built as part of the same development as The Cricketers (see above) were being sold from about 1997, though they had been built by the time that the 1994 Local Plan map (see box above) was drawn up.

1998: Off Chard Road (Saxons)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the house called Saxons was first sold in 1998. It was built in the garden of Axehill, and sits just to the south west of Ingleside (see below).

1998/99: Ingleside (2 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the 3 houses on Ingleside were being occupied from very late 1998. It appears that the single house previously observed on this site (see above) had been demolished to make way for 3 new houses, giving a net gain of 2 dwellings.

1999: Jeff's Way (7 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the houses on Jeff's Way, to the east of Stoney Lane, were first sold in 1999.

1999/2000: Hallett's Way (6 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the houses on Hallett's Way (which is accessed from Stoney Lane, and which also gives access to Jeff's Way and Newbery Close: see immediately above and below) were all first sold in 1999 and 2000.

2000: Newbery Close (7 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the houses on Newbery Close, to the east of Stoney Lane were first sold in 2000.

2000: West Street (The Shrubbery) (3 houses and 10 flats)

The complex of 10 flats and 3 town houses known as The Shrubbery was built in 1999 and occupied by 2000. It replaced and extended (via the addition of a new upper floor level) a pair of buildings (called Lanherne and Newport) which had been empty and increasingly derelict for some years. The house originally called The Shrubbery had sat further back from West Street, and had been demolished about 30 years earlier, with its site subsequently forming part of the West Street carpark.

2000: Woodbury Lane (2 bungalows)

The two bungalows on the northern side of Woodbury Lane, close to the junction with Dukes Way, and which are numbered 1 and 2, were first occupied in 2000, based on evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website.

The 21st century

Population growth in the 21st century

When the focus is on the town of Axminster, as in this document, traditional areas for recording population (parishes and electoral wards) are not particularly helpful, because they either dilute the town's data with too much rural hinterland data, or, in the case of electoral wards, they split the town into two (the town centre in Axminster Town ward, and Millwey Rise in Axminster Hamlets). A new website called citypopulation.de (linked to Google) now provides 21st century population data by built-up area. In the case of Axminster this covers all of the town, including Millwey Rise, while stripping away most of the rural hinterland.

What this confirms is what any observer can see: that in recent years the population of Axminster has been rising appreciably faster than in most surrounding towns. Between the censuses of 2001 and 2011 the population of Axminster rose by 1.5% a year, from 4,952 to 5,761. Since then the rate of annual growth has accelerated, to 2% a year, reaching an estimated 6,384 in 2016 (this being based on surveys and other data collected since 2011).

By 2001: Boxfield Road (Greenacres)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website shows that the detached house called Greenacres had been completed by 2001, facing Boxfield Road just above the entrance to the former Workhouse / Box House / St Mary's Hospital.

2001: Silver Street (Twin Cottages)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that Nos.1 and 2 Twin Cottages had been newly built on Silver Street, opposite the Axminster Inn, replacing the building which had previously stood there, and which had at times served as a shop.

2002: Boxfield Road (St Mary's Court) (4 houses)

The date on the wall of St Mary's Court (built on the site of the Lodge building of the former Workhouse / Box House / St Mary's Hospital) shows that the 4 houses in the adjacent courtyard were built in 2002.

2003: Phillips Court (9 bungalows)

Phillips Court was built on the former site of a training centre, just off Lyme Close near where it meets Lea Combe, which had been built in the 1970s and run by Devon County Council. Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the bungalows were almost all sold and occupied by the end of 2003.

c.2003: Willhay Lane (Willhay Lodge)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website shows that Willhay Lodge was built and occupied in about 2003.

2004/05: Boxfield Road (5 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that Swann House, The Burrow, Turangawaewae and Cariad, which were all built as part of the redevelopment of the former Workhouse / Box House / St Mary's Hospital site by Miller's Dream Ltd, were first sold in 2004. St Mary's House, just above the junction with Weller Road, and the last house on Boxfield Road before it becomes Morton Way, was sold in 2005.

2004: West Street (Minster Court) (41 (net) flats)

The 44 1- and 2-bed retirement flats which comprise Minster Court were built in 2004⁶³ by McCarthy & Stone. The site had previously been occupied by a garage and a row of 3 shops and flats known as Western Parade (see above). Subtracting these 3 lost flats from the 44 new ones gives the net figure of 41.

⁶³ Source: housingcare.org website.

2004/05: Weller Road (6 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the houses on Weller Road developed by Miller's Dream Ltd were first sold and occupied over the period from 2004 to 2005.

2004/06: Swain Close (21 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the houses on Swain Close developed by Miller's Dream Ltd were first sold and occupied over the period from 2004 to 2006.

2004/07: Cherry Tree Road (c.105 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the houses on Cherry Tree Road were being sold over the period from 2004 to 2007.

2004/14: Catnip Close (34 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the houses on Catnip Close were gradually released and sold over the period from 2004 to 2014.

2005: Chard Road (5 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the 5 houses which constitute Eldridge House, which fronts onto Chard Road near the junction with Second Avenue, were all sold and first occupied in 2005. These houses (together with the adjacent ones on Second Avenue: see below) were built on the site formerly occupied by The Millwey pub, though it had been closed for some years by the time the site was redeveloped.

2005: Second Avenue (13 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the 7 houses which constitute Otterton Mews (on the corner of Chard Road and Second Avenue), together with the adjacent Nos.1 and 2 Ashton Cottages and three out of Nos.1 to 4 Millwey Court, were all sold and first occupied in 2005. These houses (together with the adjacent ones on Chard Road: see above) were built on the site formerly occupied by The Millwey pub, though it had been closed for some years by the time the site was redeveloped.

2005/13: Latchmount Gardens (12 bungalows)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the 12 bungalows which comprise Latchmount Gardens were gradually completed and sold between 2005 and 2013. The builder was Messrs A G Jessop.

2006: King Edward Road (Melody Place) (3 flats)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website and the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the 3-flat block called Melody Place was built in 2005 and first occupied in 2006. The name of the block harks back to the original building to be located there: Graham Newbery's Radio Shop, which was built in about 1935. Latterly the premises had accommodated a general store, and then the Courtesy Care shop.

2006: Off West Street (Mellowes Court) (21 flats)

The 21 flats which comprise Mellowes Court were built in 2005, and occupied by 2006, on a site near the Guildhall (and accessed from West Street via a small road immediately to the north of the Guildhall). The site had previously been used as workshops and a garage (West End Garage).

2006/07: Abbey Close (14 houses)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website and the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the first of the 14 houses which comprised the fourth phase of Abbey Close (numbered from the mid-30s) were being occupied by 2006.

2006/07: Loup Court (9 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the houses in Loup Court were being occupied from late 2006. This site had previously been a petrol filling station.

2008/09: Coombefield Lane and Auction Place (26 houses and flats)

Frank Rowe House (5 flats) plus Nos.1 to 13 Combeffield Lane, plus Nos.1 to 6 Auction Place (plus No.19 Fossey Close) were all built on the former site of the livestock market by Messrs C G Fry. The houses were starting to be occupied by 2008.

2009: Mill View Gardens, Willhayes Park (3 bungalows)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website and from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the three bungalows in Mill View Gardens were complete and for sale by 2009.

2009/15: Flax Meadow Lane (c.117 houses and flats)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the houses on Flax Meadow Lane were gradually released and sold over the period from 2009 to 2015.

c.2010: Musbury Road (2 houses)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website shows that the pair of semi-detached houses known as Nos.6 and 7 Purzebrook Terrace / Cottages were being built in about 2009, and were probably first occupied the following year. The site had previously housed a small electricity sub-station, which can be seen on many older maps.

2011/14: Dukes Way (45 houses)

A development of 45 houses, comprising the second phase of development (beyond the original stretch of Dukes Way, which had been completed several years earlier: see above), was completed and being sold by Betterment Properties from 2011 to 2014.

2012: Chard Road (2 houses)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website shows that the houses on either side of Blueberry Cottage (just beyond Hilary Close, on the eastern side of Chard Road) were completed in 2012.

2012: Off Musbury Road (Kerrington Gardens) (2 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website suggests that the 2 houses built at Kerrington Gardens were first occupied in 2012.

2013: Off Lyme Road (1 bungalow)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website shows that permission was granted in 2011 to build a new bungalow behind Kylemore, set back on the northern side of the bottom end of Lyme Road. Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that Kylemore Gardens was first occupied in 2013.

c.2013: Chard Road (The Hollys)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website shows that permission was granted in 2012 to build the bungalow known as The Hollys in the grounds of Contay. The site looks north over the Chard Road / Stoney Lane junction. Similar permissions had been granted as early as 1974, but not implemented.

2013/14: Off Weycroft Avenue (Macford Court) (21 houses, 16 flats)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website shows that planning permission was granted in 2012 for the construction of 21 houses and 16 flats at Macford Court. The site previously housed the manufacturing facility of Weycroft Macford Ltd, though it had been derelict for several years. Some of the houses front onto Chard Road, but all are accessed via Weycroft Avenue.

2013/14: Three Acre Close (c.22 houses and flats)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the houses and flats in Three Acre Close were first being sold from 2013.

2013/15: Morton Way (10 houses)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website shows that in 2009 Betterment Properties was granted planning permission to demolish an existing bungalow (Overdale), and to replace it with a courtyard development comprising 11 houses (Nos.11-21 Morton Way). The houses facing onto Morton Way itself were built and occupied first, but the others were not completed and occupied

until about 2015. Although there are 11 houses, they are reported in the heading as 10 in recognition of the fact that there was previously a bungalow on the site, giving a net gain of 10 dwellings.

2014: Widepost Lane (2 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that Nos.11 and 12 Widepost Lane were first occupied by early 2014.

2014/15: Brewer Avenue (c.13 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website confirms that the first houses on Brewer Avenue were being sold and occupied by 2014.

2014/16: Amberside Square and Tigers Way (72 houses and flats)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website and from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the houses which comprise Amberside Square and Tigers Way (built on the former pitch of Axminster Town FC) were first being occupied in 2014, and that by 2016 the last of the properties (Tiger House and Sanwick House, close to the entrance off Sector Lane) had been sold.

2015: Bleachfield Drive (c.10 houses and flats)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that most if not all of the houses and flats in Bleachfield Drive were sold in 2015.

2015: Vale Lane (2 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that Nos.1 and 2 Valley Villas, two townhouses replacing an existing building, were sold in 2015.

2015/16: Parker Walk (12 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website confirms that the first houses on Parker Walk were being sold and occupied by 2015.

2015/16: Petre Street (c.15 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website confirms that the first houses on Petre Street were being sold and occupied by 2015.

2015/17: Churchill Rise (c.36 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website confirms that the first houses on Churchill Rise were being sold and occupied by 2015.

2015/18: Charter Road (c.40 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website confirms that the first houses on Charter Road were being sold and occupied by 2015.

2015/17: Green Lane Way (18 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the houses on Green Lane Way were being sold and occupied by 2015.

2015/17: Lower Mead and Upper Mead (c.10 houses and flats)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the mixture of houses and flats on Lower Mead (c.4 units) and Upper Mead (c.6 units), both accessed from Flaxmeadow Lane, were sold for the first time from 2015 onwards.

2015/18: Mitchell Gardens (14 houses, 13 flats)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website confirms that the first houses in Mitchell Gardens were being sold and occupied by late 2015, followed by the flats / duplex apartments in 2017 and 2018. The developer was Axminster Homes.

2016: Linseed Drive (c.6 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that most if not all of the houses on Linseed Drive, off Flaxmeadow Lane, were sold and occupied in 2016.

2016/17: Cloakham Drive (c.30 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that the first houses on Cloakham Drive were sold and occupied in 2016.

2016/17: Lyme Close, Norman Close and Welch Close (13 houses)

The development by Messrs C G Fry of 13 houses split between Lyme Close (Nos.23 to 29), Norman Close and Welch Close (3 houses each) was completed and the first houses were being sold in 2016. The site had previously (but not recently) been occupied by The Phillips Centre, a residential home which was built in the 1970s and run by Devon County Council. It had originally been designed for the mentally handicapped and known as Lea Combe House, but was later used as a more general residential assessment centre. When it was demolished in about 2012 there was a piece of public sculpture outside it dedicated to Norman Welch, MBE, a well-known local man who had raised many thousands of pounds for charity. His name is now commemorated in the names of the two Closes.

2016/18: Churchill Rise (c.36 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website confirms that the first houses on Churchill Rise were being sold and occupied by 2016.

2016/18: Dukes Way (c.70 houses)

Evidence from the rightmove.co.uk website shows that by 2016 the first of the houses which comprise the third phase of development at Dukes Way (numbered from the high 70s upwards) had been released by the developer, Betterment Properties, and were being sold. It is not clear when the development will be complete, but at the time of writing (2018) it is well under way.

2017: Vale Lane (Fig Tree House)

Evidence from the EDDC planning website shows that Fig Tree House, which was completed and sold in 2017, was built on the site of former garages / outhouses.

Continuing development

Development never ends, so in due course the entries above dating from about 2015 will need to be updated.

The largest development with planning approval and which will introduce streets that have not yet been named or started is at Cloakham Lawns. This will deliver several hundred more houses over the period to about 2020, possibly later.