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# HISTORY OF



## WIMBORNE IN MINIATURE

WIMBORNE MINSTER, DORSET

DIRECTORS

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# WIMBORNE

IN MINIATURE

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THE TOWN of Wimborne Minster being so rich in ancient history and containing so many buildings of historical and architectural value, seemed to be the ideal town to lend itself to be reproduced in miniature.

Thus the idea was born in the mind of Mr. C. A. Coffen of Ferndown. With Mr. R. Thorne, then a local architect, a site was inspected at the rear of the Cornmarket and this proved ideal, central, but secluded.

The decision to build this Lilliputian Wimborne taken, there followed months of painstaking, detailed work.

Buildings were photographed from every angle and plans were made of the town's winding rivers and narrow streets; every minute detail was noted for faithful reproduction. By reducing everything to 1/10th scale, it was found the site would comfortably accommodate that part of the town between the West Borough and the Square to a point just short of Poole Corner.

In 1949 a Limited Company was formed and building commenced — Local craftsmen were employed and by early 1956, the Model was completed.

People from every part of the country come by car and coach to see the Model, which occupies a site of approximately  $\frac{1}{3}$  acre and stands in the shadow of the Minster. Indeed, over 1,000,000 visitors have been delighted in this amazingly realistic miniature town during the years, and seen by people from every country. It has been described in many

languages, "appeared" on a Television feature, and now a film has been made for use on a Commercial Television programme.

This widespread publicity and increasing interest can be understood when the visitor is wandering through the narrow streets and looking down on, instead of just at, the many and varied buildings of this Market Town.

The intricate pattern of rooftops and chimneys can be surveyed from many angles. Seats have been provided (full size) for those who prefer to sit and view this panorama of Wimborne in Miniature. Its houses accurately reproduced to the smallest detail with their gardens, pocket size lawns, real miniature shrubs and flowers. The shops with their painted fascia boards, and windows displaying miniatures of the goods they sell. Meandering through this quiet scene is the River Allen, traversed here and there by tiny bridges, with fish swimming in its placid waters.

In the evening the street lights of the model are lit, and the whole is further illuminated by flood lighting, one beam of which is focussed on the twin towers of the Minster. This is perhaps the most impressive of all the buildings, built as the remainder of the town to 1/10th scale it is over 12 ft. high, and complete with stained glass windows and the floor tiled with 14,626 tiles. The Quarter Jack, like its big brother, strikes the quarter hours. It is timed to strike 2 minutes after the famous figure on the West Tower of the Church, to enable visitors to hear the Minster strike and then watch the model repeat the performance. The interior of the Minster is furnished with rows of pews, and the realism of the model is heightened by the organ music which can be heard coming from within. A window has been made in the West Tower so that visitors may see the furnished interior.

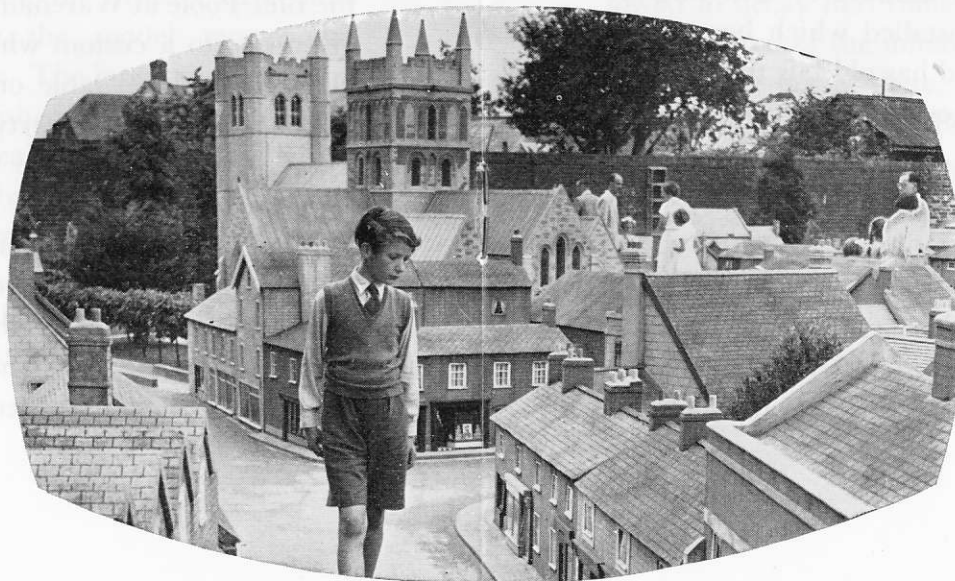
On either side of the pathway lead-

ing to the exit a small piece of ground has been used by the builders of the Model Town for the model construction of several of the better known places of interest in the vicinity of Wimborne.

They include the White Horse on the downs near Weymouth, depicting George III on horseback. The old fortifications of Badbury Rings with the Beech Avenue alongside, Bath Hill, Bournemouth, as it appeared in 1850, with the small thatched shelter and rough path leading to the water's edge. There is also a miniature of the Blue Poole at Wareham, which has given rise to a custom which is benefiting many charitable organisations. It is thought that a party of French Tourists were the first to toss a silver coin into the Pool, since then, other visitors have followed and to date over £2,000 has been taken from the Pool and distributed by the Directors of the Company to Charity. The Authorities of the Minster have been



the model town of wimborne minster



handed sums of money from time to time to assist in the upkeep of the 12th century Minster Church.

The town of Wimborne is approximately 10 miles to the west of Bournemouth and is on the main bus and coach routes.

The Model Town can be reached from the Square of Wimborne, via Cooks Row, and the Cornmarket, or by way of West Street and turning left into West Row. It is open on weekdays from 9.30 a.m. to dusk and Sunday from 10 a.m. to dusk.

In 1968 a miniature "Old English Fair" was installed which has swing-boats etc. and has old fair music playing while the old fair works.

## HISTORICAL NOTES

ON WIMBORNE MINSTER

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THE PRESENT Town Square was once the site of the Parish Church, the Chapel of St. Peter. About the time of the Reformation it was allowed to decay into ruins but in 1638 four hundred of the inhabitants of the Town were buried here, probably as a result of the plague. Between 1800 and 1820 the site was finally cleared, the Square formed and houses built on the west and south sides.

Under the Act of Parliament of 1755 three Turnpikes, or Tool Gates, were set up in Wimborne, one at "the Beehive" afterwards moved to the

north side of the river, a second on the Cowgrove Road adjacent to St. Margaret's Chapel and the third to the east near Leigh Common. Poole and Wimborne were Joint Authorities and movement from one to the other was free of toll. In 1860 the Surveyor reported that the cost of roads worked out at £12 per mile, he hoped to be able to reduce the cost to £8 per mile.

In his will dated 1681, Robert Higden bequeathed "All that messuage and tenements and bowling green — called and known by the name of the New Inn", to his son. The Inn became a Posting House and comprised the block of property now known as the Albion Hotel, The Square Post Office and the International Stores.

In 1664 a Church Rate was levied for the purpose of buying a new Organ for the Minster, probably due to the damage done by Cromwell's soldiers when they tore down the Organ pipes. The amount levied on the Crown Hotel, in the Square, was

£1 16s. 0d. and 10s. 6d. on the George, in the Corn Market.

The White Hart, in the Corn Market, has an iron bar let into one of its ground floor windows to which, we are told, offenders were handcuffed while awaiting the pleasures of a seat in the Stocks outside.

One of the Priests' houses in the High Street, now the Wimborne Museum, is a fine example of a Tudor town house. Built of stone, its walls are two feet in thickness. Inside can be seen the arched front door, also a decorated plaster ceiling.

The astronomical clock in the Minster was built by Peter Lightfoot, a monk from Glastonbury, in the early fourteenth century. At that period, it was thought the sun and moon revolved around the earth, this being indicated on the clock-face by three discs. The centre one represents the earth, in the blue circle, the moon, which revolves on its own axis, showing the phases during the lunar month.

At full moon it shows all gold. The outside disc is the sun, indicating the hours. The quarter-hours are struck on two bells by the Quarter Jack on the outside of the western tower. A wooden figure, 5 feet 4 inches in height, is brightly painted in the dress of a British Grenadier about the time of Napoleon.



