

# ALL OVER THE TOWN

Spring 2020

The Lyme Regis Society  
Newsletter



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### Collaborations with the U3A and the Friends of the Museum

The LRS and the Heritage Coast U3A have identified mutual benefit of sharing information about each others' events. You can access everything on offer at our local U3A on their website at [www.lymeregisu3a.org](http://www.lymeregisu3a.org).

The Friends of the Museum also run an excellent programme of meetings which may be of interest to members - see <http://tinyurl.com/flrmus>

Front Cover - Little Madeira Door (see p. 7)  
Photo - Heather Britton



[www.lymeregissociety.org.uk](http://www.lymeregissociety.org.uk)  
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# Chairman's Report

By Peter Coe

As I was once a church conservation officer, I found Tim Bacon's talk on 25th February "Weatherproofed! - St Michael's Tower Restoration" an example of how zealous diligence and knowledge can achieve great success. Tim, together with Audrey Vivian and their colleagues have ensured that the tower and west entrance to the church have been restored for the town. It was amazing to hear that the project started in 2017, gained the necessary planning approvals from both Dorset and the Church authorities and is now almost completed. The talk will be described in more detail in our next AOTT.

## Corona virus

Before introducing Tim, I followed the example of other local amenity groups and suggested that those attending our meetings should be aware of the most up to date advice on managing corona virus (COVID-19). We will be putting advice on our web site prior to our future meetings.

## Three Cups Hotel

I was approached by Palmers Brewery in late February to be advised that, following the grant of planning consent for the redevelopment of the former Three Cups Hotel in Broad Street Lyme Regis, Palmers Brewery's engineers and development consultants have been working on the practical realities of constructing the scheme as approved. Work undertaken to consolidate the site has shown that the scheme might have become unaffordable. Palmers have therefore decided that a more practical solution to the redevelopment of the site is to reduce the scale of the project whilst still maintaining the essential parts of the original scheme, namely the retention and refurbishment of the main block fronting Broad Street, new apartments at the rear together with a signature restaurant and a number of letting rooms the latter of which are in a "Beach hut" style.

Palmers have accepted that it would be of great interest to members to hear more details of the scheme and have agreed to present their alternative proposals to members, after the AGM on 28th April. Please let anyone interested in hearing this presentation know that we will open the meeting to all who wish to attend; starting at about 14.45pm.

## Poulett Chapel

Members will recall that when the Lyme Regis Society accepted the recommendations for work on the Poulett Chapel, we were most insistent that the bell cote must be retained as a well-loved aspect of the town's character and setting. Sadly an application has been made not to return the bell cote. The Lyme Regis

Society has now made a formal objection in relation to the application from the Alexandra Hotel not to replace the bell cote on the Poulett Chapel.

### **November 24th Joint talk with West Dorset Group of Dorset Wildlife Trust**

Members were disappointed that the November 2019 joint talk had to be postponed. I am delighted to confirm that Myra Sealy has arranged for Roger Dickey to talk on Ascension Island where he has carried out sea bird surveys on sooty terns for 26 years. Initially it was part of his work with the British Army and latterly in support of HM and Ascension Island Governments and the urgent need to establish a Marine Protected Area around this British Overseas Territory. As a result, he can tell us about the place, the wildlife and his survey work.

### **Location of the Mediaeval Town Hall / Guildhall**

Finally, I ask members for their help with an issue relating to the history of the town. Each year, with the Town Council, the Lyme Regis Society hosts the Town Hall for Dorset Heritage weeks (this year 11th, 13th, 18th and 20th September).

It has now been suggested by a local historian that the wording of the blue plaque on the Town Hall might be incorrect. The leaflet which we use for heritage days is based on local histories and suggests that there has been a Town Hall on the site for many hundreds of years. I would be interested in hearing from anyone who has evidence to confirm this wording or to demonstrate that an earlier site was used for the mediaeval Town Hall/Guildhall.

## **Planning and Town Report March 2020**

by Heather Britton

### **Hat Shop turns Café**

The old hat shop at 19a Coombe Street by the river bridge is being transformed into the 'Water's Edge Café'. Work started in December last year although work stopped at the end of January as the Dorset Council Planning Officer had concerns about the change of use from a retail shop (A1) to a (A3/A5) use for the sale of food and drink for consumption on and off the premises. The owner is working with





Dorset Council Planning and the Town Council to resolve these issues. The café plans to open in spring 2020.

### Broadway House – scaffolding up!

Last year a piece of falling masonry narrowly missed a passing pedestrian and since last November Broadway House has been sheathed in scaffolding to allow for repairs. The old render has been removed and new render is being applied.



### Your World – Scaffolding up! Scaffolding Down!

Whilst Bridge Street was closed for major work on gas, electricity and water, remedial work was also undertaken on the Your World Travel shop and the Guildhall. Scaffolding went up so that repairs could be undertaken to the bay window on the first floor of the building. The bay has seen action with a couple of lorries and a bus over the past year and temporary fixes have now been permanently repaired.





## Guildhall – Scaffolding up! Scaffolding Down!



2019    2020

During the Bridge Street closure, the Guildhall had its lime mortar on the tower walls repointed and some windows were repaired: the bay (oriel) window that is regularly clipped by lorries as they turn into Lyme and flush windows where gaps had opened up along the window frames. The white paint covering a great deal of the outside stonework has also been removed from the walls and most of the stone mullion

window frames revealing beautiful creamy coloured sandstone. When all the white paint has been removed the stonework will be sealed to protect it from the weather. The Guildhall is now shown in its original build state and looks very impressive.

The oriel window has been hit twice since the repairs were carried and the Town Council are again looking at getting permission to remodel the oriel window as other damage prevention measures have been unsuccessful.

The Mayor's parlour has had damp treatment to the walls and been repainted. The Mayor's parlour is at the top of the stairs on the right in the Guildhall. It is used by the Mayor and other organisations for small meetings and also as a robing room for the Mayor, Macebearers and Town Clerk to change into their ceremonial civic robes.

## Poulett Hall – Bell Cote

Poulett Hall, sometimes called Peek Chapel, which hosts weddings and events at the Alexandra Hotel in Pound Street underwent extensive renovation starting in 2015.

One of the conditions of that listed building renovation was that the Bell Cote (a tower which houses a bell or bells) be reinstated on the roof after the work was completed. After 5 years no Bell Cote has reappeared and it was said to be 'being restored'. In December 2019 a retrospective planning application was made to



remove the base of the Bell Cote completely and replace the ridge tiles for the roof. Retrospective planning permission means the work has already been done and the owner is just asking for permission to leave the structure as it is.

Dorset Council Planning will either agree to the removal of the Bell Cote and allow the roof to remain as it is, or instruct the Alexandra Hotel to replace the Bell Cote and return the roof to its original condition.

Peek Chapel with and without the Bell Cote



### Do you need a Tattoo?

If the answer's 'Yes', you'll be able to get one in Lyme Regis when our very own Tattoo Parlour opens at 6 Bridge Street. The Change of Use from A1 Retail to Sui Generis (Tattoo Studio) was approved by Dorset Council 25th November 2019. Sui Generis is a term used for buildings which do not fall within any particular use class. The Latin term 'sui generis' means 'of its own kind'.

### Rock Point Inn – scaffolding down!

The scaffolding is now down to reveal the elegant blue and white exterior of the inn although there's still work to be done. The inn has applied for a premises licence between 10.00 and 00.00 (midnight). Residents and bona fide guests will be permitted to consume alcohol all day on the premises. On New Year's Eve the licence operates until 01.00. The inn opens in spring 2020.



### **Quality Corner - update**

Quality Corner at the bottom of Broad Street is still awaiting approval from Dorset Council Planning to incorporate a takeaway fish and chip shop on the premises. In November 2019 supporting documents on noise assessment and revised plans regarding ventilation were submitted to Dorset Council Planning.

### **Regent Cinema**

Since the March 2016 fire after which the auditorium was mostly demolished to make the building safe, there have been no substantial proposals agreed for the re-build. The owners WTW Scott Cinemas did talk about renewing the auditorium and building 2 town houses at the rear of the plot to make plans more financially viable. In January 2020 Scott cinemas said that they have no further news at the moment. The town would welcome any sensible plans for the site that would give Lyme Regis its cinema back – we miss it.



### **Langmoor Gardens Lights - update**

Some of the lights in Langmoor gardens are still not working, in fact more failed in January 2020...is it blown fuses? Overloaded circuits? Sensitive tripping devices? Gremlins? The contractor that installed them was invited back to sort out the gremlins and get the lights fully operational. Work continues ...

### **Wooden Structure between The Cobb and Monmouth Beach - update**

At the 17th December Strategy & Finance Committee it was agreed to instruct Dorset Council to remove the substantial low wooden fence erected along from the Harbourmasters' headquarters at the rear of the Cobb Wall/Monmouth beach and landscape the beach to its previous levels removing all boats and trailers from the land. Dorset Council has admitted that they has used the land inappropriately and changed the profile of the beach and wall. The changes could have had an impact on the ability of the sea defences and sea water management in protecting the Cobb and the town. Dorset Council have now removed the wooden fence and re-profiled the beach. Storms Ciara and Dennis gave the town a pummelling so it's good to have our sea defences in the best possible shape.

The Council will review its use of Monmouth Beach area in the future to ensure that it works effectively for the town.





### Roofing Work on Marine Parade

Work has been ongoing since January to replace the roofing material covering the Amusement Arcade, The Antiques Centre and SWIM. The buildings are owned by the Town Council and leased to the business owners. The buildings were constructed 50 years ago and this is the first major refurbishment of the roof covering which was only meant to last 25 years. It's done very well to last this long.

### Sea Sports and Adventure Centre Proposal

Lyme Regis Gig Club has put forward a suggestion to develop a Sea Sport Adventure Centre in the Monmouth beach area which was discussed at the 17th December Strategy & Finance Committee. The Committee have requested further details on the proposal so that they may consider its potential.

### What's behind the Blue Door? Answer - Tenerife Path

A few years ago there was an ongoing debate whether the route between Marine Parade and Broad Street was a public footpath or a private pathway and in 2017 a final judgement was made to say that it was considered a private footpath. The door on Marine Parade (shown on our front cover) is usually locked, so it may be of interest to see what's behind the door, steps lead up to a path running eastwards past the Masonic Lodge to exit into Broad Street alongside the Galley Café.

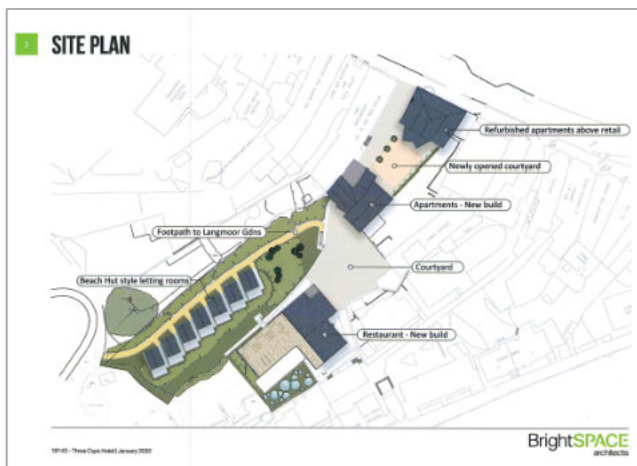


## The Three Cups

In 2019 major work was completed on the land at the rear of the building introducing concrete piling to stabilise the land. When that work was complete the front of the hotel was pressure washed, stone-work re-pointed with lime mortar and the woodwork painted.

New plans for the site have recently been released with the existing building having retail premises on the

ground floor with apartments on the upper floors, a new build apartment block at the rear of the existing building, beach style accommodation huts overlooking Marine Parade with a view out to sea, and a restaurant with a courtyard garden, again looking out to sea. Plans have to be approved by Dorset Council but as planning permission was granted in 2014 for a more extensive scheme it likely that this scheme will be given the go ahead.



## Heritage Buildings and Planning Regulations

A paper from Peter Coe, Chairman of the Lyme Regis Society was well received at the 17th December Strategy and Finance Committee. The paper was presented by Councillor Belinda Bawden and highlighted the changes to the weather and its impact on heritage buildings, particularly to guttering and glazing and the follow-on impact on carbon emissions and global warming.

The Council agreed to push for Dorset Council to waive some planning controls in favour of insulating buildings sympathetically to cope with current weather conditions. The issue would also be promoted and support garnered at the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC) so they can also bring pressure on Dorset Council.

## Trees

The Council took delivery of 200 free trees from The Wood Forest Organisation in December, these have been planted in the Gully and the woodland above the woodland walk.

The Council have also discussed placing trees around the perimeter of Anning Road grounds as there used to be rows of cherry trees surrounding the edge of the playing

fields. A limited number of cherry trees will be planted along the roadside edge as part of the Victory in Europe Day commemoration events weekend.

The Lyme Regis Society suggested to the Council that further trees might be planted in National Trust land in Ware Lane (this land was purchased by the Lyme Regis Society and gifted to the National Trust).

### **Cart Road Café - update**

The Cart Road Café has had further work carried out to the roof to stop the ingress of water, when repairs are complete the lease will be offered to the successful bidder. The Town Council selected a new leaseholder in December of last year.



### **St Michael's Church Tower Repair - Scaffolding Down!**

Work is complete on the church with leadwork and repairs to the clock face and new lime render applied to the tower walls. The old pebbledash was removed and also a sticky undercoat of bitumen over metal mesh on some tower walls. Scaffolding has been removed revealing the creamy coloured lime render visible from all over the town.

### **Delicatessen Delight!**

The Good Food Café and delicatessen in Broad Street was closed for most of January 2020 for building works and redecoration. The work uncovered a beautiful Victorian fireplace in the rear of the café. There's a new layout of the counters and seating area and a doorway has been opened up to allow an internal route to a refurbished toilet at the rear of the premises. The previously 'outside' toilet meant that staff had to walk down the side alley to use the bathroom. Customers and staff may now access the new facilities with ease – what a relief!







## Colway Gate

We included an article on Colway Gate, the derelict house on Charmouth Road in the summer 2019 edition of AOTT and wondered then if the owners would ever refurbish or live in the house.

In January 2020 the property went up for sale with Chesters Commercial Ltd. as a development opportunity and was offered for sale by informal tender with anticipated bid prices in excess of £400,000. The house was last sold for

£235,000 in September 2016.

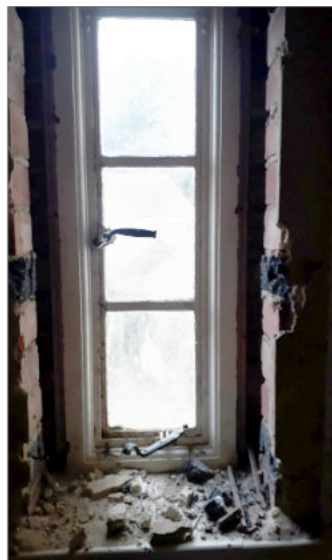


One of our investigative reporters went to view the house on 23rd January 2020 to see what was on offer. The 0.3 acre plot is on an incline but not as steep as you might imagine. The property is split into 2 flats, the upper floor flat having access to the roof terrace and an additional room leading off from this terrace. The inside of the house has been stripped of most of its original features, there are



no doors, door frames, cornices or skirting boards and the kitchens and bathrooms have mainly been removed. The only features to remain are two fireplaces, one quite stylish in the downstairs flat, another in the first floor flat in a bedroom and a small ceramic corner sink. There was a lot of interest from local builders in the site and tenders were submitted by 12 noon Friday 7th February 2020. The successful bidder was advised within 7 days of the bid closing date.

We look forward to some interesting designs being proposed for the site.





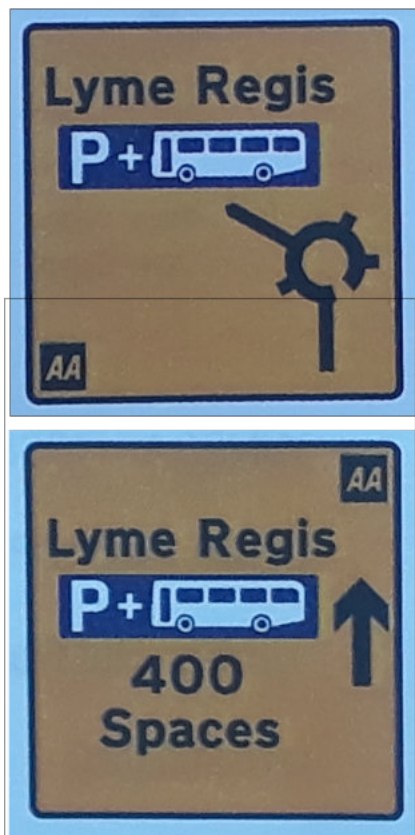
### Largigi Hotel, Coombe Street

The change from garage premises to a 10 bedroom 'self-service' hotel with on-site parking is almost complete. Some family rooms are built with a mezzanine floor to accommodate 2 sleeping areas. There is also a room designed for guests with disabilities which overlooks the river at the rear of the hotel. The hotel is due to open in spring 2020.

### Back Beach Wall/Jetty

The back beach jetty (down on the East side of the promenade by the Marine Theatre) has taken a battering in January 2020 and at first just one block was dislodged from the wall. This was reported to Dorset Council, however before any repairs could be carried out further strong seas scattered blocks over the beach and major rebuilding was required. A team have been working on rebuilding the wall but have had to cope with storms Ciara and Dennis during February. The wall is now almost complete and should weather any further storms with ease.





**Town Signage for Charmouth Road Park and Ride**

In a bid to reduce congestion in the town, especially during the summer months new signs have been agreed with Devon & Dorset Councils to direct drivers around the town to the park and ride in Charmouth Road.

**Lyme Regis Sub-Station upgrade**

The work on renewing major electrical cables from the substation in the NCP car park at the bottom of the town is almost complete. Broad Street has had major work all along its North side from the junction with Church Street to the top near the junction with Silver Street by the Baptist Church.



# **Annual General Meeting**

## **The Lyme Regis Society**

Affiliated to CPRE, Member of the Association of Small Historic Towns and Villages, Registered Charity No. 261281

28th April 2020 at 14.30 at Woodmead Halls

## **Agenda**

1. Apologies for absence
2. Acceptance of the minutes of the AGM held on the 30th April 2019.
3. Matters arising from the minutes
4. Chairman's report
5. Adoption of the Financial Statement for 2019
6. Election of the Committee -

The Society constitution confirms that ten people can be elected for Committee membership. Of the present Committee Jim Bragg, Heather Britton, Peter Coe, Vicki Dixon, Valerie Doney, Annie Nicholls and Paul Mellor have agreed to being nominated for re-election. A seconded nomination has been received for Allan Swannell to be elected a committee member

In line with the Society's constitution, nominations for elected committee members must be delivered to the Chair, Peter Coe before the AGM

Note - If the number of nominees is less than 10 then no vote is required

7. Members' opportunity to indicate interests and subjects for future meetings.
8. Any other business

# Lyme Regis Society - Accounts 2019

Income	2019	2018	2019	2018
Subscriptions			£ 1054.75	£ 974.83
Donations			£ 186.50	£ 19.10
Gift Aid Rebate			£ 203.42	£ 189.85
<b>Events</b>				
Coffee Morning	£ 43.50	£ 41.60		
Lectures	£ 142.00	£ 243.94		
Heritage Matters	£ 372.50	£ 0.00		
Total Events			£ 558.00	£ 285.54
Late paid cheque			£ 144.77	
<b>Interest</b>			£ 0.00	£ 0.00
<b>Publications</b>			£ 597.75	£ 619.40
Total Income			£ 2745.19	£ 2088.72
Less Expenses			£ 2333.68	£ 2218.08
Change for year			£ 411.51	-£ 129.36
Balance at 1st January			£ 7964.85	£ 8094.21
Deficit/surplus for year			£ 411.51	-£ 129.36
<b>Balance at 31st December</b>			<b>£ 8376.36</b>	<b>£ 7964.85</b>
Represented by				
Savings			£ 0.00	£ 0.00
Cash in hand			£ 30.00	£ 30.00
Bank a/c 20th Dec			£ 4346.37	£ 4079.63
R Driver Leg/savings			£ 4000.00	£ 4000.00
Plus outstanding Banking			£ 0.00	£ 0.00
Less cheques not presented			£ 0.00	-£ 144.77
			£ 8376.37	£ 7964.86



<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
<b>Events</b>				
Coffee Morning	£ 50.00	£ 64.00		
Lectures	£ 284.05	£ 396.42		
Heritage Matters	£ 397.00	£ 0.00		
Total Events			£ 731.05	£ 460.42
<b>Newsletter</b>			£ 595.24	£ 471.32
<b>Publications</b>			£ 39.00	£ 468.81
<b>Admin</b>				
Secretarial	£ 553.79	£ 287.42		
M'ship/Finance	£ 82.00	£ 40.00		
Planning	£ 6.00	£ 0.00		
Other		£ 104.00		
Total Admin			£ 641.79	£ 431.42
<b>Fees</b>				
Insurance	£ 145.60	£ 107.12		
ASHTAV Membership	£ 25.00	£ 25.00		
CPRE Membership	£ 36.00	£ 36.00		
Other	£ 120.00	£ 117.99		
Total Fees			£ 326.60	£ 286.11
<b>Projects</b>				
Lyme Regis Christmas Lights		£ 100.00		
Alzheimer's Society / B-Sharp	£ 0.00	£ 0.00		
Total Projects				£ 100.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>			<b>£ 2333.68</b>	<b>£ 2218.08</b>

<b>Book Stock</b>	<b>SofH</b>	<b>HH1</b>	<b>HH2</b>	<b>HH3</b>	<b>HH4</b>
Number in Stock	240	91	158	530	802
Potential value	£ 864.00	£ 182.00	£ 316.00	£ 1060.00	£ 1604.00
TOTAL	£ 4026.00				

Accounts prepared by V J Doney, Hon. Treasurer, and approved by David Cox.

## The 1925 Diary of William Trollope - Charmouth, Lyme and in between

by Vicki Dixon and Paul Mellor

In Autumn 2018 Paul and I were lucky enough to be introduced to William Trollope's diaries by his grandson, John, and in March 2019 to meet up with John and his two sons.

This precipitated a journey of discovery into the life and times of William Trollope and to Paul, John and me giving a talk focused on one particular diary which tells of William's two week stay in Charmouth in 1925, when he was 18 years old.

The diary itself is beautifully presented with gold lettering on the front and hand-written text on unlined paper. Inside there are charming illustrations,

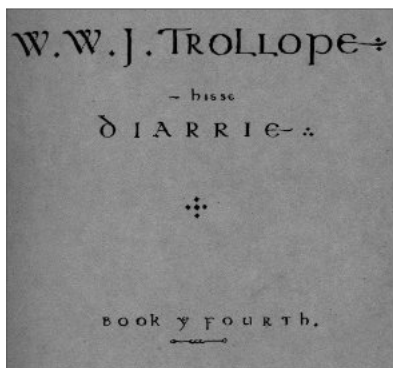


poems, rhymes and plenty of photographs. William also had a keen sense of ironic humour as you will see.

William and his two friends, Ed and Bill are Scouts and on Saturday 25th July 1925 they start out on their journey from Hackney, where they live, to Charmouth. They travel from London to Axminster by train and then go on to Charmouth by bus. The cost of the ticket is 1s 7d and having left Lyme Regis behind they go up the Charmouth Road and their adventures begin. The diary is full of stories and here is the first one in William's own words (albeit abridged)....

"The bell rang for the bus to stop and a lady past the prime of life made to descend. Out she got and the driver endeavoured to start the bus again up the hill but - great snakes, she (the bus)

is slipping backwards! The driver has lost control, the hill is too much for the engine and we are falling, slipping backwards, downwards. Will he never stop her? Ah, at last the driver pulls her to a standstill, the motor overcomes the incline and we begin



slowly, very slowly, to creep forward whilst the driver mops the perspiration from his forehead."

William's photo of the spot where the bus rolls back is taken just before the first bend on Timber Hill, this being the way the bus went in 1925 before the extension to the Charmouth Road was built in 1927. The turning on the right is the end of the old roads to Charmouth (more about which later).

The campsite, William, Ed and Bill's destination, was at the eastern upper end of the Char Valley in a field system that is remarkably unchanged today. When we visited we accessed the field up a short but muddy pathway on the right at the end of The Street just before the junction to Stonebarrow Lane.



AXMINSTER TO LYME ROAD.  
It was just before reaching here that our bus slipped backwards.



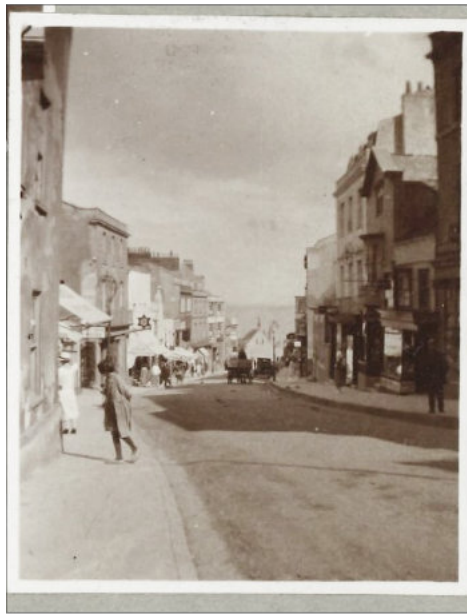
The Camp site and Charmouth beyond. This is looking west. The V-shaped gap roughly in the centre on the skyline is the Devil's Bellows. The landslide is on the sea side of it and just over the other side.

On their first day of camping William meets up with another Rover Scout and together they set out to walk to Lyme along Old Lyme Road, referred to as the Cliff Road by William. Of this journey, much in slanting text to denote the collapse of the road, William writes...

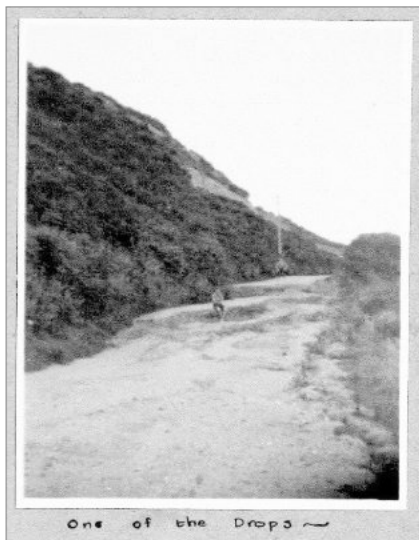
"At the top of the village, it (The Street) turns to the right towards Axminster. Just here, starting with a 5 in 1 gradient, the Cliff Road carries on along the side of the cliff before cutting a gap through the bow under the interesting appellation of the Devil's

Bellows. Immediately after passing the Bellows, one has a shock, the surprise of one's life! The road is still there but two huge stretches have cracked down and sunk, one of them as much as 10 feet. These stretches are one mass of cracks, holes and foldings. The whole of this Cliff Road has been closed a year ago as it was found to be dangerous. Cyclists still make their way as well as they can, and it still forms a short cut into Lyme for pedestrians."

Old Lyme Road was built in 1825 to replace the road at Old Lyme Hill which was very steep. Old Lyme Road was cut in 1924 and Old Lyme Hill in 1958.



The top of Broad Street - note the Star Tea Company on the left and the Assembly Rooms behind Middle Row at the bottom of the street.



William, Ed and Bill visit Lyme often during their stay..."we went into Lyme many a time", William says, and here (left) are two of his photos ....

Back in Charmouth, William, Ed and Bill became very friendly with the Billett family. Mr Arthur and Mrs Helen Billett and their daughters Portia (21) and Betty (almost 12) live at Sunnyside where Mr and Mrs Billett manage the private hotel and cafe, with bakehouse behind. The building still stands and can be found on the left-hand side going down The Street just after the newsagent.

The diary contains quite a few stories of their experiences with the Billetts, here are just a couple. On the first

Seafront looking West - note the land-slipped Langmoor Gardens, the Private Bay Hotel in the centre, completed in 1924, and the stacks of the cement works in the distance.







Monday William, Ed and Bill offered to shell peas and pick out slugs for Mr Billett and afterwards were rewarded with an excellent tea in the cafe (or coffee room as the Billetts called it).....and then the following Tuesday the threesome arrived at the Billetts about 8.00 p.m. for Mrs B, William says, "liked them to go early for their pint of beer (pardon me, glass of lemonade!) for which she charged them 3d and other folks 4d to make up for it, the correct price being 3½d."

Sunnyside was built in 1895 and owned by Mr Frank Coles with the Billett family being there for just a few years. The private hotel, sadly, was not a success. Reginald Pavey reports that unfortunately it was too large for the village and as a result Mrs Coles found

that it did not pay. Mr Coles died in 1925 and several bakers followed before it was turned into flats and renamed Devon Edge in 1945. The cake shop became a gift shop and home to the Post Office for a while and in more recent times the ground floor has been occupied by a hairdresser on the left and a butchers on the right, now both closed.

A second central theme to their stay is the Congregational Chapel further down The Street on the right and their experiences with the Reverend Walker. This is where William, Ed and Bill went to church on Sundays and more besides. On one occasion, after tea at the manse, they played croquet on the lawn. William says of this ... "we found croquet exceedingly interesting. Our host and Bill opposed Ed and I but with our superior teamwork Ed and I won two out of the three games, so it seems we were not inept!"

Originally built in 1689 the Congregational Chapel was rebuilt in 1815 and then, owing largely to the absence of a damp course, was restored at a cost of £128 10s 4d in 1868. The Chapel's upkeep continued to be costly and in 1925 certainly all was not well. William describes how he and Bill investigated the gallery, which ran around the edge of the building at a higher level, to find that it housed drums and children's toys because it was unsafe for people. The Chapel subsequently became the United



Rev. John  
Robertson Walker  
1859 - 1949





Reformed Church and as of last year a private dwelling.

The diary is full of interesting snippets of information. "The weather was by and large wet", William says, which is why the threesome spent so much time with the Billett family. Mrs Billett even dried their blankets in the bakehouse and lent William a huge fleecy Witney blanket following one night of particularly heavy rain. There was some bathing, however.... William once, Bill twice and Ed three times... to be precise.

Finally, on Sunday 9th August at the end of their holiday William, Ed and Bill set out on their journey back to London, but not too sadly. "Home", William says, "my holiday finished but I love London, dear old sooty London" and he finishes his diary with a wonderful poem...

"I've blundered in prose  
I've floundered in rhyme,  
I've written of Charmouth  
And spoken of Lyme  
I've described all the fun  
And now I am done  
And the wick gutters low in the oil  
I shut the book then  
And lay down my pen  
For this is the end of my toil."

*John, Paul and I would very much like to thank Graham Davies and Richard Bull from the Lyme Regis Museum for photos and information, Bridport History Centre for helping to research the Billett Family and Charmouth Local History Society for photos and information via their website at [freshford.com](http://freshford.com).*

# The Importance of Trees

**A talk to the Lyme Regis Society on 10th December 2019 by Professor Sir Ghilleen Prance - report by Val Doney**

Sir Ghilleen (Ian) Prance talked to us about the importance of trees in our environment. He emphasised that it is the interaction of trees and other living organisms within an ecosystem that makes it successful, disturb this and quickly the system will fail.

He started with photos of his own garden in Lyme Regis, his trees, and the many insects, birds and animals they support gave him great pleasure. This garden on its own separated from a healthy environment would not be so full of life, it has Whistlers Wood next door and the whole area is a rich biosphere. The wood was almost lost to housing, but now has been saved. He also acknowledged his beautiful trees may annoy other people when they block out the sea view. Everyone has their own ideas about nature.



Whistler's Wood in Lyme Regis, as seen from Sir Ghilleen Prance's house

Sir Ian is a botanist, his specialism is studying plants in warmer climates and he still visits Hawaii and the Amazon countries. He has discovered over 350 new plants, however there are many more in the rainforests and jungles which have not yet been recorded by scientists. The number of trees and the number of species of trees in an area depend on the conditions present, including the amount of rainfall, length of dry season and nutrients. To be successful, plants are

adapted to the place they live. They are there to reproduce and have evolved to make this possible.

He showed us photos of fig trees, that grow in the rain forest, these had visible adaptations to survive as shown in the pictures. In a rain forest the nutrients are near the surface of the soil, to collect them trees only need shallow roots. Fig trees are very





*A banyan type fig species in a flooded forest*

tall, these roots would not keep it upright, to compensate the trunk develops buttresses. They are strong and flat and stick out at the base to stabilise the tree and local people use them as paddles for their canoes.

To survive, some plants are dependent on interactions with unexpected other organisms. We were given many examples, one was the brazil nut tree. The nut is an important crop. It was thought they could be farmed in areas specially set aside for these trees. This monoculture farming was not successful, no nuts were formed and there was nothing to harvest.

Scientists investigated and worked out why. The flower is a tight complicated blossom and only one type of bee has been seen to force its way in to collect nectar, at the same time pollen from the stamens is rubbed off onto the bee. These bees fly to other brazil nut flowers, carrying the pollen and fertilising the flowers while collecting more nectar. After fertilisation, nuts will develop with the cells of a new generation of trees inside.

As only one type of bee can fertilise the brazil nut flower a healthy population of these creatures is essential for nut production. The bee can only reproduce by attracting a mate. To do this the male must find a specific scented orchid which grows in the rain forest where it rubs itself in the orchid to pick up the scent, then it is ready to attract a mate. Without the orchid scent, females are not aware of the male. By attracting a mate and reproducing, the bee population can be maintained and continue fertilising the brazil nut flowers. Remove the orchids and the bee population dies, remove the bees and the brazil nut trees are not pollinated and fail to thrive.

There are many examples of interactions between plants and other species. Palm trees give food,



*A massive buttressed trunk in the Amazonian forest*



shelter and can be used to build houses by humans. The sap of the nutmeg tree can be used by the forest dwellers for snuff, or as a hallucinogen for rituals or in some forms used as a poison on an arrow from a blow gun.

In the forest in Brazil the local people are finding that plants are flowering earlier than usual, is this a sign of climate change? There have been many severe droughts in South America since the turn of the century. Food production has been affected. This may be because of global temperature changes, but it could be directly related to the loss of the rain forest. It has been shown that if large numbers of trees are removed the local rainfall decreases. Also, after trees have been removed, when rain falls water is not held in the soil but runs away to rivers. Soil becomes less stable with no roots to hold it in place and the land deteriorates as the topsoil is lost. Has this knowledge changed the actions of significant governments? Have they started to protect their natural world? The answer is 'No'. Some governments in South America and the Far East have allowed an increase of deforestation for short term rewards in the last few years. The timber is sold, and the land used for farming. The farms are usually only successful for a few years because the soils are so nutrient poor.

What can we do to reduce global warming? A good way to stop carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) rise in the air is to plant trees. They need CO<sub>2</sub> to make sugars necessary to grow, reproduce and live. All parts of the plants hold carbon from the air. They are effective carbon 'sinks'. If they are deposited and become coal or peat this is long term storage.

Even in Britain planting extra trees will be worth doing, as it would be a step to help the global system survive. There are charities doing this at home and abroad. Some buy up woodlands and rain forests to protect them, some buy land which was once forest and help to plant trees on that land. These include the World Land Trust, the Woodland Trust and International Tree Foundation.

Another important point is that as green plants remove CO<sub>2</sub> and make sugars in a process called photosynthesis, oxygen is released, and this gas is essential for all living organisms. Plants are the major source of oxygen on the planet.

Professor Prance has written over 22 books and numerous scientific papers. He said that a disappointment for him was that he co-wrote "Extinction is For Ever" in 1977. The message was in the title. He is worried that over 40 years later there has been little change, the governments who could do something to slow down the effects of deforestation have not. Now it is people like Greta Thunberg who are visible and active, but we can all do a little ourselves. It is important that we accept some responsibility. Plant a tree, use less energy, think before you buy.

## Woodville

by Paul Mellor

At the junction of Silver Street and the narrow Woodmead Road stands a house well known to Lyme Regis Society members. For every year on July 4th a Society representative flies the United States of America (USA) flag there to celebrate American Independence Day. We do this to thank and honour the American forces



who used Woodville as a preparation base for the D Day landings in 1944.

In this account of the two hundred years plus life of Woodville we will meet several Anglican clergymen, make military contact twice with the Americans firstly in their War of Independence and later in World War II (WW II), a retired Naval Admiral, and finally several business and domestic contacts that typically reflect their respective times.

Woodville was probably built in the 1790s for Ambrose Andrew Rhodes of Exeter who owned estates in Lyme Regis and surrounding parishes. He was a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber in 1786, and thus most likely accompanied George III on his summer vacations to nearby Weymouth.

In 1799 the house was leased and subsequently sold to John Warren who was mayor of Lyme Regis five times between 1788 and 1818.

John Warren then sold it in 1801 to Reverend James Stuart. Rev. Stuart was Chaplain to the King's Rangers also known as the King's American Rangers. They were a British provincial military unit raised for service during the American War of Independence, and active from 1779 to 1783. His American wife, Ann, died in 1805 probably at Woodville and is buried in the aisle of Uplyme Parish church. Rev. Stuart died in 1809 in Newbury, and his body was returned to Uplyme to be buried with his wife. There is a lovely plaque on the north wall of the church detailing all this.

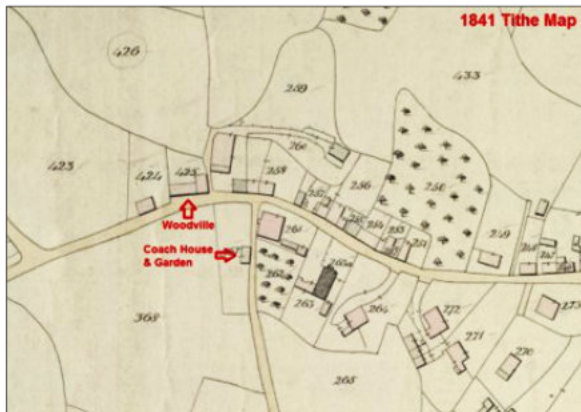
In 1807 Rev. Andrew Tucker of Wootton Fitzpaine became the new owner, leasing the house to James Huish Wolcott and family. James and his wife Bridget lived there until 1812. Their daughter Sarah was married in Lyme Regis Parish Church in 1810 to Rev. Harry Farr Yeatman of Stock Gaylard in East Dorset. In April 1811 Mr

Wolcott died and was buried in Stock Gaylard. Mrs Wolcott left Lyme Regis to live in Stock Gaylard and Woodville was rented out again.

For the next 18 years from 1814 to 1832 William Aveline rented the property. William was the stepfather to Sir Henry De La Beche, the great geologist.

Bridget Wolcott died in 1835 and was buried in Stock Gaylard. Her lease on Woodville was passed to her daughter Sarah and Sarah's husband Rev. Harry Farr Yeatman. Rev. Yeatman eventually became the owner in 1844, buying the house from the Rev. Tucker.

From 1841 to 1863 Susan Raven rented Woodville and its coach house and garden from Rev. Yeatman. Susan Raven was a member of the Henley family who owned much of the Lyme parish and town during the 17th to 19th centuries. She had married Nicholas John Raven, Rector of Harpley in Norfolk in 1812 at Sandringham. Nicolas died in 1827 and as his widow Susan appeared in the 1841/51/61 censuses at Woodville. In the 1861 census her mother Mary Henley lives next door in Belle Vue Cottage. Susan died in 1863 and was buried in Lyme Regis Cemetery.



The 1841 tithe map shows clearly the shape of the current building, and over the road, space for the Coach House and garden. From now on it must be assumed that the house was separated into different dwelling areas, as several future occupiers were clearly not using the whole house.

In 1885 William Tormey occupied "furnished apartments". In May 1885 the family advertised - 'Nurse wanted immediately, English, French or Swiss, for one child, aged 14 months. Must be experienced, Knowledge of dressmaking preferred. Aged 28-40. Send references to Mrs Bruce of Woodville.'

Between 1887 and 1895 Rear Admiral William Cox Chapman, with his wife Elizabeth and daughter Marie were tenants to Marwood S. Yeatman, the youngest son of Harry Farr Yeatman, the owner from 1844.

The retired Admiral had had a distinguished naval history. He joined the Royal Navy in 1841 and had served around the world. One of the ships he served on was *HMS Trincomalee*, a Royal Naval sailing frigate built just after the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1812. The ship is now preserved and on display in Hartlepool

and is the oldest warship still afloat in Europe. Chapman was First Lieutenant aboard *Trincomalee* from 1852 to 1855. He became a Vice Admiral in 1888.

His wife, Elizabeth died in 1887, the Admiral in 1895 and they are both buried in Lyme Regis Cemetery. In July 1895, his executors put up for sale the Admiral's Brougham & Stanhope carriages, the pair of carriage cobs and the accompanying harness.

From 1898 to 1907 William Arthur rented apartments, and in 1905 Mrs Arthur advertised for a general servant - '... wanted, a clean, good tempered girl, age over twenty ...'

In 1907 Rev. George Walker Otton MA rented an apartment and was curate at Lyme Regis parish church from 1888 to at least 1911.

By 1919 William Notting Farnham and his family were owners living there until 1935.

In the 1890s/early 1900s William Notting Farnham was described as a watchmaker & jeweller, stationer and fancy dealer. In 1905, Mrs Farnham was recorded as letting apartments at 21 Broad Street, so the family were very active in the town.

From 1936 to 1938 Edward & Hilda Wheaton lived there. They had a cook and parlour maid. In the local newspaper on 16th October 1936 they advertised - 'Nursery Governess or mother's help required. Good references. Refined cheerful companion, assist light duties. Maid kept. - Mrs Wheaton, Woodville.'

World War II saw the house requisitioned for military use.

1939                      Captain Walter, 1/6 Battalion, East Surrey Regiment.

1940                      Coastal Defence Battery 376.

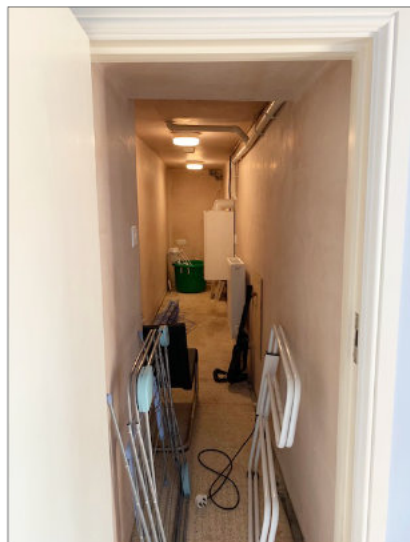
1943-44                Headquarters of "C" Company, 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st US Infantry Division. They were to land at Omaha Beach on D-Day, where considerable casualties were incurred. Several of "C" Company kept in contact with Lyme and returned in later years to retrace their time in Lyme and their eventual exit from Weymouth to the Omaha beach for their D-Day landings.

One soldier wrote:

"Your building Woodville at that time had an entrance on Silver St. and housed approximately 40 men. Had no indoor plumbing. Pull chain commodes were located 'out back'. Our cook house was located on east further up Silver St. then to the right. I lived at Woodville when I was made the company bugler."

The modern picture (above right) from the basement at Woodville shows the long shape of the soldiers' pistol firing range, now converted to its more modern usage of a heating boiler and domestic equipment room.



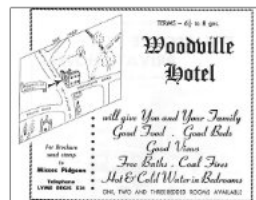


Woodville shooting range

Photo: Tony Ash

After the war had ended the house returned to domestic duties and from 1947 to 1950 Archibald & Beatrice Taylor ran the Woodville Private Hotel.

Similarly, we know that the delightfully named Misses Hilda, Bessie & Mabel Pidgeon ran their Woodville Hotel from 1954 to 1961.



Finally, in 1962 Woodville was converted into the 4 formal flats that exist today.

In 1991 a memorial plaque was put up on the house wall to mark the role of the USA use of the building in WW II, and on July 4th every year a society representative flies the USA flag there to celebrate American Independence Day.

In 2011 re-rendering of the front elevation gave an opportunity to inspect the construction of the house.



The removal of the external render shows the underlying structure of the building, which is mainly constructed with Blue Lias limestone blocks, with bricks used for windows and repairs. Most of the historic buildings in Lyme

are constructed from the local Blue Lias limestone, but because of its poor weathering properties, the majority have been rendered or stuccoed or roughcast. A small number have been slate-hung. On the right frontage you can clearly see the blocked up original matching symmetrical windows.

Today Woodville stands proud in its position in the fine company of two other historic houses - The Mariners Hotel, former home of the Philpot family, and the Dorset Hotel, formerly Gibraltar Lodge.

*With thanks for significant help from Graham Davies at the Lyme Regis Museum for sharing their records - Joe Tesoriere and Tony & Helen Ash, past and present owners of the modern flats.*

# The Lyme Regis Society

## Membership

2020 Subscriptions for those not paying by standing order are now due. I have sent out reminders by email or post to assist. Cheques should be made out to The Lyme Regis Society and sent to Mrs V Dixon, 4, Charmouth Close, Lyme Regis DT7 3DJ. Subscription rates remain £7.00 for single membership and £11.00 for family membership. Thank you.

As always we would appreciate any help Members could give to support our activities. If you feel you could do this please get in touch with Peter Coe. Contact details are opposite.

## New Members

We welcome the following new members who have recently joined the Society

Pat Marler

Janet Joyner

Tim Randall

## The objects of the Society

The objects of the Society are to safeguard the natural and architectural beauty of Lyme Regis and its neighbourhood, in accordance with its civic requirements, and to promote interest in its cultural and historical associations. The Society is registered with the Charity Commission, a member of the Association of Small Historic Towns and Villages, and affiliated to the Campaign to Protect Rural England.

**Patron** Professor Sir Ghilleen Prance FRS, VMH  
☎ 01297 444991

**President** Keith Shaw  
☎ 07792 466173

## Committee

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# Diary Dates

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> March

*Exploring the Historic Atlantic Triangle: Lyme Regis' links with America - John Dover*

Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> April

Annual General Meeting

*The alternative plan for The Three Cups - Palmers Brewery*

Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> September

*Coombe Street - Audrey Standhaft*

Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> October

TBC

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November

*The Ascension Islands and Sooty Terns - Roger Dickey*

Shared Talk with Dorset Wildlife Trust

Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> December

TBC

All meetings start at 2:30pm at Woodmead Halls. Admission is free for Lyme Regis Society members (£2.00 for the DWT meeting). Admission for visitors is £3.00