

ALL OVER THE TOWN

Summer 2025

The Lyme Regis Society
Newsletter



This Month's Contents

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|----|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Introduction | 15 | The Search for Anning? |
| 2 | Planning and Town Report | 16 | Textiles in the Lim Valley Part |
| 13 | Heritage Open Days | 1: | Woollen Cloth in Lyme Regis |
| 14 | Regency Rum Bluffers | | |

Collaborations with the U3A and the Friends of the Museum

The LRS and the Lyme Regis 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.

The Friends of the Museum also run an excellent programme of meetings which may be of interest to members - see www.lymeregismuseum.co.uk/events/

Cover: Rosalind Oswald of Regency Rum Bluffers on the Cobb. Image courtesy of Christopher Oswald



www.lymeregissociety.org.uk

Published by the Lyme Regis Society, Charity No. 261281

Printed by Mixam

Introduction - by Heather Britton

Our April AGM was well attended and it was very good to welcome so many members coming to see what the society had achieved over the past year and note that its finances were now on a more stable footing with the new membership rates coming into force in January of this year. The increased costs in printing the AOTT and postage to send out to those members further afield than Lyme Regis has increased considerably over the past few years, however our new membership rates will secure the financial position of the society in the future.

In May we welcomed members to our coffee morning at the Alexandra Hotel and this year we were lucky enough to hold it in the hotel's lovely conservatory with the weather being glorious: sunny and warm. Some guests from the hotel also joined us and became members, so we extend a warm welcome to them. We have many members who visit Lyme on a regular basis and like to keep in touch with what goes on in the town and hear about the history of our buildings, people and industries.

This issue sees the start of a run of articles about the cloth and wool industry in Lyme Regis over the years. At the end of Coombe Street by the Gosling Bridge you can look over the rooftops and see a tall, round tower built of stone and lime mortar, a reminder of the very busy period when Lyme was a hub for the woollen cloth industry.

There have been some major changes in the town over the past few months. The Lyme Regis Town Council have moved from Guildhall Cottage near the Guildhall to 100 yards further up Church Street to St Michael's Business Centre. The Business Centre is run by The Lyme Regis Development Trust who own the former school building. The council has taken a 21-year lease on a sizeable area on the ground floor at St Michael's and fully reopened on Friday 13th June.

Other changes have seen the former Boots premises taken over by White Stuff and the shop the housed Costa now opens as Weird Fish along with many other changes. It's good to see our empty shops now up and running again.

In September the 'Heritage Open Days' week happens across the country, where you can visit buildings not usually open to the public. Here in Lyme we take part for the weekend of Saturday 13th & Sunday 14th September, more on this later in the issue. Flyers will be available at all the open venues to act as a guide for the weekend. If you haven't seen the inside of some of our more iconic buildings in the town before please try and visit them. The Open Days are free and you can find out more about each location from the people hosting each site.

If you would like to help out as a host either at the Guildhall or the Cemetery Chapel please get in contact with us, either via our website or contact Val Doney, see contact details on the inside back cover.

Kind Regards, Heather - Chairperson, Lyme Regis Society

Planning and Town Report July 2025

by Heather Britton

Fire in The Hold!!

On 8th July at around 8am a strange occurrence took place in the Old Forge Fossil Shop in Broad Street. The sun's rays were focussed by a lens hanging in the window onto some combustible material that caught fire. Smoke filled the shop and flames could be seen. Smoke was also filling the flat above the shop and



Picture courtesy of MS

drifting up to the top floor flat. A local eagle-eyed nearby resident was alerted to this and getting his spear (!?) smashed the glass in the right hand door of the shop, entered the building and doused the flames.

A call had also been made to the fire service and two engines turned up to ensure the fire was properly put out. The road was closed off for some time until all concerns about the fire were damped down.

The flat above the shop was filled with smoke and had to be vented to clear it, the upper flat smelt of smoke but this also cleared. Many thanks to our local 'amateur' fire-fighter.

Post Office Update

The proposed Post Office at the Waffle House was discussed at the Tourism, Community and Publicity Committee Meeting at the Town Council Offices at St Michael's Business Centre on Wednesday 9th July 2025. A report detailed the difficulties the Waffle House were experiencing in funding the installation of the counter area which The Post Office had originally offered to fund. The counter work installation is due to take place around August this year;

The report requested that some of the revenue grant from the Town Council be used to carry out these works. After discussion it was agreed that £7.5K of the current years grant could be used to cover the counter installation work. In addition that the council would underwrite £10K of the further finance needed on the understanding that the Waffle House accounts are in order.

The Harbourmaster's Store

The new 'Harbourmaster's Store' at the side of the Bowling Green toilets was finished last year. If you've ever wondered what they keep in there..... a pick up truck type vehicle with a trailer and various ropes and equipment for use by the Harbourmaster's team.



VE Day

The Volunteer public house in Broad Street joined in with the VE Day commemorations by decorating the front of their buildings.

A Close Shave

The Guildhall chamber is an ideal spot to watch two buses manoeuvring past each other in Church Street, a very tricky job. We are thankful to have such skilled bus drivers who navigate our narrow streets safely.



Falling Debris

Walking up Silver Street, just past the Library there's a large wall running directly next to the pavement. Going past the library one evening in March I spotted that part of the wall had fallen down onto the pavement and road. I picked up the debris from the road

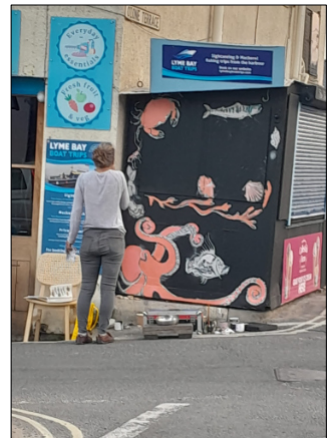
and cleared a path through the pavement. I then went to the house to tell them that part of their wall had collapsed, it was late at night and an unexpected call at night may be quite disturbing. However once I explained what had happened



they understood the reason for the late night call. The next day temporary repairs had been carried out and some protective fencing erected.

Boat Trips

The Kiosk near to the Slipway has been repainted and is advertising Boat Trips



Scaffolding...

Lyme Gift Shop and Primary Colours





The Philpot Museum was having their pointing renewed on the side wall facing Church Street.

The Lyme Bay had some work done to their side wall in March.



The Boat Building Academy

Anning Road Playing Fields

The Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) is being built in the Anning Road playing fields

The old BMX humps at the playing field in have been removed and the MUGA will be located on the northern side of the playing field, next to the

play park, and the football pitch will be relocated southwards.



Langmoor Gardens

The gardens were looking lovely this summer, the huge 'Echium pininana, Tree Echium' gave a good showing with plants growing to over 15 feet in height during the summer months.

Bus Stop

Lyme Regis Town Council painters get to work on refurbishing the Bus Stop below the corner of Bell Cliff.



River Lim bank repairs

When the bank near Jordan Flats fell into the river last year, repairs were carried out using hessian bags filled with concrete. At the time it was thought that this was a temporary repair, however a local civil engineer has said that this provides permanent formwork as the water seeps into the concrete dry mix and sets it within the cloth bag. The bag then rots off leaving a solid structure. Whether it is faced with a stone façade in keeping with the rest of the bank is up to Dorset Council.

Payphone Kiosks

The rise in mobile phone ownership and usage has had an impact on the number of Red Telephone Kiosks in operation. Our two very noticeable kiosks in the forecourt of the Regent Cinema and next to Baboo Gelato at Bell Cliff were in use up to last year. They are now both locked and the telephony equipment has been



removed. The Kiosks are both guaranteed to be left in situ as they are both Grade II listed.

The Regent Cinema

A second planning application (P/FUL/2024/03845) was submitted along the lines of the first for 2 houses, a flat and 2 retail premises on the rear of the site and in the cinema building itself. Comments on the application closed on 23rd September 2024. It remains 'Under Officer Consideration',

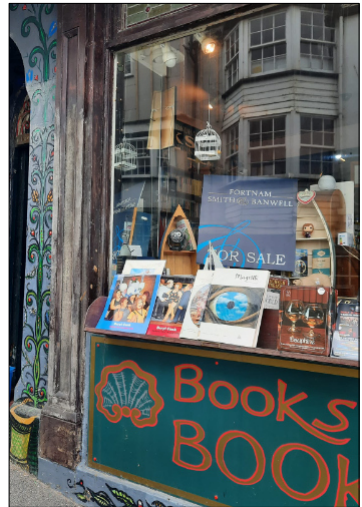
with still no decision being made as yet,

Up For Sale

If you've ever thought that you might like to run a bookshop in a small seaside town you're in luck as Bob Speer has his wonderful book shop up for sale with Fortnam, Smith & Banwell. The building is thought to be the original Three Cups before the name, and the hotel, moved further up Broad Street to its current location.

River Lim Footbridge

In January 2025 the first crossing wooden footbridge as you walk up from Horn Bridge along the Lim was blocked off. Our footpaths expert, Allan Swannell, was able to establish that Dorset Council was the responsible body for repairs. The Senior Countryside Ranger, said that the bridge would be rebuilt in the summer with Environmental Agency input. An old concrete slab was also planned to be removed before falling into the river. No further action so far this year....





Town Mill

Last year the Town Mill area had some yellow lines painted on its internal road. To say the lines were wonky was an understatement. The original wobbly lines have now been covered up with grey paint and new, straighter lines painted on the road.

Woodmead Hall Car Park

The underground drainage work was completed a few months ago and it was then discovered that the layer of gravel spread over part of the car park surface contained nails and broken/ground glass. The affected area was closed for remedial work and the contractors reinstated a safe surface.



Road Markings

The many and various coloured marking on our roads and pavements are the result of a major survey to identify what's underneath our feet. Water pipes, electricity cables, gas pipes, drainage and sewage piping are all buried beneath our walkways.

A major survey and marking happened during May and you can see the results marked in spray can paint. Detailing these services helps to identify them for any digging or repairs and improve maintenance and tracing of utilities. The following is a full key to the colours:

Red: Electric power lines, conduit, and cables.

Yellow: Gas, oil, steam, petroleum, or other flammable materials.

Orange: Telecommunication, alarm, or signal lines.

Blue: Drinking water.

Green: Sewage and drain lines.

Purple: Reclaimed water, irrigation, and slurry lines.



Night time working



Pink: Temporary survey markings, unknown/unidentified facilities.

White: Proposed excavation limits or route.

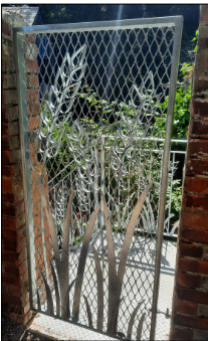
Skate Park

The protective wall around the skate park has been decorated with a seascape.



The Leat

The Mill has now opened up a doorway from the path outside by the Leat to go into the Miller's garden via a lovely steel staircase which follows the design for the new gates and railings across the site.



Doorway to
Miller's Garden



Main gates next to
Town Mill shop
entrance

New in Town

White Stuff moves into the old Boots premises



Work in progress

Weird Fish takes up residence in the former Costa café.



Flapjackery take over the old Fortnam, Smith and Banwell premises.



A makeover





The Bagel Shop opens in the former Good Food Deli shop.

Rockfish opened in Cobb Road



The Old Boathouse lives again under new ownership.



The Cove took over from Paul at the Barbers Shop over Fordhams offering hairdressing services.



Elephants Run Riot

The summer months saw Lyme, Bridport, and West Bay overrun with elephants. Some could be seen patrolling the Seafront, some lurking in Langmoor Gardens. Smaller ones took up residence in

Pictures courtesy of MS



shops and businesses. This charitable display was to promote an interest in tracking down all these beasts and making sure they behaved. Our own Lyme Regis ones were the perfectly behaved visitors!

Cockatoo?

In Lyme we are lucky to have our own regular cockatoo celebrity in the shape of Teddy Knight who works at the Lyme Regis Brewery in the Town Mill. At the Kiosk in May a visitor came with 2 cockatoos, perhaps to say 'hello'?



The Lyme Regis Society presents **Lyme Regis Heritage Open Days 2025**

Heritage Open Days offer the chance to see inside many historic buildings. The Lyme Regis Society is promoting these venues for residents and visitors to explore and enjoy.

Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th September, 10am – 4pm

Belmont House, Pound Street, DT7 3HZ

Home of Eleanor Coade, business woman and inventor of Coade Stone and later John Fowles, author of 'French Lieutenant's Woman'. The local 'Powder Monkeys' sea scouts will be providing refreshments in the garden.

Sunday 14th, 10am – 4pm

The Guildhall, Bridge Street, DT7 3QA

A barrel ceiling, wooden panelling and a host of history are here with stunning views over the bay. Cross-stitch cushions on the council benches capture the whole of Lyme Regis, including the seagulls! The Town Council meets here and holds civic ceremonies such as Mayor Making.

Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th, 10am - 4pm

The Cemetery Chapel, Charmouth Road, DT7 3HH

The chapel was originally planned in 1856 and features spectacular hand painted walls.

The Town Mill, Mill Lane, Coombe Street, DT7 3PU

Built in the 1300s and open every day to demonstrate how a mill works to produce flour in front of your eyes. Have a go at using a mill wheel yourself. See the huge wooden mill water wheel turn.

See their website for opening times: <http://www.townmill.org.uk/>

Regency Rum Bluffers

By Paul Mellor

Our Lyme Regis Society website serves to provides us with a small but steady stream of enquiries and comments about Lyme Regis, membership, and our publications sales.

Earlier in the year we were pleased to organise the sale of our *Signs of History* booklet to Rosalind and Christopher Oswald and I duly communicated with them.

It transpired that Ros and Chris have an intriguing passion for all things Regency, combining Chris' tailoring skills and Ros' piano playing. They call themselves 'The Regency Rum Bluffers'. To be a Rum Bluffer in Regency times meant that you were considered a 'Genial Host'!

They run a YouTube website: www.youtube.com/c/RegencyRumBluffers

"Regency Rum Bluffers have come to YouTube, bringing you a personal miscellany of the Regency - including Music on original instruments, Clothing, Regency Characters, re-enactment, food and drink."

A trip to Lyme Regis in the footsteps of Jane Austen was planned, hence the purchase of our *Signs of History*. Wearing period costumes they provided much enjoyment to our population that day.

Ros and Chris were particularly intrigued to view the plaque set into the upper wall of the Cobb towards its far end. It records the repairs done to the Cobb in 1793 under the direction of Capt. D'Arcy - Engineer. Our own booklet comments that "it is not too much of a coincidence that a few years later Jane Austen used the name Mr D'Arcy in *Pride and Prejudice*!"



Rosalind and Christopher Oswald – Regency Rum Bluffers. Image: Christopher Oswald



Chris on Monmouth Beach Image:
Christopher Oswald



In front of Pyne House Image: Christopher
Oswald.

The Search for Anning?

By Heather Britton

A trip to the Jazz Jurassica music event at the Royal Lion at the end of June proved to be very interesting. Some surprise guests were visiting all the way from Australia. Kim Anning and Dawn Pekin had first stopped in London for a week and then came down to Lyme Regis to see if they could track down any of Kim's 'Anning' relatives.

Kim is a musician himself and plays jazz guitar, and he and Dawn heard the jazz music coming from the Royal Lion and dropped in to join us. They live in Faversham House in York, near Perth, West Australia and came to the UK to see if they could find any information on Kim's family history. Their time was limited in Lyme, however it was very good to meet an 'Anning' from the other side of the world. If anyone does think that they may have links to Kim, please contact us via the website and we can put you in touch.



Textiles in the Lim Valley Part 1: Woollen Cloth in Lyme Regis

By Richard Bull



Factory Housing and Weaver's Cottages at Mill Green – the gable of the Old Factory stood where the modern house is. The furthest old house on the left, Silk Mill Cottage, is still supported by a wall of the Old Factory.

Cloth has been made in the Lim Valley from medieval times. This article is about the water-powered factories in Lyme that made high-quality West of England coat and blanket cloths. The factories, already struggling by 1820, were bankrupted through political shenanigans in 1847, leaving only the Waterside Factory in Uplyme to soldier on for another two decades against competition from large-scale steam powered mills in Yorkshire. The redundant Lyme factories became available cheaply to start up for silk and twine yarn manufacture. Woollen carpets are still produced in Axminster, so the local textile trade is not entirely lost.

After the 1860s cloth production continued in only a few places in SW England and Wales, mostly at small-scale factories scattered through Wales - and at some larger mills in the SW England, such as at Stroud, Bradford on Avon and Wellington, all now closed. Coldharbour Mill in Uffculme, not far from Lyme, is worth a visit. It is open as a museum where yarn and cloth production can be seen, whereas Heathcoat's Mill at Tiverton produces specialised hi tech textiles: originally it had been a silk mill.

Part 2 will deal with the Waterside Factory in Uplyme and Part 3, Silk and Twine in Lyme. Note that mill and factory are interchangeable terms in the wool trade, and that a clothier is the principal or owner of a cloth factory.

The Factories, Mills and Workers Housing

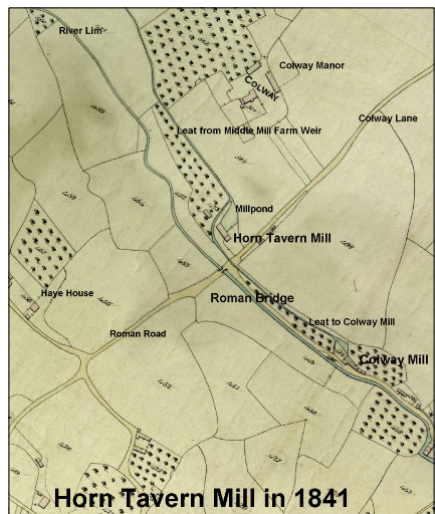
The visible remains of the Lim Valley industry are the standing mill buildings now converted to flats, their water systems and worker's housing. Other than the New Factory and the rebuilt silk mill at the Old Factory, the ages of cloth mills and their water systems are unknown. All the millwheels were overshot, which

provides more power from small rivers than undershot wheels - instead of being driven by the force of water, overshot wheels are driven by the weight of water in their buckets. The speed of rotation is determined by the time taken to fill the buckets, which depends on water flow, and the load. The size of wheels in the Lim Valley would provide about 6-10 horsepower, sufficient for most factory needs, except for many power looms. In such a small river, periods of low flow would be a serious drawback mitigated to some extent by water collected overnight in the water channels (in the SW called leats) and the small mill ponds. During low flow conditions it would be difficult to maintain a constant speed of rotation without unloading machinery from the power train. The Cannington and Yawl branches of the Lim are spring-fed and rarely dry up, whereas the Rocombe and Harcombe branches readily dry up. At least waterpower is free of charge but for the cost of maintenance. The aim must have been to build up good stocks of yarn during times of reasonable flow to keep the hand loom weavers and finishers in work all year round.

These mills were fully integrated cloth factories: fleece in, finished cloth out, although weaving probably involved working from home in worker's cottages, weavers being paid piece rate - for each piece of cloth they produced. Such outwork was normal before power looms which, were probably introduced by the 1820s - but only as far as limited waterpower would allow.

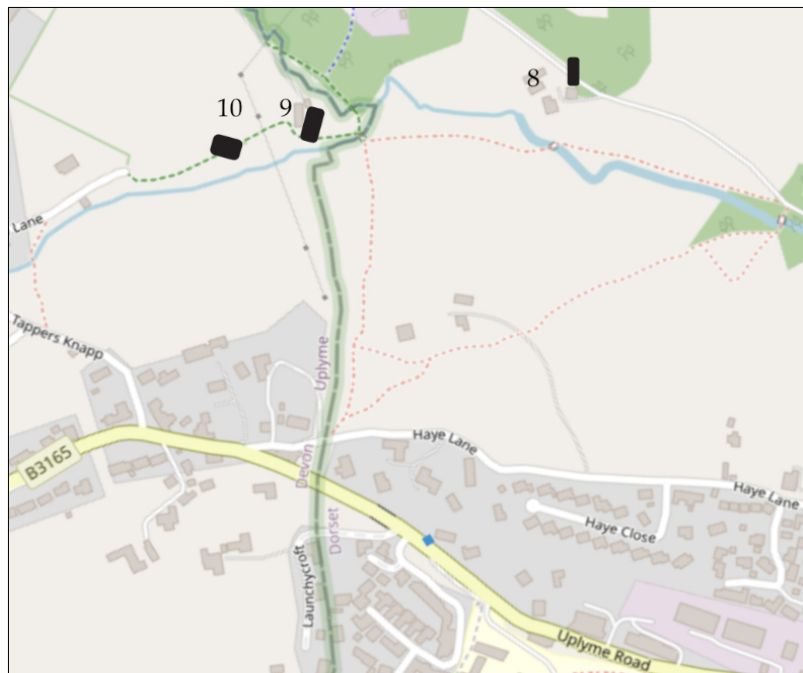
Going downstream from the county boundary at Uplyme Old Corn Mill (9 on map, next page), the key buildings are:

Horn Tavern Mill (7), a former fulling mill, just upstream of Roman Bridge. The fulling process, is a stage in the production of woolen cloth. Fulling involves cleaning, shrinking, and thickening woven cloth by pounding it in water with cleaning agents, resulting in a denser, warmer, and often water-repellent fabric. Historically, this was done manually by trampling the cloth, but fulling mills mechanised the process using water power to drive hammers that pounded the cloth. This mill has all but disappeared, but the house called Horn sits on its footprint. The weir at the bottom of



The site of Horn Tavern Mill, its leat and millpond and the tailrace which becomes the leat to Colway/Higher Mill. Based on the Tithe Map with extra annotations.

Map of the River Lim
from Uplyme to Lyme
Regis with the key
buildings numbered.
© openstreetmap.org

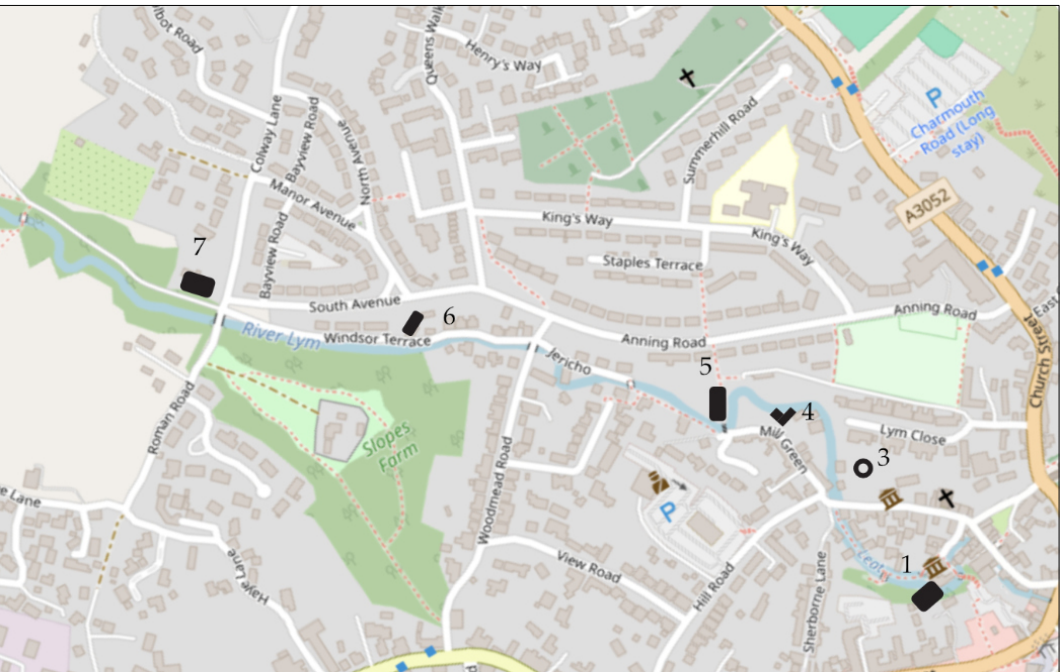


Bumpy Field can be seen and the leat and millpond can be traced. Horn Mill may have been very old. It closed about 1831.

Colway or Higher Mill (6) had been a linseed oil mill in 1798 and maybe up to the 1820s, but was derelict, perhaps fire damaged, before 1831. Around then it was revived, perhaps rebuilt, as a fulling mill for thickening woollen cloth, until closure in 1847. It was a hemp mill from 1857-1860 and last of all, a hydro-electric generator. Its leat can be traced from Roman Bridge to a filled-in millpond behind the mill. Its overflow led directly to the

Colway/Higher Mill, now Higher Mill
Flats. The waterwheel was on the
right hand elevation; the drained mill
pond lies behind and the tail race
outfall is obscured by vegetation in
the riverbank. The Mill House lay to
the right.





river to an outfall still visible. The tailrace ran in a tunnel to an outfall in the riverbank which can be seen in the winter. It is now Higher Mill Flats.

The New Factory (5), also known as Stanton's New Factory, is now Jordan Flats. It was built at the foot of the long ford between 1806 and 1819 on Henley Estate land at the top of Mill Green. The overshot waterwheel was at its eastern end and the wheelpit, although filled, can be imagined readily. The leat overflow discharged to the river into the long ford, the tunnelled outfall can be seen in the riverbank wall. The tail race ran under the path to Anning Road directly to the river. After the closure of the cloth business in 1847 it lay idle until 1854, when it became a silk thread mill - and later a steam laundry. During WWII it was the



The New Factory. The river runs under the concrete bridge in the foreground

cookhouse for UK then US troops camped on the Anning Road fields which were not built up then. A rack close was located on some of that land for tentering cloth (tentering sets the warp and weft of woven fabrics at right angles to each other, and stretches and sets the fabric to its final dimensions). This factory probably had powered looms, judging from the machinery clearance at its closure, although it is impossible to be certain.

The Old Factory (4) (mostly demolished) stood at Mill Green. The earliest mention of the Old Factory is in 1769, but it was probably much older. Burned down in 1803, it was rebuilt but later demolished in stages. The wall supporting Silk Mill Cottage was part of the factory, and the new houses at Mill Green stand on its footprint.

A part of the Old Factory still standing lies by the river. It was an entirely separate mill building and was rebuilt after another fire in 1841 and the rebuilt building only used as a cloth factory until 1847. From 1854 it was used for silk yarn production and later as auction rooms. The eastern gable stands in the river, but



Old Silk Mill Flats, the surviving mill on the Old Factory site and the most recent part to be rebuilt. In this image it is converted, as Silk Mill Flats, viewed from across the river above Gosling Bridge (photo courtesy Martin Diplock).



The gable end of Old Silk Mill Flats on the left. Behind lies a step in the riverbed where the hatches or sluices stood. Taken from just above Gosling Bridge in 2010.



The Fleece Drying Stove above Coombe Street seen in 2010. A central stove heated wooden fleece drying racks under a conical slated roof.

the waterwheel was in the centre of the building. The water came from an impounded section of the river, now drained, held up by wooden hatches or sluices on a low weir. It is now called the Old Silk Mill Flats.

Twenty two cottages still standing at Mill Green were factory housing, and some old cottages in Coombe Street appear, from their larger windows upstairs, to have been weaver's cottages.

In addition, a Fleece Drying Stove (3) stands above Gosling Bridge as a circular, roofless ruin. Such stoves were common in the Gloucestershire-Wiltshire cloth factories.

Downstream of Gosling Bridge weir lies the Town Mill (1), an ancient corn mill. Despite claims, there were never any other water mills in Lyme Regis other than these. Middle Mill Farm (8) was a farm between mills on the Horn Mill leat, not a mill. The so-called Starch Mill at the foot of Sherborne Lane was never a watermill, if it was ever a mill of any sort.

Records and Objects

There no surviving trade books, accounts or samples of yarn or cloth, but secondary sources, such as insurance records, land surveys, factory auction sale advertisements and a Select Committee report offer valuable insights. The only known objects are a faller arm from a power spinning mule, found at Mill Green in 2011 by John Hoar and donated to the Museum (LYMPH 2011/49), and a set of old keys, also in the Museum (LYMPH 1991/91), labelled in copperplate on old paper, "Keys to Oil Mill, Lyme", which was found in the Chard offices of Beviss & Beckinsale, Solicitors. Quite likely these were mislaid and never handed over to the clothiers - and therefore are not true objects from the cloth trade.

Cloth making – the essential process

Fleeces come to the factory packed into large canvas bags called woolsacks. At the factory, the fleeces are sorted by the woolstapler according to quality and staple (fibre) length. Next, they are scoured (washed) to remove grease, dirt, bracken, brambles and twigs. After drying, the fleeces are scribbled (torn up), combed and carded to produce rovings, long strips of parallel fibres ready for spinning.

To spin wool is to draw out and twist - and by this process the scales of the individual fibres lock to produce a thread known as a single. This will come undone if not kept taut. By plying or doubling, that is reverse twisting of the singles together, the threads combine to make a stable yarn. Yarn may be plied with two or more threads and wound onto or into bobbins, skeins, hanks, cones, tops, quills or pirns, or balled, and used for further processes or weaving cloth or carpets, for felting and for knitting.

Dyeing can be done in the wool, that as washed fleece, as yarn or after weaving. Natural dyes, such as madder (red) and dyer's greenweed (yellow) and woad (blue), would have been locally produced and can require milling, hot water and much skilled preparation. Dyestuffs were also imported at high cost from exotic places, like logwood (violet, purple and black). Mordants, such alum from the Whitby Lias, were used to alter and fix dyes. Artificial dyes were not available during the life of the Lyme Regis factories – Perkins sought the first aniline dye patent in 1856, for mauveine.



After spinning the yarn is usually wound from bobbins into skeins or hanks. Skeins removed from a skein winder are just like those wound from hand to elbow, but larger. A skein can be easily dipped into dye, mordant and wash vats and

Carding Machine (background) and Spinning Mule at the reconstructed Esgair Moel Woollen Mill at the Welsh National Museum of History, Cardiff. This was what a Lyme factory floor would have looked like. Blue-dyed rovings from the carder in the background await spinning, rolled on the spinning mule's carriers. The centre rail in the floor guides the mule's carriage out, to draw and spin the rovings, and back as the spun yarn is wound onto bobbins.



Above: the faller arm found at Mill Green; and Right: a similar faller arm in place on a spinning mule at the Welsh National Wool Museum at Drefach-Felindre, Carmarthenshire, where the arm was kindly identified for me. This cam-controlled arm evenly distributes the spun thread (yellow) across the bobbins (blue) by raising and lowering the faller wire, which runs through the hole at the end of the arm. £ coin for scale. In the image the mule is working, so the wire rises and falls with the faller arm as the carriage returns, and the bobbins wind in the now spun yarn.



is loose enough to accept the dyes. Dyed yarn may be balled for knitting, wound onto cones or tops for warping up looms or wound onto quills or pirns for inserting into shuttles for the weft threads.

After 1800 the Lim Valley mills were becoming more mechanised, hence a need for more power, but steam engines seem not to have been introduced except

at Uplyme. Weaving remained a hand-powered, cottage-based craft trade into the nineteenth century - power looms only appeared here late in the history of the trade, if at all. Mechanisation started with fulling in medieval times and spread to carding and spinning, first through small, hand powered machines. Weaving at home reduced if power looms were introduced, but the extent of weaving outwork versus power weaving here is uncertain. Weavers and dyers would have been time-served tradesmen and therefore able to travel to jobs elsewhere as the Lyme cloth trade finished - other less skilled workers may have ended up in the workhouse.

Finishing woven cloth involves mending imperfections, then fulling, which is washing in hot water followed by heavy mechanical treatment to shrink the cloth, to close the weave and to felt the surface. Fulling was carried out at Horn Tavern Mill, and later at Colway Mill, by fulling stocks, which are heavy wooden rods called feet for stamping up and down in tubs, and later by large wooden tuckers, rotating wooden tubs like modern washing machines - both done in hot, soapy

Hand looms such as this four shaft loom at Drefach-Felindre would have been used in the weaver's cottages in Lyme. The warp threads are drawn up from the red warping drum, down by the weaver's feet, up through the four heddles, which are lifted and lowered in turn, allowing a shuttle loaded with the weft pirn or quill to be passed by hand between the warps. The now woven cloth is wound up tightly on the right to tension the loom.



water. Somerset cloth was brought to Lyme for fulling before export. Fulling stocks copied the earlier walk mills, where cloth placed in a suitable riverbed was trampled over by people. Horn could have started as a walkmill in a naturally paved river bed.

After fulling, cloth would be tentered, that is, stretched on tenterhooks fitted to an adjustable frame to shrink the cloth back to shape, and if required white, bleach in the sun, before ironing. The frames or tenter racks were set in Rack Fields or Tenter Grounds and could be undergrazed by sheep. Back at the factory, locally grown fuller's teasels set in rotating gigs would brush up the nap, after which the surface was sheared, to cut the surface smooth with, at first large hand-held



The late Brian Matraever's impression of a Lyme rack field in use. Workers are loading the far rack; others are carrying a piece back to the factory. In the foreground a worker is stretching the cloth - whilst the clothiers consider the quality of the cloth.

shears by shearmen, then by using cutting machines with rotating blades, the origin of the cylinder lawn mower. Finally, the cloth would have been rolled into a bolt and sealed by the Borough cloth measurer with a dated lead alnage seal as a mark of length, breadth, quality and traceability.

All these processes can be done using by hand, hand powered machines - or water, steam or electrically powered factory-scale machines. These merely copy and speed the hand processes of carding, spinning, weaving, fulling and finishing.

Wool Products of the Lim Valley Factories

The “old drapery”, in which the SW specialised evolved in the 16th century from traditional broadcloth into kersey cloths or Dorset dozens, coarse narrow cloths woven from long fibre wool and usually ribbed. Some of the kersies were fine, maybe pure worsted, whereas others were coarser, maybe a woollen/worsted mix (worsted is a strong, long-fibre fine woollen cloth suitable for suiting).

In the early 16th century woollen cloth from Lyme and from a hinterland extending to Taunton, Chard and Tiverton was exported from the Cobb to St Malo, Morlaix, and La Rochelle in Brittany and to Spain. The principal route into Lyme for cloth exports was the old packhorse way through Uplyme, past the fulling mill at Horn, where some cloths were finished.

From the middle of the 18th century Blanket Cloth was the general term, for local produce. However, unlike flannel in Wales, blanket is a term to describe coat cloth, although blankets were also made at Waterside (10) in the 1850s. Duffel is a familiar type of blanket coat cloth. Blanket in the 19th century meant heavy West of England cloths with a raised finish. Brown beaver was the best quality coating, for gentlemen’s morning and coachmen’s greatcoats. It was heavy, windproof, mudproof and almost waterproof - and so dense that it could be cut without fraying. An invoice from Stanton’s Fordington Mill at Dorchester records the sale in 1838 of 18 yards of Brown Beaver at 9/9d a yard – this would total £850 in modern prices before tax.

The weight of cloth reduced, from 40oz per yard of 66in broadcloth to 20oz per yard by the late 18th century. Modern worsted suiting weighs 8-9 oz per yard. Serge is the familiar military and former railway uniform twilled worsted cloth, and would be finished to produce a thick, dense cloth and left with a raised nap. George Roberts wrote in 1834 that Lyme ships were taking serges to Ancona in Italy and bringing back Mediterranean dyestuffs.

From 1813 shoddy cutting machinery was developed in Yorkshire. Shoddy is recycled woollen rags cut up, scribbled, combed, carded. Mixed with new wool or even other fibres, it produces a cheaper yarn. Shoddy goods competed for price, but not quality, with goods from the SW, undercutting Lyme cloths.

Somerset Lead Alnage Cloth Seal found at Ware Farm, Uplyme – had an export bolt been stolen from the Cobb and the incriminating seal discarded? Found by Mike Applegate (@image courtesy M Applegate). Dated by the Portable Antiquities Scheme to 1665.



Competition from cheaper shoddy goods was partly responsible for the closure of the Lyme mills in 1847, although Waterside Mill soldiered on until destroyed by fire from its new steam engine in 1866. In the 19th century the high-class woollen trade was pushed to the margins, and coatings provided the best remaining trade, followed by riding cloths such as twills. Overall cloth production moved from small, riverside mills in SW England and Wales to large steam powered mills in Yorkshire, where Bradford came to dominate the world wool trade.

The Early History of the Cloth Trade in the Lim Valley

The first detailed report of the cloth trade in the Lim Valley was that of an Exchequer Commission held in Lyme in 1608 to consider export duties. This showed that although Dorset had grown rich on wool, much of the wool was processed into cloth elsewhere and local cloth production was of poor quality, although good quality broad cloth was woven at Sherborne and Dorchester. The Siege of Lyme in 1644 must have severely affected the cloth trade; some of the factories were in the front line. Recovery appears to have been rapid, for in 1657 it was proposed to build a Cloth Hall on the site of the Lyme Shambles. It was never built and a slow decline set in from around 1735 through the effects of Yorkshire competition.

Coade to Stanton & Boon to Stantons, then Glyde & Co

By 1769 the cloth mill on Mill Green was operated by Samuel Coade, an Exeter clothier. He leased from the Borough what became known as the Old Factory, including a sluice on the river 100 yards above Gosling Bridge, a fulling mill, a dyehouse, a plot of ground adjoining the mill and two new houses.

Coade gave up the lease before 1801 to Stanton and Boon. The Stanton family had cloth mills at Dorchester and the Boons also owned the Waterside Factory in

Uplyme. Stanton & Boon were insured by the Sun Fire Office in that year for “water, woollen and fulling mills in one building with offices connected” “all thatched” “no steam engine” and a “drying stove across the river, slated” not to be used “for drying wool or cotton”.

The 1801 census shows about 26 cloth workers in Lyme: 3 clothiers (Henry Stanton, John Boon and Thomas Burridge), 2 mercers (cloth dealers), 12 weavers, 1 spinner, 1 woolsorter (woolstapler), 3 woolcombers (carders), 1 millman (machinery maintenance, handyman or labourer?), 3 millwrights (who may also have worked on other types of mills). This seems insufficient, as no dyers or finishers are recorded and there is only one spinner. The Poor House in Coombe Street hired out inmates to the clothiers and had its own looms. Anyone walking in from outside the small area of the Borough would not be counted in the Lyme census. The occupations of women and children were not recorded, except where as servants - these omissions could account for clerks, spinners, winders and finishers.

In 1802 the Borough leased more houses and a malthouse at Mill Green to Stanton and Boon's Factory, but on 5th November 1803 fire swept through much of Lyme, including Mill Green and destroyed the Old Factory. Henry Stanton received £920 from the Sun Fire Office (£80,560 today).

The Old Factory was soon rebuilt, with a thatched roof, together with some 22 new houses at Mill Green, mainly for workers. From early Victorian drawings this can be seen to have a chimney either in the centre or at the river end, and to extend to four stories. Whether the chimney was for a steam engine to power spinning or for a furnace for the hot water supply for dyeing, fulling and washing is speculation. Machinery covered in both 1801 and 1806 insurance schedules only included breaking and carding engines, so it is unknown exactly when power was applied to spinning or weaving.

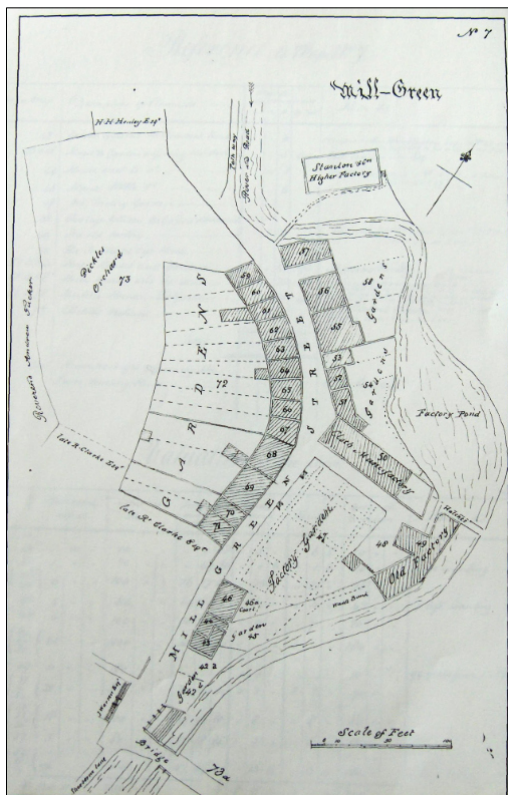
In 1812 Henry & William Stanton leased Horn Tavern Fulling Mill from the Henley Estate. But on 20th February 1819 John Boon died at the age of 50 and it appears that his sons Willian and James stopped the partnership with the Stantons and confined their activities to Uplyme. Later expansion took place on a new site at Lyme, Stanton's New Factory. This was built on Henley Estate land at the top of Mill Green sometime between 1806 and 1819. This three storey mill is now Jordan Flats. Part of the Old Factory was destroyed again by fire in 1841, rebuilt on a different footprint, closed in 1847 and become a silk mill in 1854.

By 1823 William Stanton had taken over the business and joined forces with Samuel England and William Glyde as England, Glyde & Co. William Glyde's wife was Henry Stanton's daughter, Catherine. A trade directory for that year states that the company “employs upwards of 200”, somewhat of an exaggeration perhaps?

In 1824 the Borough commissioned a survey of its property from John Drayton, Lyme surveyor and merchant. The survey shows the Old Factory now including a newer Cloth Manufactory and Dye House reaching up to Mill Green. This was largely demolished before 1880, although part was still roofed in the 1920s. A corner of the factory wall still supports Silk Mill Cottage on Mill Green. A Factory Garden is shown along the east side of Mill Green. All is shown leased to Stanton & Co, but marginal notes in another hand indicate sale to Glyde & Co in 1838. The best houses on west side of Mill Green facing the factory garden were leased to Samuel Norman, but name Glyde & Co was added later. The New Factory is shown only in outline, as it was leased from the Henley Estate.

The clothiers were fighting Yorkshire competition with innovations. Fulling moved from the old Horn Tavern Mill to Colway Mill, John Drayton's ruined Oil Mill, using fulling stocks, sometime about soon after 1831. Edward Ensor joined the partnership in 1837, bringing in new capital, marrying the widowed Mrs Ann England, another daughter of Henry Stanton. Ann's daughter by her first marriage married another partner, John Swain Hooke. He was a retail draper and the manager of the Lyme branch of Cox and Williams Dorchester Bank, which became part of Lloyds. The company was usually referred to loosely as "Glyde & Co"

Part of John Drayton's Survey for the Borough, 1824. The Glydes lived in the third house going up Mill Green (no 69 on plan, now 10 Mill Green); the Ensors next door (68 on plan, now 1 Dolphin Cottages). The former impounded section of the River Lim is marked "Factory Pond". The hatches, or sluices, are today only marked by a step in the riverbed. Gosling Bridge is at the bottom of the map. The Old Factory is in two parts, no 50 on plan by Mill Green, now demolished, and no 49 on plan, which was burned down in 1841 and replaced by a smaller mill which still stands as Old Silk Mill Flats (photo by Mike Applegate).



after 1823: it seems that William Glyde mostly ran the business after John Boon departed and Henry Stanton died

Times must have been difficult, for the 1831 census summary gives total the employment in woollen manufactures in Dorset as only 80, "chiefly in Lyme". At the time George Roberts reports a shortage of housing in Lyme; 50 families could not be housed which must have affected trade whilst the town was recovering its depressed state under the Fanes.

The extensive 1824 portfolio of Borough property was auctioned in 1838, including the factories and their houses. Glyde and Co. purchased properties previously leased to them: a cottage, stable and gighouse (where teasel napping was done), a large garden, the Cloth Manufactory, Dyehouse and grounds, the Fulling Mill down by the river (maybe this was the original Old Factory of Coade) and houses and gardens at the upper end of Mill Green. In addition, Edward Ensor bought Pickles Orchard, which is now Dolphin Close. Financing the purchase must have been difficult, bringing mortgage costs which helped the eventual downfall in 1847.

In 1840 Glyde, Ensor & Co. are recorded making drab top-coat cloths, much celebrated in the SW. These had been much in demand by coachmen, but competition, railways and fashion were putting paid to this trade. Then disaster struck, in 1841 the Old Factory down by the river was destroyed by fire, and the Glyde, Ensor, Hooke and Gregory partnership breaks down. Edward Ensor had appointed his son, Edward to manage the drapery shop in Lyme. Edward junior believed that his father had been tricked, mainly by Hooke in connection with a potential partnership in the bank which he managed in Lyme. Arriving to see the Old Factory burned and sensing that Hooke was poisoning his father against him, loading blame for the decline in the business, the son decided to head to South Africa to his younger brother's ostrich farm. The Ensor drapery and the factory closed. Meanwhile Ensor senior acquired a fireclay business in Derbyshire, which he was keen to run in person. The poor relationship between Hooke and his son probably eased senior Ensor's move. Hooke moved the bank to his own drapery shop, but a further move took the bank to Thomas Flight's house, where it remained to become Lloyds, 54 Broad Street, until recently closed.

Part of the Old Factory was rebuilt and by 1842 the factories were in William Glyde's sole control and said to be in "full swing", "employing many hands".

Closure of the Lyme Regis Mills – a murky tale bribery and retribution

In 1847, the year of Hooke's mayoralty, things turn bad. A series of wet summers, culminating in 1847 had already caused a crisis in farming at home and famine in Ireland, coinciding with a stock market crash caused by speculation in railway schemes. A bad dip in the cloth trade coincided. Years of previous poor trade left



Artist's impression by the late Brian Matcravers of William Glyde giving evidence at the Parliamentary Select Committee in the old Houses of Parliament.

Glyde & Co unable to pay back what they owed, and the firm became bankrupt. This left Hooke as the trustee in the affairs of the company. Trading may have all but ceased.

Glyde was desperate. Enter Mr Attwood, "boroughmonger" and MP for Harwich. Attwood was a notorious "buyer" of votes in the several small English and Irish boroughs. He loaned £3,000 (£270,000 in 2025 prices) in return for 3% and 20 votes (to be from Glyde's workers) at the 1847 Parliamentary Election for Attwood's chosen Tory candidate for Lyme, Sir Fitzroy Kelly. Glyde took the loan, with the business, houses and life policies of the Glydes as security. But Glyde was a Whig and for Reform and he never even tried to secure any Tory votes, so Attwood foreclosed on the loan, forcing complete closure of the business and throwing Glyde out of his house. The scandal was exposed in the 1848 Parliamentary Select Committee hearing into the 1847 Lyme Regis Parliamentary Election Petition. Glyde had lost his business and his house, and it is difficult to understand the unwarranted depth of shame that must

have felt by this clothier of 30 years' service to Lyme, its mayor in 1845. The Glyde family disappears from Lyme, and he died shortly after in Chard. Attwood, who thought he could buy, intimidate and control the people and the Corporation of Lyme Regis, lost his fortune in turn.

The closure was sudden and dramatic, with the Glydes turned out of the factories in November 1846 and their homes in September 1847. James Long and Joseph Cox wove the last piece. Glyde and many of the workers became destitute. Few had Lyme family names, and such a highly skilled workforce would have been able to migrate to Yorkshire, although some were still recorded here in later censuses and could have walked to jobs at Waterside, but not Axminster Carpets as this was closed after a fire.

The Factory House, now 10 Mill Green, which William Glyde lost. Edward Ensor had lived in the house on this side of it, later part of the old Dolphin Inn. No. 10 looked directly into the Factory Garden opposite.



Disposal of the Assets – and the processes at the Lyme Regis mills

In 1847 the leases and freeholds of the mills and cottages were auctioned with the machinery lotted with the buildings, suggesting that a buyer could restart the business. The inclusion of a jack billy and spinning jennies suggest that some machinery was rather old fashioned.

The machinery comprised: a wood mill (for grinding dyestuffs), a cleaning machine (for fleeces), 7 scribblers, 3 carders and a jack billy (obsolete carder), 3 spinning jennies, 2 water boilers (for preparing dyes), 2 skeiners, 2 warping bars and 7 warping racks (for setting up looms), 13 looms (maybe hand looms reclaimed from outworkers), 4 broad weaving looms (maybe power looms), 4 fulling stocks (to pound cloth) and a tucker (a large wooden washing machine, to shrink cloth), 2 cloth dressers, 2 brushers, one steam (for raising the nap), 3 cutting machines (for shearing the raised nap), a pressing machine and 4 coppers (for dyeing and hot water).

Hooke bought the buildings and in 1854 conveyed them to Edward Ensor for £200. In that year the Lawton Family from Congleton rented the mills to start making silk yarns (see Part 3). After his mayoralty in 1847, Hooke emigrated to Melbourne, Australia, and his son built my daughter's house!

All images are by Richard Bull unless otherwise stated. This article is updated, condensed and corrected from a fully referenced version at: https://www.lymeregismuseum.co.uk/lrm/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/2_cloth_industry_in_the_lim_valley.pdf

The Lyme Regis Society

Membership

Subscriptions from 2025 are £10 (Single Membership) and £15 (Family Membership).

If you are an existing member and pay by Standing Order please check with your bank to ensure your membership subscription amount is up to date.

We would like to thank you for your continuing support which is very much appreciated.

New Members

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

David Pearce & Louise Monblat

Elizabeth Garrard

Emma & Nicholas Orr

Joining the Society

Members receive three copies of *All Over The Town* each year together with free entry to our Talks and most Events.

To join please visit our website www.lymeregissociety.org.uk or get in touch with Vicki Dixon whose contact details are on the opposite page.

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 historic associations. The Society is registered with the Charity Commission and affiliated to the Campaign to Protect Rural England.

Patron

Professor Sir Ghilleen Prance FRS, VMH
☎ *Please contact the chairperson*

President

Keith Shaw
☎ 07792 466173

Committee

Chairperson

Heather Britton ☎ 07802 797427
✉ chairperson@lymeregissociety.org.uk

Treasurer

Alex Ruck ☎ 07969 249854

Membership Secretary

Vicki Dixon ☎ 07772 803916
✉ membership@lymeregissociety.org.uk

Membership Renewals

Valerie Doney ☎ 01297 442148

Planning & Conservation

Heather Britton ☎ 07802 797427
✉ planning@lymeregissociety.org.uk

Talks

Heather Britton ☎ 07802 797427

Environment

Jim Bragg ☎ 01297 445939

Newsletter Distribution

Valerie Doney ☎ 01297 442148

Advertising

Annie Nicholls ☎ 01297 444103

Website & Publication Sales

Paul Mellor ☎ 01297 442193
Assisted by Annie Nicholls

Footpaths

Allan Swannell ☎ 07780 682989
✉ footpaths@lymeregissociety.org.uk

Trees

Sir Ghilleen Prance ☎ *Please contact the chairperson*

Peter Coe ☎ 07747 011149

Contacts

Newsletter Editor

John Marriage ☎ 01297 443469
✉ aott@lymeregissociety.org.uk

Diary Dates

Please note our start time of 2:00pm for all talks.

Tea, coffee and biscuits will be served after each talk.

23rd September

The 12th Devons: D Day To The River Seine Breakout – *Richard Salt*

21st October

Sir William Abbot-Anderson: Physician, Botanist, LRS Founder? – *Audrey Standhaft*

11th November

talk tbc

16th December

talk tbc

All meetings start at 2:00pm at Woodmead Halls, Hill Road, DT7 3PG unless noted above. Admission is free for Lyme Regis Society members. Admission for visitors is £3.00

Please see our posters displayed on our LRS notice board by Papa Luca and around the town in various locations e.g. the Library, the Sanctuary Bookshop, or look at our website: www.lymeregissociety.org.uk.