

Henry Dinham Chard (1760-1847)
Master Shipbuilder of Lyme

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**Oil on canvas portrait of Henry Chard given to the Museum
by his great grandson, F de la C Chard**

Introduction

Henry Dinham Chard ran the Cobb shipbuilding yard from 1781-1812, succeeded in chronological order by Samuel Bussell, William Jenkins and John Mansfield, the last Lyme shipbuilder who closed the yard in 1854. Chard was baptised at Chideock Parish Church on 5th October 1760. His parents were John and Mary Chard, proprietors of the Red Lion at Chideock.

On 11th March 1775, aged 15¹ he was apprenticed for seven years to Nicholas Boole, master ship-builder of Bridport. The Museum had his Apprenticeship Indenture.



Henry Dinham Chard's Indenture of 1775, given by F de la C Chard

He married Elizabeth Stocker of Stockland, Dorset/Devon on 4th July 1797. She was removed to Chard, Somerset by the Overseers of the Poor of the Parish of Dorchester All Saints on 17th April 1810. After her death he married Sarah. He may have had one or two more wives. Henry Dinham Chard died on 22nd December 1847 in Westminster Bridge Road, London. More family research results are needed to fully understand his history.

Shipbuilding in Lyme

Shipbuilding was a normal activity around the British coast in suitable locations with a sheltered, shelving beach or estuary hard. Many wooden sail trading vessels up to around 100-150 tons were built, often in remote yards leaving little trace of the tonnages constructed, other than small pieces of discarded metal items - such as dropped roving nails.

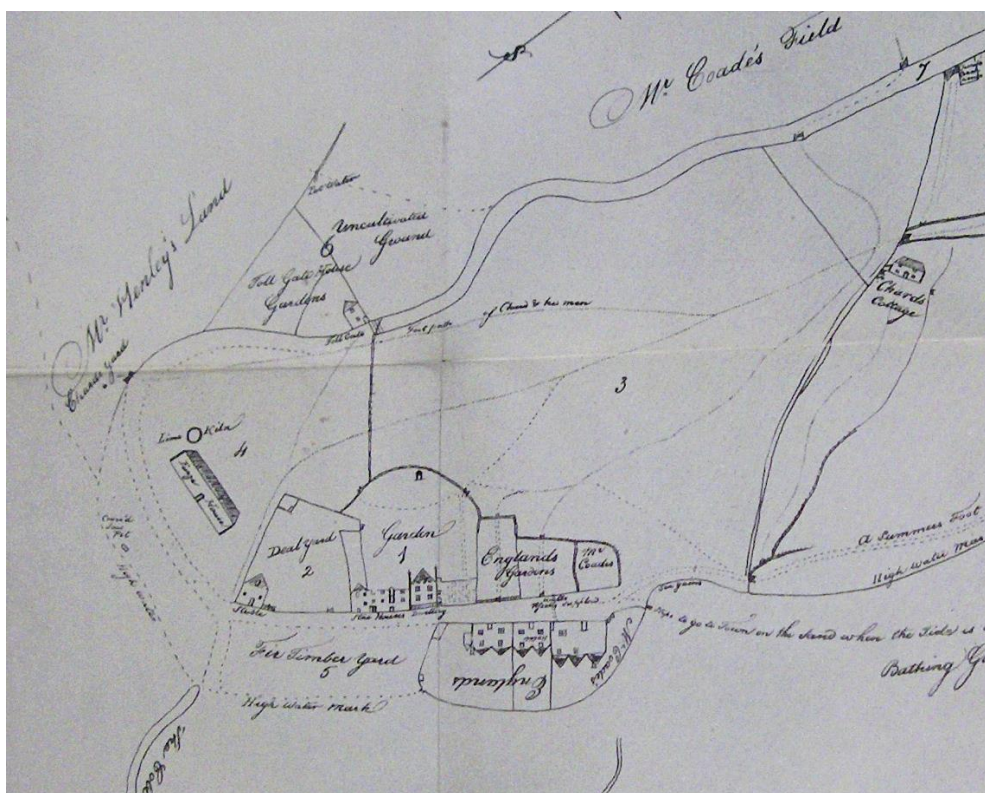
The Lyme shipyard(s) date back as far as 1294, when a galley and barge were built for the king, on his command. We only know in detail the ships built at the Cobb after about 1765, when official registers begin, but we may guess that ship-building, like the port itself, was already in decline by that time. But even in its last century over a hundred ships were built at the Cobb, the largest being built after Chard's time - the *Lyme Regis*, a 251 ton barque in 1849, and the *Salacia*, a 475 ton full-rigged ship in 1853. These large ships were the last dying flush of Lyme's shipbuilding industry, hiding a much healthier past.

¹ Some read the date of the indenture as 1773, making his start at age 13, completion at age 20.

The last 19th century shipyard(s) were on the flat land just west of where the modern Cobb Road comes down to the sea, now partly occupied by Ozone Terrace and the bowling green. Most Lyme ship-building was probably always done here, although a ship is known to have been launched near the Museum by a shipbuilder called Slaughter, involving the taking down of a sea wall in 1795².

Shipbuilding gave succour to many subsidiary trades, such as rope and sail making. For Lyme sailcloth came from nearby Crewkerne, and rope from Bridport, although Lyme had its own ropewalk on East Cliff at one time and had a rather belated and short-lived sailcloth manufactory at Higher Mill (Colway Manor Mill) in 1857³. Such ancillary trades may well have flourished in Lyme unrecorded at earlier times.

It is hard to imagine today how the old Cobb could have handled the launching of such large vessels, but today's Cobb is silted and shipping-wise, a shadow of what it once was. Nevertheless shipbuilding was once so important that in the late 18th century part of the Cobb's earlier North Wall was taken down to facilitate the launch trajectory, for otherwise it would have been in the way. It is most likely that this was done by Chard.



This 1796 sketch map of Cobb Hamlet contains three references to Henry Chard – “Chard’s Yard” on the left margin, under the flourish of “Mr Henley”, is the shipyard, with ?Chard’s Saw Pit at the high water mark of Monmouth Beach just above the High Water Mark, and Chard’s Cottage on the right. The cottage appears on the 1825 Parish Map, but no trace of the first two of these features can be seen on the 1841 Tithe Map. Note the “deal” and “fir timber yards” of the timber merchant and surveyor John Drayton, who probably supplied Chard, and who probably drew this and the 1825 map. By this time ship’s timbers would have been imported from the Baltic. Chard’s Cottage lay on the old route of Stile Lane, near modern-day Hix’s Fish Restaurant.

² Reported by George Roberts in his notebooks in LRM

³ See Richard Bull *Industrial Lyme Paper No. 8 Flax and Hemp Products* Revised 2013 on lymeregismuseum.org.uk

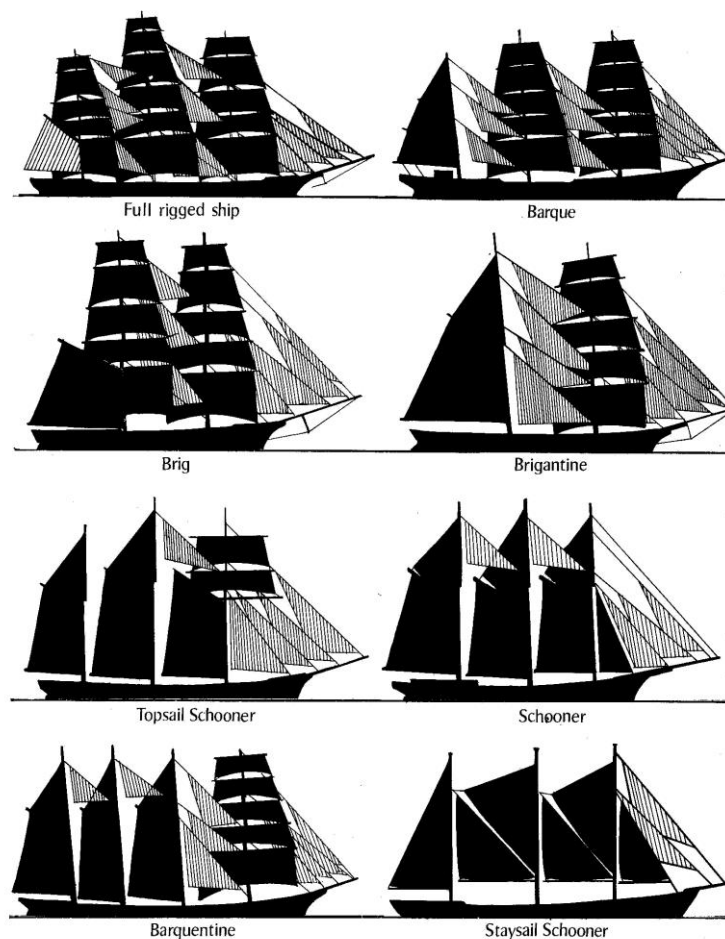
Chard's Shipbuilding Activities

On completion of his apprenticeship in 1782, aged 22, he set up his Lyme shipbuilding yard. His first his first project, in 1784, was a 35-ton sloop named *Flora*.

From the age of 24 he was the master shipwright of Lyme, and in the following year, 1785 won a commission to build a sloop, the *Belmont*, for Samuel Coade, ship-owner and clothier and uncle of Mrs Eleanor Coade, the artificial stone maker. Examples of his builds include sloops, schooners, cutters and luggers – see Appendix 1 for the full list. His ships sailed the world as well as the coast of Britain.

Many of the ships he built ended up as smugglers, often captured and forfeit by the Revenue, such as *Flora*, *Wren* and *Good Intent*, but this was hardly his fault: smugglers knew a fast ship when they saw it, able to out-run the Revenue cutters. But others were Lyme-based Government-licensed fast privateer sloops, such as *Dolphin* and *Recovery*.

In all he is recorded as having built 40 register ships, totalling 1897 tons, before selling the Cobb shipyard to Samuel Bussell around 1809. Of course Chard may have built other smaller boats, such dinghies, tenders, stone boats: we have no way of knowing.



Some sail plans. Not shown are: **sloop**, a simple fore-and-aft rig with one mast, **lugger**, somewhat similar, but with 2 or 3 masts, **cutter**, a fast small single-masted boat, fore-and-aft rigged, with two or more headsails and often a bowsprit or a **smack** which has fore-and-aft sails, but the design varied from port to port.

In all Chard built 1,870 tons of register ships at Lyme over 28 years. In some years he built no ships, yet in 1787 he built five, including his second largest. His average ship size was 47 tons, the largest 116 tons.



A ship being built in 1824, just before the great storm of that the following year. Almost complete, the ship has been slid out of the main yard, probably to make room for another, and is being fitted out. Meanwhile the presence of bathing machines demonstrates that tourism is already replacing industry at Lyme.

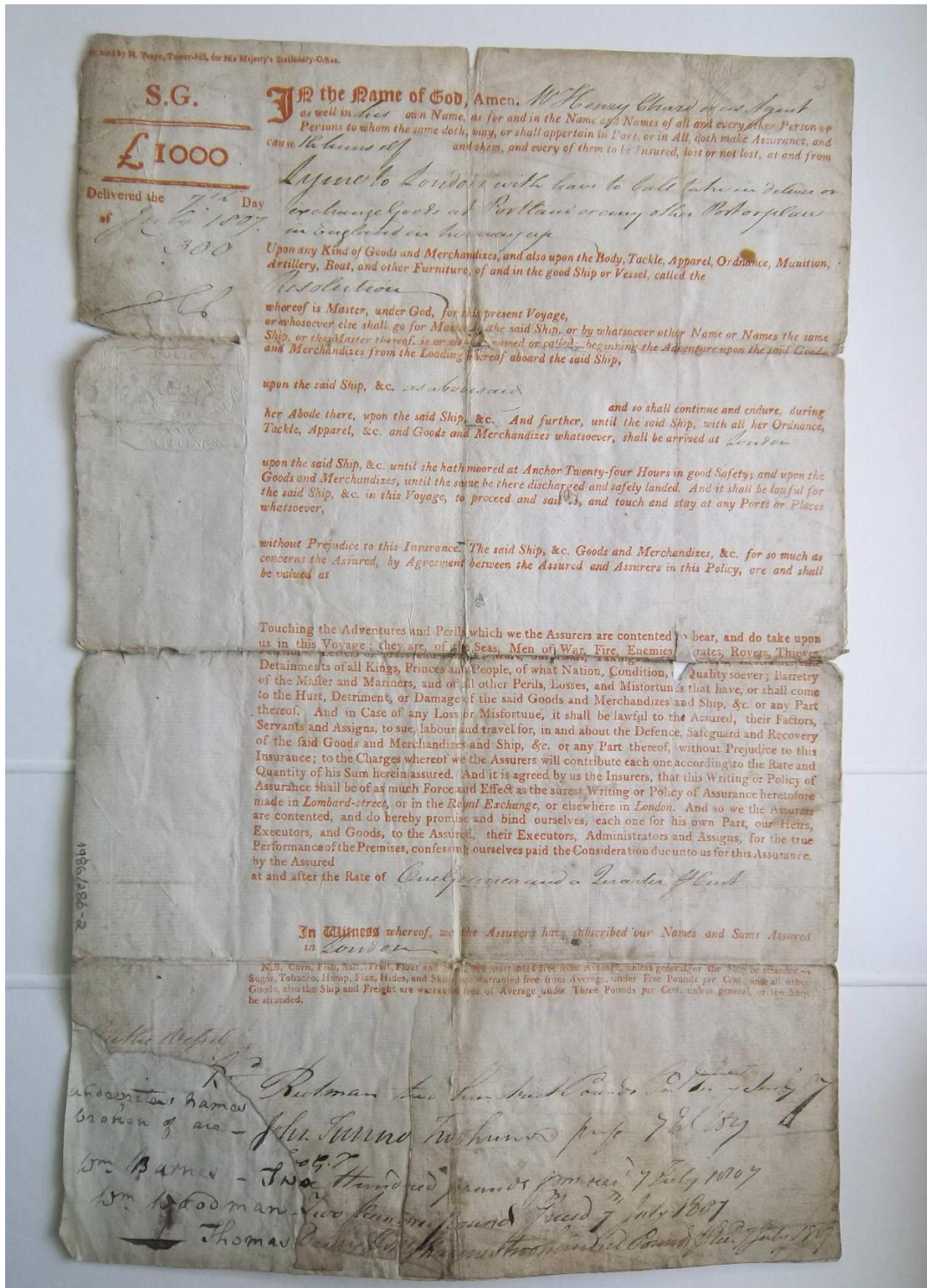


After the 1825 storm, the Cobb and foreground houses lie in ruins, but a new ship is under way in the yard glimpsed at the end of Marine Parade.

Chard's other shipping activities

In addition, Chard owned or part-owned a number of ships. It was commonplace for several Lyme owners to share ship ownership. After the shipyard was closed he worked on in Lyme, in part for the Customs service. He developed a trade in taking on the re-

floating and repair of stranded ships wherever they lay on Southern coast. He financially ruined himself through unpaid Government contracts to supply Channel Island garrisons during the Napoleonic Wars, loosing ships to the French in the process, without compensation.



Insurance Certificate of the Chard owned and built smack *Resolution*, given by F de la Chard

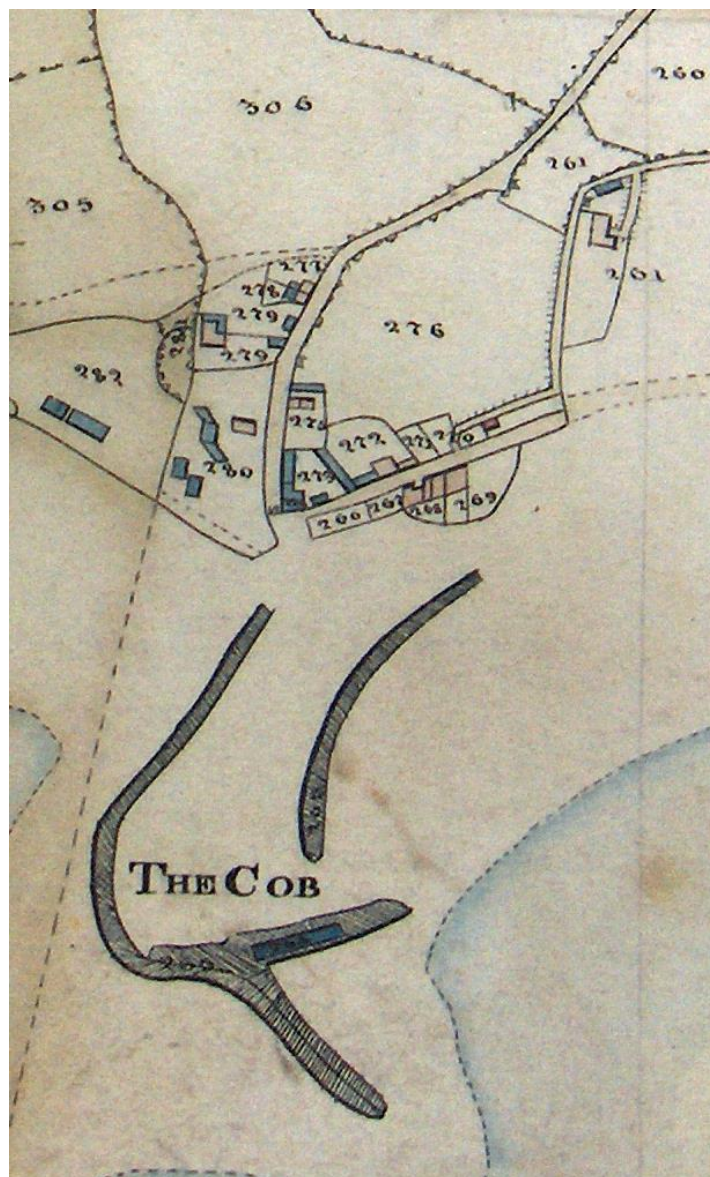
Chard's Personal Life

We know nothing about Chard's personal life or his character. He does not appear in Lyme's annals or records, other than as shipbuilder, and there are insufficient public



records readily available to build up his family tree. The only character inferences we can make are from his portrait, and that is best left to the beholder, other than to say that that his face suggests a strong personality, as might be thought from his exploits in trade. A sat oil portrait suggests someone well-to-do, but the picture shows by way of shipping references that he was proud of his trade. His portrait is one of the very few portraits of Lyme worthies in trade from this period: rarely can we put a face to a person.

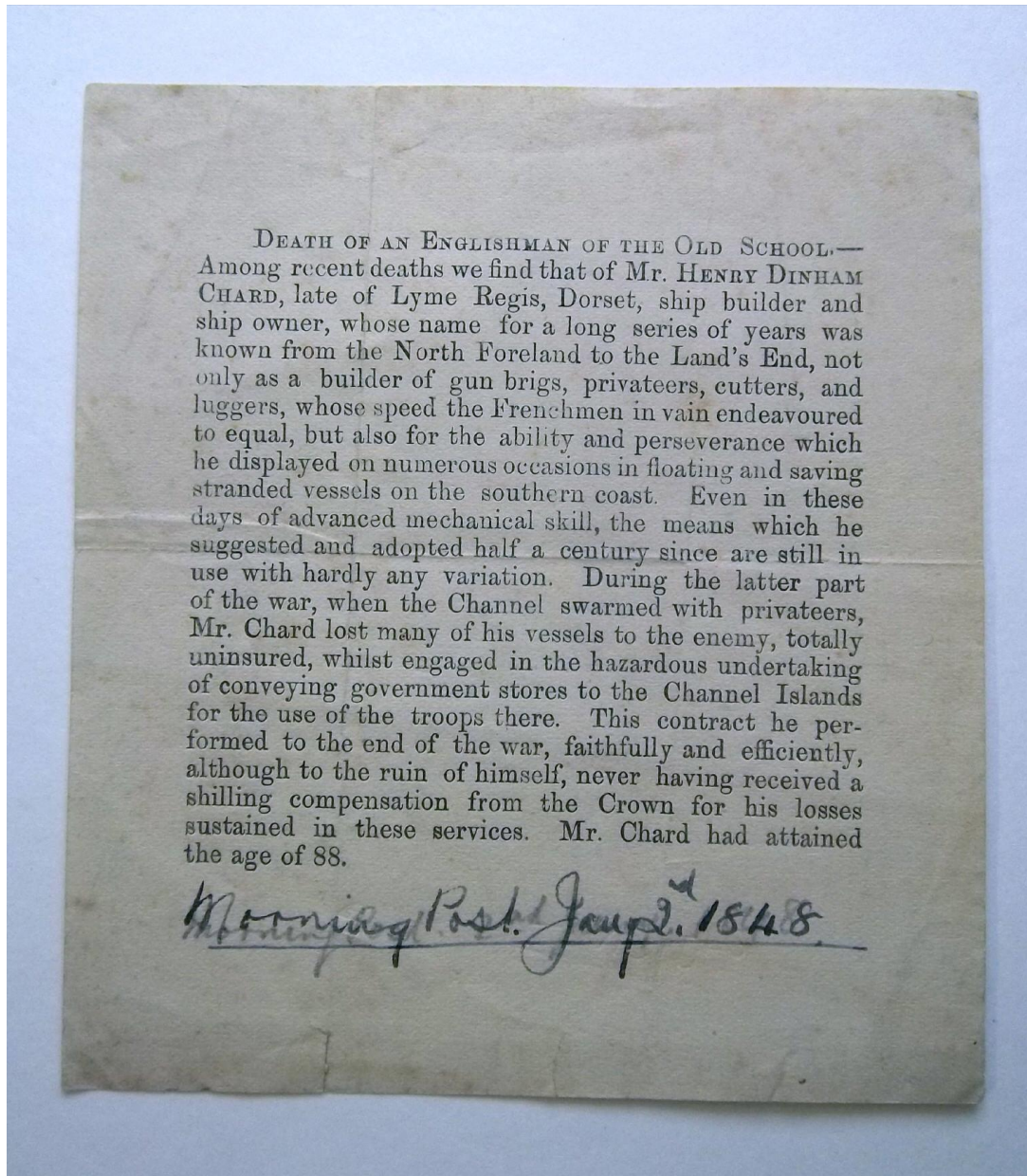
It appears that he lived, or at least owned, a cottage on the old Stile Lane, marked on a 1796 plan as Chard's Cottage. Stile Lane runs from Cobb Hamlet to Pound Road, but this section was lost in the 1962 Cliff House landslip. Legal documents have been transcribed by the Museum which show that he sold the cottage and its lands to Colonel H W Powell for £1,207 in 1807 (about £100,000 at 2014 values) and that it was no mere cottage, having stables, yards etc. It was later demolished to create a mansion, Cliff House, also known as Cliff Cottage, some distance to its east, which collapsed in the 1962 slip. Chard's Cottage stood near the modern Hix's Fish Restaurant. He therefore lived only a short distance from his shipyard.



1825 Parish Map showing Chard's Cottage at Plot 201 and the shipyard at plot 230. The schedule to this map is lost.

Chard's Death and Obituary

At his death on 22nd December 1847, aged 88, Henry Chard was living in Loughborough Road, Brixton, Surrey, but he died at Westminster Bridge Road. He left no will, leaving less than £100 in administration to his son Alfred Chard, of 19 Loughborough Road. From the entry at the Principal Probate Registry, from which this is quoted, it sounds as if he met a sudden death in Westminster Bridge Road rather than at a house, but his obituary does not say how he died. It would appear that he was living with his son, having left Lyme. His actual death record has not shown up.



Henry Chard's obituary notice in a the Morning Post, London paper, now part of the Daily Telegraph, given by F de la C Chard.

Appendix 1 Ships Built by Henry Chard at Lyme 1784-1812

Source: Coxsedge's List of Ships Built at Lyme, LRM

Ship's Name	Date	Sail Plan	Register Tonnage	Notes
1. Flora	1784	sloop	35	seized smuggler
2. Bel(l)mont	1785	sloop	31	lost, owner Coade
3. Success	1785	sloop	32	
4. Portland	1785	sloop	21	capt. by French
5. Dolphin	1785	sloop	31	licensed privateer
6. Wasp	1786	smack	27	
7. Six Brothers	1786	sloop	25	
8. Sally	1786	sloop	31	
9. Mayflower	1786	sloop	30	
10. Friends	1786	smack	25	
11. Sincerity	1787	schooner	87	
12. Neptune	1787	brigantine	111	lost in central Med
13. Dorset	1787	sloop	12	
14. William & Betsey	1787	sloop	40	
15. Lyme	1787	sloop	32	foundered
16. Hope	1788	sloop	32	
17. Dove	1789	sloop	32	
18. Wren	1791	sloop	11	seized smuggler
19. Mary	1791	sloop	32	
20. Happy Return	1791	sloop	36	
21. Hawke	1792	sloop	49	
22. Craig	1793	sloop	57	
23. Dove	1793	lugger	40	
24. Harry	1795	sloop	45	
25. Good Intent	1796	schooner	27	seized smuggler
26. Friends	1796	sloop	55	
27. Rose	1797	sloop	43	capt. by French
28. Recovery	1797	sloop	71	licensed privateer
29. Pickstone	1798	sloop	73	
30. Laurel	1799	sloop	65	
31. Good Intent	1799	schooner	18	capt. by French
32. Eliza	1801	smack	45	
33. Elizabeth	1803	sloop	81	sunk by French
34. Ardent	1805	sloop	42	
35. Trafalgar	1806	cutter	76	
36. Resolution	1807	smack	79	
37. Swift	1808	smack	62	
38. Mary Ann	1809	smack	116	lost off Whitby
39. George	1809	smack	50	
40. Alfred	1812	smack	90	
Total Tonnage			1,897	Av ann tonnage 47