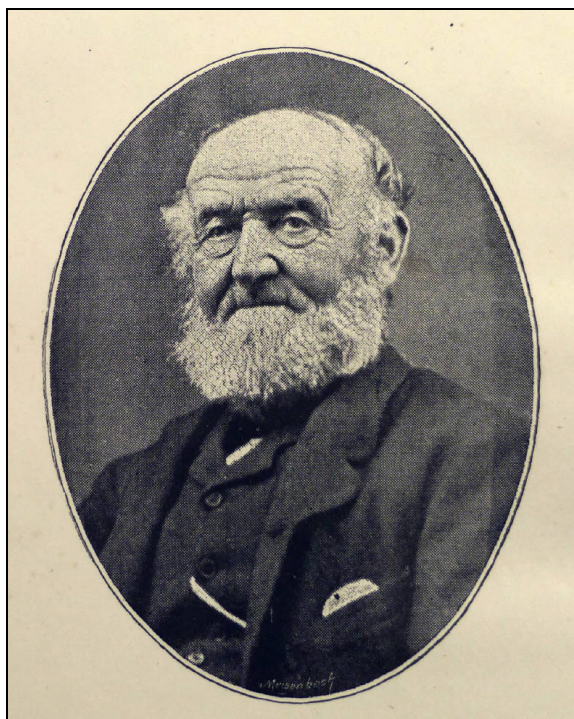


Lyme Regis Museum
People of Lyme No.4: William Porter (1819-94)

Items from a Museum display in 2013 by the Lyme Regis Museum Research Team



William Porter, born January 2nd 1819, was the son of a Lyme Regis pilot. He was brought up in Lyme, where he lived all of his life.

In his youth he was an *extraman* in the coastguard service. He married Susan Dollin in 1840, the Dollins being a local family in the stone, coal and fossil trade. In 1841 he was a fisherman, but by 1851 had become the Harbour Master. In 1868 he was appointed to manage the renewed Lyme Regis Cement Works and the stone trade. This depended on the import of coal and the export of stone and cement across the Cobb, leading to him being a shipping agent. Still the manager of the works in 1871, by 1881 he was a stone merchant on his own account, employing 12 men, a trade in which he continued until shortly before his death in 1894.

Between 1880 and 1889, he had been a town councillor and alderman.

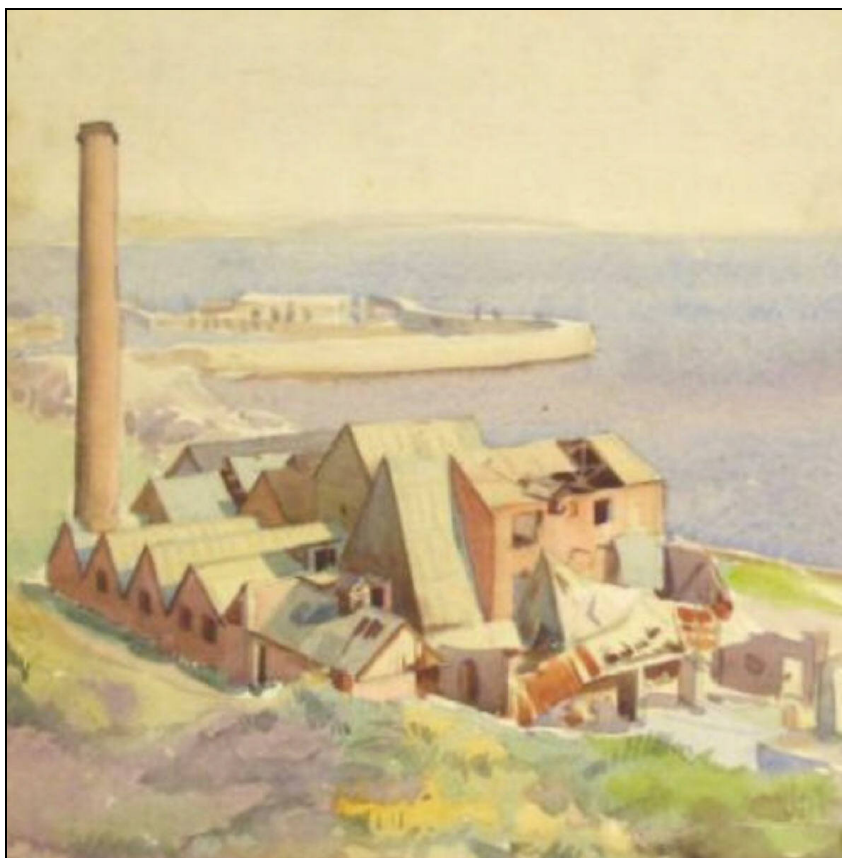
He was a staunch and zealous non-conformist Christian. Doctrinal differences made him to move from one place of worship to another, but in later life he was a Baptist. He lived most of his life in Marine Parade in Cobb Hamlet, later at *Beulah* in Silver Street and then at *Ridware* 7, Ozone Terrace. He built *Beulah* in local materials some time before 1888: this pretty Victorian decorated polychrome brick villa stands opposite the Baptist Church in Silver Street. Its Hebrew name echoes his faith – as in *thy land shall be called Beulah...thy land shall be married....so shall thy sons marry thee* (Isaiah 62:4-5). This expresses the future prosperity of the Promised Land in the Judean desert, once desolate being repopulated.

William Porter & Lyme Regis Cement

Before 1855 Blue Lias stone from Lyme was exported as ship's ballast for hydraulic cement and stucco lime making elsewhere.

In 1855 Hutchinson & Fearn of Plymouth set up the first Lyme Regis Cement Works for the large scale production of hydraulic cement. The works was on the west end of Monmouth Beach.

In 1868 Messrs Harveys of Plymouth took over the works and the stone quarrying rights, appointing **William Porter** as their local manager and agent. A new works was built nearer Lyme, just west of the present Boat Building Academy. **William Porter** was still the resident manager in 1877. Up to a few years before his death he was still a merchant in the stone trade on his own account, employing several men.



The second Lyme Regis Cement Works, before demolition in the 1930s

In 1902 the Lyme Regis Cement Co (1902) Ltd expanded the works and started making Portland cement. By this time the stone trade had stopped. The works closed in 1914 and was mostly demolished in 1936. Apart from one brick shed there is little to see on site.

An anthology of poems and prose by William Porter (1819-1894), LRM 2013/86

This little anthology dated 1892 was given to the Museum by Dorset County Library in 2013.



It contains the deeply Christian writing of a Victorian non-conformist who dearly loved God and his home town. He contemplates Life, Death and Redemption, drawing his inspiration from the landscape of Lyme as well as from young people and church workers such as Sunday school teachers, the clergy and Salvation Army officers. Lyme was a strongly non-conformist town and William Porter was latterly a Baptist, but his own strict interpretation of Christianity led him on a journey through the non-conformist denominations to get there.

The Lyme flavour shows in poems about his walks in the cliffs and to White Chapel Rocks, where the early Lyme dissenters were forced to worship out of sight of the churchwardens. Porter likens the localities to places in the Holy Land of the Old Testament, such as the hill of Holmbush to Mount Pisgah (also known as Mount Nebo), east of the River Jordan, where God invited Moses to survey the Promised Land. Interestingly Lyme Regis Cement Works, which he managed, was busily undermining the little farm holding at Holmbush.



William Porter's Mount Pisgah – the view from Holmbush Farm
Of course the real Mount Pisgah is a bare, arid mountain.

SABBATH MORNING, June 8th, 1890.

Addressed to a Christian Friend.

DEAR FRIEND,

About 3-30 a.m. I ascended to the top of that sublime Pisgah called "Holm Bush." The morning was lovely. In the eastern horizon the sun rose in majestic grandeur, shedding its golden rays on the surrounding hill-tops. Creation looked lovely, it reminded me of that beautiful passage in the book of Malachi, (iv. 2.) "But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wing," In the western sky was a very dark cloud, and in a few minutes appeared a beautiful iris, or rainbow, which reminded me of God's everlasting covenant with Noah, which you will find in the book of Genesis (ix. 12 to 16.) In the 14th verse it is said, "And it shall come to pass when I bring a cloud over the earth that the bow shall be seen in the cloud." Such were the thoughts that swarmed in my mind while

standing on that sublime spot. I beheld in the distance, on the bosom of the calm glassy sea, a vessel, which reminded me of the Ark floating on the surface of the water, containing at that time the whole visible church of the living God. In a few minutes I saw smoke ascending from the funnel of the vessel, that also reminded me of Noah's burnt offering, when the Lord smelled "A sweet savour," (Genesis viii. 20, 21,) and so He does in the present day, for the prayers of His children are all perfumed with the blood of the paschal Lamb, His own dear Son, and all the sacrifice the Eternal Father requires is a broken heart—a broken and a contrite heart He will not despise. At 5 a.m. rain came on, I then returned to my home, a little disappointed of my usual walk, but much pleased with the thoughts that occupied my mind during that early hour.

Early, my God, without delay,
 I haste to seek Thy face ;
 My thirsty spirit faints away
 Without Thy cheering grace.

My spirit labours up Thine hill,
 And climbs the heavenly road ;
 But Thy right hand upholds me still ;
 While I pursue my God.

There are poems about the love he felt for Queen and Country. Many are complete with a suggested tune and footnotes giving biblical references.

The pocket-sized lie-flat hardbound binding has a bright blue gold-blocked edging and a decorative covering in pale blue with a delicate leaf and flower pattern in silver and gold. It is a nice example of a book printed in Lyme Regis by the prolific local publisher F. Dunster, whose shop was at the top of Broad Street opposite the present Post Office.

On the faithfulness of my little terrier "Skye," 1890.

PRETTY "Skye" ! thy lovely eye !

Always does thy master spy,
Watching every moment so,
Fearing lest you should not go.

Let not sorrow, nor distress,
Kindle in thy throbbing breast,
When thy master says to thee
Next time you shall follow me.

Soon thy master will return,
O ! what love will in thee burn,
Would that I could love as thee,
I should then more faithful be.

If I sit to read or rest,
On my feet thou layest thy breast,

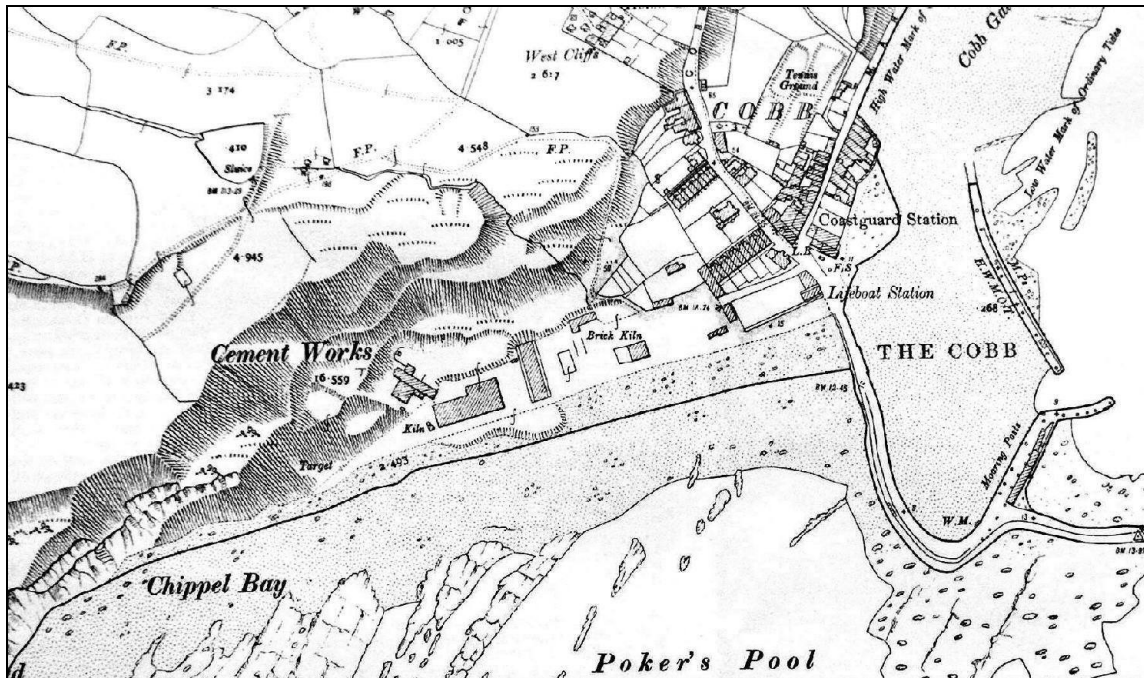
William Porter – a courageous *Extraman* in the Coastguard Service

Extracted from *Ebb & Flow, The Story of Maritime Lyme Regis* by Peter Lacey.

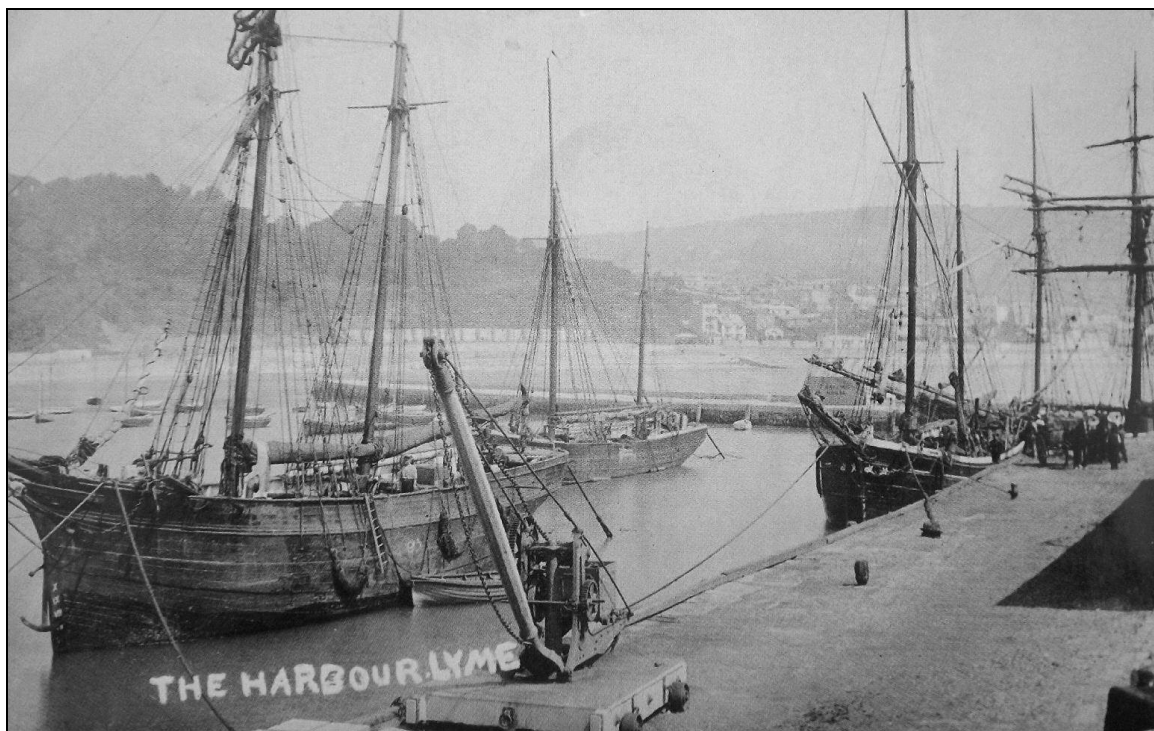
"In order to augment numbers the Coastguard employed extramen. One was William Porter, a boatman come fisherman, who enrolled in about 1835. Extramen were mainly involved in night duties, these included manning guard places and night patrols. Prior to the commencement of duty, pistols, ammunition and cutlasses were issued to every man. Their objective was the prevention of landings during the hours of darkness, smugglers avoided the periods of full moon, moonlight to them was anathema. Night duties for the Coastguard were tiring and dangerous, cliff tops and beaches were hazardous places in bad weather. It was said "that the work was terrible"; in winter months a duty could start before dusk and not end until early dawn. Sixteen hours of being exposed to the elements without shelter required physical strength and a strong disposition. Porter must have had these qualities for



after handing in his weapons he was known to *launch his boat and go to sea for the greater part of the day*'.



William Porter's World I – the Cobb and Cement works in 1903



William Porter's World II The Cobb about 1880-1890



**William Porter's World II "Beulah"
– the house he built in Silver Street of local materials**



William Porter died in 1894 aged 75. His monument in Lyme cemetery is of red granite from Peterhead, Aberdeen, not local stone from Dorset.

Extract from William Porter's Obituary

darkness and storm, to land their contraband goods. When his comrades were exhausted and longed for the hour when they should render a report of the night and go home for refreshment and rest, Porter was never heard to complain. He has repeatedly been known to give up his cutlass and pistol after a long night's duty, and without taking a moment's rest, to launch his boat and go off to sea for the greater part of the day—a strain that few could bear. He was first married on March 31, 1839 and celebrated his golden wedding in 1889 but Mrs. Porter did not live long after. On leaving the coast-guard service he became connected with the stone trade. He was first manager for Messrs. Harvey and Co., and afterwards for the Montrotier, Cement and Ashphalt paving Company, whose works were those now occupied by Messrs Hayercraft and Co. When this firm severed its connection with the town he embarked in the Blue Lias Stone trade on his own account, which he has ever since successfully conducted, shipping large quantities of Lias Stone to all parts of England but principally to Hull and Plymouth. As a manager Mr. Porter saw the difficulty the men had, to live in the Winter when for weeks together they could not work at this hazardous trade and when he became an employer he always paid his men ten shillings per week when they could not work, deducting it when times were better but we regret to state that it is said that he lost large sums of money in this way. Mr. Porter for many years has been a member of the Corporation of this Borough and at the reformed Council he was elected senior Alderman, and generally was a regular attendant. He did not often take part in the discussions nor did he sufficiently interest himself in local Government to bring forward any scheme of improvement. Mr. Porter was always good company. He delighted in a joke, and sailor-like, in a funny story. No one can say he was a niggardly man with the money he worked so hard for. He was the first to improve our main street by erecting the pretty residence he was pleased to name "Beulah" and he was careful to build it with the material produced in his own neighbourhood. Mr. Porter was a staunch and zealous dissenter. In his youth he was a regular attendant at the Sunday School and afterwards a Sunday School Teacher and Superintendant who took a great interest in the work. Minor differences in the past caused him to move from one place of worship to another but of late years he has been connected with the Baptists. He was a man who always loved his home and his family, and all he read or heard of the world never tempted him to leave his birthplace. In 1892 he published a little volume of poetry and it was a great