



# *Celebrating* **100 YEARS**

## **History of Lyme Regis Museum<sup>1</sup>**

**Version 6 prepared in the Centenary Year by Richard Bull 2021**

Accreditation No. 969 AIM Member No. 1423 Collections Code LYMPM

### **Part 1: Before the Establishment of the Museum**

#### **L(l)oyd's Collection at Charmouth**

In 1788 a private collection of fossils, displayed for sale, was shown by William L(l)oyd, a labourer, in his cottage garden at Charmouth, to Rev Stebbing Shaw, a visitor. (Draper, J., in Curator's Report 1997-99).

#### **Other early collections**

In 1817 M Phillips' Guide "A Picture of Lyme Regis" mentions "several fine collections" of fossils to be seen in the town but is not specific about their location. Besides this he mentions two circulating libraries, the recreational facilities at the Assembly Rooms and reading rooms at the Baths, which are possible locations, although he may mean private collections which could be seen by invitation.

#### **The Philpot Sisters' Collection**

1805 -1880 The Philpot sisters, mainly Elizabeth, had a private collection at Morley Cottage, now the Mariners Hotel. This collection was available for inspection on request in Lyme but was not open to the public as such. After the death of the last surviving sister it was presented to Oxford University by the widow of the sisters' nephew, John Philpott the Younger, in memory of him. The collection is still accessible at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, as it is now called, which donated a few specimens back to Lyme Regis Museum, and, in 2017, loaned more.

#### **Mary Anning's Sale Collection**

In 1811 Mary Anning's father showed curios for sale which his daughter later enlarged into a spectacle of displays of finds, not all hers, for sale. This became famous, not only in Britain, but on the continent, so much so that she claimed visitors among the crowned heads of Europe, specifically the King of Saxony in 1844. Her first shop, at Cockmoile Square, was on the site of the

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<sup>1</sup> Not all the 20<sup>th</sup> century dates in this paper after can be verified exactly to the year, particularly where they came from Curator's Reports that span 2-3 years or where the Trust records are missing.

Museum. Later she moved her shop to 28 Broad Street, opposite where Tesco now is.

Jo Draper records (Draper, J., in Curator's Report 1997-99) that, in 1840, the author of *A Summer Trip to Weymouth and Dorchester* described her "museum as one of the chief attractions of the place". In 1865 another anonymous author (probably Charles Dickens) complained that her "museum is now entirely broken up, and the specimens returned to those who had loaned them" and "no-one had the spirit to take charge of the non-paying concern when the early geological furore had calmed down" (*All the Year-Round* Feb 11st 1865).

### **Later fossil collectors and dealers**

Mary was succeeded by others such as the **Dollins** and the **Moores**, dealers and collectors like her, who displayed material for sale rather than for simply altruistic reasons. Dealers continue to display their wares to this day in what are in effect substantial collections in both Lyme Regis and Charmouth, including those at the **Old Forge Fossil Shop**, Broad Street and Charmouth, **Dinosaurland** in Coombe Street and the **Lyme Regis Fossil Shop** in Bridge Street. Before the setting up of Dinosaurland, in the old Coombe Street Independent Chapel, some of the material now there was on display in Lyme Regis Museum.

### **1844 - Lyme Regis & Charmouth Mechanics Institute**

In 1844 the Lyme Regis and Charmouth Mechanics Institute fitted up a museum somewhere in Bridge Street as one of its first acts. Mary Anning's brother Joseph was involved, certainly as auditor. It may have held Anning material, although on her death in 1847, most of her collection was either sold or returned to its owners from whom it had been loaned or left with her for sale.

At its first annual meeting of the Institute on 14<sup>th</sup> January 1845 it was reported (Lello, 1999) that sixteen lectures had been given during the first year, including one by George Roberts. Subjects covered included self-culture, astronomy, physical geography, Egyptian history, natural history, botany, light, colour and vision, and chemistry. A library of 250 volumes was set up and there were 304 subscribing members in that first year.

The movement to set up Mechanics' Institutes was begun by Dr George Birkbeck in London and grew strongly in some towns and eventually led to the founding of some civic universities. The Lyme Institute failed some time before 1856, although it had been amongst the earliest in the country. It had a reading room and a small museum, curated by Mr S Osborn, presumably Samuel Osborn the builder. The Post Office directories for 1848 and 1855 give the address as Bridge Street, later listing it as the "Museum Assembly Rooms", but only in 1859. Likely, therefore, it was at the Assembly Rooms, although that should have been called Broad Street or Cobb Gate Square.

### 1850s - Marder's Museum at the Baths and the Assembly Rooms

In 1857 Roland Brown's *Beauties of Lyme* bore an advertisement for a collection of fossils which could be seen at the Baths, presumably the purpose-built baths where the Marine Theatre is now, as the other baths were merely in the houses of their operators. The Lyme pharmacist James Marder and someone called Atkins set up this collection of fossils which was open daily (except Sundays) by ticket. They showed mainly geological material, including a 30ft *Ichthyosaurus*. The collection appears to have been displayed before elsewhere in the town by Marder, perhaps at his shop. This collection may be the one shown at the Assembly Rooms.

**NOTICE,  
TO GEOLOGISTS,  
FOSSIL COLLECTORS,  
AND DEALERS.**

A collection of FOSSILS may be seen in  
**The Large Room at the Baths, Lyme Regis**  
during the Summer from 9 A. M. to 8 P. M. daily. In the  
Winter from 10 to 4 o'clock, Sundays excepted.

This Collection contains many very fine specimens of  
the *Ichthyosaurus* *Platyodon*, *Teruistrois*, *Intremedius*,  
*Communis*, &c., also numerous illustrative fragments of  
*Ichthyosauri*, and *Plesiosauri*, with Fish, Ammonites,  
*Pentacrinus* *Briareus*, &c., chiefly from the Blue Lias in  
the neighbourhood.

One skeleton of the *Ichthyosaurus* *Platyodon* nearly  
30 feet long is the largest yet discovered.

Admission by Tickets to be obtained at the Baths.

Some of the Specimens are for Sale.

*Further information will be given if required, by appli-  
cation either personally or by letter, to Henry Marder,  
Esqr. Surgeon, Broad Street, Lyme Regis.*

**Advertisement in Roland Brown's *Beauties of Lyme***

### 1870s - Peek's Museum at Rousdon Manor (sometime Allhallows School)

In the 1870s Sir Henry Peek set up a museum at Rousdon Manor with a wide-ranging collection of exotic, not local, ethnographic and natural history items, majoring on stuffed and mounted birds. All except 5 of the 376 British birds then recognised were displayed. It was not open to the public as such but could be viewed on application. Most or all of it remains in place as part of the listing of the building, but it is now split between the ownership of two flats and is no longer open to the public, although the Natural History Museum has

advising the owners on the conservation of at least part of the bird collection. The Museum has a digital image of the printed catalogue dated around 1910 and some photographs which I have taken through the glass of the sealed cases, but all only of birds. Geological material may be preserved in the other flat from the one I was able to visit. A description occurs in the Seaton, Beer and Neighbourhood Guide of 1901.

**1870-1927 – The Lister family had a private collection at High Cliff House** in Lyme which was held in the Billiard Room and consisted of stuffed birds and mycological specimens. The former maybe the stuffed bird case in the Museum, the latter were donated to the Natural History Museum, as well as other natural history material. Joseph Lister's medical material, if any was ever at High Cliff, which is doubtful, may be at the Wellcome Foundation's Museum. The Museum's case of stuffed birds maybe came with other domestic objects given by Miss G Lister when clearing the house in 1927, in part via St Michael's School. The great mycologist Arthur Lister FRS entertained the Dorset Field Club at High Cliff in 1891 (see below).

## **2. Lyme Regis Philpot Museum - The Long Gestation**

### **1891- Thomas Philpot's First "Museum"**

In 1891 Thomas E D Philpot, great nephew of the Philpot sisters, acting as Mayor, set up a "museum" of local curios, including pictures, engravings, coins and fossils, to entertain the Dorset Field Club at the Guildhall, whilst the Borough officers exhibited a selection of charters and court books in the Mayor's Parlour [*The Grove* magazine 1891]. Whilst temporary, this exhibition was well received and may have stirred ideas in Philpot's mind about the more permanent museum. Philpot's home at Holm Cleve, now Gatesfield, was just by High Cliff, so maybe Arthur Listed, a fellow JP, influenced him.

### **1899-1902 - T E D Philpot (Mayor 1889-91) builds a permanent Museum**

Having bought the museum site in 1889 Philpot commissioned George Vials to design a museum, and had it built by Caddy & Sons in 1901-1902 in a mixture of styles, mainly Flemish Gothic with more severe a Rene Mackintosh-type elevation facing the sea. Internal detailing was in part art nouveau, such as the Rotunda's internal balustrade and notice boards and gallery labels carved in stone.

The Museum was not opened until 1921. See Appendix 1 for an article about George Vials and Philpot's commissioning of the Museum. Philpot's intentions are not at all clear – nor is it clear what he would have displayed had he opened it in 1902.



**The Museum and Cogmoile Square in 1907 © Friths.** Note the old East Wing and the cottages lurking behind the Museum's flanking wall



**Topping out in 1901/2 (Vialls Family Album, with permission)**

### **1904 - Dorset Field Club visit – no mention of a Museum**

On 13-14<sup>th</sup> September 1904 the Dorset Field Club visited Lyme Regis for a second time. As in 1891, it was entertained by the Council and the Vicar, both in the Guildhall and in the Church. The Club was shown the charters and other relics etc. Strangely **no museum project is mentioned** in the four-page report in Dorset Proceedings vol 25 1904 pp lxxv-lxxi, yet the new building by the Guildhall must have raised questions in the minds of members.

Unfortunately, Philpot had still had not arranged for the Museum to be filled or opened and the building remained empty. Long before the Philpot sisters' collection had been bequeathed to the University of Oxford.

### **1907 - Decision, indecision and dithering**

In 1907 Cllr H J Cooper suggested to the Town Council that Philpot be approached about a proposal to open a loan collection of fossils and do it in the Museum, which otherwise lay shut up. Mr A Cameron, the author of a geological guide to Lyme and recently retired to Lyme from the Geological Survey, had agreed to arrange and classify material. But even this offer raised concerns from Alderman Harris, who said that it would involve great expense upon the town. (Lyme Regis Recorder Oct 10<sup>th</sup>, 1907).

### **1912 - The Borough Council debated whether to purchase land for a much-needed recreation ground or spend it on opening the Museum.**

The latter would carry out the wishes expressed in the Moly Bequest, according to Cllr. Cooper. After a vote on amended propositions the Museum scheme was narrowly carried. (Bridport News 14<sup>th</sup> June 1912). The Borough then offered £25 p.a. rent, but this was turned down by Philpot, as he would still have to maintain the building.

Philpot remained mostly in Lyme during this period, although, from passenger lists, he seems to have forayed to Canada in 1912 and 1916, maybe living there for a time (if he is the T E D Philpot caught by the Canadian census in 1911 at Portage la Prairie in Manitoba).

During the First World War the building was used as a Red Cross depot. It appears that it was only gas lit, judging from an early account in the records. When it was first wired for electricity is not clear, but the gasolier in the rotunda *may* be part of the original lighting scheme and not an overtly museum or architectural object.

As a Museum it remained firmly shut and continued to be closed after Philpot's death in 1918, passing to his niece, Caroline Philpot. Thomas Philpot left no clue as to his intentions for the building, other than it should be a museum for the town. One has to assume this was always his intention, having earlier, as Mayor, ensured the re-building of the Guildhall and the construction of the Drill Hall, now the Marine Theatre, to form a miniature civic centre befitting such a small town.



**1920 - The Museum building was eventually accepted by LRBC, given by Miss Caroline Philpot following in memory of her uncle for the benefit of the people of the town. See Appendix 6 for a list and an analysis of the deeds.**

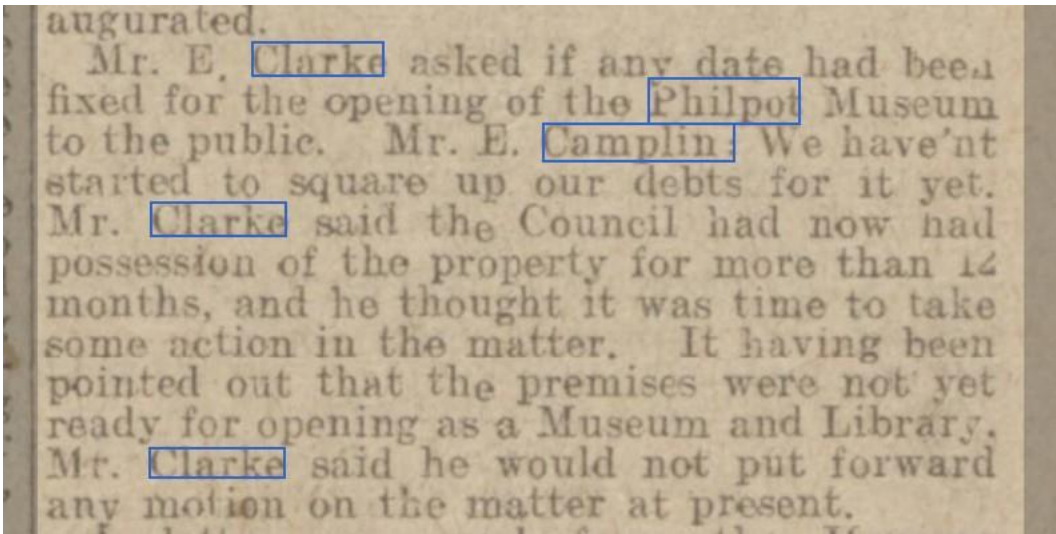


**The presentation deeds case**



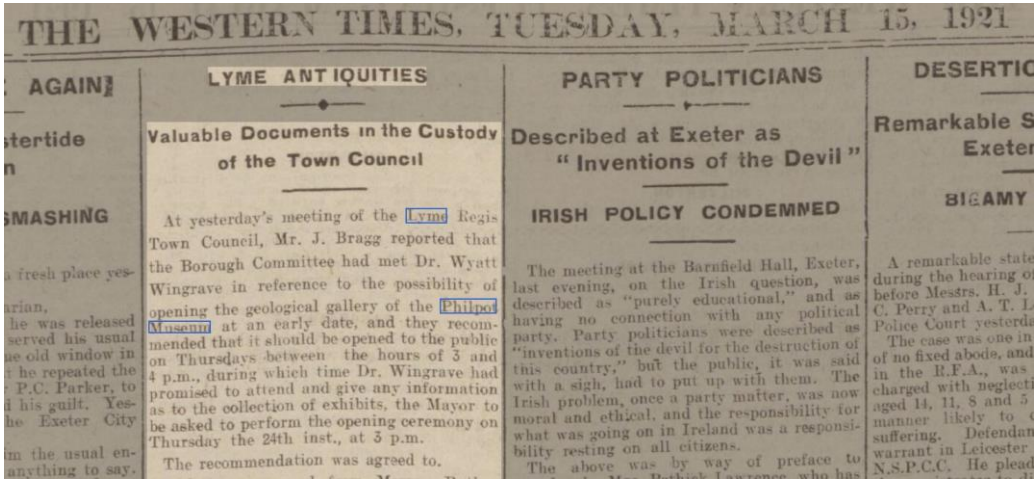
**Caroline Philpot (Vialls Family Album, with permission)**

**1921 - Having acquired the Museum it was another year before the Borough resolved to open the Museum.** The feeling amongst councillors was still not unanimous.



On 15<sup>th</sup> March 1921 it was reported that the Borough Committee met Dr Wyatt Wingrave to arrange the opening of a geological gallery as soon as possible and the opening hours were fixed as Thursdays 3-4pm, when Dr Wingrave, later appointed Honorary Curator, would be present.

Vitruvius Wyatt-Wingrave MD MRCS LSA (1858-1938) had retired to Lyme due to ill health from having been an ENT consultant and pathologist at the Royal Nose & Throat Hospital in London, although a native of Coventry. He had become profoundly deaf, blind in one eye and partly paralysed after a bout of diphtheria caught from a patient. He was passionately interested in geology and archaeology, writing some short papers on Lyme history. In 1916 he erected a new sub-species of the Lias ammonite, *Prodactylioceras davoei rectiradiatum* Wingrave He received the Freedoms of the City of Coventry and the Borough of Lyme Regis shortly before his death, both conferred by the respective Lord Mayor and Mayor, at his home in Lyme Regis, Cobb House. He was Hon Curator until 1935.







**Dr V Wyatt Wingrave, Founder Curator**

### **3 The Museum Open to the Public**

**Opening of the Museum at 3pm, Thursday 24th March 1921**

The geology gallery set up by Dr Wingrave and the Moly Reference Library, were formally opened by the Mayor, A Wiscombe, at 3pm on **Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> March 1921**, with a large crowd present. The Moly Library was in memory of James Moly c.1825-1910, an early photographer, who gave the Langmoor Gardens to the town, but the use of the name for a library dropped as the County Council took up library provision. No images of the opening appear to have survived.

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ded  
was  
accorded to the Matron and staff, the honorary  
medical staff, and the Chairman. *17th 37.1921*

## GEOLOGICAL GALLERY AND LIBRARY OPENED.

### DR. W. WINGRAVE ON GEOLOGICAL STUDY.

In the presence of a large gathering of burgesses on Thursday afternoon, the Mayor (Mr. A. Wiscombe) formally opened for the inspection by the public the geological gallery at the Museum and the Moly Reference Library. His Worship was accompanied by the members of the Corporation, the Town Clerk (Mr. H. J. Ramsbotham), and Dr. Wyatt Wingrave, a well-known geologist.

Addressing the company from the steps of the Museum the Mayor said, while, as they knew, he was not particularly versed in that sort of function, yet it gave him much pleasure, as Chief Magistrate and as the Mayor who received the gift from Miss Philpott on behalf of the burgesses, to perform the opening ceremony. The geological section at the Museum was the first instalment of the Corporation's pledge to its benefactors. He would grasp the opportunity to personally thank Dr. Wyatt Wingrave for the extreme interest he had taken in the section. He not only had lent geological exhibits, but had also arranged them for inspection by the public. He (the Mayor) was grateful, too, to the Borough Surveyor (Mr. F. H. McDonnell) for the assistance he had rendered Dr. Wingrave; also to the Chairman and members of the Borough Committee of the Town Council. The Committee had, he was quite sure, taken the right view of the matter. His Worship thereupon declared the geological gallery open to the public. (Applause.)

In the Museum the gathering was addressed by Dr. Wyatt Wingrave, who emphasised the importance of the Museum, not so much to Lyme Regis itself, as to the geological world. If they went into the British Museum they would see—indeed they would see in almost every museum on the Continent and elsewhere—specimens from Lyme Regis, yet in the town itself they could not find one. His present aim was to make a start, to form a nucleus, which was to be a kind of snowball, gradually getting bigger and bigger until at last they had a collection of exhibits of which they could be justly proud. (Applause.) To do that they would have naturally to depend upon private collectors, but care must be exercised so as not to make it a magpie collection. The work must be done with discrimination, based on scientific principles. The Museum would be of importance to visitors, for therein they would see specimens of what they were likely to find in the neighbourhood. The maps and plans hanging on the walls indicated where specimens could be discovered. These exhibited in the Museum would serve a useful purpose for comparison and diagnosis. The Museum should also be the means of re-awakening an interest in geological study locally. Lyme Regis was at one time noted for its collectors—those who collected for geologists—but to-day there was not one. He maintained that everything should be done to encourage people to take up the work, which would be found most interesting. He thanked the Mayor and Corporation for the support they had rendered the movement, and appealed to them to exercise their influence with people, who had specimens, to lend them for the good of the town.

On the motion of Mr. J. E. Hewitt, seconded by the Mayor, a vote of thanks was accorded Dr. Wingrave.

In reply Dr. Wingrave said he would be pleased to give a practical demonstration once a week to those desirous of taking up the work, and explain where specimens could be found and how they should be arranged. It was not an expensive hobby, but was a delightful sport to those who had plenty of patience and perseverance. (Applause.)

### BEAMINSTER.

MIDDLE CLASSES UNION. The Beaminster branch

The nucleus of the display was Wingrave's own collection of ammonites and saurians arranged "to appeal to the scientist and those not familiar with fossils", together with the loan of his geological and palaeontological books. Dr Lang of the Natural History Museum (NHM) provided diagrams and maps showing where material could be collected and Dr L F Spath (also NHM) identified the material, Mr Henry Ellis donated a large ichthyosaur which is still in the Museum, displayed as a cast, and the Borough Surveyor, F H McDonnell provided every assistance.

The curator gave demonstrations once a week and assisted enquirers to encourage collecting. This gallery is to be the nucleus of other material from private collections. Wingrave said that the objective was not to produce a magpie museum, but to encourage interest in the study of geology and the role of Lyme Regis in the history of the science.

# Water Works.

Rate Collected ... ..	602 14 8
Balance due to Treasurer ... ..	260 3 6
	<u>£2,102 0 0</u>

# Water Works.

Wages ... ..	3 4 6
Balliff's Salary ... ..	60 0 0
Printing ... ..	2 15 0
Water by Meter ... ..	22 6 4
Rates and Taxes ... ..	76 0 0
Insurance ... ..	12 2
Repairs and Additions ... ..	148 4 6
Tools ... ..	1 1 9
Guarantee of Meters ... ..	36 10 0

## Loans.

Frodsham, less Tax, leaving 3 more payments of £66 13s. 4d. and Interest ... ..	96 14 1
Public Works Loan, leaving £83 6s. 8d. due ... ..	19 6 0
	<u>466 15 4</u>

# MUSEUM.

## RECEIPTS.

	£ s. d.
By Balance at Bank ... ..	31 14 1
Year's Rent Surveyor's Office ... ..	15 0 0
	<u>£46 14 1</u>

## EXPENDITURE.

	£ s. d.
New Fittings ... ..	8 13 6
Repairs ... ..	6 5 11
Rates, Taxes and Insurance ... ..	15 12 10
Gas ... ..	3 2 0
Printing and Cheque Book ... ..	8 8
Bank Charges ... ..	8 3
Balance at Bank ... ..	12 2 1
	<u>£46 14 1</u>

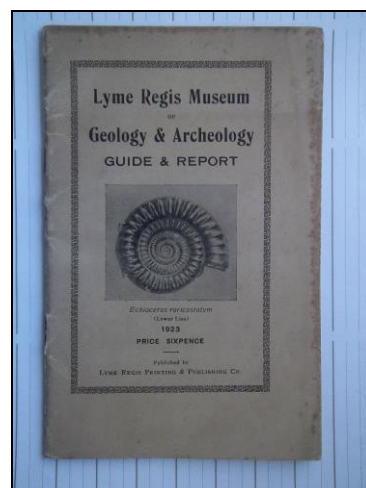
Audited and found correct, 4th May, 1923.

J. E. HILL, Borough Treasurer.

HUBERT R. MORGAN, }  
WALTER HARDY, } Borough Auditors.  
JOHN ERNEST HEWITT, Mayor's Auditor.

Lyme Regis Printing & Publishing Co.

**Museum first year (1921-22) accounts presented to the Borough Council.** Note no electricity is mentioned, only gas, and there is a recharge item to the Museum account showing that a gallery, probably the East Wing, was used by the Borough Surveyor as an office.



**The first printed guide by Wyatt-Wingrave, issued in 1923**

**1923 – Already the stonework of the Museum already needing treatment because of degradation** and A Dreyfus Ltd engaged to treat with their patent “Preserva”. No indication is given whether this degradation included the Beer Stone or the cement mullions and banding, or both.

**1926- The earliest accessioned objects** ascribed to 1926 from an analysis of the Trust Minute Book are coins and a bronze key found in the churchyard during the restoration of 1885, the town stocks, fire insurance marks, a leather fire bucket, and a horseshoe from the Venlake smithy at Uplyme.

**1927 - The Philpot Museum Trust was set up on 10th October 1927**

The trust was set up to run the Museum; ownership of the building and collections being retained by LRBC. The building was barely maintained and heated, and suffered greatly from its exposed position, problems which persisted until after LRBC was abolished in 1974. The Trust Minutes are preserved in the office. **There are no records before this of day-to-day activity in the Museum.**

The question of security arose. Dr Wingrave, now the official the Curator for Geology, set out arrangements in a letter to the Council. When reporting this, the Mayor it was stated that without security, no-one would loan anything worthwhile for display. (Bridport News 13<sup>th</sup> May 1927.

In the same year Wingrave set out clear collecting principles for the Museum, “that, in view of the limited space at the disposal of the Trustees, only such objects shall be accepted for exhibition or safe custody at the Museum as had some distinct connection with or interest to Lyme Regis. By 1943 this had been widened to a radius of about 7 miles, for geology at least.

**1929 - The third summer meeting of the Dorset Field Club in Lyme** was held on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1929 (Dorset Procs vol 51 1930 p 61-5). Cyril Wanklyn, the Curator for History, told the party that “two years ago the Museum was a neglected offspring of an unloved stepmother...our Borough Council. Dr Wingrave alone kept the dirty, ill-clad infant alive”. A trust deed had been drawn up and three trustees appointed, Wingrave, Wanklyn and, ex officio, the Mayor. He referred to most important exhibits which he had framed for the Museum, and which came from the Town Hall:

- Fielding’s note of defiance
- Coram’s acknowledgement of his Freedom of the Borough
- a case of a trial for witchcraft in 1700
- a letter from Admiral Byng
- a letter from Henry St John, Lord Bolingbroke, Anne’s minister
- a letter from the Tangier Commission of 1662 asking Lyme to send Cobb builders to construct a harbour at Tangier, signed by Pepys and
- also, the Market Bell of 1674 which he found in the Police Station in 1925 was then hanging in the well. Dr Wingrave continued with the
- relics of the Monmouth rebels’ execution
- the town stocks
- part of the floor on which Jane Austen danced and Disraeli lounged



- the aumbry stones and tracery from the Bridge Chapel and
- masonry and brackets from the old Cobb Gate.

**1930 – Gun Cliff cottages demolished, leaving Museum wall in need of protection.** First idea was to construct new Council offices, Court and Fire Station (Borough Minutes), by 1931 the proposal was reduced to that of a car park for persons attending the Town Hall or Museum on official business. (Borough Minutes).

**1930-31 – Much debate in Borough set out in the minutes over heating and the state of the roof and the wall facing the sea.** Gas supply installed in 1930 (although gas is a cost head on the 1921-22 accounts), then gas radiators installed, and the exposed elevation and roof repaired. The radiators had to be lit daily and windows opened to take away any condensation arising, which resulted in extra payments to the caretaker.

**1935 – Curator Wingrave resigned due to ill health**

**1936 – Gas radiators removed and replaced by tubular heaters** (electric?) to reduce condensation problem. **Council offices in the Museum removed**, in part to provide space to provide for a proposed County/Carnegie Library.

**1937 – The remaining Moly Library books and cases disposed of** following Trustee's decision that they could no longer give up the space for a County Library, which moved to the Old Fire Station at the top of Broad Street. Room 1 (not sure which this was as the galleries are still labelled in stone A, B & C. Maybe it was C, the East Wing, which was opened as gallery that March.

**1938 – The stonework needed preservative treatment again. Dr William Dickson Lang FRS (1878-1966) appointed Curator for Geology. He had been Keeper of Geology at the NHM.** By now the wall finishes and ceilings were in a ruinous condition. Wanklyn bought the remaining Moly Library books for £1.

**1939-1960 - The Museum lay virtually closed** – during the war and after the Trust met rarely, if at all – there were no meetings at all from 1946 to 1957. Curator Cyril Wanklyn died in 1943, leaving his collection of mainly historical and printed papers to the Museum ("The Wanklyn Bequest", catalogued on index cards by Lang. During the war, the building was in part again used as Borough offices and for ARP control, with the cellar as an air raid shelter. The collections shifted upstairs. Lang was an ARP Warden, so maybe could still keep an eye open for problems.

**When the Museum was open, it was simply on the basis that it was unlocked daily; collections, books and visitors took their chance in an open house.** Objects, particularly books, disappeared, although some are still being returned as reputable dealers come across them. Nearly all records, but for the Trust minutes were lost – the modern accession record has been built back to 1922 using the Trust minutes for dating acquisitions. It is

inconceivable that Lang, a museum professional, would not have had some detailed system of documentation. We are aware of other catalogue numbers on books, but we have no idea to what these refer (maybe a lost Lang catalogue from the late 1940s or the lost McAlister catalogue from the 1970s). Cases were acquired from the NHM in 1942, the tops are still in use, with NHM register numbers on then in gold.

Curator Lang regarded the situation as desperate and beyond his control, so he resigned in 1946. From 1946 to 1969 there was no curator.

**1958 - Miss E F Eyre offered to donate Monmouth House to the Town Council as a replacement for the dilapidated Museum.** It would cost £2,500 to refurbish, as against £3,000 to £4,000 to bring the Museum up to scratch. Cyril Wanklyn's carefully curation of the Borough Records was in danger in the Museum owing to damp - and some objects had been lost due to lack of security. The Trustees of the Museum (Mayor Nicholls acting as Trustee during his Mayoralty) made a statement *that no effort should be spared to maintain and encourage interest in our historic borough through the museum, and that the present state of affairs should at once be made known to the council and the burgesses generally in the hope that practical steps can be taken towards its resuscitation.* [Article in Dorset Evening Echo Oct 14<sup>th</sup> 1958].

**1968 The building got into a very bad state** - so much so that in 1968 the complex Flemish gothic east wing was so deteriorated that the first floor was demolished as unsafe and replaced with a 1960's box; tile hung and bland. There was a succession of curators between 1960 and 1970 – **E (Ted) S Gosling** tried hard to recover the Museum. A Mr Webb may have served for a brief time until and Sir Lawrence Whistler did a brief stint around this time.

**1970** Alderman Henry Chessell took up the reins as Curator and encouraged a new range of activity and support.

**1971** The Carnegie UK Trust paid a grant towards new show cases and Lawrence Whistler sought listing of the building to which the DoE replied, "its already been recommended".

**1974 At the abolition of Lyme Regis Borough Council at local government reorganisation following the Redcliffe-Maude Report etc, the ownership of the Museum was transferred to the new West Dorset District Council.**

**The building was listed by the Department of the Environment, which means that it cannot be demolished or altered without listed building consent. The listing is Grade 2 – the listing text, with its characteristically wrong date, says:**

"1870 circa; patron Mr Thomas Philpot. L-shaped building of red brick with stone dressings. Large transomed and mullioned windows with leaded glazing. Gable end to street has splayed bay windows on ground and 1st floors set within round-headed recess. Stepped parapet with volutes left hand return of this wing of 3 window bays;

windows in 2 bays set in 3-centred headed recesses surmounted by attic storey with oval lunette and gable. Projecting stair well set-in rear angle of this wing rising to form an octagonal tower; octagonal lantern with 2-light window in each facet; rounded roof with tapering finial. An east-west wing of 2 storeys, 2 bays. Loggia on ground floor; 2 stone arches with keystones supported by stone columns. Modern additions on 1st floor. From the land, the Museum & Guildhall form a group with Nos 60 to 62 (consec) Church Street. From the sea, the rear faces of the Museum & Guildhall form a group with the sea walls at Gun Cliff & with the rear faces of Nos 1 & 2 Broad Street".

**1976 Roger Mayne took over from Henry Chessell**, who sadly died shortly afterwards. Roger did sterling work on an interim basis until giving way in 1978 to his wife, Ann Jellicoe, jointly with author John Fowles.

**1978 – One of the most noteworthy events in the Museum's history occurred, that of the appointment of author John Fowles as honorary curator**, at first jointly with playwright Ann Mayne. Although not a Museum professional, John set out to rescue the museum and the collection and set up a purchase fund in part with his own money, and through the success of the Friends of Lyme Regis Museum. He set up a documentation system and started the series of published annual reports (which ran until 2006). He found dry rot, collapsing ceilings, stress cracks in the balcony (caused by the Shambles Bell) and a building so cold and damp that paper objects were suffering mildew attacks. Storing material at the Dorset Record Office was started, as a necessity. He constantly badgered WDDC about the state of their building and persuaded it to undertake repairs. John undertook research<sup>2</sup>, studied deeds and wrote a history of the town. His delicate and precise annotation annotations cover many documents, some irreplaceable.

**John encouraged the formation of the Friends of Lyme Regis Museum as a support group**, with 34 members in 1978. Visitor numbers reach 18,617, despite the traditional winter closing (see Appendix 4 for the annual counts).

**1979** - The Friends gained registered charity status on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1979, [no. 278774] with 175 members.

The Trust agreed to change the name of the Museum from The Philpot Museum to the Lyme Regis (Philpot) Museum, not to be too disrespectful to the founder family, but to ease marketing and public recognition. Gradually over the years since the word Philpot was dropped in marketing terms. The Trust Deed was amended to reflect this and the new situation of the independent museum in a building still then owned by the local authority. Signed off with WDDC April/May 1980

**1980 – Dry rot cured, but night storage heating found to be decrepit.**

**1981-1986 West Dorset DC tried to repair the Beer Stone mullions. It replaces the carvings on the staircase** during 1981-4 using its in-house

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<sup>2</sup> When John Fowles papers were sold after his death, great efforts were made to copy material relevant to Lyme to the Museum. The bulk of his manuscripts, including *A Short History of Lyme*, are in the Library of the University of Texas at Austin and are fully catalogued on-line.

stone mason when not employed on the Cobb. The treatment of the mullions with cement and wire was not successful, but Portland Stone provided a fine replacement for the Beer Stone carvings. In 1982 a damp recess leading to the coal hole in the cellar was bricked up and the Museum was re-wired. In 1983 storm winds drove so much spray over the building that sea water poured down the main staircase from a gutter blocked with pigeon dung, damaging just one framed print. Then storm waves would break right over the building, engulfing the museum in brine. The cellar became the driest and warmest place in the Museum. In 1984 corroding girders start to distort the ground floor and more work was done to replace stone mullions. The cellar was relined with block work and given a new concrete ceiling, but the curator's office was still not weatherproof and paper mildew affected items there. By 1986 it was again clear that the stone mullion work had not been effective.

**1987 Liz-Ann Bawden MBE appointed Hon Curator.** She spearheaded the restoration and refurbishment of the building and exhibitions, aided by Jo Draper as consultant.

**1986 – The Museum's first computer, an Amstrad 8512 PC, obtained for data storage. It seems to have been hardly used; by 2008 only a small handful of floppy discs remained as evidence that it ever existed.**

**1989 – West Dorset commission a report from the Building Research Advisory Service, BRE Garston,** on the condition of the building. It finds that the rapidly corroding steelwork is cracking the walls and pushing them out of true. Two options emerge: - demolition or total gutting to carcase and re-flooring after structural strengthening. The report was considered unduly alarmist, although as an emergency measure the ceiling by the iron staircase had to be propped.

**1991 – In April the Trust receives a strategic report from the Robin Wade Partnership of Eel Pie Island, Twickenham,** the foremost Museum and interpretive design consultants of the day, on visitor management. In the report (Lyme Regis Museum – a Planning Study) Wade considered that, as a listed building, demolition was unthinkable. "What a charming building", he said on his first visit, "but it is turning its back on the sea". He showed that the building could be transformed making the saving of the fabric even more worthwhile. The visitor experience could be turned around, with better control of the Museum environment, by providing a new entrance through the open, unused loggia. This was to be glassed in, providing an entrance desk and shop with visitors directed through a glass conservatory on the seaside to a new way into the ground floor gallery through an enlarged former window opening. This avoided congestion at the bottom of the main staircase, leaving the old entrance doors as merely an emergency exit. At a stroke the Museum would be turned around, visitors coming in could be greeted in a bright, sunny south facing space and there would be less conflict with circulating visitors already in the building.

The Trust agreed two phases for the work:



1. The reconstruction of the existing building, including the improvements and a glass gallery extension, to re-order access.
2. Internal refurbishment, with new displays and storage space.

**West Dorset DC agreed to restore the fabric.**

**An appeal for funds was launched on 14<sup>th</sup> November at the Museum by John Fowles and Sir David Wilson, Director of the British Museum.**

**1992 – In March the Museum was provisionally registered with the Museum and Galleries Commission. The collecting area was defined as the parishes of Combpyne-Rousdon and Uplyme in Devon and Lyme Regis and Charmouth in Dorset.**

**Owing to doubts about the BRE report, West Dorset DC received a second, more detailed and equally damning report** on the state of the building – rotting timber, rusting girders and walls cracked and being pushed apart required immediate attention. As a result, the District and the Museum establish a **design team** to prepare and administer a single contract for refurbishment on behalf of the District Council and the Trustees. The Trustees retained Robin Wade as advisor. Total estimate £100,000 for building work.

**1993-95 – New sea outer walls built by Highpoint Rendell design and engineering for WDDC and SW Water Authority,** It protected the Museum from the sea, making a new conservatory gallery possible. This, the Glass Gallery, has since been removed. The new sea walls solved much of the problem of salt spray by moving the sea back from the old, ailing sea wall, but the building will remain for ever impregnated with salt.

**1993 - Building and collections transferred to a new Trust** with grant promises from WDDC, subject to the building reverting to WDDC if no longer needed for museum purposes. The new trust, the **Lyme Regis Philpot Museum Trust Ltd**, a company limited by guarantee [Companies House Reg No. 2855423] with charitable status [fully registered 1994 as charity Reg No. 1041201], was founded because the 1927 Trust was not set up to own property and its 1927 and 1980 deeds made it indissoluble. Its sole trustee became the 1993 Trust. The new Memorandum and Articles of Association were sealed on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1993 but were amended in August 1994 and April 2005. The collections are vested in Philpot Collections Trust [Reg Charity No. 306241.]

**Building work started on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1993** by M F Lake and Partners. John Stark and Partners of Dorchester, Architects provided the design from Robin Wade's concept (Anthony Jaggard designed the glass gallery) and acted as clerk of works; Brody Forbes of Bridport, Structural Engineers; H W Smith & Sons, Mechanical Engineers, Peter Gunning & Partners of Bath, QS. When the building was stripped it was clear that the floors were near collapse. The cellar was tanked out and its ceiling reinforced (again?). Internal walls were drylined and a conservation-standard heating and ventilation system

installed in the cellar, with computerised monitoring. In hindsight the system was perceived to be expensive to run and difficult to understand and as a result was not used as intended. Damp problems returned, particularly in the cellar and the unheated Curator's Office. In the Curator's Office photographs were beginning to stick together because of the humid atmosphere.

**1994 – Main building work completed** on 1<sup>st</sup> July; glass gallery and loggia were finished on 7<sup>th</sup> October. No summer season of opening was lost, but the new galleries required the installation of new exhibitions, rather than just the return of the old - although temporary displays were arranged, and temporary exhibitions and talks were given in the Museum's unplastered shell.

**1997/9 – The shell finally dry lined and replastered and new displays installed.** Guided by Robin Wade and undertaken by Liz-Ann Bawden, Jo Draper (research, texts and labelling) and Stuart & Michael Case (construction and adaptation of cabinets, including retention of old mahogany cases originally from the Natural History Museum). Heritage Lottery funding was heavily involved. The first refurbished gallery opened officially was the Writers' Gallery, now called the Literary Gallery, by John Fowles in December 1997. The whole Museum was opened later by Sir David Attenborough in the summer of 1999.

In this year the refurbishment culminated in the presentation by Prince Charles of the **Gulbenkian Prize**, later known as the Museum of the Year award. This is an annual prize awarded to a museum or gallery in the United Kingdom for a "track record of imagination, innovation and excellence", in our case to "the best small museum in the country". After all the years of closure, neglect, and mismanagement, this was a stunning achievement, and a great tribute to John Fowles, Liz-Anne Bawden, Jo Draper and all the many volunteers and professionals who brought about the metamorphosis.

Liz-Anne reported: On the Monday I heard that we had been honoured by the Southwest Museum of the Year Award. I was enormously chuffed, for the Museum and everyone who had worked on it. But — I had not gone away — I had no-one to tell. (So I rang Robin.) (*RB = Robin Wade, the designer of the 1999 Museum*) I had put us in for five awards — all the ones I could lay my hands on, really, even the European Museum of the Year. We did not earn any recognition in that one, but the visit of the judges in July (one from Holland, one from Italy, both highly professional) was most enlightening — and searching.

But we were also short-listed for the National Museum of the Year. They short-list six and announce the winner on the night. We did not win that one either, but were given a Special Award for Design, a special tribute, of course, to Robin.

And that was very closely followed by the best news of all: we were awarded the Gulbenkian Prize. I had made that application with some diffidence (and said so), because I thought we did not really qualify for any of their categories except the top prize itself.

**2000 - Max Hebditch, retired Director of the Museum of London, appointed Honorary Curator**, supported by Jo Draper as paid Assistant Curator on limited part-time basis.

**2001 – The need to extend the Museum mooted** and a forward plan agreed, in which the Museum to be a key cultural centre, to maintain a programme of talks and exhibitions, to provide learning for all and to improve access. Max Hebditch takes the lead on developing and funding the extension.

**Agreement reached with the Dorset Record Office** that the Museum will deposit on loan “original manuscripts, records and other archival material” in its collection with the Office without transferring title. Any such new material offered to the Museum will be directed to DRO, unless the donor wishes otherwise, in which case the Museum will (after consultation with DRO) accept the material and subsequently deposit it with the Office. “Photographs, works on paper and printed materials” were excluded from the agreement.

For full text see Curator’s Report 2001 Appendix 4. For listings of material deposited at DRO (now Dorset Heritage Centre) see files prefixed LRM/ on the Centre’s page on the *Dorset for You* and National Archives web sites and in printouts held in the Director’s Office. Note: The Borough Archives and Charters deposited by LRBC/LRTC at DHC are listed under other file references and were sent to the Record Office many year before. There is no standing agreement with the Devon Heritage Centre.

**Lyme Regis Museum fully accredited with the Museums & Galleries Commission (now Arts Council England), no. 969.**

**2005 - Consultation with partners over extension proposals.** Studio Downie Architects lead consultants/design consultants with Dobson White Boulcott, QS; Highpoint Rendell, Structural Engineers; Beauchamps, Historic Building Consultants; Jo Draper, Conservation Statement and Historic Assessment.

**2006 - Application for Stage 1 Funding Heritage Lottery Fund to work up the application for Stage 2 approved.**

**Stage Two bid submitted December 2006.** Design led by Studio Downie Associates with Alan Conisbee & Associates, Structural Engineer; Peter Dere & Associates, building services; Gardiner & Theobald, QS and Planning. This extension was to be eastwards onto the Town Councillors’ car park.

**Stage Two bid rejected** by HLF partly because of insufficient evidence of match funding and equivocal local authority support from both Town and County. Although the Town Council had given permission in principle for its land to be used, it was never quite clear if permission in chief would be given.

**2008 – In October, Mary Godwin, the Museum’ first full-time professional curator was appointed, later styled Head of Museum, then Director.**

Under her direction visitor numbers doubled, peaking at 30,485 in 2010, but the numbers, drawn by events and outreach, even as far as a major farming exhibition held in Axminster, Uplyme as well as in Lyme, were unsustainable in view of lack of museum space and maintenance of the human effort required. An Education & Learning Officer was appointed.

**2012 – David Tucker appointed Director, with a specific remit to achieve the extension.**

In what was a disappointing year because of recession and weather 25,877 visitors attended and £92,382 was expended against an income of £102,883, plus a further £10,000 one-off expenditure set against donations. For full details of this and later years see deposited Reports and Accounts on the Companies House web site.

**2013-4 – Consultation with partners starts, leading to a fresh design approach towards a smaller, more manageable layout for an extension on the seaward side to be called the Mary Anning wing, using only Trust land for the extension.** Preparation of plans through 2014/5 leading to public consultation with a model of the proposals in Woodmead Halls and submission for major funding Stage 2 funding to HLF for an intended planning application in 2015. **HLF granted a second Stage 1 approval for the detailed design to be worked up**

**2015 – Planning permission and Listed Building Consent granted by WDDC** for Phase 1, the Mary Anning Extension and Phase 2, raising the roof of the Literary Gallery, after the Town Council had recommended that the listed building consent application be granted, but planning permission be refused overall because of its concern about the appearance of the design visually. Fund raising was put in place to raise the balance of the funds required. Architect: Mr Robert Battersby of the architectural practice of Architecton, The Wool Hall, St Thomas' Street, Bristol.

**2016 – Stage Two funding approved by HLF enabling the Devon building firm of Skinners to be selected as the main building contractor for Phase 1**, with work scheduled to start in mid-September. The HLF also approved a later Phase II, to raise the roof over the Literary Gallery to provide research and office space, which has not been implemented. The Museum closed on 5<sup>th</sup> September until June 2017, but the shop, removed to the ground floor of the Guildhall by kind permission of LRTC, became the focus for the Museum's continued presence in the town, including sales and outreach. The shop proved difficult to market in that location; footfall and takings were low, and it was closed some weeks before the Museum reopened. The programme of fossil and town walks, talks and work with schools was maintained, together with a re-designed web site and continued outreach by the Education Officer, Chris Andrew. New funding enabled the Geology, Landslip Galleries and part of the Literary Gallery to be redesigned.

**2017 - by February 2017 the main steelwork** of the Mary Anning Wing had been, erected after earlier piling to Blue Lias rockhead at low tide level. Flooring and cladding was underway, whilst the geology gallery cabinets and decoration were complete pending refitting the displays and objects. **By April** the extension was largely complete but for the glazing, as major panes arrived cracked. The Geology gallery is nearly completely, re-stocked with own exhibits and loans. The breakthroughs to the old building were made. The Jane Austen cabinet has been moved to make way for one of the ways



through and the Assembly Rooms fireplace re-instated in it (since remodelled again).

A programme of conservation of major objects was started with the repair and cleaning of the Court Suit with grant aid from AIM/Pilgrim Trust, the Carnival Committee and the Friends.

**17<sup>th</sup> July 2017 The Museum re-opened** with a party of staff, volunteers and trustees with invited guest author Tracy Chevalier; the full official opening was performed by **Sir David Attenborough later in the year.**

**2019-2020 The Literary Gallery was refurbished and re-presented at the Writers' Gallery.** During 2020 the clock was overhauled, and its case conserved, and the bell cleaned and re-hung with support from the Friends. In addition two oil paintings were restored; the *Mary Ann* near-wreck and a heptatych on boards of the Great Bindon landslip transferred from the Somerset Heritage Trust. Grant aid from AIM/Pilgrim Trust was received for the Landslip Panel.

**2020 – the Worldwide COVID pandemic hit the Museum hard**, causing a long and complete enforced closure by Government order from March until high summer, when Wednesday to Saturday opening re-commenced for pre-booked visitors. The Museum did not reopen after the Christmas break and was not able to re-open until May from Wednesday to Sunday. Only from July 2020 could the museum re-open on a daily basis. Fossil walks continued, but school and research visits collapsed. The research team did not meet, but the hon curators were able to continue documentation, enquiries and minor conservation tasks such cleaning the collection of framed paintings and repairing their frames. A programme to get geological documentation fully up to date and photographs on Modes was commenced but stalled when the staff geology curator, Paddy Howe, left for Co. Tipperary. The Government Furlough scheme ensured the retention of staff and £60,000 was paid by the Department of Media, Culture and Sport to maintain Museum facilities pending full re-opening.

**2021 – The Pandemic continued in waves through the year**, but the Museum was able to remain open more or less as planned with a limit of 45 visitors allowed in the building at any one time. By December another wave loomed, the omicron variant but with vaccination rates high and other precautions the impacts on the Museum have been limited to some extent.

**A significant turnover of Trustees** resulted in a more hands-on approach leading to the commissioning of a consultant to review the Museum's public offer and the adoption of new articles of association for the supporting not-for-profit shopco. David Tucker resigned as Director with effect 31st December 2021. The repointing of the Museum's north wall could not take place as planned as Dorset Council wanted to replace the traffic signals during the annual closure of Bridge Street.

## Sources and Resources

See the list of curators, and the papers by Max Hebditch and Michael Taylor attached here and their sources. Also see the Curator's Reports 1978-2006 - after which the series was replaced by occasional curator's or director's newsletters. Before that Trust minutes are the only source, apart from press cuttings and the occasional surviving curator's report. Preservation of records was patchy after the bound minute book was replaced by loose typescripts.

- Christopher Chaplin's 1:25 tracings of the Museum in 1990 can be found on the top office shelves.
- There is a box marked "Museum deeds". See Appendix 6.

The 1998 extension material:

- John Stark & Partner's 1993 1:50 plans likewise in a brown folder, taped around, with a box full of plans and contract papers 1992-4 in the cellar in the light grey filing cabinet in the boiler room.
- Robin Wade Associates concept report and design materials can be found in a box file in the same filing cabinet.
- Some flat plans can be found in the map chest

The 2007 failed bid Mary Anning Wing material:

- Jo Draper's Cockmoile Square history report and Terrain Archaeology SI report are in the Wardrobe files (History of Museum) and in the boiler room filing cabinet. Draper J 2005 LRM Cockmoile Square Arch Hist Survey
- Max Hebditch's correspondence files (2) are boiler room filing cabinet
- Winning tender bids, submissions to grant providers, completion plans and submissions for the 2017 extension are archived in the boiler room filling cabinet. Digital copies of the Planning Application and associated documents are in the internal LRM Digital Library

Richard Bull  
Joint Hon Curator for History  
January 2021

## Appendix 1

### **GEORGE VIALLS AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF COCKMOILE SQUARE, LYME REGIS extracted from an article on the Museum's web site by Max Hebditch**

The small square between the Museum and the Guildhall, or Town Hall, perpetuates Cockmoile Square. It was originally bounded on the east by the seventeenth century Guildhall (described in 1861 as 'a dingy cottage, apparently worth about ten pounds a year, and dignified by the name of *town hall*') and on the south and west by a group of houses, one of which was the fossilist Mary Anning's home in the early nineteenth century.

The Square's present appearance is mainly the work of the architect George Vials (1843-1912), who designed the recreated Guildhall, built in 1887-88, and the Philpot Museum, built in 1900-01. There

have been two alterations which damage his composition: the very ornate upper part of the east wing of the Museum, above the present entrance arcade, was replaced by cement tile hanging in the 1960s; and the wall (the back of cottages facing Gun Cliff) which linked the Museum to the Guildhall disappeared when the cottages were demolished in the 1920s. With a range of buildings designed for other clients in the town Vialls changed the face of Lyme Regis between 1883 and 1901.

George Vialls came from Northampton, where he began his architectural training. In 1868, aged 25, he joined the London practice of Sir Matthew Digby Wyatt. He exhibited a 'design for a town hall' at the Royal Academy in 1868. He won the Soane Medal the same year enabling him to travel, though we do not know where, and in January 1869 he was admitted as an Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects. In 1871 he set up his own practice, working from Great James Street, London. In 1874 he married Eliza in Luton and lived in Doughty Street, London. In the mid 1880s, at the time he began working for rich clients in Lyme Regis, he moved to Grange Park, Ealing, where he lived in some style with five children, a cook and two maids until the death of his wife in 1891.

Throughout his career he specialised in church projects in various parts of the country: new buildings, restoration, repairs and extension, sometimes in conjunction with other architects. Like most architects who were influenced by Pugin, Vialls' churches are gothic and meet the new approaches of the time to the internal layout of Anglican churches. His secular work, which seems to have been largely confined to the Lyme Regis area, is much more diverse. Here was someone who could give his clients what they wanted.

George Vialls' work in the Lyme Regis area begins in 1883, when he was 40 and with an established practice. For the next 19 years, until he resigned from the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1902, he enjoyed the patronage of several important individuals in Lyme Regis. Especially significant were Colonel William Pinney, Liberal MP for Lyme Regis and Charmouth for much of the period from 1833 (when the borough was reformed) to 1865 (the seat was abolished in 1868); the Reverend Edward Peek, a high-church Anglican priest without a parish; and Thomas Philpot, from a family of lawyers and of independent means.

Thomas Embray Davenport Philpot (1859-1918) lived at Gatesfield in Sidmouth Road, which he acquired in 1884 at the age of 26 and renamed Holme Cleeve. He was the great nephew of the Misses Philpot; whose geological collections went to Oxford University and who had worked with Mary Anning. The family were wealthy lawyers with a house in Portland Place, London. Never married, he became a town councillor, mayor of Lyme Regis in 1890-92, a county magistrate, Lyme Regis's first county councillor following the creation of county councils in 1889, and a stalwart of the Primrose League which supported the Conservative Party. Vialls designed a rather severe extension and other improvements at Holme Cleeve in 1885 including a lift and conservatory. Philpot's brother John, who lived in the old family house at Morley Cottage, Silver Street, now the Mariners Hotel, was also a town councillor and magistrate. Thomas remained in Lyme and later contributed financially to two civic improvements designed by Vialls. The very plain National Schools and adjoining head teacher's house in a near arts and crafts style (1892) were built to improve schooling in Lyme. He paid for the Drill Hall, now the Marine Theatre, on the site of the former seawater baths which, with other land in the area, had been acquired by Philpot. He leased it to the 1<sup>st</sup> Dorset Volunteer Artillery (1894). Thomas Philpot was in fact a local developer, financing suburban growth around what is now the Woodmead Hall.

The construction of the Philpot Museum more than ten years after the Guildhall is more of a mystery. Thomas Philpot had acquired the remaining buildings in Cockmoile Square some time earlier and they were demolished – including Mary Anning's birthplace. He began discussions with Vialls about the project in 1899, commissioned him to design it and paid for the construction. Vialls produced a rather grand building in north European renaissance style – an unusual miniature city museum in a tiny town. It is now a grade 2 listed historic building. It was built by William Caddy, a Lyme builder. But what Philpot intended to put into it is not clear. It was given eventually to the Town Council by his niece and opened with a borrowed collection in 1921.

The Museum seems to have been Vialls' last major commission. His client base in Lyme had disappeared, in part because of the effects on major families of the introduction of death duties in 1894. The Revd Charles Myers left Lyme in 1894 for Salisbury. Councillor John Gold Philpot, Thomas's brother died in 1895. William Pinney, Sir Henry Peek and Revd Edward Peek all died in 1898. Peek's

College had no endowment and closed and Poulett House was sold to investors for the planned hotel. **Thomas Philpot left Lyme for an extended period, only returning in 1916.**

Together, Vialls' Guildhall, Museum and other public buildings provide an insight into Lyme society towards the end of the nineteenth century, the influence of its 'great and good', and the work of a minor 19<sup>th</sup> century architect who knew how to serve their interests in a variety of architectural styles.

**Appendix 2** From Mike Taylor *Collections, Collectors and Museums of Note No.50, The Lyme Regis (Philpot) Museum: The History, Problems and Prospects of a small museum and its Geological Collection* the Geological Curator vol 4 1985.

The Museum building was finished in 1901 but remained partly empty (except for use as a Red Cross depot during the Great War) until 1920 when Miss Caroline Philpot, one of Thomas's nieces, donated it to the town. It is not clear what if anything Thomas Philpot had intended to put in the Museum, nor is there any record that he ever took an interest in fossils or had a collection. The collection of his great-aunts had long since gone to the University Museum, Oxford, in 1880 (Edmonds 1978). Lang (1939) asserted that Philpot had built the Museum to house 'miscellaneous collections he had made during his travels' but that it was never put to such use. It seems that the Museum opened in part of the present building in March 1921 only because a retired doctor, V.H. Wyatt Wingrave, loaned his private geological collection and acted as unofficial curator.

Anon. (1921a) stated: 'We are glad to learn that Lyme Regis, a town classic in geology, is now provided with a public collection of local fossils. Three years ago, a small museum building was bequeathed to the corporation by the late Mr Philpot, and it is now occupied by the geological collection and library of Dr Wyatt Wingrave, who has lately become a resident of the town, and has devoted much labour to making the museum of educational value. The fossils are arranged in stratigraphical order, with appropriate labels and diagrams, and Dr Wingrave gives a weekly demonstration which is well attended and much appreciated.'

Muriel Arber (pers. comm.1985) recalls one such lecture, in which Wingrave discussed the dextral and sinistral coiling of gastropods and the way in which the newel stairs of medieval castles were sinistrally coiled to permit the defender, but not the attacker, to use his sword-arm freely! At the opening ceremony (Anon. 1921b) Wingrave expressed his hope that the Museum would be important to visitors, as they could see specimens of local fossils, as well as maps and plans showing where they could be found. At that time Wingrave claimed that there were no local collectors and hoped the Museum would encourage local people to take up an interest in local geology. The weekly demonstrations were intended to explain "where specimens could be found and how they should be arranged."

In 1923 The Lyme Regis Museum of Geology and Archaeology Guide and Report was published. This 22-page illustrated booklet (Anon. 1923) was presumably written by Wingrave because, together with lists of exhibits in each gallery and notes on the most interesting specimens therein, much space was taken up by bald lists of the chief local fossils and the geological zonation of the local rocks. The reader was also told where to find specimens and how to collect them and provided with a list of 'Useful Works' on palaeontology and geology available for reference at the Museum. It would be a bold museum today which referred the general reader to Palaeontographical Society Monographs!

The Philpot Museum was set up as a Trust on 10 October 1927. The founder Trustees included Wingrave, who then became the first official Curator from 1927 (pace Lang 1939 who says 1920) to his resignation on the grounds of ill-health in 1935. In 1937 he gave to the Trustees all the material which he had previously loaned. Wingrave was the only official Curator to have any geological experience until John Fowles (1978 onwards). In November 1935 J.F. Jackson (Honorary Curator of the Isle of Wight Museum of to have acted very much as visiting unofficial curator for geology. Lang also did much other work, especially when the building was taken over by the Borough offices during the 1939-1945 war and the ground floor turned into an A.R.P. control centre in 1942. The collections were apparently shifted to the upper floor. After the war, the Museum fell into a decline and Lang resigned in 1948. There was apparently no curator from 1946 to 1960. The Trustees' minutes have a gap from 1946 to 1957 and then resume to record that the museum building and collections were in very

poor condition, and that the Museum might have to be closed if it did not move to another building. However, the Museum eventually revived, to reopen in 1960, and was considerably helped in 1971 by a grant from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust for renovation of the collections and displays.

After a succession of other curators who did good work but did not have a specific interest in geology, John Fowles, the present Honorary Curator and a member of GCG, took up his post in 1979 after one year as joint Curator. He is a keen amateur botanist and local historian with a strong interest in the history of local geology. However, the Museum (which became the Lyme Regis (Philpot) Museum in 1979) suffers from the lack of a locally available geologically trained person and has here to rely on periodic advice and help from larger museums and now the Area Museum Council for the Southwest.

### Appendix 3 Curators and Directors

**Dr. V. H. Wyatt-Wingrave** unofficial curator 1921-1926

**Dr. V. H. Wyatt-Wingrave** hon curator for geology 1927-1935 with **Cyril Wanklyn** curator for history 1927-1935

**Dr E. le Cronier Lancaster** hon curator for history 1935-1940

**George Burt Geake LDS** hon curator 1940-1946, jointly with **S C Tattersall** 1943-1946

**Dr William Lang FRS** 1938-1948 visiting unofficial curator for geology, showed not much concern for historical artefacts, unless related to the history of geology (Arber pink book, 1988). Lang resigns because of hopeless state of the museum. Ex-Keeper of Geology at BM (NH).

**No overall curator 1946-1960 and no trust minutes 1946-1957**

Philpot Trust meets in 1957 to consider removal or closure owing to poor state of building.

**Mr Marshall** hon curator 1960-1964

**Mr S. C. Bucknall** hon curator 1964-65

**Mr E S Gosling** hon curator 1965-69 tried hard to recover the museum

? **Mr Webb** 1971 (? not in minutes)

**Sir Lawrence Whistler**

**Mayor Henry Chessell** hon curator 1970-76

**Roger Mayne** (the famous photographer) hon curator 1977

**John Fowles** (the famous author) and **Ann Mayne** (playwright) joint hon curators 1978-79

**John Fowles** hon curator 1979 to 1988 (d.2005), assisted by **Albert Brown** from 1986.

**Liz-Anne Bawden MBE** hon curator 1988-2000, **John Fowles** hon archivist, **Roger Piers** curatorial adviser 1989-x, **Jo Draper** paid curatorial consultant 1993-2000.

**Max Hebditch** hon curator (ex Director, Museum of London) and **Jo Draper** assistant curator/curatorial consultant (in the last years paid only for 1 day/wk) 2000-2008.

**Mary Godwin** Curator and Head of Museum, later Director (paid, full time) 2008-2011 ex Curator Cable & Wireless Ltd and Porthcurno Telegraph Museum.

**Kate Hebditch** Acting Curator (paid, 4 days/week) Dec 2011- April 2012 Museum Consultant.

**David Tucker** Director (paid, full time) May 2012- end 2021, with **Barbara & Richard Bull**, Joint Hon Curators for History and **Paddy Howe**, Geologist succeeded by **Dr Paul Davis** Autumn 2021 paid 1 day/week.

Information drawn from Michael Taylor, *Geological Curator* vol 5 no 6 1986 pp 309-317, Trust minute book and later files, Muriel Arber *Lyme Landscape with Figures* Dorset Books 1988, Philpot Trust minutes vol 1 and later typescript minutes where available, Curator's Reports and working knowledge.

### Appendix 4 Lyme Regis Museum Visitor Numbers

All categories, 1927 and 1938 are from Ald Emmett, Mayor, at the Freedom of the Borough ceremony for Cyril Wanklyn, 1936 from Curator's Report, 1970-2006 from curator's reports, where given, except 2007-2012 which are from the Trustee's Annual Reports to the Charity Commission & Companies House.



1927	3000+	1993	no record? [refurb year]
1936	9800+	1994	no record? [refurb year]
1938	12000+	1995	no record? [refurb year]
No record until:		1996	14037
1970	16898	1997	12636
1971	17536	1998	11936
1972	18097	1999	12965
1973	27165	2000	13464
1974	26095	2001	16661
1975	21786	2002	16021
1976	24456	2003	15876
1977	21539	2004	17065
1978	18617	2005	15339
1978	18617	2006	15068
1979	17397	2007	13796
1980	18613	2008	14982
1981	18317	2009	25502
1982	18437	2010	30485
1983	19883	2011	27743
1984	21998	2012	25877
1985	22426	2013	24832
1986	22168	2014	23842
1987	17551	2015	25020
1988	16486	2016	21281 [part closed for extn]
1989	16323	2017	17626 [part closed for extn]
1990	17144	2018	“almost 33,000”
1991	16533 or 15424	2019	“around 27,000
1992	11348	2020	“around 5,000”[COVID year]
		2021	[COVID year]

### Fossil Walks

	Adults	Children	Children on organised trips	TOTALS
<b>2017</b>	3,429	1,657	2,795	<b>7,881</b>
<b>2018</b>	4,398	1,230	1,897	<b>8,205</b>
<b>2019</b>	3,295	2,7953	1,098	<b>5,623</b>

## Appendix 5 Comparable dates of the establishment of other museums

**1753 Sir Hans Soane establishes the British Museum**, which set up the Natural History Museum at South Kensington in 1881 under separate trustees.

**1823 Whitby Museum established sometime after**

**1825 Bath Museum opened on Queen’s Square**, with substantial geological collection based around William Smith’s pioneering geological work in the area

**1829 Rotunda Museum in Scarborough opened**, the first geological museum open to the public, through the efforts of William Smith and John Phillips.

**1848 The Museum of Practical Geology opened in London**, through the efforts of Sir Henry de la Beche of Lyme Regis, first director of the H M Geological Survey. It became the first “single science” national museum. It was later transferred to the new purpose-built Geological Survey and Museum in South Kensington in 1935, which is now the Earth Galleries of the Natural History Museum, although the Geological Survey’s working collection was transferred to Keyworth, Nottinghamshire in stages from 1978.

## Appendix 6

### 6A Museum Deeds

#### **Contents of Deeds Box for the deeds of the Museum site, building and Trust.**

kept in the grey metal & glass security display cabinet in the Writers' Gallery preceded by LYMPM Accession Numbers

1922/2-1 **Receipt dated 1799 by James Blackmore** for £200 paid by John Marshall for Blackmore's goods and furniture, on a slip of quality rag paper, good condition.

1922/2-2 One part of four-part **indenture** being **Davie's marriage settlement** of 1801, folded parchments or oiled paper in two sheets, folded into 12 panels, heavily creased, dirty outside but very good condition inside with seals and revenue stamp intact.

1922/2-3 **Letter E M Scott, Penryn Cornwall from John? Pxxxxman** of Exeter 1810, Exeter post mark, never any envelope, re consideration and other services rendered mentioning Marshall, paper, one-fold, good condition.

1922/2-4 One part of three-part **indenture** being **Assignment of Title Davie to Marshall** re House at Cockmoile Square, 1814, parchment or oiled paper, folded into 12 panels, heavily creased but good condition inside complete with three seals and a revenue stamp.

1922/2-5 **Conditions for sale by Marshall to John Bennett** 1830, manuscript on paper in three sheets with one north-south fold, good condition

1922/2-6 **Indenture for sale by William Randall to Elizabeth Lee** re house on Cockmoile Square, with plan of site, 1887. This is the sale of the Anning House/Bennett House block without the tongue to Bridge St.

1922/2-7 **Indenture for sale by Mrs Lee to T E D Philpot 15 May 1889** for the site of the Anning House, the Bennett House and the tongue up to Bridge St. The abstract of tile details the assembly of the Museum site.

1922/2-8 **Abstract of Title of Caroline Philpot re the Museum as built**, with plan, 1919

1922/2-9 **Supplemental Abstract of Title of Caroline Philpot** re the Museum site, 1919

1922/2-10 **Devise of will of T E D Philpot in favour of Caroline Philpot**, 1918, carbon copy of typescript by Giffard & Barlow, Solicitors acting as the Executors of T E D Philpot

1922/2-11 **Devise of T E D Philpot of the Holme Cleave estate to benefit Caroline Philpot, 1918**, carbon copy of typescript. This document sorts out the problem that T E D Philpot's will could not be enacted as written as the male succession he had expected could not be implemented owing to prior deceases, yellowing copy paper with rusty pin marks, pin removed.

1922/2-12 **Conveyance by Caroline Philpot of the Museum to LRBC 1920**, with plan and recital of title. Paper, hand-written, fair condition

1922/2-13 **Black leather presentation deed case labelled in gold** for the presentation of the deeds by Miss Caroline Philpot (she did attend, see 1922 2-14) to the Mayor of Lyme Regis in 1920. The contents presumably included the deeds above that would fit, but it actually contained only the letters 1922 2-14 which have been removed. Fair condition, slightly split.

1922/2-14 **nine (no) letters to Town Clerk from Caroline Philpot's solicitors** re handover to LRBC, mostly typed, some handwritten, all appear to be wet copy book copies and a receipt for papers deposited as Lloyds Bank.

1922/2-15 **Letter from T E D Philpot's solicitors to Francis Wills, The Bank, Lyme Regis** seeking title deeds for museum currently being built, 1920 manuscript with notes on fly.

1936/3 **Deed of Gift of Museum Objects Dr Wyatt Wingrave to LRBC, 1936**

1980/ 23A **check Declaration of LRM Trust by the trustees, 1980**

**IN ADDITION Relevant papers which explain the above, not accessioned**

Study of 1922-2 and other deeds at Dorset County Record Office by Jo Draper extracted from Archaeology and History of the Lyme Regis Museum Site by Jo Draper 2005

## **Appendix 6B**

### **The title deeds to the Cockmoil Square fossil shop by Dr Michael Taylor – an initial analysis**

On 15 May 1889 Elizabeth Lee sold to T. E. D. Philpot what appears to be the entire site of the present-day Lyme Regis Museum, in two parcels, both in the same conveyance (LYMPM 1922/2-17). One parcel consisted principally of the L-shaped Bennett property, as shown by a plan, and probably also the small house, no 17 in the Drayton survey. The other parcel was 'delineated on the plan annexed to an indenture' of 6 May 1887 in which Elizabeth Randall sold the property to Elizabeth Lee. This latter indenture survives, with the same description, complete with the plan mentioned (LYMPM number). The same plan was redrawn for LYMPM 1922/2-9, *Supplemental abstract of the title of Miss Caroline Philpot ...*

The parcel shown on the 1887 plan was described in the 1889 document as 'the site of all that tenement situate in Cockermouth otherwise Cogmoile Square in Lyme Regis aforesaid which was sometime since destroyed by storm or tempest and formerly described as follows: The easternmost part or parcel of the burgage or tenement formerly in the occupation of William Carswell [...] on the south side of the street there [in Lyme Regis] below the prison and bounded by [...] the said street on the north'. The only property fitting this description of the original plot is Drayton's plot 18 (figure 3), of which the Annings' house was indeed the 'eastern part' (Drayton 18a).

It was bounded by 'the dwelling house now or late of Charles Cawley on the east'. This must be the plot held by James Blackmore (c. 1761-1826), schoolmaster, till his death in July 1826, which indeed suffered sea damage around 1824-1825 as shown in the land tax lists. Working backwards through the same lists strongly suggests that Blackmore originally purchased this property after the death of Charles Cawley (?c.1730 -1809), as Cawley had held a property of the same assessed value. This property, held by Cawley and then Blackmore, must be that which bounded the Guildhall to the south, in deeds for part of the Guildhall ground floor which they leased (quoted by Draper [2005], 19-20), which confirms the location. Land tax lists show that Blackmore's widow Elizabeth still held it in the list of 1827 but soon sold it to the Henley

family as it is marked '[illegible] Henley Tenant Blackmore' in Drayton's sea wall survey of 1827. She appears as George Henley's tenant in 1828 and William Henley's in 1829.

The mapped parcel was also bounded by 'the dwelling house and backside now or late of the said Charles Cawley and Henry Hawkins on the southwest'. This strongly suggests the L-shaped Bennett property, which ran along the southern and western sides of the known Anning house. Draper ([2005], 18) identifies a lease to Henry Hawkings, apparently correctly, as for the little house on the north-west corner of Cockmoil Square (Drayton 17, figure 3); as quoted, the lease shows that Hawkings also owned the adjacent Bennett property. Land tax rolls show that Cawley occupied a house of no great value, almost certainly in this area, owned by Henry H. Henley. This could be the little house west of the Anning shop (Drayton 18b). Or else and perhaps more likely it was the short seaward arm of the L-shaped Bennett property immediately behind the Carswell property, which would be a convenient extension to his own next door, in which case Hawkings owned the long arm of the L, the strip running from the street to the sea. Either way, this would match the description.

It is only possible to provide rough dimensions for the Annings' house from independent map evidence (the Drayton survey inconsistently uses double and single lines to give the boundary of each plot, which gives quite a large error margin. The 1:2,500 OS map of 1887 is also too small-scale for precision, although it is possible to scale off an enlargement using dimensions scaled off from a fixed measurement made on Digimap® (the corner of the Pilot Boat Inn to the north-eastern corner of the Guildhall at the junction with Butter Market). It is also unclear exactly how the map in the deeds was measured. However, within those limits of error, the map in the deeds matches the estimates for Drayton plot 18a reasonably well, far better than it does 18b or the two combined. It is also reasonably close to the apparent plot in the 1: 2500 map, not least in the somewhat north-north-east orientation of the Cockmoil Square side.

A further potential line of evidence is the ownership history as recorded in the deeds. Unfortunately, it is not possible from the 1887 and 1889 deeds to connect back to the documented history of the Annings' house, which ends with the advertisement for Jefferd's bankruptcy sale in 1841. The detailed evidence in the 1887 and 1889 deeds goes only back to 1880 when George Lord Vaux of Harrowden and William Mostyn (possibly acting as trustees or executors for the previous owner) sold the property to William Randall the elder (d. 1884). Randall's widow Elizabeth and (presumably) son also William sold it on to Elizabeth Lee in 1887. Apart from the reference to Carswell, the only mention of a previous owner is 'lately [...] John Manden', who remains unidentified. There was a Munden family of Lyme plumbers, glaziers, painters and water-suppliers whose members owned property in Bridge Street, but they do not seem to have included a John in their number; possibly there was an error for one of the Lyme plumbers James Munden (d. 1850) or his nephew also James Munden (d. 1859).

However, Draper ([2005], 19) quotes a deed for a 1767 lease from the Corporation which appears to be the eastern part of the deceased Carswell's burgage and which comprises 'a little dwelling [...] containing a cellar and two rooms over and a chamber over the said two rooms'. She then cites a 1793 deed for the lease of what is evidently this house and the next (i.e. Drayton 18a and 18b) by the Corporation to John Hutchings, below the prison. The eastern portion of this must be the Anning house and this now ties it in with the known history of the Anning house as a Hutchings property in Cockmoil Square, as well as linking it further to the property in the 1880s deeds as being the, or at least a property once occupied by Carswell. Unfortunately, there is at least one discrepancy in Draper's analysis, a reference to a lease of 1802 to one John McCudey, which would on the face of matters break the Hutchings lease. It has not been possible to obtain access to the deeds cited by Draper and quoted in this paper from her work, in order to resolve this issue and verify the conclusions in the light of new evidence in this paper.

In summary, the property described and mapped in the 1880s deeds is identified as the former Anning house with considerable confidence, though its ownership history between 1841 and 1880 remains unclear. It throws no further light on the property's history or date of destruction than we already have from other evidence, but is at least notably consistent with it, especially in the identification of the plot of land in question [need to see the whole deed for Randall to Lee, bit hidden by map]. Further investigation in surviving deeds for this and adjacent properties would be beneficial, especially those cited by Draper.