

Vandelow Hobman Allen - Entrepreneur

Graham Davies

April 2020



Van Allen (1893-1953) was well-known in Lyme Regis from the 1920s to 1950s. He was a business man with a wide range of interests and skills. Some in the town thought of him as 'a bit of a spiv', but talking to his family, you get the impression of a good hearted man who did many of his deals on the shake of hands.



Van Allen was born in Stratton, Dorset, where his father Samuel Allen was a coal merchant. In the late 1890s Samuel moved his family, wife Sarah and their seven children, to Beaminster in Dorset to become inn keeper at the Sun Inn, East Street. Samuel Allen died in 1901. Sarah remarried the following year to a Walter Russell and the family continued to live at the Sun Inn. Van Allen was a solicitor's clerk by the age of seventeen. He married Equilla Marian Hansford in December 1915 at Beaminster Parish Church, and served in WWI as a corporal in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

At the end of WWI, Van Allen, with his wife and young son James, came to live in Lyme Regis at No.34a, Coombe Street. Their daughter Marjorie was born in 1920. It was from here, during the next seven years, that he embarked on a diverse entrepreneurial career.

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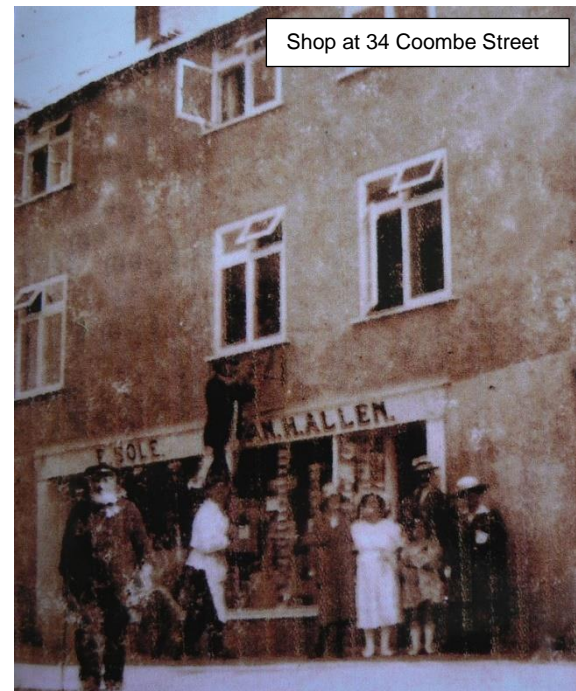
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Mr. H. Van Allen is the representative of the "Bridport News" for Lyme Regis and district, and he will be pleased to receive news items and advertisements for insertion in our columns.



Shop at 34 Coombe Street

Mr Van H Allen, Lyme Regis, the well-known card manipulator and entertainer, Is prepared to attend private parties, diners etc. Any distance – reasonable terms.

In 1925, Van Allen and his family moved to Pyne House, No.10 Broad Street. The house was divided. The incumbent solicitor's firm, Hillman & Bond, was relocated to No.10a, the Allens taking the remainder of the property for their home and business, which included the house, estate agency and photographic studio.

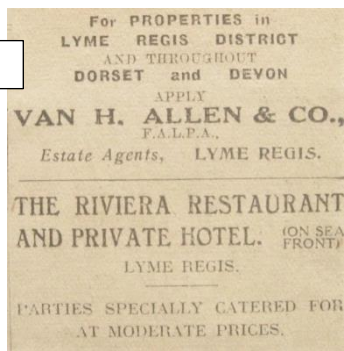


Riviera Hotel china

From the early 1930s until 1938/9, Pyne House, was also the Riviera Private Hotel. This was run by his wife. There was a restaurant and tea garden overlooking the beach.

After the move to Pyne House the estate agency was run by Van H Allen & Co.

1933



Between about 1926 and 1935 Van Allen had a photographic studio at No.10. He took studio portraits. Many of these were of 'important' local people - his portraits of Lyme mayors are in the Guildhall.

From the 1920s to the beginning of WWII, Van Allen was a local reporter/photographer for local, regional and national newspapers.

The building and vehicle park at No.67 Broad Street was bought with plans for a car repair business, which fell through when Van Allen's son was killed in WWII. The car park area was always kept as such - post war until the early 1960s they also dealt with the Royal Blue coach service, and with organising National coach trips for holiday visitors into the 1970s.

In 1948 Van Allen moved to live at Waterside, Uplyme. He continued the business at Pyne House and was also a partner in estate agents Allen & Taylor, Seaton, and Allen, Taylor & Whitfield, East Street, Bridport. He died in 1953.

References

Information given by members of Van Allen's family for a Museum exhibition in 2006
 Ancestry.co.uk
 Lyme Regis Museum archives and Research Team's digital archive



