

Raymond House, 29 Broad Street Lyme Regis

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It is believed that Raymond House is an example of a Georgian makeover of an earlier dwelling from the 17th century, or possibly late Elizabethan, with further changes in Victorian times (shop fronts) and later.

To put the few known early facts about the house in context, we must consider the development of Broad Street. Formerly known as West Street, the name of Broad Street was generally not adopted until the beginning of the 18th century. West Street is mentioned in the Court records from as early as 1478, and the growing of West Street uphill since 1549 describes the expansion westwards of the old town.

In comparison to the winding streets and irregular development of the medieval town, this street is wide and straight with regular properties on both sides, and is thought by some historians that it is even possible that the street was planned as a market-street at the time of the first charter (1284), and also by the system known as the burgage plot (effectively land grants to encourage new immigrants).

West Street or Broad Street was filling up with houses from top and bottom on both sides between 1600 and 1700. It was not at first a street of shops as it is to-day, but a street of private dwellings. However, by 1750, Lyme Regis was in a very low state. The cloth industry had declined, people were poor, houses were of little value, and there was little shipping, no influx of strangers, and very few respectable inhabitants, with the population dwindling to less than a thousand inhabitants. Finally, quoting John Fowles, 'a great social upheaval took place in Lyme in the period 1760-1830, during which it changed from a dying port into a fashionable sea-side resort. Older buildings were frequently pulled down or re-fronted to please the new influx of gentry. Many surviving houses are much more ancient than their Georgian or Victorian faces'.

The house is named after the Raymond family who came from Axminster. An Arthur Raymond, a carter of Axminster, was suspected of being a supporter of the Monmouth rebellion in 1685. He is probably the father of Arthur Raymond, who appears in Lyme in the early part of the 18th century. The family had connections with the dominant merchant family of the time, the Burridges, and were importing ivory from the Guinea Coast.

His son Arthur (1721-1789) was the Surveyor of Customs of Lyme and a very important figure during the last forty years of his life. He was mayor of Lyme Regis on four occasions between 1761 and 1786, and a powerful supporter of the Fane family who controlled the Borough during the 18th century; this ended following the Electoral Reform Act in 1832. It was he who had the riot act read against the Townites on April 8th, 1782, who disrupted a meeting at the Town Hall. In the end, the Town Council adjourned to the Mayor's house (Raymond House) and completed their business there. The will of Arthur's second wife and widow, Mary, in 1797, gives us some idea of a rich Lyme House of its time, with its books and furniture, china, and pictures.

Arthur Mills Raymond (1763-1843), son by Arthur's second marriage to Mary Mills was also mayor four times in the early years of the 19th century. He offered the money in the 1820s when the Corporation

decided it had to raise a mortgage on the then extensive Borough property. When William Pinney won the Reform Act election in 1832, and took over the Borough's mortgage, the Raymonds disappear from Lyme affairs. Arthur Mills Raymond, of the Manor House, Ealing, died in 1843, worth nearly a quarter of a million pounds at probate.

Several questions remain answered. It is not known when the house was acquired by the Raymonds, or when the assumed 'Georgian makeover' took place. I speculate that Arthur Mills Raymond continued to live in the house after his respective parents' deaths until he left Lyme to live in Ealing. A Miss Mary Ann Raymond lived at the house from at least 1841 until her death in 1863.

In 1895, Walter Wilson and his family were living in Raymond House, from where he ran an ironmongery business. A shopfront & premises must have been added. The 1911 census describes the house as having ten rooms, which would include the kitchen, but not count the scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor warehouse, office or shop. The Wilson family remained at No. 29 Broad Street until 1931.

A change in emphasis in the 1930s. The shop became a separate entity from the house, with several businesses renting the retail premises over the following years, whilst the incoming owners/occupiers of Raymond House, Frederick & Alice Paul, set up an Estate Agency on their ground floor, necessitating a change in windows, and a new entrance, at street level. These events are summarised below in my researches up to the year 2000.

<u>No. 29</u>	<u>Raymond House</u>
1905-27	Walter Wilson, ironmonger 1905 Mrs Wilson, apartments
1931	Miss Wilson, ironmonger
1933	Gale & Gale, jewellers
1934-40	Edwin C Gale, watchmaker & jeweller
1952-66	Haddon, draper & outfitter Also at 26, 27 & 28
1969-80	C Smith & Son, gentlemen's outfitter
	1932-71 A Paul & Son, estate agents
	1972-76 T R G Lawrence & Son, Estate Agents
	1976- Scott Rowe, solicitors
1981-87	The Clothes Horse, menswear
1991	Thorne & Co, estate agents
1992-97	Thorne, Smith & Banwell, estate agents
1997-2005	Sweet Thursday, gifts