

The Old George Inn, Lyme Regis

<https://www.lymeregismuseumresearchteam.co.uk>

Graham Davies & Richard Wells, 2018

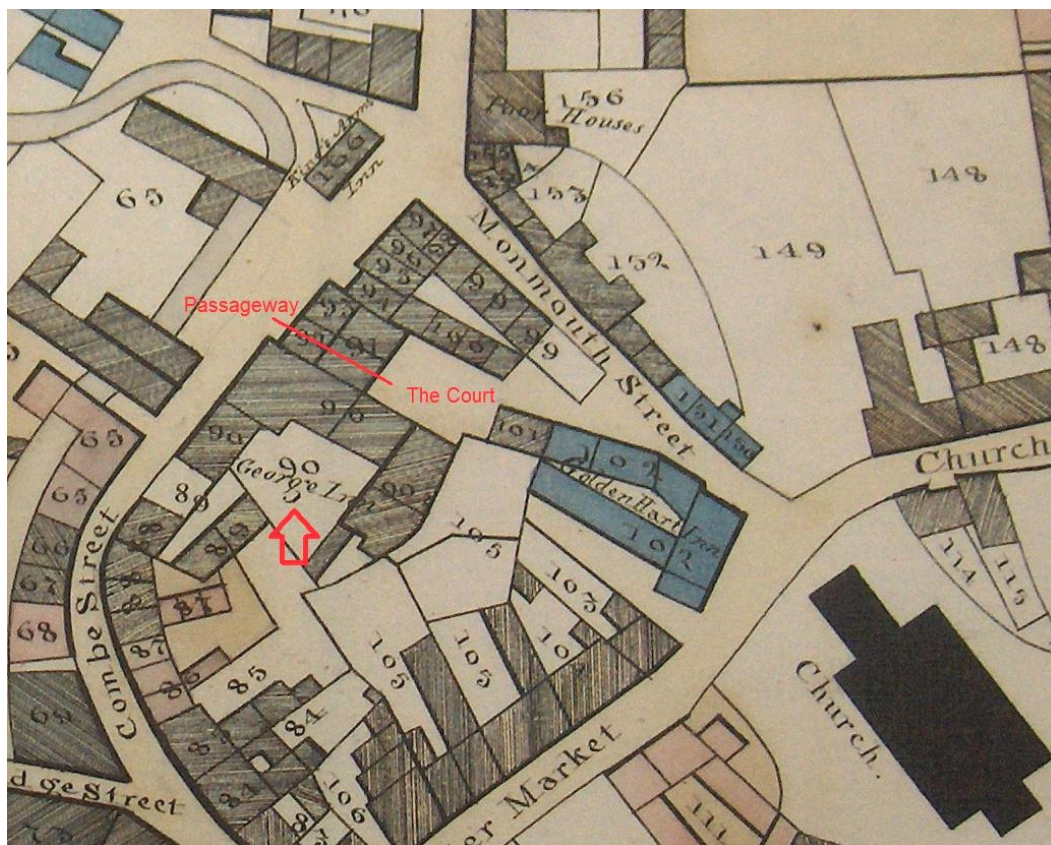
“The George was the principal inn in the town: it had stabling to accommodate a great number of pack-horses, employed in conveying into the interior the merchandize purchased at Lyme. It was built of Dutch bricks, and the premises were so extensive, that at night, after the gates were closed, it resembled a little town.” George Roberts ⁽¹⁾

It is probable, in the 17th century, that the original timber frame, with wattle and daub infill, of the George Inn, was faced with Dutch bricks, which had been imported as ballast.⁽²⁾

The George Inn was destroyed in the fire of 1844, and was not rebuilt. The name was taken over by a hostelry at today’s No.16 Coombe Street, which closed down in the early years of the 20th century.

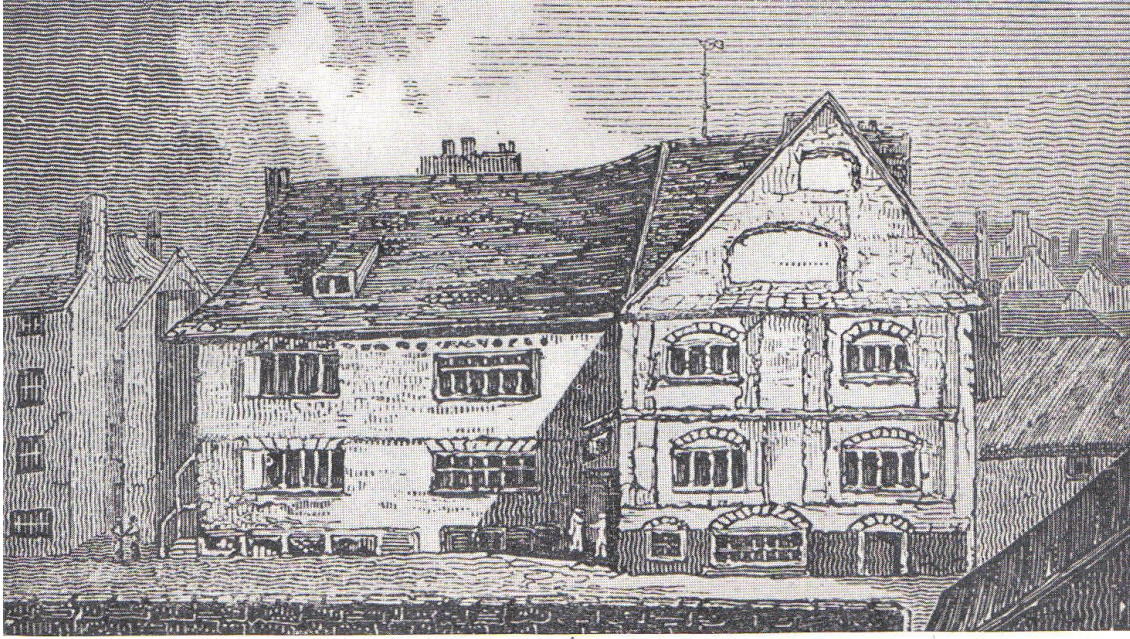
Location of the former George Inn

The 1825 map below shows the location of the George Inn between Coombe Street and Monmouth Street, ref Nos. 90.



⁽¹⁾ *History of Lyme Regis and Charmouth*, George Roberts 1834

⁽²⁾ Dutch Bricks, Wikipedia



THE GEORGE INN.

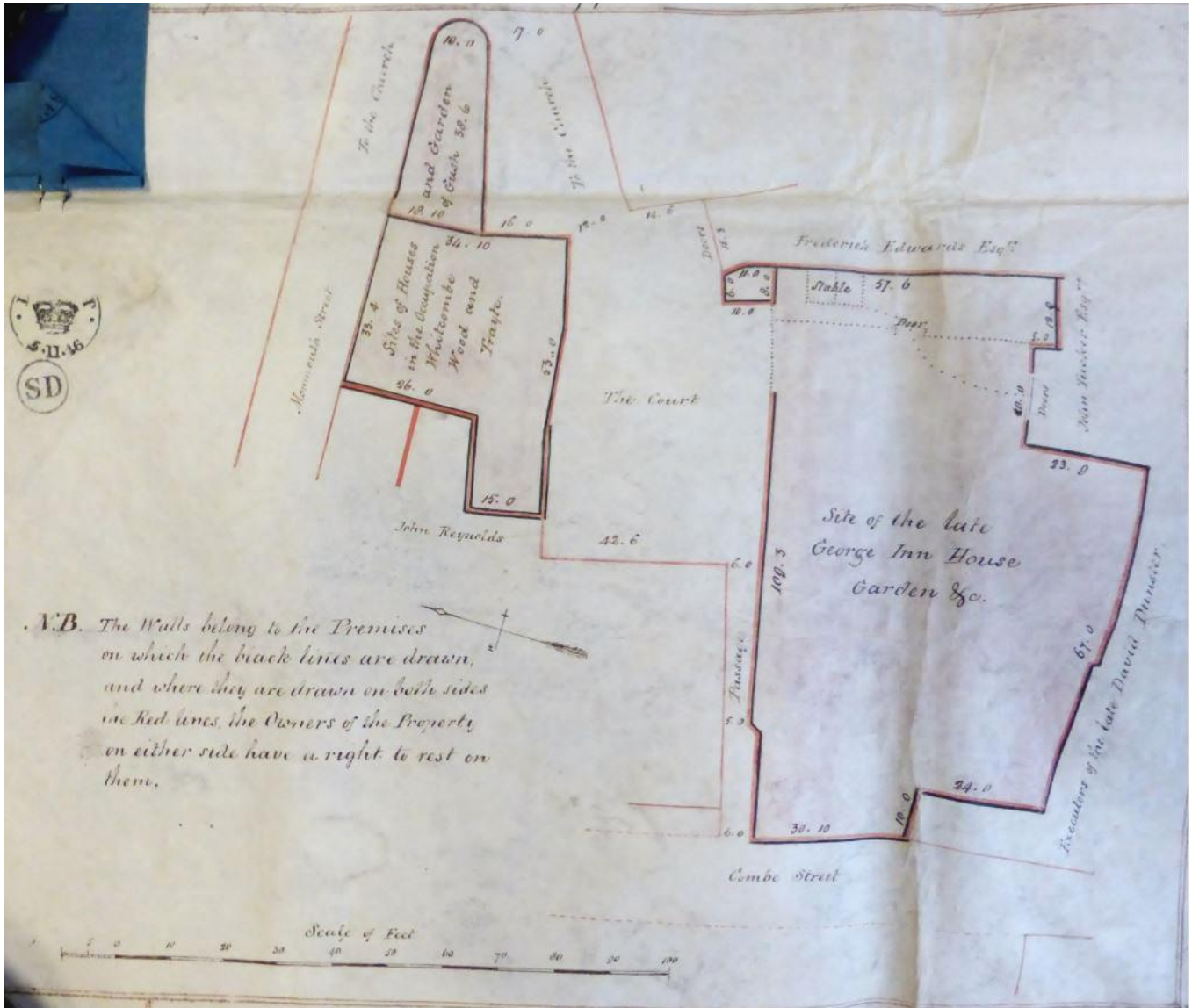
A woodcut from the 1834 edition of George Roberts's *History of Lyme Regis*

Based on comparison with the photo below, the authors believe that the only known image of the George Inn was drawn from the view in an upper room of a house in Monmouth Street looking seawards towards the inn over the intervening roof tops.



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Photo taken of George's Court from upper floor of Monmouth House



1847 plan of George's Court and the site of the late George Inn ⁽³⁾

The measurements on the above plan of the site of the late George Inn describe an area of 5845 sq ft occupied today by Nos. 4-7 (site of former stables) & Nos. 1-3 George's Square, and Nos. 38-39 Coombe Street.



This blue plaque has been mistakenly placed on No. 37 Coombe Street.

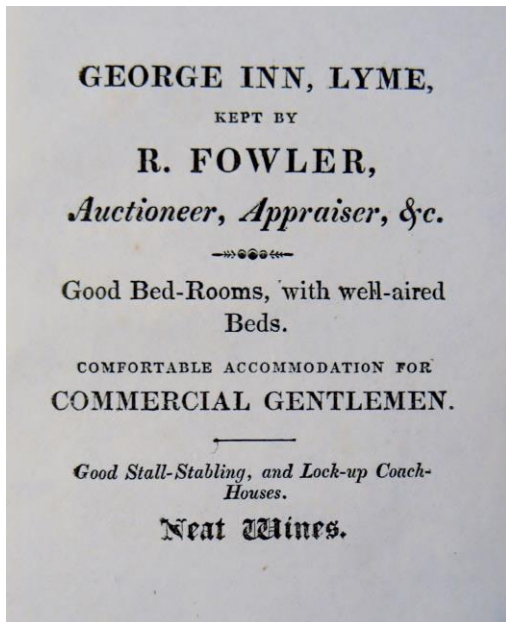
⁽³⁾ Indenture between Tucker & Barfoot, 1847, D/LRM/A6/2, Dorset Heritage Centre

History of the George Inn

The George Inn was indeed the major hostelry in Lyme Regis from the 15th, possibly earlier, to the latter part of the 18th century. It was said that anyone, who was anyone, visiting Lyme, would stay at the George Inn, including the Duke of Monmouth!

Until Lyme could be accessed by turnpike roads from the 1760s, goods entered and left the town either by sea, or overland by packhorse. Trade between Bristol and Lyme Regis had been done by packhorse from early days, across the base of the peninsula, saving time and avoiding the dangers of the sea route, namely storms, shipwreck and piracy. With its extensive stabling, the George Inn was the base for these packhorse trains, which were mainly made up of stockily built ponies, capable of carrying in excess of 100 kg in weight, spread between two panniers. A bell was commonly attached to the lead pony to warn fellow travellers of the train's approach, which typically consisted of 10-20 animals.

The packhorse trains would leave the court in front of The George, via the lower part of Monmouth Street (which local people would also name Horse Street), pass along Horse Street (today's Coombe Street, from Ship Inn to Gosling Bridge) and follow the course of the River Lim to Horn Bridge, from where they continued their journey on Clappentail, Hays or Colway Lane, depending on their destination.



In 1758, the first carriage road was built into the town. This heralded the end of the packhorse trade. No longer of importance as a packhorse inn, the George Inn just became another local hostelry in the town, overtaken in prominence by the Three Cups and the Golden Lion (today's Royal Lion), from where stage coaches began to run in the early 1800s.

The inn continued to provide stabling for its customers and coach houses for their carriages such as post-chaises and phaetons. It also provided livery for the horses of local people.⁽⁴⁾

The room in which the Duke of Monmouth slept in June 1685 was still an attraction for interested visitors. In 1836, a Miss Scriven of the George Inn found a sword concealed in the ceiling of the said room which naturally led to much surmise and conjecture.⁽⁵⁾

1830 advert

Timeline for landlords of the George Inn

1724	Brent Reynel
1802-05	Samuel Buckley
1811-20	Joseph Swaine
1823-28	Sarah Swaine
1830	Richard Fowler
1839-44	James Reynolds

⁽⁴⁾ Diary of Thomas Andros (copy), 1799. LRM Research Team Archive

⁽⁵⁾ Dorset County Chronicle, 20 July, 1836

Postscript

Much has already been written about the 1685 Monmouth Rebellion and the fire of 1844. The authors have turned their attention to the Dutch bricks, which are thinner than those in the UK, and because of their durability, were first used in the building of chimneys.



After the 1844 fire, they feel that an enterprising builder would have saved the salvageable bricks from the George Inn site and stored them for future use. A few bricks (see above) have been found in the town, but the discovery that a large number of Dutch bricks were used in the construction of a fireplace in the old police station, No. 9 Coombe Street, built in 1869, might well confirm their thoughts.

References

Elizabethan Lyme Regis, Peter Lacey 2017
LRM Research Team Archive
Lyme Regis, A Retrospect, Cyril Wanklyn 1927