

Charm of Lyme Regis in the 1920s

The newspapers describe the attractions of Lyme Regis.

Western Morning News, March 22, 1923:

If you wish to make your fortune as an undertaker don't set up in Lyme Regis. You simply will not get any business except, perhaps, your own funeral after a coroner's verdict of "Died of starvation".

There are lots of things which are better in Lyme Regis than anywhere else - its lobsters, its scenery, and its restfulness. This is a curious blend of virtues, perhaps; lobsters and rest do not go very well together - at all events at night time. Its scenery must, I think, be unsurpassed by that of any other place in England. Indeed, as one who has seen the Alps, the Rhine, the English Lakes, the Canadian & Montana Rockies, the expanses of Southern California, the wonderful rivers and forests of Oregon, and the enchanting scenery of the Straits of Fusa, I can recall little to equal that wonderful segment of coastline east of Lyme Regis when viewed from the Cobb on a winter afternoon, with its array of bluff headlands an echelon and its fascinating blend of hues as they are played upon by the beams of the setting sun.

But, after all, the chief merit of this quaint little place, tucked away so snugly among the sheltering hills, is to be found in its curiously dreamy, archaic atmosphere, recalling the days of the old country hall, with its jars of rose leaves and lavender, its wall fruit, the passing mail coach, and the old fashioned harvest. Little of that old time feeling remains in these days of hustle, but of that little Lyme Regis possess a fairly large proportion. And what if, during a few short summer months, the spell is broken by the incursion of modern elements? Does not the contrast but serve to emphasize the real life of the real Lyme.

It is, indeed, during the winter months that the merits of Lyme must be experienced to be appreciated. It is then that the seeker after rest from the never ceasing whirl of the town may come and take his ease. It is then that, without a shiver, he may read in his morning paper of freezing blasts and blizzards elsewhere, or may ramble to his heart's content over hill and dale, which is green all the year round; or take a turn on the golf links while he inhales vitalizing ozone as it blows from off the Channel.

A well known local doctor says that Lyme Regis has a very excellent winter climate, and it is sheltered from all northern winds. In spring Lyme is the most beautiful place he has seen for its wonderful wild flowers. He has yet to find a more delightful place for people to retire after the strain of life in the city. For visitors, he considered Lyme Regis a unique combination of great natural beauty, rich historical and geological interest, and exceedingly healthy environments. In a word, Lyme Regis is second to no other seacoast resort in the clemency of its climate, and it is particularly suitable for all who find it necessary for their health to reside in the South. Lyme is a very excellent resort at any period of the year.

Daily Herald, July 20, 1925:

Lyme Regis, situated at the extreme end of Dorset and on the Borders of Devon, is a town of unique charm, lying between two rocky hills.

Whether he enters it by road or rail, the visitor is almost precipitated into an atmosphere of old-world quaintness, for the long winding roads lead down from the hills right on to a wide expanse of Channel, against which Lyme is little more than a mere spot.

Lyme Regis during the past few years has made rapid strides into popular favour. As a health and seaside resort it has natural advantages for every kind of visitor, from the toddling infant to the antiquarian and the geologist. Lovers of natural beauty find here some of the most picturesque scenery in the country.

One of the oldest boroughs in England, Lyme is also one of the richest in historic and literary associations. There is the "Great House", once lived in by Pitt, and the ancient forge beloved and painted by Whistler, in an alley off Broad Street. At Tudor House there lived Sarah Andrew, the original of Sophia, in Fielding's "Tom Jones", and the town records contain the appeal of Tucker, a ward of the heiress, to the Mayor against the violence of Fielding.

Lyme Regis supplied ships against the Armada, and the ill-fated Duke of Monmouth landed near the Cobb to try to raise the West Country against his uncle, James II.

Jane Austen, who stayed there, has made Lyme Regis live for ever in "Persuasion", and round this novel and the landing of Monmouth is a well-known story of Tennyson's visit. Someone wished to point out the historic landing place, but Tennyson exclaimed: "Don't bother me about the Duke of Monmouth; show me the exact spot where Louisa Musgrave (a character of "Persuasion") fell." Mary Russell Mitford lived there for a time.

Lyme Regis has so far had a successful season. Many improvements have been made in it. The Marine Walk, a pleasant promenade, leads down to the sands. Above it are the beautiful Langmoor Gardens, overlooking that quaint structure "The Cobb" first heard of in Edward III's reign, an ancient breakwater which has probably preserved Lyme from the trouble which has overtaken Sidmouth and other South Coast resorts.
