

Water Recreation Case studies 1972 - Lyme Regis

Extracts from the report transcribed by Felicity Cox, November 2016.

A report to the sports Council and Countryside Commission by Dartington Amenity Research Trust July 1973. It consisted of 10 case studies of specific water resources used for recreation, one of those chosen was Lyme Regis, originally chosen as a "steep profile" coast with narrow beaches but perhaps better considered as a small coastal resort. Managed directly by Lyme Regis Municipal Borough Council.

Recreational facilities in Lyme Regis relating to boating activities are concentrated in the Cobb area, while other recreational facilities are dispersed throughout the study area.

Publicly Controlled Facilities

Slipway. Originally built by the RAF and now under the control of the Borough Council, the slipway at the Cobb is constructed of concrete and is 7.8 metres wide. Charges made for use of the slipway are: Visiting boats per day £0.50 per week £ 1.50. Canoes per day £0.25

On peak days during the summer the entrance to the slipway becomes very congested because of the intensity of use (an estimated 400 boats launched or retrieved on peak Sundays) by people and cars towing boats or trailers have to break through a line of cars queuing for Monmouth Beach car park. None of the officials in this area; the harbourmaster, recreation supervisor, car park attendant has any responsibility for solving this problem of congestion and Lyme's traffic warden is fully committed in the High Street area of the town.

Harbour. The harbour is tidal with a high-water depth at the entrance from 3.7 to 4.3 metres at spring tides and 0.9 metres less at neaps. Within the harbour the high-water depth is from 2.7 to 4.3 metres at spring tides. The harbour is formed by a pier divided at the end into an inner and outer pier and the separate north wall which together give protection from the south westerly and south easterly gales. The harbour is shrinking in size (one third is unusable by boats) due to a encroaching

Sand bar which the Council has removed once but which formed again within a season, further attempts to eliminate the bar will be made again this winter when the north wall will be extended northwards by 45.7 metres and the sand bar again removed. Use of the harbour is limited to vessels under 7.3 metres overall length (with the exception of commercial fishing boats) although this rule is waived for vessels using the harbour as a refuge. The harbour pier can take vessels up to 100 tons.

Lights. There are two fixed navigation lights at the Cobb which are set on a fixed bearing to bring shipping safely into the harbour at night.

Flag. A red flag is hoisted by the harbourmaster from a flagpole on the inner pier when he considers conditions to be dangerous for putting out to sea. This is an advisory service only.

Moorings. There are 190 moorings in the harbour with a waiting list for moorings of 150. The allocation of moorings is made by the harbourmaster according to his discretion.

Boat park. The Council provides parking spaces on land for 90 boats, 63 of these are in one dingy park to the west of the slipway the remainder are in three different locations – 12 on the slipway shoulders, 5 beyond the Power Boat club park and 10 which are reserved for visitors who are staying in Lyme Regis on the Cobb itself.

Public Facilities for Casual Visitors

Beaches There are four beaches at Lyme Regis plus the sand bar in the harbour. All the beaches are gently sloping, in contrast to most of the other beaches of Lyme Bay and are safe for bathing. The four beaches are: Monmouth Beach – this limestone shingle beach

stretches westwards from the Cobb and is famous for its fossils which can be found along this beach and embedded in the cliff behind it. Front Beach (including Cobb Gate Beach) – this is also a shingle beach 0.5 kilometres long although an area of sand is exposed at low tide. Church Cliff Beach – this small shingle beach 0.1 kilometres long is separated from the Front Beach by an area uncovered only at low tide where the River Lim flows into the sea. East Cliff Beach – this beach runs all the way from Lyme Regis to Charmouth and is also shingle. Its length from Lyme Regis to the eastern boundary of the Borough is 1.3 kilometres. At the Lyme Regis end the beach runs in a north/south direction and thus remains sheltered from the prevailing south westerly winds. Several groynes have been erected at this end of the beach to help prevent erosion of the cliffs and there is also a concrete sea wall at the base of the cliff in this area. Incorporated in the wall is a path for pedestrian with steps down to the beach. Many fossils, mostly ammonites, can be found on this beach.

Sand Bar. The sand bar in the harbour is not usually covered by the tide so is used extensively as a beach. It also forms the access for pedestrians to the north wall of the harbour.

Equipment on hire

Beach huts. There are 24 beach huts located on the lower concrete promenade behind Front Beach. They are bookable for periods lasting from one day to a whole season (April to September)

Beach tents. Four beach tents (canvas with wooden floors) are also erected behind Front Beach

Changing tents. Four changing tents are also erected behind Front Beach for the season – two for use by males and two by females.

Deckchairs. There are 3,500 deckchairs operated on a concession from the Council. They are available along the harbour wall and the whole length of Marine Parade, in the gardens and on the Front Beach – or may be carried to the other beaches.

Windbreaks are also for hire from a point close to the sand bar.

Floats. There are 21 small fibre-glass paddle boats which are also operated on a concession from the Council.

Harbour wall. It is used extensively by casual visitors both sitting in the shelter of the wall and walking and affords views of the activities in the harbour and out to sea, plus the whole of Lyme.

Toilets. There are public toilets provided at seven different sites. During peak days some become very crowded, particularly those sited behind the Power Boat Club car park. These are near the sand bar and Cobb area which attracts large numbers of people and they are very small. All the toilet cubicles cost 1 penny to use.

Public open space. There are several public open spaces near the coast at Lyme Regis:

Church Cliff between Church Cliff Beach and East cliff Beach is leased by the Borough Council from the Church. It is grass covered and crossed by a path with seats provided.

Langmoor and Lister Gardens. Situated on the cliff top above Front Beach, these adjacent gardens formally laid out and criss-crossed with paths are dotted with seats from which extensive views of the sea are provided.

Charmouth Road Picnic Area. This grassy space, newly cleared adjacent to the car park, provides a sheltered area for picnicking on the cliff top with views of the sea. Access is from the car park or from the footpath coming up East Cliff from the south.

Bordering the study area to the west is the Axmouth-Lyme Regis Undercliffs National Nature Reserve, covering the landslip region and traversed by a public footpath.

Shelters and seats. Free public shelters are provided along Marine Parade some of which are glass-fronted and some open-fronted. Shelters are also provided on the Cobb – a small

one on the main pier and three small open-fronted shelters on the inner pier. Seats are provided in the Langmoor and Lister Gardens and on Church Cliff. They are also provided along Marine Parade, on the outer pier of the Cobb, at the entrance to the Monmouth Beach area, on the raised pedestrian area of the eastern end of the High Street and above Gun Cliff.

Lifebelts. Seven lifebelts are provided by the Council on the Cobb and at points along the sea front.

Safety boat. The Council provides an unpowered dingy near the sand bar during the summer for general use in an emergency and for use by the concessionaire who controls the hire of the paddle floats.

Secondary facilities. The Council also provides other facilities for visitors which are not related to water recreation. These are putting (18 holes) and mini-golf (18 holes) courses, located in the Langmoor and Lister Gardens and two hard tennis courts located at Woodmead Halls. There are ten trampolines on Monmouth Beach, the cost of a five-minute "go" being 5 pence: they are run on a concession from the Council and were a new feature in 1972.

Public Facilities for Schoolchildren and Youth Groups

Lyme Regis Adventure Centre is a residential centre specialising in adventure activity and work study related to both land and sea. It is situated in the area behind Monmouth Beach in the building which was built and occupied by an RAF Marine Craft Unit from 1937 until 1964. The building is leased from the Lyme Regis Borough Council by the Dorset County Council Education Authority and the services of the Centre are mainly used by Dorset Schools and youth organisations. The Centre is equipped for outdoor land and water activities and indoor games and teaching activities.

Water-orientated equipment. Two launches, six sailing dinghies, 12 canoes, two rowing boats with outboard engines, a full range of fishing tackle, boat trailers, anoraks for sailing, wet suits for staff, life jackets, charts and compasses for elementary navigation.

Land-orientated equipment. Full camping and expedition equipment for 24 including Ordnance Survey maps and compasses and field study equipment including microscopes, lenses, nets, ranging poles and aquaria.

Other equipment includes a library, games equipment for volleyball, basketball, badminton and table tennis, chess dominoes draughts, record player, darts, cine projector, slide projector and a Transit van.

COMMERCIAL FACILITIES

Commercial Facilities for Boats

Cobb Garage. This garage, the premises of which are leased from the Council, is situated in the area behind Monmouth Beach, adjacent to the Adventure Centre and provides complete garage services for both cars and boat engines with the exception of petrol sales.

Chandlery. There is one boat chandler situated on Marine Parade at the western end who provides a full but unspecialised chandlery service.

Commercial Facilities for Casual Visitors

Pleasure/fishing boats. There are 12 boats licensed for these trips ranging in length from 21 feet to 24 feet. The trips catering for tourists are 45 minute mackerel fishing trips which cost 25 pence per person. The same boatmen also offer three hour return pleasure trips to Beer at a charge of 75 pence. Each boat may carry up to a specified maximum number of passengers (average about 12) depending on the size of the boat.

Shops. There are several tourist orientated shops selling souvenirs, postcards, shells etc. They are situated in the High Street and also along Marine Parade and in the Cobb area.

Aquarium. This is situated on the Cobb in part of the old isolation hospital. There is a marine aquarium giving an exhibition of living fish and other marine creatures found locally on the

rocks, shore and in the sea. The admission charge is 12 pence. The premises are owned by the Council and rented to the present occupiers. The Aquarium is closed during the winter.

Minibus service. This service runs between the Holmbush car park at the top of Cobb road to the Cobb. It is planned to run for the whole of the summer season from May to September. The first bus is at 11.00 and from then buses run at ten-minute intervals through the day. The charge in 1972 was originally 5 pence but after complaints was dropped to 4 pence.

Information bureau. The Lyme Regis Borough Publicity Association runs an information bureau for visitors. It is situated at the eastern end of Marine Parade and provides general information on Lyme Regis for tourists ranging from accommodation information to directions and timetables.

Secondary facilities. Additional commercially controlled recreation facilities are the seafront amusement arcade permanently housed this year for the first time in the new concrete bays created by the cliff retaining structure built after the landslide of 1962 and leased from the Council. There is also a cinema and a seasonal theatre (rented from the Council) and coach tour facilities.

Commercial Facilities for Anglers

Bait and tackle shops. Two shops in the High Street and one in the Cobb area sell fishing tackle and live bait.

Fishing boats. The same boats that are available to the general public for pleasure trips and short mackerel fishing trips are also available for longer periods of hire by serious anglers, for mackerel, deep-sea, and wreck fishing. The trips are usually three-hour sessions (10.00 to 13.00 and 14.00 to 17.00) at 75 pence per session. The boats are also available for longer trips by arrangement from 10.00 to 16.00 hours. All the boats except one are subject to Board of Trade regulations which state that they cannot go further than 40 kilometres out to sea and have to be back one hour before sundown. The one boat that is not subject to these regulations also has wreck-finding equipment installed. Hire charges for this boat are £3 per person for a whole day or night and £1.50 per person for an evening. Free bait and tackle is also provided.

Commercial Facilities for Sub-aqua Divers

The same boats described above are also available at the same cost for hire by sub-aqua groups – the boat with equipment for wreck location being particularly important for these groups.

PRIVATELY CONTROLLED FACILITIES

Lifeboat. The Royal National Lifeboat Institution's lifeboat station and slipway is adjacent to the public slipway running into the harbour and houses a twin-engine fibreglass inshore rescue boat (45 h.p.) which has a self-draining cockpit and is fitted with marine radio. The boat is not now operative during the winter as it does not have adequate protection against cold weather. The Lyme Regis branch of the RNLi organises a fund-raising Lifeboat Week during the summer when events such as helicopter and water-skiing displays are staged (the latter by the Lyme Regis Power Boat Club).

Coastguards. The coastguards are organised on a voluntary basis, the number of people being increased from six to ten during July 1972. The duties of the coastguards are to stand by on the Cobb during lifeboat calls and to carry out searches for missing persons and cliff rescues. They are under the direction of the professional coastguards at Wyke Regis (southeastern end of Chesil Beach). Their equipment which is stored on the Cobb consists of rocket lines for boats and cliff rescue equipment and is easily portable by two persons.

First aid. There is a Red Cross first-aid post situated on the Front Beach. It is staffed on a voluntary basis by a rota of eight helpers, most of whom are Red Cross trained. The post operates for the whole of the summer season, starting with one week at Whitsun, all weekends from then until mid-June, daily from then until the end of August, and afternoons only from then until mid-September when it closes. The duties undertaken by the post are

first-aid administration, passing on more serious cases and dealing with lost children. All together 250 cases were dealt with in 1971 and 200 in 1972.

Beach huts. There are 85 beach huts on Monmouth Beach in two groups: 69 in a line westwards along the beach from the Cobb and 16 further along the beach. There are 22 beach huts on Front Beach (in addition to those owned by the Council) and 7 on Church Cliff Beach. The huts are all privately owned, although the site on which they stand is rented.

CLUB CONTROLLED FACILITIES

Lyme Regis Sailing Club has the following facilities:

Boathouse and boat park. These two facilities are adjacent with a total area of 121 square metres. They are capable of accommodating up to 20 dinghies each. They belong to the Club which bought them in 1971 with the aid of a Sports Council grant. Inside the boathouses are facilities for the storage of dinghies and gear and two changing rooms with hot showers.

Dingy park and car park. The Club rents from the Council for Club members part of the area behind Monmouth Beach for a dingy and car park. This area accommodates up to 40 cars and 18 dinghies.

Clubhouse and operations room. These are situated on the inner (Victoria) pier of the harbour in part of the old isolation hospital building and are rented from the Council. The Clubhouse consists of a kitchen, dining room and bar. During the racing season full teas are served at weekends from 4.30 and lunches from 12.30 on Sundays. Adjoining the Clubhouse is the operations room from which the Flag Officer and his staff control the racing.

Safety boat. The Club owns a powered safety launch which has a radio telephone link with the operations room.

Lyme Regis Power Boat Club has the following facilities:

Boat and car park. The Club rents this tarmac space from the Council. It is located near the slipway adjacent to the lifeboat house. It has 65 spaces for use by boats and cars.

Slipway. The Club has its own wooden slipway leading directly from the boat park . The slipway does not reach the water, even during high tide, but leads on to the sand bar.

Land Rover. The Club owns a Land Rover which is kept in the boat park for the use of all members to launch or retrieve their boats.

Moorings . The Club has no moorings at present but has applied for and been granted some of the new moorings being created by the harbour improvements (extension of north wall and removal of sand bar). In addition the Club has been granted the use of the outer harbour between the inner and outer piers by the Council. It has purchased four pontoons which will provide daytime moorings for power boats from the 1973 season onwards.

Overflow boat park. The Club has an agreement with the proprietor of the Talbot Inn Uplyme by which the field at the rear of the Inn can be used as a boat park for a fee dependent on the amount of use made of it. The field can accommodate more than 80 boats

Clubhouse. The Club has no clubhouse, however a plan for a Water Sports Centre to be sited on the area behind Monmouth Beach has been formerly submitted by the club to the Council and if this is accepted the Centre would serve as a clubhouse .

Secondary Clubs. There are two other clubs which provide recreational facilities for visitors although they are not concerned with water recreation:

Lyme Regis Bowling Club has premises and an outdoor 6/7 rink green in the area behind Monmouth Beach, which is leased from the Council. The wooden club room has facilities for serving tea, coffee, biscuits and alcoholic drinks on a small scale. During 1971 there were 800 tourist players.

Lyme Regis Golf Club. This club's 18 hole course is situated above the landslip area to the east of the town. Facilities include a clubhouse providing lunches and teas and a bar and golfing equipment for hire. The Club has approximately 4,000 non-members using it per year.

SECONDARY FACILITIES

Serviced accommodation. There are 25 hotels in Lyme Regis averaging 15 rooms each. Most of these were not purpose –built but large old houses converted to hotels.

Consequently they do not obtrusively line the seafront but are frequently set in their own grounds on the cliffs above the sea, commanding good views and scattered throughout the Borough. In addition to the hotels there are a minimum of seven guest houses and at least four inns which provide bed and breakfast accommodation. There are also numerous private houses offering this facility. It is estimated that the peak bed and breakfast season extends for a period of six weeks during the summer.

Unserviced accommodation. There are at least 65 cottages and flats available for rent by summer visitors to Lyme Regis. These vary in size from one-room flatlets to whole houses and are scattered throughout the Borough.

There are also 98 chalets in the Borough. Of these, 28 are owned and operated by the Council, who let them from mid-March to the first week of October, the rent varying in the 1972 season between £5 per week and £10 per week. The chalets are situated behind Monmouth Beach and are constructed of aluminium, measuring 2.9 metres x 2.1 metres (inside) to accommodate two adults and one child. (During the winter of 1972-73 these chalets are being removed by the Council as part of their plan to redevelop the whole area behind Monmouth Beach.) The other 70 wooden chalets, situated further to the north and west behind Monmouth Beach are privately owned with the owners paying ground rent to the Council. The chalets can be occupied only from May to September and the owners have to reapply for planning permission for the chalets every five years. Many of these chalets are let by the owners to other people during the summer.

Caravanning facilities in Lyme Regis are restricted to two sites. There are 43 pitches for static caravans in the area behind Monmouth Beach, these are privately owned and the owners pay ground rent to the Council. The other caravan site at Lyme Regis is situated one kilometre from the sea front on the A3052. There are 200 pitches for static caravans and 15 for touring caravans. The site is open from April to September.

There are no camp sites for tents within the Borough of Lyme Regis but several in the surrounding area.

Estimated number of beds available for summer visitors

Type of accommodation	Number of beds
Hotels guest houses and public houses	1,200
Bed and breakfast	650
Let properties chalets, flats etc.	650
Caravans	900
Total	3,400

Public houses. There are ten public houses in Lyme which are used extensively by summer visitors since there is little evening entertainment in the town. Two of these are in the Cobb area, one with an outdoor beer garden and several near the eastern access to the beach.

Eating places are also used extensively by visitors, the majority close down during the winter since the winter population cannot support them. At peak times during the summer all the restaurants and cafes are full with people queuing for a table. The Council is currently proposing that the space provided by six of the concrete bays on the sea front at the foot of the Lord Lister Gardens, constructed primarily to stabilise the cliff after the landslip of 1962 and at present unused, should be leased as a restaurant, at a rent of 2,750 per annum for a seven year lease.