LYME REGIS MUSEUM
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John Speed Turner (1849-1931)

Proprietor & editor of Lyme Regis Mirror

Graham Davies, November 2012, revised in 2026.

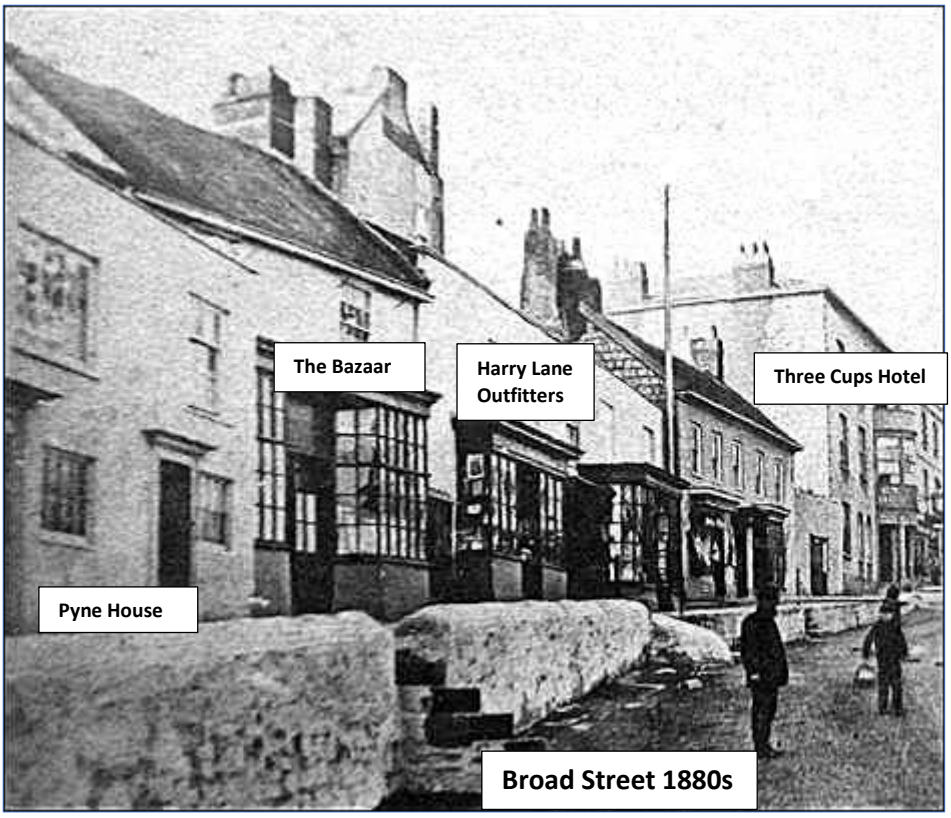


John Speed Turner – self portrait

Newspaper obituary - A well-known figure in the borough has been removed by the death of Mr John Speed Turner, of Millgreen-court. Mr Turner, who was 82 years of age, was for a considerable period the proprietor and editor of the "Lyme Regis Mirror," which has long since ceased publication under that title. His brief editorials and notes were much enjoyed, but at times, being a little sarcastic, he met with criticism. In praise and condemnation of the local authority he never hesitated to comment. When advocating measures calculated, as he thought, for the benefit and improvement of the borough, he was on occasions met with language somewhat unparliamentary. In later years, however, he had the pleasing satisfaction of knowing that his ideas had matured and had been accepted. For some years he was secretary of the Working Men's Institute, later renamed the Town Club, in which he manifested great interest. As a member of the old Artillery Volunteers, he took an active part in gun and rifle competitions, and in the latter he was regarded as a crack shot. Latterly he had lived a more retired life, though by no means an inactive one, as almost to the last he took walks which to many young people would be unthinkable. He was a remarkable man in many respects. He leaves a widow, one son and two daughters ….

John Speed Turner (JST) was born in Chardstock in 1849, then in Dorset, the son of John Turner, an agricultural labourer. By 1861, John had brought his family, wife Susanna and children John & Sarah Joan, to live in Lyme Regis. During the next 20 years they lived at Colway Cottages (1861: John 35 yrs, Susanna 36, John 11, Sarah J 10), Gas Field Cottages (1871) and Monmouth Street (1881) with John Turner employed as an agricultural labourer/gardener, his wife as a laundress and their son a bookbinder, who may have worked for Edward Locke, publisher & printer, Bridge Street, the original proprietor of the *Lyme Regis Mirror.*

John Speed Turner married Anna Cox (aged 24 yrs) at her parish church, Combpyne, on Oct 17, 1881. Her father, James Cox, is recorded as a poulterer in the marriage certificate.



During the 1880s the Bazaar housed JST's Fancy Shop (i.e., gifts, postcards, toys and fancy goods) and his printing works at rear, formerly J Walter's Photographic Institute

John and Anna Turner lived above the outfitters next door.

A large fire in November 1889 destroyed the five shops between Pyne House and the Three Cups including the Bazaar and Photographic Institute.

The business transferred to Middle Row, later to be identified as No.5 Broad Street when buildings in Lyme were first given street numbers in 1900. John Speed Turner was described as a printer and publisher of *Lyme Regis Mirror* (1895) which expanded into the *Lyme Regis Mirror & Visitors' List* (1903 - 1911).

From the early 1890s to 1911, JST continued at No.5 Broad Street as printer and publisher of the newspaper. During this period John and his family (wife Anna and children Winifred born 1883, Godfrey 1885, Wilfred 1893 and Vida 1898) lived at Bank House, No.1 Broad Street, as tenants of wine and spirit merchant Richard Southwood (see Rock Point Inn).

The 1911 census describes the JST household in Bank House.
John Speed Turner (age 62 yrs), head, married, journalist, own account.
Anna Turna (54), wife, stationer & newsagent, own account.
Winifred E Turner (23), daughter, single, assisting in her mother's business.
Vida Turner (13), daughter, school.



Ana Turner at No.5 Bridge Street

Anna Turner ran her own 'stationer' business at No.5 Bridge Street from the beginning of the 1900s, perhaps even sooner. With the assistance of her daughter Winifred, she continued until 1939.

John and Anna Turner separated in 1915. John moved from Bank House to No.44 Coombe Street in that year. The Bridport News had purchased the *Lyme Regis Mirror at the beginning of 1913.* Described as a printer at No.44, his entry in the 1921 census is that of a 71 year old retired journalist and printer. In 1922 John had moved to Mill Green Court.

Anna Turner went to live at No.5 Bridge Street. Her business was recorded in the 1915 directory and several subsequent editions. She was first entered on the Electoral Register in 1918.

John Speed Turner died in November 1931, aged 82. (Cemetery ref B147)
Anna Turner died in May 1944, aged 88. (Cemetery ref A976)
They are buried in Lyme Regis Cemetery.

References

1. This article arose from an enquiry to the Museum in 2012 from Mrs Mary Stacey who was a great granddaughter of John Speed Turner. She provided copies of family documents and the loan of two editions of the *Lyme Regis Mirror.*
2. Lyme Regis Museum Research Team Digital Archive.
3. Findmypast.