

5. Lympstone Buildings



Photograph of Lympstone Church from 'Picturesque ketches of the churches of Devon, drawn from nature and on stone' by W. Spreat. Published by W. Spreat, 200 High Street, Exeter. 1842. (no. 12)

Introduction

Lympstone has an array of historic buildings that reflect its location as a place of orchard and farm work, a place of waterfront activities and a place in which people lived, milled flour, shopped, drank their ale and there is an interesting church in which they worshiped. There are ninety-three listed buildings in the village, mainly along the winding main road. There are four pubs, and in Victorian times there were dozens of shops, as evidenced by the shop-front style of windows of many of the old houses.

To find out more, scroll down.

This is one of a set of info points around the village.

For more information click [here](#).

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Under the railway arch, showing Mortimer's Stores, late 1800's/early 1900s

Shops and Pubs

Like many villages Lympstone had an array of small shops that took up front rooms or yards. In 1881 with a population of just 1,051 Lympstone supported 5 bakers and 7 shoe/boot makers, along with other trades such as blacksmiths, masons, washerwomen, fly proprietors, thatchers and sawyers. The shops were arrayed all the way from The Saddler's to the Globe Inn. Over time, along The Strand alone, there have been greengrocers, butchers, a general store which included a drapers, post office, tearoom, ironmongers, newsagents, banks, fish & chip shop, wool shop, Co-op, sweet shop, chemist, hairdressers, coal merchants, fishmongers and a hardware shop which also sold paraffin.

In Church Road, Town Dairy Farm supplied milk, cream and eggs and was run by the Ware family. Pam Ware and her cousin Donald Delahay continued a milk round until 2008, long after the farm closed. A nursery occupied the fields in front of the church (now sporting a housing development). The nursery sold bedding plants grown in glasshouses and poly-tunnels.

The land below the nursery is part of Lympstone Mills (with two working millstones). The Mills were first mentioned in the reign of Henry III (1216-1272) and produced the flour and malt the village needed. The mills ceased operation in the 1950's.

Today there are four pubs, all with some history. The Saddler's Arms would have served the farmers visiting the cattle market (now the pub car park). The Redwing

Inn was formerly called 'The Vaults' and in the last twenty years changed from a well-known music pub into its modern form. The name of The Swan Inn changed to 'The Railway Hotel' with the coming of the line in the mid eighteen hundreds and then it reverted back to The Swan. The Globe Inn was a favourite with the local people and in particular the old fishermen. Gone now are the 'London Inn' by the railway bridge, which was formerly a coaching inn, and the 'New Inn' on the sea front, which was demolished to make way for Peters Tower.

The Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

There has been a church on this site since Norman times, but what you see now is a Victorian building, with a mediaeval tower which is 600 years old. The only evidence of its origins is the broken Norman font that now serves as a flower pot in the porch.

The church that was pulled down in 1863 was described by the Vicar of Woodbury as "all glorious within", but by the Rector of Lympstone as "infirm, dilapidated, damp and very incommodious". This neglected building, which dated from 1409, had a colourful interior, with painted bosses in its cradle roof, bands of vermillion and emerald green stripes on the pillars, a wall painting of St Christopher carrying the Holy Child, and in the chancel windows figures of the Virgin Mary and St George & the Dragon. It was furnished with Georgian box pews and a three-decker pulpit.

The Exeter architect Edward Ashworth, who was appointed to solve its problems, told the Rector that the mediaeval church "must" be rebuilt, apart from the tower, which he allowed to remain.

The 75 foot tower is typical of Devon churches of the Perpendicular period, battlemented and buttressed and with a stair turret and two-light belfry windows. Figures of sheep serve as gargoyles, no doubt indicating the source of the money which paid for this building. Like the rest of the church to which it belonged, the tower was built of red sandstone quarried in Lympstone itself, from a field near the Mill.



Lympstone Church 2017

Ashworth was an antiquarian as well as an architect, and his new design remained faithful to the Perpendicular style and spirit of the church he had demolished. Indeed he instructed the builders to re-use the old Beer stone pillars and capitals in the North aisle, and to transfer the windows from the South wall to be used in the new North wall. The chancel arch, which dates from an enlarging in 1831, was re-erected.

The brief was to accommodate a larger congregation, which Ashworth achieved by lengthening the nave and adding a South aisle, with pillars that copied the design of the 15th century pillars, but in Bath stone. The window tracery also replicated that of the older church. The focus returned to the chancel and the High Altar, and box pews were replaced by bench pews, all facing in that direction. The aisles have wagon roofs, but for the nave Ashworth designed an elaborately-carved oak roof

with braced arches supported on stone corbels. The new church was once again built of local red sandstone, but this time brought on barges from quarries at Orcombe, a few miles away.

A feature of the interior of the church is the collection of Victorian stained glass, by some of the best-known glass makers of the period: Clayton & Bell, Heaton Butler & Baine (in glowing colours), Powell & Sons, W. G. Taylor, and three particularly fine windows by the lesser-known John Jennings of Clapham.

The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a rare dedication in this country, possibly unique.

Houses of Lypstone

Lypstone houses date from mediaeval times until the present day, and are mostly strung out down the long road running from Lypstone Common to the Exe estuary. Ninety-three of them are listed buildings.

The oldest are mainly cottages or small farm houses, originally built of cob with a thatched roof. Most of the thatch has now been replaced with slate, and the cob is hidden behind white render. Berry Cottage at the top of the village, the cottages at Pretty Corner, and the former Underhill farmhouse are amongst the best examples of 16th century buildings, although others have been identified, much altered over the centuries. Varnes, for example, was a 16th century farmhouse that acquired a Regency façade. Merrylands was another early farmhouse that was later re-faced.

In 1833 a fire destroyed 58 cob and thatch cottages in and around Quay Lane, making some 240 people homeless. The fishing cottages were rebuilt in brick with slate roofs, but the cobbled lane is still atmospheric.

The oldest house in the village is said to be Farleys, whose smoke-blackened beams indicate an open central fireplace, but the red sandstone façade was added in the 1960s.

The first brick building was The Queen Anne House, whose origin is identified on a datestone as 1702, the year the Stuart Queen ascended to the throne. With the growth of local brickworks, their use became common in the village, including Dutch bricks brought in by the wool trading ships as ballast, which can be seen in several chimneys. Many of the brick houses are now rendered and pebble-dashed, but the brickwork is proudly on display at the 18th century so-called Manor House, for example (with its array of East Devon frilly-topped sliding shutters), and nearby Greenhill, built around 1800 to rent out to rich visitors wanting to take the Devonshire air.

At the top of the village are more brick Victorian terraces. On the way, you pass 20th century houses on the site of former orchards. The coming of the railway from Exeter in 1861 brought commuters to Lypstone. Twentieth century housing estates followed, of suburban design, and are still being erected, even in the heart of the 'Conservation Area'.



The brick terrace called Harefield Cottages, which overlooks the estuary and the boat shelter, was built by Mary Jane Peters of Harefield House for the “toilers of the deep” (poor Lympstone fishermen) in 1883. Her generosity is commemorated by the attached Italianate tower (now a Landmark Trust holiday cottage) which is a feature of the foreshore.

The 21st century has also seen a few large architect-designed houses, usually with an estuary view. A village whose houses bear witness to centuries of change, is now changing faster than ever.

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