

Home

Scroll down or click on [Home](#) to return back
Use Search engine below to find more pages.

THE WEB CHARMOUTH SITE

Charmouth in the Age of Jane Austen



Claire Tomlin writes in her book - "Jane Austen - a Life" that Jane Austen has been in Charmouth in the summer of 1803 and at Lyme Regis in November of that year and again in the summer of the following year. I have researched the village for that year and intend delivering a talk in due course. The following pages will be the basis for it and will be added and edited to in time. There was a Census taken of Charmouth in 1812 of the inhabitants, their occupation and number of members, male and female in each household. It is also useful in approximating where they lived as it progresses along the Main Street.

Jane Austen references in Persuasion to Charmouth

Chapter 11

The scenes in its neighbourhood, Charmouth, with its high grounds and extensive sweeps of country, and still more its sweet, retired bay, backed by dark cliffs, where fragments of low rock among the sands make it the happiest spot for watching the flow of the tide, for sitting in unwearied contemplation

Chapter 14

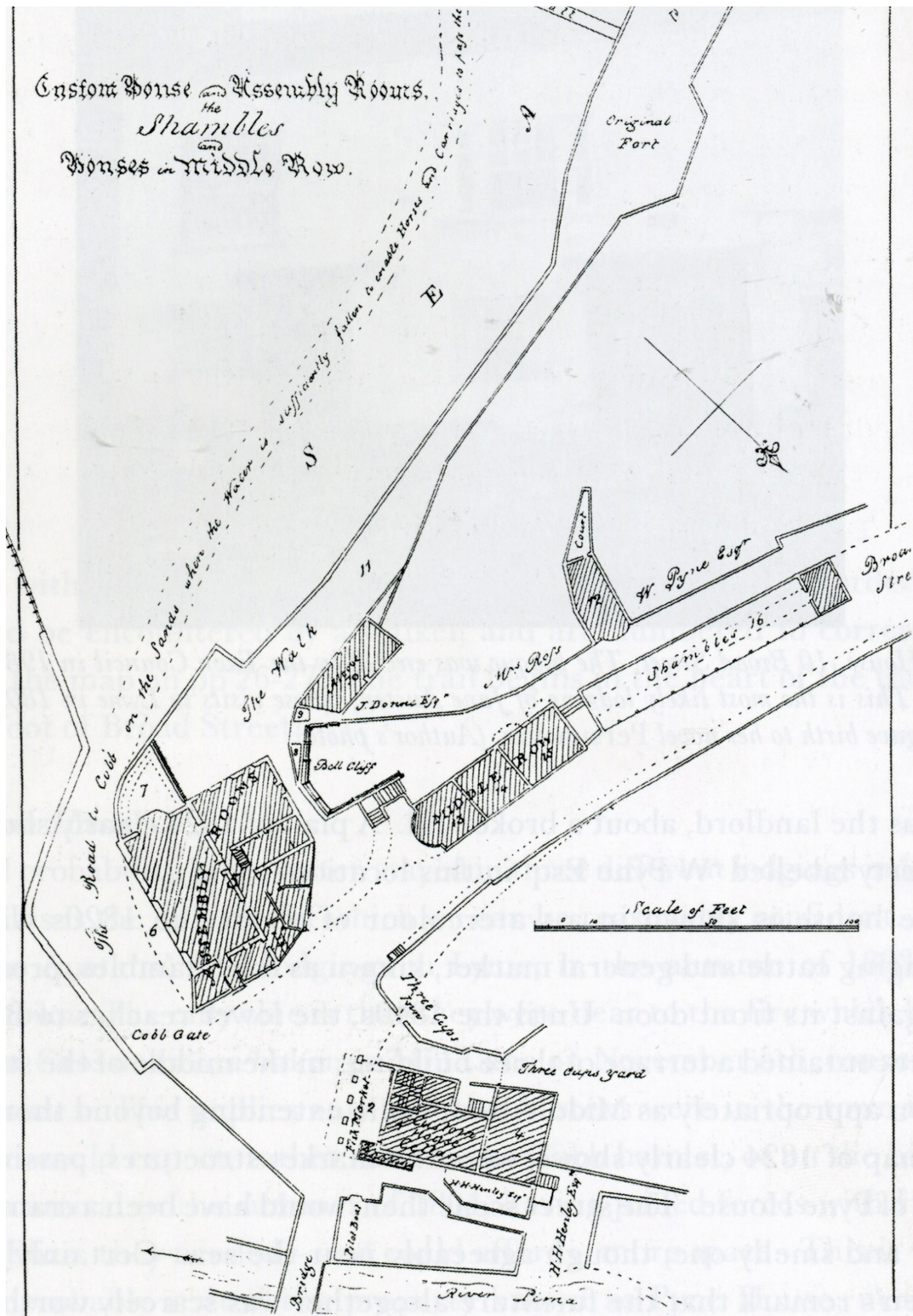
Mary had had her evils; but upon the whole, as was evident by her staying so long, she had found more to enjoy than to suffer. Charles Hayter had been at Lyme oftener than suited her; and when they dined with the Harvilles there had been only a maid-servant to wait, and at first Mrs. Harville had always given Mrs. Musgrove precedence; but then she had received so very handsome an apology from her on finding out whose daughter she was, and there had been so much going on every day, there had been so many walks between their lodgings and the Harvilles, and she had got books from the library, and changed them so often, that the balance had certainly been much in favour of Lyme. She had been taken to Charmouth too, and she had bathed, and she had gone to church, and there were a great many more people to look at in the church at Lyme than at Uppercross; and all this, joined to the sense of being so very useful, had made really an agreeable fortnight.

At the end of Marine Parade, where it intersects with Broad Street and Bridge Street, is the site of the most imposing building of Jane Austen's Lyme -- the Assembly Rooms. Sadly, the building was demolished in 1924, and the site is now a small car park. However, Fred assured us that in its time it would have rivalled the Assembly Rooms in Bath (presumably in terms of grandeur rather than size, since there's only a limited amount of space!).

It's well-recorded that Jane Austen visited the Assembly Rooms on several occasions while she was in Lyme. What is less well recorded is exactly where she stayed in the town -- probably in several different lodging houses. A short way up Broad Street there is a rather seedy looking building bearing a blue plaque (pictured below) with the inscription "Pyne House: This is the most likely lodging of Jane Austen, whose visits to Lyme in 1803 and 1804 gave birth to her novel 'Persuasion'."



Here is a 1825 map of Lyme which shows you the position of the Assembly Rooms at the bottom of the town (note, Jane Austen was staying at Mr Pyne's house which is also shown on the map)



But we can never visit the Assembly Rooms at Lyne Regis which Jane Austen visited in 1804, for they were demolished in 1928.
[https://www.freshford.com/Jane Austen in Charmouth in 1803.html](https://www.freshford.com/Jane_Austen_in_Charmouth_in_1803.html)

Jane Austen famously danced there on her visit in 1804:

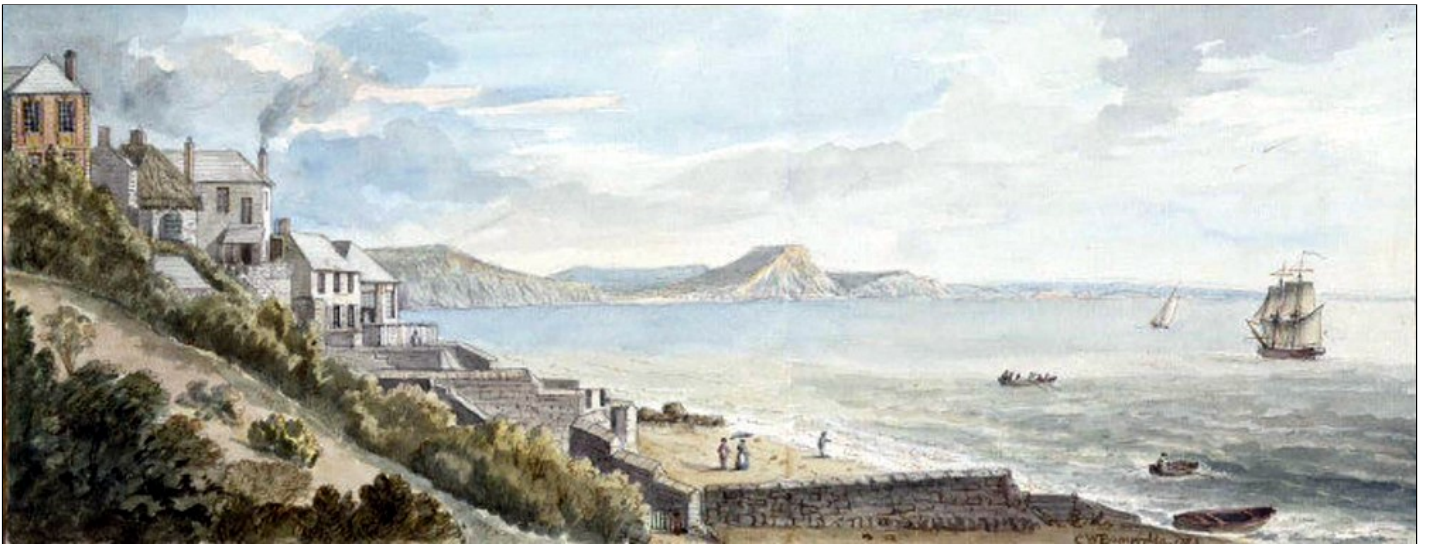
The ball last night was pleasant, but not full for Thursday. My father staid contentedly till half-past nine (we went a little after eight), and then walked home with James and a lanthorn, though I believe the lanthorn was not lit, as the moon was up, but sometimes this lanthorn may be a great convenience to him. My mother and I staid about an hour later. Nobody asked me the two first dances; the next two I danced with Mr. Crawford, and had I chosen to stay longer might have danced with Mr. Granville, Mrs. Granville's son, whom my dear friend Miss A. offered to introduce to me, or with a new odd-looking man who had been eyeing me for some time, and at last, without any introduction, asked me if I meant to dance again. I think he must be Irish by his ease, and because I imagine him to belong to the honbl. B.'s, who are son, and son's wife of an Irish viscount, bold queer-looking people, just fit to be quality at Lyme

(Letter to Cassandra Austen dated 14th September 1804)

Here is a description of the rooms from my copy of John Fletham's early tourist guidebook, *A Guide to all the Watering and Seabathing Places* dating from 1803, which is slightly apologetic in tone:

Lyme has a small Assembly-Room, Card-Room and Billiard-Table all conveniently ranged under one roof; and had the Library been joined to it, all the amusements which the place can furnish would have been comprised in one building. The situation for this edifice is happily chosen, as it commands a charming marine view as far as the Isle of Portland, eight leagues off, and the interior is compact and well arranged. Magnificence is not essential to enjoyment: often more happiness is found in a cottage than in a palace; and the rooms at Lyme frequently exhibit as cheerful countenance as are to be seen at Bath or Brighton.











Britain's greatest artist - J.M.W. Turner visited Charmouth in 1811 and painted this beautiful view of a squall looking towards Lyme Regis, which now hangs in the Kelvingrove Gallery in Glasgow. There are 3 drawings in his sketchbook which records the village in that year.



J.M.W. Turner's painting of Lyme Regis





View from Stonebarrow Hill looking on to Charmouth and Lyme Regis c.1850



A View of Charmouth by Daniel Dunster c.1850.

CHARMOUTH.

This delightful village lies between Bridport and Axminster, on one of the roads leading to Exeter, and is thirty-one miles from that city. It occupies an elevated situation, and consequently commands many vast and beautiful prospects both of the sea and land. It has likewise the advantage of being a considerable thoroughfare, and lying so near Lyme, it is much resorted to by bathers. The beach is pebbly, and in all its advantages and disadvantages partakes of the qualities of its neighbour and rival. It cannot be expected that fashionable amusements are to be found here: but the lover of nature will be sure to enjoy gratification in his rambles in the environs; and he who is in search of health, a still superior good, will be as likely to find it on the coast of Dorset as on that of Sussex.

The fisheries here and at Lyme present a constant scene of useful activity, no less advantageous to the individuals concerned than amusing to spectators.

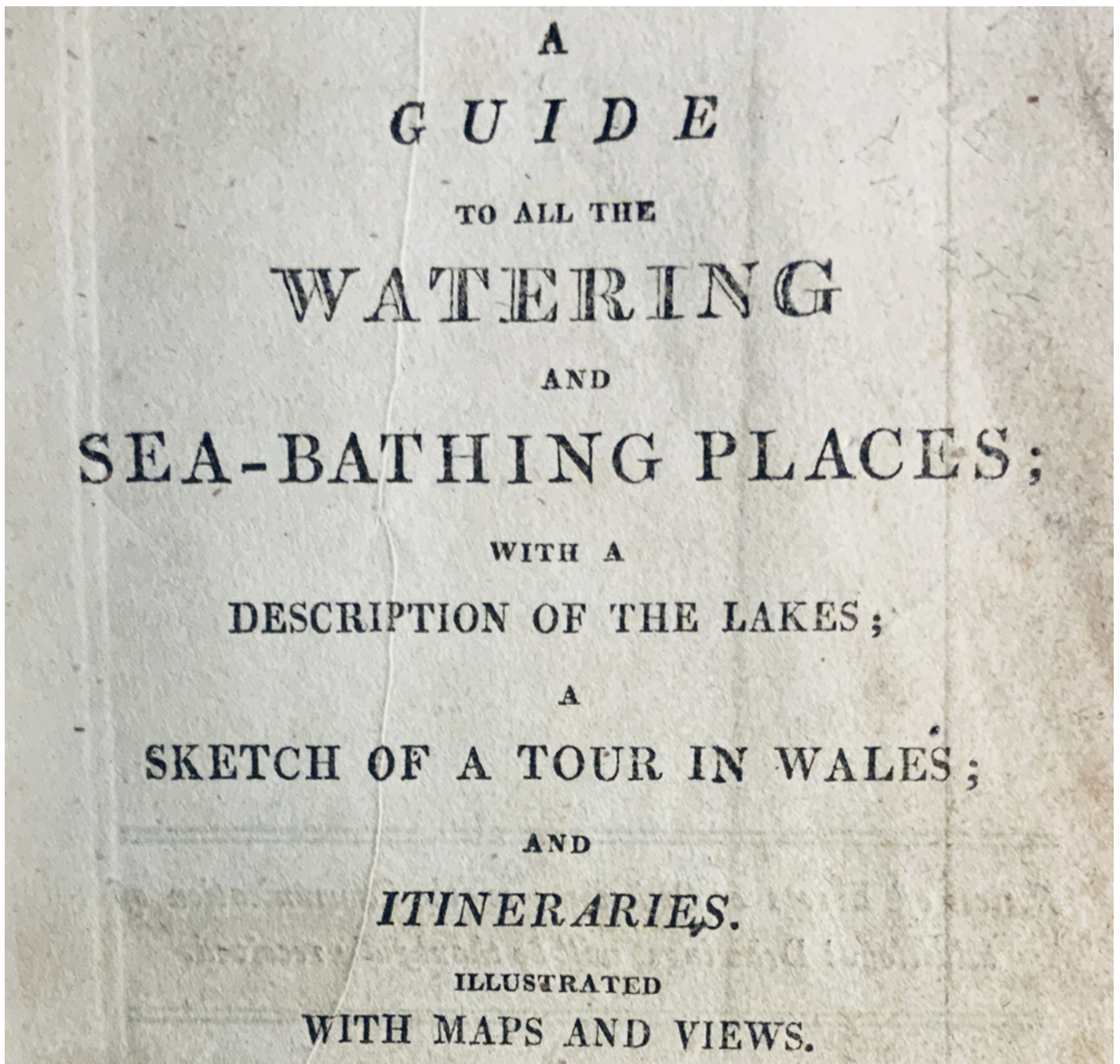
The rides and walks are sufficiently varied and numerous. Bridport, Axminster, Axmouth, &c. will be included amongst the former.

Sailing too, which, whether it is regarded as a pleasant or a healthful exercise, cannot be excelled by any in the circle of the occupations of the idle, may here be enjoyed to the full, with facilities that render it still more inviting.

LYME REGIS, AND CHARMOUTH.

THE proximity of Lyme and Charmouth, for they are within two miles of each other, and the constant intercourse which is kept up between those who visit either the one or the other, evince the propriety of classing them together. As Lyme, however, is the most frequented, it first claims attention. This an-





We are very fortunate to have a link with the village over 200 years ago in the form of a Census carried out in 1812. When I originally saw the list of names with a description of their occupations in the Parish Records kept at the Family History Centre in Dorchester, I wasn't sure what relevance it had as there was no heading or year to it. But since then, with my researches on the village history I realise it is an early Census. By collating lists for the Poor Rates, Land Taxes and Burials for Charmouth, I can accurately place it at the end of 1812. For amongst the list of names is a Peter Clapcott, who is shown as dying on 28th June 1813. His Will is amongst a number that have survived from the people recorded on the List.

Closer study of the Census shows it to be the occupants of the houses that were in the village, as there is reference to a house, where Mrs. Mary Tozer lived as being void. Many of the inhabitants rented their properties from wealthy landowners, who lived elsewhere and hence do not appear on the list. The Poor Rates and Land Taxes for the Year 1812 supply this information, but often leave out the occupants, especially if there are a number in the same building and is grouped together as "others". This is where the Census is exiting as it gives the number of Males and Females in each House. It also describes the occupation of the main person. I was particularly excited to find that Joseph Bradbeer was described as a Post Master. He would have been running his business from what is Nisa (Charmouth Stores), which shows it have been a shop for over 2 centuries. Almost every trade was represented and included Dress maker, Butcher, Carpenter, Shoe Maker, Fisherman, Builder, Dairyman, Baker, Taylor, Blacksmith and Surgeon. There were also three Inns at that time, which were the Fountain run by George Harvey and owned by Squire Gordon, who the following year closed it down and lived in it what is today Charmouth House. The George was owned by Samuel Gundry, who ran his brewery from the old building that still forms part of Palmers Brewery at Bridport. The tenant was Richard Hawkins. The largest of the Inns was the 3 Crowns whose landlord was Richard Clemoes, its name was later to change to the Mail Coach Inn and finally the Coach and Horses. There are four men and five women shown as living there at that time.

If we were to go back two centuries we would be surprised to see that the village had its own industry in the shape of Sail Making. For three of these business men are revealed on the list, they are William Burnard, George Webber's widow and Jacob Ridley Kitt. They all rented or owned many of the fields in the village which would have been covered with Flax, the staple for their trade. The largest at that time was Kitts, which stood on the site of Charmouth Lodge, but at the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, was also the year that they went bankrupt with the decline in sails for shipping.

The village had been centred along the Street for many centuries and the majority of those on the list were living along it. Both Lower and Higher Sea Lane were surrounded by fields, with few buildings. John Robins who appears in the list had recently built the fine three storey.

Sea Horse House in Rocket Lane as the latter was called then. Old Lyme Hill had a number of buildings along it, including the Poor House and the cottages where the Gordges lived.

There were a number of farms surrounding the Street, the largest of which had been Charmouth Manor Farm, which had been bought by Lieutenant James Warden in 1788 and he kept the fields to the South of The Street, which became known as Sea Lands. Those fields to the north were bought by the village Curate, Rev. Brian Combes and became known as Back Lands. By 1812, James daughter, Ann Liddon is renting them to John Harris, who appears as a Farmer on the list. Brian Combes, appears as the largest Land Owner and is renting his farm and other properties to some of the people who appear on the list. He is Rector of Catherston and although Curate for Charmouth, does the work of the absentee Rector, Rev Audain, who has quite a colourful life. Another clergyman, Reverend Puddicombe, the vicar of Branscombe, has inherited Wood Farm from his sister, Elizabeth, wife of James Warden. Mary Newton, William Burnard and William Palmer, who appear in the list are renting property from him. William Burnard runs his business from the Mill buildings. William Browning, a coach man living in building opposite, owned by Frances, son of Joseph Bradbeer who share part of it and runs his Post Office from there.

The Mail and two other coaches pass daily through Charmouth from London to Plymouth, it being the Great Western Road – Bathing Machines are kept on the beach during the summer season, for the accommodation of the company who resort to this truly pleasant and healthy spot - advert in 1810.

Males		Females	
Henry Smith Miller	2	5	
Digey Gorge Habauer	2	3	
Robert Bragg	3	2	
Amos Cook - Carpenter	1	3	
John Wild - Labourer	4	3	
Wm Palmer Butcher	3	6	
Jacob Baker Shoemaker	6	1	
Wm Burnard - sail cloth maker	1	3	
R. Good - widow		2	
Peter Clapcott - Gent	2	2	
Richard Hawkers Innkeeper	1	3	
Charles Gale - Mason	1	3	
Wm Ruffell - Shoemaker	3	4	
Mary Edwards - widow	1	2	
Mich Richard - Spinster	2	3	
J. Lodgers		2	
Wm Cole - Baker	2	3	
Rev. B. Combe - Curate	2	3	
J. R. Kitt - sailcloth maker	6	3	
Tho. Browning - coachman	1	1	
Jos. Bradbeer - post master	1	1	
Wm Edwards - Butcher	3	3	
John Chesmer - Innholder	4	5	
F. Welch - Mantle maker	1	3	
Saml. Lask - Carpenter	3	4	
Simon Buller - Gent	3	3	
Philip Wheaton Carpenter	1	5	
John Harris - Farmer	4	2	
Tho. Shute - Gent	3	5	
M ^{rs} Clarke - Widow	1	5	
Jos. Hackman - Gent	1	3	
Wm Inson - Gent	1	2	
Step ⁿ Harris - D ^o	1	5	
Major Charming	2	4	
Mary Hill - widow		2	
M ^{rs} Marring		3	
Mich Torer - House vacant			
Henry Haskins - Thatcher	3	7	
James Griffing - Labourer	2	1	
R. Gorge - widow	4	1	
	81	121	
Wm Butcher, Taylor	1	1	
Geo. Hart - Gent	1	3	
Wm Dragg - Surgeon	2	3	
James Love - Butcher	4	2	
Maria Channon			
John Paul - House building			
M ^{rs} Willox - widow		4	
M ^{rs} Reid - D ^o	1	8	
M ^{rs} Pattison - Gent	1	8	
George Harvey - Innholder	2	2	
John Robbins - Gent	2	5	
William Cousins - Labourer	2	5	
Simon Symes - Gent	1	1	
Lodgers		3	
Henry Goodling - Labourer	1	2	
M ^{rs} Edmonds		3	
M ^{rs} Wubber		1	
Henry Norman - Labourer	2	4	
Rich ^d Dark - D ^o	1	4	
John Potter - Shoemaker	5	3	
John Hunter - Labourer	2	4	
Benj. Siment - Blacksmith	4	2	
Rev. Jos. Good		2	4
Mary Newton - Spinster	2	4	
John Bull - Gent	2	1	
Henry Diment - Baker	2	3	
M ^{rs} Kidiout		3	
James Powell - Butcher	3	3	
Wm Roper - Fisherman	2	4	
Robt. Whore - Labourer	7	3	
Rich ^d Stokes - Gent	1	1	
M ^{rs} Hyper		3	1
M ^{rs} Haycraft - Taylor	2	1	
Wm Way - Mason	4	3	
Rich ^d West - Labourer	1	6	
Jos. Bile - D ^o	2	2	
Aaron Loundge - Dairyman	2	3	
Wm Oliver - Shoemaker	2	1	
Poor House		5	
J. Tipping	1	1	
Thi. Cousins - Shoemaker	4	5	
Wm Lock - Labourer	1	3	
	121	128	

Surname	Christian	Occupation	M.	F.
Baker	Jacob	Shoemaker	6	1
Bile	Joseph	Laborer	2	2
Bradbeer	Joseph	Post Master	1	1
Bragg	William	Surgeon	2	3
Browning	Thomas	Coach Man	1	1
Bugg	Robert	Laborer	3	2
Bull	John	Gentleman	2	1

Bullen	Simon	Gentleman	3	3
Burnard	William	Sail Cloth Maker	1	3
Butcher	William	Taylor	1	3
Channing	Major	Gentleman	2	4
Channon	Maria			2
Clapcott	Peter	Gentleman	2	2
Clarke	Mrs	Widow	1	5
Clemens	John	Inn Keeper	4	5
Cole	William	Baker	2	3
Combe	Brian	Curate	2	3
Cood	Robert	Widow		2
Cook	Amos	Carpenter	1	3
Cozens	William	Laborer	2	3
Cozens	Thomas	Shoemaker	4	5
Dark	Richard	Laborer	1	4
Diment	Benjamin	Blacksmith	4	2
Diment	Henry	Baker	2	3
Edmonds	Mrs			3
Edwards	Mary	Widow	1	2
Edwards	William	Butcher	3	3
Eyres	Mr.		3	1
Fipping	George		1	1
Gale	Charles	mason	1	3
Good	Joseph	Rev.	2	4
Goodling	Henry	Laborer	1	2
Gorge	Digory	Laborer	2	3
Gorge		Widow	4	1
Griffin	James	Laborer	2	1
Hackman	Joseph	Gentleman	1	3
Harris	John	farmer	4	2
Harris	Stephen	Gentleman	1	5
Hart	George	Gentleman	1	1
Harvey	George	Inn Keeper	2	2
Haskins	Henry	Thatcher	3	7
Hawkins	Richard	Inn Keeper	1	3
Haycroft	John	Taylor	2	1
Hill	Mary	Widow		2
Hunter	John	Laborer	2	4
Juson	William	Gentleman	1	2
Kitt	Jacob Ridley	Sail Cloth Maker	6	3
Lock	Sam	Carpenter	3	4
Lock	William	Laborer	1	3
Love	James	Butcher	4	3
Loveridge	Aaron	Dairy man	2	3
Newton	Mary	Spinster	2	4
Norman	Henry	Laborer	2	4
Oliver	William	Shoemaker	2	1
palmer	William	Butcher	3	6
Pattison	Mr	Gen.	1	8
Paul	John	House building		
Poor House				5
Potter	John	Shoemaker	5	3
Powell	James	Butcher	3	3
Rickard	Miss	Spinster	2	3
Rickard	Miss	Lodgers		2
Ridcout	Mrs			3
Robins	John	Gentleman	2	5
Roper	William	Fisherman	2	4
Rudd	Mrs	Widow	1	8
Russell	William	Shoemaker	3	4
Shute	Thomas	Gentleman	3	5
Smith	Henry	Miller	2	5
Stokes	Richard	Gentleman	1	1
Symes	Simon	Gentleman	1	1
Symes	Simon	Lodgers		3
Tozer		House -vacant		
Wavring	Mrs			3

Way	William	Mason	4	3
Webber	Mrs			1
Welch	F.	Mantll Maker	1	3
West	Richard	Laborer	1	6
Wheaton	Philip	Carpenter	1	5
Whore	Robert	Laborer	7	3
Wild	John	Laborer	4	3
Willcox	Mrs	Widow		4
		Total:	156	247