

On Life in Late Georgian Somerset

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By the end of the 18th century major changes had begun to worry the establishment—the American revolution; the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, with their real threat of invasion, and the gathering speed of the industrial and social revolutions. However in remote rural Somerset all this had as yet brought little change to the long established hierarchy, which all classes understood that God had ordered, an attitude reflected in the diary of the Rev. William Holland of Over Stowey. In this diary we find a picture of life in a typical small Somerset town and its surrounding countryside in the first two decades of the nineteenth century.

Society

Most of the countryside round here formed part of extensive estates, long in the ownership of the aristocracy and gentry, principally the Carews of Crowcombe Court, the Aclands of Fairfield, and the Luttrells of Dunster, and after only 70 years something of a newcomer, the Earl of Egmont of Enmore Castle, friend of Coleridge and brother of Spencer Perceval, the Prime Minister assassinated in 1812. The Rev. William Holland, as the younger son of an old Welsh family of landed gentry, albeit with only a modest private income and the revenue from his living, could consider himself the social equal of these, and was accepted as such. Many of the local clergy, by necessity educated at Oxford or Cambridge, came from similar backgrounds. Here is Holland on the gentry. Tuesday August 13th 1805.

We got to Alfoxden. Young St Albyn (the son of Wordsworth's landlady) is the hero of the day, it being his birthday, 20 years of age. The next birthday puts him in possession of everything. He enters life with great advantages, a good education, a good person and a good estate, a tolerable house and very good situation. I hope he will make a good use of all these advantages.

The day passed off very well: a glorious haunch of venison, a good dinner and everyone in good humour. All the silver and grandeur made their appearance this day, the equipage quite brilliant and the china uncommonly handsome. Cards were produced, but no one attempted to play. At last we ordered our equipage. We passed through the park in a picturesque curve before the house, the family viewing us in front and the deer smiling at us behind.¹

Amongst the prominent upper middle class families were the Pooles who, says Holland

are branched into a great number of families, and cover this part of the county. They are very wealthy, the very top of the yeomanry

¹ Holland's diary was published as *Paupers & Pigkillers*, edited by Jack Ayres, Alan Sutton 1984.

(yeoman class), good-tempered, proud, noisy and extravagant, are all in a very prosperous way rising in the world. In character and reputation they have a good many great qualities, but are very vain and important in themselves.

Tom Poole's father Thomas and uncle John had been partners in the tanning business, but by Holland's time only young Tom was still in trade, whilst his younger brother Richard had trained as a doctor. John Poole—of Over Stowey—had married minor gentry, and educated his sons at Blundell's School, with John going on to Oxford and the church, and Ruscombe entering the law. The Holland family became close friends with these Pooles, and also saw a great deal of Tom, albeit deeply disapproving of his politics and what they saw as arrogance and pushiness. Both Poole families had also become of sufficient social standing to be entertained by the gentry.

Somewhere between these two strata were the Riches of Crosse Farm, Over Stowey, where the family had built up a substantial land holding from the mid seventeenth century.

Mr James and Mr Thomas Rich are two old bachelors, worth sixty or seventy thousand pounds, though they live like substantial farmers. They dine at the head of their table with the servants below, a cloth being laid on the upper end, with a fowl or duck dressed in a better manner for my Masters.

Mr James I believe has never been from home farther than Taunton or Bridgwater, yet associates with people more than Mr Thomas. Mr Thomas is more shy, yet free enough, and talks much when the ice is broken; and he in the days of his youth has been a traveller – entered a volunteer in the Militia and marched as far as Plymouth.

The Riches preferred this life style, but if they had shared the social ambitions of the Pooles, they could have mixed readily with the highest Somerset society. Here is Holland visiting the Rich brothers on June 4 1807.

All of our party moved off after dinner to our neighbours, the Riches. There are nothing but old bachelors in the house the two Mr Riches, Jenkins and Michael—two apprentice boys from the parish—and Mrs Batty, a complete old maid, is housekeeper. Very chatty and communicative she is: though her office be to wait, and get things ready, yet she perceives the visit is as much to her as to her masters.

Mr Thomas Rich had not returned from his walk to Mount Pleasant, and I am doubtful whether Mr James had got his best stockings on, or shaved himself, but certainly he had got his best hat on. Of course, there was some little degree of fluster: however we were ushered into the little Parlour—not into the best, for alas the best I fear has not been opened these twenty years, and had we gone in we must have caught an ague apiece. Mrs Batty had now got on her best gown, and best cap, and an apron as white and clear as new

fallen snow. In came Mr James, all spruced up, and with his hat on.

‘Oh Master Holland, do keep your hat on.’

‘Not,’ said I rather unguardedly, ‘before the Ladies.’ This threw poor James into a kind of quandary.

‘Why sir, we keep our Hats on!’ On this, starting up, he boldly claps his hat on a peg.

‘Oh no,’ cried I. ‘Oh no,’ cried the ladies, ‘that must not be.’ Then immediately I put my hat on. At last he was prevailed to take his hat down from the peg, and—‘put it on’ cried everyone.

It seems James and his virgin housekeeper had had some deep and serious discourse about the etiquette of the tea table. Madame thought it was her absolute prerogative to make the tea for the ladies, but James thought otherwise, and so pushed the table towards one of our nymphs, who was seated in the window. Then in came all the old china and accoutrements, and loads of bread and butter and cakes, and Mrs Batty curtsying low and handing round, and very gracious she was truly to everyone. By this time Mr Thomas had returned from his walk, and had got his best wig and best coat on.

As the tea went round, Mr Thomas started up, ‘I drinks no tea, Ladies, excuse—I must go to the Kitchen to smoke a pipe, – will be in again presently.’ All this time, the company kept steady fixed countenances. They bit their lips now and again, but not a smile escaped, no more than if it had been a funeral. After Mr Thomas finished his pipe he came to us once more. After tea the ladies moved off, and took a turn in the garden, for this the old bachelors keep in a good, clean, and formal style, then we got home and amused ourselves variously till bedtime.

As to the general middle class, Nether Stowey, with a population of 600 in 1801, and classified as a town, was largely self-sufficient in professions and trades—medical practitioners, including a surgeon, a physician and an apothecary, who also ran a pharmacy; three substantial coaching inns; a tannery; an eminent clockmaker; tailors, shoemakers, dress makers, butchers, general shopkeepers such as ‘the bowing’ Mr Francis Poole who kept an everything shop; a maltster; a nurseryman; carriers and others.

Of the uneducated labouring class, some might be lucky enough to become servants, or assistants to the professions and trades, but the majority worked on the land, earning a subsistence wage of about 6 shillings for a six day working week of up to fourteen hours a day—£15 a year. However it was only in summer that such work could be found regularly: consequently, in the absence of any financial support except charity, the unemployed, the infirm, or the old always faced the shame of destitution and the poorhouse. Six shillings, which William Holland was happy to lose in a friendly evening of cards with the Pooles, would have bought you three packets of broccoli seed, six yards of white calico, one pair of the best women’s hose or two tickets for a ball in Taunton.

The Parish Priest

The duties of the incumbent of a small rural parish were comfortably few—one service on a Sunday; christenings, marriages and funerals—but not many—and visiting the sick when necessary. Then there were the occasional vestry meetings, and keeping an eye on the parish officers, the Overseer and Surveyor. Holland was a conscientious pastor, but even so most of the week was free for domestic and social activities.

Over Stowey vicarage included glebe of about eight acres, stables, barn and yard, where the vicar kept his horses and farmed to provide food for his household and some left over for the poor. The cows provided milk, and in due course, like the pig, meat. The family grew its own vegetables, brewed its own beer and cider, and baked its own bread. The Hollands employed a cook/maidservant, a frequently changing all-purpose manservant, who was expected to serve at table, even if he had been digging in the garden immediately beforehand, and, for much of the week, a general labourer.

On a typical day Holland was usually up first in the morning, and made for his Study to take and record readings from his thermometer and barometer. This room was unheated and was sometimes ‘Too cold to write’. Winter breakfast was ‘a comfortable meal, when our little family assemble around the table in good spirits, with a strong blazing fire, scheming their plan for the future day.’ Summer breakfast would be in the arbour in good weather. The usual menu was, toast, whey, curds and sugar. (Curds I suppose must be similar to cottage cheese). Dinner was about three, tea not long afterwards, and supper late—it was often eaten on the knees, even in the highest society.

Holland tried to take a daily ride, either to Stowey to the shops, visiting, or on other business, or if he had nothing else to do, a favourite circuit ‘up Quantock’ as he calls it, round and down to Dodington, and home. In the evening, if not invited out, the family would gather in their Parlour and play cards or read. So from the diary of 8th June 1800 we read,

I mounted my horse once more, posted up the Quantock and laced his flat sides, and returned very safe. Dinner being over, we took a turn in the garden, and then down to the ducks in the pond to feed them. These are trifling amusements, yet they are amusements in a country place, and certainly full as innocent as the amusements of a dissipated town; yet all of my hours do not pass on in this way, for this day I wrote part of a sermon, and always have some book or other to dip into.

Holland one would say was a contented man. However for poor John Skinner, vicar of Camerton in north Somerset, life was very different, with a flock of truculent and violent coal miners’ families. An intellectual, but with little understanding of human nature, he was constantly pulling them up for their ungodly behaviour in the most pompous tones, and was soon to lose their respect.

Whilst walking into the Village I met George Coombs. I asked him

whether he had seen a building called a church in his walk? I had been spending an hour there, and it would have given me pleasure to have seen him of the company. ‘Why, Sir,’ he replied, ‘my wife was there.’ I said she was so, and only wished she could persuade him to follow her example—that the reason I took that opportunity of speaking to him was for his own good, and to give him advice he would one day thank me for.

Finding him inclinable to be civil, I thought it a good opportunity of urging the necessity of reformation in his general conduct, as I had heard some things very much to his disadvantage. I said, as we were alone I should urge upon him the consideration of the uncertainty of human life, and assure him that if any man was cut off in his sins he would be exposed to a certainty of punishment in another world; that in short, if he did not perform the duties of his station and reform those he so continually transgressed, he would if taken hence go to Hell. He, having been nettled before at what I had advanced, said, ‘I don’t believe there is such a place.’ I was most sorry, I replied, to hear such a sentiment from his mouth. I advised him, therefore, never to adopt this pernicious doctrine on trust, but turn his thoughts towards serious subjects, which would not only make him happier and better in this life, but, what was of more consequence, extend his claim to an eternal felicity hereafter. He then went his way, and I mine.²

Another entry from John Skinner’s diary tells a similar tale:

I performed Evening Service at Timsbury. Whilst reading the prayers I experienced an open insult from some of the congregation in the gallery, as the people made such a constant hawking in the manner the audience at a theatre expresses disapproval of an actor on the stage, I was obliged to tell them to leave off, otherwise I could not proceed with the Service. Then they stopped.

When the funeral service was concluded I returned to the Church. Finding the Clerk there alone I asked the meaning of that hawking when I was in the reading desk, saying if the people wished to insult me I wished to know their reason for so doing; that I had long known there were underhand dealings against me.

Finally

The same day I saw Joseph Gould, and spoke to him on the subject of his brother’s being unemployed.

‘What do you talk to me so much about my brother for?’ said he in the most insolent manner. ‘If you have anything to speak, say it to him, not to me; I have nothing to do with him.’

I said I conceived he had, and was the properest person to speak

² All extracts from Skinner’s diary are from *The Journal of a Somerset Rector*, edited by Howard & Peter Coombs, Kingsmead 1987.

to. After a repetition of what he had before advanced, delivered, if possible, in a far more insolent way and rather in a menacing style, he said I had no business to interfere with him as I had done of late; that he was sure I would do him some injury if I could, but that he would put it out of my power. I replied, if he meant that I wished to punish him for his insolence and ill behaviour in many instances he was perfectly right, and that he might depend upon it that I would not let the next opportunity slip, as I had done before in many particulars.

During this conversation I had walked to the top of the street returning to my own house. He followed, close to my side, now and then as he walked brushing against me. I turned back again, thinking he would leave me, instead of which he continued following me down the street again, abusing me in the most insolent manner, calling me by my surname, as 'No, no, Skinner, that won't do,' and making use of every aggravating expression. At last I stopped and told him if he again brushed against me in the manner he had done before I should consider it as a blow and would return it with interest—or my words, I believe, were I would knock him down. He replied he should desire nothing better than that I should strike him; indeed his whole behaviour was calculated to provoke me to do this, not merely through the expressions he uttered but the menacing attitude into which he put himself. In the course of his exclamations he said 'Damn you, who cares for that?' and 'I'll be damned if I'll mind it'. On my telling him I would note down those oaths, and that he should pay for them, he said he could afford to pay a couple of shillings as well as I, and that if I wanted a pencil he would lend me one, etc. On passing his house he went to his own gate, calling after me and making use of some expressions, the meaning of which was 'I might go to Hell'.

You'll not be surprised to hear that in due course someone did actually hit him, though he didn't return the blow. As his children grew up he fell out with them as well, and in the end took his own life.

A bit about crime.

Hunger and want often drove the poor to crime, and until the major changes in the law in the 1830's thefts of the value of 40 shillings or over were punishable by death, although this was more often than not commuted to transportation, as it was in the case of Mary Philips, who stole a petticoat in Over Stowey, and was sent to Australia. Last year her teenage and many times great grand-daughter wrote to me, a delightful letter which begins 'Dear Dave, I am enclosing a list of my descendants'.

Lesser crimes such as selling adulterated butter were often punished by flogging—in public for men but in private for women. For those who were incarcerated, the prison reformer John Howard found the County Gaol at Ilchester to have only minor shortcomings compared with some truly terrible prisons he had visited, but was severe in his criticism of Bridgwater Gaol, which was used for remanding prisoners and for holding them during the

assizes. It consisted of a single medium-sized room, in which one of the two small windows had been stopped up by the gaoler in order to save tax. Here up to twenty-seven prisoners of both sexes had been held for several days during the summer assizes, when the gaoler's mother herself had complained to Howard of their sufferings in such conditions.

Something about travel.

The Hollands did not keep a carriage, nor even a trap like the Pooles, but occasionally put their farm cart to use for passengers. Locally—such as to Nether Stowey and back for shopping and visiting in the daytime—the family would walk.

21st November 1799. Met two Miss Rollins from Stowgurcy; they were dressed very smart, yet trudging along in the dirty road with a servant maid attending. I never think young ladies appear to advantage when trudging along a dirty high road by themselves, and I would advise all ladies when obliged to pass through dirt not to draw the petticoats up too far behind, for I can assure them that they discover in so doing more than is to their advantage. The female leg never looks so well behind as before.

For longer trips, such as to Bridgwater, those who could afford it would hire the Stowey conveyance, although this could be unreliable.

Thursday September 5th 1805. Busy this morning in preparing for a dinner, as we are to have company; so, about one o'clock first came the Yorkes (he was vicar of Spaxton), and by and by the St Albyns from Alfoxden, four of them, Mr. and Mrs. Gravenor and son and daughter. They were all on foot, having been disappointed in the Stowey conveyance, but they ought to have been ashamed of the disappointment, being immensely rich and, it is said, Mrs. Gravenor had no less than twenty thousand pounds left her on condition that she should keep a chaise.

And they walked the three miles home again. The weather was a constant hazard. On Monday July 22nd 1817 the Hollands are invited to Crowcombe Court, a journey of only 3 miles, but over the top of the Quantocks.

We prepared ourselves to go to Mr. Carew's, but the weather did not promise much: yet on a promise of beds etc. we went, my wife with Mr. Sealey in his carriage, Margaret driven by William in a gig, and I leading the way on my horse. It rained as we set out, and before we had got far the rain increased to a great degree and the wind blew hard and pelted me violently on the left ear. To add to the whole a thick moist mist came on, so that I could not distinguish my way, had not honest Luke directed me several times.

Two beds were offered us at first, and William and Luke were to return in the gig, but it grew so dark and rainy that they contrived

another bed for William, and poor Luke was obliged to make his way over Quantock in a dark, misty, rainy night, in a gig, with another horse to lead. He did not get home before one o'clock.

Of course, if bad weather made travelling out of the question, you could always send your servant to tell your hosts that you couldn't make it. And there were always risks associated with travel: on Monday 25th April 1808, Mrs Elizabeth Poole left on a visit to Shropshire to see her daughter's first baby. On the 17th May 1817 she wrote from Bridgnorth,

This morning William (her son-in-law) came into my room to tell what a dreadful accident they saw last night, and of their great preservation. In a very narrow road, and down a hill, a post chaise came towards them at a wild gallop, and must have upset them, but luckily passed them, and that instant struck against a post with such force that the body came off the wheels and was tossed quite round. Three men in it—all drunk—received no hurt. The post boy, drunk, had both bones in one leg broken and through the skin. They sent for Mr. Pritchard, a surgeon, who had him carried to a house, and the horses to a farmhouse. The boy was later carried to Shrewsbury Infirmary.³

Wednesday January 18th 1809. Young William Holland is on his way back to school at Charterhouse, a journey by stage-coach which started from Bridgwater at 3 a.m. and arrived in London about 9 p.m.

I paid a man to sleep in the same room to see him off. He paid his fare and took his place in the coach with the other passengers when lo, another passenger came forth who had not appeared before, and demanded his seat, and in short turned out William. At last he was put in the basket—the coldest morning this season and the snow falling fast—and thus he went on as far as Wells when the other passengers took him in. It was the most cruel and brutal act I ever heard of—they took his inside fare and put him outside. How the passengers could suffer such a thing I cannot tell; probably they did not know that he was on the outside till they saw him at Wells: indeed the coachman took off his coat and covered him and put a woollen cap on his head, but still it was a brutal act. I have written to Fromont the proprietor of the coach. William's trunk had not arrived when he reached London; we are in great anxiety about him.

Bath and London

This was their heyday of Bath, to which the Hollands made a number of trips, living in lodgings. Holland knew, and met, a number of eminent contemporaries at Bath.

³ Extracts from Elizabeth Poole's diary are from *The Shropshire Journal of Mrs. Elizabeth Poole*, edited by David Worthy, Friarn Press 2002.

April 24th 1803. A very wet morning. Old Mr. Graves called, author of *The Spiritual Quixote* and several other things. He is a fine old man of eighty-five, and often walks to Bath from Claverton, and a little thin hawk-nosed man, always in haste and always on a run, inoffensive and very benevolent.

A vicar has little to do in Bath, especially on a rainy morning—but he has not lost his fine ironic touch.

We lay long in bed. It seems to clear a little. Went to Rosenberg after breakfast to see Mrs. Poole's silhouette of her husband—not done.

After dinner Miss Dodwell came with her maid to dress her aunt and Margaret for the play. It was *Speed the Plough* (by Thomas Morton, 1798). The actors all did their parts exceeding well. The plot was horrible and shocking in itself; murder and incest, repentance, reconciliation; other matters relating to farming.

The farce was the *Babes in the Wood*, founded on an old ballad; but it is not exactly the same, for the poor children are preserved at last, which I was glad of, and the uncle killed. We returned late to our lodgings, had some negus, and to bed.

But he gets up earlier on a fine day.

Slept till after six, and got up a little after seven. Went about the town in quest of chairs; found six very elegant, cheap, he being a workman who supplies great shops where we found them. This is a good method of procuring them, because it prevented one profit on them.

We called on Miss Blgrave. Soon came in Lady Scott, the wife of that eminent man Sir William Scott, Judge Advocate. A strange woman, pompous, unwieldy and hobbling in her motion, affects great dignity in speaking, and claps her jaws together to give force to her words, so as to make it disagreeable to behold or hear her; and all the time she speaks her eyes are cast downwards as if she was looking at her nose. She is remarkably mean, and near a bad physiognomy altogether. Sir William Scott I am told, though so great in abilities and so very rich, with scarce any family, is very close and penurious, but his lady exceeds everything.

Breakfasted at Mr. Hume's, late canon of Salisbury—an immense Sally Lunn cake on the table, the first time I had seen one complete.

In February 1805 the Hollands undertook their only recorded visit to London. On their way they stayed for some days with relations at Maidenhead, and visited Windsor castle:

We entered the quadrangle, and saw the Queen (Charlotte, wife of George III) and two of the princesses enter into their carriage.

There were only a pair of horses, and they were going to Frogmore, a farm of the Queen's, no bustle, no parade but just like a private family. I was indeed struck with astonishment at this sight, to see greatness as if it were in deshabilles: but the Queen had got into the carriage before I could approach to see her perfectly, and there was a handsome, good tempered young Princess looking full at me from the carriage, and she perceived that I was rather disappointed, and I saw that she intimated as much to the Queen, who immediately rose in the carriage, put her head out, nodded first to me, then to the company, turning her head round to them. What Queen in Europe could or would do this with so much ease and condescension as the Queen of England? (Condescension then meant 'affability to one's inferiors, with courteous disregard of rank'—OED). The two princesses were lovely looking women. The Queen I thought looked old and larger featured than when I saw her many years ago.

Saturday March 2nd 1805. They have arrived in London, and are staying in Doughty Street. Holland sets off to see the Duke of Somerset, whom he had known in his previous parish, and with whom he shared an interest in phrenology. Presumably he was wearing his clerical black, and gaiters, and looked the part of the country parson—a type of visitor to whom the staff were not accustomed.

A very fine morning. Military men passing in the street, and the London cries I hear from all quarters. When I came towards Hyde Park Corner there were such a range of noblemen's houses and so many carriages and so many fellows in livery with their terrible high cocked hats and broad lace that I began to repent me of my journey. I asked one or two of these powdered fellows which was the Duke of Somerset's, and they behaved very civil to me, which put me in heart a little. Well, at last I found the place, so in I went and desired to know whether the Duke was at home. The porter hummed a little, then called another servant. I mentioned my name and gave him the direction. Still there was some difficulty and he said perhaps I could call again.

No, I would not call again, and told him to '*Carry up that card!*' Then he took out a book with the names of persons. 'It is of no use to look into that book for my name; I am just come up from the country; *carry my name to the Duke*', on which another servant appeared. My lord Duke's gentleman soon conducted me into a Drawing Room, where I waited a short time, and in came the Duke who shook me by the hand and we had some chat.

And London had its virtual art. Wednesday March 6th 1805.

A very good morning. Mrs. Dodwell, my wife, myself, Margaret Holland, Margaret Ridding [and] Anne Dodwell all went off after breakfast to Leicester Fields to see the Panorama of Edinburgh. It

exceeded everything I could conceive; we were there, in short, on the spot. We saw the real thing of every house, every man their looks and actions, the hills distant and near, the whole horizon around Edinburgh just as it is; all the shipping and vessels sailing, hills and coasts: in short, though in the midst of London, in reality you are in fancy as completely in Edinburgh as any man who resides there.

Thursday March 14th 1805. The Wapping Police Office, where a friend Mr Kinnard sat as a magistrate.

We padded through many dirty narrow streets and got at last to the water side. There we took boat, and passed through groves of shipping. There seemed to be no end of 'em; it was a gloriously awful sight and gave a lively idea of the greatness of this nation. Boats were passing and repassing continually, every one after his own business, no loitering, no turning or stopping to view and talk to different people. At last we got to the office and landed and in we went; a pleasant room overlooking the river and vessels in full sail passing by. It was indeed delightful.

The docks are immense things; one had five acres of water and the other twenty-five. There was a large space around walled in and prodigious warehouses along the sides everywhere with cranes and other instruments to take in the cargoes of vessels. These docks are not half completed, and will cost I suppose a million of money and all this in times of war. The vessels were ranged along the sides in great orders, and we saw the three Spanish prizes in the middle by themselves; all these things give us vast ideas of the wealth and Power of Great Britain. They have bought ground for other docks an immense way, and beside these are the West Indian docks still larger. This is truly sublime.

And so back to Stowey. Holland often complains of wind and other stomach problems. Thursday November 30th 1809

Dressed myself, and Margaret and I went to dinner at the Allens—the vicar of Stowey's family). We were very long before dinner came in, and when it came everything was cold. Mrs. Allen manages very well, and is a genteel woman, but she has got at present a set of potato headed Somerszetshire servants, so that everything was badly dressed, although the provisions were great and elegant.

I took some rhubarb, magnesia and ginger as usual today before dinner, but after dinner I worked me off very inconveniently. Add to this it rained most terribly, and I was obliged to march off with a candle and lantern to find the little house in the garden, through lanes and wet bushes, so that it was quite unpleasant. At last I found it with some difficulty, and while there my candle went almost quite out, which alarmed me to a great degree, so that I hastened back, and with great poring and groping, and running now and then into a wet bush, I did find my way back at last, and upon my word if my candle had

gone quite out I know not how I should have got out of the garden. I was obliged to undertake the same expedition once or twice more, and to leave company for that purpose, which made it quite disagreeable for me.

And October 26th 1809

in the afternoon, when we were going to tea, we were alarmed by a great noise at the gate. I thought all Stowey was come up to us, when lo! Mr. Coles, alias Conjuror Coles, (the Stowey clockmaker, friend of Coleridge, and a detested Democrat) presented his compliments and said John Bull was come to visit, and begged he might be admitted, which I granted. Then lo! a large figure as big as life was admitted. He stood on a kind of stage, and it was with great difficulty he could be admitted. He was dressed in a red satin waistcoat, with stripes of old lace or tinsel, and a great deal of gaudiness about his head. He had a full red face, but I objected to his nose being broad and flat at the end. I told Mr. Coles that John should have a better nose than that. John was a very honest, good-tempered man, but that he should have a predominant and rather aquiline nose, for that John, when aroused, was of a martial spirit. They sang God save the King and I gave Coles half a crown and some cyder to his myrmidons.

And to conclude, on the eve of the century which was to bring so much change, Christmas Day 1799.

Cold clear and frosty. Sacrament day at my church. The singers at the window tuned forth a most dismal ditty, half drunk too, with most wretched voices. Returned to a late dinner by myself on sprats and a fine woodcock. The family had all dined—so had the good folks in the kitchen this day, which was tolerably well lined with my poor neighbours, workmen &c. Poor Ben Hunt came in towards the evening, and, putting his straight black hair behind his large ear, made me a very low bow at the Parlour door, thanking Master and Madam for his dinner. After came Mr. Amen (the parish clerk), and little mouse Weymouth stood behind, but he was not bold enough to come forward in front. Many of them stayed till past ten o'clock, and sang very melodiously.

And New Year's Eve.

The ground is covered with snow, the sun shines clear, and the horizon looks keen for frost. The bells are merrily ringing out the Old Year.

This concludes this year, my family and self in good health, comfortable and happy, having discharged, I trust, our duty towards God and man, as far as human frailties could permit, and in a manner I trust that will be accepted through Christ our Redeemer.

[From *The Coleridge Bulletin* New Series 25, Summer 2005. © Contributor]