

## Local History Meeting 20<sup>th</sup> November – Terry Sackett – Coleridge and Thomas Poole – a defining relationship.

I reproduce here the synopsis from Terry. There follows a bullet list of snippets I picked up from the talk for what they are worth!

**Coleridge:** *Most of your members will know something about Coleridge. I thought the talk I gave at The Thomas Poole Library a good while ago might be more interesting. It's not a talk about poetics, but about an extraordinary relationship, an unlikely one between two very different young men – Thomas Poole the self-taught radical, and the troublesome but brilliant poet and thinker Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The relationship proved mutually beneficial, leading to friendships and collaborations with major writers and influential people of the day (including Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt, Robert Southey, and John Thelwall). Without this friendship, the Romantic Movement might not have happened during the three years the poets lived here.*

**Themes:** *How this liaison led to vital friendships: with the Wedgwood brothers of Stoke on Trent; with Humphry Davy the world-renowned scientist; Coleridge as a Unitarian and preacher; his anti-slavery protests; Poole's important work for Thomas Rickman on the Poor Laws; Poole's attempts to revitalise the mining of copper around Stowey; the various Quantock rural industries (tannery, coppicing, charcoal burning, quarrying etc) that Poole was involved in; and how he introduced Wordsworth and Coleridge to the working men and women in and around the Quantocks, leading to the ground-breaking poems in 'Lyrical Ballads'.*

My random snippets!

- Tom Poole (TP) younger son
- Self-apprenticed to a tannery in London; campaigned about hide taxation and raised his profile
- Bark house built with mill machinery for grinding bark for tanning process – still exists, much changed
- Terrible harvest made poverty in Nether Stowey (NS) even worse
- Would not powder his hair, read radical texts and supported French revolution (FR) – made him a subject of suspicion
- Incident with Thomas Paynes rights of man
- Coleridge (C) met TP in Bristol, about 20, met in NS under auspices of Southey
- Supporters of FR
- Henry Poole's house in Shurton (Shurton House) – place of meeting.
- Tannery made an awful stench
- Other branch of Poole family lived at Marshmills, Over Stowey, rev John Poole
- Journal of rector William Holland very disparaging
- Coleridge fascinated by tanning process
- C protesting about clampdown on free speech, and slavery. C did anti-slavery lectures advertised in Bristol Mercury
- Slaves did not actually appear much in Bristol, but were a key part of the wealth generation – filling empty ships on journeys from Africa to Americas.
- The Watchman published by C not Tom Poole...very damaging
- Quarterly review admired C
- TP addicted to snuff
- Slave trade drove friendship between C and TP
- Idealistic plan for a communist community on Susquehanna River "pantisocracy" (C and Robert Southey) – this led to their marriages in preparation!

- Late 1796, C very unhappy in Bristol, begging to move to NS.
- Poole eventually said Gilberts hovel only.
- Sara (C's wife) was witty and cultured, and must have been appalled
- Conversational poetry very radical at time e.g Frost at Midnight
- Raised suspicions as cultured but shabby and eccentric
- TP paid their bills often, Eliz Poole helped Sara make connections in village
- 1794, book society set up by TP and the great and the good came to their "salons"
- TP know about laudunum C, for rheumatism/ neuralgia for pain from childhood illness following a night spent on a river
- C and Wordsworth (Ww) met at a plantation owner John Pinney's Georgian House in Bristol (which seems surprising given antipathy to slavery)
- C got Ww to move to Quantocks, and TP found Alfoxden...were they really siblings????
- St Aubins did not want to renew lease
- John Thelwell became a friend, he had been imprisoned in Tower for treason
- Walking was odd, 180000 miles walked in lifetime
- Coleridge no idea about dialogue: Lamb buttonholed story
- Wedgewoods of Etruria...owned estate outside Bristol, they were unitarians, Josiah was a hypochondriac, but came close to developing photography. Tom Wedgwood met Ww, then TP then C.
- Granted him £100 annuity
- Thomas Clarkson (not sure I have got this right...treat with care) had a place in Lake District
- Humphrey Davy lab assistant pneumatic clinic, alongside Roget of the thesaurus. They all inhaled laughing gas!
- Davy and Poole connected over chemistry
- Charcoal burning platforms widespread across the Quantocks
- Dorothy Ww often walked back in dark from NS
- Lyrical Ballads, many inspired by local people. Suspect these details and introductions led by TP
- Plainer language, more emotional response
- TP devastated when C left. C became a journalist on Times on recommendation of Wedgewoods
- Sara and Hartley to lakes, Southey and family joined them and looked out for them at Keswick, C joined for bit, but addicted to opium
- TP carried on progressing local life but still radical
- Tried to entice C back, but refused
- TP eventually went on a grand tour, met Tom Paine and Napoleon.
- John Rickman set up first census, and TP joined him to analyse poor law returns
- Only 11 letters between TP and C. C had given up on poetry following republication of lyrical ballads excluded Christabel, and criticised Ancient Mariner
- C Dejection: an ode 1802...he was addicted, and withdrew, lost his shaping imagination
- C goes to Malta as a secretary to governor
- Moved in with Dr Gillman in Highgate. Missed TP.
- Visited C in Highgate
- He actually had quite a prolific output post the lyrical poems
- Byron encouraged C to publish Kubla Khan
- 1834, age 62 died. Sage of Highgate
- Davy dedicated his last book to TP
- TP not able to marry sister of the Wedgwood brothers due to their disapproval.