

moved with the Morgans to Calne in Wiltshire and entered upon a period of renewed literary activity.

In 1816 he returned to London to try again to come to terms with his opium addiction, consulting a number of eminent physicians before finally becoming the house guest of Dr James and Mrs Anne Gillman in Highgate. The Gillmans' affection for Coleridge, and their success at managing his health issues, provided an environment secure and comfortable enough for the poet to remain with them for the rest of his days.

The publication of *Sibylline Leaves* and *Biographia Literaria* confirmed his celebrity as a leading writer, critic and talker. *The Ancient Mariner* was now republished with additional

marginal commentaries, and both *Kubla Khan* and *Christabel* – formerly Coleridge's oratorical party-pieces, were published at the insistence of Lord Byron who had been much impressed by them.

The Highgate years offered Coleridge some stability and contentment. He holidayed in Ramsgate, becoming an enthusiastic sea bather, and even undertook in 1828 a nostalgic repeat of his German tour with Wordsworth.

His health, never robust, entered a final decline in the early 1830s and in spite of rallying to some extent in 1833, by the beginning of the following year he was clearly very ill.

Coleridge died at Highgate on 25th July 1834.



An Archangel, a little damaged.

Coleridge was often condemned by many of his contemporaries for failing to fulfill his potential and of wasting his genius. They would sometimes prefix their remarks with "Poor Coleridge, ...". Charles Lamb, STC's oldest friend and greatest admirer, objected to this: "He is a fine fellow, in spite of all his faults and weaknesses. Call him Coleridge - I hate 'poor Coleridge.' I can't bear to hear pity applied to such a one." The passage of time has shown us with increasing clarity how fundamental his contribution to our modern cultural outlook has been, and how much we are indebted to him for his literary and cultural heritage. He left us with some sublime poetry and he helped to change the way we think about our relationship with the natural world. In this sense he was among the very first 'environmentalists'.

If there was anything about Coleridge that you discovered in Ottery which caught your imagination, you may find yourself joining the worldwide ranks of those who continue to find him a source of endless fascination and interest. His life and work are well worth pursuing. Start at www.coleridgememorial.org.uk or www.friendsofcoleridge.org.uk.

Ottery St Mary resources for visitors

Tourist Information Centre

10a, Broad Street, EX11 1BZ Tel. 01404 813964
email info@otterytourism.org.uk web: www.otterytourism.org.uk

Ottery St Mary Town Council

The Old Convent, Council Offices, 8 Broad Street. Ottery St Mary, EX11 1BZ Tel. 01404 812252
email enquiries@otterystmary-tc.gov.uk
www.otterystmary-tc.gov.uk

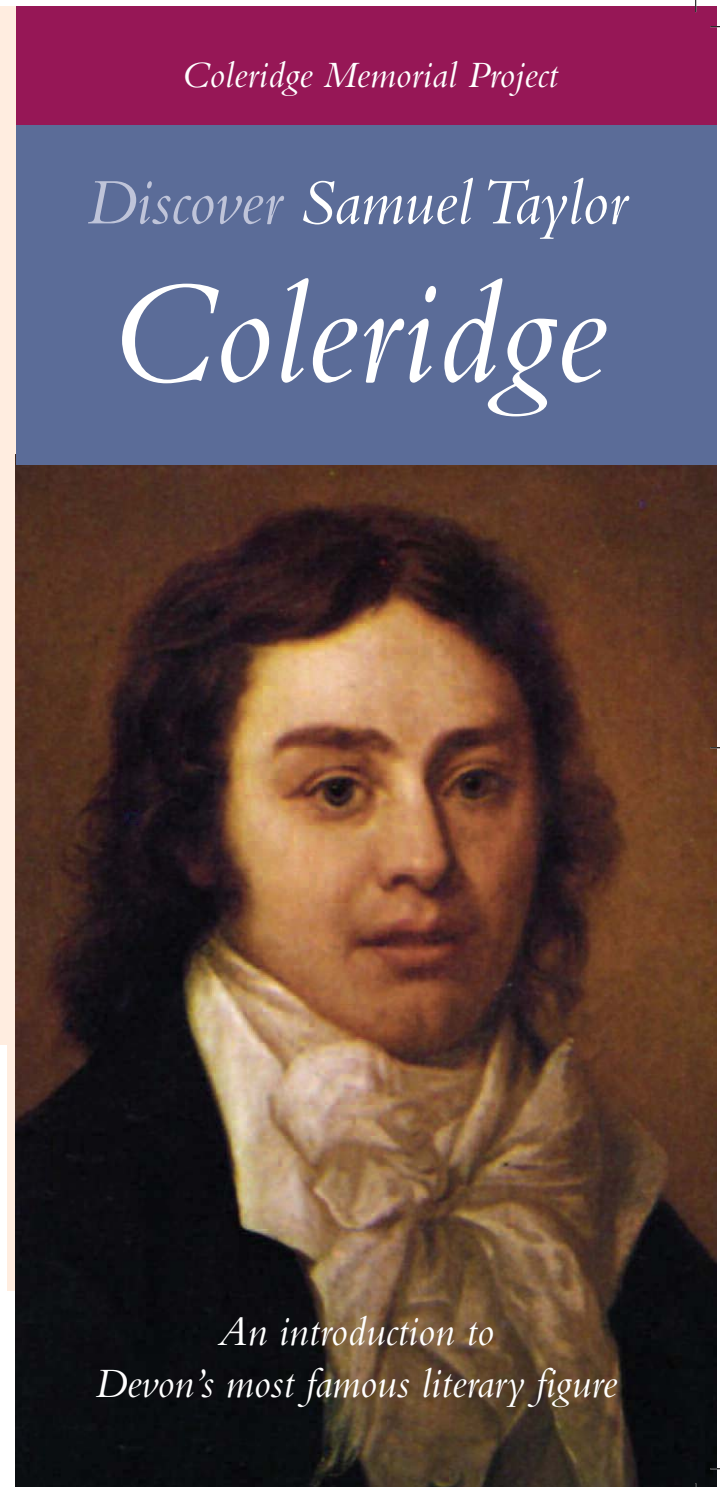
Published by the Coleridge Memorial Project, Fir Grove, Lower Broad Oak Road, West Hill, Ottery St Mary, EX11 1UF.

© Coleridge Memorial Project, 2011.

More information is available at

www.coleridgememorial.org.uk

Photos: Wikimedia Commons, Google Books, Phyllis Baxter, Chris Wakefield, Peter Harris.



Coleridge Memorial Project

Discover Samuel Taylor
Coleridge

An introduction to
Devon's most famous literary figure



Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Coleridge was the youngest child of the Reverend John and Anne Coleridge who lived opposite St. Mary's Church in

Ottery St Mary, a small market town in East Devon. John was the vicar and also master of the local Grammar School.

It was clear from his very early years that Coleridge was not an ordinary child; at three years old he could read a chapter in the bible, and at seven he was reading the *Arabian Nights*. But it was far from an idyllic childhood. He was clever well beyond his years

which set him apart from other children in Ottery. In his own words, he "became fretful, & timorous, & a tell-tale & the School-boys drove me from play, & were always tormenting me & hence I took no pleasure in boyish sports but read incessantly."

His father was his preferred companion and he would accompany him around Ottery on parochial business.

When his father died in 1781, Coleridge was approaching nine years of age. His mother felt

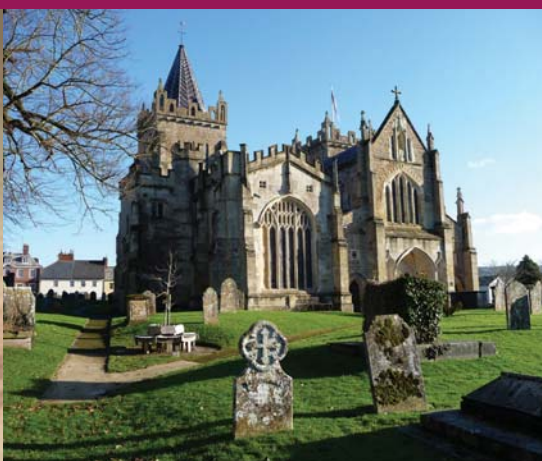
there was little hope of educating such a child prodigy in Ottery St Mary, so she sent him to the Christ's Hospital School in London, where he boarded and felt abandoned.

Poet & Philosopher (1772-1834)

Portraits of a Poet 1796 - 1834



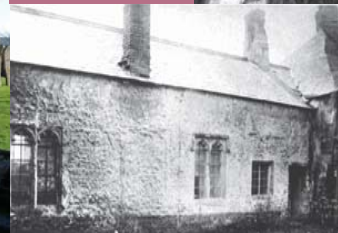
*Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.*



Left: Coleridge's birthplace (demolished 1884). Above: St Mary's Church, Ottery. Right above: The old King's School; Christ's Hospital School; Jesus College Cambridge. Right: Pixies' Parlour; Memorial plaque marking Coleridge's birthplace; the River Otter at Head Weir.



Front cover: Coleridge at twenty two. Far left: Coleridge at twenty six. Right (from left): aged twenty four; forty five; early fifties; sixty one; death mask.



A genius discovered

It was at Christ's Hospital he discovered friendship and a gift for effortless, mesmerising oratory.

He won a place at Cambridge, but very soon money troubles drove him out of the university, and briefly into the army. Then, with Robert Southey - a future poet laureate - he devised a

radical scheme for the perfect society which he called *Pantisocracy*. Southey's connections drew Coleridge to Bristol where he established a reputation for radical political journalism and oratory, eventually attracting the unwelcome attention of the government. In 1795 he married Sara Fricker and moved to Clevedon on the Somerset coast.

At the end of 1797 Coleridge and Sara moved, with their 18 month old son Hartley, to Nether Stowey. Here he began his long association with Wordsworth, and the two years at Stowey 1797-99 were the period during which his most famous poetry was written.

After a spell in Germany, he returned and moved the family to Keswick in the Lake District but

illness, opium use and a passionate but celibate involvement with Sara Hutchinson (Wordsworth's sister-in-law) undermined his health and in 1804 he left for Malta to attempt a cure and general restoration.

Returning from Malta Coleridge was unwilling to resume married life and embarked on a protracted search for a place to live, while at

the same time trying to stay in touch with his children and, less frequently, his wife. First stop was with the Wordsworths at Coleorton and later Allen Bank where he published a new, but short-lived, periodical called *The Friend*.

Beset still by opium and drinking too heavily, Coleridge was not an easy house guest, and a chance

remark caused a rift between Coleridge and Wordsworth for over a year. Although things were patched up in time, they never fully restored their earlier friendship.

Coleridge remained in London and moved in with the Morgan family - friends from his Bristol days - returning to journalism and lecturing. In 1814 he