



Coleridge Cottage

Location: Nether Stowey, Somerset

Owned by: Samuel Taylor Coleridge (21 October 1772 – 25 July 1834)

The Romantic poet enjoyed a three-year spell at this Somerset cottage, on the edge of the Quantock Hills. Though brief, his time here from 1797 was considered his most productive, during which he wrote *Kubla Khan*, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Frost at Midnight*, the latter penned by the parlour fireside.

Captivated by the Quantock scenery, the Devon-born writer needed little persuasion in moving to Gilbard's Cottage on Lime Street shortly after his marriage to Sara Fricker, with their baby son Hartley, on New Year's Eve 1796. Having formed a close friendship with popular local figure Thomas Poole, who found the cottage for the family, the Coleridges rented the property for £8 a year. Privately, it was not the dream house

the couple had imagined. Sara called it: "the old hovel". Damp and plagued by mice, the six-room property was not conducive to wedded bliss, but its peace and quiet allowed the poet to focus on his work.

The countryside became beloved stomping ground and inspiration for the poet, the cottage a place for entertaining, with guests including William Wordsworth and his sister, Dorothy. Coleridge would often abandon his family for weeks at a time and in 1798 went to Germany with the Wordsworths, leading to speculation about his marriage. On his return in 1799, he fell in love with mutual acquaintance Sara Hutchinson but could not escape his marriage. This, coupled with ill health, was the beginning of a descent into depression and laudanum (drug) addiction.

The cottage passed through numerous

hands after Coleridge's time and became the village inn in 1871. The National Trust acquired the property in 1909, and has newly restored the interiors. In the garden visitors can rest beneath the bower to listen to recordings of Coleridge poems.

Tel: 01278 732 662; www.nationaltrust.org.uk

