

BUXTON BINCLEAVES MEMORIAL SERVICE 2021

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY THE MAYOR, CLLR COLIN HUCKLE

We celebrate today the achievements of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, MP for Weymouth and Melcombe Regis, 1818-1837.

From 1823 Buxton led the abolitionists in Parliament through to the successful Abolition of Slavery in the British Empire in 1833.

In addition, in the 1820s and 30s he championed the rights of indigenous peoples in that same burgeoning Empire.

He sat on influential parliamentary committees on criminal law reform and on a committee aiming to abolish suttee; the burning of widows alive on the pyres of their husbands in India.

A friend said of him, “His sympathy was awakened by men he had never met and he gave the best years of his life to their welfare”.

Buxton’s life was one of political and philanthropic achievement but what of his personal life?

He had married Hannah Gurney in 1807 and was very much devoted to his family.

Four years later they lost a five month old daughter, Suzanna, in 1811.

Buxton and his wife faced a further tragedy with the deaths of four of their children in just under two months in 1820.

Ten years later their teenage son Harry died of consumption aged 17 years old.

Buxton wrote, “How are all our most choice and comely blossoms cut off; how naked do we appear, how stripped of our treasures! Oh, my God, my God! Be thou our consoler, and comfort us, not with the joys of this world, but with faith, love, obedience, patience and resignation”.ⁱ

This gives us just a glimpse into the public life of the politician and the private life of the family man, whose achievements we celebrate today, Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton.

Thomas Fowell Buxton we thank you for dedicating your life to this noble enterprise. You bore the slings and arrows of personal sorrow and strove to be a soldier of Christ. Your energy and perseverance bore great fruit. May your motto, taken from Ecclesiastes “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might” Inspire us to raise our eyes from our smart phones and to use our energies for the betterment of society.

ⁱ Charles Buxton, *Memoirs of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton*, John Murray, 1850, page 86.