

Application for Membership

The Membership Subscription is £8.00 payable on 1st October. Payment is by cheque (to 'The William Cobbett Society') or by Standing Order.

Cheque: If you join mid-year, your first payment will be pro rata to the nearest £1.00 until the following 1st October.

Standing Order: (the preferred method). Enrolment is immediate and you will enjoy free membership until your first payment, due on the following 1st October.

To: David Chun, Membership Secretary, The William Cobbett Society, 1, Meadow View Cottages, Spring Grove, Bursledon, Southampton, SO31 8BB.

I/We wish to join The William Cobbett Society

NAME(S): capitals please

ADDRESS:

TELEPHONE NO:

E-MAIL:

I/We enclose a cheque for £.....
(Alternatively complete the Bank Mandate below). Do not send a cheque.

Standing Order Mandate

Please pay on the first day of October each year the sum of £8.00 (eight pounds) commencing on 1st October 20..... (year) until further notice, quoting Reference.....(to be inserted by William Cobbett Society). Payments to be made to the 'William Cobbett Society' Account No. 59454466 at National Westminster Bank 60-11-08.

Name and address of **YOUR** Bank: Account in the name of

To: The Manager

Bank Account No.

Signature

Bank PLC

THE WILLIAM COBBETT SOCIETY



WILLIAM COBBETT

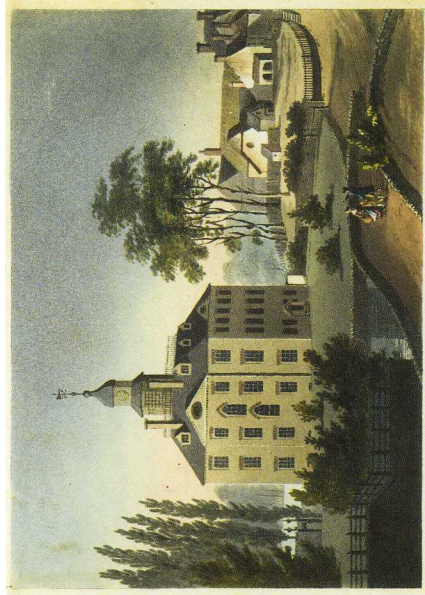
possibly by George Cooke oil on canvas, circa 1831
© National Portrait Gallery, London

William Cobbett was "one of the most extraordinary characters in English history, the most effective, most savage and most satirical political journalist of his or any other age."

Richard Ingrams, *The Life and Adventures of William Cobbett*, 2005

"He is not only unquestionably the most powerful political writer of the present day, but one of the best writers in the language. He speaks and thinks plain, broad, downright English."

William Hazlitt, *Table Talk*, 1821



'View of Mr Cobbett's House, Botley, Hants' published in 1817.

The print may have been made to assist with the finding of a buyer for the house, as by 1817 Cobbett was in financial difficulties and contemplating the disposal of his property. Cobbett had made substantial alterations to the house, including the addition of a portico and the erection of eight feet-high walls around the grounds. His daughter Eleanor refers to the print in a letter she wrote in 1897 saying that it did not show accurately the house she had known as a child. Nonetheless the print gives some idea of how the house would have appeared. Locally, it was nicknamed 'the lantern house' on account of its many windows.

Hampshire Record Office, Top37/2/2

COBBETT SKETCHES HIS TURBULENT LIFE

WILLIAM COBBETT (1763 - 1835)

Contemporaries of William Cobbett, who was born in Farnham and is buried in St Andrew's churchyard, would have known of him as a radical politician and the foremost political journalist of the age. Writing in the 1790s under the pseudonym of Peter Porcupine in the United States, and then under his own name in England from 1800 onwards, Cobbett was the scourge of successive governments. In pamphlets, newspapers and books he mercilessly exposed corruption and maladministration in high places, agitated about the miserable conditions of the labouring people, and undeterred by fines and imprisonment, repeatedly called for a radical reform of Parliament and the Church. His efforts were rewarded by the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832, and he spent the last two and a half years of his life as the Member of Parliament for Oldham, fighting on the floor of the House of Commons for his "beloved country-men", the labourers of the United Kingdom.

Today, Cobbett is probably best remembered for such books as *Cottage Economy*, *The English Gardener* and *A Grammar of the English Language*, though the 89 volumes of his weekly newspaper *The Political Register* are greatly valued as much by social historians as by students of nineteenth-century politics. Best known of all is his book *Rural Rides*, an account of a series of rides on horseback in the 1820s in which he combines brilliant political polemic with marvellous descriptions of the English countryside.

Talk of rocks and breakers and quagmires and quicksands, who has ever escaped from amidst so many as I have! Thrown.... on the wide world at a very early age, without money to support, without friends to advise, and without book-learning to assist me; passing a few years dependant solely on my own labour for my subsistence; then becoming a common soldier, and leading a military life, chiefly in foreign parts, for eight years; quitting that life after really, for me high promotion, and with, for me, a large sum of money; marrying at an early age, going at once to France to acquire the French language, thence to America; passing eight years there, becoming bookseller and author, and taking a prominent part in all the important discussions of the interesting period from 1793 - 1799.... conducting myself... in such a way as to call forth marks of unequivocal approbation from the Government at home; returning to England in 1800, resuming my labours here, suffering, during these twenty-nine years, two years of imprisonment, heavy fines, three years' self-banishment to the other side of the Atlantic, and a total breaking of fortune, so as to be left without a bed to lie on, and, during these twenty-nine years of troubles and punishments, writing and publishing every week of my life.... a periodical paper, containing more or less of matter worthy of public attention... and having during these twenty-nine years of troubles, embarrassments, prisons, fines, and banishments, bred up a family of seven children to man's and woman's state... If such a man be not, after he has survived and accomplished all this, qualified to give advice to young men, no man is qualified for that task.

From Advice to Young Men, published in 1829

THE WILLIAM COBBETT SOCIETY

was founded in 1976 to bring together those who have an interest in the life and writings of William Cobbett.

Among its activities are:

* An Annual Memorial Lecture.

* The publication of a journal, *Cobbett's New Register*; containing articles on various aspects of Cobbett's life and times including, the text of the Annual Memorial Lecture.

* An annual expedition by coach, retracing, with readings, routes taken by Cobbett on his *Rural Rides*.

Other activities are sometimes arranged and these, together with information on the committee, can be seen on the Society's website www.williamcobbett.org.uk

In association with the Society, the Museum of Farnham holds in its Reading Room an almost complete set of the bound volumes of Cobbett's "*Political Register*" and a large collection of Cobbett's works and books about Cobbett; and has various Cobbett artefacts on display.

Further information about the Society is available from:

David Chun, *The William Cobbett Society*,
1, Meadow View Cottages, Spring Grove,
Bursledon, Southampton, SO31 8BB.