

# Thomas Follett of Lyme Regis

## Thomas Andros Journals

Graham Davies, April 2022

In July 1798 Thomas Andros (1755-1831) brought his family from Guernsey to Lyme Regis where he lived for the remaining 33 years of his life. His journals provide an insight into the social history of the town during that period.

In this article, quotes from the journals are indicated in **italics and colour**.

1825 town map  
Residences of Follett,  
Andros and Poole.  
Andros first rented his  
house from William  
Poole before buying it  
in 1805



EXPLANATION:	
House belonging to Mr. Henry Ely	
Do Corporation	
Do Freehold	
Do part belonging to Corporation and part to Mr. Henry Ely	
Do part Freehold and part belonging to Mr. Henry Ely	
Places of Worship	
Land belonging to Mr. Henry Ely	
Do Freehold	

The author has chosen Thomas Follett as a focal point for this article. A prominent and public-spirited citizen of Lyme Regis, Capt. Thomas Follett (1744-1818) lived in Monmouth Street (today's No.4). His garden shared a common boundary with Thomas Andros's garden. Thomas Follett fought in the American War of Independence and was wounded during the action at Bunker Hill in June 1775 when captain of a light infantry company. His estate included farms in the parish of Stockland, West Hill farm in Uplyme and houses in Monmouth Street, Lyme Regis. Of particular interest to the Museum, Capt. Follett copied into his commonplace book the 'Edward Drake's Diary', a personal description of the 'Siege of Lyme Regis 1644'. The Follett Commonplace book, including the copy of Drake's Diary, was donated to Lyme Regis Museum in 2013.

Capt. Follett has few entries in the journals, but they are of interest: introduction of income tax, the threat of invasion by France in 1803, Follett as a go-between in house purchase, the maintenance of mud/cob walls, the death of Follett's first wife Mary and Thomas Follett's funeral in 1818.

Capt. Follett and Thomas Andros were at the Public Rooms on the evening of 5th December 1798. In his journal, Thomas Andros writes, *Tax of ten per cent upon Income was proposed Monday 3rd instant by Mr Pitt among his ways and means for the year 1799. The account, or news, of that proposition, has reached Lyme this day and Cap. Fawlett [sic] has read it to me and other gentlemen from the Courier at the Public Rooms this evening. The Tax to begin to take place on the 5th April 1799.* This was introduced to fund the struggle against the French Revolution and subsequent Napoleonic wars.

The Lyme Regis Assembly Rooms (1777-1928) were locally known as the Public Rooms or just The Rooms. They were built on the site of former warehouses (today's Cobb Gate car park). The Rooms operated as a club and social centre for the wealthier residents and visitors. Membership was by subscription. Members were offered light refreshments, newspapers, cards and billiards. There were regular evenings for balls and dancing.

The peace treaty at Amiens between France and Britain (1802) ended abruptly in 1803 when Britain declared war again on France. At the end of July in that year, an assembly was called at the Town Hall for those, *who chose to give their names for forming themselves into a company of volunteers to defend their king and country in case of invasion from the enemy.* As over 70 townsmen had already given in their names, Thomas Andros thought it proper to do so as well and gave in his name the next morning, but he had misgivings about doing so, *as my health does not admit of it, and also as being a half pay officer, it might be out of character to serve as a private, though I might and would help them in case of emergency.* He declined a proposal to be captain of the company because of ill health: Mr Lillingston was chosen as captain. Several days later, Thomas Andros discovered that, *Capt Follett was taking down names for a company of volunteers, the very names of those who were down on the list of which Mr Lilingstone had been chosen to be captain.* On the afternoon of 15th August 1803, *Capt. Follett asked me, at the rooms, to look at his list, where he said there were about 60 names that he had been applied to, that he did not do it in opposition. Gave him no opinion and he said I might cut and run if I liked, told him it would suit me to join in case of invasion only and that I considered myself bound to Mr Lilingstone who was chosen by those with whom I had given in my name.*

Thomas Andros was able to buy his house and garden in Church Street in 1805 with the help of Capt. Follett acting as a go-between. Mrs Elizabeth Andros wrote in the Journal. *March 7, This day Capt. Follett has spoken to Mr Poole who has agreed to sell his house, garden etc. to Mr Andros for 650 (£).* The sale of the half-acre plot was completed on the 27th March.

The boundary between the gardens of Thomas Andros and Capt. Thomas Follett took the form of a 85-foot mud (cob) wall. These walls needed to 'keep their feet dry and always have a hat on!' A layer of pitched thatching provided the hat. In 1906, Thomas Andros repaired the thatching, *Paid Master Hallett for thatching the garden wall against Capt. Follett 85 feet of three quarters work at 4s.1½d. per rope of which twenty feet being whole at 5/6d per rope is 18/- also for sticks to set up on the top to prevent cats running on it, 2/-, in all 20/-..... I had before paid £1.5.0 for fifty bundles reed to do the above work of which there are four left.* The rope is a former English unit measuring 20 feet in length. There are still some cottages built of cob in Lyme Regis originating from the late 18th century, but no thatched cob garden walls have survived.

Mrs Mary Follett, wife of Capt Thomas Follett, died on 9th May 1807, aged 63. She was buried in the graveyard of the Lyme Regis Parish Church, St Michael the Archangel on the 12th May 1807. The entry in the journal, *9th May 1807, Mrs T Follett died this day, Saturday, about one o'clock in the morning. She was taken ill in the night of Friday of the preceding day at about eleven o'clock, complained of a pain in her head and expired in about 2 hours.* There were no entries in the journal about her funeral. Capt. Thomas Follett married Ann Lane, of Askerswell, Dorset, on the 12th July 1810. Their son, Francis William, was baptised 18th August 1811.

Capt. Follett died in 1818: *May 29<sup>th</sup> Capt. T Follett died this Friday Evening at about eleven o'clock. Was buried 5<sup>th</sup> of June without any Paul Bearers [Pallbearers], the corps\* was preceded by Mr Hingeston & Mr J Hingeston, followed by his son Lisle Follett, Mr Pennell with him, then his widow and the Little Boy, her son by him, and four women. There were also Ben Case & Wm. Hook. I went to the Grave & saw written on the Coffin, as follows, "Thomas Follett, formally Capt in his Majesty's 63<sup>rd</sup> Regt of Foot, died 29<sup>th</sup> May 1818, aged 74 years."*

\* Thomas Andros's first language was French, hence the use of corps for 'body'.

The graves of Mary and Thomas Follett can no longer be identified in Lyme Regis parish church.

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#### Acknowledgements

The original Andros Journals are in the Priaux Library, St Peter Port, Guernsey. The Museum is indebted to Geoffrey Andrews, four times grandson of Thomas Andros for providing the Research Team with digital copies of the journals and to Sue Laker, Chief Librarian at the Priaux, for allowing the author to quote from the journals.