



A Typical Regency Christmas Gathering

## *Christmas Festivity at Bremhill*

On Christmas-day, 55 girls of Mrs. Bowles's school were plentifully fed on beef and pudding at the Rectory-house Bremhill. At two public-houses in the parish, the parochial choir and 50 men and women had a substantial dinner of beef and beer; and on the same day bread and soup were distributed to upwards of 200. The plan of penny a week clubs is proved to be highly useful at Bremhill: from these alone, in one year, were distributed in the parish of Bremhill 24 blankets, 40 shirts, 36 shifts, 40 pairs of stockings, 21 under petticoats, 41 double handkerchiefs, 3 pair of shoes, and 4 frocks. All but blankets found in one year for a penny a week; the cloaks and blankets at two-pence a week. At this meeting the Clergyman (the Rev. W.L. Bowles) addressed some of his assembled parishioners in a speech replete with the most affectionate admonition. **Salisbury & Winchester Journal, Monday January 10th 1820**

**OPC Note:- This was followed by a complete copy of his sermon.**

On Christmas Day the Rev W L Bowles gave a dinner of old English fare to 400 of his parishioners at Bremhill. **Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette Thursday 30 December 1824**

At Bremhill, Wilts, the residence of Canon Bowles at Christmas. 60 sheets and blankets were distributed to poor families, the produce of their own subscriptions of two pence a week. At the same time one whole fat sheep was given away, with a loaf and pint of beer to each of 60 labourers. Beef, bread and beer were given to nearly 50 persons at the public house, and at the parsonage 50 individuals, including nearly 40 children, dined on roast beef and plum pudding; all the school girls being instructed every Sunday, and 6 of them annually clothed by Mrs Bowles which has been the practice of that lady for 27 years. **Sherborne Mercury Monday 9 January 1832**

On Christmas day the girls of Mrs Bowles' School, in the village of Bremhill, were regaled at the Parsonage with a good dinner of roast beef and plum pudding; and the Sunday School boys received a gratuity in proportion to their good behaviour.

A substantial dinner of beef, mutton and beer was also provided at the expense of the Rev Canon Bowles and his excellent lady, at the two public houses; and victuals were sent from the Parsonage to those of the aged and sick who were unable to leave their dwellings, to whom also blankets and sheets were distributed on St Thomas' day, which, it is almost needless to add, were thankfully received. Among those who dined at the public house was the old man, more than 90 years of age, whose case was stated by Mr Bowles at the meeting of the Agricultural Society, lately held in Bath, and who walks two miles to church every Sunday. **Salisbury and Winchester Journal Monday 4 January 1836**

Christmas at Bremhill      Christmas Day was cheerfully commemorated at Bremhill. A substantial dinner of beef and mutton was given at the two public houses to fifty poor men, at the expense of the Vicar, the Rev Canon Bowles, who also, at the same time, according to annual custom, had an excellent dinner provided for the parish singers.

The children of Mrs Bowles' Sunday school after church dined at the parsonage, a custom that has not been omitted for the last thirty years.

On the following day shirts, flannel garments &c were given to the most necessitous by Mrs Bowles, and many and sincere were the prayers for the health and happiness of the givers. We think it right to mention the good of parochial clubs, three of which were established by Mr Bowles many years ago, and long before they became so general; by this means blankets, sheets &c are provided from the weekly savings of the industrious poor. **Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette Thursday 5 January 1837**