

1778

Poet John Codrington Bampfylde wrote a sonnet about the inhumanity of slavery in the late 17th century; to provide an understanding of the historical backdrop against which the poet was writing here is a snapshot of people and events in the year that was 1778...

- British Monarch King George III ('mad King George' 1738 – 1820)
- British Prime Minister, Lord North, Tory, (1770 – 1782)
- War, Britain fighting on two fronts: American Revolutionary War or American War of Independence (1775 – 1783), in early 1778, France signed the Treaty of Alliance with the United States against Great Britain and the conflict escalated. First Anglo-Maratha War (1775–1782), first of three Anglo-Maratha wars fought between the British East India Company and the Maratha Empire in India which at its peak, ruled over much of the Indian Subcontinent (modern-day Republic of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh as well as bordering Nepal and Afghanistan)
- On his third voyage, Captain James Cook, with ships HMS *Resolution* and HMS *Discovery*, becomes the first European to view the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean, he names them the *Sandwich Islands*
- Knight-v-Wedderburn case: the Scottish Court of Session rules in favour of Joseph Knight, (the former slave seeking manumission in the Scottish courts) the court in effect declares slavery does not exist in Scotland. The case for Knight was helped in preparation by James Boswell and Samuel Johnson, their argument was that 'no man is by nature the property of another'.
- Antoine Lavoisier, "The father of modern chemistry", recognizes and names oxygen and recognizes its importance and role in combustion
- Joseph Bramah patents an improved design of flush toilet in London
- Deaths: Voltaire French Enlightenment writer, historian and philosopher famous for his wit, his attacks on the established Catholic Church, and his advocacy of freedom of religion, freedom of expression, and separation of church and state. Rousseau Swiss philosopher, writer, and composer, his political philosophy influenced the French Revolution as well as the overall development of modern political, sociological, and educational thought.
- Births: Sir Humphrey Davy, Cornish Chemist and Inventor, responsible for the Davy Lamp which allowed miners to work safely in the presence of flammable gases. George Bridgetower, Afro-Polish-born virtuoso violinist, lived in England, Beethoven dedicated his great Violin Sonata No. 9 in A major (Op.47) to Bridgetower, which he coined *Sonata per un mulattico lunatico*.
- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, aged 22 – *Symphony No. 31 in D* the "Paris" symphony
- Fanny Burney's novel *Evelina or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* published (anonymously), considered a significant precursor to the work of Jane Austen
- John Codrington Bampfylde publishes his first and last collection of poetry 'Sixteen Sonnets' dedicated to Miss Mary Palmer, niece of the renowned 18th century artist Sir Joshua Reynolds