

Suffolk is proud of Thomas Clarkson's connections with the county. In 1796 he married Catherine Buck, the daughter of William Buck who, with Benjamin Greene, owned the Westgate Brewery in Bury St Edmunds. They married at St Mary's Church, Bury St Edmunds. In 1816 he retired to Playford Hall, where he died on 26th September 1846. He is buried in the churchyard at Playford.

On the London Road estate in Ipswich, new streets were named in honour of anti-slavery campaigners: Clarkson, William Wilberforce and Anthony Benezet (1713-1784) an American Quaker who was a prolific writer. A fourth street, Woolman Street, named after John Woolman (1720-1772), an associate of Benezet's, was planned but never built.



Thomas Clarkson,
Playford Hall. Aug. 31. 1846, aged 87

Suffolk Record Office is commemorating the anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade with an exhibition of original documents in Endeavour House, Ipswich and exhibition panels in Ipswich Record Office on Thomas Clarkson and his links with Suffolk. The panels will be on display in other venues around the county later in the year. For further details about Suffolk Record Office's activities please check the website, <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/sro>

Thomas Clarkson and the Abolition of the Slave Trade



Clarkson (right) and Wilberforce

“It is impossible to imagine the severe anguish which the composition of this essay cost me. All the pleasure I had promised myself from the contest was exchanged for pain, by the astounding facts that were now continually before me..... I was so overwhelmed with grief that I sometimes never closed my eyes during the whole night and I no longer regarded my essay as a mere trial for literary distinction. My great desire now was to produce a work that should redress the wrongs of injured Africa.”

Thomas Clarkson

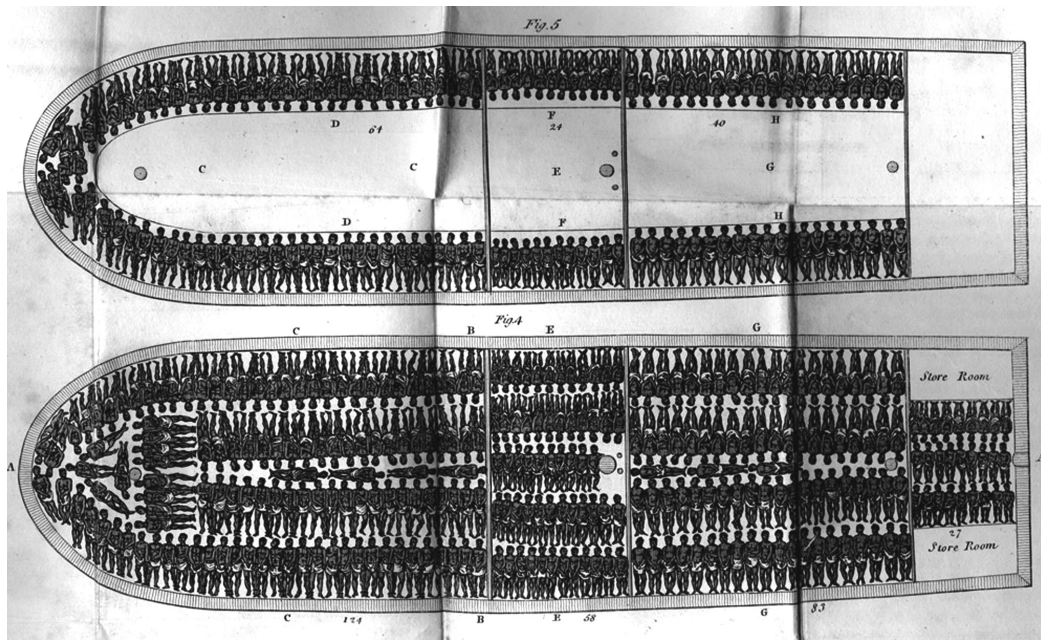
Thomas Clarkson was one of the leading British campaigners against slavery and the slave trade. He first became aware of slavery at Cambridge University, when he entered a Latin essay competition on the topic 'is it lawful to make slaves of others against their will?' He won the prize, and then translated the essay into English so that it could gain a wider audience. It was published in 1786.

The Essay soon brought Clarkson into contact with others who had published or campaigned against the slave trade. In 1787, he was one of the founders of the Committee for the Abolition of the African Slave Trade. Clarkson became the Committee's researcher and for the next two years rode around the

country gathering evidence against the trade.

Clarkson set about collecting evidence with characteristic persistence. This included interviewing 20,000 sailors and obtaining equipment used on the slave-ships. In some places, notably the major slave trading ports of Bristol and Liverpool, he was threatened with physical violence by supporters of the trade.

One of the most enduring images from Clarkson's huge body of evidence is the diagram of the Brookes slave ship, built in Liverpool in the 1780s and named after its owner and builder, James Brookes.



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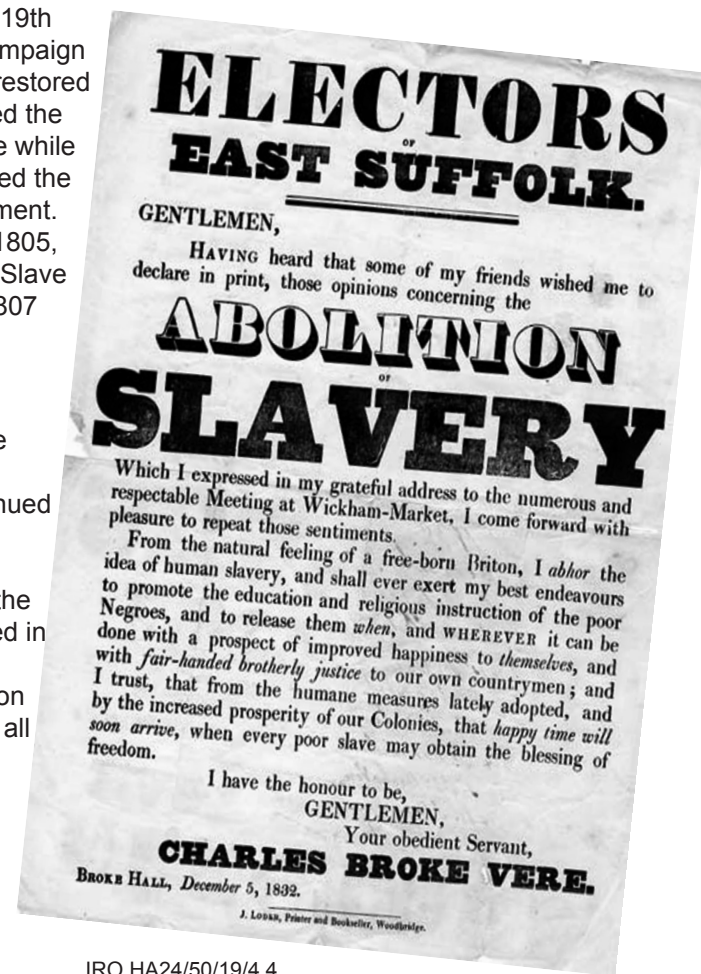
From Clarkson's : *The history of the rise, progress and accomplishment of the abolition of the African slave trade by the British parliament, 1808.*

In 1794 Clarkson suffered a physical breakdown brought on by over work and was forced to retire from the campaign.

“ For seven years I had a correspondence to maintain with four hundred persons with my own hand. I had some book or other annually to write on behalf of the cause. In this time I had travelled more than thirty-five thousand miles in search of evidence. ” Thomas Clarkson

The abolition campaign lay dormant until the early years of the 19th century. In 1803 a new campaign was launched. Clarkson, restored to health, once again toured the country gathering evidence while Wilberforce again introduced the Abolition Bill before Parliament. After failures in 1804 and 1805, the third Bill to abolish the Slave Trade was introduced in 1807 and finally became law on 25th March 1807.

Abolishing the Slave Trade was just the first step and Clarkson and others continued the campaign to bring emancipation. Clarkson became vice president of the Anti Slavery society, formed in 1823. Parliament finally passed the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833. This act gave all slaves in the British Empire their freedom.



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