

Some of Sheffield's Past Campaigners

Mary Ann Rawson (Rights of the slave)

1801 - 1887

Many Sheffield women, such as Mary Ann Rawson, were active in the abolition movement. Rawson lived at Wincobank Hall, and was a founding member of The Sheffield Female Anti-Slavery Society formed in 1825. The society condemned the cruelty of the slave trade through public lectures and the distribution of leaflets. Members also campaigned for a ban on goods produced through slavery, such as sugar and coffee. Sales of West Indian products in the town declined.

Mary Rawson



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Rawson worked for the society until it was dissolved in 1833 after the Slavery Abolition Act gave all slaves within the British Empire their freedom. In 1837, she became secretary of the newly formed Sheffield Ladies Association for the Universal Abolition of Slavery, and along with her colleagues focused their new campaign on improved working conditions, a fair wage, and an education.

Rawson collected poems and articles on an anti-slavery theme from over 50 local philanthropists and writers. These were published in a leather bound volume entitled *The Bow in the Cloud*. The book aimed to keep the campaign fresh in the minds of local people.



Museum Sheffield Weston Park

She was also involved with campaigns for better conditions for chimney sweep boys and better education for the poor. She was still campaigning for the rights of fugitive slaves as late as 1875.