

Bolton Museum, Aquarium & Archive

# Revealing slavery A hidden history trail



1834 medal

**Bolton**  
Museum and  
Archive Service

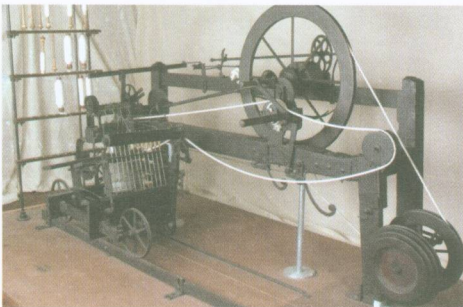
**REVEALING HISTORIES**  
REMEMBERING SLAVERY

# 2007 marks the bicentenary of the abolition of the British slave trade.

Away from slave trading ports like Liverpool, the relevance of slavery can seem distant, but when you dig a little deeper even landlocked Bolton played its part in the history of slavery – Bolton's mills were major customers of the slave cotton plantations of the American South.

While slave trading and labour was a boon to many of the world's economies, it displaced around 12 million Africans and created a legacy of inequality based on skin colour. The origins of many of today's racist beliefs date back to pro-slavery arguments. However, it must also be remembered that it was public support that brought about the Acts of Parliament that ended slavery. This is also the history of slavery in Bolton.

This trail takes in a selection of objects from the Museum collections that reflect the subject of slavery and its legacy. Look out for the special labels marked with the Revealing Histories logo.



## 1. Crompton's Mule

- The last surviving Spinning Mule that was built by Samuel Crompton, invented in 1779 when he lived at Hall i' th' Wood.
- The Mule was used to spin cotton and was capable of spinning very fine yarn. Many of the mills in Bolton and beyond were founded on the success of this machine and it changed the landscape and fortunes of the town.
- Unfortunately, its success helped to create an increased demand for raw cotton, leading to an expansion of the slave cotton plantations in the Southern States of America.

## 2. Bowyer Bible

- The Bowyer Bible is a forty-five volume version of the bible containing over six thousand illustrations. It was bought by Robert Heywood in 1853 for £550 – a large sum at the time.
- In part, Heywood's wealth derived from deals involving slaves and slave owners. However, over the course of the 19th Century, the family changed to being opponents of slavery.

**If you've enjoyed your visit today why not visit our other two museums and find out more about Bolton's slave legacy...**

## Smithills Hall Historic House

The Ainsworths were a family of bleachers who established their business in 1739 and moved to the Manor of Smithills Hall in 1801. Some of the family's wealth was derived from a bequest from Richard Ainsworth (probably the brother of Peter Ainsworth the founder of Halliwell Bleachworks ) who died in c.1758. This Richard Ainsworth was a logwood merchant and slave owner in Honduras, South America. Logwood was used as a source of cheap black dye for fabrics.

## Hall i' th' Wood Museum

Hall i' th' Wood was the home of Samuel Compton when he invented the Spinning Mule in 1779. This invention helped revolutionise the British cotton industry and increased the demand for raw cotton.

Another famous Boltonian, William Hesketh Lever, the founder of Lever Brothers and inventor of Sunlight soap gifted the Hall to Bolton in 1901 as a memorial to Crompton. Lever sourced the palm oil used in his soap from the same parts of West Africa that had once fed the British slave trade.



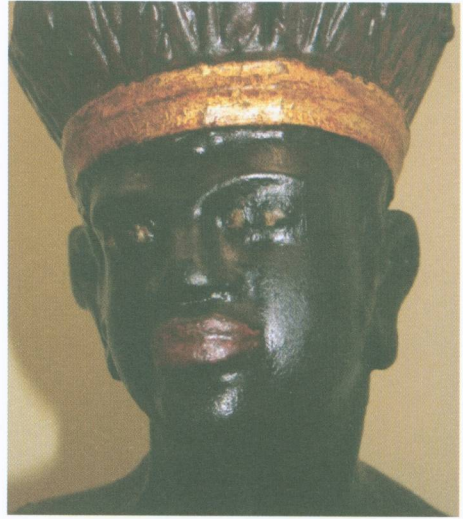
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### 3. Barbados pennies

- Barbados was settled by England in 1627.
- Initial attempts to grow tobacco and cotton were unsuccessful but soon lucrative sugar plantations were developed which required the importation of large numbers of African slaves to work as labourers.
- The first penny coins used on the island are thought to have been privately commissioned by Sir Philip Gibbs, a local plantation owner. The African head on the coin probably represents a slave.



### 4. 1793 Bermuda copper penny

- The ship on this coin is generally taken to represent the "Sea Adventurer", symbolising the first British association with the Island, and the Island's economic reliance on shipping, which used slave labour.



### 5. Blackamoor

- Blackamoors were used by tobacco shops in the 18th and 19th centuries as advertising signs.
- They demonstrate the clear association of the tobacco industry with black slave labour.
- This one was used in John Johnson's tobacco shop, which stood on Bradshawgate, Bolton, from the early to mid 19th century.

### 6. George II Tobacco Casket and Silver Sugar Tongs

- From the 17th to 19th centuries smoking tobacco or putting sugar in your tea was one of many ways that people unwittingly supported slavery on far away plantations.

## 7. 1834 medal

- The Slave Trade was abolished in 1807 but slavery was not abolished in the British Empire until 1834.
- This medal was given to children in Tewkesbury schools in 1834 to celebrate the abolition of slavery in the British Empire.
- One side depicts a freed slave. His arms are raised to heaven and he holds broken manacles in his hands.



## 8. Stereoscopic cards; 'Cotton is King – Plantation scene' and 'Ironing day'

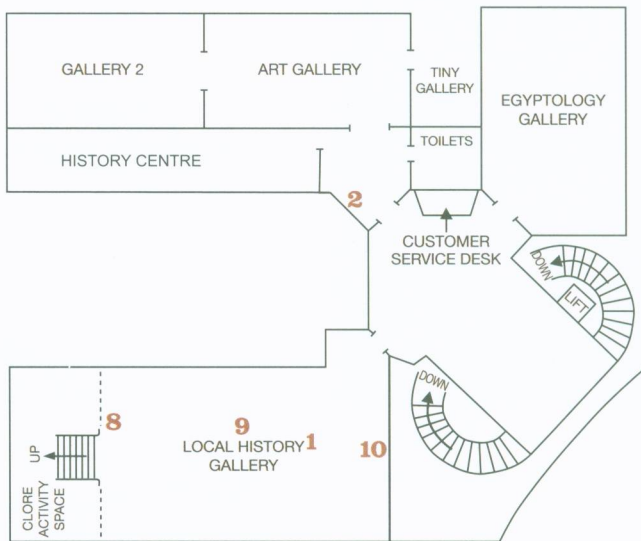
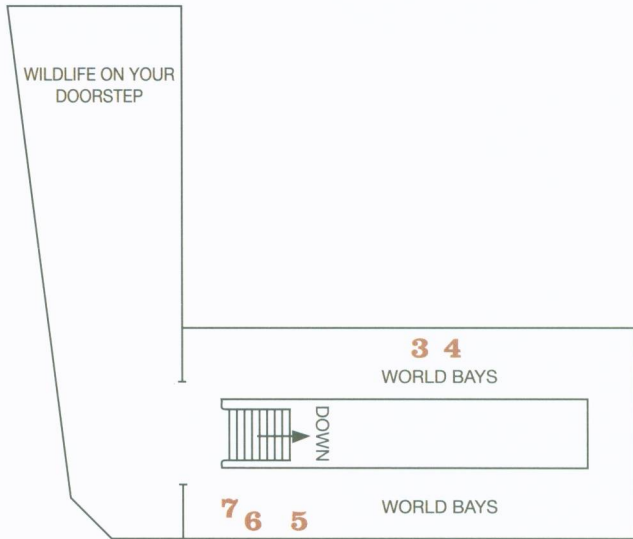
- These pictures were published well after slavery had been abolished in America, yet they show that for many former slaves and their descendants the occupations and working conditions were little different to those of the slavery period.

## 9. Epstein's study for Slave Hold

- It is uncertain why the artist, Jacob Epstein, chose to address the subject of slavery but this was planned as part of a much larger and more dramatic work.

## 10. A romance of modern work

- This 1920 illustration from the publication *Concerning Cotton* by the Amalgamated Cotton Mills Trust Ltd. glazes over the history of slavery and its legacies. Was it an embarrassment to the industry?



**Follow the hidden history trail**