

# Acknowledgements

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# The History of Anti-Slavery in South Gloucestershire

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## Introduction

2007 marked the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire. Inevitably, and rightly, there have been and will be many books examining the trade and its abolition. However, this unique publication seeks to analyse the role of individuals and groups within the modern South Gloucestershire area, rather than the whole country. Hitherto, much of the regional research has centred on Bristol. However, historians such as Madge Dresser of the University of the West of England, have confirmed the integral roles played by people in the South Gloucestershire area.



Dodington House. © S.Codrington.

Much of this research has focused upon slave trade merchants erecting large houses around Bristol, such as Dodington House. Yet, as we shall see, people in the South Gloucestershire area were active in many different aspects of the slave trade, and in its abolition. This involvement was both direct and indirect, ranging from digging coal to fuel the brass industry making Guinea goods; to the probable Codrington slave breeding programmes taking place on Antigua.

Fortunately, South Gloucestershire can also boast an impressive record of anti-slavery movements, with people throughout the area taking part in sometimes heroic campaigns before, during, and after, the 1807 ruling which prohibited the trade in slaves.

More than anything else, the booklet should surprise you. The research demonstrates the depth of local involvement on many different levels.

Although this booklet has been inspired by the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the British slave trade, it is abundantly clear that slavery, in some form or another, has sadly always been a part of the human condition. In order to place the transatlantic slave trade in its historical context, this booklet will seek to analyse slavery in earlier civilisations, and in more recent times.



Anti-slavery exhibition at Yate Heritage Centre. ©YHC

# 1. Early Slavery

**Slavery has been a part of human life since ancient times. The Egyptians, Chinese, Greeks and Romans, all practised slavery and built their Empires upon it. These ancient civilisations believed slavery was part of the natural order of the world. Mentions of slavery occur in some of the earliest known written documents, such as the legal code of Hammurabi in Mesopotamia [modern-day Iraq], from 1760 BC.**

## **Ancient Egypt**

Slavery in Ancient Egypt varied greatly from other practices of slavery at the time. In Egypt, a slave was merely a person with fewer rights, dedicated to serving a God or the royal administration. It was not until the end of the Old Kingdom that slaves were privately owned. Egyptian children were sold into slavery by their family, or imported from nearby countries such as Kush, Meroe or Libya.

Slaves kept by the Ancient Egyptians could be used as scribes, accountants, dancers or domestic servants. From the Middle Kingdom onwards, many slaves were traded in from Asia; many of these were prisoners of war or had been sold on by slave traders. It was not uncommon for Egyptians to sell themselves into slavery to escape debt or poverty. Egyptian slaves did not lose all their rights. Many believed the benefits gained by becoming a slave outweighed those rights that were lost. Debt slavery was finally abolished in the Late Dynastic period.

During the New Kingdom there were many wars and battles between Egypt, Nubia, Canaan and Syria. This resulted in many prisoners of war becoming slaves. The least fortunate slaves were forced to work the gold and copper mines of Nubia and Sinai. The Greeks claimed water was rationed and thus many of the miners died from dehydration. Others were forced to join the army, and the rest were used as labourers for priests, pharaohs and noble men. Some slaves rose so high in status they were able to marry into their former owners' families after being granted freedom.

## **Ancient Greece**

Historians believe it is possible there were more slaves than freemen in Ancient Greece. Greek slaves were often prisoners of war, or those who had been taken by piracy. They had rights depending on their position; some slaves could have a family and own land whilst others were viewed as nothing more than domestic animals. Many slaves had unions with non-slaves; people were not judged on their slave status, but on whether or not they were independent of the palace.

It is not known exactly when the Greek slave trade began but by around 400BC, the Ancient Greeks were beginning to question its morality. The Sophists were one of the first groups to develop the idea that all men are born equal, and therefore should be treated as such.

This version of slavery was not continual, and by Homer's time or the "Greek Dark Ages", the majority of slaves were women who were used as servants or concubines. Despite being practised in a reduced form, slavery still remained a disgrace. Eumaeus declared: "Nay, thralls are no more inclined to honest service when their masters have lost the dominion, for Zeus, of the far-borne voice, takes away the half of a man's virtue, when the day of slavery comes upon him". Aristotle asked whether slavery was natural or conventional, and decided on the former.

## Ancient Rome

Slavery was also practised in Ancient Rome, where slaves accounted for around 40% of the population. When the Romans conquered the Mediterranean they transported millions of slaves to Italy, who toiled on large plantations or in the houses and workplaces



Roman coins found at Hall End. © M.Isaac.

of wealthy citizens. The Roman economy depended on abundant slave labour. Enslaved people with talent, skill or beauty, commanded the highest prices; many served as singers, scribes, jewellers, bartenders and even doctors. One slave trained in medicine was worth the price of 50 agricultural slaves. The household accounts of Livia, wife of Emperor Augustus, listed 50 slaves, each with a specific role from clothes mender to baker and from masseuse to servant in charge of the silver.

When the Romans invaded Britain in 43AD, the usual pattern of events unfolded. Once a tribe, such as the local Dobunni, had been defeated, its leaders had the choice of collaborating or being taken to Rome in chains. The Dobunni chose to collaborate with the Roman invaders. Despite the collaboration, life for the majority, including the tribe's slaves, remained much the same.

Many Romans, especially after the arrival of Christianity, believed slavery was immoral, but regarded it as a necessary evil. Saint Augustine opposed the principle of slavery, but did not see how it could be abolished without endangering the social order. He regarded slavery as another necessary evil resulting from humanity's fall from divine grace. Other bishops were less troubled, and the early Christian Church even acquired its own slaves.

Millions of people were enslaved throughout the Roman Empire due to the success of the Roman army in battle. The majority of slaves were captured in war, or kidnapped in lootings.



It has been estimated that at the height of the Roman Empire, over 500,000 slaves a year were provided for Rome through military success. The Romans were brutal to their slaves and the slaves would often try to revolt or to run away from their masters. The most famous slave revolt was led by Spartacus. His army of 70,000 slaves defeated two Roman armies before he was killed in battle; thousands of his soldiers were captured and crucified.

### **What of Roman Slavery around South Gloucestershire?**

The Romans had an immense impact on the South Gloucestershire area and the local Iron Age Dubonni Tribe. Archaeological remains testify to their influence. There are several hill forts on the escarpment to the east of Yate, and a selection of villas and small industrial sites near Kingswood. Archaeologists have uncovered a major settlement of around 500 people to the north of Yate.



Roman remains at Hall End. © Avon Archaeology.

The Roman Army soon quelled the Dubonni, who in turn became reconciled to Roman life. Thus, it seems reasonable to assume the enslavement of hundreds of local people, or those captured elsewhere, took place. Therefore, the villas and small towns around South Gloucestershire almost certainly had their fair share of slaves.

Slavery in Roman Britain did not suddenly end; instead it was slowly replaced when new economic forces introduced other forms of cheap labour. During the late empire, Roman farmers and traders were reluctant to pay large amounts for slaves because they did not wish to invest in the declining slave economy.

## Saxon Slavery

Despite the decline during the Roman period, it is clear slavery continued unabated into Saxon Britain. The most significant local event following the Roman departure was the Battle of Dyrham, in 577. The battle had a lasting significance on the lives of the remaining Roman-British tribes; it saw the advancing West Saxons, under King Caewlin, fight the remaining Roman-British.



Site of the Battle of Dyrham. 2001. © E.Proctor.

The Saxon victory was pivotal in shaping Britain's future. The Celtic Iron Age groups were confined to Wales and Cornwall, whilst the Saxons secured power and influence in southwest England. Without doubt, some of the spoils of victory for the Saxons were Roman-British slaves. These slaves were necessary to capitalise on the new political situation in the West and to build for the future.

It is clear slavery was part and parcel of Anglo-Saxon England. The legal status of a slave endured for centuries. As Saxon society evolved from the 6<sup>th</sup> century, different strata of peasantry emerged. Slaves and servile were considered to be one strata, and together they formed a significant part of Saxon society.

Slaves were gradually replaced by wage labourers in the towns and by land-bound peasants (later called serfs) in the countryside. These types of workers provided cheap labour without the initial costs slave owners paid for slaves.

## 2. St. Wulfstan and the Irish Slave Trade

The first definite evidence of anti-slavery activity in England came in the 11<sup>th</sup> century in the form of St. Wulfstan, a former parish priest from Hawkesbury. Well before the transatlantic trade in black Africans, Englishmen were enslaving their own people and shipping them off to a life of slavery in Ireland. St. Wulfstan is remembered for being one of the first to try and abolish slavery in England. He rose to become one of the most powerful bishops in the land, and was also responsible for compiling the Domesday Book entries for the Yate and Sodbury area.

### The Early Years

St. Wulfstan was born in Warwickshire in 1008. He was a scholarly boy and decided on a career in the priesthood. Being a favourite of the then Bishop of Worcester, Beorhtheah, Wulfstan had his pick of parishes. Instead, he chose the rather unfashionable parish of Hawkesbury. Some historians believe Wulfstan was something of a hero amongst local people, offering free baptisms and not abusing his position. It was whilst in Hawkesbury that Wulfstan had his epiphany when the smell of a roasting goose distracted him from his work; this led him to denounce his life of plenty and become a vegetarian.



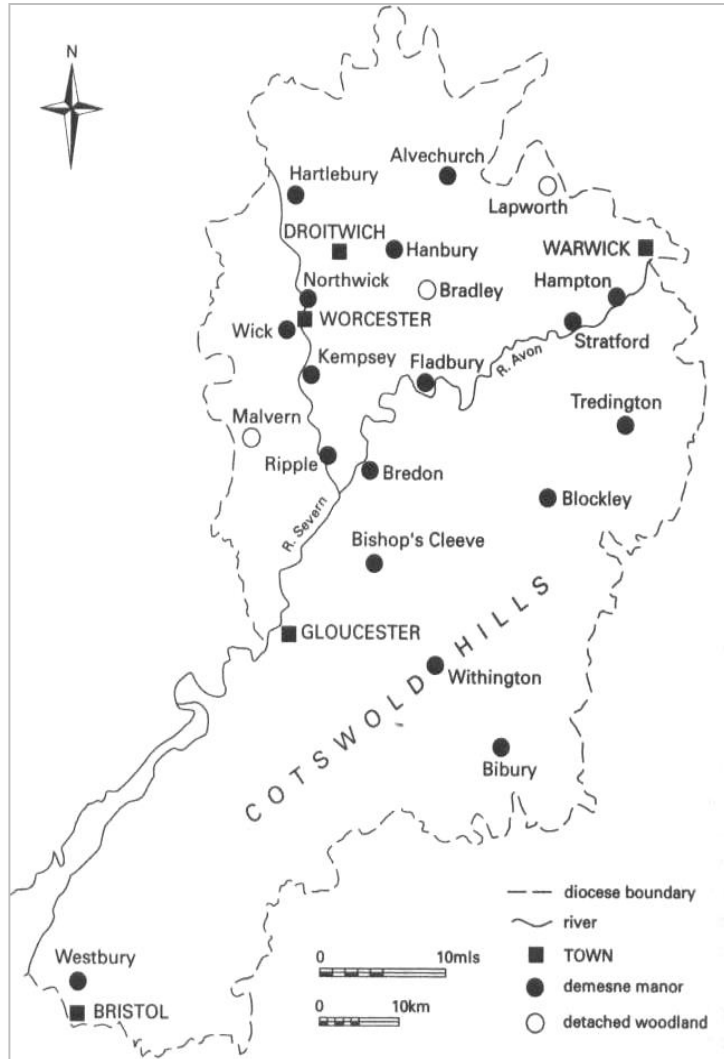
Hawkesbury Church. © YHC.

### Bishop of Worcester

Wulfstan later gave up his parish and returned to Worcester to live the life of a monk. Despite this, he rose through the ranks once more and became Bishop of Worcester in 1062. In his new role, Wulfstan became Confessor to King Harold and William the Conqueror. He was the only Anglo-Saxon bishop to be left in his post by the conquering Normans. As a trusted servant to William, Wulfstan put down several local revolts and rebellions.

## The Formative Years

Wulfstan's diocese was huge: the see of Worcester ranged from Bristol in the south right up to Birmingham in the north. As Bristol was in his diocese, Wulfstan often visited the city as part of his duties. Here, the English slave trade was in full swing, and Wulfstan was appalled at what he discovered. He believed slaves



had souls (many were baptised Christians), and thus enslaving them was wrong. With the encouragement of Lanfranc, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Wulfstan became the first recorded Englishman to speak out against slavery. He regularly gave sermons denouncing the trade at Bristol's slave market, and soon gained the support of the Bristol public. Wulfstan's efforts did not go unrewarded and he was successful in putting an end to the Irish slave trade.

Map showing the See of Worcester © Christopher Dyer

While this may sound extremely brave, one must remember that during Wulfstan's time bishops were politically influential and held authority over their subjects. It is likely Wulfstan had the support of armed guards during his speeches and on his travels.

## The Domesday Book and Slavery



St Wulfstan  
© Worcester Cathedral

In 1085, Wulfstan assisted the royal commissioners in the survey that led to the Domesday Book of 1086. Despite Wulfstan's efforts, slaves were a common feature around Gloucestershire centuries after the Roman occupation. In the entry for the area around Yate, 25 manors included slaves in their work force: in what is now Codrington, 18 slaves are listed. Mention is also made of female slaves in many manors, including Berkeley and Dyrham. Hawkesbury Manor lists seven freedmen among its residents, with Berkeley having 22.

The Domesday Book shows that slavery was alive and well in the local area over 400 years before Columbus first travelled to the Americas.

St. Wulfstan died in 1095 whilst engaged in his daily ritual of washing the feet of the poor. According to local rumour he was first interred at Hawkesbury and then moved to Worcester Cathedral where a shrine was built in his honour.



© Yate & District Heritage Centre

### **3. Wickwar, Tobacco and the Slave Trade**

**In 1610, Thomas De La Warr helped developed Jamestown, Virginia. The town went on to become England's first successful colony on the American mainland. Many local Gloucestershire families settled in Jamestown, and some were lucky enough to make their fortune in the colony. De la Warr is credited with the success of the settlement and as a result, the Delaware tribe, river and state, were named after him.**

#### **Jamestown**

Colonial life did not start off well. Early struggles with Native Americans, crop failure and starvation led to a proposed abandonment. Thomas de la Warr, who was descended from an old Wickwar family, arrived in Jamestown in 1610. He helped turn the colony's fortunes around with the introduction of tobacco plants. Vast supplies of cheap labour were needed to work the plantation and in 1619, the first shipment of slaves arrived from Africa. Jamestown had a slave market by 1638 and in 1661, the Virginia Assembly officially recognised the practice of slavery.

## Tobacco Wars

Tobacco smoking took off in England, and a pipe was soon considered to be the perfect accompaniment to beer. Due to its success, tobacco plants even began to be cultivated in Gloucestershire. This led to a trade war between the Gloucestershire tobacco growers and the tobacco merchants in Virginia. In 1662, Bristol's Merchant Ventures petitioned the king for the suppression of the Gloucestershire plants. An extensive raid was carried out on the tobacco plants in 1664 by the then sheriff of Bristol. Despite this, three years later, it was still reported that "tobacco was [being] grown throughout Gloucestershire". The King's guards were sent to march on Winchcombe to destroy the plantations. However, this still was not the end of the matter and in 1692 it was reported that "nine plantations of tobacco [325 acres in area] were discovered near Bristol"; these were finally suppressed by "the superior machinery of the revolution government". This ended the legal Gloucestershire tobacco industry.

## Wickwar and Tobacco

Despite the suppression, Wickwar retained an interest in the tobacco trade via the pipe-making industry. Three kiln sites existed in the town, and were believed to have been active between the late 1600s and early 1800s. Wickwar operated a small industry



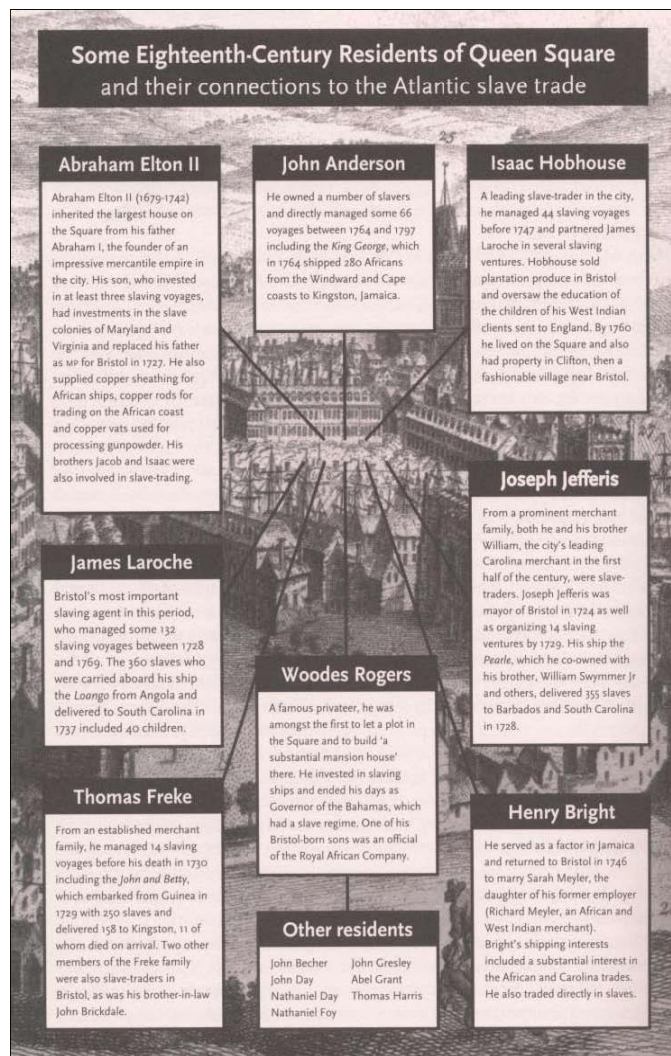
and only a few people were employed to work each kiln. The earliest record of a clay pipe maker comes from 1715; the owner was the appropriately named Obadiah Ash, a one time Mayor of Wickwar, who became churchwarden in 1723.

Clay Pipe. © Yate & District Heritage Centre.

## 4. The Bristol and National Slave Trades

We can not ignore Bristol. The profound impact of the slave trade around South Gloucestershire came as a result of the city's central role within the trade. The transatlantic trade was in full cry in Bristol from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Traders sailed from Bristol to Africa, where they would pick up black slaves to trade on. Between 1698 and 1807, 2,108 slave ships left Bristol bound for Africa. Bristol, along with London and Liverpool, emerged as one of the country's main slave trading cities. The cities' status helped Britain emerge as the leading slaving nation by the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### The Early Bristol Trade



Initially, many slaves were prisoners from the British Isles. Merchants in Bristol were given 500 Scottish Loyalist prisoners at the end of the English Civil War, in 1651. The prisoners were sent to work on plantations in the West Indies. Defendants in criminal trials were often advised to plead for transportation, as it was considered a favourable punishment to imprisonment. In fact, so many prisoners were transported, that in 1654, the Council of the City of Bristol threatened heavy fines for ships carrying unwilling passengers.

Queen's Square Bristol was steeped in slavery. Profits from the slave trade financed the building of Queen's Square.  
© M.Dresser.



## **The Original Plantation Labour**

Plantation owners originally employed native labour. A smallpox epidemic in San Domingo in 1514 is thought to have killed over 2 million inhabitants. Due to this huge decrease in population, the plantation owners needed to find a new workforce. They began using indentured European workers, but were not keen on this idea as the European workers would only work for five years, and after that expected to be given their own piece of land.

## **African Slavery**

Bartolome de Las Casas is believed to be the first person to mention the use of Africans as slaves. De Las Casas, a Spanish priest, was concerned disease and hard work was damaging the native population. He claimed Africans were more hardy people and thus would find it easier to cope with the work, and fend off disease.

## **The British Slave Trade**

The British slave trade effectively began with Elizabethan buccaneers or privateers. The first English transatlantic slaving expedition was captained by John Hawkins in 1562. Hawkins claims to have obtained slaves “partly by sword and partly by other means”. Hawkins bought slaves from Sierra Leone and transported them to Spanish America. In doing this, he was breaking the New World trading monopoly that had been granted to the Spanish by the Pope.

## **Triangular Atlantic Trade**

The transatlantic trade really took off in 1672, when the Royal Africa Company was granted a charter to transport slaves from Africa to the Americas. In 1698, the London monopoly on African trade was lifted. Due to the city’s position, it took Bristol only 20 years to take over London’s dominant position within the trade.

## The Horror of the Trade

The size of slaving ships varied. A small slaver could carry around 30 slaves, whereas a large ship could carry over 400 slaves. Merchants would often take a few slaves if they had extra room onboard. Some 12 million men, women and children, would make the transatlantic journey; one in five would die before reaching their destination as a result of the terrible conditions.

## African Involvement

The coastal states of West Africa supported the slave trade as it provided the African traders with a personal income, and helped boost national revenue. Villagers would often capture and sell on personal rivals or known criminals from the village; the trade was used as a way to seek revenge on those who had wronged you or who you did not like. However, not all tribes were so ruthless: many only sold prisoners of war and not their own people. John Newton believed war and the slave trade were so inter-linked, that the slave trade would cease to exist if all war ended.

## The Triangular Trade

The Trans-Atlantic trade followed a triangular route: ships left Bristol in June for West Africa, taking with them goods including textiles, iron and guns. The traders arrived in West Africa during the yam harvest in September, providing them with yams to feed the slaves en route. They exchanged the goods they had brought from Europe for slaves, wood, ivory and gold.



18<sup>th</sup> century sugar nippers  
© Yate & District Heritage Centre

The slave ships arrived during the sugar harvest in January. This meant there was a large demand for slaves and planters were prepared to pay a higher price. Traders bought sugar, rum, coffee and tobacco to ship back home.

## The Beneficiaries

Many Bristolians profited from the trade, and the local area as a whole flourished during this time. The wealth obtained from the slave trade was used to fund new ships, buildings and factories. Bristol's first bank, which opened in Broad Street in 1750, was founded by slave merchants. The bankers provided loans to finance new ventures in the trade. Indeed, much of Bristol's wealth came about as a result of the slave trade. Profits from the slave trade made many traders very wealthy men indeed, not least Edward Colston.

### Edward Colston

Edward Colston was one of Bristol's most famous sons, and an official in the Royal Africa Company. Most of his wealth may have come from the plantations he owned in the West Indies. When he died, Colston left vast amounts of money to Bristol schools and hospitals. His legacy still remains in the city today with a concert hall, schools and streets, named after him.



Statue of Edward Colston, Bristol.  
© M.Dresser

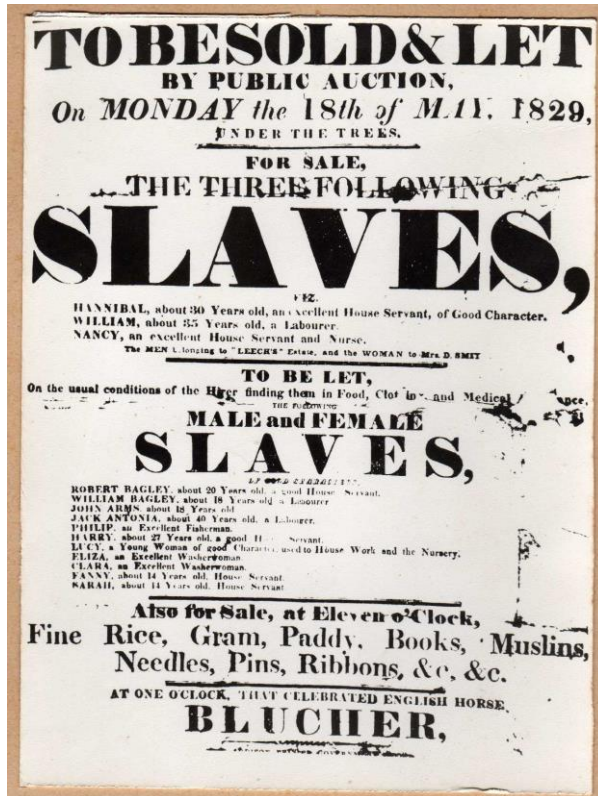
### Indirect Involvement

Many ordinary Bristolians profited from the trade: the ship's captain would be paid for transporting slaves across the Atlantic Ocean; the businessmen who funded the voyage would receive the final profits from the venture; dockworkers in Bristol were paid for unloading goods from the ships at the end of a journey; craftsmen received money for supplying the goods that were sold to African traders. Pipe smokers, sugar users and tea drinkers were also indirectly involved in the trade; it was their demand for these luxury goods that fuelled the trade.

## 5. The Codringtons

The Codringtons were one of several families in South Gloucestershire who became rich on the back of plantations

in the West Indies. The family owned slave plantations on Antigua and Barbuda for nearly 200 years. As a consequence they dominated island life. Colonel Christopher Codrington arrived in the West Indies in 1642 and soon began buying and selling land there. His sons, Christopher and John, developed sugar plantations on Antigua and obtained a 200 year lease of the island of Barbuda. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Codringtons used their family fortune to buy Dodrington House.



Poster for a Codrington Slave Auction. 1829.  
© S.Codrington

### The Plantations

The Codrington sugar plantation on Antigua was given the name Betty's Hope. The plantation, which stood 10 miles east of the port of St. Johns, covered 25 acres and was managed by John Griffiths. William Codrington asked that Griffiths saw the slaves were fed well, and their feet kept clean. Slaves working the Codrington plantations are known to have sailed from Bristol. A ship, also called Betty's Hope, set sail from Bristol in March 1731. She was captained by Edward Little and had 222 slaves on board. However, this ship was an exception to the rule. From 1730, the number of slaves travelling from Bristol to Barbados had begun to decline.



Codrington Sugar Mill, Antigua  
© S.Page. 2002

## The Barbuda Operation

Barbuda had only a small fresh water supply, which meant soil was poor and sugar was not able to be grown on the island. Instead, Barbuda was used to supply food to the slaves working the plantations on Antigua. The slaves on Barbuda were allowed to catch fish to eat whilst they harvested food to send to the workers. Fear of being sent to work on the plantations on Antigua as punishment, kept the slaves on Barbuda in line.

## The Scope of the Plantations

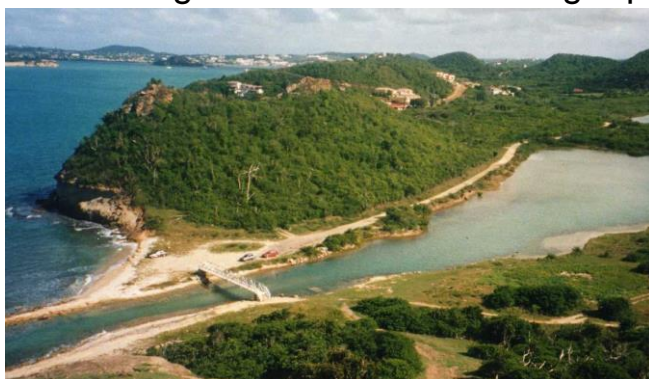
A letter dated 8 June 1754, states the Codrington family had 799 slaves working on their plantations. Slave prices in 1755 varied from: £36 for a blacksmith and £139 for seven “fine young women”. A list of slaves on Betty’s Hope Estate from 30 June 1827, lists not only the names of slaves and their jobs, but in some cases, personal descriptions. Betty Gay and Mary George are listed as “indifferent workers”; Sarah Charles is noted as having “a cancer in her breast” and Holly Braid is identified as “a lunatic.”

## The Breeding Scheme

Many historians believe the Codringtons were operating a breeding programme on Barbuda during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The aim of the programme was to produce healthy slaves who would be best able to toil the sugar plantations on Antigua. Regardless of breeding or not, the success of the Codrington plantations was undoubtedly due to careful planning on the part of the family.

## Managing the Plantations

Although sugar was a vital part of the Codrington income, the family were seldom directly managing affairs. Generally, agents and managers looked after the sugar plantations on Antigua.



Indeed, Christopher Codrington III spent much of his early life in England where he was educated at Oxford; he returned to the family home on Antigua in 1703.

Site of Codrington sugar plantation.  
© S.Page. 2002.

## Christian Control

**The Christian Remembrancer**  
VERSUS  
THE  
**Anti-Slavery Society.**

**ENGLISHMEN**, read and reflect upon the following extract from the *Christian Remembrancer* for February 1831, a work long distinguished for its able support of the *real unadulterated* principles of the Christian Religion, in contradiction to the "seers of visions, & dreamers of dreams" who pervert the word of God to their own vile and infamous purposes. "Let not your own prophets and your divines" (your Evans's & Bennett's) that be in the midst of you, deceive you." *Jeremiah, xxix. v. 8.*

A short comparison of the respective conditions of the British Peasant and African Negro will perhaps, alter the opinion of some of our readers who may have been misled by unfounded assertions, or blinded by pre-existing prejudices.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Slave!</b></p> <p>1. The Slave is provided with a comfortable house, of which he cannot be deprived, and good clothing suited to the climate; he is allowed a portion of land and time to work. If which enable him to maintain himself, his children must be provided with good and wholesome food by the master; he never wants a hearty meal for if the produce of his labour fall from bad seasons, his owner feeds him and provides for all his wants.</p> <p>2. The Negro goes to his daily labour a little after six and toils about nine hours, he has the evening undisturbed and he sleeps soundly without a thought for the morrow.</p> <p>3. If he is sick, he has a doctor to attend him, who is paid by his master; medicines are provided for him which cost him nothing, and soap, and wine, and every thing else which his situation requires are supplied him free of expense, and his wife, and family are well fed and want for nothing.</p> <p>4. When the Negro dies, he leaves his wife and children without anxiety for their future welfare; he deposits with the consulting relations that want cannot smother them, and that the evils of poverty are never reach them.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Free Born Briton!</b></p> <p>1. The British peasant from his daily labour, must the rent of a miserable hut and provide food and cloth, for his family. If work fails, or times are hard, he cannot pay rent, he is turned out of his house, his family must starve, beg or steal, and perhaps end their days in a workhouse.</p> <p>2. The poor man generally labours longer and harder, and when he lies his head upon his bed, if he has the fortune to possess one, he knows that if the morrow gives him no employment, he and his family get no food.</p> <p>3. If sickness disable him from pursuing his daily labour, he can have no medical advice, no physician, no food, no soap, no wine, nor any other comforts he depends for his situation, save from the grudging humanity of a parish doctor, or charity hospital entrance, and even that not always; besides, his wife and children must pass their days in poverty's bread. Their only scenes in the hospital. Their only prospect of relief, the grave!</p> <p>4. The death of the poor man is the scene of human suffering. His trembling wife and wretched children add bitterness to his dying moments. His bones lie in a hole in their straw bed. He sees them cry themselves of the covering that should protect them from the inclemency of the wintry blast, to shield him some little relief.</p> |
|--|--|

**ENGLISHMEN!** The above are the statements, not of a West India Planter, but a Christian Writer, not the advocacy of a hired agent but the indignant expression of a defender of the Truth and honest faction. The character of the *Christian Remembrancer* conducted & supported as it is, by one of the most distinguished members of the Church of England, forbids the supposition that they could only be actuated by any improper motives in advocating the cause of an honourable and much calumniated set of men. Again therefore I repeat, read, mark, & weigh well the contrast, & say whether the *charges of these anti Slavery demagogues are not converted into arenas for factious discussions.*

London, August 8th, 1832.

**Furner & Co. Printers, Wood Street, one door from Cheapside.**

Anti-slavery debate poster from 1832 © S Codrington

The Codringtons used Christianity as a tool to control their slaves. Slavery and Christianity were far from separate in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. When he died, Christopher Codrington III left two estates in Barbados and part of the island of Barbuda, to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. He insisted priests were to be trained to help slaves learn the Bible and thus, "have the opportunity of doing good to men's souls, while they are taking care of their bodies". Arguably, Codrington's intention was to encourage slaves to learn basic morality and discipline, which in turn would discourage them from rebelling.

William Codrington was MP for Tewkesbury from 1761 until his death in 1792. His constituents lobbied Codrington to bring an end to what they referred to as a "national disgrace". Codrington replied it was in his, and the slaves', best interests to continue with the trade.

## 6. The Codringtons and Abolition

The period from the mid 1700s to the 1833 Abolition of Slavery Act saw an increase in the slave population on Antigua. The number of slaves rose from 172 in 1746, to 503 in 1831. Whether this is due to the rumoured slave breeding programme, or merely down to the better treatment of slaves, is open to question. Despite this, the increase in slave numbers, Anglo-French wars and the French Revolution caused unrest in the West Indies. The unrest caused Plantation owners to move back to Britain, where they built grand estates from their profits.

### The Beginning of the End

On Antigua, profits halved by the early part of the 1800s and continued to decline. Agents working for Christopher Codrington began to take advantage of his absence and often neglected their duties. William Beckford, one of the plantation owners, was cheated by agents working for him when he returned to Britain: he lost 1,500 slaves and property worth over £30,000.

### Keeping up Appearances



Dodrington House. © S.Codrington.

Despite the fall in profits, the Codringtons felt it essential to maintain Dodrington House to keep up appearances. The house had been built in 1557 by Robert Wekys, who sold it to Giles Codrington in the 1700s. During the 1760s, vast amounts of restoration work were undertaken at great expense. William

Codrington, who had taken over as head of the Codrington family at the age of 19 in 1738, continued running the estates in Antigua and Barbuda to bring in a source of income with which to fund the restoration.

## Freedom and Beyond

An Act of Parliament in 1809, made it almost impossible to send slaves to the plantations. Sir Christopher believed slaves would be better cared for under his ownership. However, 1834 saw freedom awarded to all 310 slaves at Betty's Hope as a result of the 1833 Abolition of Slavery Act. A letter from an overseer in Antigua to Sir Christopher in March 1840 describes the circumstances there: "Negro emancipation seems to have made the proprietor the slave. The former will reside on my property and have daily wages whether I have work for them or not". After emancipation was granted, Betty's Hope fell into disrepair and those who were previously enslaved were no longer obedient to the agents.

## Local Opposition

In 1834, Christopher Bethell Codrington was publicly denounced as a prospective MP because he was, "Heir to property in human flesh and blood"; Codrington was elected to Parliament

**Anti-Slavery Electors**  
OF THE  
**COUNTY OF GLOUCESTER.**

GENTLEMEN,

IMPRESSED with the conviction that in advocating the immediate Emancipation of the Slaves in our West India Colonies, your desire can only be the welfare of those Slaves, I would endeavour to draw your attention to the statements of Persons whose object must accord with your own; and who, from living among those Slaves, are eye-witnesses to their *real* situation. It is said, Gentlemen, that nothing has been done to ameliorate the state of the Negro; nothing to further the advancement of his Religion; but will you credit the assertions of anonymous Scribblers, (who can know nothing of the subject on which they write,) and refuse your belief to Men who have banished themselves from this, their native Country, with the humane object of diffusing among the Negro Population a knowledge of the Gospel, with a view to their emancipation at the earliest period at which it can be beneficially extended to them?

*The Bishop of Jamaica writes, under date of August 29th, 1831, as follows:*

"Fifteen new Chapels have been erected in the Archdeaconry of Jamaica, since 1825, and four more are about to be erected; marriage is becoming every day more frequent; and as the minds of the Slaves become more strengthened and improved, the hold of superstition becomes weaker."

*The Archdeacon, too, in a speech at a Meeting held at Bermuda, says:*

"Situated as the Colonies are, if I could with a breath pronounce Freedom to every Slave in the West Indies, I would withhold the utterance, from a conviction, that in his present state of mental degradation, Liberty would be to him, instead of a boon, a burden and a curse."

In all the other Islands Chapels have been built, several of them by voluntary contributions, in which the names of many Slaves appear as subscribers. But it is said that the West India Planter will not see his own interest; that he is so wedded to Slavery that he opposes Emancipation, although it would be a mine of riches to himself. Can any argument, I ask, be used more favourable to the humanity of the Planter? The object we all have in view is, TO CONVERT THE WORKING SLAVE INTO A WORKING PEASANT. So far am I from being an opponent, that no Man would more gladly see it, because no Man would receive more benefit from the completion of such a blessing. Gentlemen, the space allowed in a letter of this kind admits but of a few scarcely connected observations. I stand forward as the Friend, not the Opposer, of Negro Emancipation;—of that Emancipation which (to use the words of the Archdeacon of Jamaica) shall be a boon, an eternal blessing, not a burden, or a curse, to the Negro. To such an Emancipation, you shall never see me opposed. Nay, I call on you, Gentlemen, to assist me in this undertaking,—to promote, as I will promote, the diffusion of Religion and Knowledge among the Negroes, with a view to their becoming the Peasants above described! Immediate manumission would destroy all hope of such a blessing. Listen not to me, nor to Men ashamed to give you their names, nor yet to the Anti-Slavery Calumniators; but consult your own sound understanding. If I bring you, Gentlemen, to that point, to act from the dictates of your own good sense, the cause of humanity, the cause of the Slave, will be promoted; and we may all look forward with the greatest confidence to that gradual and certain manumission, which by hasty and improvident measures will be altogether prevented, but which you are not more desirous of seeing beneficially accomplished than,

GENTLEMEN,

Your faithful humble Servant,

**C. BETHELL CODRINGTON.**

London, August 24th, 1832.

regardless of this disapproval. The Gloucester Journal published an article criticising those who voted for him and labelling them "Mr Codrington's white slaves". When he died in 1792, William Codrington left his fortune to his nephew, Christopher Bethell Codrington, rather than his own son. This is believed to be due to letters Christopher used to write to William, detailing his capabilities as a successful merchant.

Election poster. 1832. © S.Codrington.



## **7. Humanity- the story of one slave**

**Slaves in the eighteenth century were listed under one name and often this name was shared by many slaves. As a result, individual stories are rarely heard. In the Codrington records for Barbuda however, an unusual name is frequently referred to. Humanity is first mentioned in 1782, and continues to be mentioned until his death in 1818.**

### **Life on the Ocean Wave**

Humanity had an important job as a regular sailor, and would often sail as a captain. The ship, The Forager, is noted to have sailed with Humanity as its captain in 1782. Humanity's crew consisted of six to eight men; captains were paid almost double what the crew received, and were provided with medical care and a uniform.

The slave register for 1783 mentions just two sailors. Humanity is not recorded in the 1783 register as he was believed to have been at sea at the time; he is however, mentioned in all subsequent registers. Humanity's death is recorded on 28 April 1818; he was described as "male, black, sixty years".

### **A Sailor's Role**

Being a sailor was regarded as a very important job. Sailors were relied upon to be good seamen in all conditions and were trusted with valuable cargo such as mail. One of their most common journeys involved transporting food supplies from the Codrington plantations on Barbuda to Antigua. Sailors also undertook salvage missions from shipwrecks, and in later years, transported sugar from the Codrington estates to the ocean-bearing ships.

### **An Unfortunate Mistake**

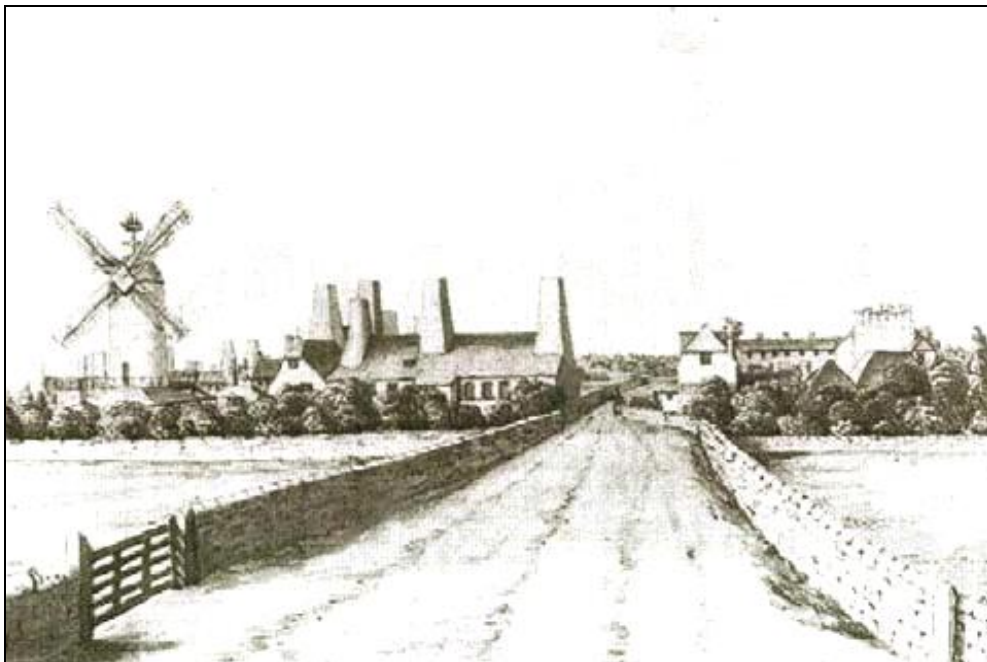
One incident is recorded following Humanity mistaking a schooner privateer for the ship of an English naval officer. Humanity and his crew were captured but were later released by an intercepting English ship, the HMS L'Aimable. £800 was paid for the retrieval of Humanity, Will, Primus, Jacob, Othello and Simon.

## 8. Kingswood Industries and Slavery

Many local industries were linked with the slave trade: the brass works at Warmley produced “Guinea Goods”, which were sold to the slave traders; sugar refiners and distillers were dependent on slave labour for their raw materials; whereas the miners in Kingswood produced the coal needed to fuel these various processes.

### Slavery and Brass

Abraham Darby established the Baptist Mills Brass Works in 1702 with surplus money from his expanding slave trade business. William Champion founded his own brass works in Warmley in 1746. The brass works at Baptist Mills used 2,000 horse loads of coal a week; the coal came from coal mines in Kingswood, which had been operating since medieval times.



Warmley Brass Works in its heyday c1780 producing brass for Africa  
© Kingswood Museum.

The brass industry was so commercially important that factory keyholes had to be blocked-up to prevent competitors spying. The majority of brass workers did not know where the goods they were making ended up and indeed, in many ways, the workers were exploited themselves.

Brass rods made around the Kingswood area were used as currency by the slave traders. In West Africa, the metal rods were melted down and made into pots, tools and other household goods. Africans referred to the copper obtained from the melted rods as the “red gold of Africa”.



Engine House, Kingswood. Remnants of Kingswood's coal industry can still be seen today. © Kingswood Museum.

## Other Slave Industries

Historians at Wedgwood Museum believe that although most pottery was unmarked, the majority of abolition ceramics came from the same potteries in Bristol that made pots to supply the slave trade. Gin made in Bristol was purchased by the slave traders and taken to be drunk on the long voyage to Africa.

However, the traders did not always deal directly with the big foundries and factories. They would often buy second-hand pots and pans for a cheaper price at local markets, thus indirectly involving local market traders in the slave trade.

## 9. John Wesley, Kingswood and the Slave Trade

John Wesley was born in 1703 and was an ardent opponent of slavery and the slave trade right up to his death in 1791. He was responsible for the building of the New Room in Bristol, which today is the oldest Methodist Chapel in the world. Wesley preached to the Kingswood miners on many occasions. His verbal attacks on the poor working conditions of the miners and the slave trade made him an inspiration to many local people.

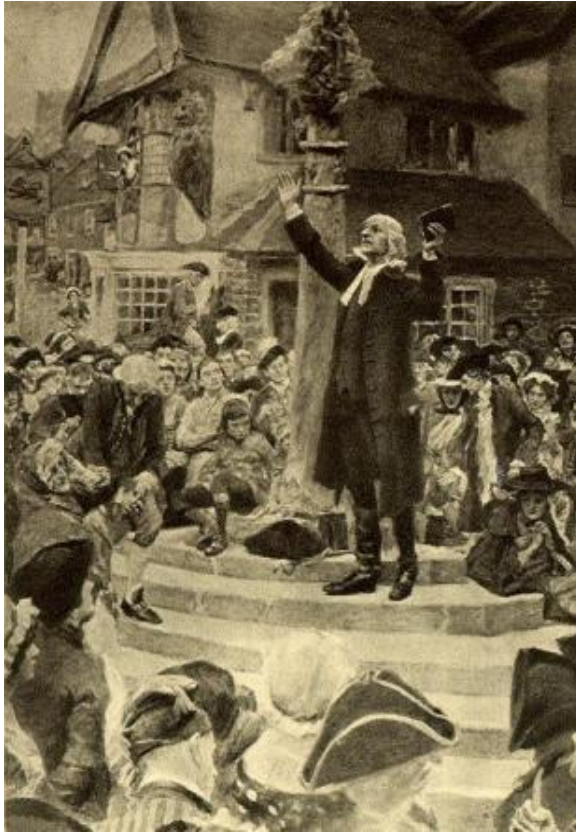
### Thoughts upon Slavery

In April 1739, John Wesley preached the first of many sermons to miners in Kingswood. Wesley's involvement in the abolition movement began in 1736 after he made a visit to the American colony of Georgia. His experiences of slavery in the colonies installed pro-abolition feelings in Wesley. However, to begin with, these were not feelings he felt obliged to act upon. On his return to England, Wesley read the book: "Some Historical Account of Guinea" by Anthony Benezet. After he had finished reading, Wesley wrote down his thoughts on the book in his journal:

*"In returning, I read a very different book, published by an honest Quaker, on that execrable sum of all villainies, commonly called the Slave Trade. I read of nothing like it in the heathen world, whether ancient or modern; and it infinitely exceeds, in every instance of barbarity, whatever Christian slaves suffer in Mahometan countries."*

Inspired by Benezet's work, Wesley published his own article, entitled "Thoughts Upon Slavery", in 1774. Wesley's pamphlet proved to be very successful and went into four editions in just two years.

## Wesley the Inspiration



Wesley preaching near Bristol © Kingswood Museum.

On many occasions John Wesley preached the word of God to the Kingswood miners. Although Wesley himself offered no practical solutions to poor working conditions, his outdoor preaching and attacks on slavery made him an inspiration to many people in the area. In Bristol in 1788, Wesley delivered his most memorable sermon. Many miners were in attendance, as were a number of slave traders who were there to upset proceedings. The ceremony was disturbed by a great storm, which frightened even the most vocal of anti-abolitionists.

## 10. The Sturge Family

The Sturge family were Quakers based mainly in the Thornbury area. The Quakers were one of the first groups to speak out against the slave trade and indeed, many Quakers were leading abolitionists. Quakers saw slavery as a violation of their belief that every man was born equal. The slave trade was banned from Quaker properties in 1760, and by 1761, the movement began expelling any Quaker who owned slaves.

### Joseph Sturge

Joseph Sturge VI was perhaps the most ardent abolitionist of them all. He was born at Elberton Manor House, near Olveston, in 1793. Joseph moved to Tockington at the age of 10 to live with his grandfather. At 14, Sturge began to learn farming skills at Sheepcombe Farm in Tockington and later started his own farming business at Aust Farm. The Sturge family had farmed in the local area for over 200 years and from the 1830s, some family members



Lawns House (now the Lawns Hotel), Yate c1910. The Yate branch of the Sturge family built the property in the 1830s.  
© R Jordan.

lived in The Lawns in Yate. However, in 1814, Joseph gave up farming to become a corn merchant with a fellow Quaker, Henry Cotterell. In 1822, he left the corn business in the charge of his brother and moved to Birmingham for a new start.

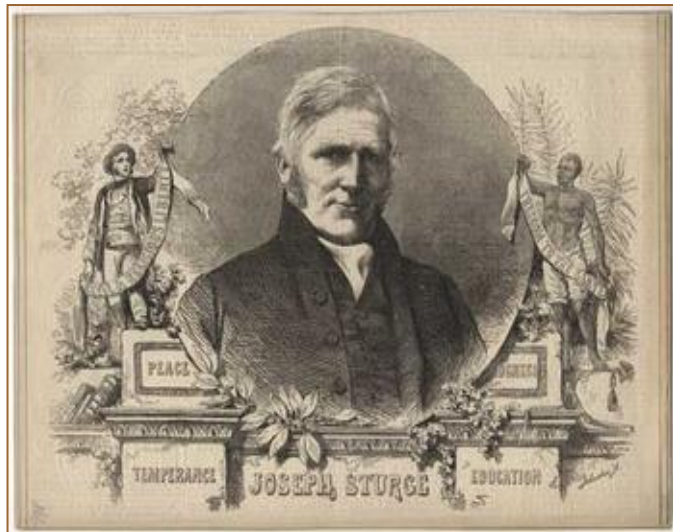
### The Great Abolitionist

Joseph Sturge was appointed Secretary to the Birmingham Anti-Slavery Society in 1826. He became annoyed at the lack of progress that was being made after 1807, and began to campaign for a complete end to slavery itself. Sturge left the Society when it became geared towards the reform of slavery and not abolition.

## The New Scourge – the Apprenticeship System

In 1834, Joseph Sturge turned his attentions to the new apprenticeship system, which operated in the West Indies after the passing of the 1833 Abolition of Slavery act. Former slave owners were still entitled to 40 hours of free labour from their former slaves, but any further toil required wages.

Sturge travelled to the West Indies to see how the apprentice system had been implemented. He discovered the social and economic conditions in Antigua, where plantations had not adopted apprenticeship, were far superior to those islands which had initiated the system.



Joseph Sturge. © The National Portrait Gallery

Sturge voiced his criticism of the apprenticeship scheme and informed his fellow campaigners that nothing much had changed and in his belief, apprenticeship actually prolonged slavery. On his return to England, Sturge brought back a Jamaican apprentice called James Williams, whose testimony on apprenticeship provided first-hand evidence of this fact.

## American Slavery

In 1841, Sturge visited America and tried to obtain an interview with President Tyler; unfortunately, Tyler was not interested in Sturge and his campaigns. In retaliation, Sturge penned a protest against Tyler and the American slave trade, and made sure it was published in every anti-slavery manifesto he could find. He also sent copies of the articles to members of congress and to the President himself.

## Oveston Estate and Sturge Town

In 1852, Joseph Sturge started on a new campaign. The lime crop had failed and many estates were now out of pocket; their



misfortune was quickly acted upon by the Sturge family. Thanks to the West Indies Encumbered Estate Act, which permitted the sale of any estate crippled by debt, the Sturges were able to purchase debt-ridden estates at low prices.

Plantation workers on the Sturge estate. C.1890. © E.Garrett.

Sturge wanted to prove the problem with the decreasing West Indian economy was due to the behaviour of the landlords, and not the laziness of the slaves. He believed that if he was able to conduct business and grow crops successfully in the area, then anyone could. The new land was renamed 'Oveston Estate', after the village where Joseph had spent his childhood. The Sturges sold and rented land to labourers, where they could grow sugar, fruit and vegetables; these small holdings eventually grew into free villages.

### Sturge Town

In 1840, Reverend John Clark established Sturge Town in St Ann Parish, Jamaica, which he named after Joseph Sturge. Sturge Town was the second free town to be set up in Jamaica. The land, a previous plantation owned by the Scarlett family, measured around 500 acres and was shared between 100 families. The water supply for the town came from Marley Spring, which was discovered by a runaway slave by the name of Marley. A schoolroom was opened in the town in 1842, and a Baptist Church was built in 1858. It is believed that around 20,000 former slaves settled in free villages in Jamaica.



## The Sturge Montserrat Company

Joseph Sturge founded “Sturge’s Montserrat Company” in 1868. Due to the success of the company, the lime industry went on to become the primary industry on the island. The Sturge family became major landowners on Montserrat, and by 1878 had over 120,000 lime trees in production. They were also responsible for founding the first non-Church school on the island. The school was named Olveston Elementary School, again after Sturge’s childhood home, and was used to educate the children of the lime



estate workers. Olveston School was financed by shareholders of the Sturge Montserrat Company until 1932, when it was turned over to the island government.

Ploughing the plantation fields on the Sturge’s Montserrat plantation c1890. Despite there being no slavery at this time, labour still involved manual toil © E Garrett.

## 11. The Philosophy of Abolition

**Quakers were very much at the forefront of the abolitionist cause and were particularly well represented in the South Gloucestershire area. During the 1700s, slavery was considered part of the natural order of the world and those who spoke out against it were considered unpatriotic. It was believed slavery and colonisation went hand in hand, and thus abolition would provide other nations with an economic advantage. Over the next 100 years, changes in ideology would alter the way people viewed slavery and the slave trade.**

### The Quaker Dimension

The Quakers were one of the first to speak out against the slave trade. They first condemned the trade at a monthly meeting



held at the house of Richard Worrell in Germantown, Pennsylvania, on 18 February 1688. The Quakers even went so far as to claim that slavery amounted to nothing more than theft. Quaker banks refused credit to individuals and companies directly involved in the slave trade. The slave trade was banned from Quaker properties in 1760 and from May 1761, the movement was expelling any Quaker who owned slaves.

Phillip Debell Tuckett. Tuckett was clerk to the London Yearly Meeting; the highest Quaker body in England  
© Frenchay Museum.

### Abolition Fever Takes Hold

By the late 1770s, other groups were beginning to question the slave trade. The Court of King's Bench, held in 1772, ruled slavery unlawful in England. The Somerset Case arose as a result of this meeting and ruled no slave could be forcibly removed from Britain. This new ruling led to a widespread belief that slavery itself was not only legally, but morally wrong. Anti-Slavery groups began appearing in London in the 1780s and by 1790, abolition fever had

swept the country. In its first year, the abolition campaign held 51 meetings, conducted 26,526 reports, and published 51,432 books.

Many slaves fought for Britain during the American War of Independence. In return, they were given freedom once the conflict was over. A handful of freed slaves arrived in London where they voiced their experiences of slavery to a willing audience.

### **Am I Not a Man and a Brother?**

In 1787, the Anti-Slavery Committee designed a seal showing a black slave kneeling in chains with the words: "Am I not a Man and a Brother". The image was displayed on campaign material such as cameos, pottery and posters. It was also incorporated onto brooches, bracelets and hair pins; this gave women, who could not vote or sign petitions at the time, a chance to show their support to the campaign.

Abolition supporter and pottery maker, Josiah Wedgwood, used one of his own factories to produce items with the image on. The society gave away vast amounts of the seals to fellow supporters: Thomas Clarkson received 500, which he gave away to friends, family and other campaigners. The image was criticised by some abolitionists as it showed a slave on his knees. These campaigners believed the design reflected the notion of white supremacy over a grateful, free black slave.



Abolitionist sugar bowl. Many abolitionists were very proud of their actions.  
© Yate & District Heritage Centre

## **Anti-Abolition**

There was also opposition. Pro-slavery groups were set up, slave traders lobbied parliament, organised rallies and drafted petitions in support of the trade. During the 1790 session of parliament, trade-groups disrupted proceedings being made by an abolition group. They claimed the abolitionists had already been given too much time to get their point across. However, William Wilberforce claimed only 57 days out of the 81 days put aside for the proceedings had been taken up by the abolitionists. The traders did their job and the motion was not carried.

## **The Slave Trade Act**

The British Parliament received a record 519 petitions on the subject of abolition; this was one from every county in England, and most of Wales and Scotland. In 1806, Lord Grenville was appointed Prime Minister. Grenville was a strong supporter of abolition and filled his new cabinet with like-minded politicians. On 25 March 1807, the Slave Trade Abolition Bill was passed in Parliament by 283 votes to 16.

Slavery itself was not abolished for another 26 years with the passing of the Emancipation Act in 1833. The act abolished slavery, but gave the colonies a choice between freeing slaves outright or binding them into a six year apprenticeship. In 1838, the British Government agreed to free 800,000 men and women from apprenticeship two years early.

## 12. Heroes of Abolition

The campaign for abolition was the first large scale national campaign devoted to a single cause. Abolitionists, both local and national, met with great opposition from supporters of the slave trade. At the time, slave traders were very influential men and the trade was seen as a legitimate business. The slave trade helped maintain the prosperity of the west coast ports like Bristol, provided a lot of money and created many wealthy families around the South Gloucestershire area.

### Slave Rebellion

Slaves played their own part in the fight for abolition, from small acts of rebellion like damaging machinery, to full-scale protests and revolts. The 1791 slave rebellion in Haiti led to a revolution and war of independence. The Republic of Haiti was proclaimed in 1804, creating the first free black republic.

### Quakers at the Forefront

Quakers proved a constant source of strength for the abolition movement. Hannah More and Wilberforce both stayed with the Quaker banker, John Scandrett Harford, at his house in Frenchay between 1811 and 1813. Harford also held a collection in the new Frenchay Meeting House in aid of Wilberforce and the Anti-Slavery movement; the meeting raised £55.



Elizabeth Tuckett. Tuckett was the widow of John Wright, a Quaker member of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

© Frenchay Museum.

## **Thomas Clarkson**

Thomas Clarkson became interested in the slave trade whilst at Cambridge University. His father was a reverend and Thomas had enrolled at university with the intention of pursuing a career in the church. Clarkson entered an essay contest in 1785, entitled “Is it lawful to enslave the consenting?”, which prompted him to undertake further research into the slave trade. He became appalled at what he read and decided that something must be done to rectify the situation. Clarkson was travelling through Hertfordshire, when he stopped at Wades Hill and came to the conclusion that “if the contents of the essay were true...it was time some person should see the calamities to their end”. His essay was published in 1786 and influenced many of the leading abolitionists of the time.

### **Clarkson Comes To Bristol**

To gather evidence for his cause, Clarkson travelled 35,000 miles around Britain. His journey led to him becoming despised amongst the trading community. Clarkson visited “The Seven Stars” pub on St. Thomas Street, Bristol in 1787. Indecently, in America, the Seven Stars is a famous coded Slavery song which gave runaway slaves directions to the North (Freedom) Star and safety; the pub was given this name long before Clarkson visited on his abolition campaign.

Clarkson had compiled a list of 145 questions to ask those involved in the trade. Unfortunately, he discovered most people were unwilling to have their answers recorded. To get round this, Thomas would commit interviews to memory and write up the script whilst in his lodgings at night. The majority of sailors Clarkson met with condemned the slave trade. Many had been forced to sign on by press gangs, or been recruited whilst drunk. They claimed they did not enjoy the slave voyages, but the voyages were so highly bribed that they sometimes took them on for a bit of extra money. Clarkson discovered that more sailors than intended slaves died during the middle passage.

## **Taking the Campaign Abroad**

Clarkson was a vocal supporter of both the American and French Revolutions. In 1789, he travelled to France in a bid to encourage the French leaders to push for abolition. His continued correspondence with the French leaders was criticised by politicians in Britain, who felt his support on the subject was detrimental to the abolition campaign.

## **The Wilberforce Factor**

William Wilberforce was Leader of the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. He entered parliament in 1780 and used his influence to try to put an end to the slave trade. Wilberforce was a reluctant poster boy for the campaign and did not believe he was the best man for the job. From 1791, Wilberforce supported abolition in every parliamentary session. He made twelve attempts at abolition, including bills in April 1792 and February 1793; but all were rejected. He first met Thomas Clarkson in 1787, and was greatly influenced by Clarkson's work. Wilberforce published his own essay, "A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade" in 1807.

## **Hannah More**

Hannah More was born in Fishponds in 1745. She began writing anti-slave trade material after reading the letters of former slave captain, Reverend John Newton. She began a correspondence with Newton, who further increased her interest in abolition. Thanks to a wide social circle, More soon became friends with many leading abolitionists including Wilberforce and Clarkson. She quarrelled with Lord Monboddo over his continued defence of the trade. In 1788, she published her most famous work: "Slavery": the poem details the slave trade as Bristol's great shame. More went on to become the most influential female abolitionist of her time.

Other local campaigners included Dr. JB Estlin, who lived on Park Street in Bristol. Dr. Estlin and his daughter, Mary, were frequent travellers to the West Indies. Their meetings with slaves on their travels encouraged the pair to join the campaign for abolition.

Abolitionists were criticised by many for ignoring the plight of the poor and indentured labourers back in Britain. Richard Oastler wrote an article in his local paper criticising the abolitionists; he claimed they should first seek to solve the problems at home before venturing off to the West Indies.

Traders, and those associated with the slave trade, did not see how an abolition bill could be passed. They viewed the campaigners as nothing more than over enthusiastic do-gooders who, as Llangford Lovell put it “artfully and wickedly set out to inflame the minds of the people”; they did not believe the general public would fall for what they viewed to be complete propaganda. William Codrington sent a collection of anti-slavery pamphlets to his friend, Dennis Reynolds in 1787. Reynolds wrote back that he



“at first laughed at the attempts of the Manchester fanatics” but later realised “it is a serious business taken up warmly by Mr Wilberforce and others...they do not require any modification of the slave trade but a total abolition”. The cry for abolition was beginning to take shape, and the slave traders now realised that the abolition bill they had previously regarded as pure fantasy could soon threaten their livelihood.

Christopher Codrington. The Codringtons were eventually against abolition. © S.Codrington.



## **13. Abolition and Beyond**

**The 1807 Slave Trade Act prohibited the trade in slaves, but did nothing to help those who were already enslaved. In fact, a quarter of all transatlantic slaves were transported after 1807. However, this did not mean people had forgotten about abolition. Apprenticeship was considered by many to be just another form of slavery and abolitionists fought on to bring an end to the trade once and for all.**

Between 1809 and 1811, British Army ships were stationed on the West African coast to ensure British ships were no longer involved in the slave trade. Many British ships got around this law by disguising themselves with American colours, as American ships were not allowed to be searched. After abolition in 1807, many anti-slavery groups saw a decline in their members. Despite this, the Quakers increased their campaign for full abolition, just as many others were reducing theirs.

### **The Road to Abolishing Slavery**

By the summer of 1824, 800 abolition groups had been set up or re-established and 777 petitions had been sent to parliament. It was becoming clearer that the government's aim was to improve the conditions for slaves, rather than to abolish slavery itself. The British government felt slaves did not possess the skills to manage an independent life: they had no skills to manage a household budget or to find work. To try and teach these life skills to slaves, the British Parliament introduced a system with which to train the slaves: they called it Apprenticeship. Despite all the government's good intentions, apprenticeship was seen by many campaigners as another form of slavery. The apprenticeship scheme was abolished in 1838 and slaves were finally granted true freedom.

## The Hawkesbury Connection

Robert Banks Jenkinson, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Liverpool and 2<sup>nd</sup> Baron of Hawkesbury, was instrumental in the later stages of the abolition campaign. Jenkinson delivered many speeches in Parliament, including one speaking out against abolition; this reflected his father's opposition to the campaign. His father, Charles Jenkinson, was a West Indian proprietor and the first President of the Board of Trade. Charles was also a strong opponent of the abolition campaigner, William Wilberforce.

## Jenkinson as Prime Minister

Robert Banks Jenkinson was appointed Prime Minister in 1812. He attended the Congress of Vienna in 1815, where he petitioned other European powers to join Britain in abolishing the slave trade. It is unsure if Jenkinson changed his own opinions on abolition, or if he joined the campaign because it was in Britain's best interests.



Congress of Vienna © M Steeds

## Compensation, But Not For Slaves.

Local slave owners were compensated for each slave freed. Over £20 million, around £1 billion in today's money, was paid to the slave owners in compensation. Charles Pinney of the Georgian House in Bristol claimed about £36,000, which would be worth around £1.8 million today (2008). The Codrington family received £14,754 10d as compensation for the loss of their slaves.

## Black Servants in Local Houses

A ship's captain was usually given a few slaves as part of his salary. He would sell the slaves to wealthy families, who employed them as domestic servants. When merchants returned from overseas, they too would bring slaves back with them to work on their estates. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, owning a black slave was regarded as a sign of wealth. The Codringtons were no different, after they returned from the West Indies in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, they brought with them a number of slaves to act as domestic servants. One of the West Indian slaves owned by Simon Codrington is believed to be buried at Dodington House. The Stokes family at Stanshawes was also rumoured to have had a black servant.



The Bush Family, Alveston. Note the black servant Elizabeth Snipe looking after Emily Salmon in the chair © Thornbury Museum.

## The Liston Family

The Liston family from Iron Acton transported indentured servants to Barbados and Virginia, and exported sugar from Barbados back to Europe. The family also had holdings in Virginia but sold these in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. In 1682, Thomas Liston purchased Acton Lodge in Iron Acton. Thomas was considered an important member of the local community and was appointed Sheriff of Bristol in 1688.

Thomas Liston's daughter was married in 1688. The daughter and her husband, Joseph Temple, owned a plantation with a dozen slaves in King William County, Virginia. At least one of the slaves owned by the Temple couple is known to have been born in Bristol. The Harford family estate at Latteridge bordered the Liston estate. The Harford's also had dealings in Virginia and were involved in tobacco; they too, shared a common commercial interest with Thomas Liston Junior.

In May 1764, a Bristol newspaper reported the death of George Harford "a negro who had formerly been a servant to William Liston Esq. of Acton". George Harford was serving as a sailor on the warship Stag Man of War, at the time of his death. Therefore, his death did not come about as a result of his work for the Liston family. George had been given his freedom in exchange for serving in the British Navy during the Seven Years War (1756-1763).