

HAREWOOD

1807



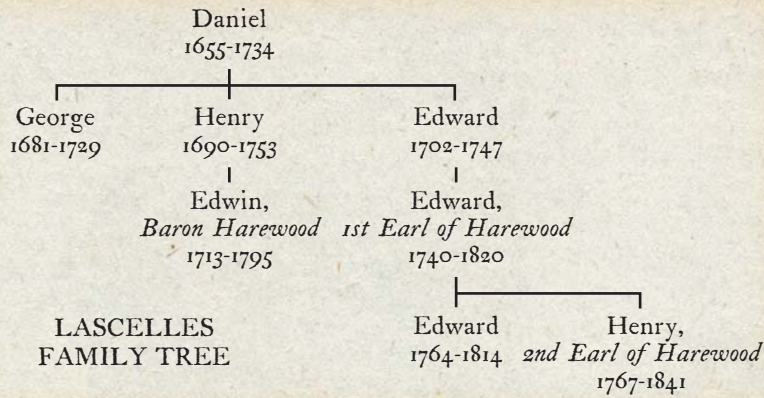
*Henry Lascelles,
2nd Earl of Harewood*



William Wilberforce

*A commemoration of the bi-centenary of the
abolition of the slave trade and the Yorkshire
election in 1807 contested by William
Wilberforce, Henry Lascelles and Lord Milton.*

INTRODUCTION



Henry Lascelles and the West Indies

THE Lascelles family association with Barbados started in the seventeenth century when Edward Lascelles and later his son Daniel were based in Bridgetown. Daniel's three sons George, Henry and Edward went on to found the family fortune.

Before 1706 the eldest son George was based in Barbados working as a sugar merchant. Prior to 1712 his 22 year old brother Henry had joined him there followed in 1720 by their half brother Edward. Over the next few decades they amassed a large family fortune through working as sugar merchants, money lenders, slave traders, plantation owners, suppliers to the Navy and as Collectors of Customs for Bridgetown. Between 1713 and 1717 Henry had a financial share in 21 slave ships and was partly responsible for trading thousands of slaves.



The Transatlantic Slave Trade

BARBADOS was colonised by the British and became a major producer of sugar. In 1647 the first Caribbean sugar was imported into Britain. The triangular trade involved taking goods from Europe to the West coast of Africa which were exchanged for African people who were then enslaved. They were then shipped to the West Indies and largely sold to plantation owners. The luxury goods such as sugar and cocoa that these slaves produced were then shipped back to Europe. It is estimated that over 12 million Africans were exported to the West Indies and became slaves on the plantations.



The late eighteenth century saw an increase in the number of people calling for the abolition of the slave trade, partly leading to the formation of the 'Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade' in 1787.

Abolition Day and the 1807 Election

IN May 1807 William Wilberforce, Henry Lascelles and Lord Milton all stood in an election to become Members of Parliament for Yorkshire. In March of the same year Parliament had voted for the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and this became one of many issues that made the subsequent election one of national importance.

Wilberforce was well established as an abolitionist but Lascelles was typified as 'the son of a plantation owner' and his opponents claimed that he would repeal the abolition act given the chance.

THE LASCELLES FAMILY AND THE WEST INDIES

AFTER Henry returned to London in the 1730s Edward took over his brother's position as Collector of Customs for Bridgetown. In the 1740s allegations of corruption were brought against Henry and Edward who were both said to have abused their roles. The allegations were never proven and although Edward was removed from his post both men continued to successfully manage their business interests. Corruption in business dealings was not uncommon during this period.

The Lascelles family were not unusual at this time in being involved in the slave trade as many merchants and members of the aristocracy had financial and trading interests in the West Indies. The large port cities of Liverpool, London and Bristol and some of their occupants were made rich from the profits of the slave trade. By 1787 the Lascelles family were financially involved in 47 plantations across the whole of the West Indies not just Barbados.

In 1739 Henry Lascelles bought the Harewood and Gawthorpe estates for £68,828. In the 1750s his eldest son Edwin commissioned John Carr of York to build a magnificent new house at Harewood which was completed in 1771. Edwin retained his West Indian plantations but spent his life as an absentee landlord.

25TH MARCH 1807 - 'ABOLITION DAY'

BY the 1780s a social, political and religious movement was developing against the slave trade and slavery itself. It was largely the Quakers who spearheaded the anti-Slavery campaign.

William Wilberforce was elected MP for Hull in 1780. Wilberforce was an evangelical Christian and he was closely associated with the abolitionist Thomas Clarkson. In 1788 Clarkson wrote 'An Essay on the Impolicy of the African Slave Trade'. Wilberforce lobbied parliament regularly and proposed many bills to abolish the slave trade.



Portrait of an African, possibly Ignatius Sancho

Abolition was not purely the reserve of Britain's politicians but was lobbied for by thousands of people across the country and the world. There were many women abolitionists including Hannah More and Mary Wollstonecraft as well as abolitionists of African descent such as Ignatius Sancho, Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah Cugoana.

In 1792 and 1805 resolutions for the gradual abolition of the slave trade were defeated by the House of Lords. However on the 25th March 1807 the 'Slave Trade Abolition Bill' was passed by royal assent after having been voted for by British government.

THE 1807 ELECTION

IN the late 18th and early 19th centuries it was customary for the county of Yorkshire to elect two MPs. Henry Lascelles, later 2nd Earl of Harewood, had previously been MP for Yorkshire along with William Wilberforce.

Henry stood down before the election in October 1806 as his support for the increasing mechanisation in the cloth-working industry was unpopular. Many people in Leeds and Bradford felt this would result in greater unemployment. The growing support for the abolition of the slave trade also meant that Henry was not popular as he was characterised as the son of a plantation owner.

In April 1807 an election was called and William Wilberforce declared his intention to stand as an Independent candidate in Yorkshire. Henry Lascelles followed suit largely in support of the Tory party and the final candidate was Lord Milton supported financially by his father Earl Fitzwilliam of Wentworth Woodhouse in support of the Whigs.

Voting started on the 20th May but at this time, only men who owned property or who had extensive business interests were entitled to vote, which was less than 5% of the population. Bribery was common during electioneering. As well as being paid to attend, voters were plied with free beer and food.

In the same way that elections are fought today speeches were made and printed in the newspapers, bills were produced and scurrilous accusations were made on satirical posters or 'squibs'. The competition between the opposing camps was fierce...

'NO Tyranny. No enemy to the Clothiers. No Juggling Union of Candidates. ... No Slave dealing Lord. No Yorkshire votes purchased with African Blood. No Lascelles, no never! Milton for Ever.'

'... No Slave Trade! Who voted against the abolition of the Slave Trade? Earl Fitzwilliam, The Father of Lord Milton ... deny it who can? Who did not vote against the Abolition, the Hon H Lascelles, who always professes his conscience to his Interest.'

Henry was regularly accused of being a supporter of the slave trade. Henry's followers countered these accusations by issuing a statement saying that if elected Henry would oppose any move to repeal the abolition act.

The election was fought based on many issues that were important to people, including Catholic Emancipation, cloth-worker's rights and abolition of the slave trade. Poverty at home was also an issue for many people as the country's poor, including thousands of children, were working long hours in terrible conditions.

The voting which took place in York, lasted for fifteen days. For the first twelve days of the election it looked as though Henry Lascelles would beat Lord Milton but by the end of the fifteen days Lascelles lost to Milton by 181 votes.



FINAL CLOSE OF THE POLL
MR WILBERFORCE 11,806
LORD MILTON 11,170
MR LASCELLES 10,989



1624	1672	1712	1720	1730	1731	1732	1738	1739	1743	1744	1753	1759	1787	1796	1806	March 1807	April 1807	May 1807	1833	1838
Barbados and St. Kitts colonised by the British.	The Royal African Company established to control the British slave trade.	Henry Lascelles established in Bridgetown working as a sugar merchant and money lender.	Henry is joined by his half brother Edward Lascelles.	Edward succeeds Henry as Collector of Customs for Bridgetown.	Henry's eldest son, Edwin is studying at Trinity College, Cambridge.	Henry returns permanently to London.	Edwin goes on the Grand Tour.	Henry buys the Harewood and Gawthorpe estates for £68,828.	Dinwiddie sent to Barbados to investigate charges of corruption against Henry and Edward.	The allegations of corruption are not proven. Henry becomes MP for Northallerton.	Henry allegedly commits suicide leaving a fortune of £392,704 (modern equivalent £28.5m).	The foundation stone of Harewood House is laid. The building is completed in 1771.	The 'Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade' is formed. Edwin has a stake in 47 plantations and owns thousands of slaves.	Henry Lascelles, later 2nd Earl, first elected MP with Wilberforce to represent Yorkshire. Repeated in 1802.	Henry pulls out of the election due to unpopularity with the clothiers.	Abolition Act passed by royal assent.	Parliament dissolved over a crisis about Catholic Emancipation.	Henry Lascelles stands for election alongside Wilberforce and Milton but loses by 181 votes.	Slave Emancipation Act passed.	Slavery fully abolished in the British Empire.

POST 1807

THE abolition of the slave trade in March 1807 did not actually come into effect until 1st January 1808 and even then had a limited impact as the Royal Navy could not police all the ships crossing the Atlantic Ocean. After a few years the situation improved and slave trade involving British ships decreased significantly. Britain then put pressure on other European powers to abolish the slave trade.

In the meantime those that had already been transported to the West Indies were still enslaved. It was not until 1833 that the Slave Emancipation Act was passed in parliament. Slaves in the British Empire were gradually freed via a compulsory apprenticeship system which was finally abolished in 1838. In 1836 Henry Lascelles received £26,309 as compensation from the British Government for the loss of his slaves after emancipation.

FURTHER READING AND USEFUL WEBSITES

*Slavery, Family and Gentry Capitalism in the British Atlantic:
The World of the Lascelles, 1648-1834*, Simon D. Smith

Bury the Chains: The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery,
Adam Hochschild

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Harriet Jacobs

Black Ivory: Slavery in the British Empire, James Walvin

The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings, Olaudah Equiano

www.harewood.org

www.hull.ac.uk/wise

www.antislavery.org

www.hullcc.gov.uk

www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/slavery/liverpool

William Wilberforce by John Rising, Hull Museums

Portrait of an African, c.1757-60 (oil on canvas) by Allan Ramsay (1713-84) (attr. to)
© Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, Devon, UK/The Bridgeman Art Library

A Few Plain Questions ANSWERED.

WHO has been a Friend to the Slave Trade, and an Enemy to its Abolition?.....LASCELLES.
 Who has discovered an intollerant persecuting Spirit, particularly against the } The Family of
 METHODISTS, the Sect patronized by Mr. Wilberforce?.....LASCELLES.
 Who INSULTED the CLOTHIERS?.....LASCELLES.
 Can the ENEMIES to the SLAVE TRADE—Can the METHODISTS—Can the } IMPOSSIBLE.
 CLOTHIERS then vote for Lascelles?.....LASCELLES.
 Who is the PUPPET of the MERCHANTS?.....LASCELLES.
 Who has been the Defender of Melville and Trotter?.....LASCELLES.
 Who is likely to defend Peculators and the MAGIC OF THE BLACK ROD?.....LASCELLES.
 To what does the Name of Lascelles owe its Consequence?..... { Ask BLEEDING
 AFRICA.
 What ought to be the Portion of MEN STEALERS, PECULATORS, and those } Shame and ever-
 who countenance and support them?.....lasting Contempt.
 Is not LORD MILTON as old in Virtue as Mr. Lascelles?.....YES.
 Which is older in Talents?.....MILTON.
 Which is the better Orator?..... { MILTON, beyond
 Comparison.
 Is not Lascelles' printed Address to the Freeholders unintelligible?.....YES.
 Whence is LORD MILTON descended?..... { From a Family whose
 Patriotism & Virtues
 all the World knows.
 Whence is Lascelles descended?..... { From a Family
 Nobody knows.
 Is Lascelles a FIT Person to represent this County?.....NO.

FREEHOLDERS!
Milton for Ever.

Printed at the Leeds Mercury Office, by Edward Baines.



York Spring Meeting, 1807.

A LIST OF THE HORSES AND THEIR RIDERS, Entered to Run for the Parliament Stakes

During the present Month,
(Over the Castle Yard)

His Majesty's Bay Horse, Loyalty, by Patriot, out of Constitution; Rider, *Honest Harry.—Blue. Lascelles*

Mr. Africa's Horse, Perseverance, by *Humanity*; Rider, *Will Steady.—Pink. Wilberforce*

Lord F-w-m's Dun noted Arabian Poney, (train'd by the Whig-Club) by *Discontent*, out of *Anarchy*, own Sister to *Sedition*; Rider, *Old Jumper.—Orange. Ten to One on Loyalty.*

W. Story, Printer, Petergate

ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE.

The Hon. H. Lascelles's
 CHARACTER

Having been traduced as the Abettor of the
SLAVE TRADE,

With the view of injuring his Interest in the present Election,
 THE COMMITTEE, ACTING FOR MR. LASCELLES,

HAVE HIS AUTHORITY

To assure the FREEHOLDERS of YORKSHIRE, that in case any Attempt should be made in Parliament,

TO REPEAL THE ACT,

For the Abolition of the Slave Trade,

Such attempt will meet with his most

DECIDED OPPOSITION,

Mr. LASCELLES having unequivocally pledged himself to that Effect at LEEDS, and in the Castle-Yard, at YORK, on the DAY of NOMINATION.

Committee-Room, Halifax, 15th May, 1807.

Holden and Downen, Printers, Halifax.