

*Early
17th
century*

Slavery becomes industrialised. The number of slaves transported across the Atlantic increases. The feeling that slavery is wrong begins to grow.



Slave revolts

1655

The first recorded large-scale slave revolt in the British West Indies takes place; small-scale revolts are recorded from 1639.

1671

George Fox, founder of the Society of Friends (Quakers), asks that Quakers do not own slaves.



George Fox (National Portrait Gallery, London)

*Late
17th
century*

Quakers become firmly opposed to slavery.

1759

James Ramsay, a surgeon in the Royal Navy, witnesses the results of the slave trade and declares his opposition.

1765

Granville Sharp (d.1813) meets Jonathan Strong, a young black slave in London who has been mistreated, and decides to help him.



Granville Sharp (National Portrait Gallery, London)

1772

Sharp helps runaway slave James Somerset. A resultant legal ruling says that slaves that have reached England cannot be forcibly returned to the West Indies.

1774

John Wesley (d.1791), the founder of Methodism, writes his 'Thoughts on Slavery'. Former slave trader, John Newton, reads this and decides to dedicate the rest of his life to the abolitionist cause.



John Wesley (National Portrait Gallery, London)

Late

1770

The American War of Independence is fought. The British offer black people in North America their freedom in return for their support in the war. After the British defeat, black people were allowed to travel to Britain as free men. This increased awareness of the slavery issue.

1781

Captain Luke Collinswood of the slave ship Zong threw large numbers of slaves overboard. Overcrowding on board had led to death and disease and he wanted to save the lives of the crew.



Zong Slave Ship (Jerome S. Handler and Michael L. Tuite Jr. at the University of Virginia original image from the Library Company of Philadelphia)

1783

Olaudah Equiano finds an article in a London newspaper about the Zong. A court case has resulted, not for murder, but to see if the ship owners are entitled to compensation for their loss of slaves. Many people are converted to the abolitionist cause by this and similar reports. The Quakers form a committee for the abolition of the slave trade

1783

The Quakers form the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. Their efficient system of pamphlet distribution brings the cause to the attention of many more people.

1787

The Committee for the Abolition of the African Slave Trade is formed. This is mainly a group of Quakers and Evangelicals; among its members is Thomas Clarkson (d.1846) who was later to become a leading figure in the abolition movement.



Thomas Clarkson (National Portrait Gallery, London)

May

1787

William Pitt and William Wilberforce talk under an oak tree in the grounds of Pitt's home, Holwood House, Keston. Wilberforce is persuaded to introduce a Bill to Parliament to abolish the slave trade.



Plaque on Wilberforce Seat

1789

After a struggle, Pitt gets a Bill passed that restricts the number of slaves that can be carried on a ship. Inspired by the French Revolution, the slaves on St. Dominigue begin a revolt.



Wilberforce Seat

May
1789

Wilberforce introduces his Bill to Parliament. The famous picture of the Brookes slave ship showing tightly-packed slaves is published for the first time.



Model of the Slave Ship Brookes.
(Courtesy of Wilberforce House)

1790

Pro-slavers delay the vote on Wilberforce's Bill. The revolt on St. Dominigue continues.



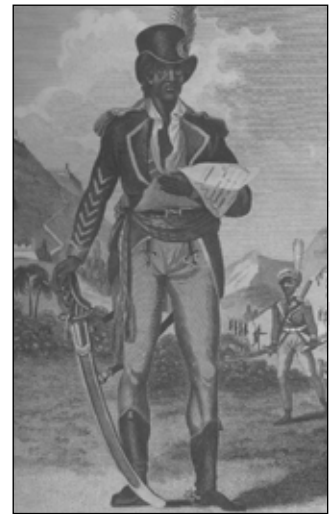
Slave revolts

1791

Wilberforce's Bill is defeated by 163 votes to 88. A boycott of slave-grown sugar begins.

August
1791

Slaves on St. Dominigue, now led by Toussaint L'Overture, are victorious in their revolt and declare the founding of the Republic of Haiti on 23 August 1791. Many Europeans renew their hostility to abolition.



Toussaint L'Overture (Anti-Slavery International)

1794

Post-revolutionary France abolishes the slave trade. Traditionalists begin to view abolitionists as dangerous.

1795-
1805

Abolitionists continue the struggle to abolish slavery with little success.

1806

Pitt dies. After his death, the new Prime Minister, Lord Grenville, expresses his support for abolition. Old-timer Charles James Fox lends his support to the abolition campaign.



William Grenville. (National Portrait Gallery, London)

1807

Wilberforce introduces a new Bill to abolish the slave trade; it is passed by 283 votes to 16 and becomes law on 25 March 1807.

1807-
1810

Enforcement of the new law by the Royal Navy begins but the chances of being caught are small. If slavers see a patrol ship approaching the slaves are thrown overboard. Punishment consists of confiscation and sale of the ships; however, as these ships are designed for slave-trading they are usually bought by other slave-traders for the same purpose.



Slave Patrol (Royal Naval Museum)

1811

Slave-trading is now punishable by transportation; there is no record that anyone was ever punished in this way.

1815

Wilberforce introduces an unsuccessful Bill for compulsory slave registration. Believing this to be an attempt to end slavery, several revolts break out. Including the Bussa Revolt on Barbados. Slave owners begin to accept that the situation must change.



Bussa Revolt (Anti-Slavery International)

1823

The Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery is formed. Wilberforce, now aged 64, hands much of his work over to his friend, Thomas Fowell Buxton, also an MP. Buxton introduces an unsuccessful Bill for the gradual abolition of slavery. Slaves, believing that freedom is imminent, begin to revolt. A riot breaks out at Demerara in Guyana.

1824

Wilberforce's Bill is defeated by 163 votes to 88. A boycott of slave-grown sugar begins. Slave trading now punishable by death but there is no record that anyone was ever punished in this way. Elizabeth Heyrick (d.1831) publishes a pro-emancipation pamphlet that results in increased support from women.



Elizabeth Heyrick (BBC)

1831

George Thompson (d.1878) tours Kent giving the anti-slavery message. The belief in slave emancipation is now mainstream. Sam Sharpe leads the Christmas Rebellion on Jamaica. Emancipation is now unstoppable.



George Thompson (National Portrait Gallery, London)

1832

The Great Reform Act brings many young pro-emancipation MPs into Parliament.

1833

Buxton introduces a Bill to abolish slavery in parts of the British Empire: the West Indies, Canada, Mauritius and Cape Colony. The Bill is successful. Slavery remains legal in India and West Africa. Wilberforce dies.



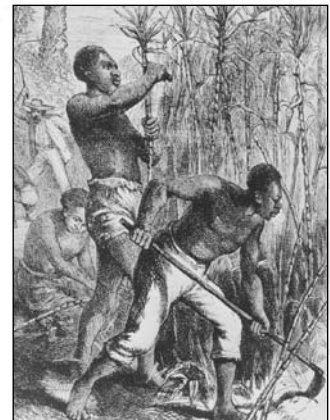
Sam Sharp (Anti-Slavery International)

1834

The abolition of slavery law is enacted. Slavery is replaced by compulsory apprenticeship: slaves had to work for their former owners for 12 years to allow them to become 'acclimatised' to freedom.

1837

Workers from India begin to be imported from to the West Indies to replace slaves under the indentured labour scheme. Under this scheme workers are entitled to pay but are often tricked into signing contracts that mean they do not receive any wages. These conditions are similar to slavery. A similar scheme begins in Britain: workers, often from China, are known as Coolies.



Cane Cutters (Anti-Slavery International)

1838

Following petitions and campaigning by Buxton and Clarkson, the apprenticeship scheme is abolished. Slaves in the Caribbean finally get their freedom.



Slave Driver (Anti-Slavery International)

1839

The British and Foreign Slavery Society is founded. It continues work today as Anti-Slavery International.

1840s

British slave traders continue to operate with little fear of punishment.

1848

France abolishes colonial slavery.

1865

USA abolishes slavery.

1886

Cuba abolishes slavery.

1888

Brazil abolishes slavery.

1907

The indentured labour scheme is abolished in UK.

1920's

The indentured labour scheme is abolished in the West Indies.

1926

The League of Nations drafts the Slavery Convention calling for slavery "in all its forms" to be ended.

1928

Sierra Leone abolishes slavery.

1948

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights outlaws slavery almost everywhere but in practice it still continues.

2007

We still have slavery. **Bonded labour:** people work to clear a debt but never can because of the conditions of the loan. **Child labour:** children work for little or no pay. **People trafficking:** people are taken far from home on a false promise and made to work against their will. Campaigns against these conditions continue as they did 200 years ago. The fair trade movement echoes the sugar boycott. Opposition to sweatshops in the Far East would be supported by the early abolitionists and the move against people trafficking is the present day is equivalent of the abolition of the slave trade. 200 years of history have shown that outlawing a profitable activity will not stop it. The struggle continues.



Indentured Labour



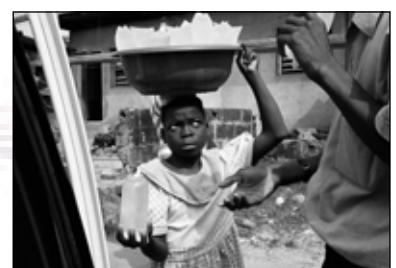
(Anti-Slavery International)



Women in bonded labour, Pakistan, Sindh Province. (Shakil Pathan/Anti-Slavery International)



Camel jockey superman landscape colour. (CDP/Anti-Slavery International)



Trafficking. (Anti-Slavery International)