

In chains

Today we take it for granted that enslaving other human beings is wrong.

The 18th century was a different world. The enslavement of and trade in people was common in many of the countries of Africa and had been for centuries. Since the 16th century enslaved people from Africa had been regularly transported vast distances in appalling conditions across the Atlantic to work in British and French plantations in the Americas. These plantations needed huge numbers of workers. The existing slave trade inside Africa expanded to fulfil the requirements of this market.

The 18th century was also the Age of Enlightenment, of new thoughts and strong and vocal public opinion. The British Colonies in America fought and won their independence from Great Britain and the French had their Revolution. In the British Isles, however, public

opinion was considering the question of slavery. Initially a few voices called for better conditions for the enslaved people on the slave ships.

Next came calls to abolish the Transatlantic slave trade between the African coast and the British Dominions, abolished in 1807. The culmination was the abolition of slavery in the British colonies in 1833.

The British actions were a catalyst to the other western nations to deal with various forms of slavery across the world. Included in this was the enslavement of white Christian Europeans by the Barbary corsairs of North Africa.

This was an activity much closer to home both geographically and mentally. This corsair activity had been as long running as the Transatlantic slave trade and occasionally included raids upon the coast of Cornwall taking men, women and children captive.

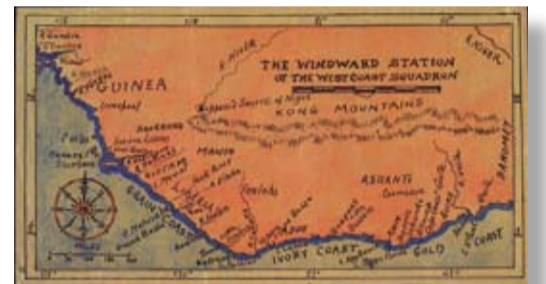
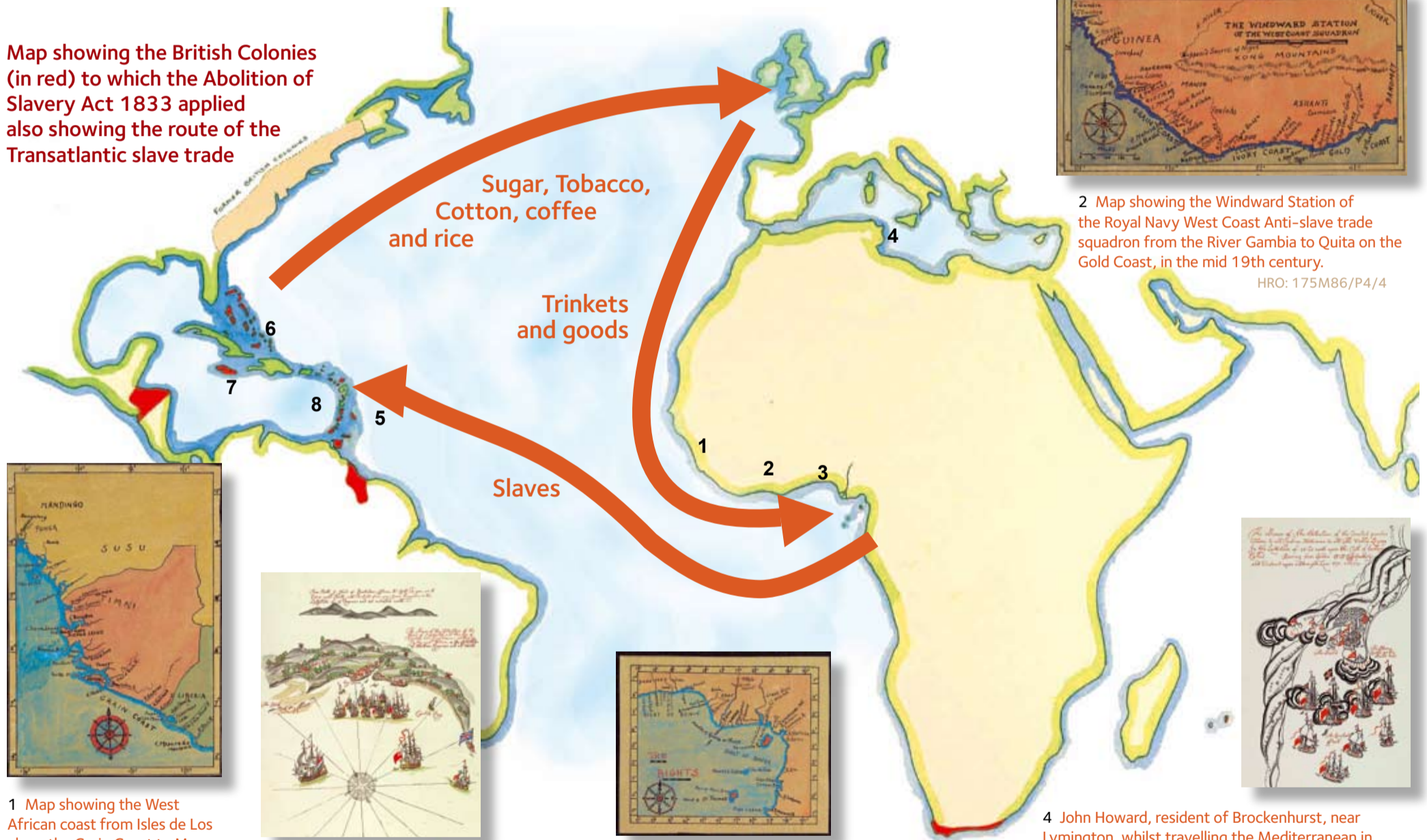


Engraving of ships close to Hole in the Wall, Abaco, in the Bahamas. The Bahama Islands served as a staging post for many slave ships. HRO: 175M86/P1/1



The L'Antonio and other slavers of the Black Craft lying in the Bonny River in the Niger Delta. After the close of the slave trade this became the trading centre for the Palm Oil trade. HRO: 175M86/P1/15

Map showing the British Colonies (in red) to which the Abolition of Slavery Act 1833 applied also showing the route of the Transatlantic slave trade



2 Map showing the Windward Station of the Royal Navy West Coast Anti-slave trade squadron from the River Gambia to Quita on the Gold Coast, in the mid 19th century.

HRO: 175M86/P4/4



1 Map showing the West African coast from Isles de Los along the Grain Coast to Monrovia, in the mid 19th century.

HRO: 175M86/P4/3



5 The island of 'Barbadoes' showing 'Brig Towne' and Carlisle Bay (a 19th-century copy from a late 17th-century journal).

HRO: 175M86/P6



3 Map of West Africa showing the Bight of Benin to Cape Lopez, including the Niger Delta, also known as the Bonny River, in the mid 19th century.

HRO: 175M86/P4/6



4 John Howard, resident of Brockenhurst, near Lymington, whilst travelling the Mediterranean in 1785 narrowly escaped being taken by a Tunisian corsair, and being blown up by his own captain to avoid slavery. This drawing shows part of the Barbary Coast, near Tunis, with the English Fleet in the foreground.

HRO: 175M86/P6



6 Map of Cuba and the southern section of the Bahama Islands, in the mid 19th century.

HRO: 175M86/P4/2



7 The Harbour of Port Royal, Jamaica, in the mid 19th century.

HRO: 175M86/P4/5



8 Map of the Leeward and Windward Islands.

Sold like cattle

“The doom of the negro slave is still severe uncompensated labour; averaging ...sixteen hours and forty minutes of daily toil. He has no personal motives to labour than pain and terror. Social motives he has none. He has no wife if it be essential to the marriage tie that nothing but death can sever it. His children are not his own, they may be taken from him on the plea of a prior and superior right of property. He cannot aspire to the dignified enjoyment of working for his family. Make the best of it, and the slaves in the West Indies are still fed, and worked and estimated as beasts.

The whip, the collar, the stocks, the auction mart, are still in existence...”

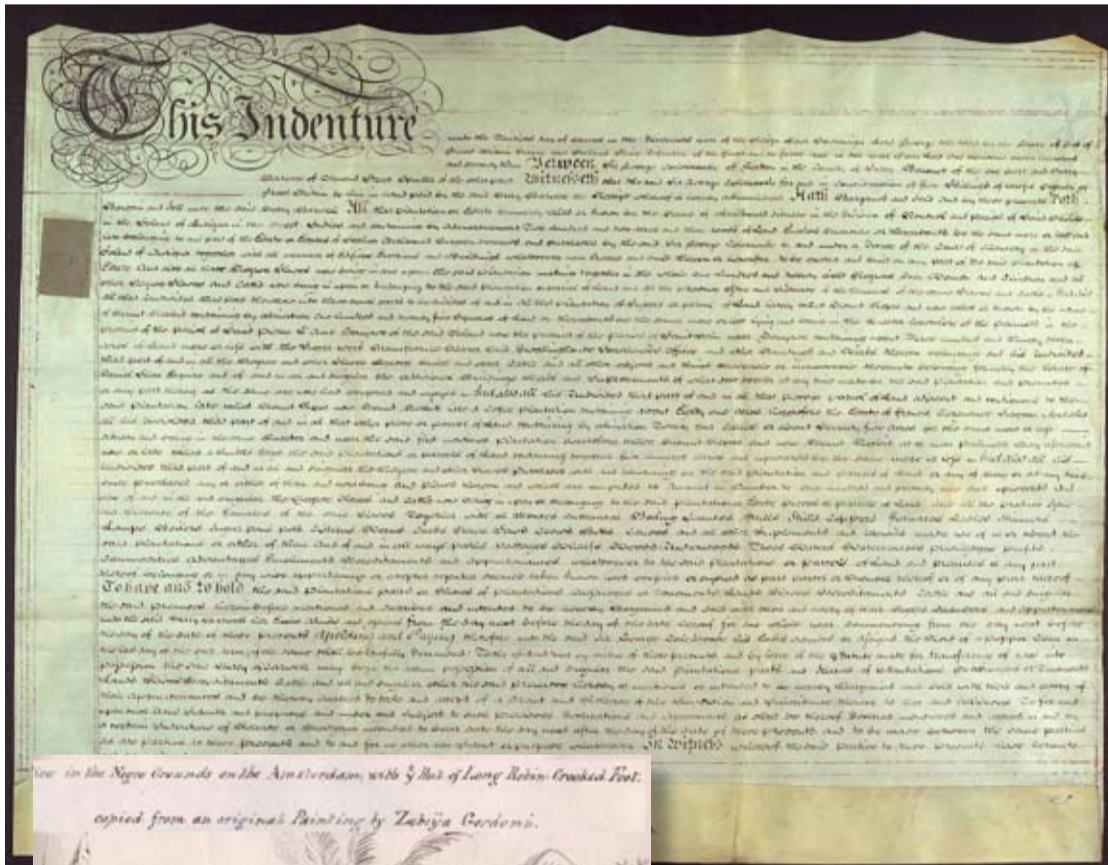
Rev. C.E. Bird, at a public meeting in Portsea, Portsmouth, reported in the Hampshire Telegraph for 28 January 1833

Enslaved people were considered objects, the property of others. In legal documents such as mortgages and marriage settlements they were listed amongst other property. Such lists of enslaved people could cover many pages; each page might give the name, sex and age of one hundred people. The income to Great Britain from the product of the labour of these enslaved people was vast. The government itself made, according to newspaper reports, a total of almost £8 million in

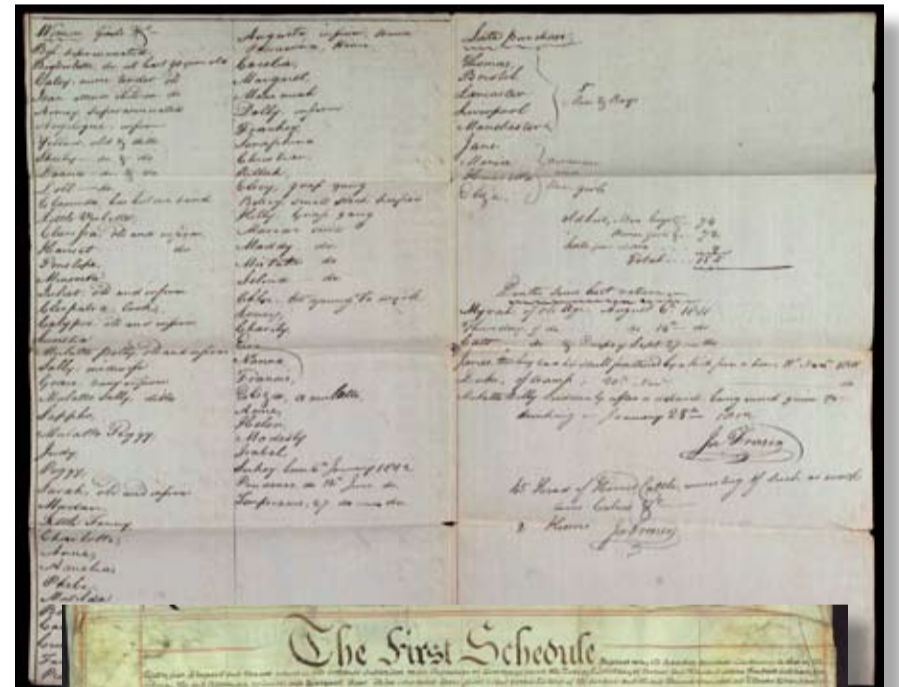
duty in 1831 from the imports of sugar and tobacco. In that same year about 97% of the tobacco, 96% of the sugar and 93% of the raw cotton imported to Britain came from areas using slave labour, mainly North America and the West Indies. Coffee and rice also came from these areas. Cowes on the Isle of Wight was important in Britain's rice trade with the Carolinas

One of the reasons given at the time for the use of enslaved peoples from Africa was the climate. “Every one acquainted with the burning soils of the ‘Sea Islands’ and Georgia, whence the best cotton wool is grown, is aware that it is by slave labour alone that those soils can be cultivated”.

Captain Charles Napier at Portsmouth in January 1833 stated: “It was certainly true that the slave laboured very hard during the crop time, perhaps from 15 to 16 hours a day: but they had no other means of getting in the crop. At other times their work was light, and not so hard as the labouring classes of this country.” This compares a common idealised view of the agricultural worker to the factory worker in Britain enslaved to his machine.



Part of a list of enslaved people in 1812 on an estate on the Island of St. Christopher (St. Kitts) owned by the Dewar Family of Hurstbourne Tarrant. Some of the names used for the slaves were the same as those given to the cattle or horses, whilst others were given names of members of the Dewar family. The document also gives an insight into the jobs, lives and deaths of those working on this estate. HRO: 109M82/28/1



A mortgage document of 1773 relating to the Archbould Plantation on Antigua which included with it 128 enslaved people (men, women and children), together with “all other Negroes Slaves and Cattle...belonging to the said Plantation”. HRO: 6M59/B3/1



A schedule of around 150 enslaved people included in a mortgage document of 1769 relating to Providence Plantation on Grenada. HRO: 5M50/2702

The hut of Long Robin Crooked Foot on the Negro Grounds on the Amsterdam sugar plantation in Demerara (Guyana) in 1825. HCCMS



Sugar production buildings, including the mill for grinding the cane, on the Amsterdam Plantation, in Demerara in 1825. The view is from the gallery of the dwelling house. HCCMS



The north west end of the dwelling house on the Amsterdam Plantation, Demerara in 1825. HCCMS



Block House, the seat of Alexander Gordon, Esquire, in George Town, Demerara in 1825. HCCMS

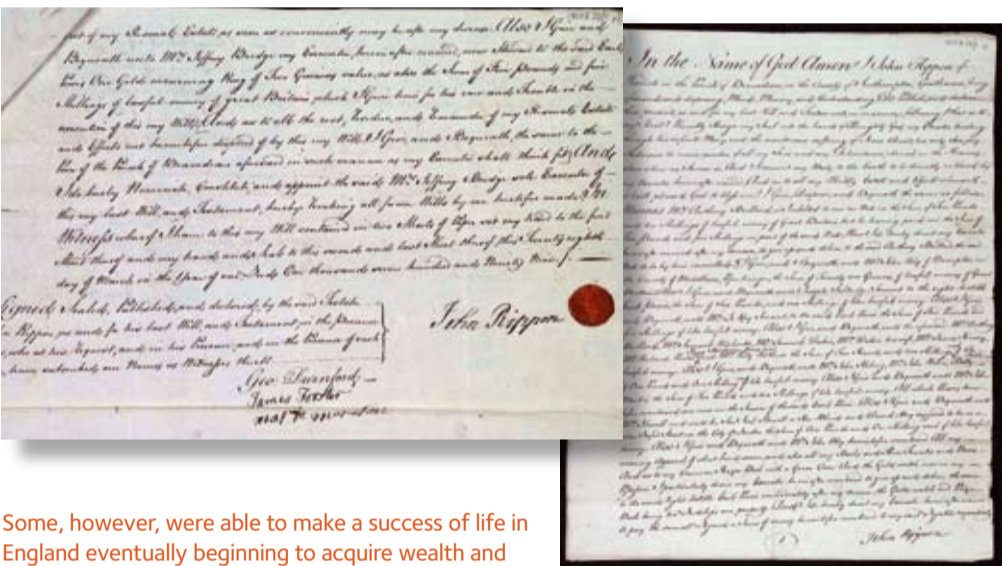
Freedom

Some slaves were able to buy their freedom, some were freed after long service by their masters but many had to wait until the passing of the act for the abolition of slavery in 1833. However they were freed their lives continued with some returning to countries in Africa and others trying to make a life for themselves in Europe or the colonies.



Former Slaves in Hampshire

It was fashionable for the upper classes in the 18th century to have black footmen or boys, who might have been brought to England under compulsion or after having been freed. It is surprisingly difficult to identify them in the surviving records, as they were often given names indistinguishable from those of their white fellow-servants. Many would have found their new life very hard, especially if their owners became tired of the novelty of a black servant. HRO: 108M91/26



Some, however, were able to make a success of life in England eventually beginning to acquire wealth and social status. Among the thousands of wills held in Hampshire Record Office is one which, at first sight, is nothing out of the ordinary. It is described as the will of John Rippon of Bramdean, gentleman, and includes bequests to more than a dozen servants of Lord Powis, and the remainder of his property was to be given to the poor of Bramdean.

We would have no idea from this will that John Rippon was a former black servant, but for the fact that the entry in the Bramdean parish register for his burial in December 1800 is a particularly helpful one, describing him as "a Black, who had been more than fifty years, in the service of the Earls of Powis, and who by will after bequeathing certain legacies amounting to £63 to his old fellow servants left the residue of his money... to the poor inhabitants of the parish of Bramdean".

HRO: 1801B/28/1

This is an extract from a Martyr Worthy parish register of baptisms, marriages and burials, 1633-1807 showing the baptism of "Francis, a negro servant of Captⁿ Chal[oner] Ogle's an adult", 11 Apr 1767.

HRO: 78M82/PR2



This is an extract from a West Meon parish register of baptisms, burials and marriages, 1733-1812 showing the account of the burial of John Elton, a black man and native of Madagascar who was rescued from slavery in 1761 by Captain William Brereton. HRO: 67M81/PR6



"...all slaves who may at any time previous to the passing of this Act have been brought with the consent of their possessors, and all apprenticed labourers who may hereafter with the like consent be brought into any part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, shall from and after the passing of this Act be absolutely and entirely free..." HRO: 94M72/F42

Extract from the Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British colonies, 28 Aug 1833

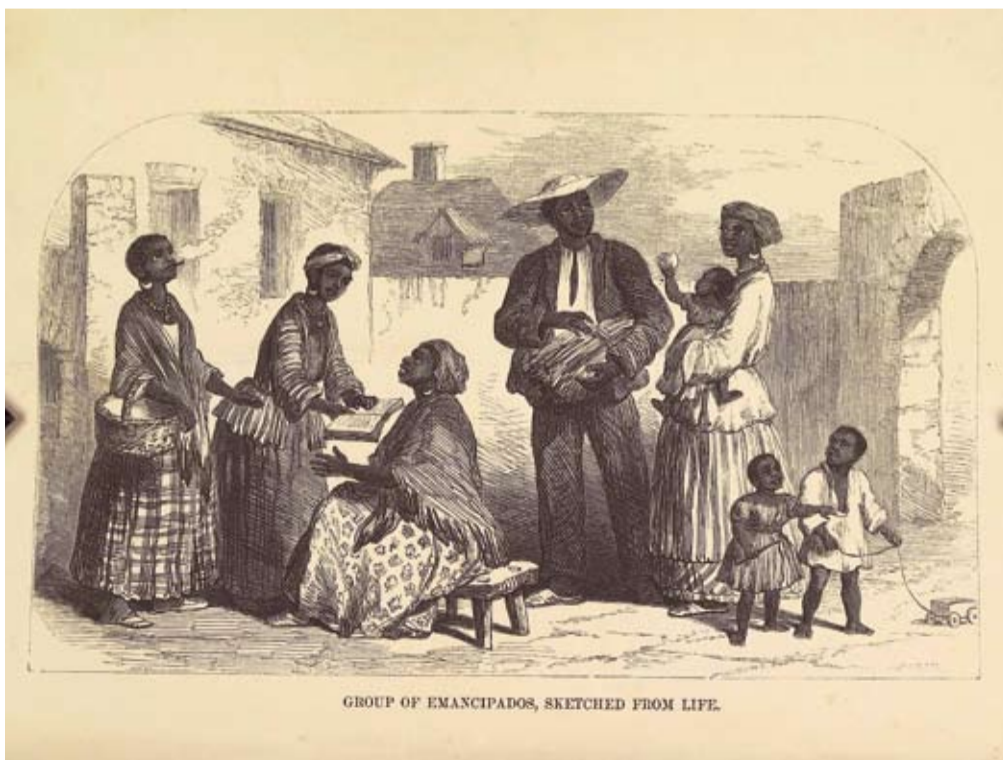


Emancipated Slaves in Southampton

This is an extract from a description of the journey of a group of emancipated slaves from Havana to Africa, via England in 1855 by Lydia Prideaux of Plymouth. Many of the men had worked as porters on the wharves, and many of the women as laundresses. They had in many cases been in Cuba for over twenty years and had mostly bought their own freedom for sums ranging from \$300 to \$1000. Arriving at Southampton by ship they were sent on to London, before being taken to Plymouth to await the ship which would take them to Lagos. Lydia Prideaux was one of a number of townspeople who took an active interest in their welfare: she arranged games for the children in her garden, while others helped in providing religious services in Spanish or with negotiations for their passage.

One of the group, Leandro Llopas, had become separated from his parents in London, and it was only on the morning of embarkation that a letter arrived which gave news of him. As it was too late to delay their departure, a clergyman, Mr Townsend, who had been helping to interpret for the party, promised to search for him. The search began in London, but it turned out that Leandro had been walking through Hampshire in search of his family.

After Leandro was rediscovered, he was sent to Plymouth, and spent some weeks there before following the rest of the party to Africa. HRO: 16M97/13/11



One of two engravings bound into the account by Lydia Prideaux. Lydia did not approve of the drawings that had been made of the emancipados, commenting 'the Sketch... does not do them justice...' and that 'their faces... are grotesquely caricatured...' HRO: 16M97/13/11

Voices of protest

The African slave-trade commences with fraud and violence, is pursued with cruelty, and often terminates in murder

The opinion of a public meeting of the people of Portsmouth and Gosport

During the late 18th and early 19th centuries the campaigns to abolish, first the transatlantic trade in slaves, and then the practice of slavery itself, both in British colonies and elsewhere, provoked a lively debate, both in Parliament and around the country.

Hampshire was no exception to this: the county was home to a number of prominent campaigners for abolition, such as Revd David Bogue of Gosport and John Bullar of Southampton, while others such as Rt Revd Thomas Burgess, Bishop of Salisbury, were born in the county. Just as important, perhaps, were the lesser-known characters in large and small towns who organised committees to stir up public opinion against the trade.

Petitions against the trade were presented to Parliament in 1788 from Southampton and in 1792 from Alton, Basingstoke, Ringwood, Fordingbridge, Whitchurch, and Portsmouth and Gosport, often with the support of Quaker families such as the Curtis family of Alton and the Neaves of Fordingbridge.

For some other people in Hampshire, the merits of the abolition campaign were not so obvious; although none of the ports most associated with the slave trade was located in Hampshire (the main ones being London, Liverpool and Bristol), the county was home to a number of owners of slave-worked West Indies plantations.



Disgraceful to a free and civilised nation

1792 saw an unprecedented number of petitions presented to Parliament. Unfortunately the actual petitions were not generally preserved, so the exact wording is not always known. In 1792 a petition was submitted as a result of a public meeting of inhabitants of Portsmouth, Portsmouth Common and Gosport, and fortunately an advertisement giving the full text of the resolutions passed, which probably reflects the text of the petition, was published in the Hampshire Chronicle.

HRO: 3A00W/A1/10

The arguments put forward in petitions were that the slave trade, or slavery (some petitions concentrated on the trade, some had a wider application) was contrary to Christian principles, or was fundamentally inhuman, or was an invasion of personal liberty; some also advanced economic arguments, that the West Indies plantations could be cultivated more effectively if the slaves already there were treated more humanely, and that the existence of the slave trade was preventing the establishment of other trading relations with Africa.

It cuts me to the heart

William Wilberforce the prominent abolitionist wrote to his friend Lord Calthorpe, owner of the Elvetham estate in north-eastern Hampshire, on 10 Jan 1822 saying: "I have meant for 2 or 3 days past to write to you but have been prevented... When I was called hither I had made some progress in a Letter to the Emperor of Russia (all this secret of course) on the present State of the Slave trade. It was especially intended to enlighten & impress the minds of the mass of the Community throughout France, for which purpose it was to be translated & publish'd on the Continent. But I was forc'd to break off from my work & to this moment have not been able to resume it... Now this you will see is a work of great Importance and indeed it cuts me to the heart sometimes that I have not been more alert in the execution of it..."

HRO: 26M62/F/C81

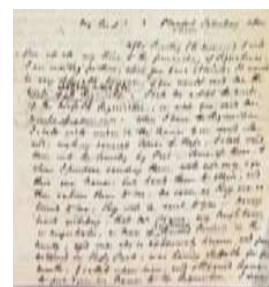


Proceeding expeditiously

This letter written by Thomas Clarkson the prominent abolitionist to Lord Calthorpe, at his Suffolk estate gives an insight into the process of collecting signatures in the anti-slavery cause, and Clarkson's indefatigable activity. The letter is undated, but may date from 1824 when there was a further wave of petitioning. It appears to relate to the collection of signatures, not directly for a petition, but for a requisition, perhaps for the calling of a County Meeting in Suffolk at which the compilation of a petition on behalf of the county would be debated.

He writes: "After Sunday (tomorrow) I will give up all my time to the forwarding of Signatures. I am waiting for those, which you have obtained. It would be very desirable, however, if you would send me the words of what you intend to be the Requisition - Shall we adopt the words of the Norfolk Requisition, or will you send the words of your own... By all means send me the Requisition, for I cannot proceed so satisfactorily without it, as with it, nor so expeditiously."

HRO: 26M62/F/C1301



A campaigner's schooldays in Odiham

Thomas Burgess (1756-1837) was the son of a grocer at Odiham, and was educated at Odiham Grammar School. He went on to Oxford, and was ordained, eventually becoming Bishop of Salisbury. He became one of the trustees of his old school in 1789, the same year in which he published a treatise arguing for the abolition of the slave trade and slavery.

This photograph, reproduced in The Story of Odiham Grammar School 1694-1930 by C H S Willson and F E Hansford (1930) shows the old grammar school before its rebuilding in the 1870s.

HRO: B146

Character and learning

While William Wilberforce's name is still widely associated with the abolition campaign, thanks to his high-profile work in Parliament, fewer are familiar with the work of Thomas Clarkson, a tireless worker for the abolition campaign for most of his life, after becoming aware of the plight of slaves while writing an essay on the subject as a student. Clarkson travelled the country raising awareness of the campaign, stimulating local groups, encouraging the production of petitions, and acting as a link between local campaigners and the London Committee for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade. In 1783 he was ordained deacon, the first stage of becoming a Church of England clergyman, and his ordination was undertaken by the Bishop of Winchester.

HRO: 21M65/E1/4/1303

Melesina Trench's 'mite'

This draft of a letter to Thomas Clarkson by Melesina Trench (1768-1827) a widely travelled poet, is a reminder that many women were active in the anti-slavery movement.

"Permit one of the warmest admirers of your zeal in the cause of humanity to offer you a few copies of a letter addressed to the Females of Great Britain, on the subject of the Slave Trade - She was induced to risk this humble attempt from a wish to contribute her mite - to the "Holy Cause" - She has printed for her own distribution, one hundred Copies, but has not published - Should you, Sir honor the address with a perusal, and wish to publish it, she will be very happy to offer it to the Society for promoting the abolition of the Slave Trade, and will think herself flattered by your pointing out any alterations, omissions, or additions your judgement might suggest - or indeed, by your marking any definite line in which she might employ her pen on a subject which from her childhood, has occupied much of her thoughts..."

HRO: 23M93/42/10



Never so well nor so happy

The Hampshire Chronicle printed some news of the campaign against the slave trade, and also included some of the arguments against abolition.

This letter, which purports to have been written by a boy under the age of six, shows some of the arguments raised for and against abstaining from sugar which had been produced by slaves. The youthful correspondent, writing to a lady who had persuaded him to promise not to eat sugar, describes how some gentlemen "told me that they had been in the country where the Negroes make Sugar, and that they are never so happy as when they are making it... They say.. that their poor Negroes don't work near so hard as the men who dig your papa's hop grounds".

The argument that campaigners would be better occupied turning their attention to the working conditions of British labourers was also put forward by, somewhat surprisingly, the radical William Cobbett of Botley. The debate about sugar was, no doubt, one which was carried on across dining tables around the county.

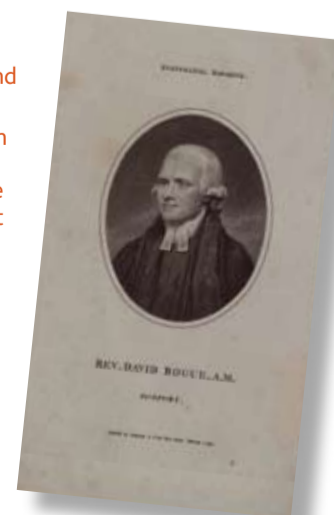
HRO: 3A00W/A1/10

Liberty for the world

The Revd David Bogue of Gosport (1750-1825) was a minister and the tutor of the Hampshire and Missionary Academy at Gosport.

According to a sermon preached after his death (HP/147), although Dr Bogue avoided involvement in politics, he "felt an ardent attachment to the cause of civil and religious liberty", and "What he wished for Britons, he wished for the world". It is not surprising that a number of his former pupils at the Gosport Academy went on to become prominent in the abolition movement, including John Le Brun and James William Massie.

HRO: HP/147,Portrait/B/8



Voices of protest



A petition from Gosport

The process by which signatures were obtained for petitions at this time can be shown by these letters.

In the first letter, dated 18 February 1826, W Grant, Francis William Austen, John Tracy and Joseph Beazley write to George Purefoy Jervoise of Herriard Park asking him to support 'the Prayer of the Petitioners by your vote and influence in the House of which you are a member [the Commons]'

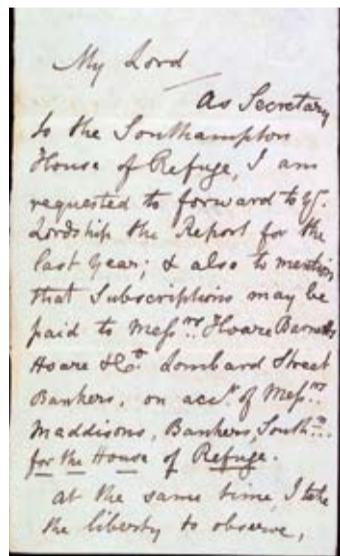
Francis Austen, brother of Jane Austen, had witnessed the suffering of slaves while he was serving in the Royal Navy enforcing the ban on British ships engaging in the transport of slaves. He condemned not only the transatlantic traffic but the whole system of slavery, writing "slavery however it may be modified is still slavery". Enclosed in this letter is a copy of the text of the petition (although not, sadly, of the signatures), which shows that they described 'the system of Slavery as existing in the West India Colonies to be not only repugnant to the principles of the British Constitution but also to those of the Christian Religion'. Commenting on the 'ungracious manner' in which measures proposed by the Government in 1823 had been met by the colonial legislatures they concluded that 'it will be utterly vain to expect those Legislatures will of themselves adopt any effectual means for obviating the existing abuses' and so asked the Commons to 'take such measures as may in your wisdom and justice appear most conducive to the immediate amelioration of the Slave Population as well as the gradual but total extinction of Slavery in all His Majesty's Plantations'.

Mr Jervoise annotated the letter with a copy of his response to the petition, 'in the prayer of which I cordially concur and shall be most ready to support'. Francis Austen replied on 23 February offering the Committee's 'best acknowledgments' for his support and giving the news that the petition, signed by 552 people, would be forwarded that day to Mr Fleming at Stoneham Park. Jervoise of Herriard collection: HRO: 44M69/F10/60/5

A doctor leads the campaign in Southampton

In 1825 Robert Lindoe, a Southampton doctor, took the lead in forming a local branch or 'auxiliary' of the Anti-Slavery Society, which had been founded in 1823. Initially there may only have been about 12-15 members, but by lobbying parliamentary candidates and circulating literature they kept the issue in the public eye, and in July 1828 a petition for the mitigation and gradual abolition of slavery in the West Indies, signed by 1,358 individuals from the Southampton area, was presented in Parliament.

Dr Lindoe's letter to Lord Calthorpe shows that, like many of the campaigners, he also took an interest in other charitable organisations; in the letter he asks for a subscription to the Southampton House of Refuge. HRO: 26M62/F/C1361



This photograph shows the Victoria Rooms in Southampton, the setting for a number of anti-slavery events. HRO: 65M89/Z211/469

Impolitic, unconstitutional and un-Christian

In the 1820s and early 1830s, the process of petitioning Parliament gathered strength again, this time in favour of the abolition of the whole institution of slavery.

One of the most detailed reports of a public meeting to discuss a petition is the Hampshire Telegraph's account of a meeting held in 1833 in Portsea, and chaired by the Mayor of Portsmouth.

Among the arguments put forward at the meeting by supporters of abolition were:

- The recent Reform Act had given freedom of political representation to a wider cross-section of society, and this could now be used to bring freedom to others.
- Slaves suffered worse treatment than most convicts.
- Opponents of abolition now claimed that they were opposed to slavery as an abstract concept, but favoured *gradual* abolition, yet: "Slavery, whatever may be admitted in the abstract, is still the same substantial evil in reality, and continues the same practical evil in incessant operation."

The meeting passed a number of resolutions, and culminated in a petition describing slavery in the British colonies as "impolitic, unconstitutional, and un-Christian, a disgrace to a land which vaunts its love of liberty..."

Committees at Alton

One of the most prominent Quaker families in Alton was the Curtis family, whose name lives on in the name of the Curtis Museum.

William Curtis wrote to his wife Jane while she was staying with her family, the Heaths, in Andover. Mixed in with family news is one of the best insights we have into the process of abolition campaigning in Hampshire. He writes:

"Is there no one in Andover to be found who will act the part of a Mrs Heath in the slave question? A female antislavery association seems to be wanted there to spread information - the one formed here has flourished amazingly, and distributed pamphlets in all directions. The Alton petition has been numerously signed, and that to the house of lords will be given to the bishop to present. Many of the neighbouring parishes are following our example - the exertion of Quakers & other dissenters has roused the clergy & several parsons are very active, as will be seen by the paragraph one of them inserted in the Hampshire paper respecting the meeting here.

A gentlemen committee is about to be formed to correspond with the antislavery society in London. Emma as secretary to the ladies' association has had occasion to write to one of the London secretaries, a George Stevens I believe - and has also written a very long account of their proceedings to Hannah Messon their founder."

HRO: 12M58/8



The Quakers played an extremely important role in the campaign against the slave trade, especially in its early phases. The minute book of the London Committee mentions John Merryweather of Ringwood and J Waring of Alton, both from prominent Quaker families, as two of the Committee's four Hampshire contacts, while members of the Neave family, who were active in the Fordingbridge Quaker meeting, were responsible for sending a copy of Fordingbridge's petition to the Committee in 1792.



This watercolour is believed to show HM Brig 'Ringdove' in chase of a slaver. In 1844 'Ringdove' was stationed on the coast of Africa, helping to enforce the ban on slave trading. William Houston Stewart served on board as a Lieutenant. Sir William, as he became, has two Hampshire connections: he was Admiral-Superintendent at Portsmouth in 1871-2, and his first wife was Catherine Elizabeth (married 1850, died 1867), only daughter of Eyre Coote of West Park, near Rockbourne.

HRO: 175M86/P1/26

The Anti-Slavery Society at the national level became inactive after the success of the 1833 Act, but there was widespread appreciation of the work that remained to be done.

In 1839 a new society, the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, was formed, and in the following year the Southampton Anti-Slavery Society was reconstructed as an auxiliary of this. This report in the Hampshire Chronicle mentions a BFASS meeting at the Long Rooms, Southampton.

HRO: 3A00W/A1/25



The fine interior of the Long Rooms in Southampton, near the West Quay, built in about 1760 and demolished around 1900, was the location of a number of anti-slavery lectures. Among those who spoke against slavery in these rooms was Revd Thomas Adkins, Minister of Above Bar Congregational Church. HRO: 65M89/Z211/473



Several black Americans gave lectures in Southampton in the early 19th century.

When William Wells Brown spoke at the Town Hall in January 1853, there was insufficient room for all those who had hoped to attend. He also spoke at two meetings in Andover, each of which was attended by about 600 people.

Once slavery had been abolished in all the American states, the campaign might be said to have come to an end: slavery, after all, was no longer believed to be practised in any country under British influence. It took the power of the incoming tide at Morecambe Bay in 2004 to make many people wonder just how effectively the slave trade had been brought to an end.