

Subject Guide



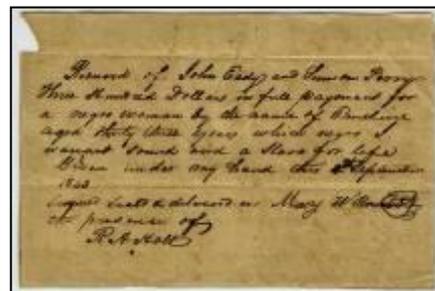
Enslavement



Ref. PRINTS/2



Ref. GALE/2/2



Ref. EMELINE/1

Background

Slavery has existed, in one form or another since the beginning of civilisation and continues to exist today. Slavery is the “system of un-free labour in which human beings were claimed to be the absolute property of others, as distinct from, for example, systems of serfdom or indentureship.”¹

The Transatlantic Slave Trade grew out of the economic need to unlock the potential of the relatively newly discovered Americas and Caribbean. During the Transatlantic Slave Trade, millions of Africans were forcibly removed from their homes and families, and reduced to the levels of chattel and commodities; stripped of their right to be called human.

The Slave Trade is often viewed as a triangular Trade. Enslaved people were brought from Africa to the Caribbean; from the Caribbean sugar, tobacco and other goods were taken to England; from England copper, textiles and other goods were taken to Africa to trade for enslaved peoples. However, the Trade was far more complicated than this and included various routes around the Caribbean and America.

The conditions on board slave ships during the ‘middle passage’ were appalling. Enslaved Africans were bound in groups with barely enough space to turn. All supplies were communal and those enslaved were required to shuffle together to use the tubs provided for waste matter. If the weather was good, those enslaved were also allowed on deck in small groups for exercise. However, if the weather was bad they would be kept locked below deck, sometimes for weeks on end with no exercise or cleaning. Unsurprisingly, death and disease was common and in order to preserve the ‘stock’ many of the enslaved were thrown overboard, dead or alive, to prevent the spread of further disease.

There were 27,000 known journeys² throughout the period and it is estimated approximately 12 million Africans were loaded onto ships, destined for the ‘New World’, with only 10.5 million surviving the difficult journey.³ Upon arrival, the enslaved Africans were then put up for auction

¹ The Oxford Companion to Black British History, (Oxford University Press, 2007): Slave Trade

² Ibid

³ Ibid

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to be sold to plantation owners. Those who were too weak or too sick for sale were left on the docks.

In addition to those newly arrived from Africa, there was also an inter-island trade where enslaved men, women and children from different islands were bought and sold.

In the early part of the Trade the work undertaken was mainly in the fields, but as the Trade became more sophisticated, so did the work of those enslaved. As production methods improved, the enslaved Africans were able to broaden their skills and learn trades, eventually moving in to low managerial positions. Skilled workers in textiles, metallurgy and farming were also prized which diversified the roles of the enslaved.

The abolition of the Slave Trade movement began in earnest in 1787 through the establishment of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade (also known as the Committee of the Abolition of the Slave Trade) in Great Britain. There are many factors to explain the movement of the abolition of the Slave Trade, but the widest ranging was the growth of moral sentiment and Christian ideals. Many of the abolitionist campaigners were Quaker and were keen to spread Christianity in Africa and amongst the enslaved population.

It is also important to remember the contribution of enslaved Africans to the ending of the Slave Trade. The fear of slave rebellions also created a climate of fear, particularly after the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) and the belief that newly enslaved Africans may be more likely to rebel. There were also major slave rebellions in Barbados (1816) and Jamaica (1831), along with every day acts of resistance by those enslaved.

Since the beginning of the Slave Trade enslaved people had been running from plantations. On islands such as Jamaica, the mountainous geography allowed for settlements to develop and these settlements became known as Maroons. In Jamaica, the Maroons were literally at war with the British and had developed successful patterns of guerrilla warfare. Interested parties were pressuring the Jamaican Assembly to sue for peace in order to extend the plantation system and by 1739 a treaty had been drawn up which ceded land and freedom to the Maroons.

The publication of works by previously enslaved men, such as Ignatius Sancho and Olaudah Equiano also helped the further the cause of the Abolitionist Movement. Equiano's autobiography spoke of his capture, the horrors of the middle passage and his life onboard ships. The abolitionist movement eventually succeeded in ending the Trade in 1807. Total emancipation for the enslaved in British colonies was not granted until 1833.

The most obvious outcome of the Slave Trade was the forced migration and Diaspora of millions of Africans to the Americas and the Caribbean. Men, women and children from different tribes were taken from their homeland and forced to make a new life elsewhere, to create a new shared identity.

The instability in Africa can also be traced back to the Slave Trade. The 'export' of millions of people from Africa led to a depopulation of Africa, and the loss of key skills and knowledge about trade. At the end of the Slave Trade the 'scramble for Africa' began, establishing many European countries as colonial powers and limiting the development of Africa.

Slavery and the Slave Trade has also led to the creation of 'scientific racism.' For the first time people were enslaved based only on their ethnicity. To justify this, stereotypes around Black people were created, many of which still exist today, perpetuating the idea that some people are less deserving than others according to the colour of their skin.

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Brief overview of some key dates⁴

1562	Sir John Hawkins' first English Atlantic slave voyage.
1625	Britain settles its first Caribbean island, Barbados
1655	Britain settles Jamaica.
1672	The Royal African Company is founded. The Company was originally founded in 1660 under the name Royal Adventurers into Africa, and was granted a monopoly of the Trade under Charles II. Following minor changes in staff and charter it became the Royal African Company.
1730-1740	First Maroon War, Jamaica. In 1739, a treaty was drawn up between the Maroons and the British which gave the Maroons a declaration of peace and some land. However, the Maroons had to agree to not take in anymore runaways and to also aid authorities in the capture of any runaways who attempted to join them.
1735-1736	Tackey's Revolt, Antigua.
1756-1763	The Seven Years War is concluded by the Treaty of Paris. The treaty granted Grenada, Dominica, St. Vincent and Tobago to Britain.
1760	Tacky's Revolt, Jamaica. An uprising of slaves that occurred in Jamaica in May, June and July 1760. It was the most significant rebellion in the Caribbean until the Haitian Revolution in 1790.
1771-1772	Somerset Case. This case was brought by abolitionists hoping to get a definitive ruling on the legality of slavery in England. Granville Sharp the abolitionist became involved after a slave named James Somerset was brought to England and then re-captured to be taken back to America. The judge, Lord Mansfield ruled that as slavery was not legal in England, it would not be legal for anyone to be forcibly removed. Although many Abolitionists thought that this would end enslavement Lord Mansfield also ruled that the end to enslavement would need to be passed in Parliament.

⁴ Compiled using Walvin, J. *Black Ivory* (London, 1992) pp xi-xii, and the Oxford Companion to Black British History: Slavery

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1780	The posthumous <i>The Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African</i> is published which feature the letters and articles written by Sancho on the subjects of enslavement and the Trade.
1783	Zong case. After taking on more slaves than was safe and running into poor weather the Captain of the Zong, Luke Collingwood decided to 'jettison' 133 of the sick to claim on the insurance. By law, at the time, if sick 'cargo' were delivered to the Caribbean the traders would gain no money but if they were 'lost' they could receive £30 per person enslaved. When the company who owned the Zong filed their claim, it was disputed by the insurers and it went to court. No officers or crew were punished and Granville Sharp's attempt to file a murder charge was never taken up.
1787	The Society of the Abolition of the Slave Trade was founded. Nine of the original twelve members were Quakers and also included Thomas Clarkson and Granville Sharp.
1789	<p>The French Revolution erupts. The principles of equality and fraternity echo around the world, including slave colonies causing disruption.</p> <p>Olaudah Equiano publishes his autobiography.</p>
1791	The Haitian Slave Revolt. The Haitian Revolution, formerly the French colony of Saint Domingue, was the only slave revolt which led to the founding of a state. The revolution was one of the two successful attempts, along with the American Revolution, to achieve permanent independence from a European colonial power.
1795-1796	Second Maroon War, Jamaica. Unhappy with the terms of the original treaty the Maroons of Trelawny Parish engaged in an eight month war with the British after two members of the community were flogged. After agreeing to surrender the Maroons were required to beg for the King's forgiveness and come forward by January 1st. Very few surrendered on this date and wary of the Maroon's intentions they were all deported to Nova Scotia.
1795-1796	Fédon's rebellion, Grenada. Inspired by the French and Haitian Revolutions Julien Fédon, a mixed race owner of the Belvedere estate launched a rebellion against British Rule. During the revolution 14, 000 enslaved Africans joined Fédon to ensure their emancipation, although 7,000 were to die. In late 1796 Fédon was defeated by the British.
1804	The French forces in Haiti, who were also fighting the British, were finally defeated in

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	November 1803. On 1 st January 1804 Haiti was officially declared independent.
1807	Abolition of the Slave Trade by Britain and the USA. After rejecting many previous Abolition Bills, an <i>Act to end the Trading of Slaves</i> was granted Royal Assent on the 25 March. The Abolitionists hoped that ending the Trade would improve the situation of those already enslaved and working in the Americas and the Caribbean.
1816	Bussa's rebellion, Barbados. Led by Bussa, a head officer at the Bayley plantation, the rebellion was planned amongst other enslaved men and women from different plantations. Bussa commanded 400 enslaved men and women and after three days it was put down.
1823	Slave Rebellion, Demerara (Guyana). Led by Jack Gladstone as his father, Quanima from the 'Success' Plantation and involved more than 10,000 slaves who were rebelling against the harsh conditions of the plantations. Most of the rebels exercised restraint and very few white people were killed. The rebellion was eventually put down although the death sentences handed out helped to further the abolitionist's cause.
1831-1832	<p>Following a lull after the Abolition Act of 1807 there was new impetus to form the Society for Mitigating and Gradually Abolishing the State of Slavery throughout the British Dominions (Anti-Slavery Committee). The brainchild of William Wilberforce, the society also included Thomas Clarkson and Thomas Buxton.</p> <p><i>'The History of Mary Prince'</i> (1831) is published. This was the first account of the life of a Black woman to be published in the United Kingdom.</p> <p>The Baptist War, Jamaica. (Also known as Sam Sharpe's rebellion). Sam Sharpe, a Black Baptist deacon reportedly encouraged his congregations to stop work on Christmas Day. However, before Sharpe could impose order, open revolt fanned out across the island. It took two weeks for order to be restored. The brutality with which this and other rebellions were put down galvanized public opinion against slavery.</p>
1833	<i>The Abolition of Slavery Act</i> passed in August 1833, although enslavement was replaced by an apprenticeship system. West Indian planters were also guaranteed between £15-£20 million worth of compensation.
1838	Full freedom is granted to all previously enslaved, signalling the end of the apprenticeship system.
1865	The Thirteenth Amendment abolishes slavery in the USA.

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1886	Slavery abolished in Cuba.
1888	Slavery abolished in Brazil.

Subject Guide Collections



Ref. AN/2



Ref. PRINTS/35



Ref: EPHEMERA/60/D

3.1 The Gale papers (Ref. GALE)

The indentures primarily relate to land owned in Jamaica by the Gale family and its descendents. However, there are also indentures in **GALE/2** and **GALE/3** that have no obvious connection to the Gale family or their estates. These indentures are concerned with Swanswick Plantation in Trelawny apparently in the hands of the Clarke family, and Rose Hall (the site of a series of notorious murders in the later nineteenth century) in Saint Thomas in the hands of the Caswells and the Thoyses.

Along with **GALE/1/11**, two further indentures (**GALE/2/1** and **GALE/2/2**) in this collection contain lists of the enslaved people on Swanswick plantation, and in one instance the indenture itself is conveying enslaved people (**GALE/2/1**). The majority of these indentures only give the names and occupations of the enslaved people, but **GALE/2/2** also gives ages and ethnic categories, as well as some details of births and deaths.

3.2 Black Cultural Archives papers (Ref. BCA)

BCA's own organisational papers contain research information on various figures connected with enslavement including Quobna Ottobah Cugano (**BCA/5/1/49**) and Olaudah Equiano (Ref. **BCA/5/1/57**). There is also a research file on Enslavement (**BCA/5/1/85**) including information relating to the International Slavery Museum, Liverpool.

BCA also holds correspondence with Bernie Grant and meeting notes relating to the Africa Reparations Movement (UK) (**BCA/5/1/39**). [For more information on this please see 3.8.]

3.3 The Gladstone Papers (Ref. GLADSTONE)

Sir John Gladstone, 1st Baronet (11 December 1764 – 7 December 1851) was a Scottish merchant, and the father of the British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone.

This collection comprises seven letters apparently written by John Gladstone's agents; Alexander C Logan in Jamaica and Edwin Smith and James Killey in India. A further seven

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letters are from commercial correspondents; including Messrs Watson and Hudson in Australia and Hunter, Arbuthnot & Co in Mauritius.

The letters are business based and often deal with the practicalities of running a plantation, maintaining crops and expanding sugar works. The letters from Jamaica, Demerara, Mauritius, and India are primarily concerned with sugar and rum, while those from Australia are concerned with wool. These letters also contain details of local prices and contain the names of several ships. Logan, writing from Jamaica, also makes references to the changes in the economy following the abolition of slavery in 1833.

3.4 Antique Newspapers (Ref. AN)

This collection contains cuttings from various newspapers from 1703-1802, which were purchased in lots by BCA. The newspapers include the London Gazette and the Times and features articles relating to the Slave Trade. The newspapers also contain articles referring to Imperialism and musicians. The cuttings specifically relating to the Slave Trade are:

- AN/2
- AN/4
- AN/8
- AN/17-AN/25
- AN/27-AN/28
- AN/37
- AN/39
- AN/40
- AN/43
- AN/47

3.5 The Papers of BASA (Ref. BASA)

BASA was established in 1991 as the Association for the Study of African, Caribbean and Asian Culture and History in Britain (ASACACHIB) to encourage research and disseminating information on the history of Black and Asian peoples.

In 1997 it changed its name to the Black and Asian Studies Association (BASA) and is now a membership organisation. It focuses and campaigns on education related issues; particularly on the school curriculum and publishing of books for schools. BASA also undertook a survey of London Libraries policies and their procedures on acquiring Black and Asian book resources.

BCA holds many of BASA's newsletters (**Ref. BASA/6/1**) which contain articles relating to the Slave Trade and its legacy.

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3.6 Ephemera Collection (Ref. Ephemera)

Within the Ephemera collection there are a number of leaflets and posters relating to the bi-centenary events of the abolition of the Slave Trade in 2007. These can be particularly found at **Ephemera/273**.

The Ephemera collection also contains Acts of Parliaments (**Ref. Ephemera/60**) related to the abolition of the Slave Trade and treaties with France (**Ref. Ephemera/60/G**) and for compensating the owners of those enslaved (**Ref. Ephemera/60/D**).

3.7 A Bill of Sale (Ref. Emeline).

One of the 'treasures' of BCA is a 'Bill of Sale' for Emeline, an enslaved woman. This bill dates from 1843 in the southern States of America (**Emeline/1**).

3.8 The papers of the Africa Reparations Movement (Ref. ARM)

The Africa Reparations Movement (ARM UK) was set up by Bernie Grant as a result of a the Conference on Reparations held in Nigeria in 1993 with the aim of seeking reparations for the harm done to Africa and the African Diaspora through enslavement, colonisation, and racism.

The UK branch of ARM came into being in December 1993 at a well attended conference sponsored by The Voice. The management committee consisted of Bernie Grant MP (Chair), Linda Bellos OBE, Professor Stephen Small, Patrick Wilmott, Sam Walker, Sally Murray Jones, and Hugh Oxley.

BCA holds correspondence, minutes of meetings and agendas (**ARM/1**).

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Further Reading: Available at BCA

- *The Forgotten Trade*. Nigel Tattersfield, (London, 1991) (Ref. **381.44 TAT**).
- *Capitalism and Slavery*. Eric Williams (London, 1964) (Ref. **331.11734 WIL**).
- *The Business of Abolishing the Slave Trade*. Judith Jennings (London, 1997) (Ref. **381.44 JEN**).
- *Britain's Slave Trade*. S. I. Martin, (London, 1999) (Ref. **381.44 MAR**).
- *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery: The mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787 - 1807*. J.R. Oldfield, (London, 1998) (Ref. **381.44 OLD**).
- *Black Peoples of the Americas*. Nigel Smith, (Oxford University Press, 1992) (Ref. **2.6 SMI**).
- *Black Ivory: A History of British Slavery*. James Walvin, (London, 1992) (Ref. **941 WAL**).
- *The Oxford Companion to Black British History*. David Dabydeen, John Gilmore and Cecily Jones eds, (Oxford University Press, 2007).

Other Sources [please note this list is not exhaustive]

Access to Archives: Slavery,

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/results.aspx?tab=2&Page=1&ContainAllWords=slavery>

Archives Hub: Slavery

<http://archiveshub.ac.uk/search/search.html>

BBC History: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/abolition/>

Bernie Grant Archives (held at Bishopsgate Institute): <http://www.berniegrantarchive.org.uk/>

Black and Asian Studies Association: <http://www.blackandasianstudies.org/>

Breaking the Chains: <http://www.breakingthechains.co.uk/>

Bristol Record Office: Records Relating to Anti-Slavery, <http://archives.bristol.gov.uk/dserve/>

British Library: History of the Slave Trade,

<http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/campaignforabolition/abolitionbackground/abolitionintro.html>

International Slavery Museum, National Museums Liverpool.

<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ism/slavery/europe/liverpool.aspx>

The National Archives: Black Presence,

(<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory/rights/abolition.htm>)

Transatlantic Slave Trade,

(<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/research-guides/slave-trade-slavery.htm>)

The Parliamentary Archives: <http://www.parliament.uk/slavetrade>

The University of Liverpool: The Rathbone Papers, (<http://sca.lib.liv.ac.uk/ead/html/gb141rp-p1.shtml#id3392999>)

The University of York: Borthwick Institute, <http://www.york.ac.uk/library/borthwick/projects-exhibitions/equality/race/>



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Understanding Slavery: <http://www.understandingslavery.com/>