
Remembering Slavery:

**Sunderland's links to the
trans-Atlantic slave trade**

**Tamsin Lilley
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Remembering Slavery 2007: Sunderland's links to the trans-Atlantic slave trade

By Tamsin Lilley

1. Introduction

It has often been supposed that Sunderland had few links to the trans-Atlantic slave trade and its abolition. In light of research undertaken as part of the Remembering Slavery 2007 project coordinated by Tyne and Wear Museums, Sunderland's numerous links to the slave trade have been revealed. It is now evident that individuals and families originally from Sunderland were involved with (and in some cases owned) plantations in the West Indies. Others played a crucial role in the campaign to abolish the slave trade; including several African American abolitionists who visited the area.

This document is not intended to be an in-depth discussion on issues surrounding the slave trade and its connection to Sunderland, but to outline some of the research that has been undertaken and to suggest possible further links.

Where appropriate, the names of individuals who have undertaken a more in-depth study into a particular topic have been included as a starting point for further reading and research.

2. Plantation owners from Sunderland

William Hylton

The Hiltons were a prominent north east family and owned Hilton Castle near Sunderland.¹ Sir William Hylton was a mariner and salt merchant who went to America from Sunderland in 1621 and settled in New Hampshire. He is the first recorded person from the north east to settle in America and became the first settler in what was to become New Hampshire.

Anthony Hylton from South Shields (possibly a cousin of Sir William), took settlers to Jamestown, Virginia in 1623. Whilst it is probable that William and Anthony were connected to the Hyltons at Hilton Castle, there is currently little evidence that definitely links them to Sunderland. The Hyltons were a sea faring family who forged links with the Caribbean –

¹ The letter 'y' in the name Hilton was used instead of 'i' in the 1600s. After this, Hylton started to be spelt 'Hilton'.

including Anthony Hylton's acquisition of a tobacco plantation. Descendants of William Hylton settled in Maryland, Carolina and Jamaica all before 1700. Involvement in the slave trade and slavery at this time grew out of the labour shortages in their new lands.

Opportunities in the Americas were increasing in the eighteenth century and many people from the north east migrated there, and this heightened the number of wealthy north east plantation owners and merchants. These new opportunities meant that people in Sunderland and the rest of the region could remain in the north east and become absentee land owners.

There are a number of County Durham place names in the area in America in which William Hylton settled, suggesting that other people from the north east settled in this area as well. At the time, Sunderland was part of County Durham and further research into the connections between the slavery narrative and Durham should be explored.

Ralph Hilton settled in Jamaica by the 1740s and several other family members owned plantations there in the following years. The Hylton (later Hilton) surname is widespread in Jamaica today, through the descendants of enslaved Africans who worked on the Hilton plantations.

Based on research by Neil Sinclair and John Charlton

For further information:

John Charlton: member of the Archive Mapping and Research project and author of a forthcoming book on the north east's links to the slave trade.

Sean Creighton: Project Officer for the Archive Mapping and Research project.

Neil Sinclair: former Curator of Sunderland Museum.

3. Sunderland contributors to the slave trade

The South Sea Company

In 1711, the South Sea Company proposed to finance Britain's £10 million debt incurred during the war. In return, they asked for the trading rights for the South Seas; its proximity to the South

American colonies meant that they would be able to monopolise the slave trade. Ambrose Crowley (Sunderland and London ironworks' owner) proposed that the South Sea Company should take over the slave trade contract with Spain. The Crowleys also profited from the slave trade by making shackles in their ironworks. However, their involvement with the South Sea Company came after their time in Wearside.

The Earl of Sunderland (Charles Spencer) played a significant part in the South Sea Company, but had nothing to do with Sunderland, other than in name.

George Hudson

Hudson was a railway magnet and mayor of Sunderland in the 1840s. He was founder of what became the North Eastern Railway and was the Conservative MP for Sunderland 1845-59. It has been suggested that he took an anti-slavery position. However, records of Sunderland Dock Company include George Hudson MP in a list of directors and shareholders 1855. The same document refers to ships going from Sunderland to Newcastle, Hartlepool, Hull or London and to requests to supply cotton; suggesting that George Hudson supported the anti-slavery cause but also engaged in the trade of slave-produced cotton.

See 'Records of Sunderland Dock Company 1854-59', Tyne and Wear Archives (TWA 740/18).

Thomas Wilson

In the early 1800s, Thomas Wilson (a schoolmaster from Sunderland) designed the Iron Bridge in Jamaica over the River Cobre in Spanish Town.² This provided a vital link between Kingston and Spanish Town and was the first of its kind in the Americas. Wilson didn't actually go to Spanish Town himself but he designed and created the bridge in England and sent it to Jamaica with a draughtsman.

The bridge was created twenty two years after Iron Bridge in Shropshire and spans 29.7 metres and cost £4000 to make.³ It is still in use today (bearing the words 'Thos Wilson Engineer 1800') but currently only by cyclists and pedestrians whilst repair work is being carried out.⁴ This work has been achieved after a grant was awarded as a result of it being included in the World Monuments list 1998.⁵

² Lambton (2004)

³ Skempton (2002), p 755; James, J.G. (1979), p 7

⁴ www.jamlib.org.jm

⁵ <http://www.international.icomos.org/18thapril/2006/18april2006-wmf.htm>

In the late 1800s, Spanish Town competed with Kingston to remain Jamaica's capital. The government had moved to Kingston from Spanish Town in 1872. This led to Spanish Town being reborn when the African Jamaicans who had worked on banana and sugar plantations were free after 1838 and built housing for their families. This was all built using slave money.

In 1829/1, James Hakewill sketched the bridge and commented that 'from the year 1766 we find the House of Assembly constantly engaged on the improvement of the road of communication between Kingston and Spanish Town, and several acts were passed for that purpose.'⁶ The significance of the bridge seems to be important. Spanish Town was the only town of any importance not to serve a port function. The nearest port would have been Kingston, so it is possible that the bridge would have been used to bring enslaved Africans across from Kingston into Spanish Town. However, this doesn't seem applicable until later on (1832) – more research is required.⁷

Thomas Wilson was responsible for the design and construction of the cast iron bridge over the Wear at Sunderland in 1796. This bridge attracted fame as the 'largest iron bridge in the world' and would have been a huge contributing factor to Wilson's appointment to construct the iron bridge in Jamaica.

4. Visiting African and American abolitionists

Olaudah Equiano (1745-1797)

A reprint of the ninth edition of Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa the African* of 1794 includes an updated list of subscribers, including Thomas Richardson from Sunderland. A Thomas Richardson also featured as Sunderland representative in the list of delegates for Newcastle Society of Friends Minutes 1831-56.

In 1792 Equiano visited the north east (Durham, Stockton and Newcastle) whilst campaigning against slavery.

⁶ James, J.G (1979), p 7

⁷ The bridge was contracted for by Messrs Campbell and McIntyre so perhaps this needs following up.

Celestine Edwards (1858-1894)

Samuel Jules Celestine Edwards was born on the Caribbean Island of Dominica in 1858. When he was 12 years old, he left Dominica as a sailor. In the 1870s, he settled in Edinburgh and was involved in the temperance movement. He later lived in Sunderland before moving to London in 1880. Records show that he was a labourer, but also a lecturer and researcher and focussed on slavery and how black people could carve out a role for themselves.

Edwards gave speeches across England on the subject of slavery (among other things). This includes a speech in Newcastle on 3rd November 1894. He soon became known as ‘the Negro Lecturer’.

Talks given by Edwards in September 1891 in Sunderland Assembly Hall are mentioned in the *Sunderland Echo* on 23rd, 26th and 30th September (**see appendix 1**). In the same year, he gained a theology degree at King’s College and helped write an autobiography of Walter Hawkins, a former enslaved worker. These talks took place two years before his big UK lecture tour of 1893.

One of his speeches was entitled *Freethought and Freethinkers*. He was an ‘anti-freethought Christian’ and a ‘staunch upholder of human rights and brotherhood’. The speech was received by a ‘crowded mixed audience’. It caused uproar from Mr Weightman of the National Secular Society who thought a Freethinker was someone who followed his own reason, rather than Edwards’ description of them seeing themselves as having superior knowledge. The post-lecture discussions were a popular feature of secular meetings at this time and ‘often the occasion for spirited exchanges of verbal blows’.⁸ This is not to say that Weightman was anti-slavery – indeed a popular British secular song included ‘*If you would happy be, Free from all slavery*’.⁹

The *Sunderland Echo* on 26th September 1891 reported on a speech given by Celestine Edwards the previous night entitled ‘An Atheist’s Creed’ with the New Assembly Rooms being again filled. Another ‘pretty lively discussion’. His next lecture was to take place that night on Christianity and War.

⁸ http://www.infidels.org/library/historical/john_mcgee/british_secular_movement.html

⁹ http://www.infidels.org/library/historical/john_mcgee/british_secular_movement.html

Another talk took place on 29th September 1891 to a full house in the New Assembly Hall on Fawcett Street. Edwards lectured on evolution and the fact that Africans were seen as descending from apes. The audience listened with great attention.

In 1892, the following year, Edwards helped edit the Christian newspaper, Lux. Edwards was probably the first black man to edit a white-owned newspaper. Celestine Edwards died in Dominica 1894. In 2003, he was shortlisted for a Blue Plaque award.¹⁰

Frederick Douglass (1817-1895) addressed a meeting in Sunderland on 25th September 1846 (recorded in the Sunderland Herald). In the summer of 1846 the escaped slave, Frederick Douglass, stayed with the Richardsons in Newcastle during his anti-slavery lecture tour of Britain. Anna and Henry Richardson helped raise money to buy Douglass' freedom so that he could return safely to the United States without fear of enslavement. In 1850, both Henry Highland Garnet and J.C. Pennington (former enslaved workers) addressed a meeting in Sunderland probably about the free produce association.

5. Black presence in Sunderland

'Brown Birds' revue (1927)

A poster advertising the Brown Birds revue can be found at Tyne and Wear Archives.

Sunderland Empire, 16th September 1927.
Will Garland presents a riot of mirth and syncopation
In: Brown Birds Twelve Syncopated Flights

The poster talks of a 'galaxy of coloured stars' that have been collected from all parts of the British Isles. Will Garland was an important Afro-American entertainer in Britain.

See 'Daybill of the revue 'Brown Birds'', Tyne and Wear Archives (TH.EMP/1/18/15).

¹⁰ <http://www.everygeneration.co.uk/blueplaques/nomination2.htm>

Ira Aldridge (1807-1867)

Ira Aldridge was born in New York in 1807 to free black parents and went on to become a very influential Shakespearean actor. He also performed in *The Revolt of Surinam or A Slave's Revenge*. He often ended his performances with an anti-slavery message and put some of his wealth towards backing the abolition movement. In 1827, he performed in Newcastle and Sunderland. His inter-racial marriage to a girl from Yorkshire was criticised by pro-slavery groups.¹¹

6. Local supporters of the campaign to abolish the slave trade

Rev. John Hampson (1780-1817)

Reverend Hampson was Rector of Sunderland and in 1794, wrote *Observations on the present war the projected invasion and a decree of the national convention for the emancipation of the slaves in the French colonies*.¹² He denounced slavery and said there is no connection between supporting abolition and favouring the French. In 1814 he headed a petition against the French slave trade. He denounced the Jacobins and said that Britain is united against them. J. Graham, Sunderland (among others) was sold a copy of his book.

Hampson was also a founding member of the Literary and Philosophical Society in Newcastle.

Researched by Peter Livsey

James Field Stanfield (1749-1824)

Summary

James Field Stanfield (1749-1824) was the first ordinary seaman involved in the slave trade to write about its horrors. He became a supporter of the campaign to abolish the slave trade after his experience on a slave ship which he described as 'a floating dungeon'.¹³ In 1788 Stanfield wrote *Observations on a Guinea Voyage*, vividly describing his experiences on the voyage from Liverpool to Benin in West Africa. It was published as a series of letters addressed to Stanfield's friend and leading anti-slavery campaigner, the Reverend Thomas Clarkson. Clarkson added this to the evidence collected for the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade, of which he was a founding member.

¹¹ http://www.itzcaribbean.com/history_ira_aldrige.php

¹² A copy of which is held at the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society: Lib Rm Tracts 042/4 v.201(1)

¹³ Stanfield (1879), 26



James Field Stanfield enjoyed a colourful career. After his experiences at sea, he became an actor and joined the Scarborough-Sunderland theatre circuit in 1789 and set up his own theatre company in 1799. Between 1793 and 1796 he temporarily gave up acting and became a brandy merchant in Sunderland, where he spent the next twenty years. His son, Clarkson Stanfield, was born in Sunderland and became a famous painter. Clarkson was named after the famous abolitionist Thomas Clarkson. During his time living in Sunderland, James Field Stanfield was a principal founder of the town's Subscription Library in 1795 which was to also house the Sunderland Subscription Museum from 1810. He also became involved with Sunderland's two Masonic Lodges.

The *Guinea Voyage* poem by James Field Stanfield was originally published in 1789 as an attack on the slave trade. Appalled by his own experiences on board a slave ship voyage, James Field Stanfield was compelled to write this anti-slavery poem. It was unusual at the time because he speaks of the 'dauntless crew'¹⁴ as being victims of the slave trade as well as the enslaved Africans. Stanfield's writings were serialised in newspapers in Britain and America and shocked their readers. In 1775 (and not 1776 as the title suggests) he wrote *Written on the Coast of Africa in the year 1776*.

In the previous year, James Field Stanfield published *Observations on a Guinea Voyage in a series of letters addressed to the Rev. Thomas Clarkson*. In 1807 both works were published as a single volume, a copy of which was on display in Tyne and Wear Museums' Remembering Slavery 2007 exhibition and is held at Sunderland City Library Local Studies.

Stanfield's first wife Mary Hoad, who was the mother of their son Clarkson Stanfield, died in Morpeth or Alnwick in 1801. As well as publishing anti-slavery material, James Field Stanfield wrote an *Essay on the Study and Composition of Biography*. He also published a biography of John Howard in Newcastle.

¹⁴ Stanfield (1879), 3

Further information about Stanfield's contribution to the abolition campaign:

Stanfield's first hand experience of the middle passage

Stanfield disagreed with the pro-slavery argument that commercial interests would ensure the enslaved Africans were well-treated on board – he experienced their maltreatment first hand on a slaving voyage to Benin. In 1788 he stated that 'One real view – one MINUTE absolutely spent in the slave rooms on the middle passage, would do more for the cause of humanity, than the pen of a Robertson, or the whole collective eloquence of the British senate.'¹⁵ He was successful in showing the horror of the middle passage and the importance of these types of testimonies in helping to abolish the trade – you can't take the experiences of this away from those involved.

Stanfield's contribution to the abolition campaign was extremely significant. The middle passage was central to the abolition campaign (for example, the use of the Brookes ship image) yet sailors were previously only ever talked about in the context of the pro-slavery portrayal of them being the 'nursery of British seamanship'.¹⁶ Stanfield was later able to contradict the pro-slavery argument that the European traders were saving the Africans – he commented that he 'never saw a happier race of people than those in the kingdom of Benin' who were living in some degree of luxury.¹⁷ In the preface to the *Guinea Voyage*, Stanfield was keen to show that the poem is not based on hearsay, but his own experience. He talked to other sailors on slave ships who described almost identical experiences. He states that even if he is only about to influence the feelings of 'but a few individuals', he will have achieved success.

Stanfield's account of the experience of sailors aboard slave ships

Stanfield is unique to praise (or even talk of) the grief of 'Neptune's Sons' (i.e. the crew) and warned British seamen against the trade:

*"Ye sons of Britain, who, in dangers brave,
Dare all the tumults of th' uncertain wave..."¹⁸*

¹⁵ Wood, M (2000), 15: quoted from Stanfield, J. *The Guinea Voyage* (1788)

¹⁶ Wood, M (2000), 15

¹⁷ Rediker (2007), 13

¹⁸ Stanfield (1789), 11

He goes on to describe the lash the sailors experienced and describes them as 'hapless victims'.¹⁹ This challenges the popular image of slave trade sailors as abusers who raped enslaved women.²⁰

Stanfield's path to the trans-Atlantic slave trade

Despite Stanfield talking in his prose account about public houses being paid by merchants to lure sailors into the trade, he became involved voluntarily. This was perhaps down to his 'rash youth'²¹ as well as his 'secular awakening' from a Roman Catholic training school and the desire for an adventure. His friend Russel (mentioned in the poem) was going on the trip as well and this might be another reason for Stanfield's involvement.

In 1774, Stanfield signed up for a slaving voyage from Liverpool to Benin and on to Jamaica onboard the *Eagle* – something he described as a nightmare voyage. The mortality rate was off the chart for both the sailors and the enslaved: of the 33 or 34 original crew, only 4 were left by the end of the voyage. His sailing career was over and he became an actor.²²

Stanfield and abolition

In 1787, Stanfield became involved in the abolition movement and was active in saying what happened onboard the slave ships. He sent letters to Thomas Clarkson and was the first to write a first hand account of slave trade. He made 'continual inquiries'²³ in Benin about false accounts of the enslaved being prisoners of war (when in fact they were snatched from their homes). In his *Guinea Voyage* poem, he appeals to the British Senate to 'blast the horrors of the infernal trade'. He provides very graphic accounts – probably down to his theatrical tendency. Stanfield describes seeing resignation, bitterness and resistance in the eyes of the enslaved Africans when they arrive on deck. He also talks of individuals being ripped from their mother's breasts – including his close friend, Russel. He later appeals to British women with a description of childbirth on the middle passage and the story of Abyeda being ripped from her fiancé on their wedding day.²⁴ This was a sophisticated argument early on – women were to play a significant role in the abolition campaign.

John Newton used metaphors to describe enslaved Africans lying in rows – they were packed in 'like books upon a shelf...I have known them so close that the shelf would not, easily, contain

¹⁹ Stanfield (1789), 10

²⁰ Christopher (2006), 3

²¹ *Written on the coast of Africa*, 1775

²² http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/podcasts/transcripts/slave_ship.asp

²³ Rediker (2007), 15

²⁴ Stanfield (1789), 29

one more'.²⁵ In contrast, Stanfield relied more on realistic images such as the 'floating dungeon' and descriptions of the 'gorged cell of dim disease',²⁶ and enslaved Africans being shackled to their dead companions.

Records of Stanfield's involvement in the abolition campaign do not just take the form of his poem and prose writing. Durham County Record Office holds an undated handbill showing Stanfield's initials (JFS) as the signature. The handbill outlines facts relating to the slave trade and shows that in 1786, 950 seamen were destroyed by the slave trade. It also shows the number of lives that could be saved by a family which abstained from sugar and rum. However, the handbill is undated and its context is unclear; does this suggest that Stanfield played a more active role in the abolition campaign than simply retelling his experiences? This item was used in Remembering Slavery 2007 exhibition.

Why is Stanfield not more widely known?: the significance of Stanfield's accounts

The abolition movement was dominated by the middle and upper class and 'saintly' individuals such as Granville Sharp and Thomas Clarkson. Whilst Stanfield was a common sailor and would not have fitted into this category, the influence of his descriptions should not be underestimated. Without the first hand accounts of sailors like Stanfield, it would have been almost impossible to educate the public and to lift the 'impenetrable veil'²⁷ about the slave ships and what really went on; the sailors had a unique insight into the running of the ships and matters such as stowage, exercise, mortality rates, and so on. There were few survivors so accounts such as this are very valuable. Whilst the abolition campaigns and committees were very committed to the cause, nobody can abolish something they do not really have any real facts about. Clarkson did go to Liverpool and Bristol to research the workings of the trade - merchants and ship owners ran away but sailors flocked to him. It is the accounts of those involved that really illustrate the dire conditions. That said, Stanfield was paid £37 by Thomas Clarkson's committee for his 'observations'; this, together with his theatrical tendencies needs to be borne in mind.

So whilst Stanfield contributed to the abolition campaign, he was not a 'self propelled crusader' against the trade (he was probably too busy looking after his 9 or 10 children!) but rather an opportunist who 'got on a rolling bandwagon, rather than being among the horses that got it going'.²⁸

²⁵ Newton (1788), 33

²⁶ Stanfield (1789), 27

²⁷ Rediker (2007), 2

²⁸ *pers. comm.* Pieter van der Merwe

Stanfield and the 21st century

Stanfield featured in *Squaring The Triangle* exhibition at the Museum of Freemasonry in London between 14th May and 28th September 2007. This exhibition talked of his involvement in the establishment of the first Masonic lodge for black men in revolutionary America: Black Lodge.

Research is being undertaken by Pieter van der Merwe regarding the date and artist of the James Field Stanfield portrait in Tyne and Wear Museums' collections. It is currently credited to the 'circle of Martin Arthur Shee' but both the hair style and dress are typical of French fashion in the 1780s.

A plaque has been erected in 2008 on Boddlewell House in Sunderland on the site of Stanfield's house to commemorate his life:

JAMES FIELD STANFIELD
(1749 – 1824)
Actor, Author and Campaigner against the Slave Trade
lived in a house on this site,
which was also birthplace of his son
CLARKSON STANFIELD R.A.
(1793 – 1867)
Theatre, Marine and Landscape Painter

Neil Sinclair is extremely knowledgeable about Stanfield's prominence in Sunderland in the 1790s. In October 2007 he gave a guided walk of Sunderland to highlight the buildings (or sites of buildings) Stanfield had connection with. This includes: the iron bridge for which he wrote the poem for the laying of the foundation stone; the Subscription Library which he helped to found; the Phoenix Masonic Lodge where he was a prominent member; the Sunderland Theatre where he acted; his house and wine shop; and Sunderland Parish Church where two of his daughters were christened.

Relevant objects:

1. Portrait of James Field Stanfield (Tyne and Wear Museums: TWCMS : H22101)
2. Anti-slavery handbill signed by James Field Stanfield (Durham County Record Office (DRO), *Durham City Council Archives*, Du 1/60/8 (29))
3. Guinea Voyage poem 1807 (Sunderland Local Studies)

For further information:

Neil Sinclair – former Curator of Sunderland Museum who has researched James Field Stanfield's Sunderland.

Pieter van der Merwe - General Editor at the National Maritime Museum, which he joined in 1974. The life of Clarkson Stanfield, including much on the career of James Field Stanfield, was the subject of both his PhD and a major exhibition which he co-curated at Sunderland and the Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Bonn, in 1979. He recently re-wrote the entries on both for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and is continuing work on them for further publication. For more information, see <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26236?docPos=5>

Marcus Rediker – author of *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (2007) which features a chapter on James Field Stanfield.

Sir Ralph Milbanke

In 1791 Sir Ralph Milbanke was elected an MP for the County Durham constituency (which at the time included Sunderland) and moved his home to Seaham Hall. He took up the cause of abolition of the slave trade and was soon in correspondence with John Dodgson, a Darlington Quaker who had organised a petition against the trade. In March 1792 Milbanke's wife wrote that the only reason that he was remaining in London was because he wished to take part in the vote against the slave trade.

Sir Ralph continued to support William Wilberforce's bills to abolish the slave trade. When James Field Stanfield published his combined edition of his *Guinea Voyage* works in 1808, to mark the passing of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, it was dedicated to Milbanke, whom Stanfield records as seconding Wilberforce's successful bill.

Because of the family connection with William Wilberforce, Sir Ralph's daughter, Anne Isabella (the future Lady Byron), was asked by a friend in 1811 to interest Wilberforce in the case of Forster Charlton. Charlton had been committed to Morpeth Gaol for agitation against slavery.

Written and researched by Neil Sinclair

Lord Castlereagh

After Sir Ralph ceased to be an MP, Seaham Hall passed in 1821 into the ownership of Lord Stuart who later became the Third Marquess of Londonderry. His brother, the Second Marquess of Londonderry had also been active in the movement to restrict the foreign slave trade and the continuing illegal British trade. Better known as Lord Castlereagh, he was foreign secretary from 1812 to 1822. A map of Castlereagh's in the Durham County Record Office collection is annotated with observations on the Portuguese and Spanish slave trade. As foreign secretary, Castlereagh was responsible for negotiating treaties which restricted the Portuguese and Spanish slave trade and prevented British slave ships from sailing under the Spanish flag.

Written and researched by Neil Sinclair

Notice of a petition to Parliament for the Abolition of the Slave Trade by the inhabitants of Sunderland, 1792

In 1792, The Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade presented 519 petitions to Parliament. This petition signed by Sunderland inhabitants calls for West India slave holders to treat the enslaved people they owned more humanely. It classes the slave trade as 'one of the greatest evils at this day existing upon the earth' and appeals for its end.

Credit: Durham County Record Office ['DRO'], Durham City Council Archives, Du 1/61/8/32

Report by a Committee of the Society for the Purpose of Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 26 June 1795

This handbill encourages consumers to use goods from the East Indies, instead of the West Indies where enslaved labour was used. The reference to Sunderland grocers at the end of the handbill shows that many had made the decision to sell goods that were not produced by enslaved people. It was written by Granville Sharp, the chairman of the Committee, who was born and educated in Durham.

Credit: DRO, Du 1/60/8/36

Sunderland Anti-Slavery Association

The existence of Sunderland Anti-Slavery Association is shown in a list of subscribers to Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter 1825-29. In 1828, the Sunderland Anti-Slavery Society is included, showing £5.16.0 proceeds from publication sales.

The 1840 Anti-Slavery Convention

Several delegates from Newcastle and the north east area attended the 1840 Anti-Slavery Convention between 12th and 23rd June 1840 in London. This includes Michael Longridge whose father (also named Michael Longridge) is listed on a Sunderland petition in 1814 regarding the 1814 Treaty and the slave trade. The elder Longridge is mentioned in a report of a meeting in August 1794 relating to Sunderland Library. This was also attended by James Field Stanfield who was active in the establishment of a permanent library in Sunderland; hosting a meeting at his own house in January 1795.²⁹

Newcastle Society of Friends minutes (mens)

This outlines all monthly meetings for the Newcastle Society but they took place across Tyne and Wear and included delegates for Sunderland and Durham 1831-56.

See 'Newcastle Society of Friends minutes', Tyne and Wear Archives (TWA MF169).

Sunderland Free Labour Association

In January 1851 a list (available from the British Library) of the 26 Free Labour Associations included Sunderland. The Free Produce Movement in the 1850s was co-ordinated by Anna Henry Richardson, a Quaker in Newcastle.

Other meetings in Sunderland, referenced in the Sunderland Herald:

August 9 1834 page 2: Public meeting to celebrate the granting of freedom

May 12 1838 page 3: Great public anti-slavery meeting

September 25 1848: Meeting addressed by Frederick Douglass

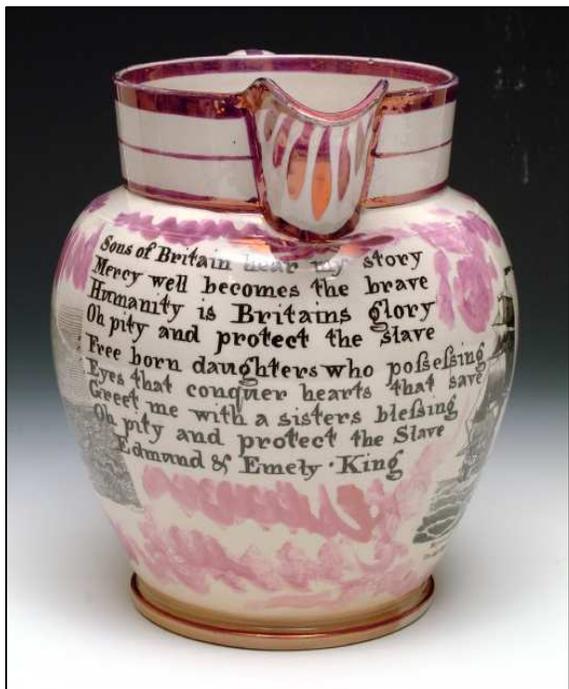
October 4 1850: Meeting addressed by both Henry Highland Garnet and J.C. Pennington, presumably about the free produce association.

²⁹ Sunderland Herald (1878)

7. Objects linking Sunderland to the slave trade

Jug

This jug was made in Sunderland in about 1820, when there would have been potteries along the banks of the River Wear in Sunderland. It is a good example of a distinct type of pottery known as Sunderland Lustreware; pink lustre with a metallic sheen.



© Tyne and Wear Museums B1334

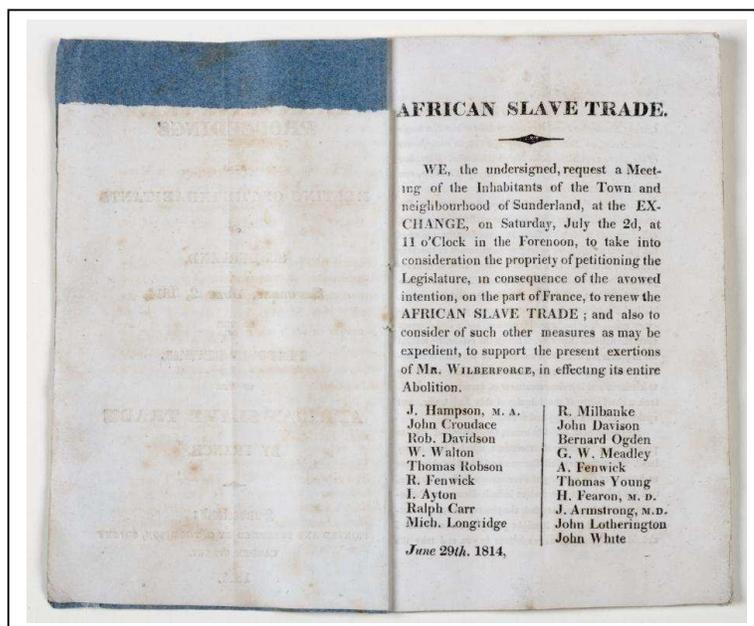
It includes an anti-slavery verse:

*Sons of Britain hear my story
Mercy well becomes the brave
Humanity is Britain's glory
Oh pity and protect the slave*

Many of the buyers of this type of product were women. Although they were not allowed to take an active part in the political debate, ten per cent of the entire financial support for the anti-slavery movement came from women. This shows the material nature of the anti-slavery propaganda and its domestic setting.

Booklet

This booklet records the minutes of a meeting that took place in Sunderland on July 2 1814 regarding France's proposed revival of the African slave trade. France reinstated the slave trade in 1815 but backed down following pressure from Britain.



© Tyne and Wear Museums D3738

Sunderland blue glass rolling pin with gilt printed verse

This rolling pin is from 1825-50 and is owned by National Museums Liverpool who purchased it in 2000 from Penrith Farmers and Kidd's Plc. It is currently on display in the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool.

It has anti-slavery verse printed on it:

*Health to the sick,
Honour to the brave,
Success to the lover,
And freedom to the slave.*

There is a Sunderland white glass rolling pin showing the same anti-slavery verse inscription in Tyne and Wear Museums' collection (TWCMS : E4906). Rolling pins at this time were often found in the homes of sailors as they were given as gifts for loved ones from those in the coasting trade.³⁰ Women played an important role in the abolition campaign. 'Sunderland type' glass may have come from a Newcastle glass-house.

Abolitionist medal, about 1814

This medal was produced around 1814 to commemorate the 1807 abolition of the slave trade. It shows an African man and a European man shaking hands. In the background is a view of huts and people dancing. The Arabic inscription reads: SALE OF SLAVES PROHIBITED IN 1807, CHRISTIAN ERA, IN THE REIGN OF GEORGE III; VERILY, WE ARE ALL BROTHERS. The use of Arabic on the coin suggests that it was intended to be distributed in Sierra Leone, which in 1808 became a base for campaigning against slave ships. On the reverse, WE ARE ALL BRETHREN. SLAVE TRADE ABOLISHED BY GREAT BRITAIN 1807 is inscribed. Coins and medals were often used to communicate anti-slavery messages as they could be mass-produced and widely distributed. They were also used to circulate announcements and changes in the law. This medal is owned by a Sunderland resident and was exhibited in the Remembering Slavery 2007 exhibition at Sunderland Museum.

For further information and images of similar items:

<http://www.understandingslavery.com/citizen/explore/heritage/gallery/?id=1426>

http://www.thecoppercorner.com/history/bw_photos2a.htm

³⁰ <http://1st.glassman.com/gallery-victorian/slides/antique-glass-rolling-pins.html>

The Orange Grove series and Stuart Henry Bell (1823-1896)

The Orange Grove was a ship was built in 1812, perhaps originally for the fruit trade but it later became involved in the slave trade.

The Sunderland artist Stuart Henry Bell produced six paintings relating to *The Life of the Slaver 'Orange Grove'* - including it '*Leaving Sunderland Harbour*' (it was perhaps even built there) and later being '*Chased by an English Frigate*'. All six paintings are at Wilberforce House Museum in Hull.

The Orange Grove series was likely to have been painted between 1892 and 1893; some research has been conducted into Sunderland newspapers produced between 1891-4 to see if the paintings were exhibited in Sunderland during those years. This search has so far not been successful but further research needs to be conducted. Stuart Henry Bell exhibited several times in Newcastle from 1870 until his death in 1896. One of the paintings in the Orange Grove series, *Cut Out By the Frigate Boats*, shows the Orange Grove about to be inspected by the British Navy for evidence of illegal trading. Despite the slave trade being abolished in 1807, British ships were still involved illegally and sailed disguised as America, French or Portuguese by sailing that country's flag. The Orange Grove is shown flying the American flag as it leaves Sunderland Harbour.

Stuart Henry Bell often painted retrospectively, so it is likely that the painting of the ship leaving Sunderland Harbour was created a reasonably long time after he saw the ship. He may have not even witnessed the Orange Grove first hand. The accuracy of the event he was depicting cannot be deduced from the paintings – he put in landmarks that had changed over time, for example he preferred the old wooden lighthouse over the new metal one. Queen Victoria viewed his work very favourably - declaring that one of his pictures was the 'best marine picture I have seen since the days of [Clarkson] Stanfield'. This is ironic because not only was Clarkson born in Sunderland but he was named after the abolitionist, Thomas Clarkson.

8. George Washington: the first President of the United States of America (1732-1799)

'Upon the decease of my wife, it is my will and desire, that all the slaves which I hold in my own right shall receive their freedom'. - George Washington's will, 1799

The Washington family took their surname from Wessyngton over 800 years ago. Five generations of George Washington's descendants lived in Washington Hall, near Sunderland, which is now owned by the National Trust. Following the English Civil War, John Washington (living in Tring) was disillusioned with England and left for Virginia in 1656 to seek his fortune. Three generations later, George Washington (1732-1799) was born on his father's slave plantation in Virginia and went on to become the first President of the United States of America. This new country used the family coat of arms of George Washington and his descendants from Washington, near Sunderland, as the basis for its flag. It is worth noting that there was a gap of several hundred years between members of the Washington family leaving Washington Hall and their descendants settling in Virginia. Whilst there is no direct connection between Sunderland and George Washington, it is worth noting the family association between the two.

George Washington and slavery

George Washington was born into a world where slavery was accepted. He became a slave owner when he inherited ten enslaved workers upon the death of his father in 1743. By the time of his own death in 1799, George Washington was a significant slave owner and 316 enslaved Africans were living on his Mount Vernon estate. This includes the 20 slaves his wife, Martha, brought to Mount Vernon upon her marriage to George Washington in 1759. As President, George Washington did not lead the fight against slavery for political reasons. However, in his will, he arranged for all the enslaved people he owned to be freed after the death of his wife Martha, who passed away two years after her husband in 1802.

Whilst the end of the American War of Independence in 1783 had encouraged equality, George Washington's decision to emancipate his enslaved workers was an unusual move. The trading of enslaved people was not abolished in America until 1808, nine years after George Washington's death in 1799. It took a further 57 years to abolish slavery in all of the American states.

During his time on the Mount Vernon plantation, George Washington expanded the land for farming and continued to buy more enslaved workers. However, it has been suggested that by 1778 he had stopped selling enslaved people without their consent because he did not want to break up slave families. In the following year, he planned to sell some of his land to allow him to purchase the freedom of his enslaved workers. By the 1780s, George Washington had continued to feel troubled by the moral and economic implications of slavery and in a letter to John Mercer in 1786, he vowed never to purchase another enslaved African. In his will, as well

as freeing all the enslaved people he owned upon his wife's death, he made provisions for those who were too old, too young or infirm (and could therefore not be left) to be clothed, fed and educated (**see appendix 2**). Martha Washington in fact freed her late husband's enslaved workers in 1801 whilst she was still alive. Washington's declaration in his will was extremely significant: 'With the stroke of a pen, Washington set in motion the apparatus intended to free 123 enslaved African-American men, women and children'.³¹ However, this still left 153 dower enslaved workers (i.e. they belonged to the estate of Martha Washington's first husband) and 40 leased enslaved workers on his plantation. Furthermore, despite the fact that 13 editions of his will were printed in 10 different countries (in the year 1800 alone), few of his contemporaries followed his lead.

Washington Old Hall

Washington Old Hall, a stone-built 17th century manor house incorporates parts of the original 12th century home of George Washington's direct ancestors. George Washington's first ancestor to live in Washington (which at the time was not part of Sunderland) was William de Hertburn in 1183. He later changed his name and became William de Wessyngton after the property he owned. The Hylton family were neighbours when they built Hylton Castle between 1390 and 1410. The Hyltons were also involved in the slave trade and became plantation owners. Washington Old Hall was first opened to the public in 1955. Two years later it was given to the National Trust, who manages the property today.

The National Trust and Sunderland City Council have images of Washington Old Hall.

For further information:

Kate Gardner: manager at Washington Hall (National Trust).

John Charlton: member of the Archive Mapping and Research project and author of a forthcoming book on the north east's links to the slave trade. *Hidden Chains: the Slavery Business and North East England 1600-1870* (ISBN 978 185795 123 3). For more information, see www.tynebridgepublishing.co.uk.

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³¹ Pogue, D.J. (2004)

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Appendices

Appendix 1:

Text from Sunderland Echo reporting on Celestine Edwards' speeches

Taken from the Sunderland Echo held at Sunderland Local Studies.

Sunderland Echo, Wednesday 23rd September 1891

The Negro Lecturer

Mr Celestine Edwards, the Negro lecturer, delivered an address on "Freethought and Freethinkers" last night, in the Assembly Hall. Mr Price, of the Y.M.C.A., occupied the chair, and there was a crowded mixed audience. In the course of a long lecture Mr Edwards spoke of the titles "Freethought" and "Freethinker" as presumptuous and absurd. Everybody was free to think. If they said they were Freethinkers by virtue of superior knowledge he would say it wanted proof, because they could pick out in England no mightier intellects than the men who were believers in God and worshippers in Jesus Christ. (Loud applause.) Men could only be free when they were no longer servants to sin. (Loud applause.)—A discussion being invited, Mr R. Weightman, of the Sunderland Branch of the National Secular Society, ascended the platform amid some applause. In the course of a ten minutes' speech he explained that a Freethinker was one who followed his own reason, exclusive of creed or dogma and conformed to none. He then held that the Christian religion was based upon miracles, which to scientific men were altogether inadmissible.—Mr Edwards replied, holding that true science could not object to miracles.—Mr Spencer objected to Mr Edward's method. If they wanted to convert those men from the errors of their ways, they would have to stop holding them up to ridicule.—Mr Edwards denied that he held them up to ridicule. —At this stage there was considerable interruption in the meeting, and several of the opposite parties became excited.—Mr Weightman condemned the "bigotry of Christians." The Freethinkers were almost boycotted; they could not get a place to lecture in.—After some rather [warm?] passages at arms between Mr Edwards and Mr Weightman, the chairman at ten o'clock declared the debate closed.

Sunderland Daily Echo, 26th September 1891

The Negro Lecturer

THE LADIES OBJECT

Last night Mr Edwards delivered his lecture on "An Atheist's Creed," the New Assembly Rooms being again filled. At the close of the lecture, in response to the chairman's invitation, a gentleman came on to the platform to defend the Atheist's position, and for some time the meeting was pretty lively. Finally, counsel for the Atheists branched off from defending his position to that of attacking the position of the Christians. At this stage the ladies on the platform joined in the chorus of "sit down," and the speaker, after remarking upon this fact, took his seat. The meeting was protracted beyond the usual time.

Mr Edwards intends lecturing tonight on "Christianity and War," and he will also speak tomorrow.

Sunderland Daily Echo, 30th September 1891

The Negro Lecturer

Mr Celestine Edwards gave a lecture last night on the above subject in the New Assembly Hall, Fawcett street [sic]. There was a full house. Mr Sharp again acted as chairman, and introduced the lecturer. Mr Edwards dealt at length with the theory of evolution, and said that Darwin had somehow got the negro race mixed up in his book, and had stated that in his opinion it was somewhere in Africa that the human race first originated from ape. The lecturer then dealt with the various objects raised against the negro, and caused much amusement by the comparison he made between negroes and white men. The lecture was listened to with great attention, and was much applauded, Mr Edwards concluding a fine peroration by saying that the time was coming, and coming fast, when public opinion would be turned, and it would be found that, given equal opportunity and equal time, the negro race would show as honourable a record as any race with which the earth was blest.

Appendix 2:

Text of the section of George Washington's will relating to the slavery issue.

The Will and Last Testament of George Washington

Upon the decease of my wife, it is my will and desire, that all the slaves which I hold in my own right shall receive their freedom. To emancipate them during her life, would, though earnestly wished by me, be attended with such insuperable difficulties on account of their intermixture by marriages with the dower Negroes, as to excite the most painful sensations, if not disagreeable consequences from the latter while both descriptions are in the occupancy of the same proprietor; it not being in my power, under the tenure by which the dower Negroes are held, to manumit them. And whereas, among those who will receive freedom according to this devise, there may be some who from old age or bodily infirmities, and others who, on account of their infancy, that will be unable to support themselves, it is my will and desire that all who come under the first and second description, shall be comfortably clothed and fed by my heirs while they live; and that such of the latter description as have no parents living, or if living, are unable or unwilling to provide for them, shall be bound by the court until they shall arrive at the age of twenty-five years; and in cases where no record can be produced, whereby their ages can be ascertained, the judgement of the court upon its own view of the subject, shall be adequate and final. The Negroes thus bound, are (by their masters or mistresses) to be taught to read and write and to be bro't up to some useful occupation, agreeably to the laws of the commonwealth of Virginia, providing for the support of orphan and other poor children. – And I do hereby expressly forbid the sale or transportation out of the said commonwealth of any slave I may die possessed of under any pretence whatsoever. And I do moreover, most pointedly and most solemnly enjoin it upon my Executors hereafter named or the survivor of them, to see that this clause respecting slaves and every part thereof, be religiously fulfilled at the epoch at which it is directed to take place, without evasion, neglect, or delay, after the crops which may then be on the ground are harvested, particularly as it respects the aged and infirm; seeing that a regular and permanent fund be established for their support so long as there are subjects requiring it; not trusting to the uncertain provision to be made by individuals:- and to my mulatto man William, (calling himself William Lee) I give immediate freedom, or if he should prefer it (on account of the accidents which have befallen on him and which have rendered him incapable of walking or of any active employment) to remain in the situation he now is, it shall be optional in him to do so; in either case however, I allow him an annuity of thirty dollars during his natural life, which shall be independent of the victuals and cloaths he has been accustomed to receive if he chuses the last alternative; but in full with his freedom, if he prefers the first: and this I give

him as a testimony of my sense of his attachment to me, and for his faithful services during the Revolutionary War.

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