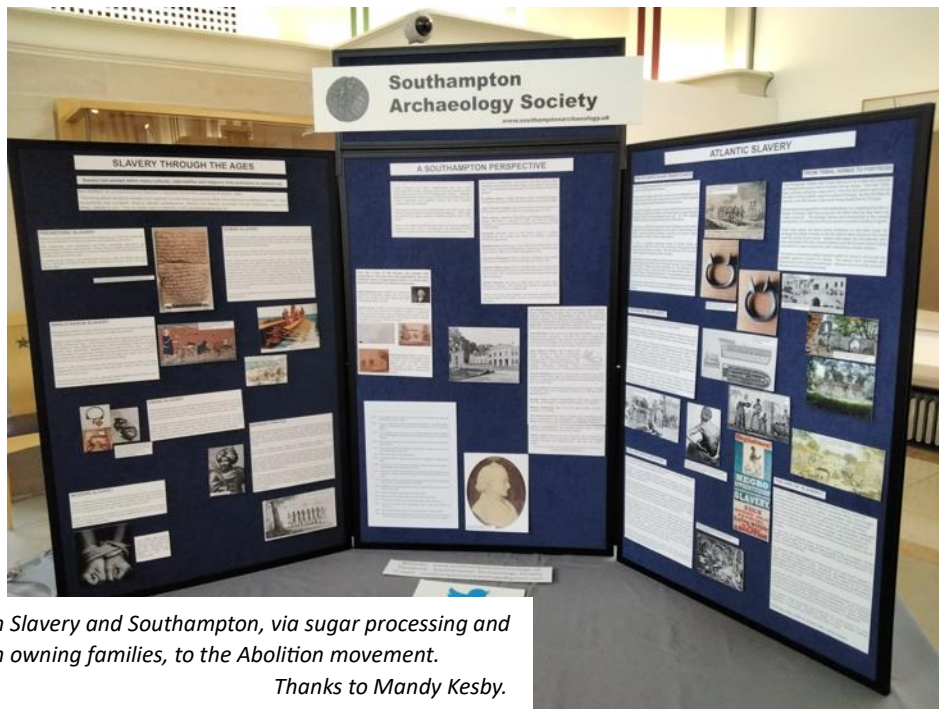


STUDY DAY LECTURE NOTES Saturday 10th June 2023

Slavery, Colonialism and Empire: a Southampton perspective



Display on Slavery and Southampton, via sugar processing and plantation owning families, to the Abolition movement.

Thanks to Mandy Kesby.

Introduction to Transatlantic Slavery by Christer Petley

Slavery is the systematic exploitation, possession and social exclusion (being excluded from society) of certain groups. Enslaved people were considered to be merely a commodity and could be transferred like any other goods. This differs from modern slavery in the aspect of possession, as today people are trafficked illegally rather than bought via a 'legal' process with documentation. However, anyone subject to slavery is faced with the "certainty of uncertainty", as enslaved people can never know what tomorrow will bring. An 18th century slave owner, Bryan Edwards, wrote "the leading principle where slavery is established, is fear". He was born in Wiltshire and retired to live in Southampton where he became MP, and he died in the town, owning 600 slaves.

In the context of world history, slavery was known among prehistoric societies, and was well-established by the time of the Greeks and Romans. In Europe the system of serfdom was widespread, and slavery existed both in the Americas and Africa before 1492. Transatlantic Slavery was the largest forced migration of people in history: between 1525 to 1866 12.5 million enslaved people were transported across the Atlantic, and before 1800 the vast majority of those were West Africans. In Greece and Rome slaves had the possibility of manumission, whereby they could be granted freedom by their owners in their wills or as a reward, or occasionally they could obtain enough money to buy their freedom. However, people in the Americas were enslaved for life and children born to slaves automatically became slaves, passed through the female line: this made skin colour and 'race' defining characteristics of the system.

Transporting enslaved people to the Americas started after European nations began to colonise areas in the New World. Christopher Columbus in 1492 was the first to land in Mexico which led to the Spanish Empire in Central America. This was followed by the

Portuguese in Brazil, and to avoid conflict the Pope decreed that in the New World western lands should be Spanish and the east Portuguese, while Brazil remained Portuguese. But in the 17th century the Netherlands and England developed as Atlantic powers, and in the 18th century the English and French expanded into the 'Atlantic system', leading to conflict over trade and colonies, and trade in enslaved people increased.

In 1607 the English took the Caribbean island of Barbados and the island was settled with slave plantations by the British, while the French arrived in the 17th century. These colonies became very profitable for the English, most especially the Caribbean in the 1640s, and this expanded to other islands. Sugar was first found in Guinea (West Africa) and its cultivation moved east to the Levant during the medieval period, then west across the Atlantic to the Caribbean. It is a type of grass, and the crop became popular because it grew easily with little care, especially in hotter climates, although its processing was labour intensive. Tobacco, rice, cotton and coffee were also grown by enslaved labour.

The Triangular Trade refers to ships going from England, across to Africa with trade goods, buying slaves and taking them to the Americas and selling them on the slave markets, then buying commodities to bring back to England. Ships would not always undertake all three legs of the triangle: some would ply only between Africa and the Americas as these were specialised ships, with other ships trading between America and England. One product used for trading was cotton cloth from India. The production of crops from the plantations being separated from the areas of consumption by thousands of miles was significant for the Transatlantic trade, and meant that that goods expensive to buy.

Slaves from Africa were either captured during raids or as a result of wars or battles mostly between native peoples, then route marched to the coast or taken by boat along the rivers where they were sold to European slave traders, usually based at one of the forts along the West African coast. The marching routes were known as "the way of death" as so many captives died during this first leg, but even so the trade was very profitable. Between the 16th and 19th centuries, Brazil took the majority of slaves, a large proportion went to the Caribbean and comparatively fewer to North America, in fact only about one in four slave journeys went there. During that period about one million went to Jamaica, Barbados, Antigua, Dominica, St Vincent, Trinidad and British Guiana.

Illustrations of work on plantations at this time were obviously 'sanitised' and did not show the true conditions for enslaved people. Planters took into account how long a slave was expected to live, bearing in mind long hours, probably little food, very hard labour and any punishments – they were only viewed as far as economics were concerned and not as human beings. In Brazil and the Caribbean slaves would be lucky to live into their 40s. But amongst those taken to North America survival rates were better, the climate and conditions were less harsh, and the high number of African American people in the USA today has been the result of natural reproduction.

Most of the British plantation owners were merchants or businessmen with the means to set up plantations in order to gain great profits. Not only was there profit for the owners, but also for the Treasury in the form of taxes. In Britain sugar became an essential part of people's diets and was much sought after.

When abolition of slavery was first mooted in late 18th century England, the campaign initially concentrated on slave trading and an Act to abolish the trade was passed in 1807, but by the 1820s there were increasing calls for abolition of slavery itself. The Abolition Act was passed in 1833, but the enslaved people were then subjected to a four year apprenticeship, whereby the previous owner would “train” their former slaves to enable them to earn a living, whilst paying them a pittance. This ended in 1838, after which payments totalling £20m were paid as compensation - to slave owners, while in many cases former slaves were left without any other form of employment. Abolition in Britain came about due to fear of increased slave uprisings, the spread of education enabling former slaves to write of their experiences and a number of black lecturers touring England. This helped to change the opinions of the British people, putting pressure on Government. Religious opponents of abolition found many quotes within the bible to sanction slavery, while the abolitionists were motivated by the mantra to “treat others as you would have yourself treated”.

Slavery and the slave trade were abolished in the USA in 1865 following the American Civil War, but Brazil did not finally abolish slavery until 1888.

Southampton and the Transatlantic Slave Trade *by Maria Newbery*

Maria has studied patterns of trade in Southampton from medieval times, and the port was never a hub for the transatlantic slave trade, unlike Bristol. There are limited port records of ship movements or details of their cargoes from the 1770s, as some of these were lost in a fire in the Southampton Customs House. However, we know that 5092 voyages left the port during 1773 to 1777, with a drop in numbers travelling to America during the American War of Independence. During that time ships from Southampton tended to head across the English Channel and the North Sea, while Portsmouth and Cowes had more trade contact with the Caribbean and North America at that time. Cowes was used for importation of rice and ships might call there on the way in or out of Southampton, as with sailing ships it was sometimes difficult to navigate the Solent, and the port was also used for restocking the ships. Many ships captains lived in Lymington, which also offered ship repair facilities.

Four ships are known to have left Southampton sailing to Africa in the late 1780s. One was the “Hero” captained by James Bean, which sailed in 1787 and ’89 from Southampton (but moored in Lymington for three weeks) because the captain lived there. On its last trip the ship ran aground off Africa and was lost. Two others were the “John” which sailed in 1787 under Captain Willoughby to Africa and on to Kingston, Jamaica with 119 captives (110 survived); and the “Lawson” captained in 1799 by Captain Lawson. These ships were owned by London shipping companies and transported sugar and slaves amongst other things, going from Southampton to Africa, then to Jamaica and back to Africa. One company had connections to Southampton, one Director being involved with the Royal Africa Company and a founder of Lloyds. Richard Shepherd was another Director, involved with transporting wine from Guernsey and Porto. Another Director was Hans Sloane, MP for Southampton who lived at South Stoneham House.

Residents of Southampton were involved with slave plantations in Barbados and Jamaica, including local MP Bryan Edwards (owner of Polygon House) who owned four plantations,

and was a prominent anti-abolitionist. His story features in an exhibition in Southampton Stories at SeaCity Museum, **Sugar Politics & Money**, which reveals how Southampton families and businesses benefitted from the labour of enslaved people and their products.

Southampton's 18TH century Sugar House by *Andy Russel*

Andy stated that his seven times great grandmother was born on St Kitts, enslaved by a brutal owner. She went on to marry an Abolitionist Preacher and came to England. Sugar was known for a long time in the form of candied fruit and from ~1477 as sugar, although it came to the fore after 1527 when the use of sugar soared throughout the country. It was also used by apothecaries to sweeten foul tasting medicine. At this time sugar was probably refined in Madeira which was settled by the Portuguese in 1419, when they were involved in a war in the Canaries and enslaved the population. All the trees on the island of Madeira were cut down to burn for boiling the sugar, and the trade from the island then ceased.

A lot of glass has been found during excavation of a merchant's store near Simnel Street and Bugle Street in Southampton, probably brought in by those transporting sugar. Sherds of sugar moulds were also found, originally imported to Southampton by the Portuguese, between 1550 and 1600. The Portuguese made sugar moulds and sold them across Europe. The store was at Biddlesgate and it was rented out to a merchant.

Southampton Friary was built in the 13th century but when it was demolished during the Dissolution of the Monasteries, a large house was built on the site. Immigrants bought the house, using money from the Genoese who made their money from wine and cloth. They demolished the house and built a Sugar House for refining raw sugar on the site between 1610 and 1612. A French family named Brissault operated a similar establishment in London, but in 1742 they took over the Southampton sugar house while their partner – a former apprentice – ran the business in London. Lots of rubble from the demolished Friary was used for the foundations. There was also a clean water supply on the site, running from the Conduit House in Commercial Road and fed from the Conduit Head in Hill Lane. The building was seven stories high and, because of the heavy loads it therefore carried, the foundations were substantial and columns added between floors.

*Reconstructed large sugar mould (3' high).
Southampton City Council*

To make sugar, the cane is first crushed and the liquid boiled to produce muscovado sugar, which was transported from the Caribbean to England and Europe, as refined white sugar did not travel well. The raw sugar would start from the top of the Sugar House and travel down the seven floors, going through the stages of refining. It was boiled using coal from Newcastle, in soft rainwater collected from the roof, and then lime and ashes added to the liquid to remove impurities. The Sugar Boiler was the highest paid employee in the process as he knew the optimum temperatures during boiling and could judge when the liquid was ready to be tipped into moulds. A piece of cloth was put in the drip hole at the bottom of the mould to stop liquid escaping during cooling, with the remaining molasses being drained once it was cool and returned to the process to be boiled again. The Clayer was the next



most important employee, adding animal blood and clay to the liquid to remove more impurities and produce white sugar. Larger moulds were used for less purified sugar which was sent to merchants, and more refined sugar to be sold to aristocratic and wealthy people was put into smaller moulds.

The refinery operated for over thirty years, but the Brissault family went bankrupt and in 1775 the refinery and other buildings were auctioned at the Star Inn, Southampton. The estate comprised the seven storey building, two stoves, six boiling pans and ancillary items, together with a dwelling house, adjoining mill house, accommodation for workers, stables, store house and a large plot of land, as well as the family home. The Sugar House was used latterly as a Pickford's warehouse, but was badly bombed during the blitz and demolished after WW 2. After demolition, excavation uncovered the cistern in the centre of the property, together with three of the boiling pans and many sherds of sugar moulds, mostly of the three foot type used for coarse sugar, and some sherds of drip pots.

In many cemeteries excavated over the ensuing years, the state of teeth of the skeletons clearly show whether the "residents" lived before or after the coming of sugar. During the Spa period in Southampton it was fashionable to use sugar. Later, however a boycott of sugar was organised, mainly to support the emancipation movement and encourage the closure of plantations.

Stories of Slavery from Bevois Mount *by Ally Hayes and Wendy Stokes*

Jane Austen, a resident of Southampton in late 18th century, included references to slavery in her books, indicating that at the time, it not particularly frowned upon. Residents of the town owned slaves, made money from the labour of enslaved people, or had been enslaved.

The Jessop family had an estate on Barbados and in 1736 Edward Jessup commissioned a map of the plantation and an inventory listing buildings on the estate. This was a sugar plantation and some workers were highly skilled as shown on the lists, together with values. The estate later passed to Job Ede who also owned plantations in Nevis Island. In 1835 he moved his family to Laura Place, Southampton. At that time, Coloquhoun's and the Jessup estates, both owned by Ede, were worth £2,262. Job Ede later built Clayfield Lodge located near Stag Gates, with seven bedrooms and eight servant's rooms. He visited Nevis occasionally where he died and was buried. George Ede, his great grandson, became a steward on the Titanic and his home was at Balkley House in Manor Farm Road, Bitterne.

Portswood House was owned by Walter Taylor (maker of wooden blocks for sailing ships) who commissioned a painting showing a New Year's Eve dinner party at his house, with the first visual portrayal of a black person in Southampton, Anthony Desource and also his young son. Anthony worked for the Taylor family until Walter's mother Maria Taylor died.

Robert Sheddons had married the daughter of a plantation owner in Virginia, with a plan to make money and go into public office. He had the idea to buy an enslaved African, have him fully trained as a carpenter in Scotland and then sell him for a profit. The man named Jamie escaped in Scotland, but a price was put on his head and he was caught, though he died shortly after. By this time the American Revolution had started, when Rob Sheddons moved to Bermuda, returning to London in 1783 and setting up a company there. In 1784 he

purchased Stewart Castle Plantation, then purchased Paulerspury, and his son inherited the plantations and the people. The son retired at the age of 33 and became the Sheriff of Hampshire, buying Brookfield House on the Hamble river, and later Bevois Mount House.

John Langran introduces the afternoon session at Southampton City Art Gallery lecture theatre.

Photo: Mandy Kesby.



The Day family were the owners of Spear Hall, located between Lodge Road and Spear Road. In 1814 Charles Day retired to Southampton, which was popular with sea captains and other wealthy people. He was born in 1772 and joined the East India Company in 1794, when he was stationed in Bencoolen (now Indonesia) and had two children there. It was a good place to boost wealth: he took part in trading 150 enslaved Africans and then invested and made money from opium and “good accounting” for the East India Company. Day bought two plantations, growing nutmeg and cinnamon as well as other spices. A Mr Bogle managed the estate, but he was not a good manager and it was a harsh environment for the 26 slaves (two slaves were murdered by other slaves). Charles Day’s two sons, Tom and William went with their parents to Indonesia but were sent to school in England. In 1821, when Tom was 18

and William 17, they returned to Bencoolen to look after the plantation, with a view to making money for themselves whilst also working for the East India Company. Tom was reputedly a lady’s man, he was married and had a native lover. William speculated and lost money. At this time Charles became suspicious of Mr Bogle after slaves ran away, especially the women. It was difficult to get slaves for the plantation at that time, and many were getting older or were very young.

Tom and William Day realised they would never return to Spear Hall. The Dutch later took Bencoolen which resulted in less profit for the family. William had a child with a native girl. Mr Bogle, who still managed the plantation, reported William as a “slaver” to the Dutch magistrate. William died in 1828 at the age of 26 and left his estates to his two daughters, two thirds to Amelia and one third to Ellen.

In the 1870s Rev. Thomas Pinckney and his wife Elizabeth lived in a terraced house in Avenue Road, Southampton. They were a mixed-race couple, he a black man and she a white Englishwoman. He was born in Charleston Ca and ordained into the Episcopalian Church, and went to Liberia as a missionary to help freed slaves. He returned to the USA due to ill-health, but the couple suffered discrimination and moved to England. He died in 1887 and is buried with his wife at the Old Cemetery on Southampton Common.

SOUTHAMPTON AND ANTI-SLAVERY by John Oldfield

Slavery and abolition were two sides of the same coin. For over 100 years England was very involved in the transatlantic slave trade, a long story. There were possibly 60 MP's against abolition in government, and economic interest vied with strong humanitarian and religious activism. There was no single route to the abolition of slavery, but a combination of national and international sources. Economic interest, wars and the Reform Act were all involved, together with black protest. Twelve men (not at the time including Wilberforce) formed a society for abolition, these were business men not just reformers. They produced artefacts and literature to advertise and raise funds for the movement. This was the period when the well-known Wedgwood cameo of the slave in manacles and other prints were for sale. Petitioners bombard the government and in 1792, some 500 petitions for abolition were put in front of parliament, and further petitions put forward across the country to MPs, perhaps ~5000 petitions, signed by more than 1.5m people before the Act was passed. British involvement in the Slave Trade ended in 1807 and slavery was abolished in 1833.

In 1823 abolition of colonial slavery was stepped up and again petitions were put forward together with financial reports and circulating literature. In 1823-1824, Thomas Clarkson did a tour of the country to understand the strength of the West Indian interest, with books stating the slaves were not "suitable" for emancipation. In Southampton in 1823, Clarkson organised an Anti-Slavery Society and over the next few years the society strengthened. There were meetings of owners, merchants etc, together with subscriptions in Southampton and a petition was successful in 1828. They gave a platform for black abolitionists in the 1850s, resulting in five black Americans speaking to the general public which caused a sensation in Southampton, and further meetings were arranged by popular demand.

The local Abolition Society was drawn into the national society and went to group meetings in London. The Boston Bazaar came into being where women supplied goods to be sold to raise funds for the cause, and this continued during the American Civil War. Southampton was not typical for an abolition town, most of which were industrial cities like Leeds. Eventually the British and foreign abolitionist societies were organised to show a united front. The society in Southampton was very active, with Thomas Atkins and many others involved.

ABEL ROUS DOTTIN MP: HOW SUGAR, POLITICS & MONEY CHANGED SOUTHAMPTON by Liz Batten

Abel Rous Dottin lived at Bugle Hall in Southampton in the 1820s and became MP for the town (1826-31; 1835-41). Like other Southampton MPs he had interests in the West Indies and was very wealthy. He was owned a plantation in Barbados with 189 slaves, eventually claiming compensation of £3809 after abolition. He was known for giving large banquets, and he became involved with the expansion of the railways in England. He arranged the sale of Bugle Hall to Manchester & Southampton Railway Company for £4,500 in 1841, but the sale did not go ahead so the property was sold piecemeal. All that remains are the two gate posts which can be seen in Cuckoo Lane. Dottin left Southampton for Oxfordshire where he died ten years later.

Dottin was a founder of Southampton & London Railway and the Dock Company, but these companies did not last. He became involved with the London & South Western Railway and encouraged extension of the railway to the west of England. It was difficult to interest investors in Southampton as passenger numbers were low, but he wanted to link the railway to the port to encourage ship passengers to disembark at Southampton and take the train to London. In the day of sailing ships, moving along the last leg of the English Channel to get to London could take more time due to the weather so this would save time for passengers using the train, and helped the railways.

Southampton Town Council sold the land where the Docks now stand to the Docks & Harbour Company for £5,000. The face of Southampton began to change with gradual reclamation of the land beneath the walls and around the bay where Central station was built. This land became of interest to various industries which moved into the area, being well served by the docks and the railway.



Audience members in Southampton City Art Gallery during a break. Photo: M Kesby

After Abolition: Britain and Slavery in Africa in the 19TH century by Chris Prior

One consequence of the abolition of the slave trade was a change in England's relationship with Africa. The continent was still thought of as the "home of slaves" and there was a focus of political attention on Africa, with the British attempting to enforce abolition there and throughout the world. The Anti-Slavery campaigners supporting abolition tried to stop the trade by force through economics and religion.

A Naval blockade of coastal regions known as the West Africa Squadron was set up in 1808 to intercept ships as they left the African coast. After capture of a slave trading vessel the crew would be removed, and the captives given clothes, food and drink and they were taken to Freetown in Sierra Leone - if returned to their homes, it was likely that they would be recaptured by the slavers. During this period 1,635 ships were captured with around 160,000 captives on board, but many more ships managed to escape the blockades. But with fewer slaves were coming out of Africa, the price was elevated and the traders moved south

to Angola to avoid the naval blockade vessels. Portugal eventually stopped trading in slaves but the trade continued. England looked at how they could stop slaving in Africa.

The Victorian traveller and missionary, David Livingstone became a “hero” of the age as he sought to expand British trade through “Christianity, civilisation and capitalism”. The British Geographical Society also helped to “open up” parts of Africa for trade. On his death, Livingstone’s body was brought to Southampton for the journey to London for burial. An example of the success of religion in Africa is illustrated by the story of Samuel Ajayi Crowther, born in 1806 in Oyo, Western Nigeria. His father was a farmer and his mother a priestess. He was captured and transported by the Portuguese but his ship was seized, and the 85 survivors being sent to Sierra Leone. Crowther was baptised into the evangelical church and educated as a priest with the Church Missionary Society, and he became the first African Bishop of the Anglican Church.

Edward Lugard was the first Governor of Northern Nigeria, and was sent there in the early 20th century to eradicate slavery in the area, which then had the largest number of slaves in the world. Rulers in the area took many concubines not only for sexual favours, but to gain control of women held by the wealthy and increase the size of their households, making the Caliphate larger. Lugard tried to collaborate with the Caliphate, but the rulers argued that concubines were married and therefore not slaves (although not free to leave). In the 1920s pressure was put on the people to stop this practice.

Change in Africa took place very slowly and as far as Europe was concerned, the continent needed to be “saved”, especially as Africans were considered “inferior in intelligence and needed intervention” – the basis of “scientific racism”. In many parts of Africa, Imperial Administration was established and consolidated between 1887 and 1897. The British preferred stable government in their colonies which tended to be authoritarian, and the fight against slavery was used to support the status quo. Europe and the Americans were also trying to stop the slave trade and enforce the emancipation of enslaved people. General Gordon (a native of Southampton) spoke out against slavery, and also against indentured labour and the use of Chinese coolies in mines.

By the end of WW 2, there were only two regions of Africa which were not under European rule. It was still thought that Africa was primitive and barbarian and input was needed from outside. In the 20th century racist regimes developed in South Africa and Rhodesia; but in West Africa farmers were encouraged to set up co-operatives and trained as capitalists, rather than using slave labour.

Many thanks to Mandy Kesby for her notes; also to Sotonopedia.

Edited by Sarah Hanna