

# Myths about the slave trade

Recent articles on the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade and the William Wilberforce biopic *Amazing Grace* perpetuate the current misconceptions about the trade.

It is true that slavery was the norm in the 18th century world but it was not particular to Britain as seems to be the general impression people have and as the film's director, Michael Apted, and its star, Ioan Gruffudd, suggest in the interviews.

For a start, long before abolition, the 18th century courts ruled that slavery was not actually legal in Britain itself, when owners tried to bring their slaves here.

Secondly, Britain's economy at that time was not "built on the back of the slave trade" as Gruffudd says. It was built on the Industrial Revolution, which followed, and was made possible by, the financial and agrarian revolutions of the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

No economic historian would assert that British industrialisation, which conferred superpower status upon from the 18th century, was made possible only by the slave trade.

It was not the dominant economic factor and quite clearly, none of the other European countries involved in the West African trade moved to early industrialisation on the back of it.

I would never deny the ghastly character of the Atlantic slave trade but it was in no way unique, nor was it particularly racist.

African societies had had slavery for centuries before the Europeans ever turned up. Africans were willing

partners in the Atlantic trade. It was they who seized the victims and sold them to the traders. Arabs were also enormously important slavers in Africa and the vast Ottoman Turkish Empire really was built on slavery.

Its Janissary infantry soldiers were all slaves – Christian children taken as a 'tax' and forcibly converted into Muslim fanatics. The whole of its officialdom was built on the institution as were its harems and enforced economic settlements of enslaved populations.

Slavery was not confined to black people. The North African Barbary Corsairs stole tens of thousands of white people from European towns and ships. They raided as far as Iceland.

Further east, the Moghul Indian empire, the Chinese and other major civilisations perched comfortably upon slavery.

It remained legal in Saudi Arabia until 1962. All ancient civilisations depended on it, even the 'democratic' Athenians.

What was unique about Britain was that it was the first major society in the history of the world to take a stand against slavery and to begin the process of getting rid of it.

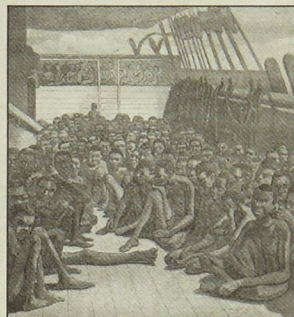
Furthermore, by 1807, Britain had the global naval power to enforce the ban on the slave ships of any nation anywhere in the world and did so.

Of course entrenched economic interests opposed Wilberforce and his great and long stand was heroic.

But we should recognise and celebrate the fact that Britain, first among all the nations of the world, finally took a moral stance against slavery in defiance of economic interests.

That was a great achievement for our Parliament and Wilberforce should be held as a hero of humanity for his leadership in the struggle.

Sean Holden  
Cranbrook

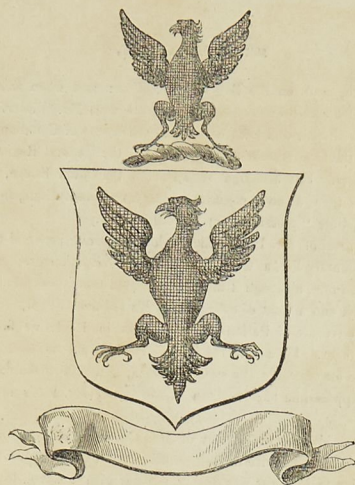


**CAPTURED:** Prisoners on a slave ship



HEROES OF THE SLAVE TRADE ABOLITION.





### M R. WILBERFORCE.

THE name of Wilberforce is so imperishably associated with the noblest legislative act recorded in the annals of any country, that there are few individuals, in modern times, to whom the pen of the biographer can be more worthily devoted, than to the subject of the present memoir; although from the prominent position he so long occupied, not only in the eyes of his own countrymen, but in those of philanthropists of every civilized nation, there are probably but few particulars regarding his private history, or political acts, which are not already known to the public.

William Wilberforce was born at Hull, on the 24th of August, 1759. By birth, he might be considered to have belonged to the middle classes, his father being a wealthy merchant of the town of Hull; but his ancestors having for many years possessed extensive property in the East Riding of York, and his mother being connected with several families of consideration, these circumstances, added to the large patrimony, which he inherited at his father's death, placed Mr. Wilberforce in the foremost ranks of the gentry of his own county.

The fortune left him by his father's death was increased during a long minority, and by further bequests from wealthy relatives. So that on quitting Cambridge, where he was educated at St. John's College, and formed his intimacy with Mr. Pitt, he was launched into society with all the advantages which great wealth confers, but exposed also to all the temptations which invariably assail its possessors. Fortunately, in Mr. Wilberforce's case, there existed a powerful counteracting influence in strict religious principles, and a moral tone of character of the highest and purest kind, which enabled him to pass through this ordeal unharmed; and, even whilst pursuing for a brief period the pleasures of youth, he did not lose sight of higher objects, but appeared in the political arena of the House of Commons, being first elected for his native town in 1780, and after a novitiate of four years, in this character, being placed in the more commanding position of Representative of Yorkshire. His election for Yorkshire, in 1784, was carried, after a severe struggle with the leading Whig families of the county. The expenses of the contest amounting to nearly £20,000 were defrayed by the subscriptions of his supporters; and the high reputation he soon obtained, joined to his well-deserved popularity, secured him from any further opposition during many successive Parliaments. A parliamentary career commenced under such flattering auspices, bid fair to be a successful one; and although it was not till a later period that Mr. Wilberforce's eminent talents and great energies were fully developed, still from his very first appearance in public life in the then enviable, and honourable, position of an independent County Member, by his honest votes he rendered good service to his country, and laid the foundation of his high reputation for integrity, and sound liberality.

This tendency on the part of Mr. Wilberforce to support liberal measures, was exemplified in many instances. He was strongly opposed to the American War; he warmly supported Mr. Pitt in his opposition to the India Bill; in



his Commercial Treaty with France, and on the Regency Question: and when that minister proposed his plan of Parliamentary Reform, in 1784, it met with no more zealous advocate than Mr. Wilberforce. Indeed, upon the failure of Mr. Pitt's motion, he himself introduced, and even carried, in the House of Commons, two very essential enactments of the Reform Bill, since carried by the Grey Administration: namely, the General Registration of Voters—and a measure for the better polling of County Voters. But although successful in the Lower House, he was defeated in the Upper, for the Lords, true to their principles then, as now, rejected as dangerous innovations, any attempts at Reform which were not forced upon them by some irresistible "pressure from without."

Mr. Wilberforce's general approval of Mr. Pitt's policy, added to strong personal regard and admiration, made him during the first years of his parliamentary life, a warm supporter of that minister. Still, even then he asserted his independence on more occasions than one, although it must be admitted that it was sometimes manifested in a way which gave an appearance of inconsistency, and a want of coherence in his political views.

After seeing him the warm advocate of Parliamentary Reform in 1784, we find him a few years later opposing Mr. Grey's motion on the same subject. He considered Mr. Grey's measure as too comprehensive, and the time as not fitting; a pretext but too often made for opposing any specific reform, although in the case of Mr. Wilberforce we cannot doubt its sincerity, and can only suppose him to have been influenced by Mr. Pitt's authority to follow him in his inconsistent course on this question.

In 1809 we have again to record his vote in support of Mr. Curwen's motion for Parliamentary Reform, and in 1826 he gave the same testimony of his adherence to Reform principles by his support of Lord John Russell.

His first signal act of opposition to Mr. Pitt was during the war with France, to which from the first he was disinclined; but of which, in 1794, he openly opposed the continuation, when the fall of Robespierre appeared to give an opening for a stable, and honourable, peace. The war having, however, been continued, he thought an appearance of unanimity desirable both to ensure its success, and its speedy termination. In this latter expectation he was disappointed; but we find him relaxing more and more in his opposition, availing himself of every occasion to recommend peace, but supporting the Government in most of their measures for a vigorous prosecution of the war. Indeed, his alarm at the supposed progress of Revolutionary principles, increased to such a degree, that he thought himself compelled to countenance ministers in many of their coercive measures. He voted with them on the Bill for the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, and the prominent part he took in the Treason, and Sedition, Bills, exposed him to great temporary unpopularity.

It is rarely, however, that Mr. Wilberforce's name is to be found among the opponents of any just or liberal measure. His religious toleration was evinced on many occasions. He always voted for Catholic Emancipation, and after some wavering and hesitation, he became a convert to the Union with Ireland, chiefly on the ground that it would open the way for the Roman Catholics to the possession of a fair share of political power. He defeated an attempt to mutilate the Toleration Act, and took an active part in the Quaker's Relief Bill, and in a Bill for regulating the Stipends of Curates. He opposed to the utmost the lavish expenditure of the public money, and drew upon himself the severe indignation of the minister by speaking, and voting, in 1795, against an increase of the income of the Prince of Wales.

But under no circumstances did Mr. Wilberforce's high political integrity display itself more conspicuously than on the measures taken against Lord Melville in 1805, when, in spite of his great regard for Mr. Pitt, whose warmest wish was to save his most attached, and intimate, friend, he voted for Mr. Whitbread's resolution of censure, and delivered a speech, which had a great effect in deciding the event of the division. In the next year, though he generally supported the Whig ministry, he very properly opposed it on the important question of Lord Ellenborough's admission into the Cabinet. Again, in 1807, with equal impartiality he opposed the first act of the new Tory ministry, the conferring the office of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on Mr. Perceval in perpetuity. Throughout his political life, except during the Coalition ministry of Lord North and Mr. Fox, which he opposed most strenuously, it may be said that Mr. Wilberforce was never in systematic hostility to any ministry, at the same time that there was no ministry, of which he did not constantly assert his independence by frequent conscientious opposition.

But the great business as it was the great glory of Mr. Wilberforce's life was the extinction of the Slave Trade, and Negro Slavery. From the year 1785, Mr. Wilberforce's sentiments underwent a remarkable change; his mind became more occupied with his religious duties, and his attention having been directed to the subject of the African Slave Trade by Mr. Clarkson, he thenceforth more especially devoted himself to the great work, which charity might well induce him to regard as the first business of a Christian legislator. In 1789 he made his first motion against the Slave Trade. Though enthu-



siastically supported by Burke and Fox, and strongly assisted by Mr. Pitt, who, in 1791, made in support of his motion a speech, which is perhaps the most brilliant and interesting specimen of his eloquence, the humane object of Mr. Wilberforce found the enlightened aid of these great men more than counteracted by the powerful interests which were embarked in the iniquities of the Slave Trade. Not only was he opposed by the West India Proprietors, but he found himself even more vehemently assailed by the mercantile body, and the representatives of Liverpool and other commercial towns. Mr. Pitt could not prevent his most unswerving adherent Mr. Dundas from opposing him in the most determined manner; and such was the force of the coalition against this measure, that on the occasion of the first division on a motion for the abolition of the Slave Trade, in 1791, Mr. Wilberforce found that the support of the great leaders of the Ministry, and Opposition, could only obtain him the votes of 88 to 163.

Never, indeed, was a great cause commenced under circumstances so calculated to dishearten and defeat; and it required the energy of a Luther to effect a reform second in its religious, and moral, importance only to that of the founder of Protestantism. Such energy, and such perseverance fortunately Mr. Wilberforce possessed; and as year after year he brought forward the same motion, repeated the same heart-rending details, and made the same eloquent appeals to the humanity and Christian feelings of the nation, those better feelings were gradually, and effectually, called into action, and public opinion generally, and loudly, declared itself against the horrible traffic in human beings. After annual exertions and annual defeats, during almost the whole period from 1791 to 1804, Mr. Wilberforce had at length the happiness of carrying in that year a bill for the Abolition of the Slave Trade through the House of Commons. This bill was dropped in the Lords, on the ground of "the late period of the session." It was again defeated in the House of Commons in 1805; but in 1806 Mr. Fox, as minister, introduced resolutions for the abolition of the Slave Trade, which were triumphantly carried, and in 1807 the trade was finally abolished by act of Parliament.

But this signal triumph was regarded by Mr. Wilberforce as but one step in his labours in behalf of the oppressed slaves. From the period of the abolition of the trade by this country, his great object was to secure its general prohibition by other powers. For this purpose he took advantage of the Peace in 1814 and 1815, to urge the Government to secure this object by treaty with various nations; he moved annual addresses, in answer to which he received from the Ministers constant assurances of sympathy and co-operation; and the assent of some of the European States was obtained; though the securing that of France, and other of the more important powers, remained to be effected by the present Foreign Minister.

In 1815 he first appeared to extend his efforts from the abolition of the Slave Trade to the mitigation of slavery itself; but it was not until 1823 that he actually agitated the Abolition of Slavery. In this year he brought forward the question, and subsequently supported the Resolutions of Mr. Fowell Buxton, on which Mr. Canning moved, by way of amendment, those which may be regarded as having commenced the work of Abolition.

During all this time, however, Mr. Wilberforce did not cease to take part in general politics, though his attention seemed always to be directed by considerations of benevolence and religion. On the question of the renewal of the East India Company's charter in 1813, he shewed great zeal for the conversion of the natives of that country to Christianity. He supported all Sir Samuel Romilly's, and subsequently all Mr. Fowell Buxton's motions for the mitigation of the criminal code. Of the sufferings of Ireland he always spoke with the utmost sympathy, and enforced the necessity of some reparation to that unhappy country for years of misgovernment: and in the debates on the Catholic question, his speeches are among the most earnest, and argumentative, of those of the advocates of Emancipation. He constantly enforced the necessity of general education; and even in supporting the Six Acts, to which, as to former coercive measures, his old views of government unhappily induced him to lend his sanction, he did not forget to urge that the instruction of the people afforded the only means of obviating the recurrence of such encroachments on its liberties. The abolition of Public Lotteries may in great measure be ascribed to his repeated remonstrances in Parliament. He constantly opposed the Game laws; generally supported Free Trade, and enlightened views of taxation: and in the latter, as in the first part, of his public career supported motions for economy. His last appearance in direct party politics, was on the occasion of the proceedings against Queen Caroline, when his sense of justice, and regard for the national morality, induced him to make repeated exertions to stop those disgraceful proceedings. It is true that in his famous motion for the adjustment of the differences between the King and Queen, he may be accused of having desired that the accommodation should be effected by concession on the side of Her Majesty alone. But when this had failed, and the Bill of Pains and Penalties had been proceeded with, and defeated, he supported the proposal of reparation by the insertion of Her Majesty's name in the Liturgy, not only with his vote, but also with the most eloquent speech delivered on the occasion.



The labours of this long, laborious, and most useful parliamentary career were brought to a close some years before the termination of Mr. Wilberforce's life. In 1812 he had retired from the representation of Yorkshire into that of the close borough of Bramber. In 1824 he took part in bringing before Parliament the case of the Missionary Smith, persecuted for his exertions in behalf of the slaves in Demerara. On the 15th of June in that year he delivered his last speech in Parliament on presenting a petition from Carlow for the Abolition of Slavery: and, early in 1825, he accepted the Chiltern Hundreds and retired from Parliament. From this period he remained in retirement until his death, which occurred at the house of his friend, Mr. William Smith, in Cadogan-place, on the 29th of July, 1833, and in the 73d year of his age. But he had lived to see the complete success of the great work which he had passed his life in promoting: he had seen the Bill for the Abolition of Slavery in the British dominions pass the House of Commons; and a few days after his death it became the law of the land. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, and his body was followed to the grave by the most distinguished members of both houses.

Mr. Wilberforce left a family by his wife Barbara, the eldest daughter of Isaac Spooner, Esq., of Birmingham, whom he married in 1797. In person he was below the middling size, and of a weak constitution. The beautiful tones of his voice, the distinctness of his elocution, the richness and vigour of his phraseology, and, above all, the earnest benevolence which always animated him, rendered him among the most agreeable and effective speakers of his time. And by dint of these qualities, and by unwearied devotion to a great and holy cause, he effected a more signal triumph over oppression, and injustice, than perhaps any Minister or Statesman of this country has been enabled to bring about by means of all the appliances of party influence, or official authority.



*The Sandgate Society*

200 years since the  
Abolition of the Slave Trade  
in England and its Empire,  
we remember reformer

**WILLIAM WILBERFORCE**  
**1759 - 1833**

his long visits here, 1812, 1813, 1814  
and 1825 did much for his family,  
his health, also for faith  
and schooling  
in Sandgate

*With gratitude and pride March 2007*



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## Historic Figures

### William Wilberforce (1759 - 1833)

*Wilberforce was a deeply religious English member of parliament and social reformer who was very influential in the abolition of the slave trade and eventually slavery itself in the British empire.*

William Wilberforce was born on 24 August 1759 in Hull, the son of a wealthy merchant. He studied at Cambridge University where he began a lasting friendship with the future prime minister, William Pitt the Younger. In 1780, Wilberforce became member of parliament for Hull, later representing Yorkshire. His dissolute lifestyle changed completely when he became an evangelical Christian, and in 1784 joined a leading group known as the Clapham Sect. His Christian faith prompted him to become interested in social reform, particularly the improvement of factory conditions in Britain.



William Wilberforce ©

The abolitionist Thomas Clarkson had an enormous influence on Wilberforce. He and others were campaigning for an end to the trade in which British ships were carrying black slaves from Africa, in terrible conditions, to the West Indies as goods to be bought and sold. Wilberforce was persuaded to lobby for the abolition of the slave trade and for 18 years he regularly introduced anti-slavery motions in parliament. The campaign was supported by many members of the Clapham Sect and other abolitionists who raised public awareness of their cause with pamphlets, books, rallies and petitions. In 1807, the slave trade was finally abolished, but this did not free those who were already slaves. It was not until 1833 that an act was passed giving freedom to all slaves in the British empire.

Wilberforce's other efforts to 'renew society' included the organisation of the Society for the Suppression of Vice in 1802. He worked with the reformer, Hannah More, in the Association for the Better Observance of Sunday. Its goal was to provide all children with regular education in reading, personal hygiene and religion. He was closely involved with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. He was also instrumental in encouraging Christian missionaries to go to India.

Wilberforce retired from politics in 1825 and died on 29 July 1833, shortly after the act to free slaves in the British empire passed through the House of Commons. He was buried near his friend Pitt in Westminster Abbey.

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# Wilberforce Family Coat of Arms

A Coat of Arms first allowed men fighting in battles to be identified in by devices painted on their banners, shields & surcoats because facial identification was impossible when the head was completely covered by a war helmet. The Heralds of the English royal household were required to keep records both of the arms & of family descent. These were recorded in the Rolls of Arms as early as 1250. In 1484, King Richard III granted a charter of incorporation, which resulted in the various Heralds & their records being brought together within The College of Arms in London. In 1555, a second royal charter of incorporation was issued & the site of the present college building, in what is now Queen Victoria Street was granted to them it is presided over by the Duke of Norfolk as hereditary Marshall of Arms. Theoretically, the court can deny a family adopting arms if they are not entitled to them. Still each person who is granted arms as a gentleman or a member of the peerage must apply before the Court of Arms for a "grant."

According to the Visitation of Yorkshire and signed by Roger Wilberfos in 1584 and by his son Robert in 1612, the family traces their origin back to a Philip de Kyme (Philippus Kyme) Lord of Wilberfoss whose daughter Margaret married Ilger Wilberfoss. He reportedly came from a village in the north of Durham County now called Eggleton and carried an Eagle as his heraldic device. He may even have used this device to identify himself during the famous battle of Stamford Bridge (Pons Belli) during which Harold defeated Tostig and King Harold Hardrada in 1066. This event is recorded by the Pocklington Rural District Council where their Civic Coat of Arms has two spears with bloodstained points.

In the 1584 Visitation by Robert Glover a copy of the Arms was recorded and signed by "Robert Glover alias Somersett, herald at Armes, Marshall and depute to William flower, Esquier, alias Norroy, kinge of Armes and principall herald of the East West and North partes of ye realme of Englande from ye Trent Northwarde"

Roger would have signed a duplicate which was then kept by the Herald and deposited in the college of Arms in London. This was the earliest form of a census. Roger reported his family as far as he could remember and his children and grandchildren. It also allowed him to use his arms on official papers such as indentures or other legal documents. I have several of these documents with the eagle sealed by various members of the family.



*Glover Somersett*  
1781

The earlier the arms the simpler they were and in the case of the Wilberfoss arms, there is no Crest. The arms are recorded in simple terms as

"Argent, an eagle displayed sable, beaked and membred proper" this translates as a silver shield with a black eagle with beak and claws.

There is no recorded motto in the Visitations of 1584

What is different about this hand painted (note the red smudge on the right hand wing) representation of the Arms is that there is a crescent in the middle of the Eagle to signify that Roger and his son Robert were of the younger branch of the family. It was this younger branch that later changed the name to WILBERFORCE in the time of the emancipator's uncle.

This copy of the original is signed by Robert Glover





Later illustrations have shown the device with the wings either down as in the bookplate that William Wilberforce used,



or when a daughter married into another family for instance John Wilberforce married Sarah Pawson (paws on a red background) in 1720



or up as in the arms of the East Riding of Yorkshire.

For a number of generations a member of the older branch of the family served as mayors of Beverley in the East Riding of Yorkshire.



Members of the local Police force wore a blue eagle on their caps taken from the local Civic Arms.

### **The Motto;**

There was no motto in the earliest Coats of Arms. It is probable that William Wilberforce the Emancipator used

**"NOS NON-NOBIS".**

It comes from psalm 113 (114)

"Not to us Lord, not to us,  
But to your name give glory  
For the sake of your love and your truth,  
Lest the heathen say, "Where is their God?"

Another motto has also been used this time in about 1877 (Letter to Pope Pius IX in 1877 from W.I. Wilberforce.)

**"NEMO SIBI"**

"If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord"(Romans 14)

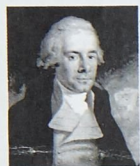
**"IN PORTU QUIES"** There is rest in port  
has apparently also been used.

**Father W Gerard Wilberforce**

# The fight for freedom

Wilberforce was just one of many who called for the abolition of the slave trade

WORDS ALEC MARSH ILLUSTRATION NEIL GOWER



William Wilberforce was the leader of a 20-year crusade to abolish the slave trade. Born to a wealthy merchant family in Hull in 1759, Wilberforce entered Parliament at the age of 21. Two important relationships were formed in his early years: the first with William Pitt, whom he met at university; the second, in 1785, with God – when

he converted to the Evangelical wing of the Church of England. This emboldened faith both fired his reformist zeal and fire-proofed him from the corruption that so marked late-eighteenth-century public life. From 1787, with his small group of followers known as 'the Saints', and with the support of Prime Minister Pitt, Wilberforce began the parliamentary campaign to abolish the slave trade – in his own words: "The grand object of my parliamentary existence." This ambition was finally achieved in 1807, though he had by then passed the baton of reform to the new Whig Prime Minister, Lord Grenville, and to Charles James Fox, the administration's leader in the Commons. When the Bill passed its last Commons vote, the MPs – to a man – turned to Wilberforce and overruled the Speaker to give him three resounding cheers. Wilberforce bowed his head and wept. He campaigned on for emancipation of the slaves, and died in July 1833, just days after the Bill enacting this legislation passed.



## THE OTHER CAMPAIGNERS

The work of Wilberforce did not occur within a vacuum of unquestioning moral quiescence. At a time when many prominent families and influential individuals were making a fortune from their plantations in the West Indies and America, it took formidable strength of character to speak out against slavery and to condemn the trading of slaves.

Outside Parliament, Granville Sharp and Thomas Clarkson were recognised leaders of the cause: they founded the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787 – the year of William Wilberforce's historic decision to lead the parliamentary campaign.

Sharp became involved in the cause in the 1760s in London, after helping Jonathan Strong, a slave who had been beaten by his master. Sharp's involvement culminated in a legal fight for Strong's freedom. He also championed the case of James Somerset, the slave at the centre of the court battle that led to historic ruling of 1772 by Lord Mansfield, which established the legal precedent that slaves could not be forced to leave English soil against their will.

Clarkson, meanwhile, published a highly influential essay against the slave trade: his work was important in exposing its brutal excesses – for example, the sadistic treatment of slaves on plantations, and the horrors of the 'middle passage'. These were the issues that abolitionists highlighted to bring the blight of slavery to the forefront of public attention.

Preacher John Newton (whose evangelical sermons had so influenced Wilberforce) was a former slave trader who became a passionate supporter and proponent of abolition – and incidentally composed the song *Amazing Grace*. EH

PHOTOS: BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY; NATIONAL MUSEUMS LIVERPOOL

1562

**The British slave trade begins**  
Captain Sir John Hawkins takes 300 Africans from Sierra Leone to sell in the Caribbean.



1625

**Sugar plantations**  
New methods of crop cultivation developed in Barbados create a major British market for slaves.



1750

**Business booms**  
London, Bristol and Liverpool grow rich on the traffic in slaves and Britain's passion for sugar.



1772

**Legal precedent set**  
Lord Chief Justice Mansfield rules in favour of legal claim that slaves cannot be forced to leave England.



1782

**Slaves overboard**  
Capt Collingwood of the *Zong* makes an insurance claim for lost cargo when 133 slaves are 'discarded' en route to Jamaica.



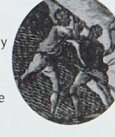
1789

**Memoir of a slave**  
The life story of ex-slave Olaudah Equiano is published, and it becomes a Europe-wide bestseller.



1791

**The tide turns**  
Slaves revolt on the French colony of San Domingo, which soon becomes the free state of Haiti.



1807

**British slave trade ends**  
The law against the trade comes into effect on 1 May 1807. But those already enslaved are not freed until 1833, when slavery itself is banned.







the kind though it is a sort of preserve of the Archbishop's. There is not even a Sunday school (Note: for children at work during the week.) We are trying to get something of the kind set on foot."

Sandgate was also the preserve of two great landowners and philanthropists, the Earls of Darnley and of Radnor, who assisted the village in later years, but not before Wilberforce had made his views felt. Indeed, when he returned to Sandgate with his family in the summer of 1813, he found it much improved. "... and that partly I hope from my expostulations", he told Lord Teignmouth, "in having schools set up in the two towns adjoining, and in Sandgate and its interior village itself. What mercies we do enjoy in this land of peace and liberty. ..."

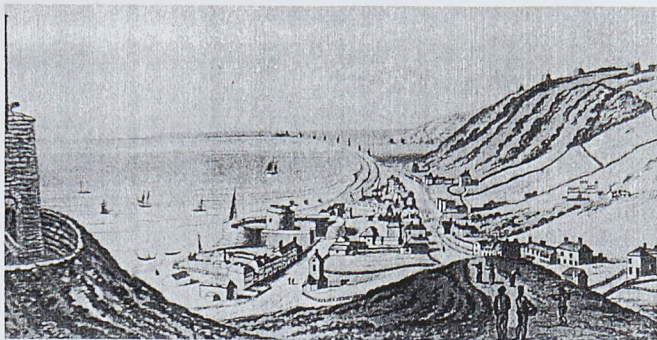
By contrast, tyranny still reigned on the opposite shore, but Wilberforce's journal foretold its slow collapse. "Austria has joined", he wrote on September 19, 1813. "Bonaparte crippled on both flanks and I hope centre too. ... St Sebastian taken but with a terrible loss of men."

Visitors and locals gleaned the latest news and rumour at Mr Purday's Reading Room and Library. Among the notables were members of the family of Dr Burney, the great musical historian. His granddaughter Charlotte had come to sea bathe, together with her elderly husband Henry Barrett and their children. Dr Burney's son, Charles Burney DD, classical scholar and Chaplain to George III, was there with his wife "Rosette".

Fanny Burney d'Arblay, the novelist, also joined the Sandgate set but, feeling unwell, avoided "the general rendez-vous of the social". She had met Wilberforce as their two families were leaving Folkestone Church on September 19. "The Ramparts & Martellos around us became naturally our theme, & Mr Wilberforce proposed showing them to me." He gave her his arm, and a long stroll followed. "4 hours of the best conversation I have nearly ever enjoyed. He was anxious for a full and true account of Paris & particularly of Religion & Infidelity & of Buonaparte & the wars & of all & everything that had occurred during my ten years seclusion in France."

Napoleon abdicated the following April. In June 1814 the cannon of Sandgate Castle joined the salvos that echoed round the Kent coast as the Allied monarchs sailed into Dover on their way to the victory celebrations in London. The slave abolitionists seized the moment to intensify their campaign and rally all Europe to their cause.

That summer, the Wilberforces were back in the peace and quiet of Sandgate enjoying the "overflowing bounty of the Almighty". In between family excursions to Caesar's Camp and the Cherry Gardens, and lengthy visits to London on slavery matters, Wilberforce settled down to write to the Tsar of Russia, the King



5—SANDGATE IN WILBERFORCE'S TIME. (Below) 6—THE COASTLINE TODAY



of Prussia, a private letter to Talleyrand, another to Chateaubriand, while the Prince Regent wrote to Louis XVIII. The tour-de-force, however, was a 15,000-word printed letter to Talleyrand arguing the abolition cause. It was headed "Sandgate (Kent) Oct. 10th, 1814" and signed W. Wilberforce.

Amid this intense activity, Wilberforce still found time for Sandgate's welfare, in which a niece of Fanny Burney shared. She was Marianne Francis, an intelligent, pious girl of 24, whose lively mind and humour endeared

her to Wilberforce and his children. Every day Marianne taught at the girl's school in Sandgate and, together with Wilberforce, helped to set up another schoolroom for adults.

Among others, Marianne corresponded with that witty old bluestocking Mrs Piozzi, who was almost 50 years her senior. On September 23, 1814, Marianne wrote that she was at last under Mr Wilberforce's wing, in his hospitable mansion where she was to spend about six weeks. A delightful description of her surroundings ends: "If you ever want a quiet sea place, dear Mrs Piozzi, do think of Sandgate."

In 1825 Wilberforce, frail in health, resigned after 45 years in Parliament. July and August found him again in Sandgate, and its many changes must have pleased him. Above all, it now had a chapel-of-ease, a simple domed edifice in the classical style designed by George Stanley Repton, fourth son of Humphrey Repton and assistant to John Nash. It made way in 1849 for the present, more spacious church in the neo-Gothic style by S. S. Teulon.

Wilberforce was a gregarious man and a tireless traveller about England, in public causes, on visits to friends, or for his health and family's wellbeing. He often visited Bath and many of the fashionable seaside resorts. But the quiet Kent village, lying on the fringe of Channell and of great events, seems to have held a certain attraction. Despite the development of the south-east coast in recent years, that peaceful air has not quite disappeared from Sandgate.

Illustrations: 1 and 5, author; 2, British Museum; 3, National Portrait Gallery; 4, Victoria and Albert Museum; 6, Charles Bryant; 7, RIBA.



7—THE CHAPEL-OF-EASE, CONSECRATED IN 1822 AND

BUILT AT THE SOLE COST OF JOHN, 4th EARL OF DARNLEY



# Society remembers slavery abolitionist

**THIS year marks the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade, and a local historian is making sure that Sandgate's association with this event is not forgotten.**

William Wilberforce, who was a leading campaigner for the abolition of the slave trade, wrote one of his most famous works while living in Sandgate, and his presence is marked in the street name Wilberforce Road.

Wilberforce first started campaigning against slavery in 1787, when he was an MP, and it was finally abolished when Parliament passed the Anti-Slave Trade Act in 2007.

Linda Rene-Martin, vice-president of the Sandgate Society, said: "He is a very important figure in history, and with this year marking the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade, we are reminded that William Wilberforce, protagonist in Parliament, was here."

Wilberforce spent the summers of 1812 to 1814 in Sandgate, during the parliamentary recesses, with his wife Barbara and their six children.

It is thought that he stayed for a time at Knoll House, originally at Top, The Crescent, although this house has since been pulled down.

Report by **Sarah Shaffi**

Mrs Rene-Martin said: "In between picnics with his family in the cherry orchard, walks on the beach and excursions to Dover, the crusade to abolish slavery continued unabated.

"Although he was on holiday, he could not stop working."

One of Wilberforce's most famous essays, a 15,000-word letter to the French diplomat and foreign minister Talleyrand, is headed "Sandgate (Kent) Oct 10th 1814".

In addition to his work to abolish slavery, Wilberforce set up a number of school rooms in Sandgate, where the adult poor and children could learn to read, write and receive religious instruction.

Wilberforce returned to Sandgate in 1825 after he retired from the parliamentary seat of Hull.

Wilberforce will be the subject of Mrs Rene-Martin's Greenwall lecture to the Sandgate Society on May 9.



**Campaigner: William Wilberforce spent four summers in Sandgate with his family.**

newsdesk.heraldexpress@kentregionalnewspapers.co.uk

# IN BUSINESS

A WEEKLY ROUND-UP OF NEWS AND VIEWS

## Saga Radio bought by Guardian Media

FOLKESTONE-based company Saga has sold its radio franchise.

The major Shepway employer, which offers products for the over-50s including holidays and insurance, launched Saga Radio in 1994, combining talk and music catering for the tastes and interests of the older population.

It is broadcast to more than 900,000 listeners in Glasgow, and the midlands, but after 12 years running the stations, Saga decided to put the radio franchise up for sale, and it has been bought by the Guardian Media Group.

A Saga spokesman said: "In recent years the radio sector has begun to change significantly.

"We concluded that the best option for future development of Saga radio is to be part of a larger radio group."

John Myers, chief executive of Guardian Media Group, said that they intend to rebrand the station for the future but are confident they will build on the foundations laid by Saga to continue the station's

## Compliments the Gurkha cl



THE GURKHA Palace Nepalese

Report by Steven Jones

## ing seminar

ing fast for a  
er taking place at



'He loved to spend his summer holidays in the retirement of the country surrounded by his children; with whom 'he had begun walking, and examining them in walks in the books which they are reading, and talking them over together' While, 'in the evening' almost the greatest of their treats, he was 'reading to them Shakespeare' Occasionally, too, he made excursions with them for the day; and in 'Caesar's Camp and the cherry orchards' all the burden of his business was thrown off, and he was the most cheerful of the party. "We took our dinner with us upon Saturday" is the description of such a day this summer in the letter of a guest [ME to AY] "and were fourteen in number. Mr Wilberforce made us all very happy. He read and talked, and carved, and reminded us of the benevolence of God in making the avenues of innocent pleasure so numerous, and forming us for so many enjoyments which have nothing sinful in them ". "There is no way" is his own remark on this day, "in which children's tempers are more indicated than in such excursions". Leaving Sandgate for urgent business in London, he regrets his absence, the efforts for blood and tears -- making others miserable while endeavouring to secure our own happiness.....

p.208 "There" he said when hurried once almost beyond bearing, calling the attention of a friend to a sudden burst of voices "how can I be worried by such trifles, when I have a constant remembrances of God's goodness to me? " It was his children playing overhead with a noisy glee which would have jarred upon the feelings of almost any one besides himself. Thus, amidst his present business he rescued time enough to write to his second son. He delivers a slight reproach at Robert Isaac ....

From Battersea Rise, Sept 14 1814.

My very dear.....

I do not relish the idea that you are the only one of my children who has not written to me during my absence, and that you should be the only one to whom I should not write: I therefore take up my pen though but for a very few moments, to assure you that I do not suspect your silence to have arisen from the want of affection from me, any more than that which I myself have hitherto observed has proceeded from this source. There is a certain demon called procrastination, who inhabits a castle in the air at Sandgate, as well as at so many other places, and I suspect that you have been carried up some day, (at the tail of your kite perhaps) and lodged in that that same habitation, which has fine large rooms in it from which there are beautiful prospects in all directions; and probably you will not quit a dwelling place that you like so well, till you hear that I am on my way to Sandgate.....

Following on aside he continues But I am trifling sadly, since I am this morning unusually pressed for time. I will therefore only guard my dear boy seriously against procrastination, one of the most dangerous assailants of usefulness, and assure him that I am today, to-morrow, and always while I exist,

His ~~affectionate~~ ~~father~~ affectionate Father

W. Wilberforce

See letter from Mme de Staël Paris 4 September 1814.

'D'ordinaire les idées triomphent par elle mêmes et par le tems, mais cette fois c'est vous qui avez devancé les siècles .. .... Jouissez de votre ouvrage

There were other faces around, the Larkins' and the Saumarez, doubtless the retired Vice-Admiral and generous patron of very many religious and educational institutions. He was a President of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge and perhaps it was no coincidence that he was in Sandgate about the time the local schoolroom was being set up, on Dr. Bell's system, near the Castle and the seashore. Sandgate that summer, must have seemed like a hot-bed of Evangelicals.

Fanny Burney d'Arblay, the novelist, also joined the Sandgate throng. She had journeyed by coach to Canterbury where her brother Charles Burney had sent his chaise to fetch her. Now in Sandgate for a brief stay, Fanny was nursing a persistent cough, avoiding the Library 'the general rendez-vous of the social' and the Pier at Folkestone 'which I shall forbear parading till just before my departure'. She then tells her ~~father~~ beloved father about 'a singular gratification & , in truth, a real and great Honour I have had to rejoice in'.

This was her introduction to William Wilberforce as the families were leaving morning service at Folkestone Church on 19 September. According to Charles 'Sarah and I left Mrs. d'Arblay in bed -- but up got she, and away marched she, and after the service, out of Church came she at one door, while we went out the Other.-- She walks her wihhe the Wilbers and Barretts.

The story pours  
ecpours from Fanny's plume.



## LETTER,

&c. &c.  


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*Sandgate (Kent), Oct. 10th, 1814.*

MONSIEUR,

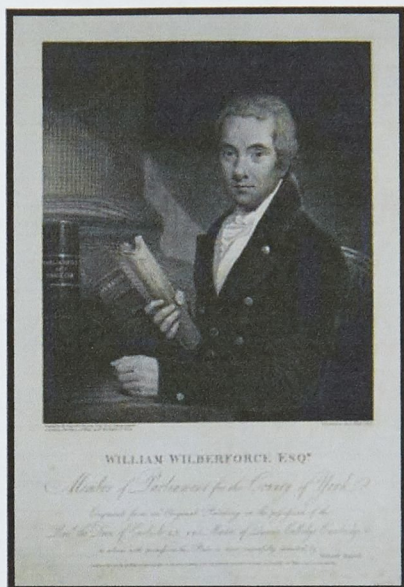
THE continued warfare which, to the regret of all good men, subsisted so long between France and Great Britain, was productive of this bad effect, among many others, that it prevented that mutual interchange of useful intelligence and suggestions, that intercourse of mind, if I may so term it, which is the happy privilege of our advanced state of social civilization. This consideration is painfully forced upon me by intelligence recently received from France. I should otherwise be greatly surprised as well as much concerned to hear, that the information concerning the nature and effects of the African Slave Trade, which, having been universally diffused throughout Great Britain, has produced one concurrent opinion and feeling on the subject in all classes of our community, has been very little circulated in France; and consequently, that the same erroneous notions of that traffic are still found among you, which were so generally prevalent in this country before such information was obtained.

The Slave Trade had existed for more than two centuries, and had greatly increased within the last; and of all the nations by which it was carried on, Great Britain had by far the largest share of it. At length, the public attention having been drawn to the subject, a Parliamentary Inquiry into the nature and consequences

of the Slave Trade took place; and though, as might be expected, it was strenuously defended by classes of men who were personally interested in its continuance, and their prejudices and errors were great and obstinate, yet the true character of the trade having been brought to light, its fate was no longer doubtful. All our leading Statesmen, however widely and generally they differed on most other subjects, and whatever differences of opinion there were among them as to the manner of abolishing the Trade, all agreed on the national duty of its speedy and perpetual suppression.

It was not a case in which the voices of the many dictated to the judgments of the few; but rather the reverse. The people waited with deference and patience for the issue of the Parliamentary Discussions: but the facts which were brought to light, and the conclusion upon them of the most distinguished Members in both Houses of Parliament, were promulgated throughout the country; and the natural effect on the public mind was that general abhorrence of the traffic which so universally prevails in every part of this United Kingdom. The popular feeling, thus led and sanctioned by the judgment of the Legislature, greatly, no doubt, facilitated a reformation, which real difficulties, as well as groundless apprehensions, had conspired with very powerful particular interests, to retard. A great commercial body, with an immense capital, was directly interested in the support of the traffic for Slaves. The still more powerful body of West Indians combined in a most strenuous and long-protracted contest to preserve it; and that dread of political reformation in the abstract which revolutionary mischiefs had produced, brought to the cause a very critical and powerful support, such as enabled them to delay the reformation which they could not avoid. But in a very few years, the cause of justice and mercy was completely victorious. The Slave Trade was prohibited; was declared a felony, and visited by the severest punishment, short of death, that is inflicted by the laws of England. Such has been the progress of truth and right, such the consequences of the development of the real nature and effects of the Slave Trade, that now, throughout these kingdoms, not an individual is to be found by whom that traffic is not condemned in terms of the strongest reprobation. There is no man whose feelings would not shrink from the shame, as well as his conscience recoil from the guilt, of being concerned in it;—no man, who would not conceive that he should thereby hand down to his descendants profits polluted with blood, and a name branded with infamy.

It was the effect, perhaps, of too scrupulous a regard for private property, that the two Houses of Parliament instituted, and long prosecuted, that minute and protracted inquiry which, by reasoning



**William Wilberforce Esq.<sup>r</sup>. Member of Parliament for the County of York. Engraved from an Original Painting in the Possession of the Rev.<sup>d</sup> the Dean of Carlisle. D.D. F.R.S. Master of Queen's College Cambridge &c. to whom with permission this Plate is most respectfully dedicated by William Russell.** Painted by the late John Russell Esqr.

R.A. Crayon Painter to the King the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York. Engraved by James Heath A.R.A. Published Novr. 26. 1807 by William Faden. Geography to the King & Charing Cross. John Hatchard Bookseller to the Queen. 190 Piccadilly and William Russell, 17. Newman Street. Engraving, 520 x 394mm. Faint foxing and staining, mostly to margins. Fine copy of this portrait of Wilberforce clutching the Slave Trade Abolition Bill in his right hand. William Wilberforce [1759 - 1833], was an evangelical Christian and social reformer who dedicated himself to the 'suppression of the Slave Trade and the reformation of manners'. He entered Parliament in 1780 as a Tory MP and was the Parliamentary leader of the Abolition movement from 1787. After years of campaigning, Wilberforce's bill to end Britain's part in slave trading was passed to a standing ovation in 1807. A further act of 1833 provided for the emancipation of slaves in British colonies.

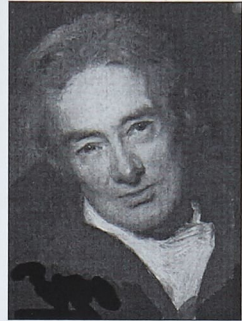
17. Newman Street. Engraving, 520 x 394mm. Faint foxing and staining, mostly to margins. Fine copy of this portrait of Wilberforce clutching the Slave Trade Abolition Bill in his right hand. William Wilberforce [1759 - 1833], was an evangelical Christian and social reformer who dedicated himself to the 'suppression of the Slave Trade and the reformation of manners'. He entered Parliament in 1780 as a Tory MP and was the Parliamentary leader of the Abolition movement from 1787. After years of campaigning, Wilberforce's bill to end Britain's part in slave trading was passed to a standing ovation in 1807. A further act of 1833 provided for the emancipation of slaves in British colonies.



# William Wilberforce (1759-1833)

## Biography

William Wilberforce is perhaps the best known of the abolitionists. He came from a prosperous merchant family of Kingston-upon-Hull, a North Sea port which saw little in the way of slave trading. (His birthplace is now preserved as the Wilberforce House Museum.) At twenty-one, the youngest age at which one could be so elected, he was returned to Parliament for his native town. Four years later he was again returned to Parliament, this time for the county seat of Yorkshire which was large and populous, and which therefore required an expensive election contest. The advantage was that the election, being genuinely democratic, conferred a greater legitimacy to the two Members which that county returned to Parliament. Wilberforce's early years in Parliament were not untypical for a young back-bencher. He was noted for his eloquence and charm, attributes no doubt enhanced by his considerable wealth, but he did not involve himself at first with any great cause. A sudden conversion to evangelical Christianity in 1785 changed that and from then onwards he approached politics from a position of strict Christian morality. In 1786 he carried through the House of Commons a bill for amending criminal law which failed to pass the Lords, a pattern which was to be repeated during his abolitionist career. The following year he founded the Proclamation Society which had as its aim the suppression of vice and the reformation of public manners. Later in 1787 he became, at the suggestion of the Prime Minister, William Pitt the Younger, the parliamentary leader of the abolition movement, although he did not officially join the Abolition Society until 1794.



The story of Pitt's conversation with Wilberforce under an old tree near Croydon has passed into the mythology of the anti-slavery movement. The result was that Wilberforce returned to London having promised to look over the evidence which Thomas Clarkson had amassed against the trade. As he did so he clearly become genuinely horrified and resolved to give the abolition movement his support. Working closely with Clarkson, he presented evidence to a committee of the Privy Council during 1788. This episode did not go as planned. Some of the key witnesses against the trade, apparently bribed or intimidated, changed their story and testified in favour. In the country at large abolitionist sentiment was growing rapidly. While the king's illness and the Regency Bill crisis no doubt supplanted the slave trade as the chief topic of political conversation in the winter of 1788-9, by the spring the king had recovered and abolition was once more at the top of the agenda. It was under these circumstances that Wilberforce prepared to present his Abolition Bill before the House of Commons. This speech, the most important of Wilberforce's life to that point, was praised in the newspapers as being one of the most eloquent ever to have been heard in the house. Indeed, *The Star* reported that 'the gallery of the House of Commons on Tuesday was crowded with Liverpool Merchants; who hung their heads in sorrow - for the African occupation of bolts and chains is no more'.

The newspaper was premature in sounding the death knell of the slave trade. After the 1789 speech parliamentary delaying tactics came into play. Further evidence was requested and heard over the summer months and then, on 23 June 1789, the matter was adjourned until the next session. Wilberforce left town, holidaying at Buxton with Hannah More, confident that the next session would see a resolution of the debate and abolition of the trade. It did not and by January 1790 the question was deemed to be taking up so much parliamentary time that consideration of the evidence was moved upstairs (as parliamentary jargon has it) to a Select Committee. Evidence in favour of the trade was heard until April, followed by evidence against. In June Pitt called an early general election. Wilberforce was safely returned as a Member for Yorkshire, but parliamentary business was disrupted. Despite being behind schedule, Wilberforce continued to work for an abolition which it appeared the country wanted. News of the slave rebellion in Dominica reached Britain in February 1791 and hardened attitudes against abolition, but Wilberforce pressed on. After almost two years of delay the debate finally resumed and Wilberforce again addressed the Commons on 18 April 1791.

When, on the following night, the House divided on the question of abolition fewer than half of its Members remained to vote. Because of this or not, the Abolition Bill fell with a majority of 75 against abolishing the slave trade. Wilberforce and the other members of the Abolition Committee returned to the task of drumming up

support for abolition both from Members of Parliament and from ordinary people. More petitions were collected, further meetings held, extra pamphlets published, and a boycott of sugar was organised. The campaign was not helped by news of the revolutions in France and Haiti. Perhaps sensing that a hardening of attitudes was becoming increasingly likely Wilberforce again brought the question of abolition before the House and, almost a year after the previous defeat, on 2 April 1792, once more found himself addressing the House of Commons. Every account we have of this speech shows that it was an intense and lengthy emotional harangue. Public feeling was outraged and, on this occasion, so was the feeling of the House. But not quite enough. Henry Dundas suggested an amendment to the Abolition Bill: the introduction of the word 'gradual'. The bill passed as amended, by 230 votes to 85, and gradual abolition became law, the final date for slave trading to remain legal being later fixed at 1796. But this gave the 'West India Interest' - the slave traders' lobby - room to manoeuvre. Once again parliamentary delaying tactics came into play, further evidence was demanded, and it became clear that gradual abolition was to mean no abolition.

This event marked a turning point in the fortunes of the abolition campaign. Partly because of a hardening of attitudes caused by the outbreak of war with France, and partly because of determined resistance from the West-India Interest there was a collapse in public enthusiasm for the cause. Some abolitionists withdrew from the campaign entirely. Wilberforce did not, but his speeches fell on ever deaf ears. Although Wilberforce reintroduced the Abolition Bill almost every year in the 1790s, little progress was made even though Wilberforce remained optimistic for the long-term success of the cause. He directed some of his efforts into other arenas, largely evangelical or philanthropic, and was instrumental in setting up organisations such as The Bible Society and The Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor. In 1797 he published a book, *A Practical view of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians*, a work of popular theology with a strong evangelical hue which sold well on publication and throughout the nineteenth century. On 30 May 1797, after a short romance, he married Barbara Ann Spooner.

If the first two years of the new century were particularly bleak ones for the abolition movement, the situation was rapidly reversed in 1804. The association of abolitionism with Jacobinism dispersed as Napoleon's hostility to emancipation became known. Members of Parliament, especially the many new Irish members, increasingly tended toward abolition. The Abolition Society reformed with a mixture of experienced older members and new blood. Wilberforce assumed his old role of parliamentary leader, and introduced the Abolition Bill before parliament. The Bill fell in 1804 and 1805, but gave the abolitionists an opportunity to sound out support. In 1806, Wilberforce published an influential tract advocating abolition and, in June that year, resolutions supporting abolition were passed in parliament. A public campaign once again promoted the cause, and the new Whig government was in favour as well. In January 1807, the Abolition Bill was once again introduced, this time attracting very considerable support, and, on 23 February 1807, almost fifteen years after Dundas had effectively wrecked abolition with his gradualist amendment, Parliament voted overwhelmingly in favour of abolition of the slave trade. During the debate the then Solicitor-General, Sir Samuel Romilly, spoke against the trade. His speech concluded with a long and emotional tribute to Wilberforce in which he contrasted the peaceful happiness of Wilberforce in his bed with the tortured sleeplessness of the guilty Napoleon Bonaparte. In the words of Romilly's biographer;

Wilberforce was overcome by the power of Romilly's concluding passages, and sat with his head on his hands, tears streaming down his face. As Romilly reached his final sentences the House broke into one of those scenes that it reserves for great occasions. Members stood and cheered him tumultuously.

According to *The Morning Chronicle* he received 'three distinct and universal cheers'. Scenes such as this are rare in the House of Commons, where applause is forbidden, but this report, or one like it, must have reached William Hey, the Yorkshire surgeon, evangelical, and former Mayor of Leeds, for on February 28 he wrote to Wilberforce to ask if it was true. 'If so,' he continues, 'was not this an unprecedented effusion of approbation?' Wilberforce replied that 'I was myself so completely overpowered by my feelings [...] that I was insensible to all that was passing around me'.

The Abolition Act received the Royal Assent (became law) on 25 March 1807 but, although the trade in slaves had become illegal in British ships, slavery remained a reality in British colonies. Wilberforce himself was privately convinced that the institution of slavery should be entirely abolished, but understood that there was little political will for emancipation. Already recognised as an elder statesman in his 50s, Wilberforce received a steady throng of visitors and supplicants, and he became involved in many of the political questions of the day. He supported Catholic Emancipation and the Corn Laws. His health was poor, however, and in 1812 he resigned the large and arduous seat of Yorkshire for the pocket borough of Bramber. In the same year he started work on the Slave Registration Bill, which he saw as necessary to ensure compliance with the Abolition Act. If slaves were registered, he argued, it could be proved whether or not they had been recently transported from Africa. The Prime Minister, Spencer Perceval, supported the Bill, but was assassinated shortly after. Thereafter, Wilberforce's efforts met with increasing resistance from the government. In 1815,



with the government again blocking progress, Wilberforce publically declared that as they would not support him, he felt himself no longer bound by their line on emancipation. From this time on, Wilberforce campaigned openly for an end to the institution of slavery.

Wilberforce's health, never good, was deteriorating. Although now free to speak his mind on emancipation, he was never able to campaign with the same vigour that he had done for abolition of the trade. However, he continued to attack slavery both at public meetings and in the House of Commons. In 1823, he published another pamphlet attacking slavery. This pamphlet was connected with the foundation of The Anti-Slavery Society which led the campaign to emancipate all slaves in British colonies. Leadership of the parliamentary campaign, however, was passed from Wilberforce to [Thomas Fowell Buxton](#). In 1825, Wilberforce resigned from the House of Commons. He enjoyed a quiet retirement at Mill Hill, just north of London, although he suffered some financial difficulties. His last public appearance was at a meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society in 1830, at which, at Thomas Clarkson's suggestion, he took the chair. In parliament, the Emancipation Bill gathered support and received its final commons reading on 26 July 1833. Slavery would be abolished, but the planters would be heavily compensated. 'Thank God', said Wilberforce, 'that I have lived to witness a day in which England is willing to give twenty millions sterling for the Abolition of Slavery'. Three days later, on 29 July 1833, he died. He is buried in Westminster Abbey.

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  - <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/REwilberforce.htm>  
A short biography
  - <http://www.figureheads.com/cutty/william.html>  
Image and description of the figurehead of the ship *William Wilberforce*
  - <http://www.orwin.karoo.net/people/dead/People/Wilberforce.html>  
A short biography, interesting for its information on statues and monuments to Wilberforce
  - <http://www.victorshepherd.on.ca/Heritage/wilberforce.htm>  
Another biography from a Christian perspective
  - <http://www.hullcc.gov.uk/museums/wilberforce/index.php>  
The Wilberforce House Museum
  - <http://www.brycchancarey.com/abolition/wilberforce2.htm>  
Extracts from reports of Wilberforce's 1789 abolition speech (on this website).
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## Main British Abolitionists Page

\* This page last updated 12 December 2005 \*



Sandgate nr Polkstone  
July 31<sup>st</sup> 1812

My dear Mr L'E

I am sorry that my  
being out of London, whences I was called by the  
distention, now thank God no longer alarming of  
half of my family, sooner than I should otherwise  
have left it, because previously to the removal of  
Mr L'E, preoccupying having of various pleasures of  
several attending. Mr L'E, to Mr L'E, to Mr L'E,  
it is the purpose of introducing him to Mr L'E,  
that I now take up my pen. Permit me to  
commend him to Mr L'E's attention, & to assure  
you that he is a Gentleman of great personal & pro-  
prietarily in the mercantile line — Let me beg  
also to call of most serious attention to

Remain always w. Respect & regard  
My dear Sir  
Yours sincerely  
W. Milborne

The Earl of Liverpool  
Mr. An



In 1812, Wilberforce arrived with his family for the first of four summer visits to Sandgate. His letters are most revealing about the lack of religion in the village and especially about the military defences that met the eye as he gazes from his hillside window.

Turning west, his eye follows the line of Martello Towers along Dungeness Bay and the silvery streak of the Royal Military Canal starting at Seabrook across the Marshes to Rye. Wilberforce writes:

'Near us there are also indications of our opulence (i.e. the local amenities) which are not so indicative of our understanding. About a mile from us begins a canal which was formed when the alarm concerning invasion was the most generally prevalent. It runs parallel with the shore for about twenty miles; but I never yet talked with any military man, who conceived that it would oppose any serious obstacle to an enemy, who, besides the ease with which it might be crossed by portable bridges, might tap it without difficulty. *simply* Certainly its merits are far too deep to be discerned by unmilitary eyes. *And yet - I believe all has been done with good intentions.*

Seriously, I am told that two millions sterling must have been expended in fortifying this part of the coast.'

He continues: 'The number of Martello towers is very great; but, unfortunately, instead of being composed of such massy blocks of stone or marble, as defied our attack and returned the fire of our ships with interest, in Corsica, for that was our model - they are built of brick, and I am assured the first cannon shot would beat a hole in them ... the centre being broken down or weakened, the twenty-four pounder would fall through with its own weight, and would bury itself in the ruins.'

'Really', he exclaims, 'the French coast appears so near, that I can scarcely wonder at our being somewhat excessive in our preparations to receive an enemy who was said to have 100,000 men within four hour's sail of us.'

Sandgate Talk 1974



## **8. At the Chichester Memorial Hall North Road**

### **William Wilberforce 1759 – 1833**

“It is the true duty of everyman to promote the happiness of his fellow creatures to the utmost of his power”. So said William Wilberforce who lived his life by this code and was responsible for the foundation of Sandgate Primary School in 1814.

Wilberforce (b.1759 d.1833) was a Yorkshire MP who served in the House of Commons from 1780 to 1825. He is most famous for his tireless effort to achieve the 1807 Act “Abolition of the Slave Trade”, and Britain’s involvement in capturing and shipping slaves from Africa to the Americas. He then helped secure the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 (passed a month after

his death), to give freedom to all slaves working in the British Empire.

He was a national activist, driven by his Christian beliefs, and very

influential, gaining the title “Renewer of Society”. Senior politicians and Prime Ministers ranked amongst his influence and he was a close personal friend of William Pitt the Younger

Wilberforce was an active member of the School Society, and he also worked on legislation for the Relief of Boy Chimney Sweeps!

Wilberforce suffered from ill health and became an annual Summer long resident of our community. A local house and road have been named after him.

Wilberforce retired from politics in 1825 and died on 29 July 1833, shortly after the act to free slaves in the British empire passed through the House of Commons. He was buried near his friend Pitt in Westminster Abbey.