

North East Slavery & Abolition Group ENewsletter

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WHAT IS THE NORTH EAST SLAVERY & ABOLITION GROUP?

The North East Slavery & Abolition Group has been set up by the group of volunteers who worked on the Tyneside Remembering Slavery 2007 Project researching into the archives of literature and documents held at the Literary & Philosophical Society, Tyne & Wear Archives, the University's Robinson Library Special Collections and Northumberland Collections. The results of the archive mapping and research carried out during the Project are on a Resource Disc which can be seen at each of the partner organisations.

The Group is an informal group and will mainly operate on the basis of its members continuing the research, to write and to give talks, and through email. Members have already given several talks to local history groups and more such talks are scheduled for 2008. Several are writing essays for the 2008 issue of the Journal of the North East Balfour History Society. One member, John Charlton is proceeding with a book on the slavery business and North East England to be published in the Autumn of 2008.

John's masterly overview of the project and what has been learnt from it, and my October 24 talk at the Literary and Philosophical Society are available in PDF format on my website. www.seancreighton.co.uk.

Although my contract as Project Officer has ended, I remain involved with the group, acting as the recipient for the further material that is written up and summarised. This will be made available from time to time to supplement the official Project Disc. The first batch was added in January. It includes notes on: John Bruce, Newcastle schoolmaster, social reformer and abolitionist, the Thornhills of Sunderland and Antigua, Robert Hutton, Sunderland's Slave Trader, and extracts from Tyneside newspapers 1788-1792.

Sean Creighton, Editor

EXHIBITIONS THIS MONTH

Seven Stories, 30 Lime St, Newcastle until Friday 29 February. During his travels around Britain in the 1790s the black abolitionist campaigner Olaudah Equiano visited Newcastle. Using Equiano's autobiographical account "The Interesting Narrative" the touring Equiano exhibition draws together all the major themes connected to the history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and its abolition.

Shipleigh Art Gallery, Prince Consort Road, Gateshead until Sunday 24 February. Exhibition in which young people from Gateshead and South Shields explore their image and identity through Remembering Slavery 2007.

TALKS

John Charlton, in particular, has been engaged in giving a series of talks on slavery and abolition in the North East: Newcastle, Sunderland, Darlington, Longhorsley, Hexham, Morpeth, Stanley, South Moor, Killingworth, Acomb, Woodhorn, Tynemouth, Fawdon.

Discussion at most of these talks is revealing new information to be followed up.

The following are to take place: Stanley (3 March), Newcastle, MEA House (6 March), Shadforth, Durham (18 March), Hepscott (19 March), Cullercoats (9 April), Easington (15 June), Newcastle (17 September), Sunderland (18 Sept), High Heaton (30 Sept), Aycliffe (8 Oct), Peterlee (15 Oct), Belford (18 Oct), and Killingworth (January 2009).

'SHARP PRACTICE'

'Sharp Practice' is an original play revealing the heritage of slavery in the North East and the role of the Durham abolitionists. It is devised and produced by Jackass Youth Theatre in collaboration with Jack Drum Arts. When you think of slavery, what do you think of? Chains? Sugar plantations? How about the upper classes fighting for justice? Or protests filling the streets of Durham? In 'Sharp Practice' Jackass Youth Theatre explore an aspect of slavery that time has forgotten, showing how the people of the North East led the way in the fight for abolition. Working with professional artists from Jack Drum Arts, heritage professionals and archivists, Jackass Youth Theatre grapple with the complex history of a worldwide struggle for freedom. Their research has taken them on a journey to Newcastle, Liverpool, Hull, Gloucester, London and the University of Virginia, in the search for historical material, documents and evidence to inspire a new generation of theatre makers and the audience! 'A toleration of slavery is, in effect, a toleration of inhumanity.' Granville Sharp, Founder of the Anti-Slavery Society 'Slavery still exists. Indeed, it is more diverse and entrenched than it ever was before.' Gloria Steinem.

The play, and associated exhibition and talks is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund's Young Roots project. The Newsletter Editor has been contracted to help advise, working with Julie Ward of Jackdrum. The project has the support of the Wear Valley District Council. The performances will be:

Wed April 2, 7.30pm - Durham VI Form Centre

Thurs April 3, 7.30pm - The Witham Hall, Barnard Castle

Fri April 4, 7.30pm - Stanhope Town Hall, Weardale

Sat April 5, 1.30pm - The Arc, Stockton on Tees

There is a possibility that John Charlton and the Editor sharing the task of giving a short talk at each event.

For more about Jack Drum Arts and Jackass Youth Theatre see: www.jackdrum.co.uk & www.jackass-yt.co.uk:80.

BACKGROUND READING

There is a growing literature on abolition and the black presence on Tyneside and the North East. These include:

- The Editor's 'The Black Presence in the North East' prepared between 2001 and 2003 for Shiny Row Resource Project, which formed the basis of a small display at an event organised by the British Association of Settlements & Social Action Centres in Sunderland, and was shared with representatives of the Tyneside Community Empowerment Networks involved in the Pentagon Partnership. It still provides a useful introduction to the subject to enable readers to undertake further reading. It is available on request.

- Stephen Harbottle's 'The Reverend William Turner: Dissent and Reform in Georgian Newcastle Upon Tyne'. Turner was an abolitionist and social reformer. Its publisher Northern University Press is remaindering the last unsold copies. Originally selling at £20 it is now available at £6.99 plus p&t from www.psbooks.co.uk; Ref No. 36737.
- Robert I. Lawless's 'From Taizz to Tyneside: An Arab Community in the North East of England During the Early Twentieth Century.' (University of Exeter Press, 1995)
- Joan Allen's 'Joseph Cowen and Popular Radicalism on Tyneside 1829-1900' was published by Merlin Press last year (paperback ISBN 978-0850365849; £15.95). As the leader of Tyneside radicalism Cowen had spoken against slavery as a student in Edinburgh, and then was active in the campaign to support Emancipation during the American Civil War. For a review see Newsletter 30, London Socialist Historians Group. Spring/Lent 2008 on www.LondonSocialistHistorians.org. (There is also a review of Marcus Rediker's book 'The Slave Ship'.)

The Journal of the North East Labour History Society contains the following essays on aspects of abolition and the black presence:

- Nigel Todd's essay 'Black on Tyne: The Black Presence of Tyneside in the 1860s' (Vol 21)
- Clare Midgley. Women Anti-slavery Campaigners, with Special Reference to the North East. (Vol 29)
- Review of Robert Lawless's 'From Taizz to Tyneside: An Arab Community in the North East of England During the Early Twentieth Century' (Vol 29)
- Review of Stephen Harbottle's 'The Reverend William Turner: Dissent and Reform in Georgian Newcastle Upon Tyne' (Vol 32)
- David Renton's 'Chris Mullard and Black Radicalism in Newcastle 1968-73' (Vol 36); this can be seen along with an article on migration to the North East on the Research and Migration pages of his website www.dkrenton.co.uk

The Journal also contains many other articles e.g. on radicalism which set the context within which abolition campaigning took place. A full list can be seen on the Society's website: www.nelh.net

The following are some of the websites which contain relevant notes:

www.newcastle.gov.uk - Slavery 2007 page

www.dr.ac.uk - for Durham University's on-line collection on slavery and the North East

www.bbc.co.uk/tyne/roots

www.bbc.co.uk/wear - inc. Neil Sinclair on James Stanfield

RESEARCH QUERIES

- **Rev Robert Morrison**, the first English missionary to China, was brought up in Morpeth and Newcastle. Before he went to China he visited Clapham and the abolitionists' African Academy for teaching African children, where he met a Chinese man who taught him Chinese. Morrison's first visit to China in 1807 was commemorated last year. He remains relevant because this year's theme for Museums, Libraries & Archives is China 2008. Dr Garry Tidemann, a retired lecturer at the School of African & Oriental Studies, has been liaising to find out

more about Morrison in the North East, including his visit and speaking in Newcastle in 1824. Any information known to readers can be sent to the Editor. The enquiry has also triggered the beginnings of trying to piece together the links between the North East and China. A note on this is available from the Editor.

- **The Sellars and Chiltons.** On 10 November 1723 Elizabeth, the daughter of Francis Sellar, 'Mr Chilton's moor' was baptised at Houghton. (Herbert Maxwell Wood. Extracts from the Houghton Registers Antiquities of Sunderland and its vicinity. Sunderland Antiquarian Society. Vol IX 1908.) A Francis Sellar is buried in the churchyard of St Michael & All Angels Church in Houghton-le-Spring. (St Michael & All Angels Churchyard Burials for 1581 - 1854; www.houghton-hillside-cemetery.org.uk/names_churchyard.html). Does anyone know anything about the Sellars and Chilton? Please send any information to the Editor.

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