A historical painting of a busy street in Belfast, showing a crowd of people, buildings, and a horse-drawn cart. The scene is set in a 19th-century urban environment with multi-story buildings lining the street. A large crowd of people, including men, women, and children, is gathered in the street. A horse-drawn cart is visible on the right side of the street. The overall atmosphere is one of a bustling, active community.

5. The campaign to abolish slavery, 1807-1833

OLE3245 - Belfast and Slavery, 1613-1866

Dr Tom Thorpe

Objectives

- Outlined the economic, political and social background to Belfast from 1807-1833.
- Consider abolitionist activity in the town and public opinion on the issue.
- Set out the formation of the Belfast Anti Slavery Society.
- Role of slavery in the 1832 Election.
- Cover the compensation for slave owners in Belfast.



Belfast, 1807 to 1833

Religious, political and economic context



Belfast in social, political and economic flux

Political

- Outcome of United Irishmen rebellion.
- 1800 Act of Union.
- Campaign for repeal of Act of Union.
- Emancipation of Catholics.

Social

- Changing demography and urbanisation.
- Rise of Sectarian tensions.

Economic

- Industrial revolution.
- Rise of the commercial classes.



National representation from Ireland

- 1782: Irish parliament get legislative independence
- 1798: Irish Parliament with 300 MPs.
- 1800: Act of Union abolishes Irish Parliament and from 1 January 1801, Ireland was represented in the House of Commons by 100 MPs from Ireland:
 - Each of the thirty-two counties returned two MPs as did the Boroughs of Dublin City, County Dublin and Cork City, County Cork.
 - Thirty-one other Boroughs and Dublin University sent one MP to Westminster.



The Irish House of Commons in session
(by Francis Wheatley, 1780)

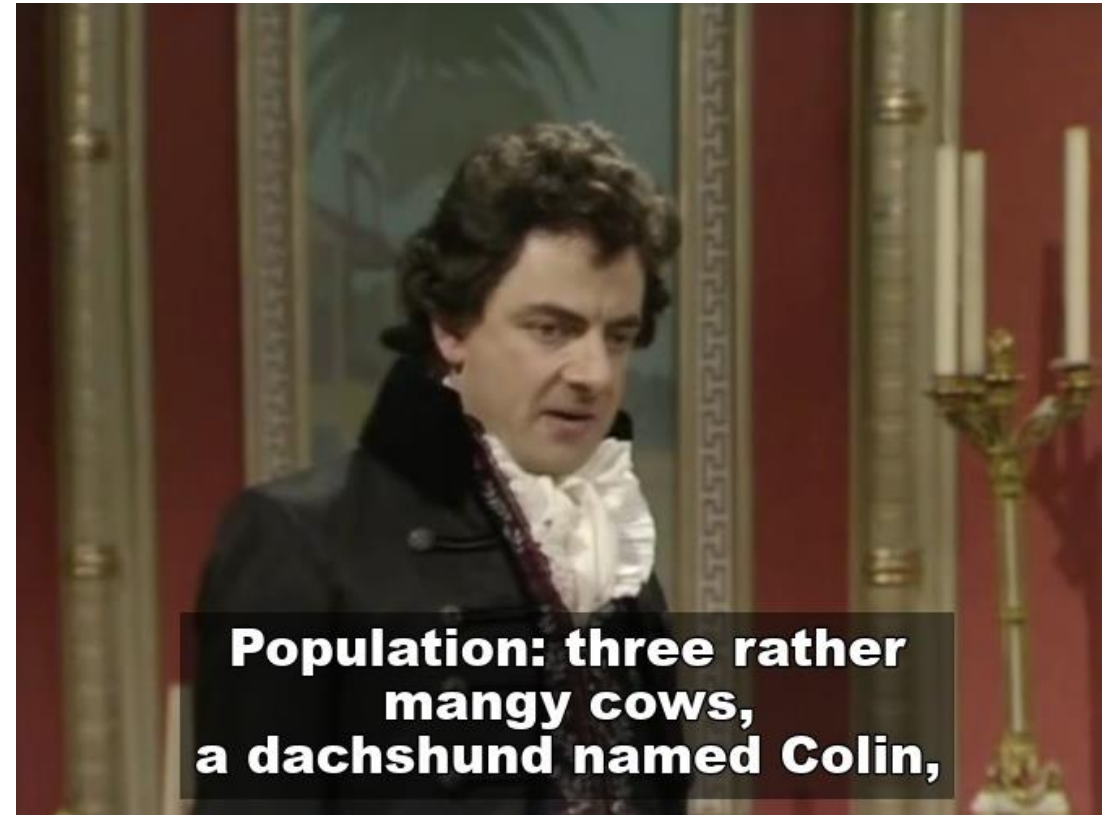
Belfast was a 'rotten borough'

Rotten boroughs were underpopulated electoral districts in the United Kingdom with disproportionate political influence. They had:

- Small populations compared to other constituencies.
- Controlled by a handful of landowners or elites.
- Landowners held multiple seats, securing their interests.
- Reinforced the power of the Protestant Ascendancy



Belfast was like Dunny-on-the-Wold



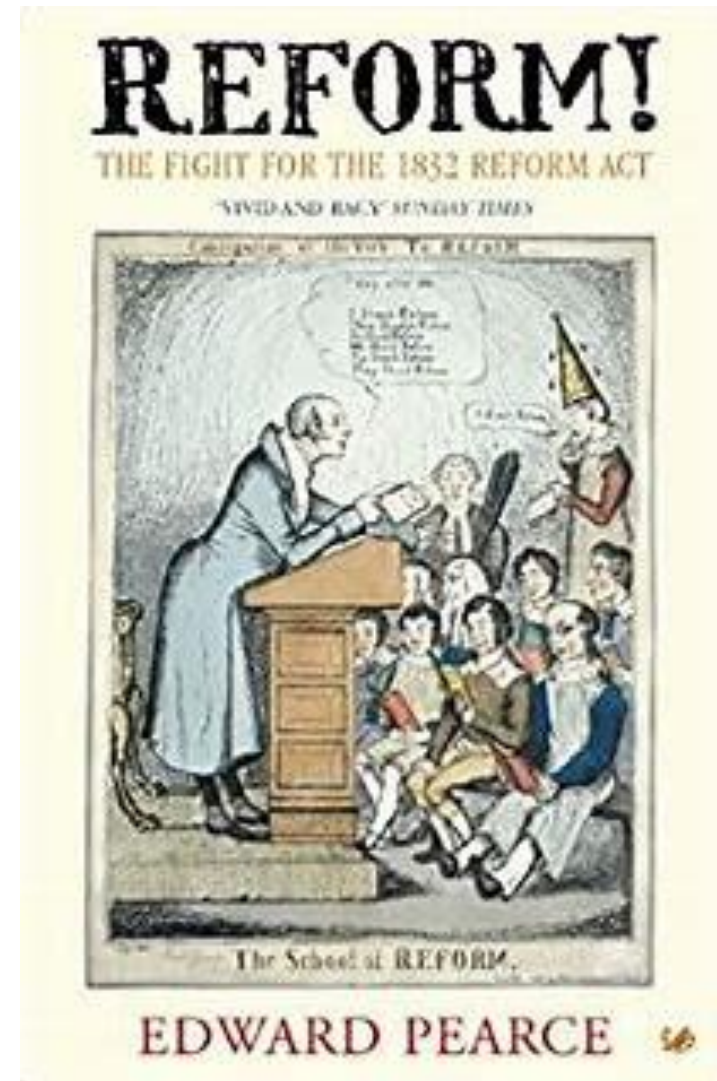
Franchise, 1790s to 1832

- 1793: all male property holders whose property was valued at over 40 shillings could vote.
- 1801 to 1829: the possession of freehold land worth at least 40 shillings (£2).
- However, each borough constituency had its own qualification for voting. In Belfast, only the Sovereign and burgesses could vote (13 wealthy men)



Reform Act of 1832

- Primarily aimed at reforming the electoral system to make it more representative and fair.
- Abolished many rotten boroughs, redistributing seats to more populous areas
- Extending voting rights to a broader section of the male population.
- Marked a crucial step in the democratization of the British political system.



But was a backwards step in Ireland...

- 1832: Irish Boroughs were given a more uniform franchise. In addition to those who qualified under the previous rules, all occupiers of property worth at least £10 and resident freemen by birth or servitude became electors.
- In Ireland, the electorate was cut from 216,000 to 37,000 as qualification was raised (0.004% of the 8m population).



Why the step back?

1. Raising the franchise property qualification to £10 in Ireland under the Reform Act of 1832 excluded a significant portion of the population who did not meet the higher property ownership threshold.
2. The Act was influenced by the interests of the Anglo-Irish elite, who sought to protect their power and maintain control over the political system.
3. The Act was perceived by some as a means to limit Catholic representation and uphold the dominance of the Protestant Ascendancy, adding to religious and political tensions.
4. The decision to restrict the electorate in Ireland was influenced by concerns of the British government about potential political instability in a country with a history of unrest.



Catholic Association and the Catholic Rent

- Founded in 1823 by Daniel O'Connell for Catholic emancipation in Great Britain.
- Objective: Campaigning through mass membership and public protests in Ireland.
- 1824: Introduction of the Catholic Rent, a penny-a-month membership.
- In its first year of existence the Association had an income of £1,000 per week (960,000 pennies a month) and at the end of the year it had £10,000 invested.
- Impact: Constant funds, increased membership, and the birth of mass mobilization politics in Europe.
- Catholic Church alliance: Collection of Catholic Rent and support for pro-emancipation MPs in elections.



Progress

- Sacramental Test Act 1828 repealed, raising hopes for Catholics.
- Daniel O'Connell's elected as MP for County Clare, but could not take his seat because of the Penal Law.
- Government's response: Submission of the Roman Catholic Relief Bill in 1829.
- 1829: Roman Catholic Relief Bill passed, a significant victory for O'Connell.
- O'Connell's titles: "the liberator" and the "uncrowned king of Ireland."



The Roman Catholic Emancipation Act

Passed in 1829 in the United Kingdom.

Aimed to grant political rights and equality to Catholics. Provisions:

Oath of Allegiance: Modified to accommodate Catholic MPs.

Catholic MPs: Allowed to take seats in the Parliament.

Catholic Peers: Permitted to sit in the House of Lords.

End of Anti-Catholic Laws: Removal of various legal restrictions against Catholics.



Local opposition to emancipation

News-Letter published a critical article in 1828.

It gave details of a Roman Catholic meeting in Co. Antrim in which attendees discussed a petition seeking Catholic emancipation.

The News-Letter's response to the petition mocked the term "emancipation" being used to describe Catholics in Ireland:

"The very phrase Emancipation necessarily supposes a pre-existing state of slavery which in relation to the Catholics of Ireland is both unintelligible in theory and false in fact...not even Dan. O'Connell seriously believes they are enslaved."



Henry Cooke

- Henry Cooke was born on 11 May 1788 in County Londonderry, Ireland.
- He came from a family of puritan settlers known for their conservative Calvinistic beliefs and anti-Catholic prejudices.
- Cooke's upbringing and remarkable memory were influenced by the events of the 1798 Irish Rebellion.
- He matriculated at Glasgow College in November 1802, focusing on arts and divinity courses.
- Cooke began his ministry in Duneane, County Antrim, and later served at Donegore and Killyleagh.
- He engaged in theological study and missionary work, forming a congregation at Carlow.



A handwritten signature of Henry Cooke in cursive script.

Cooke's later life

- Cooke played a crucial role in the division within the Presbyterian Church of Ireland.
- He opposed Arian theology and fought against the election of Arian candidates to key positions.
- Cooke's strong political and religious beliefs made him a leader in Ulster politics.
- Cooke's influence transformed the political landscape of Belfast and Ulster.
- He was a key figure in establishing the Queen's College in Belfast.
- He passed away on 13 December 1868 and was buried in Balmoral Cemetery.
- Henry Cooke's legacy endures as a symbol of Northern Ireland's Protestantism.



Tensions exacerbated by Henry Cooke

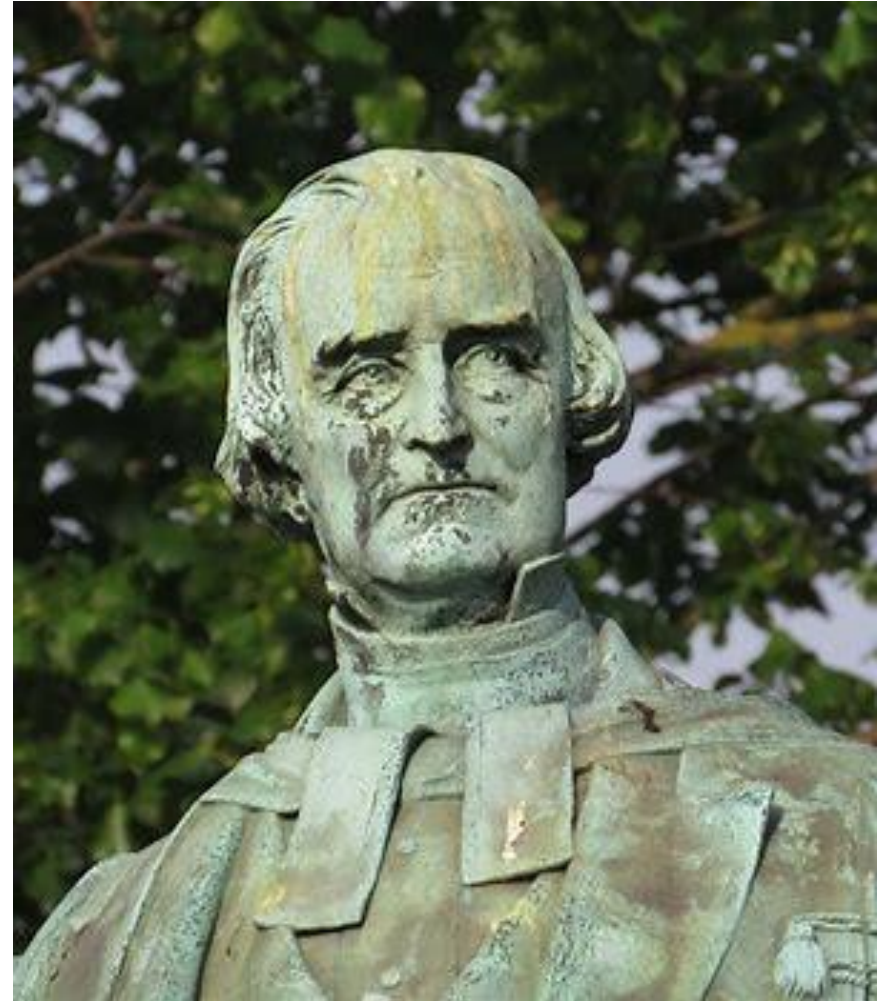
- He assured Belfast Protestants that 'there was not a Protestant more opposed to Catholic ascendancy' than he was.
- Champion of Presbyterian orthodoxy, anti Arian, Old light.
- Declared Catholics to be 'greatly inferior in point of education [&] farming ... they put up with far less comfort, both in point of dress and food.'



Relief bust of Cooke, on the Omagh Orange Hall

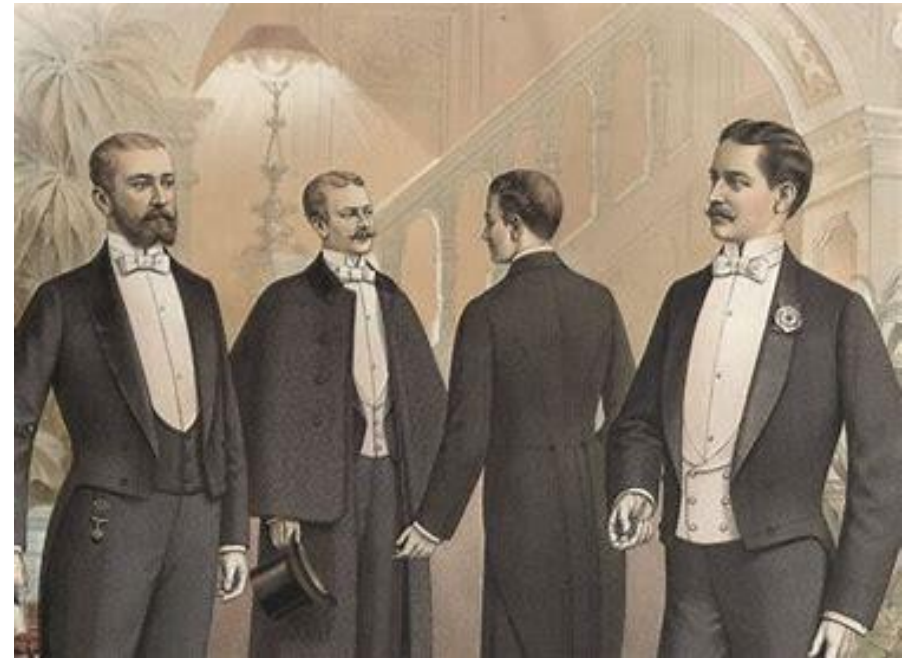
Further attacks

- Cooke launched virulent attack on Belfast Academical Institute declaring that the teachers held Arian beliefs in direct opposition to scripture.
- Spoke against the O'Connell-Whig alliance to reform the Union as 'this close-compacted phalanx of infidelity and Popery'
- Called Repeal 'just a discreet word for Romish ascendancy and Protestant extermination'
- He challenged Daniel O'Connell's visit to Belfast in 1841 and rallied Protestant sentiment.



Impact

- Branch of Catholic Association set up in Belfast in 1824
- Brunswick Clubs established, to lobby to retain the 'Constitution in its Protestant essentiality'
- Belfast club set up in 1828
- Reform Society of Belfast set up in 1830 for reform of Parliament



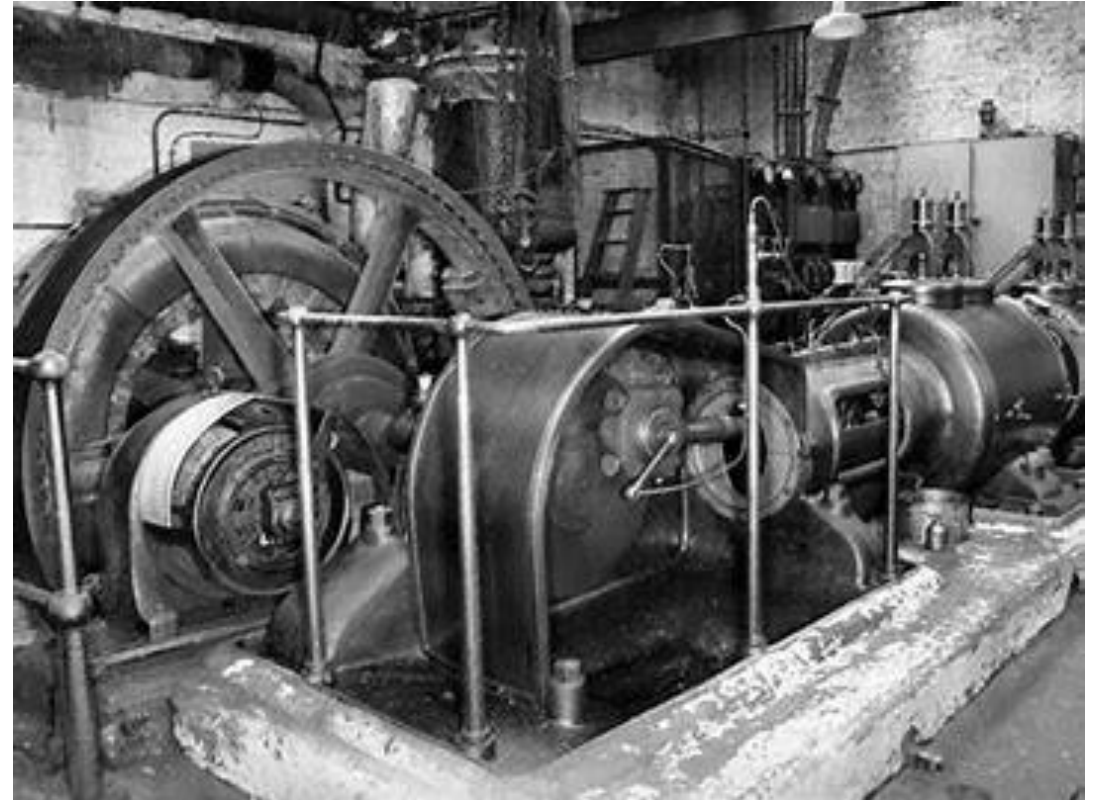
Birth of the cotton industry

- The Poor House introduced cotton spinning for inmates as 'productive labour' in 1777.
- Mills started to be erected in Belfast, both water and steam powered.
- In 1782, 25 looms, 1791, 229, 1806, 600.



Industrialisation: rise of steam power

- John McCracken had 200 workers in mill in Donegall St, had a 6hp engine
- John Milford had a mill in Winetavern St, powered by 10hp steam engine.
- Falls Cotton Mill had three factories 2 powered by water, one by steam
- Between 1800-1812, £350k invested in cotton machinery



Decline of the cotton industry

By 1836, cotton manufacture had almost ceased in the city. Reasons were:

- Cotton mills in Lancashire could produce cheaper and higher quality cotton than Belfast.
- Belfast mills had increased costs by importing coal, cotton and other raw materials.
- Linen was much more lucrative than producing cotton.



Improvements in the port

- No.1 Clarendon Graving Dock completed in 1800
- No.2. Clarendon Graving dock completed in 1826
- Customs revenue increased from £101k in 1784 to £393k in 1813.
- William and John Richie started shipbuilding.



Trading conditions in Belfast improve (for some)

- November 1824, removal of all trade duties on goods moving between Britain and Ireland (sounds familiar!)
- Though coal was more expensive to import to Belfast, labour costs were 1/3 lower than Manchester.



‘The Northern Athens’, title given to Belfast by John Lawless, editor, *Irishman*, 1826.

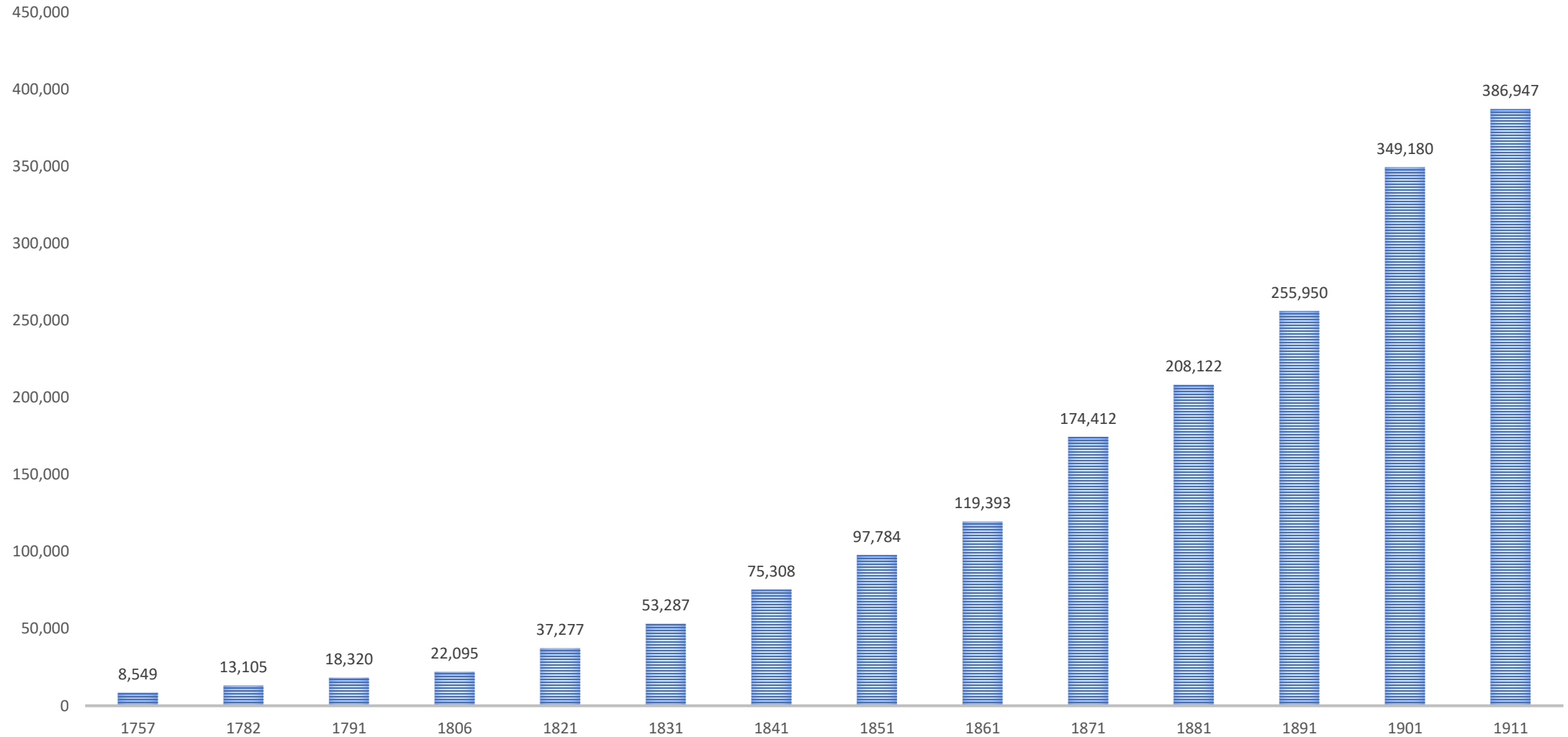
- However, while a spinner in 1811 earning £2 7s (51s) weavers earnt 12-15s.
- Many home had looms at home.
- Wages rose and declined with booms and depressions.
- Many weavers involved in the textile industry were in dire poverty





Social and demographic change

Demographic changes in Belfast, 1757-1911



Overview: religious composition

Table 3: Religious Composition of Belfast Population, 1757-1891

Year	Total Population	No. of Catholics	% of Total
1757	8,549	556	6%
1784	13,000	1,092	8%
1808	25,000	4,000	16%
1834	60,803	19,712	32.4%
1861	119,444	41,237	34.1%
1871	174,412	55,575	28.8%
1881	208,122	59,975	28.8%
1891	255,950	67,378	26.8%

Source: I. Budge and C. O'Leary, *Belfast: Approach to Crisis*, (London, 1973), p. 28, p. 32.

Why migrate to Belfast? Push factors

- Agriculture becoming more efficient – fewer jobs
- Rising rents and absentee landlords
- Sectarian tensions
- Famine and poor harvests



Pull Factors

- Jobs and employment, better than poverty and employment
- Charity and welfare, Poor House and Work House
- Expanding industry needed workers
- Housing, relatives and communities
- Belfast was a port from which people could emigrate to Britain, The Empire or New World.



What was the impact of migration on inter community relations?

- Importing sectarian problems from countryside (e.g. Dolly's Brae conflict, Defenders/Peep O Day Boys, Ribbonmen/Orange men).
- Impact on jobs, economy and employment.
- Major impact on social and community relations.



Rise in the middle classes

- Napoleonic blockade had helped stimulate Belfast industry to meet the demands of the British war economy.
- Lisburn Road opened in 1817
- Commercial opportunities for the clever (e.g. Adam McClean, innkeepers son who had made a fortune as a draper)
- Financial problems of the 2nd Marquis of Donegall meant land and leases were sold off in central Belfast (they moved to Ormeau)



Rise in middle class entertainments and facilities

- Belfast Society for Improvement of Knowledge, 1792 (Linen Hall Library)
- Belfast Theatre, 1793
- Commercial buildings, built 1819
- Georgian houses on College Square, Chichester St
- Botanic Gardens, 1827
- Belfast Savings Bank, 1829
- Schools:
 - Belfast Royal Academy, 1785
 - Inst, 1816
 - St Malachy's College, 1833
 - Shaws, Donegall Arms, Bullicks, High Street, Telfair's, Ann St, David's, Castle St.



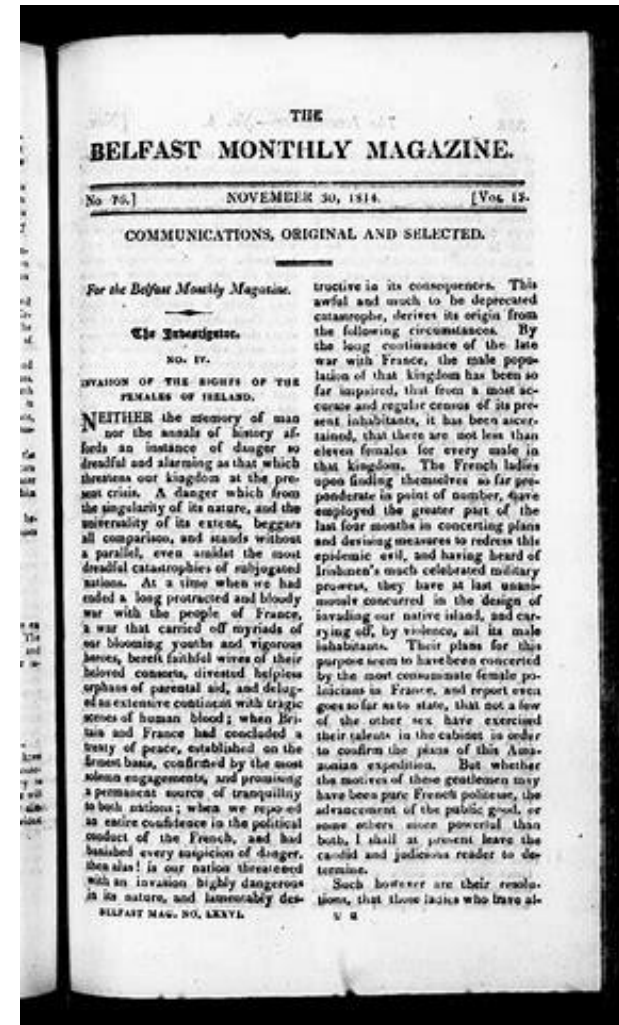
Rise of middle class activism

- Belfast Literary Society (1801)
- Cosmographical Society (1811)
- Belfast Anacreontic Society (1814)
- Female Society for Clothing of the Poor (1820)
- Belfast Natural History Society (1821)
- Belfast Medical Society (1822)
- Mechanics Institute (1825)
- Society for the Relief of the Destitute Sick (1826)



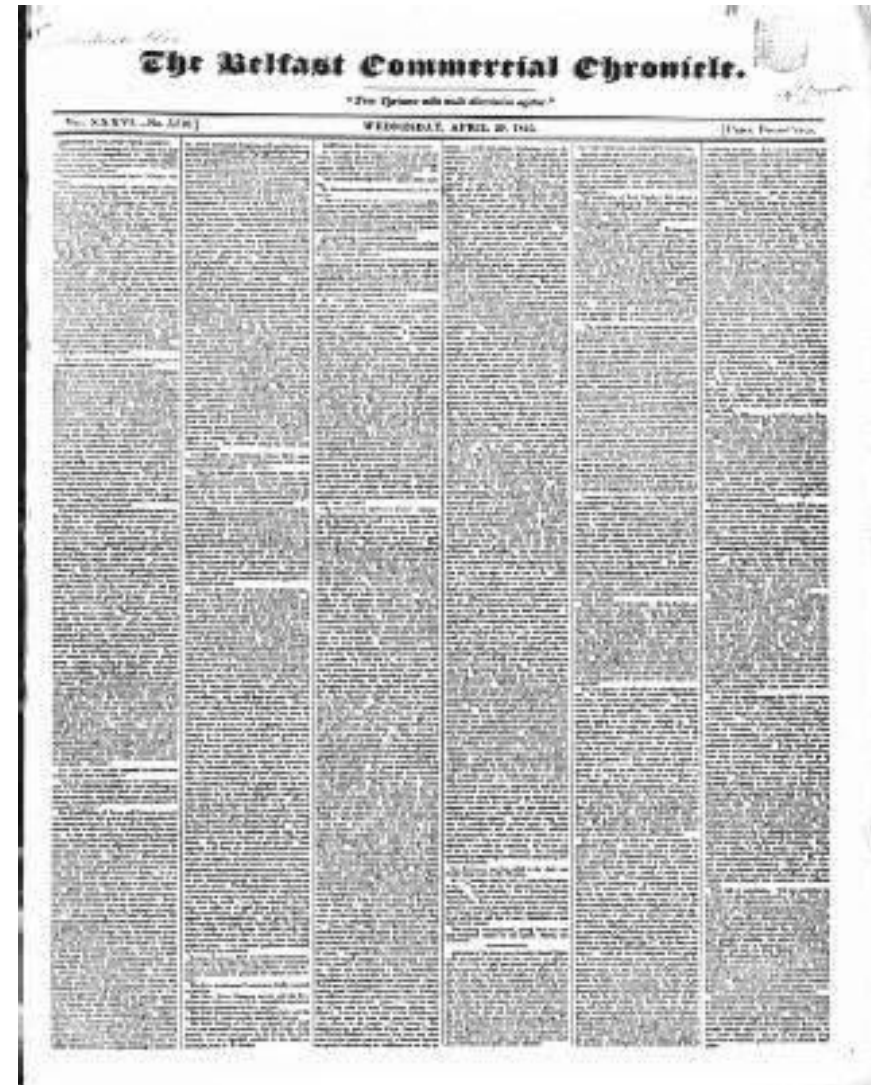
Belfast Monthly Magazine (1808)

- Founded and edited by William Drennan in 1808.
- Numerous editorials addressing the evils of slavery.
- Mainly of nationalist character, advocating reform of the 'Catholic Question.'
- Surprisingly, the primary readership was predominantly Protestant.
- Focuses on Irish subjects: origins, history, antiquities, politics, language, and topography.
- Explores links between Ireland and the world, appealing to "universal philosophers."



Belfast Commercial Chronicle (1805)

- Established alongside the Monthly Magazine, the Belfast Commercial Chronicle focused on the commercial sectors of the town.
- Demonstrated a clear stance against slavery and the slave trade.
- Frequently published articles addressing the issues of slavery, reflecting the newspaper's commitment to social justice.
- Poetry served as a popular tool for Belfast anti-slavery supporters, amplifying the moral and emotional dimensions of their stance.



Belfast Commercial Chronicle purpose and function

- Aimed at engaging and informing individuals involved in commerce, aligning with the newspaper's commercial focus.
- Played a significant role in promoting anti-slavery sentiments within Belfast's community.
- The publishers of the Chronicle, due to it being aimed towards the town's commercial sector that an end of slavery could affect local businessmen who traded in products such as sugar and cotton. Despite this however, the paper frequently published abolitionist material in the 1820s.

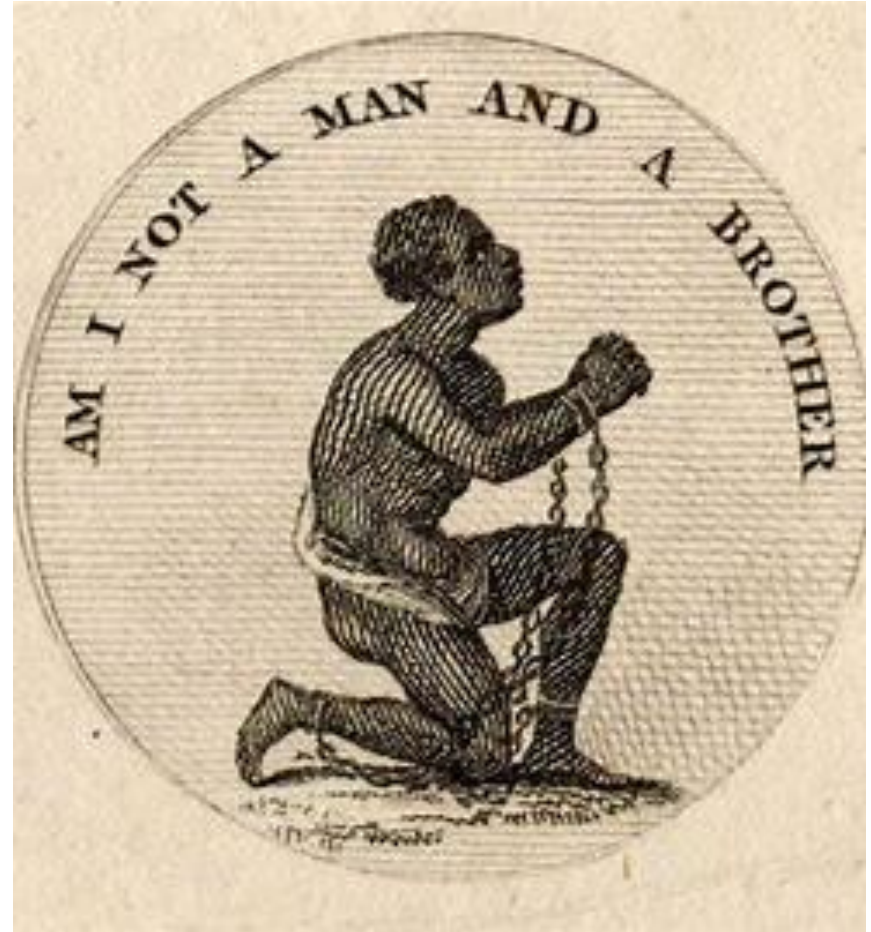


Belfast Commercial Chronicle content

In 1805 the Chronicle published a poem in which it criticised the hypocrisy of the trade:

“Proud Christians, who boast of their civilisation, Go far beyond Pagans in cruelty’s art...”

The rhetoric within the Chronicle is highly similar to that used both in the previous century and in the poem “The Abolition of the Slave Trade”.

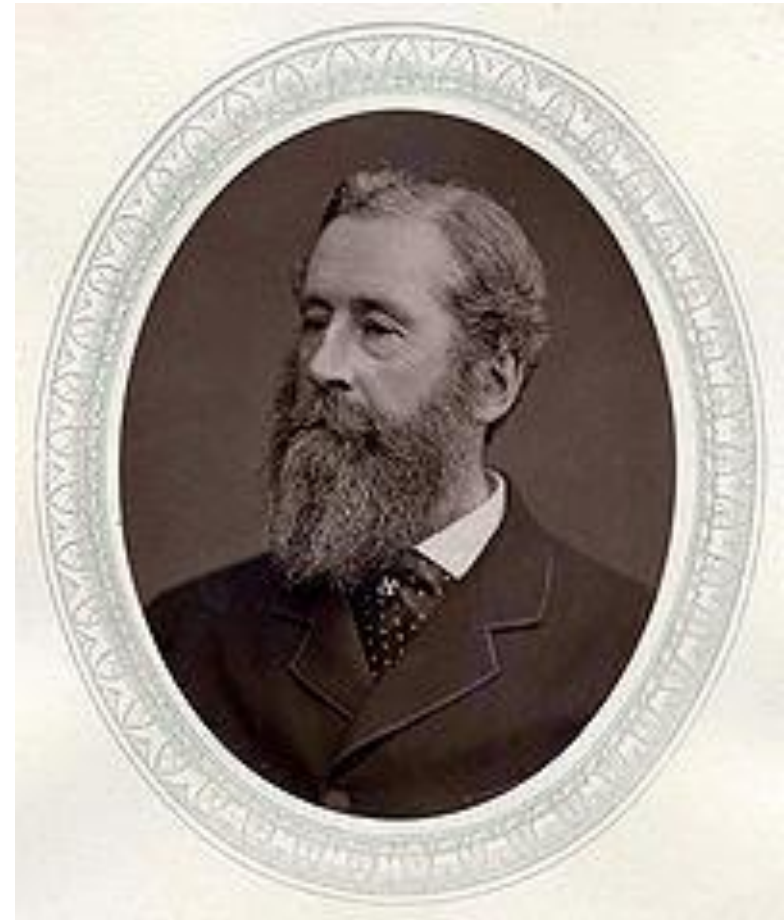


Abolitionist activity



James Hamilton, 1st Duke of Abercorn

- Born into an Ulster-Scots aristocratic family on January 21, 1811. - Succeeded grandfather's titles and estates at age seven in 1818.
- Educated at Harrow School and Christ Church, Oxford.
- Appointed Lord Lieutenant of Donegal in 1844; - Served as Groom of the Stole, Privy Counsellor, and Viceroy of Ireland in 1866.



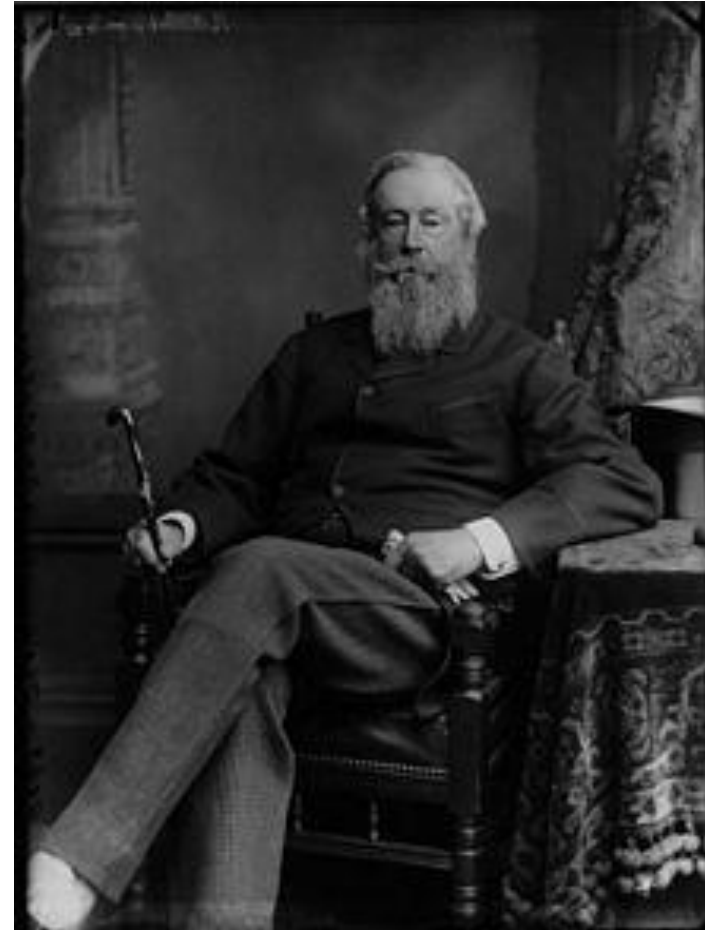
James Hamilton, 1st Duke of Abercorn, later life

- Became Marquess of Hamilton and Duke of Abercorn in 1868. - Envoy-Extraordinary for King Umberto I of Italy's investiture with the Order of the Garter in 1878.
- Elected Chancellor of the University of Ireland in 1881.
- Married Lady Louisa in 1832, had fourteen children;
- Committed to maintaining family status, seven daughters married into the peerage.
- Died on October 31, 1885, at Baronscourt, County Tyrone.



1806 speech

‘My principles, which I believe are just what they were upon all subjects, are upon none the more steady than upon the slave trade...it [is] a duty to God and man to hold in abomination the principles trafficking in human blood and misery...’



Celebrating abolition of the British slave trade

- Public celebration of the abolition of slavery
- Formal thanks given to Wilberforce at meetings.

AT a MEETING of the MERCHANTS of WATERFORD, held at their Committee-Room, on Wednesday, 14th of April, 1807.

WILLIAM PENNELL, in the Chair,

RESOLVED, That in Order to commemorate the Abolition of the Slave Trade, a Subscription be entered into, to be applied to the Release and Relief of unfortunate Debtors now confined in the Prisons of this City, and such other Charitable Purposes as shall hereafter be deemed expedient by a Committee of the Subscribers.

RESOLVED, That our Fellow Citizens be invited to cooperate with us, for the above laudable Purposes; and that SIMON NEWPORT & SON, and J. & A. ATKINS, and N. B. SKOTTOWE, Esqrs. Bankers, be requested to receive their Subscriptions.

RESOLVED, That our sincere Thanks be transmitted by our Chairman to WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, Esq. for his active and continued Exertions in that great Cause of Humanity, and which have so happily terminated.

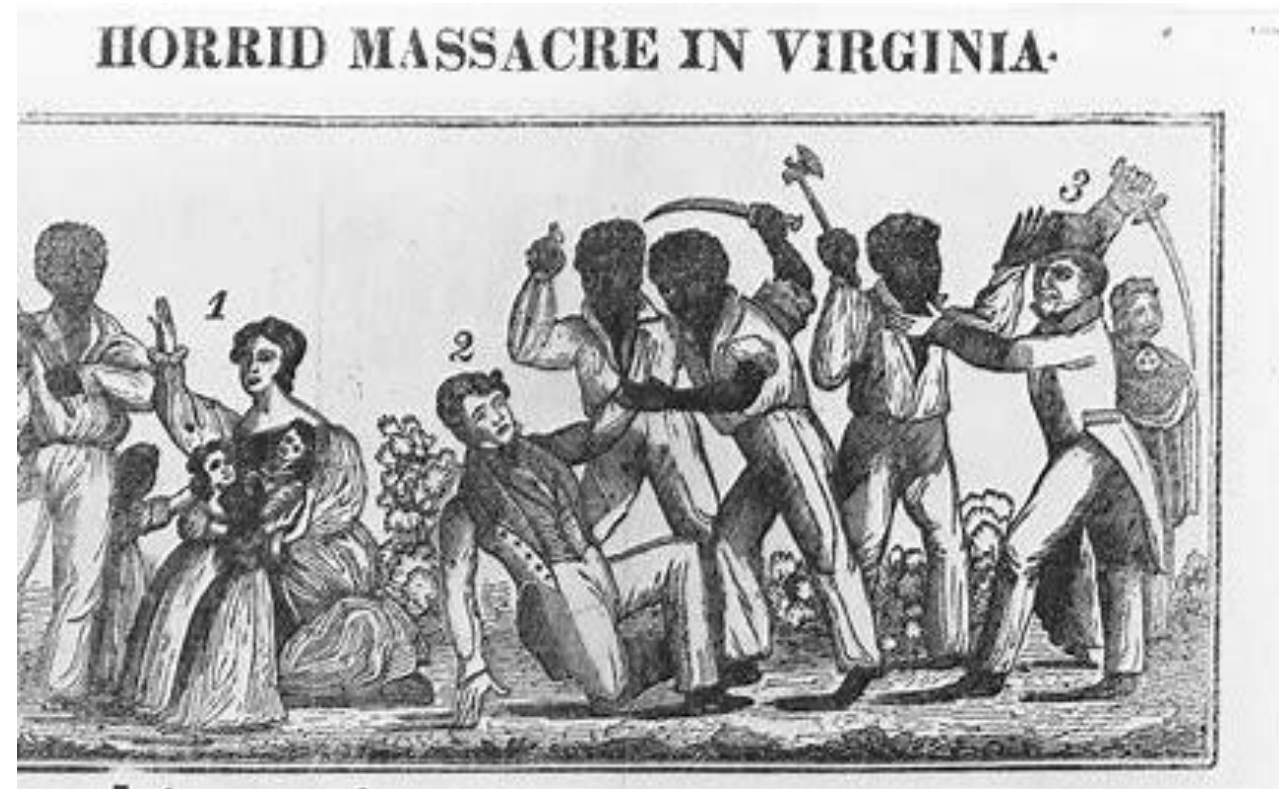
W. PENNELL, CHAIRMAN.

The Friends to the Abolition of the Slave Trade propose to commemorate that Event by Dining together, at the Commercial Buildings, on Monday, the 4th of May next.
Tickets to be had at the Bar.

Waterford, April 18, 1807.

Press agitation

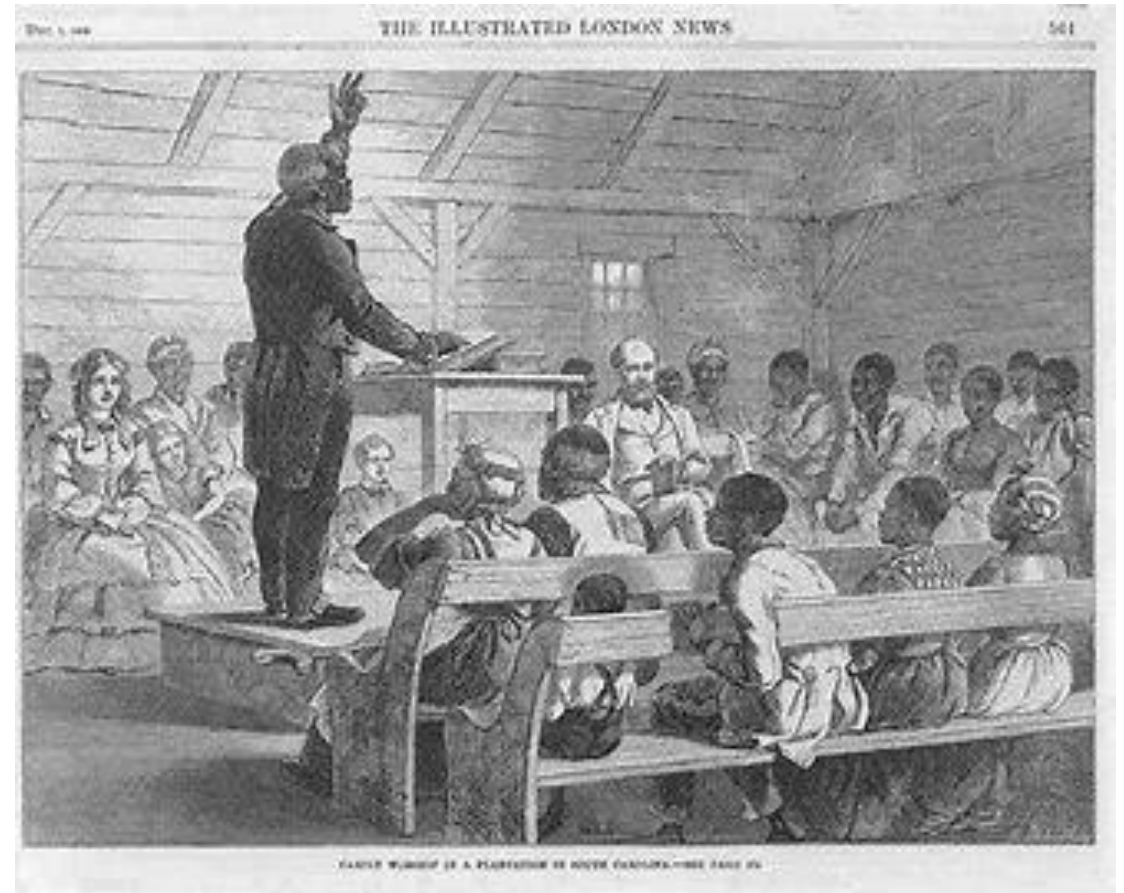
In 1816, frequent mention was made in the *Belfast Commercial Chronicle* of the “Friends of civil & religious liberty” It spoke not only on the liberation of slaves from slavery, but on the topic of liberty.



Denied religion

In 1819, the BNL frequently spoke of the treatment of slaves, and in 1819 criticised the treatment of slaves in the USA. Of particular focus in this article was the interference encountered by the slaves when they wished to partake in religious services:

“That such feelings and practices should among men, who know the value of liberty, and profess to understand its principles, is the consummation of wickedness.”



The Persecuted Negro

WISDOM'S spurn'd, and lonely silence
Keeps our Chapel clos'd by pride.
What was heard, that, Chiefs! your violence
Parts the **Negro** and his Guide?
Did you think to keep us pray'less,
Lest Heav'n's King should hear our cry?
Or that Truth would make us fearless
In the cause of Liberty?
Impious men! had Fortune made you
Slaves in Africa, many a Chief,
Charitably would persuade you
To embrace his false belief;
You, who should be heard deploring
Our wild errors, wield your rod,
To prevent us from adoring,
With yourselves, the living God.

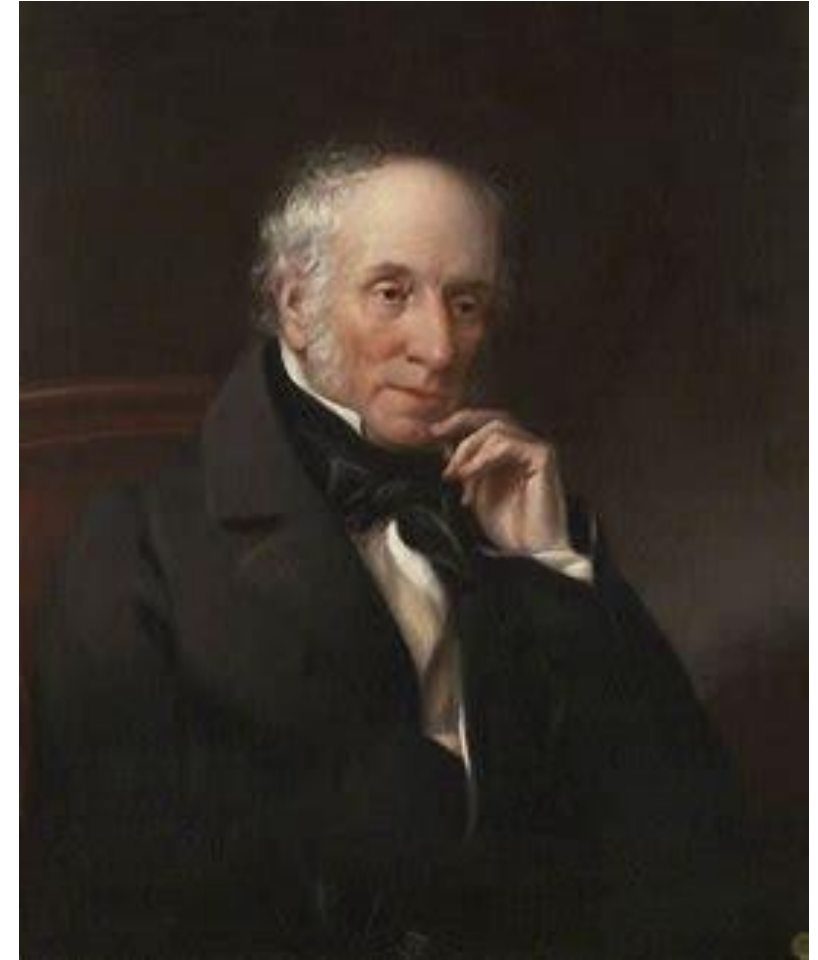


Belfast Commercial Chronicle - Saturday 20 May 1809

Much expression through poetry

Why was poetry an important medium?

- 1. Emotion and Romanticism:** Poetry in this period was characterized by the Romantic movement, which celebrated intense emotions and the beauty of nature. Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" and Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" exemplify this focus on the sublime and emotional experience.
- 2. Social Commentary:** Poets used their verses to comment on pressing societal issues. Lord Byron's "Don Juan" satirized contemporary society, while Robert Burns' poems highlighted the struggles of the common people.



William Wordsworth

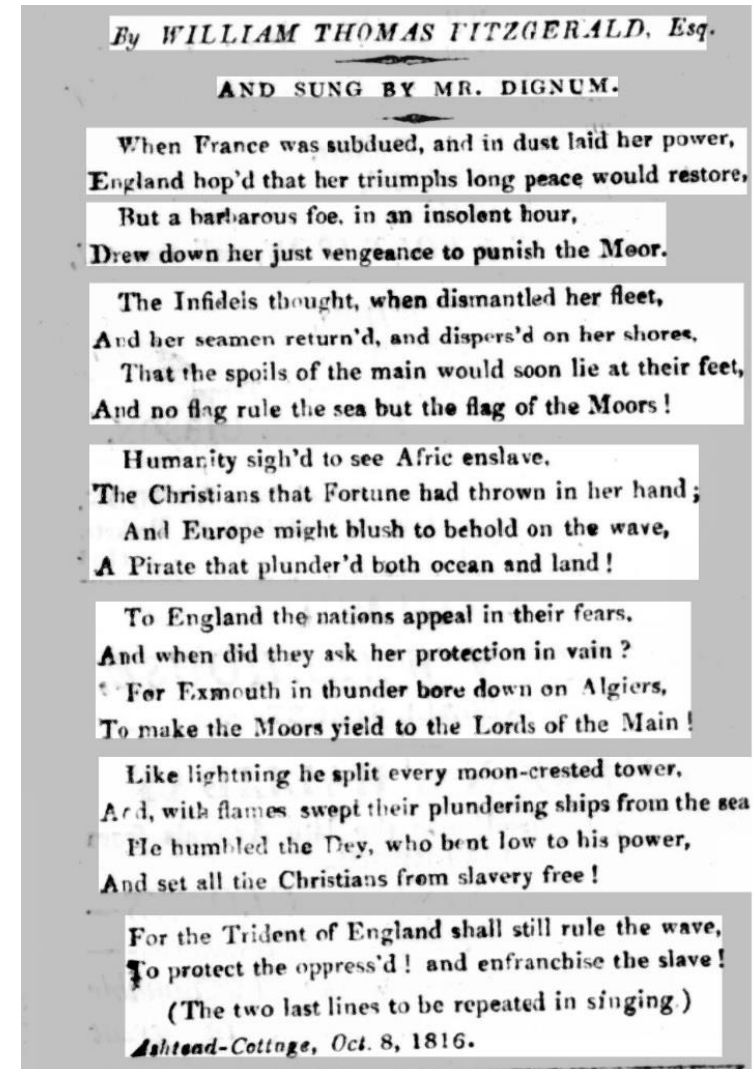
Nationalism and innovation

- 3. National Identity:** In Ireland, poets like Thomas Moore expressed nationalistic sentiments through their verses, contributing to the preservation of Irish cultural identity.
- 4. Literary Innovation:** The early 19th century witnessed innovative poetic forms and styles, with the emergence of the lyrical ballad and the use of conversational language. This experimentation expanded the boundaries of poetry.
- 5. Legacy:** The works of poets from this era continue to be studied and celebrated for their enduring impact on literature and culture, making poetry a vital form of expression in early 19th century Britain and Ireland.

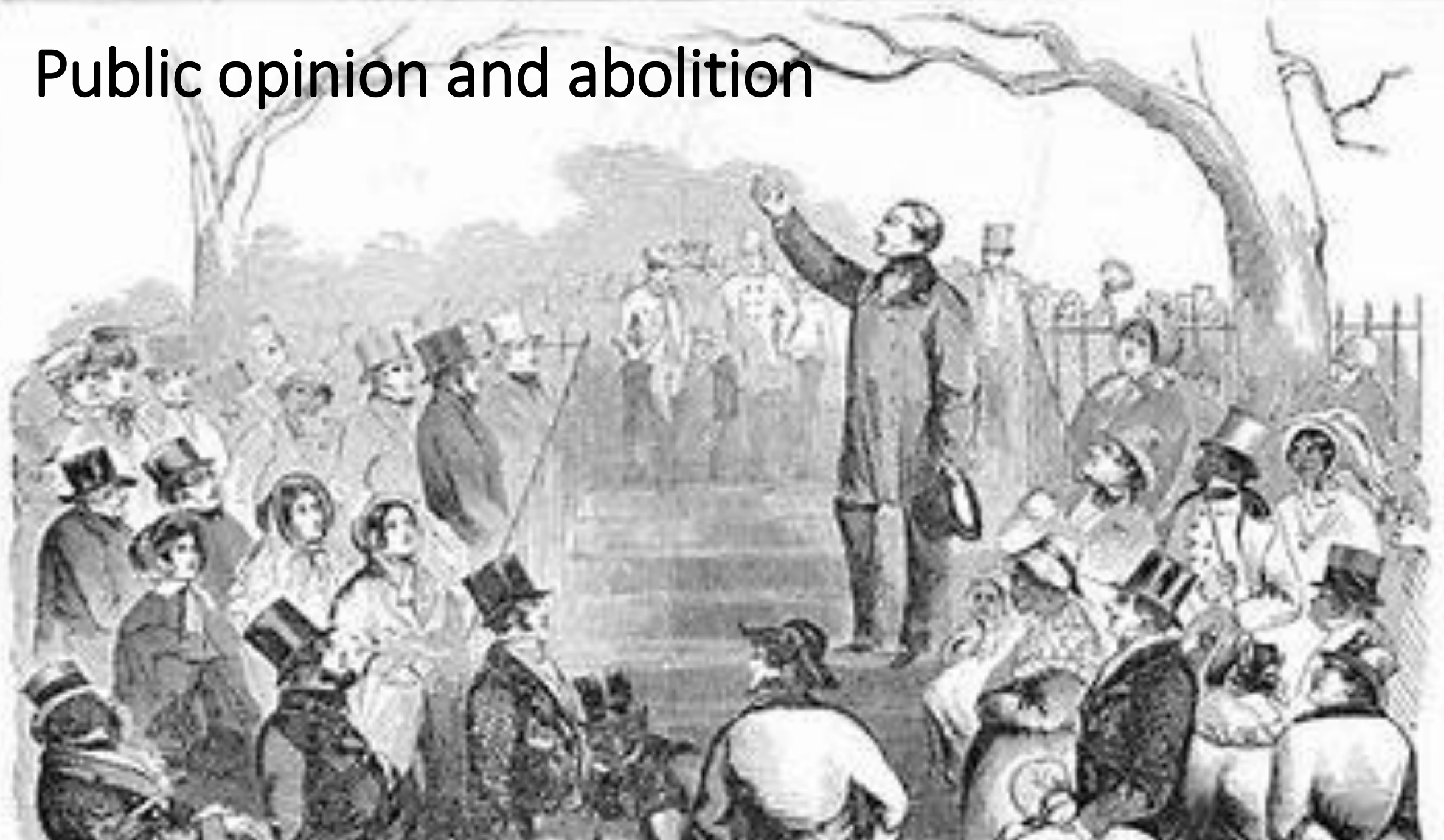


Celebration of the abolition of slavery in Morocco

- Trans-Saharan Slave Trade:
 - Centered in Morocco from the 7th to the early 20th century.
 - Enslaved Africans transported from Timbuktu to Marrakesh.
 - African tribes converted to Islam participated in the trade.
 - Almoravid dynasty facilitated trade in exchange for goods.
 - Sultan Isma'il ibn Sharif incorporated Sub-Saharan slaves into his army.
- Barbary Slave Trade:
 - Morocco's role in the Barbary slave trade from the 16th to the early 19th century.
 - Barbary corsairs from North African Ottoman provinces and Morocco captured European slaves.
 - Ransoming or enslaving merchant ship crews enriched the rulers.
 - Estimated 1-1.25 million Europeans captured by Barbary pirates.



Public opinion and abolition



Was slavery a popular issue?

BNL, June 1800 noted:

‘The distresses of the poor have for many months been very severe and still continue...further aid must be had...’

Weavers suffered from poor wages and poverty diets



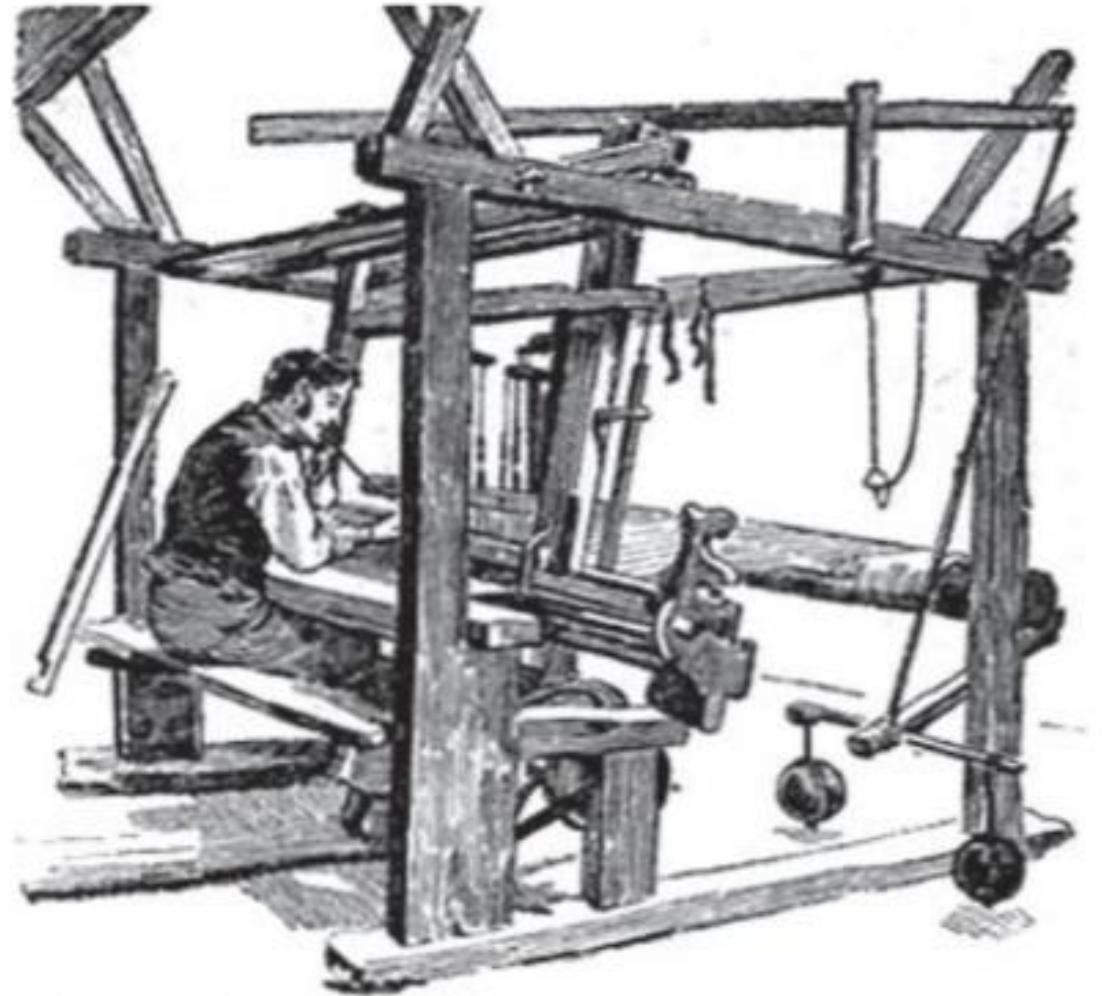
Jemmy Hope

Hand weaver Jemmy Hope wrote to Mary Ann McCracken in 1808 that he had to leave the employment of John McCracken (brother) for 'want of wages, not being able to support my family out of my salary'.



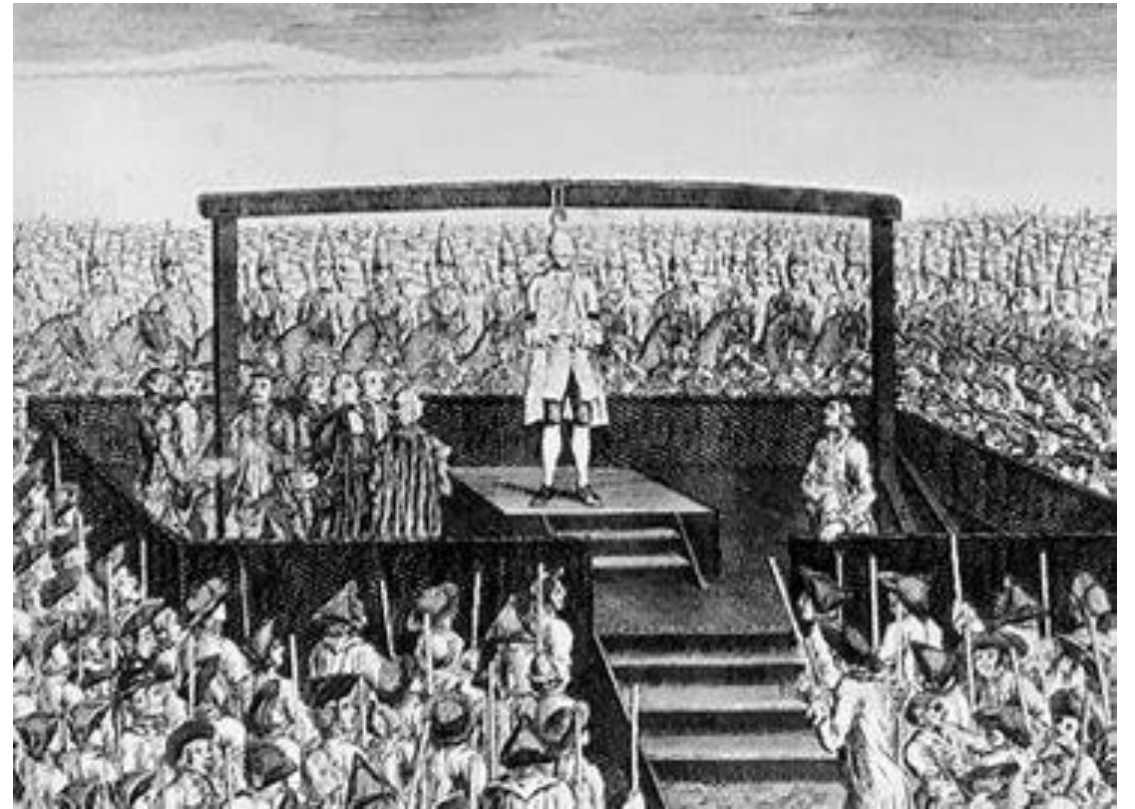
Francis Johnston

- Francis Johnston was an employer who employed home based weavers.
- In 1815, weavers were in dispute with him and agreed to 'neither weave a web for him...or permit others to work for him'.
- It was alleged that Johnston had given work to others at lower prices than other employers at the time.
- August 1815: an attempt was made to burn Johnston's home down in Peter Hill. In February 1816, Johnston was burned out of his home.



Execution and resolution

- A £2k reward given to catch the culprits. Several were arrested. James Park and James Dickson were given 18 months and 300 lashes.
- Two weavers, John Doe and John Magill were hanged for their part outside Bank Budlings (Primark) in 1816.
- Another weaver, Joseph Madden, was also executed for his part in the attack.
- 1817: John McCann, tried but acquitted for having shot the president of the Weavers' Society with whom he had a dispute.
- Industrial action led to 1818 strike which forced employers to modify their wage reductions.
- Typhus outbreak in 1817/8 killed 7,000 Belfast weavers in three years.



Poverty in 1830

- Depression years weavers worked from 4am to midnight for 4s 6d per week.
- 17 Feb 1830, meeting of gentlemen at St Anne's church agreed to provide relief.
- Many weavers lived on 'Indian' meal for animals, described as 'unfit' for human consumption.
- Mulholland told Parliamentary commissioners that workers can '60 to 70 miles to be employed'.



Slave Girl incident, 1818

In 1818, Belfast News-Letter (23 June 1818) published a Chronicle article detailing a fifteen-year-old slave girl's arrival in Belfast with abusive masters.

Reports claimed she sought refuge upon discovering her freedom but was apprehended and destined for Jamaica.

The incident triggered a public outcry, leading the Sovereign to intervene and summon the girl for investigation.



Resolution

Subsequent inquiries revealed inaccuracies in the story, clarifying that the girl had left Belfast willingly.

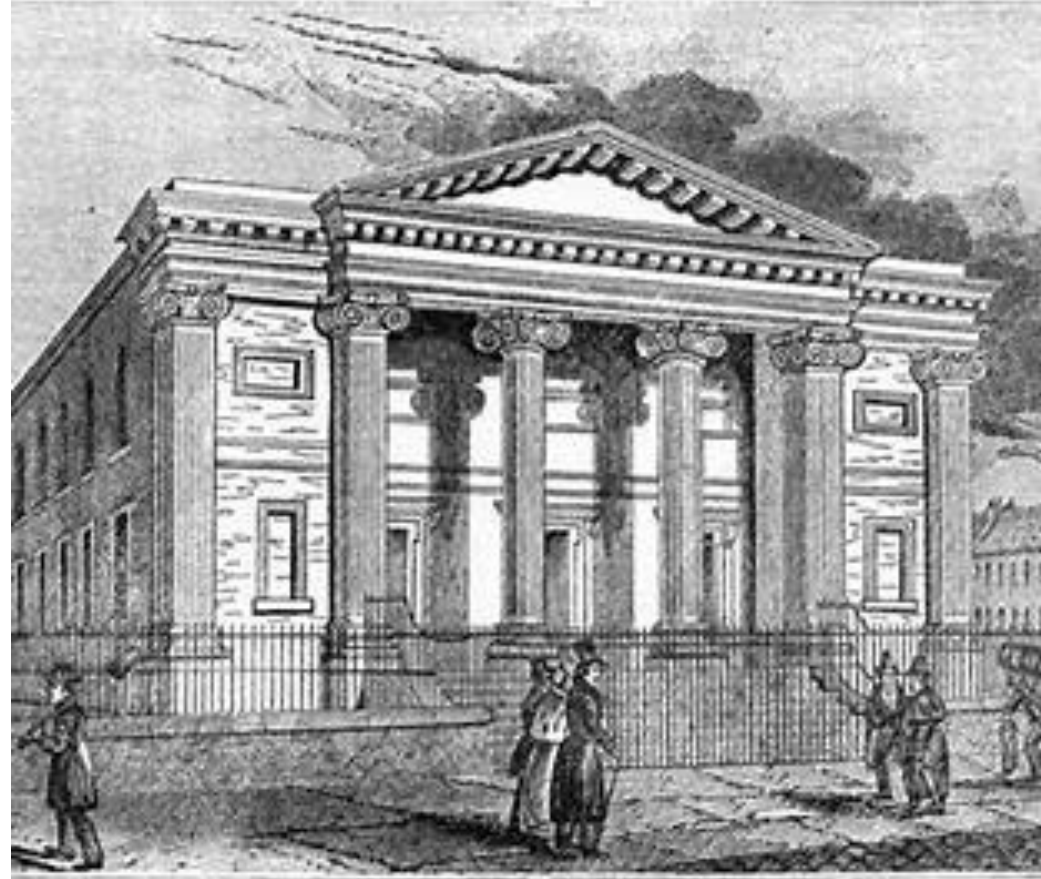
Despite factual discrepancies, the strong public reaction underscored Belfast's vehement opposition to slavery and its disapproval of slave owners.



Portrait of an older woman in [New Orleans](#) with her enslaved servant girl in the mid-19th century

Presbyterian Synod, 1828

- Presbyterian Synod met in Armagh in July.
- It discussed slavery and an anti-slavery petitions being forwarded to the government.
- The Synod's support for abolition was a topic of discussion



Twelve slave incident, 1828

- A cargo of sugar from Bermuda arrived two ships, the Belfast and the Griffin in September 1828.
- A "man of colour" residing in Belfast appealed to local citizens for assistance in freeing the twelve slaves who were on board.
- Men called before Magistrates at Belfast Police Court to be asked whether they wanted to be freed or return home



The twelve slaves

- They were 'healthy stout men, clean and well clothed...seemed to be 16 to 20 years of age..'
- The men 'spoke English very well..'
- In Bermuda 'their employment was not very laborious, they did some work on the Sabbath...they usually attended a Protestant place of workshop...'
- Their masters hired them out and got 2/3 of their wages.

SLAVERY — INTERESTING INVESTIGATION.

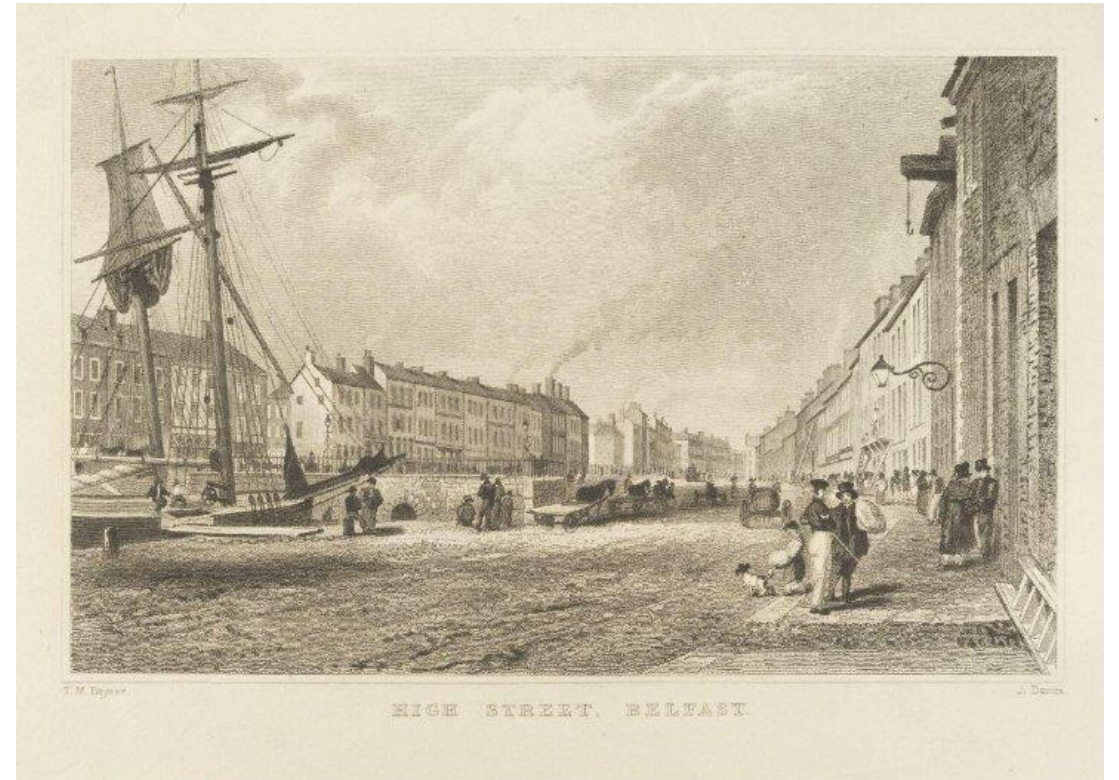
Yesterday an investigation took place at the Sessions-house of this town, before C. M. Skinner, Esq. the Police Magistrate, and William Clark, Esq. J. P. The circumstances connected with this enquiry are these:—

Some time since the *Lavinia*, from Trinidad for Belfast, put into Bermuda in a leaky state. She was condemned, and two vessels (the *Belfast*, a brig, and the *Griffin*, a schooner,) were chartered to bring her cargo of sugars to Belfast. They arrived here about a fortnight ago, and discharged their cargoes. A few days since, a man of colour who resides in this town, waited on a member of the Society of Friends, and informed him that there were twelve Slaves on board of the Bermuda vessels. This fact having been communicated to the Moyallen Branch of the London African Anti-Slavery Association, Messrs. Wakefield, Christy, Dawson, and Sinton, members, immediately repaired to Belfast, and waited on several of the Magistrates, and claimed their interference in liberating those unfortunate men.

About one o'clock the

Resolution

- Three men chose freedom, while the others opted to return to slavery to reunite with their families.
- The meeting organizers emphasized their intention was not to criticize employers but to provide slaves with the option of freedom.
- Organisers pledged support for those choosing freedom, assisting them in finding employment.




William John Brown

- In August 1830, William John Brown, a black American and former slave, appeared in Belfast Police Court.
- Accompanied by members of the Society of Friends, he looked frail and spoke in a feeble voice.
- Recounted his journey from slavery in Virginia to freedom, and subsequent kidnapping by slavers.

NOW IN PORT.

FOR NEW ORLEANS,
To Sail on the 10th September,
The first class Brig
PLANTER,
CHARLES KENN, Commander,



Coppered and Copper-fastened, and Sails remarkably fast.
For Freight or Passage, having excellent accommodations,
apply to

JOHN VANCE, or
ROBERT GAMBLE,
Who have for SALE, received by said Vessel,
883 Bales Orleans COTTON.

Belfast, 7th August, 1830. (135

The Sailing of the PLANTER is unavoidably
POSTPONED till the 18th instant.

Kidnapping and Enslavement

- In 1826, slave speculators kidnapped him from his home in Baltimore, Maryland, despite having papers of freedom.
- Transported to New Orleans, sold multiple times, and forced into labour, loading cotton onto ships.

SLAVERY.—On Thursday, 12th inst. a very curious case of slavery underwent investigation at the Police-office of Belfast, before C. M. Skinner, Esq. J. P.—William John Brown, aged about 50 years, was brought before that gentleman under the following circumstances:—Brown was, according to his own account, a free black, born in Baltimore, and had a wife and five children, who resided with him in his own house. His domestic happiness, however, was effectually destroyed by some of that class styled, in America, *slave-speculators*, by whom he was kidnapped, and compelled to cross the country in such a manner as rendered it impossible for him to form any idea of the route taken. He was put on board of a vessel, in which he remained 25 days, at the end of which, he found that he had been conveyed to New Orleans. At this place he was detained three years and a half. He was sold, as a slave, by one King, to a person named Jacob, who employed him in loading the *Planter*, the property of Mr. J. Vance, of Belfast. Brown, anxious to regain his liberty, purchased a dollar's worth of biscuit, and contrived to conceal himself in the hold of this vessel, amongst a quantity of cotton. Immediately after he had thus secreted himself, the vessel proceeded to Belfast, where she arrived on the 4th inst. During the passage he subsisted on the biscuit, gliding occasionally out of his retreat in the night time, in order to obtain water, and satisfy other calls of nature. Brown declares that none of the ship's crew knew of his concealment, save one man, whose name he would not divulge; and he was not seen on board by the captain, mates, or any other of the crew. He was not even seen getting on shore, when the vessel came to the quay.—One of the crew afterwards saw him in the street, and communicated the fact. This intimation led to his arrest, and, of course, to the hearing of the case before Mr. Skinner.—Some members of the Society of Friends, and others, actuated by that spirit of philanthropy, which forms a strong trait in the character of that most valuable community, attended on behalf of the oppressed man of colour, and Mr. Skinner having, with much patience and strict regard to justice, heard Brown's statement in detail, and pronounced him to be a *free man*, he was liberated, and left the office in company with those benevolent gentlemen who had espoused his cause. He was also accompanied by an intelligent and spirited black, an inhabitant of Belfast, who evinced a lively interest in his behalf, and pleaded his cause with an animation and zeal which was honourable to his feelings. From Brown's appearance, he seems to have suffered much from hunger and confinement.

Escape and Freedom

- Secretly planned escape with the help of a crew member on the brig Planter, during a voyage to Belfast.
- Hid in a cotton bale, sustaining himself on biscuits; escaped upon arrival in Belfast.
- Caught but supported by Quakers in court; declared free by the magistrate.
- Lived in Belfast as a laborer near Smithfield Market.
- Passed away in November 1831, buried in an unmarked grave in Clifton Street Cemetery.
- Noted in burial records that his wife and children remained enslaved in America.



Unknown man from Bermuda, 1833

- A slave from a Bermuda vessel arrives in Belfast, initially intending to return to the West Indies.
- Changes his mind and seeks help from the Anti-Slavery Society to stay and claim his freedom.
- Mr. Carlile and Wm. Clarke, Esq. advocate for the man's case, aiding in his emancipation.
- The man, stolen by a slave dealer from Martinique, had been hired out as a cook in a trading vessel.
- His former owner received 12 dollars per month for his labor.
- Now free, he expressed joy in his newfound freedom and willingness to work for his livelihood in Belfast.

*A **Slave** Emancipated in Belfast.*—Some days ago a vessel belonging to Bermuda arrived in this port. It was understood that a **slave** was on board, and that he was anxious to return to the West Indies, though aware of his right to freedom by remaining in this country. However, on Friday evening he called on the Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society, and expressed a strong desire to remain in this country as a freeman. Mr. Carlile called on Wm. Clarke, Esq. who entered warmly into the poor man's case. He has regained his liberty, seems delighted with his newly acquired freedom, and perfectly willing to work for his support. We have heard that he was originally stolen by a **slave** dealer from Martinique, and has for several years been hired out by his late owner as a cook in a trading vessel, the owner receiving 12 dollars per month as remuneration for the **slave's** services.

Meetings for anti slavery activity

- Established in 1816 by Robert Finley.
- Originally named the Society for the Colonization of Free People of Color of America until 1837.
- Aimed to encourage migration of freeborn blacks and emancipated slaves to Africa.

Meeting This Evening.

TO THE
FRIENDS OF AFRICA,

THE AMERICAN COLONIZATION SOCIETY have now, during Eleven Years, been employed in settling Christianized and Emancipated Negroes on the West Coast of Africa, with a view to extend Christianity among the Heathen and Mahometan Tribes, and to form a barrier against the continuance of the Slave Trade on that Coast. Providence has already wonderfully blessed their labours. Three Thousand Christian Negroes have been settled in the Colony of Liberia; and these have been joined by so many Natives, that the Colony now extends about 280 miles along the Coast, and includes a population of nearly 30,000, partly employed in Agriculture, and partly in Commerce—having a regular African Government, Schools, Printing Press, Newspaper, Places of Worship, and a stated Christian Ministry, including Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists.

The FRIENDS of the above Plan are respectfully requested to attend a MEETING, in the

**PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
MAY-STREET,**

*Upon WEDNESDAY, the 6th inst. at SEVEN o'Clock
Evening,*

When ELLIOTT CRESSON, of Philadelphia, the Representative of the Society, will attend, and give a statement of the principles, plans, and progress of the Settlement, and its happy influence in destroying the Slave Trade.

Sir S. MAY has kindly consented to take the Chair on this occasion.

(795)

Educational lectures

Lecture this Evening.
NEGRO SLAVERY.

A COURSE of LECTURES on NEGRO SLAVERY will be delivered, under the Divine blessing, in the LANCASTERIAN SCHOOL-HOUSE, by the Rev. C. STUART, as follows, viz. :—

3. FRIDAY, 31st Dec. } *Justice and practicability of immediate emancipation.*
4. SATURDAY, 1st Jan. ... } *Duty of refraining from Slave Sugar, &c. &c.*

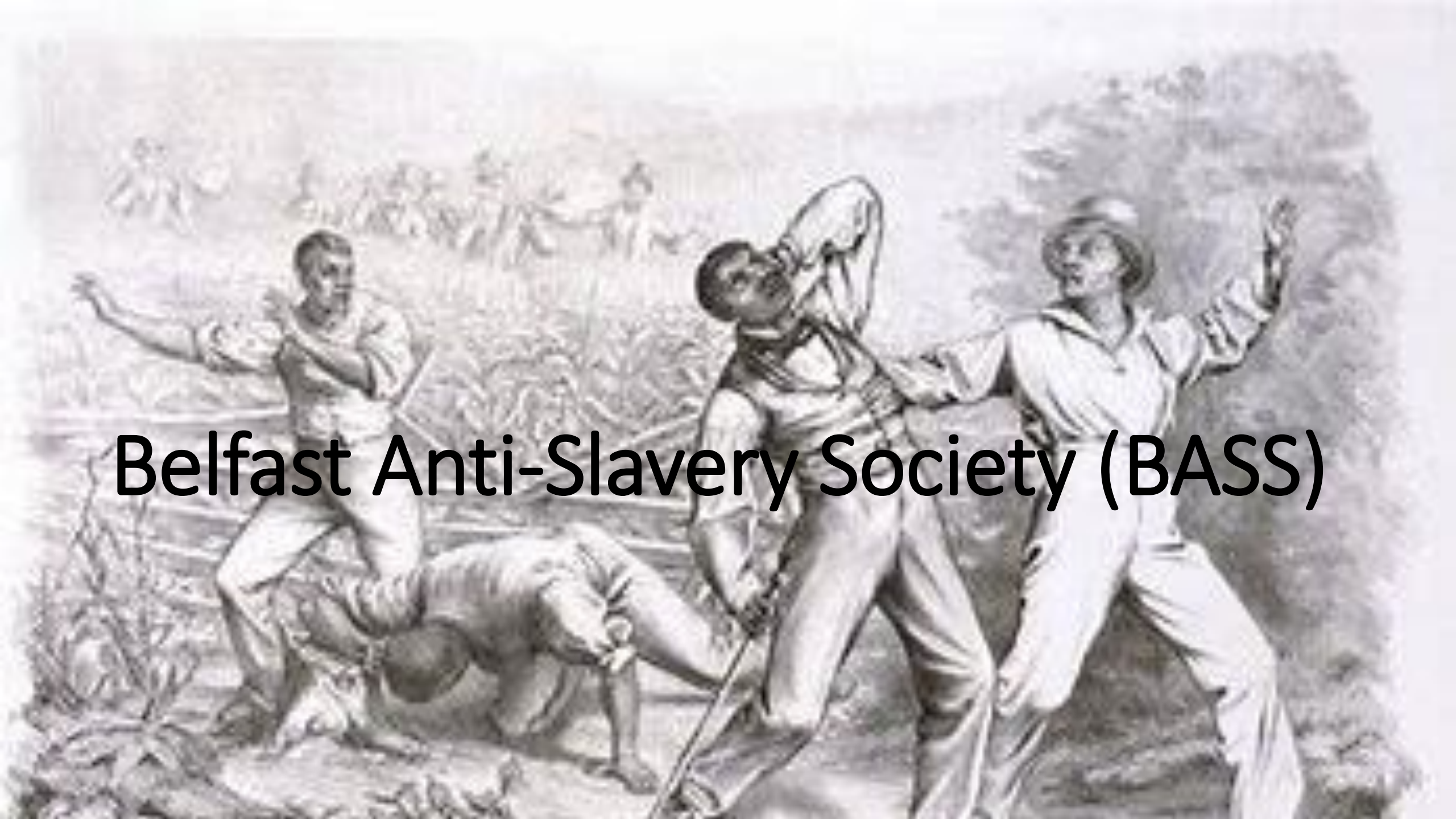
Lectures to begin at ONE o'clock, P.M.
Admission free. (477)

NEGRO SLAVERY.

A COURSE of LECTURES on NEGRO SLAVERY will be delivered, under the Divine blessing, in the LANCASTERIAN SCHOOL-HOUSE, by the Rev. C. STUART, as follows, viz. :—

1. MONDAY, 27th Dec. } *History and present state of Negro Slavery.*
2. WEDNESDAY, 29th Dec. } *Comparative view of East and West India Slavery.*
3. FRIDAY, 31st Dec. } *Justice and practicability of immediate emancipation.*
4. SATURDAY, 1st Jan. ... } *Duty of refraining from Slave Sugar, &c. &c.*

Lectures to begin at ONE o'clock, P.M.
Admission free. (477)



Belfast Anti-Slavery Society (BASS)

Formation

- In September 1830, the Belfast Anti-Slavery Society (BASS) was established, marking a pivotal change in the town's stance on slavery.
- The society's formation resulted from a request by one hundred and fifty inhabitants who urged Sir Stephen May, the Sovereign of Belfast, to convene a meeting.
- The primary objective of the meeting was to promote the abolition of slavery within the British Empire.

Meeting this Day.

ANTI-SLAVERY MEETING.
TO SIR STEPHEN MAY,
SOVEREIGN OF BELFAST.

WE, the undersigned, respectfully request you to call a MEETING of the Inhabitants of this Town and neighbourhood, on as early a day as convenient, to take into consideration the propriety of forming a Society, whose object shall be to obtain by all lawful and prudent means the abolition of Slavery throughout the British dominions.

(Signed by about 150 respectable Inhabitants.)

Agreeably to the foregoing Requisition, I call a Meeting of the Inhabitants of the Town and neighbourhood of Belfast, on TUESDAY, the 14th instant, in the Lancasterian School-House, at ONE o'clock.

(Signed) **STEPHEN MAY,** Sovereign.
8th September, 1830. (3)

Who was present?

- People attending anti slavery meeting on 14 September 1830 were described as 'respectable'.
- Meeting chaired by the Sovereign, Sir Stephen May.
- Rev. Dr Crolly, RC bishop
- Rev Thomas Dix Hincks
- Rev Prof William Bruce

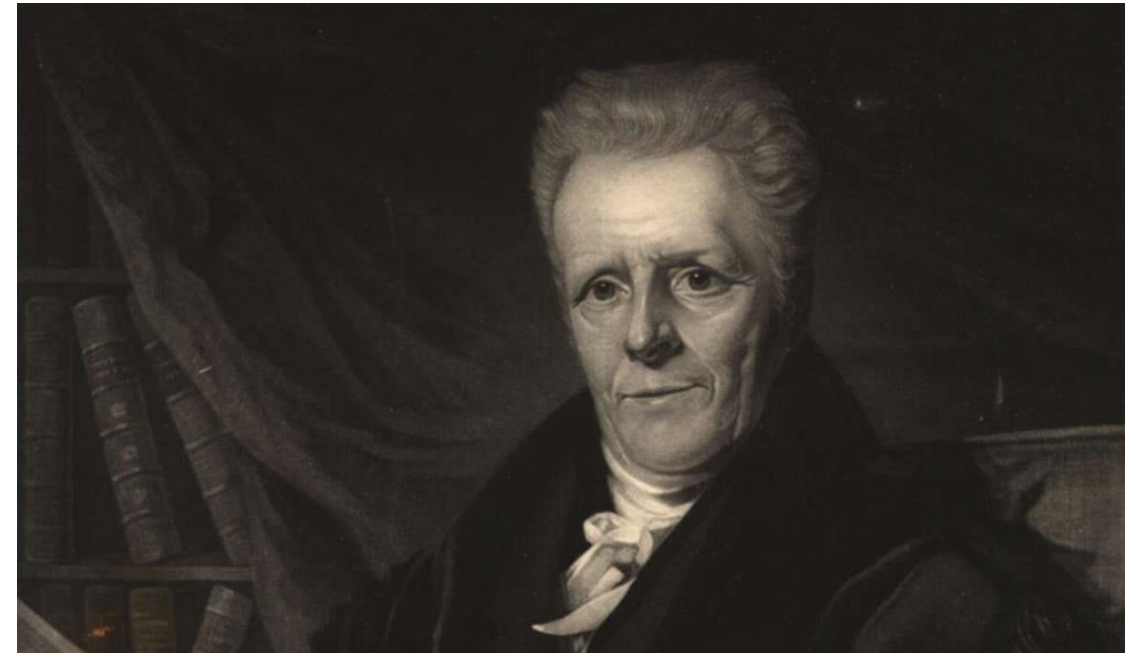
BELFAST ANTI-SLAVERY MEETING.

On Tuesday last at one o'clock a numerous and respectable meeting of the inhabitants of Belfast was held in the large room of the Lancasterian School-house, for the purpose of taking into consideration the subject of Negro Slavery, and of adopting such constitutional measures as might be advisable for its complete abolition. Sir S. May, Sovereign, was in the Chair.

After reading the requisition in consequence of which the meeting had been called, and which had been signed by 150 respectable individuals, the Chairman said, that though in conformity to the wishes of so many influential persons he had in his official capacity called the meeting, yet he did not mean to take an active part in its proceedings. He felt in common with the requisitionists the strongest possible objections to the general system of slavery, but in the settlement of this specific question so many interests were to be reconciled, that any measure which would hurry it to a precipitate conclusion would be injudicious, especially as Government had resolved on putting an end to it as soon as it could be done. In an enlightened country, an immediate transition from a state of slavery to a state of freedom might

Rev Thomas Dix Hincks, LLD, MRIA (1767-1857)

- Born 24 Jun 1767 in Dublin, Ireland
- Son of Edward Hincks and Bithier Dix
- Husband of Anne Boult; married 1791
- Father of Edward Hincks DD, William Hincks, Thomas Hincks, and Francis Hincks
- Died 24 Feb 1857 at age 89 in Belfast, Ireland
- Educated by Mr Mercer, entered Trinity College Dublin on 1 November 1784, aged 17; No degrees recorded
- Ordained a Presbyterian minister; worked at the Old Presbyterian Church (Unitarian) on Princes Street in Cork
- Founded the Cork Institution and taught in Fermoy, County Cork
- From 1821 to 1836, served as classical headmaster at the Belfast Academical Institution



Rev Thomas Dix Hinks

Sir Stephen Edward May (1781-1845)

- He was the illegitimate son of (Sir) (James) Edward May*, 2nd Bt.
- On 17 Jan 1820, he married Frances Stella, the daughter of Reb. Brinsley Nixon of Paynestown, co. Meath.
- In 1816, he was knighted.
- May held several offices during his lifetime:
 - Storekeeper in Belfast in 1803
 - Collector of customs in Belfast from April 1816 to 1832
 - He also served as a captain in the Belfast volunteer infantry in 1814.



Later life

- May's political career included representing the constituency of BELFAST from 16 Sept. 1814 to April 1816.
- He was known for his support of Catholic relief and his vote for Parnell's motion on 30 May 1815.
- Generally, he voted in favor of government policies on various issues.
- In March 1816, he received the collectorship of customs and a knighthood as part of a deal.
- Sovereign of Belfast, 1830
- Stephen Edward May passed away on 28 Oct 1845 at the age of 64.



William Crollly (8 June 1780 – 8 April 1849)

- **Positions:**

- Bishop of Down and Connor (1825-1835)
- Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh (1835-1849)

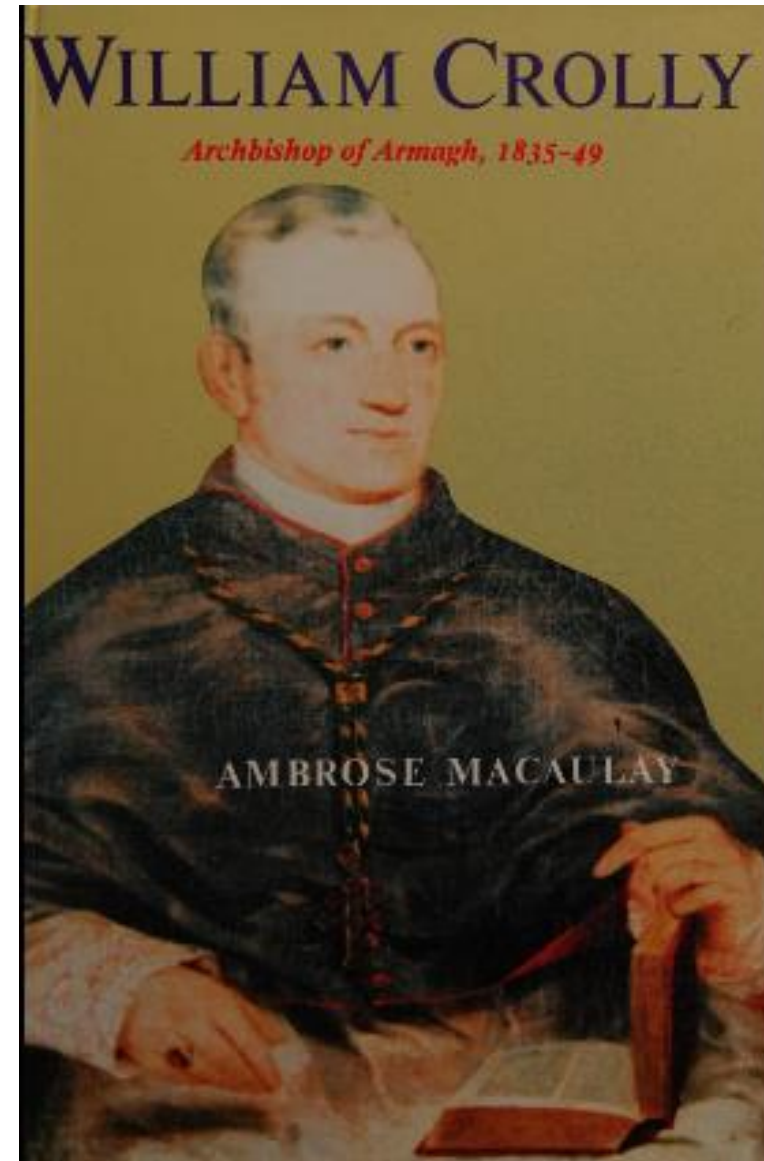
- **Early Life and Education:**

- Native of Ballykilbeg near Downpatrick
- Educated at Mr. Nelson's Classical school in Downpatrick
- Attended Maynooth College, excelling in Dogmatic Theology (1806)
- Ordained as a priest by Archbishop Troy in the same year



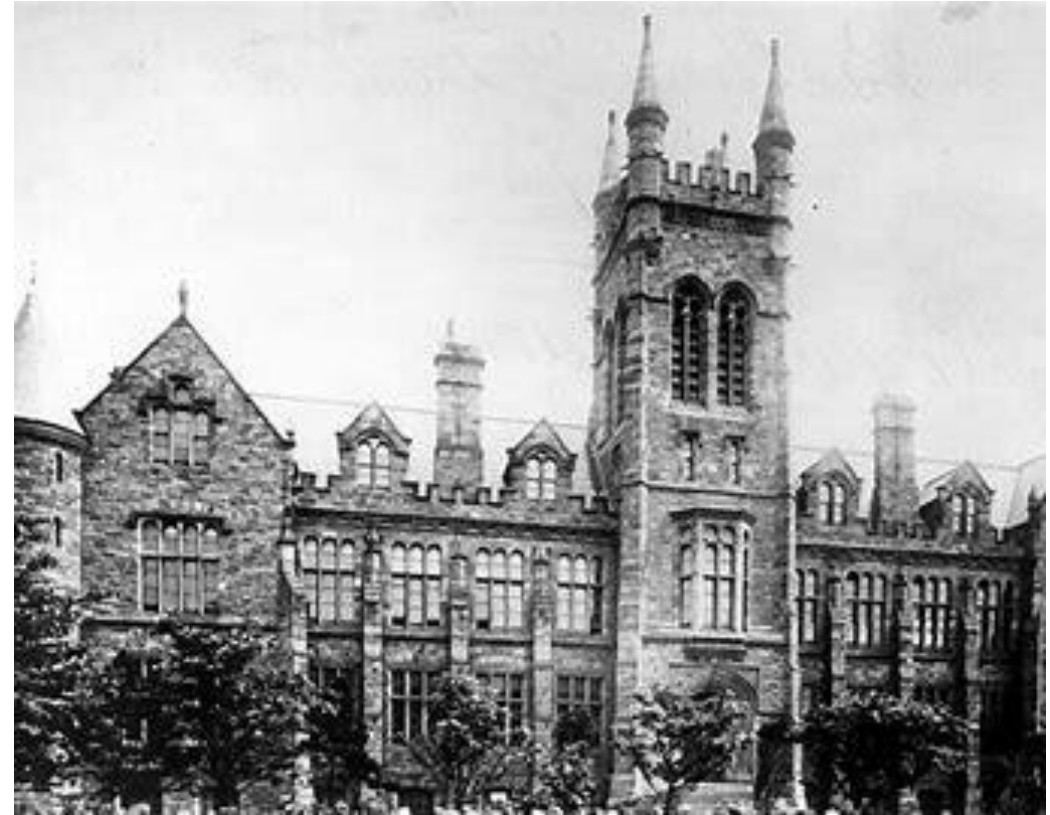
Later life

- **Bishop of Down and Connor:**
 - Appointed in 1825, the first Catholic bishop ordained in Belfast
 - Established St. Malachy's College in 1833
 - Oversaw construction of numerous rural parish churches
- **Archbishop of Armagh:**
 - Appointed in 1835
 - Initiated construction of Armagh Cathedral in 1840
 - Supported non-denominational education and Queen's College's in 1845
- **Legacy:**
 - Remembered as a "thoroughly tolerant man" who advanced his church
 - Died of cholera in Drogheda in April 1849
 - His birthplace in Ballykilbeg, County Down, is commemorated with a blue plaque.



Rev Prof William Bruce (1790 - 1868)

- William Bruce was born on 16 November 1790 in Belfast.
- He was the second son of Rev William Bruce DD, a prominent Presbyterian minister and Principal of Belfast Academy.
- Educated at his father's school, known as "Bruce's Academy," and later attended the University of Dublin, Trinity College.
- Graduated in 1809 with a Bachelor of Arts (AB) degree.
- Ordained as a priest by Archbishop Troy in 1806.
- Became the Minister of the First Belfast Presbyterian congregation, Rosemary Street, in 1812.
- Active in the Belfast Literary Society and Belfast Society for Promoting Knowledge.
- Led the Northern Presbytery of Antrim, advocating for non-subscribing Presbyterians.
- Retired from active ministry on 21 April 1867.



Belfast Academy.

Later life

- Served as Minister of the First Belfast Presbyterian congregation for fifty-five years.
- Also held the position of Professor of Latin and Greek at the Belfast Academical Institution (later the Royal Belfast Academical Institution) for twenty-eight years.
- Instrumental in the establishment of St. Malachy's College in 1833.
- Played a key role in the intellectual, ecclesial, and charitable life of Belfast.
- Advocated for reciprocal accommodation of books with the new Queen's College.
- Known for his theological views, similar to his father's, and for his non-polemical style.
- Elected Moderator of the Northern Presbytery of Antrim in 1862.
- Involved in various charitable activities and keenly interested in agriculture.
- Remembered for his gentle amiability, high esteem, and valuable services.
- William Bruce passed away on 25 October 1868 at his home, "The Farm," in Belfast.



Activism and Advocacy

- The BASS emerged as a dynamic and impassioned society with a dedicated membership.
- Regular communication with British societies showcased strengthening bonds between Britain and Belfast during this period.
- Shared reports included interviews with the BASS's delegation and Belfast MPs, notably Presbyterian Robert James Tennent.
- Tennent, a member of the prominent Tennent family and brother-in-law to MP James Emerson Tennent, played a key role in the society.



Rev. John Edgar

BASS and politics

- The society's commitment was evident when Reverend John Edgar, a Presbyterian minister, informed Tennent that only abolition supporters would receive members' votes during his MP candidacy in Belfast districts.

“ I am directed by the committee of the Belfast auxiliary antislavery society to faithfully and pointedly to request from you an explicit declaration, whether, should you be returned as a member of parliament, you will use every constitutional means for effecting, throughout the British dominions, the immediate extinction of Negro Slavery.”

Union with Freedom—No Union with Slaveholders.

ANTI-SLAVERY MEETINGS!

Anti-Slavery Meetings will be held in this place, to commence on _____ at _____ in the _____

To be Addressed by

Agents of the Western ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

Three millions of your fellow beings are in chains—the Church and Government sustains the horrible system of oppression.

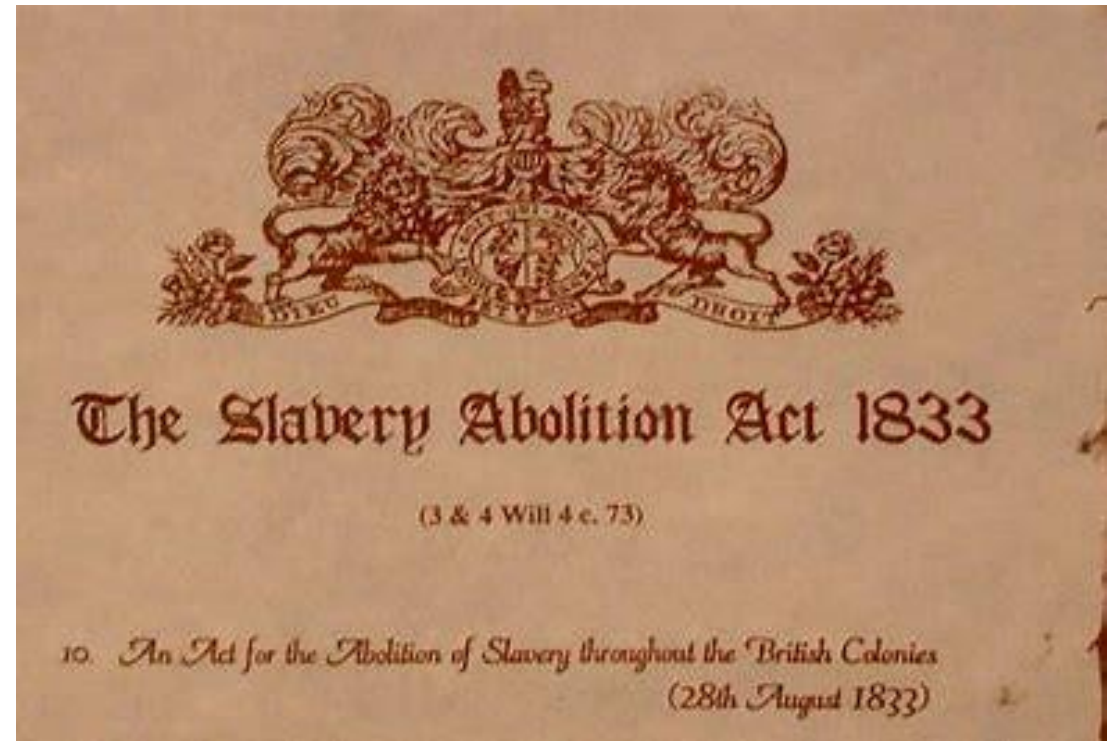
Turn Out!

AND LEARN YOUR DUTY TO YOURSELVES, THE SLAVE AND GOD.

EMANCIPATION or DISSOLUTION, and a FREE NORTHERN REPUBLIC!

Activities

In 1833, members from the BASS, including Robert James Tennent, formed part of a delegation which was sent to London to demand abolition in the lead up to the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act.



1832 Election



1832 Election and Abolition of Slavery

- The 1832 election marked a transformative period in Belfast's political landscape, revealing shifting dynamics and priorities.

- Notably, the election underscored the significant role of the abolition of slavery in the town's political discourse.

- In December 1832, an article in the Whig exposed both the acrimony of the election and the candidates' stances on slavery.

Candidates:

Conservative/Tory - Lord Arthur Chichester/James Emerson Tennent

Whig - Robert James Tennent/William Sharman Crawford



Crawford's position

;...the practice of one human being claiming a property in the body of another human being, is contrary to both divine and human law...the immediate abolition of such a system is essential to the exercise of any effectual means for the improvement of the condition of our enslaved fellow-creatures.' Robert James Tennent agreed.



Chichester's position

He argued that “every constitutional means should be adopted for its immediate extinction throughout the British dominions.

But, he'd leave it “to the wisdom of Parliament the devising of the most suitable plan for carrying into effect that compensation which may be required by existing interests...”



Emerson Tennent's view

It was similar to Chichester's, while he campaigned for abolition he believed colonists should be reimbursed for lost profits if abolition were successful.

“You forget...that if there is to be any ‘hanging’ in the case, the British Parliament, who at one time compelled the colonists to keep slaves, are the men who ought to be ‘hanged up by the neck,’ and not the planters, who, under their guarantee, expended large sums in the purchase and improvement of colonial estates...I would wish to combine ‘humanity to the negroes’ with ‘charity’ to the planters.”



Sir James Emerson Tennent, 1st Bt
by Richard Austin Artlett, after George Richmond
stipple engraving, published 1836

James Emerson Tennent MP

- Born on April 7, 1804, in Belfast; educated at Belfast Academy and Trinity College, Dublin.
- Joined Greek War of Independence, serving in Lord Byron's artillery corps; authored influential works on Greece.
- Called to the English bar in 1831; married Letitia Tennent, adding "Tennent" to his name.
- Entered Parliament for Belfast in 1832, initially as an Independent Whig, later aligning with moderate Conservatives.
- Advocated for abolition during the 1834 Commons debate on Repeal of the Union.



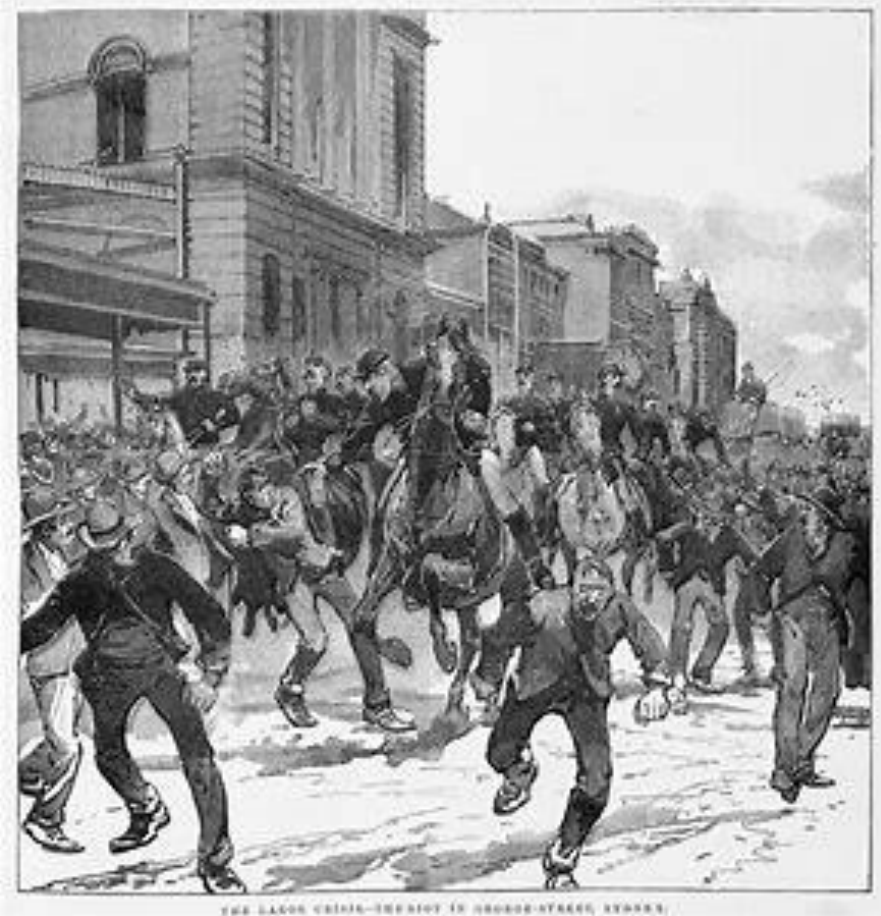
Lord Arthur Chichester MP

- Lord Arthur Chichester, born on September 30, 1808, was an Anglo-Irish Member of Parliament (MP).
- Fourth son of George Chichester, 2nd Marquess of Donegall, and Anna May, daughter of Sir Edward May, 2nd Baronet.
- Brothers included George Chichester, 3rd Marquess of Donegall, Edward Chichester, 4th Marquess of Donegall, and Lord John Chichester.
- Returned to Parliament as one of two representatives for Belfast in 1832, serving until 1835.
- Sadly, Lord Arthur Chichester passed away in January 1840 at the age of 31.



1832 Hercules' Street Riot

- After the result of the election, Tory supporters attacked the Catholic area around Hercules Street (Royal Ave today)
- Fighting erupted, 4 killed.
- Restored by calvary charge



1833 Slavery Abolition Act



Details of the 1833 Act

- The Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, a landmark legislation, was enacted by the British Parliament.
- Received Royal Assent on August 28, 1833, and became effective on August 1, 1834.
- The act played a crucial role in the abolition of slavery in most British colonies.
- Liberated over 800,000 enslaved Africans in the Caribbean, South Africa, and a limited number in Canada.



Partial abolition

- The act explicitly made the ownership of slaves illegal, marking a significant step towards emancipation.
- However, it's essential to note that while ownership became illegal, slavery persisted in parts of the British empire generating substantial economic returns.

**EIGHT HUNDRED THOUSAND SLAVES
SET FREE!!**

The Anniversary of EMANCIPATION in the British West Indies, will be celebrated in the

CITY OF WORCESTER,
On FRIDAY, August 3d,

By a general MASS MEETING of the Friends of Freedom. If the weather be pleasant, the Meeting will be held in the

HOSPITAL GROVE
Commencing at 10 1-2 O'clock, A. M.

If the weather be unseasonable, the meeting will be in the spacious

City Hall,

Among the Speakers, who have engaged to be present, are

Wendell Phillips, Wm. Lloyd Garrison, Theodore Parker, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Adin Ballou, Charles C. Burleigh, and Robert Morris.

LET WORCESTER COUNTY
give a good account of herself that day. Let the HEART of the Commonwealth be moved from its depths. Let a mighty voice go up, in the name of GOD, demanding that HIS PEOPLE SHALL GO FREE.

COME ONE AND ALL,
and Keep the Fast which GOD HAS CHOSEN—even "to undo the heavy burdens, and let the OPPRESSED GO FREE."—Mt

Contents

Passed House of Commons unopposed on July 22, 1833, a week before William Wilberforce's death.

Received royal assent on August 28, 1833, effective from August 1, 1834.

Immediate freedom for slaves under six; those over designated as "apprentices."

Gradual abolition: first set of apprenticeships ended on August 1, 1838, and the final set on August 1, 1840.

Exceptions for East India Company territories, Ceylon, and Saint Helena eliminated in 1843.



Competition to slave owners

- £20 million compensation to slave-owners, financed through a £15 million loan.
- Half of the compensation to slave-owning families in the Caribbean and Africa; the other half to absentee owners in Britain.
- Taxpayer money serviced the debt originating from the Slavery Abolition Act.
- Act left a lasting impact, but financial compensation perpetuated disparities.
- Act did not extend to East India Company territories, Ceylon, and Saint Helena.
- Indian Slavery Act, 1843, prohibited company employees from owning or dealing in slaves.



Compensation for slave owners



Slave Compensation Act 1837

- Enacted on December 23, 1837, as a complement to the Slavery Abolition Act 1833.
- Aimed at compensating slave owners in British colonies for the loss of enslaved labor.
- Passed after decades of campaigning, overcoming opposition from plantation owners in the Caribbean.



Mechanisms and Amounts of Compensation

- Authorized the Commissioners for the Reduction of the National Debt to oversee compensation.
- Approximately £20 million allocated for compensating slave owners, impacting over 40,000 awards.
- Payments made to slave owners in the Caribbean, Mauritius, and the Cape of Good Hope.



Financial Impact and Legacy

- The compensation constituted around 40% of the Treasury's tax receipts, equivalent to £16.5 billion today.
- Payments were made in the form of government stock and annuities, lasting until 2015.
- The financial crisis of the mid-1830s was exacerbated due to the compensation, causing distress and unemployment in Britain.



Compensation to Belfast slave owners

Name	Irish Address	Slave Plantation Address	No. of Slaves	Compensation paid
Hugh McCalmont	Carnmoney, Belfast, Co. Antrim	Hope & Experiment, British Guiana	287	£14,639
Hugh McCalmont	Carnmoney, Belfast, Co. Antrim	Hope & Experiment, British Guiana	139	£7,244
Hugh McCalmont	Carnmoney, Belfast, Co. Antrim	Orangestein, British Guiana	82	£4,261
William Forsyth	Belfast, Co. Antrim	Plantation Friends, British Guiana	272	Claim Failed
John Cunningham	Belfast, Co. Antrim	Mathewson, Constitution Hill, Antigua	158	Claim Failed

Questions