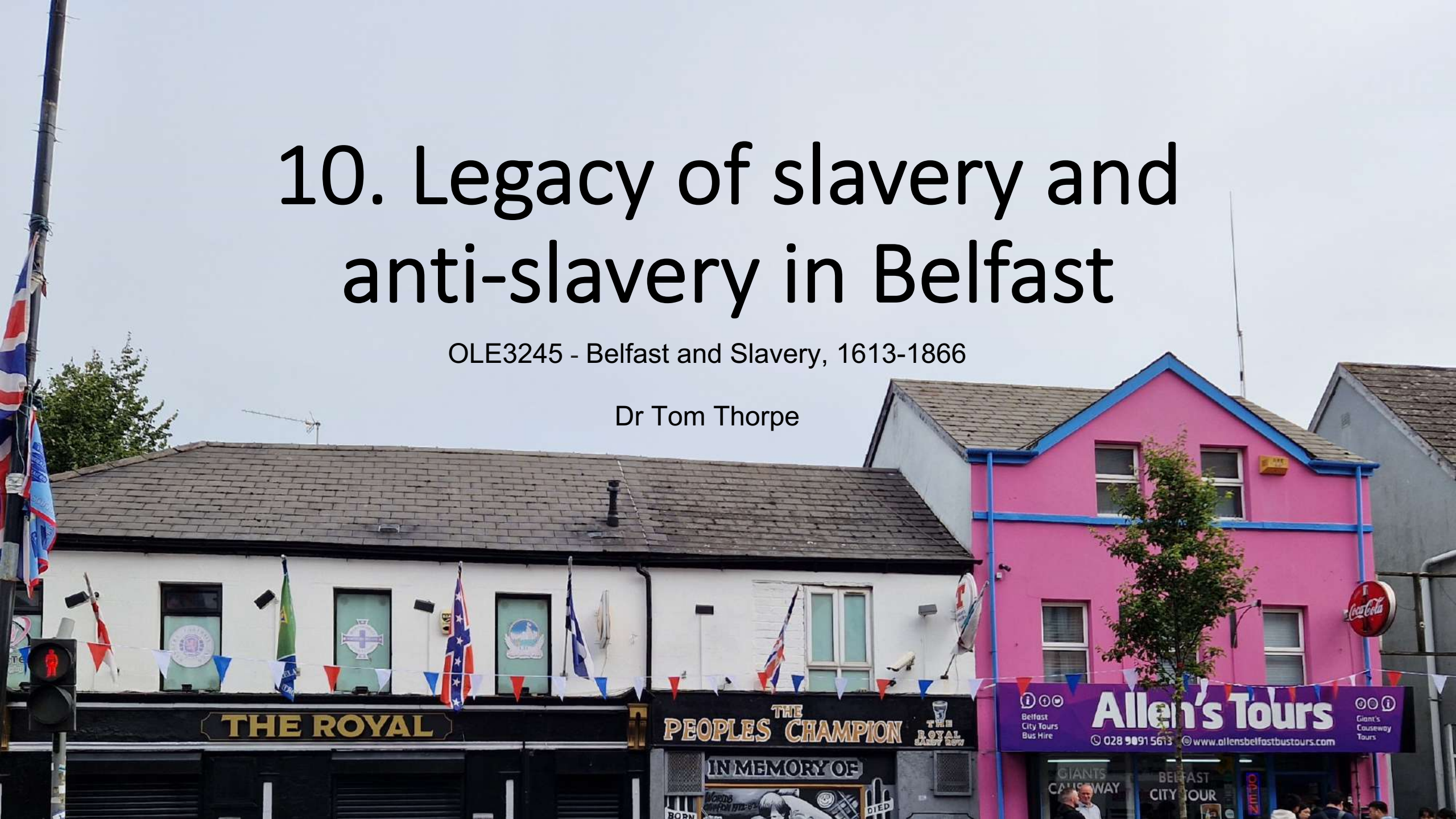


10. Legacy of slavery and anti-slavery in Belfast

OLE3245 - Belfast and Slavery, 1613-1866

Dr Tom Thorpe



Contents

- What is the physical legacy of slavery/anti slavery in Belfast?
- Interpretation and narratives of slavery in Belfast
- Issues relating to slavery – reparations and responsibility
- Statues, art and slavery





What is the physical legacy of slavery/anti slavery in Belfast?

Art in public spaces

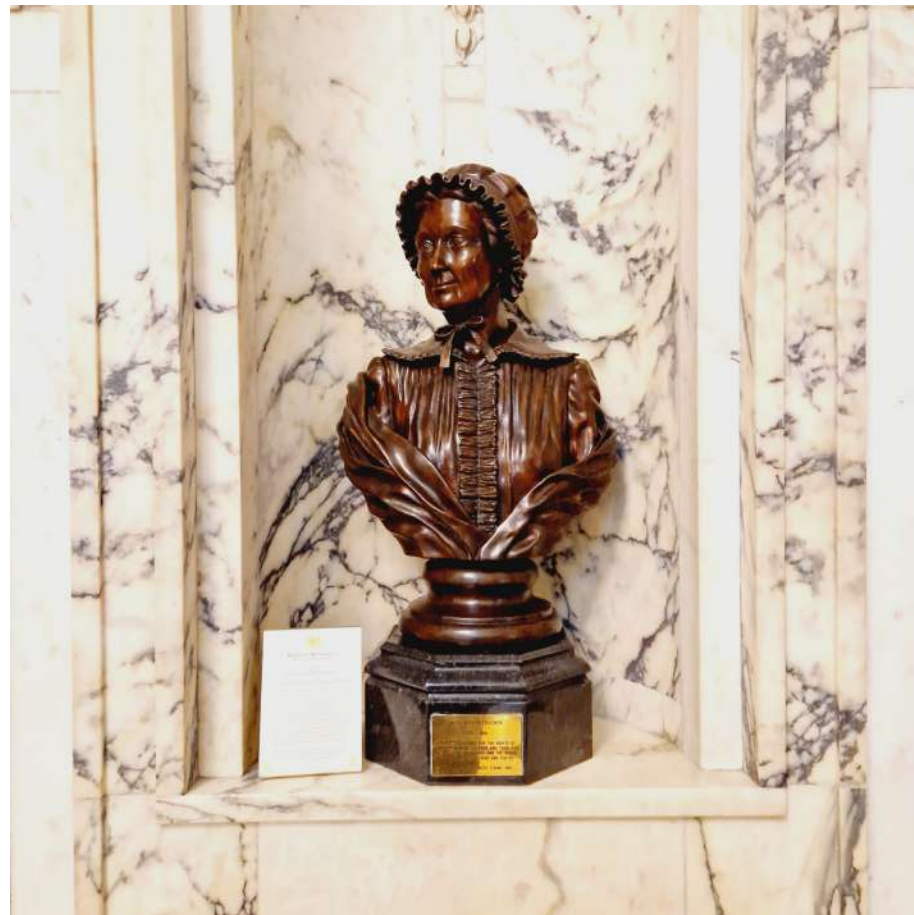


Bust of Mary Ann McCracken, Clifton Street

- Statue erected to mark 250th after her birth, put up on a housing development built on where she used to live.
- The Carrick Hill Residents Association raised the funds for the partial bronze artwork by local sculptor Anto Brennan.



Bust in Belfast City Hall



Mary Ann McCracken Blue Plaque

- The plaque is attached to a building on the north side of 62 Donegall Pass.
- Placed there by the Ulster History Circle in 2019



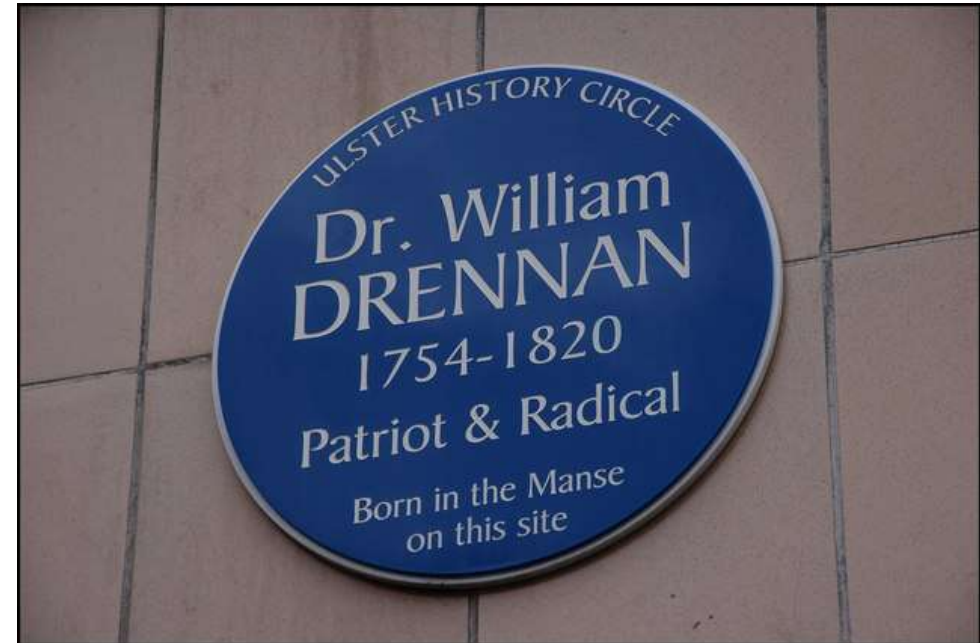
Thomas Russell Blue Plaque, Linen Hall Library

- Russell was an Anglican, whose Christian ethos and ethics shaped his abolitionism.
- He believed slavery went against God, and those involved used their powers and privileges to “frustrate the divine plan of liberty and justice for all”.
- Hung at DownPatrick Gaol, 1803 for rebellion.



William Drennan, blue plaque, Rosemary Steet

- Born in 1754 in Belfast, William Drennan, from a family of 11, only had three siblings survive infancy.
- Educated at the University of Glasgow, influenced by the Scottish Enlightenment and Francis Hutcheson, Drennan championed the "restless power of reason."
- Gaining national attention with his 1784-1785 publication "Letters of Orellana," he advocated for radical constitutional reform.
- In 1791, he proposed a "benevolent conspiracy" for Irish independence and republicanism, leading to his 1793 arrest on sedition charges.
- Following the 1798 Rebellion, Drennan supported women's suffrage and co-founded the Belfast Academical Institution for democratic reform.
- Renowned as a poet for "When Erin First Rose" (1795), he also contributed to medicine, advising handwashing and pioneering cowpox injections.
- William Drennan passed away in 1820, leaving a lasting legacy in politics, education, and medicine.

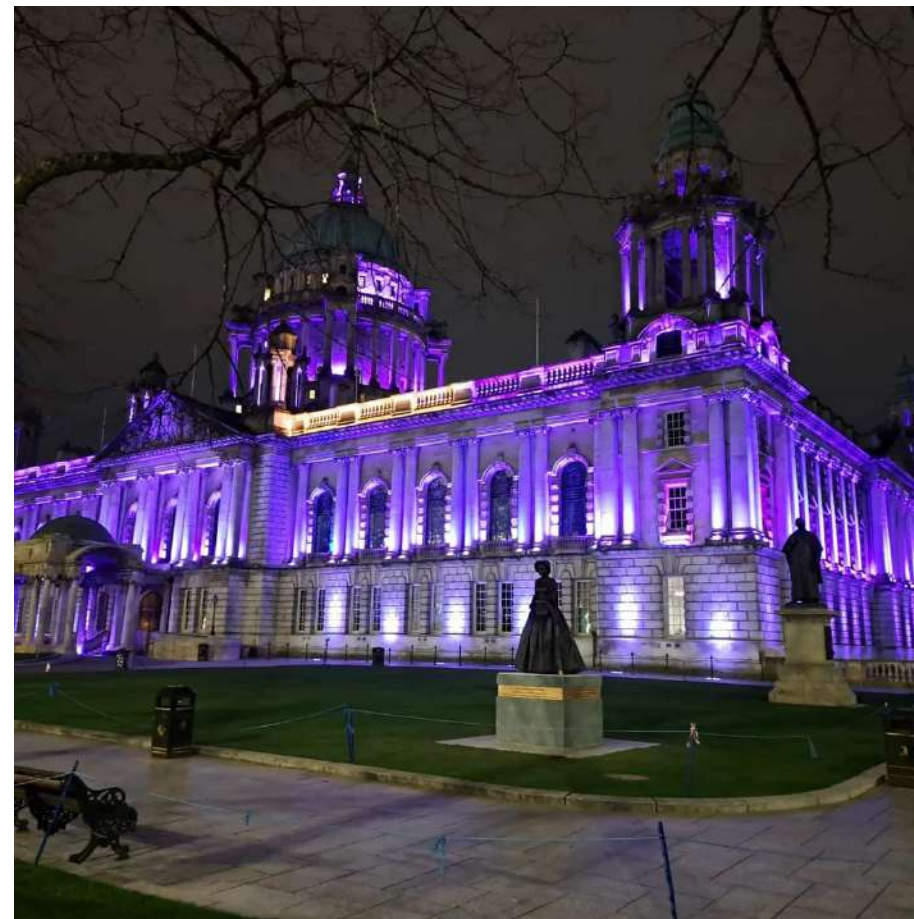
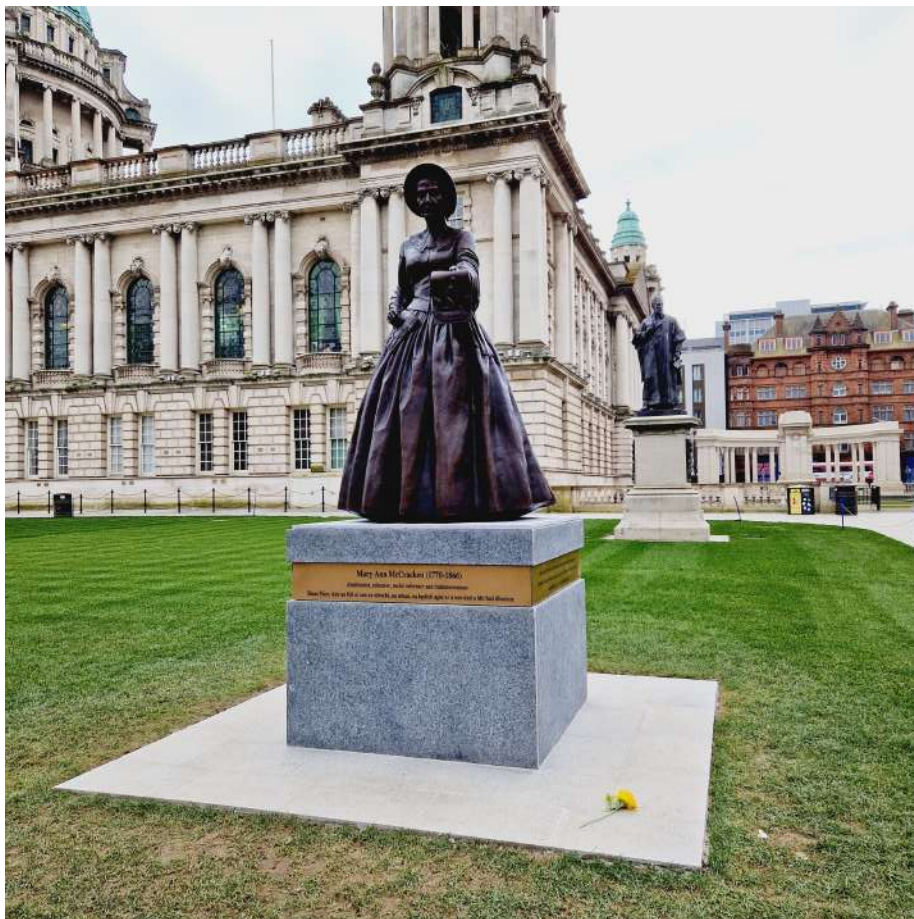


Statue of Mary Ann McCracken

- Statue of McCracken to be erected in Belfast City Hall Grounds (maquette opposite)
- Cost of £50,000
- Winifred Carney also will be honoured. Born in Bangor, County Down, in 1887, Carney was the second youngest of seven children born to a Catholic mother and a Protestant father.
- She moved to Belfast as a child and in her twenties became involved in the Gaelic League, suffragist and socialist activities in Belfast.
- She was at James Connolly's side throughout the Easter Rising. Carney was his close confidant and typed his orders throughout the rebellion.



March 2024



Detail



Frederick Douglass Statue, Lombard Street



Statue

- BCC approved statute in 2020, unveiled on 31 July 2023.
- The proposal, brought by Sinn Féin, passed unanimously.
- Located in Lombard Street, off High Street.
- First statue in Europe to celebrate Douglass



Sculptors Alan Beattie Herriot and Hector Guest



FREDERICK DOUGLASS

1818 – 1895

ABOLITIONIST
AND
HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGNER

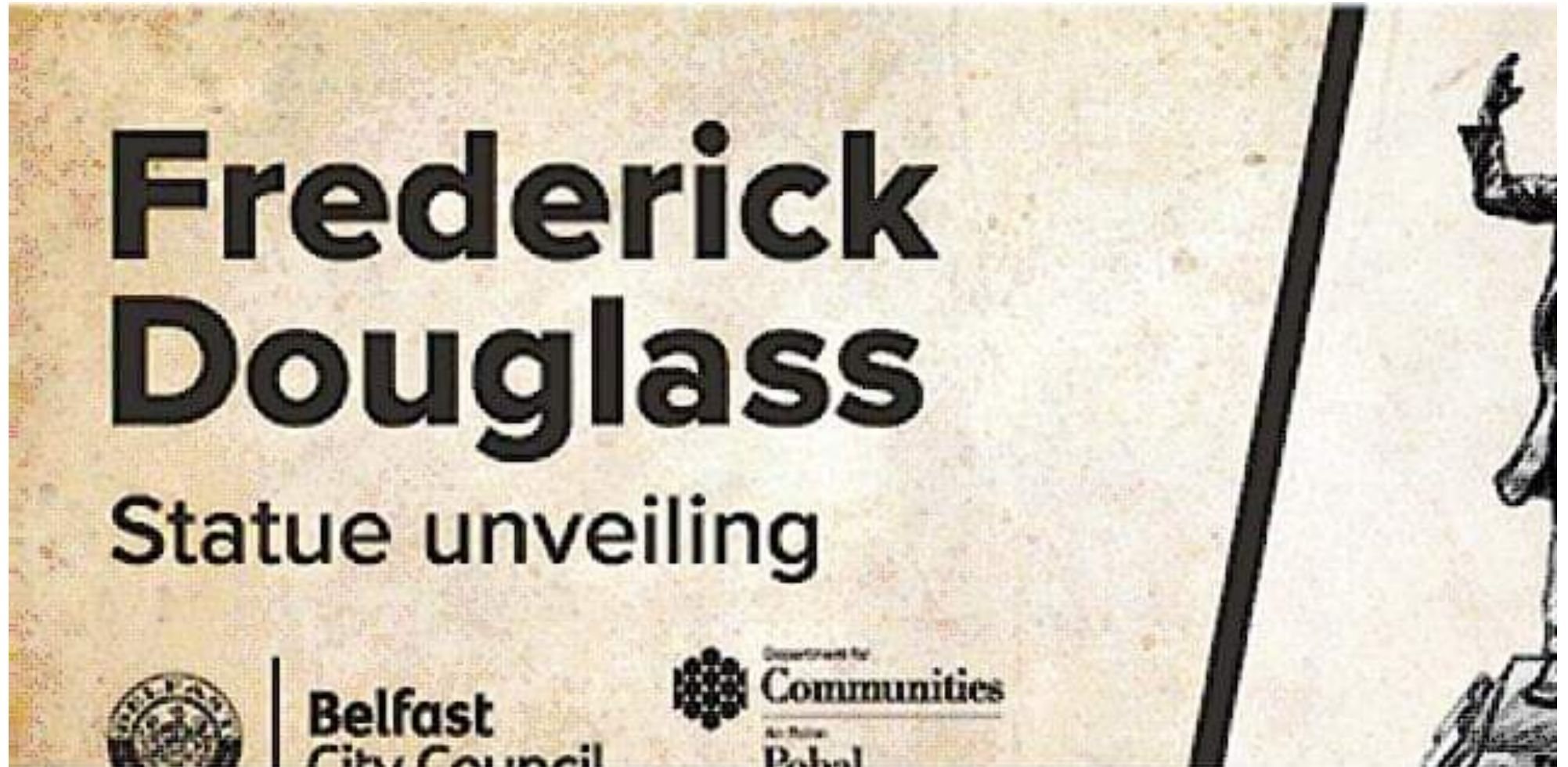
"I shall always remember
the people of Belfast, and
the kind friends I now see
around me, and wherever
else I feel myself to be a
stranger, I will remember
I have a home in Belfast."

On leaving Belfast,
January 1846

"I could hardly indulge in the
hope of someday owning a watch,
yet in those hope-killing days of
my slave life I did think I might
somewhere in the then dim and
shadowy future, find myself the
happy owner of a watch... a sign
of wealth and respectability."

Written in Belfast,
January 1846

Publicity and media attention





Anna Slevin from the Department for Communities, Takuri Makoni of the African and Caribbean Support Organisation NI (ACSONI), sculptor Hector Guest, Belfast Lord Mayor Ryan Murphy, sculptor Alan Beattie Herriot and the Reverend Dr Livingstone Thompson of ACSONI at the unveiling

Media coverage of the launch



Murals and street signs



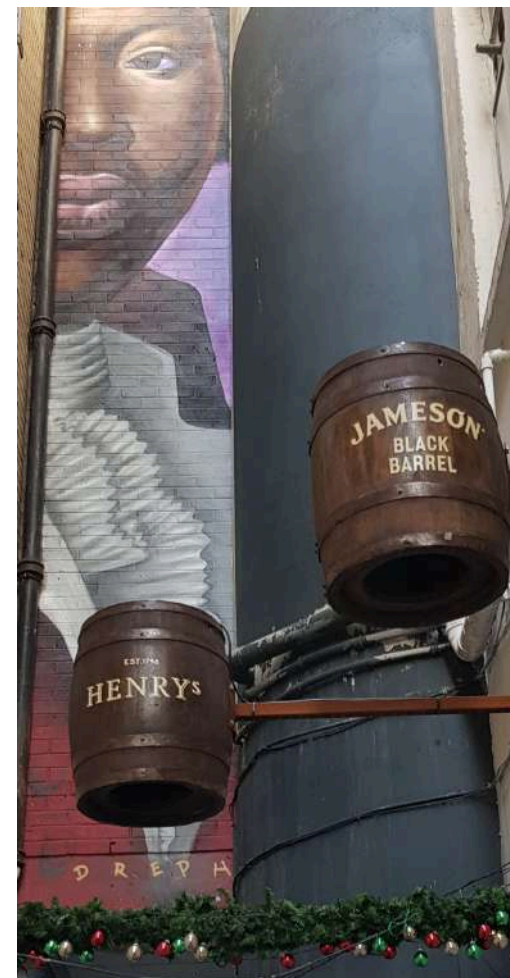
Sugarhouse Entry, off Waring Street



Frederick Douglass Mural, International Wall



Equaino Mural, Joy's Entry



Paintings



END OF AN ERA

STEFANIA R. THOMAS



Thomas Bateson and Family

- Business partner of Valentine Jones, frequently mentioned in West Indian produce advertisements.
- Partner in Mussenden, Bateson and Co, wine merchants, Winecellar Court, Belfast.
- Collaboration with James Adair to establish Belfast's first bank.
- Thomas Bateson resided at Orangefield House, Knockbreda.
- Son, Robert Bateson, lived at Belvoir Estate.
- Thomas Bateson's philanthropic efforts. - Robert Bateson continued philanthropy, providing beds to the poor in Knockbreda.



The Family of Thomas Bateson, Esq. (1705–1791) by Strickland Lowry

Thomas Greg (1721–1780)

- Born to Elizabeth and Thomas Greg, part of a prominent Belfast family.
- Partnered with brother-in-law, Waddell Cunningham, forming a successful mercantile business.
- Established a thriving shipping company in New York, benefiting from war and trade.
- Invested in a sugar plantation called "Belfast" on Dominica, supplied with slaves by Greg's brother.
- Improved Belfast's commercial infrastructure, including the Lagan navigation canal and White Linen Hall.
- Played a significant role in the Volunteers, advocating for free commerce and Irish legislative independence.



Waddell Cunningham (c. 1729-1797)

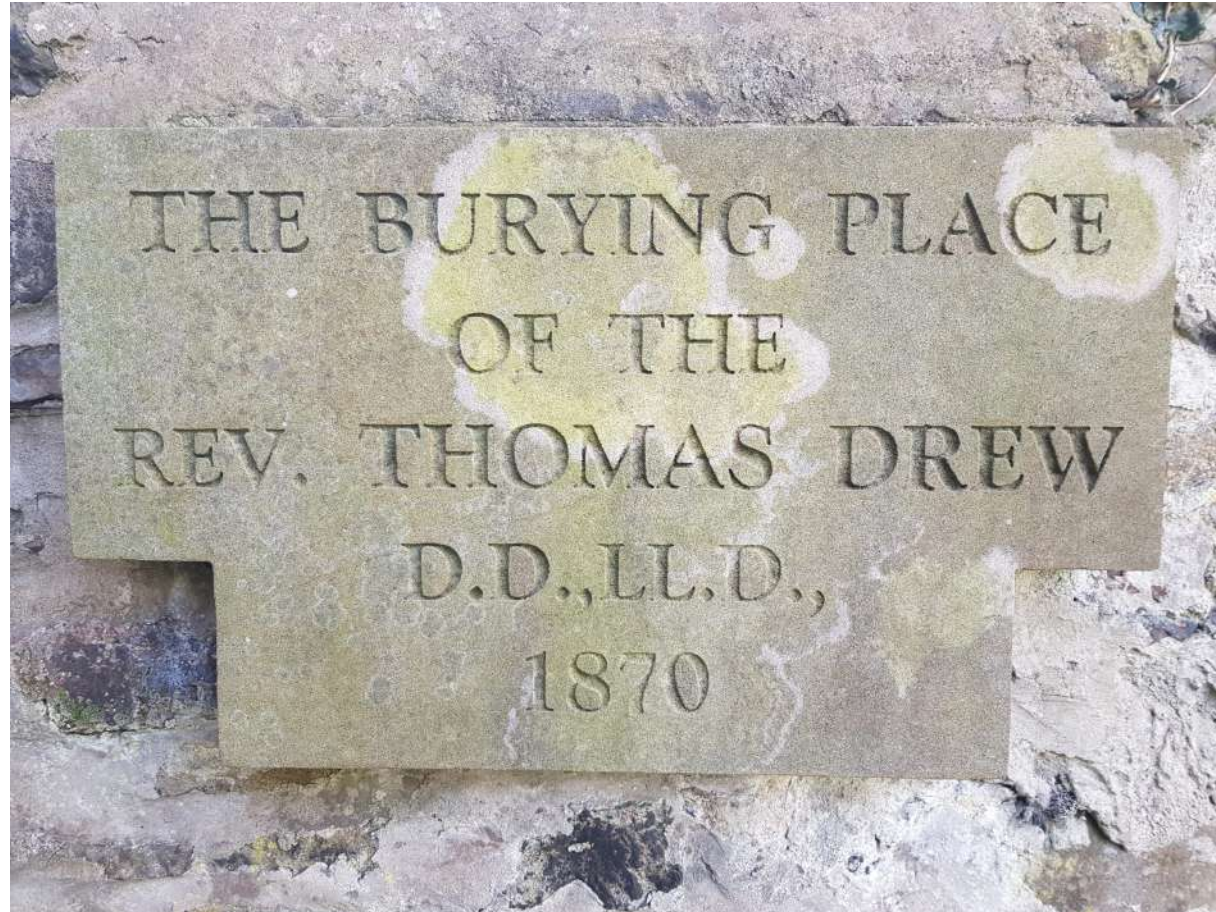
- Irish merchant prominent in Georgian-era Belfast
- Patron of Belfast Charitable Society and its Poor House
- Commander of Volunteer patriot militia
- Supported the construction of Belfast's first Catholic chapel
- Controversial for land speculation and slaveholding
- Opposition to immediate Catholic Emancipation
- Legacy includes contributions to trade, infrastructure, and social initiatives



Graves and monuments



Grave of Rev Thomas Drew



Gregg and Cunningham Mausoleums, Knockbreda Church, south Belfast



Mausoleums of Greg and Cunningham, Knockbreda, Forrestside, south Belfast









Henry Joy McCracken, Clifton Rd Cemetery





ERECTED TO COMMEMORATE
THE BIRTHDAY OF
THE FOUNDRING OF THE
BELFAST SOCIETY
OF
UNITED IRISHMEN
1791-1991



IN THIS GRAVE
RESTS THE BODY OF
MURPHY JAMES BARRINGTON
BORN 10th AUGUST 1791 DEPARTED THIS 17th JULY 1870

William Drennan



WILLIAM DRENNAN M.D.

BORN MAY 23RD 1754 DIED FEB 5TH 1820

Pure, just, benign thus filial love would trace
The virtues hallowing this narrow space
The Emerald Isle may grant a wider claim
And link the Patriot with his Countrys name

- District seat
- Frontier post
- Railroad
- Expressway
- Road
- Built-up area

Distances from the county towns of their own
 counties, where indicated, are shown in the
 form of both Roman and Arabic numerals.

0 10 Kilometers 20 Miles

Outside Belfast



John Mitchel in Newry

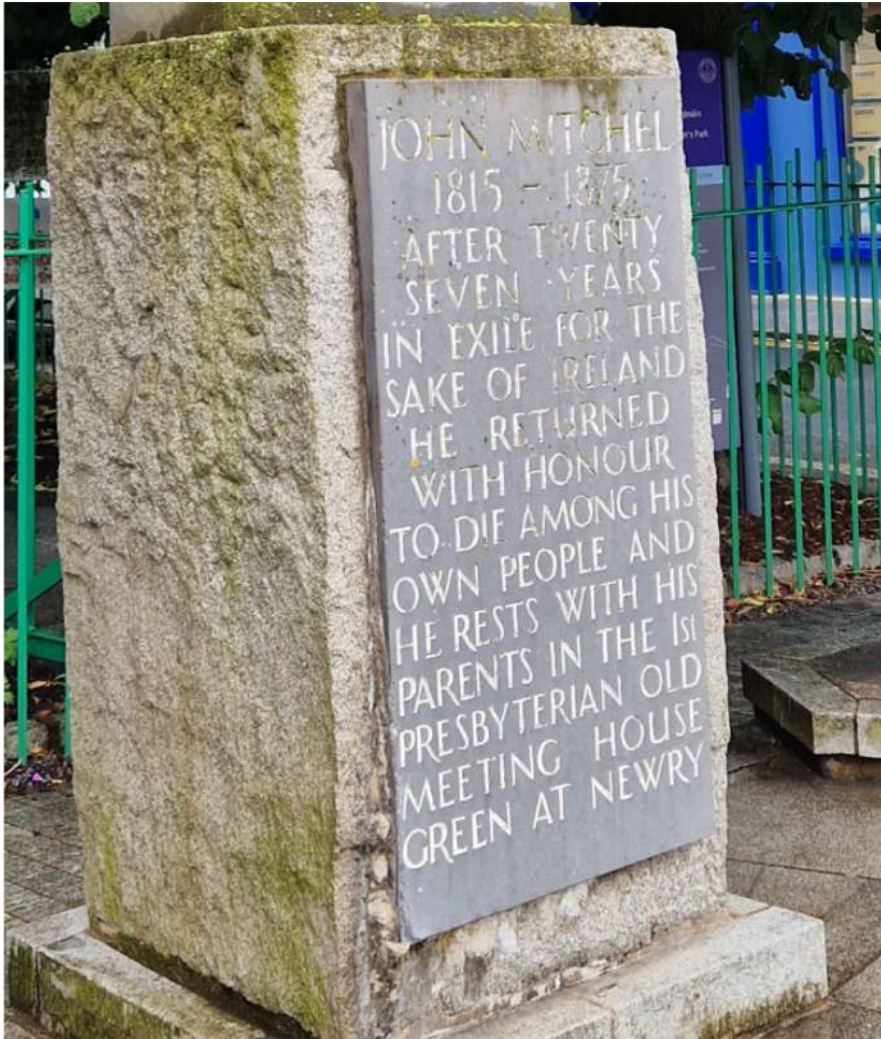
- John Mitchel (1815–1875). Born Newry in a Presbyterian manse.
- Irish activist, author, and journalist; strong supporter of Irish nationalism
- Transported by the British to Australia for his role in the Young Ireland Rebellion in 1848.
- Escaped to USA where he became an advocate for slavery and the Confederacy.
- Returned to Ireland in 1874, elected as MP for Tipperary; became nationalist hero.



John Mitchel in Newry



Statue



Belfast Estate Rum Distillery, Belfast, Dominica



BELFAST ESTATE

Christmas BUNDLE

Available only at
Belfast Estate
Distribution Center
Jimmit

\$50
VAT INCLUSIVE

BB 750ml | Soca Strong Rum 750ml | Belfast Estate Rum Punch 750ml

JIMMIT, DOMINICA (767) 440-7032 BELFASTRUM



A black and white portrait of a man with dark, curly hair, wearing a dark suit jacket and a white collared shirt. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. The portrait is set against a light, textured background that appears to be a page from an old book or document, with some wear and tear visible at the top and sides. The text "Interpretations and narrative" is overlaid in white, sans-serif font across the middle of the image.

Interpretations and narrative

Douglass Week

- Frederick Douglass Week is an annual commemoration and celebration of the life and legacy of the prominent African American abolitionist, writer, orator, and statesman.
- Douglass Week 2024 is in Belfast from 14-20 April.



Frederick Douglass Walking Trail

'Wherever else I feel myself to be a stranger, I will remember I have a home in Belfast', Frederick Douglass

When Frederick Douglass arrived in Belfast in early December 1845, he had been in Ireland for three months and had achieved a level of comfort, acceptance and happiness that he had never experienced before. The 27-year-old 'fugitive slave' was there at the invitation of the Belfast Anti-Slavery Society. At this time, Belfast was a town, only achieving city status in 1888. The year 1845 was significant for another reason. In late August, a deadly disease appeared on the potato crop plunging Ireland into one of the most lethal famines in modern history. All parts of the country suffered, including Belfast, where potatoes were a staple food for the poor. As the famine progressed, people from the local countryside fled to the town looking for work, relief, or seeking to emigrate. Private bodies such as the Charitable Society struggled to assist them.

Before leaving Belfast in January 1846, Frederick uttered the heartfelt words, 'Wherever else I feel myself to be a stranger, I will remember I have a home in Belfast'. Frederick returned for three brief visits later in 1846.

This is a suggested route as the trail is drop in/drop out. It will introduce you to some of the sights, sounds and smells that Frederick experienced and the people and places he encountered. There have been some changes in the numbering of houses and buildings.

- Grave of Mary Ann McCracken: Clifton Street Cemetery, (entrance) Henry Place**
The Clifton Street Graveyard, or New Burying Ground, was opened in 1797 by the nearby Belfast Charitable Society. Mary Ann McCracken (1770-1866) was buried in Plot 35. She had been inspired by Frederick's visit to revive a women's branch of the anti-slavery society. Mary Ann's grave remained unmarked for over 40 years. In 1902, the bones of her beloved brother Henry Joy, who had been executed in 1798, were placed nearby. William John Brown from Maryland, who had escaped enslavement as a stowaway on a ship from New Orleans to Belfast, was buried here in 1831. His wife and children remained enslaved. The graveyard, a registered historical site, can be accessed through prior agreement.
- Clifton House, 2 North Queen Street**
Clifton House, a beautiful example of Georgian architecture, was opened in 1774 as a poorhouse and hospital infirmary by the Belfast Charitable Society. The Society had been founded in 1752 to provide refuge for the poor and vulnerable. Robert and Henry Joy McCracken oversaw the construction of the house, while their niece, Mary Ann, helped
- Lancasterian School Room, 42-45 Frederick Street**
One of Frederick's final public appearances before leaving Belfast was before children in the Lancasterian School Rooms. He spoke about abstinence from alcohol. The Lancasterian School Rooms were named after Joseph Lancaster, an English Quaker educator who believed that the best way to learn was by teaching—hence gifted students became teaching assistants. As industrialization spread, towns such as Belfast established these schoolrooms to provide education to the poor. The Frederick Street School opened in 1811 for 700 pupils. The site of the school also housed the Meeting Rooms of the Society of Friends. Due to their growing numbers, in 1839 Quaker architect Thomas Jackson designed a larger building. Part of its frontage has survived.
- Victoria Hotel, 1 York Street (corner of York and Donegall Streets)**
One of the things that proved liberating to Frederick was the lack of racial segregation in public places, including hotels. In Belfast, Frederick stayed at the Victoria Temperance Hotel. Regardless of the success of the temperance movement, the life of this hotel was short. By 1850, it had become an outlet for selling 'Teas, Coffees, Foreign Fruits, Wines and General Groceries.'

Continued Overleaf

**Turas Bhéal Feirste Frederick Douglass
The Frederick Douglass Trail in Belfast**

The map displays the Frederick Douglass Trail in Belfast, Ireland, marked with a red line and numbered stops 1 through 13. The trail begins at Clifton Street Cemetery (1) and passes through Clifton House (2), the Lancasterian School Room (3), the Victoria Hotel (4), and continues through several other locations including the Clifton Street Graveyard (13). The map shows the River Lagan and various streets in Belfast. A portrait of Frederick Douglass is featured in the top left corner. Logos for the Government of Ireland, Ulster Museum, and Belfast Media are visible at the bottom.

Anti Slavery Belfast Walking Tour

The **ANTISLAVERY BELFAST TOUR** reveals the story of Belfast's involvement in this shameful transatlantic trade and the inspiring role of anti-slavery campaigners who ensured Belfast never profited from the trade in the same way as cities such as London, Liverpool, Glasgow or Bristol.





Courses

ork - Open Learning Autumn/New Year Programme 2023/2024

Belfast and Slavery, 1613-1866

OLE3245

Tom Thorpe, BA, MA, PhD

Fee £116.00 (concession rate £86.00)

New Year 2024

10 weekly sessions on Wednesdays 7.00 pm to 9.00 pm, starting 17 January

This course explores Belfast's involvement in the international transatlantic slave trade and its role as a centre of abolitionist agitation. It firstly examines how Belfast's merchant classes in the mid-18th century were involved in trade with the slave plantations in the West Indies. The course then examines how, by the 1790s, the city became increasingly known as a centre of radical thought fighting against the slave trade and the institution of slavery. The city hosted former slaves like Olaudah Equiano in 1791 and 'fugitive slaves' like Frederick Douglass and Samuel Ringgold Ward in the middle of the 19th century. Once slavery had been abolished in the British Empire in the 1830s, Belfast campaigners turned their energies to campaigning against slavery in the southern States of the USA.

This class will take place on QUB campus

Talk given by Clifton House, December 2020



Belfast and the Slave Trade Online Talk

Slavery related issues in Belfast, UK, NI and Ireland



What are the contemporary debates?

1. Acknowledgement of Historical Ties:

Organizations, individuals, communities and states examining and disclosing their connections to the slave trade. Inequality: Addressing the lingering impacts of slavery on societal and economic inequality. Reparations, money and recompense.

2. Responsibility and Action: Debates over who should take responsibility and what actions should be taken to address these historical injustices. Who should act: individuals, decendants, organisations, states? Statues, flags and public space.



A punishment, practised in the United States, for the crime of loving liberty.



Reparations and responsibility

Arguments for and against reparations



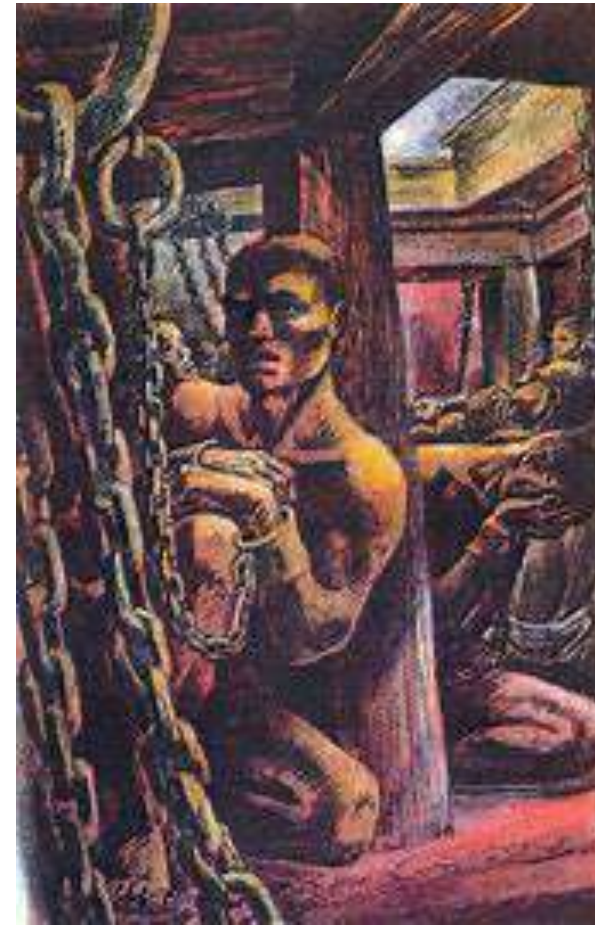
Scope and typology

- Definition: Reparations for slavery involve addressing the historical injustices inflicted upon victims of slavery and their descendants.
- Types of Reparations: Reparations can manifest in various ways, including:
 - Practical and financial assistance to enslaved descendants.
 - Acknowledgements and apologies to nations and peoples negatively impacted by slavery.
 - Honoring the memories of enslaved individuals through naming conventions.



Evolution of Reparations

- Some reparations for slavery date back to the 18th century in North America.
- The 21st century has seen a surge in the pursuit of reparations, with governments and individuals in the United Kingdom, the United States, and European colonial powers taking various actions.
- Reparations can take forms such as affirmative action, monetary payments, educational schemes, systemic initiatives, land-based compensation, removal of monuments, renaming of streets, and naming buildings after enslaved persons or abolitionists.



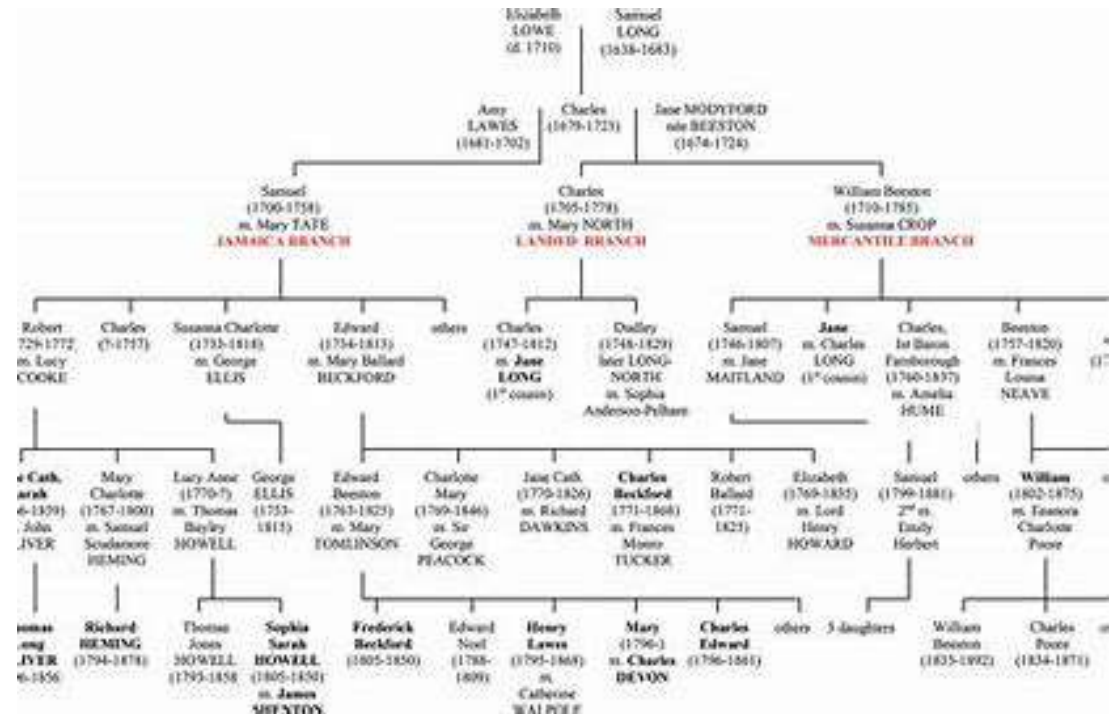
For reparations: Moral and ethical arguments

- **Moral Imperative:** Advocates argue that reparations are morally necessary to make amends for centuries of unpaid labour and brutal exploitation during slavery.
- **Ethical Standpoint:** Reparations are seen as a way to acknowledge past wrongs and confront those responsible, recognizing the value of enslaved individuals as human beings.
- **UN Support:** UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet emphasized reparations as a means to address the legacy of slavery and systemic racism during an urgent debate on racism and police brutality in 2020.



For: Reparations to Ease Impact on Descendants

- Historical Context: Supporters highlight the substantial compensation given to British slave owners under the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, in contrast to freed slaves who received nothing.
- Wealth Built on Racism: Reparation proponents assert that Western nations' wealth was built on racism, enslavement, and colonialism, leading to ongoing racial inequalities.
- Massive Transfer of Wealth: Advocates argue that racial equality can only be achieved through a significant transfer of wealth from developed to underdeveloped nations and the descendants of slavery and colonialism.



Against reparations: Its too complex to resolve equitably

- Complex Issue: Critics contend that reparations are complicated by the absence of direct descendants of those harmed by slavery, making it challenging to determine who should receive reparations.
- The Jamaican Case: A 2021 petition by the Jamaican government seeking reparations from the UK was dismissed due to the lack of living direct victims.
- Focus on Education and Development: Opponents argue for better education about slavery's history and development assistance for countries in the Caribbean instead of direct financial reparations.



Against Reparations: Won't Address Racial Inequality

- Targeting Aid: Some argue that UK aid should prioritize helping the world's poorest, rather than providing reparations, which may not effectively address historical injustices.
- Perceived Insult: Opponents view reparations as insulting and patronizing, suggesting it perpetuates a narrative of victimhood.
- Consent and Self-Definition: Critics argue that reparations may make individuals into victims without their consent, potentially undermining the right of black Americans to define themselves.



Against: Where do you draw the line?

“As regards compensation, therefore, one has to ask how far it would be proposed to go back in time. The noble Lord suggests that we go back 300 years to the slave trade, and the descendants of those involved. Why not go back 1,000 years to the descendants of the Greeks? Where would it stop? And who would pay compensation?”

Lord Gisborough, House of Lords,
1996





Arguments for acknowledging responsibility or involvement in slavery

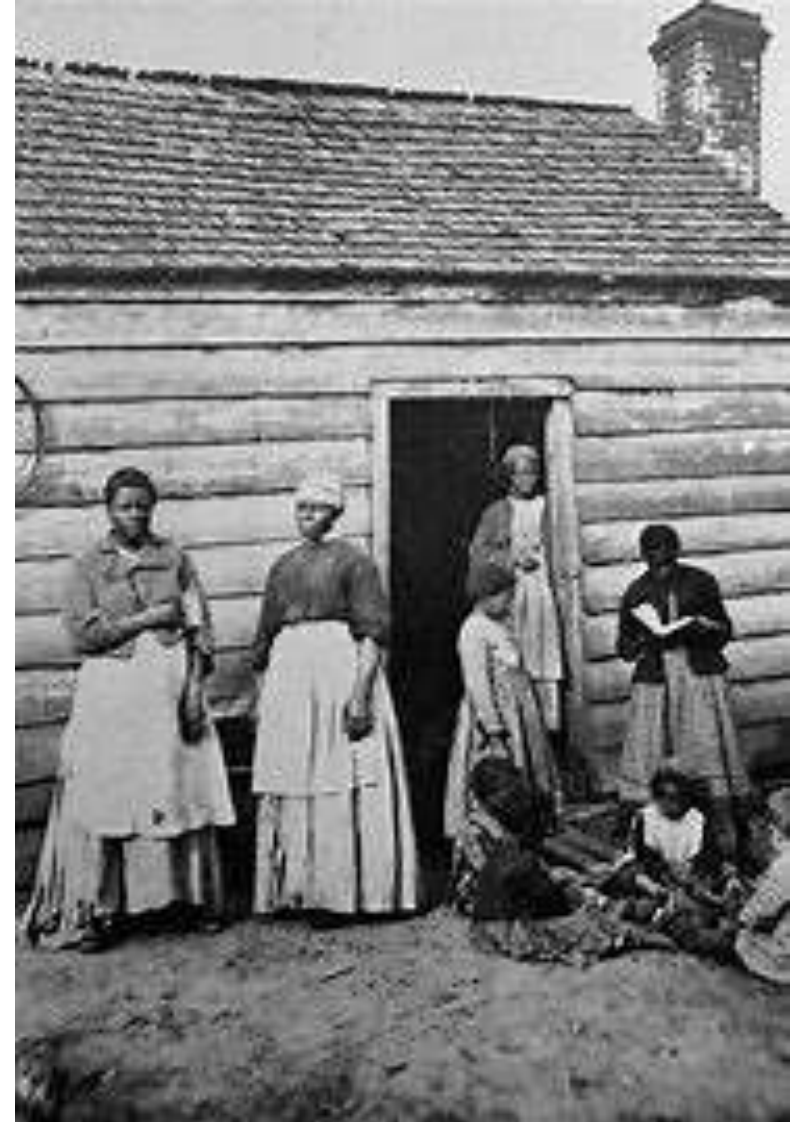
Acknowledging Slavery

- **Promotes Transparency:** Shows commitment to honesty about past actions.
- **Facilitates Healing:** Helps address historical wounds and foster reconciliation.
- **Educational Opportunity:** Enhances public understanding of history's complexities.
- **Social Responsibility:** Reflects ethical commitment to acknowledging past injustices.



Against

- **Risk of Oversimplification:** Can lead to a simplified view of complex historical events.
- **Potential for Backlash:** May incite controversy or division among different groups.
- **Reputational Concerns:** Institutions/individuals might fear negative publicity or financial repercussions.
- **Historical Context:** Arguments that past actions should be judged within their historical context, not by modern standards.
- **Politicising history:** giving a screwed and ideologically driven version of history driven by modern political and largely left wing ideas.



Who has been interested in promoting reparations and acknowledging responsibility for slavery?

Black Lives Matter (BLM): BLM emerged in 2013 but gained significant momentum after 2014 with protests following the deaths of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown. While primarily focused on addressing issues related to police brutality and racial inequality, BLM has also advocated for racial justice, acknowledging the legacy of slavery and its ongoing effects.



Me Too Movement

Although the Me Too movement primarily addresses issues of sexual harassment and assault, it has shed light on power dynamics and inequalities, including those rooted in historical systems of oppression like slavery. It highlights how marginalised communities, including women of colour, have been disproportionately affected by these issues.



Reparations Movements

Various movements advocating for reparations for slavery and its descendants have gained traction in the 21st century. These movements aim to address historical injustices through financial compensation, educational opportunities, and other forms of redress. They have sparked debates and discussions at the political and societal levels



Reparations Advocacy in the UK (1993-2000)

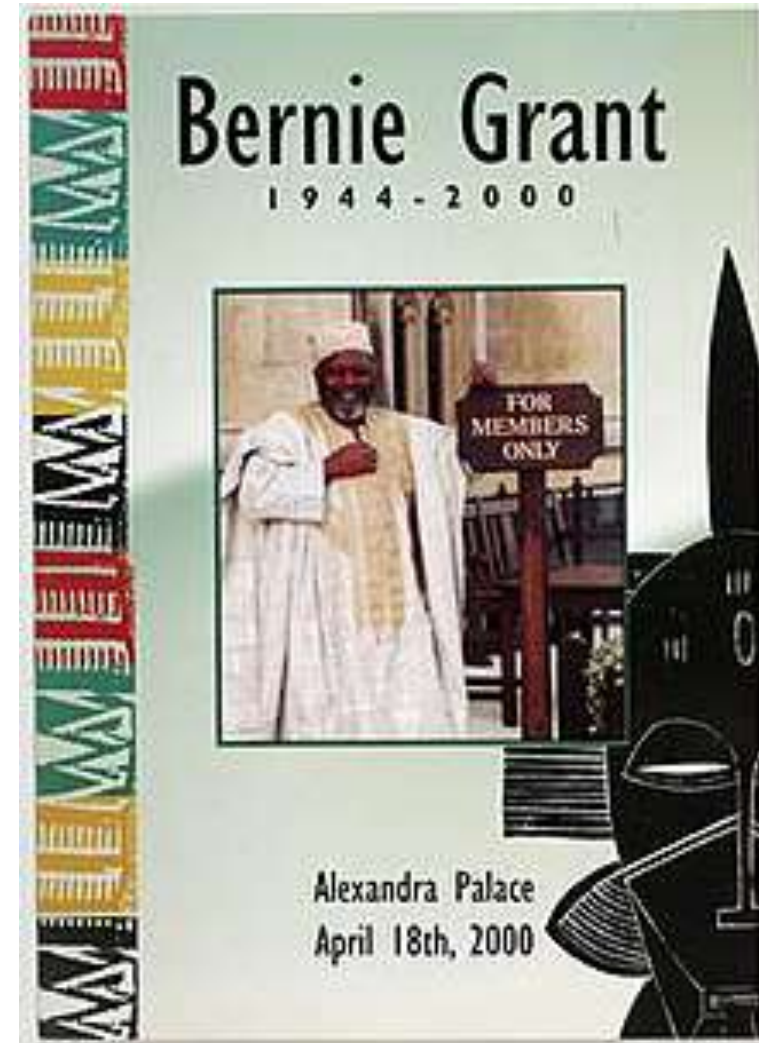
- Early 1993: British MP Bernie Grant toured the country, advocating for reparations for slavery.
- May 10, 1993: Bernie Grant tabled a motion in the House of Commons, calling for recognition of a moral debt to African people, reparations, and support for the OAU's efforts in this regard.
- Motion Supporters: The motion was sponsored by Bernie Grant, Tony Benn, Tony Banks, John Austin-Walker, Harry Barnes, and Gerry Birmingham, with 46 additional Labour Party MPs, including Jeremy Corbyn, signing in support.



Tony Benn

Formation of ARM UK and Its Goals

- December 1993: Bernie Grant co-founded ARM UK (African Reparations Movement UK) and served as chairperson.
- Core Group: ARM UK's core group included secretary Sam Walker, treasurer Linda Bellos, and trustees Patrick Wilmott, Stephen A. Small (a British academic specializing in slavery), and Hugh Oxley.
- ARM UK's Objectives:
 - Seek reparations for the enslavement and colonization of African people in Africa and the African diaspora through lawful means.
 - Campaign for an apology from Western governments for enslavement and colonization.
 - Advocate for acknowledgment of African contributions to world history and civilization.
 - Promote an accurate portrayal of African history to restore dignity and self-respect to African people.
 - Educate and inform African youth about African cultures, languages, and civilizations.



Post-Bernie Grant Era and Inactivity

- After Bernie Grant's death in 2000, ARM UK became inactive and faced challenges in maintaining its momentum and leadership.
- The organization's impact and activities waned in the years following Bernie Grant's passing, but the legacy of advocacy for reparations and acknowledgment of the historical legacy of slavery continued in various forms.



Heirs of Slavery: Making Amends for the Past

February 2023: Former BBC journalist Laura Trevelyan, whose family owned plantations in Grenada, traveled to Grenada to apologize for harm caused by slavery and provide reparations.

- Trevelyan's family extended their apology to the island nation and urged the British Prime Minister and King Charles to make a formal apology on behalf of the United Kingdom.

- April 2023: Laura Trevelyan co-founded "Heirs of Slavery," a group of descendants of those who profited from British transatlantic slavery, with a commitment to making amends.

- Trevelyan's family has contributed funds to education schemes in Grenada through CARICOM, and Heirs of Slavery aims to undertake similar actions on a larger scale.

- As of May 2023, the group includes notable individuals like David Lascelles, 8th Earl of Harewood; Charles Gladstone, descended from Prime Minister William Gladstone; journalist Alex Renton; Richard Atkinson; John Dower; Rosemary Harrison; and Robin Wedderburn.



Laura Trevelyan

Academic and Research Initiatives

Various academic and research initiatives have emerged to study and document the historical and contemporary impacts of slavery. Scholars and institutions have played a significant role in shaping the discourse around slavery and reparations.



University of Glasgow and The University of the West Indies

- Signed on 31 July 2019 in Kingston, Jamaica between the University of Glasgow and The UWI.
- Follows Glasgow's 2018 report acknowledging financial benefits from slavery.
- Creates the Glasgow-Caribbean Centre for Development Research.
- Glasgow commits £20m over 20 years for reparative justice.
- Dr David Duncan and Professor Sir Hilary Beckles were the signatories.
- Aims for research and scholarships in affected communities.
- Another event scheduled at Glasgow on 23 August 2019, marking UNESCO's International Day of Remembrance of the Slave Trade.



UNIVERSITY
of
GLASGOW

Institutional responses

- **Bank of England: Acknowledging Ties to Slavery**
- Apologized for past governors and directors involved in the slave trade.
- Committed to removing their statues and paintings from its headquarters.
- Prompted by global movements and scrutiny of historical ties to slavery.
- Bank, founded in 1694, not directly involved in slave trade.
- Research indicates at least 25 past governors and directors had ties to slavery.



Restore Trust and the National Trust

- Established following a report (*Colonialism and Historic Slavery Report*) linking 93 historic places to colonialism and slavery.
- Faced criticism from MPs and peers for allegedly tarnishing Winston Churchill's legacy by “by linking his family home, Chartwell, with slavery and colonialism.”
- Aims to refocus the National Trust on its core mission of preserving heritage and countryside.
- Controversy highlights the complex relationship between historical preservation and contemporary values.



THE
NATIONAL
TRUST

Political and public response

On 27 November 2006, British Prime Minister Tony Blair issued a statement expressing "deep sorrow" for Britain's role in the slave trade, saying it had been "profoundly shameful".



UK government, 2020

In August 2020, the UK government's response was: "The UK deplores the human suffering caused by slavery and the slave trade. They are among the most abhorrent chapters in the history of humanity."



Prince William

On his 2022 trip to Jamaica. The statement went on: “While reparations are not part of the government’s approach, we feel deep sorrow for the transatlantic slave trade, and fully recognise the strong sense of injustice and the legacy of slavery in the most affected parts of the world. We also believe that we have much to do today and in the future to address the reality of slavery in the UK and around the world.”





Statues, art, symbols and monuments related to slavery: remove or not to remove?

Why are statues controversial?

- Racial Equality Focus: Increased awareness of racial injustice and demands for equality.
- Historical Context vs. Glorification: Debate over representing history or perpetuating oppressive symbols.
- Impact of Movements: Black Lives Matter and similar movements have heightened sensitivity to racial symbols.
- Societal Shift: Growing consensus against celebrating figures associated with slavery and colonialism.
- Identarian politics: Identity politics tied put perceptions and reading of history and what the past means in the present.
- History is about now: History often reflects the values and perspectives of the time it is written or debated, rather than solely the period it covers.



The statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee towers over Monument Avenue in Richmond.

Arguments for removing statues/art

- **Reflects Current Values:** Society's evolving moral standards no longer align with celebrating such figures.
- **Promotes Healing:** Helps address historical injustices and aids in the healing process for descendants of enslaved people.
- **Reduces Glorification:** Prevents glorification of individuals who profited from or perpetuated slavery.
- **Encourages Education:** Spurs discussions and education about the complex history of slavery.



Arguments against removing statues

- **Historical Erasure:** Risks erasing uncomfortable parts of history, which are essential for learning and understanding.
- **Slippery Slope:** Concerns about where the line is drawn for removing historical figures from public view.
- **Educational Value:** Statues can serve as reminders of the past, fostering discussion and reflection.
- **Preservation of Heritage:** Seen as part of cultural heritage and historical landscape, regardless of the individual's actions.



The controversy of statues

- Many statues and monuments have appeared on the website Topple the Racists, which includes 78 targets across Great Britain, from Lord Kitchener's memorial in Orkney to the statue of Francis Drake in Plymouth.
- **Topple the Racists.** This map is a Stop Trump Coalition project in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and the topplers of Edward Colston.
- Far-right groups with the support of extremists such as Tommy Robinson are planning to hold a "defend our memorials" events, aiming to prevent the removal of effigies.



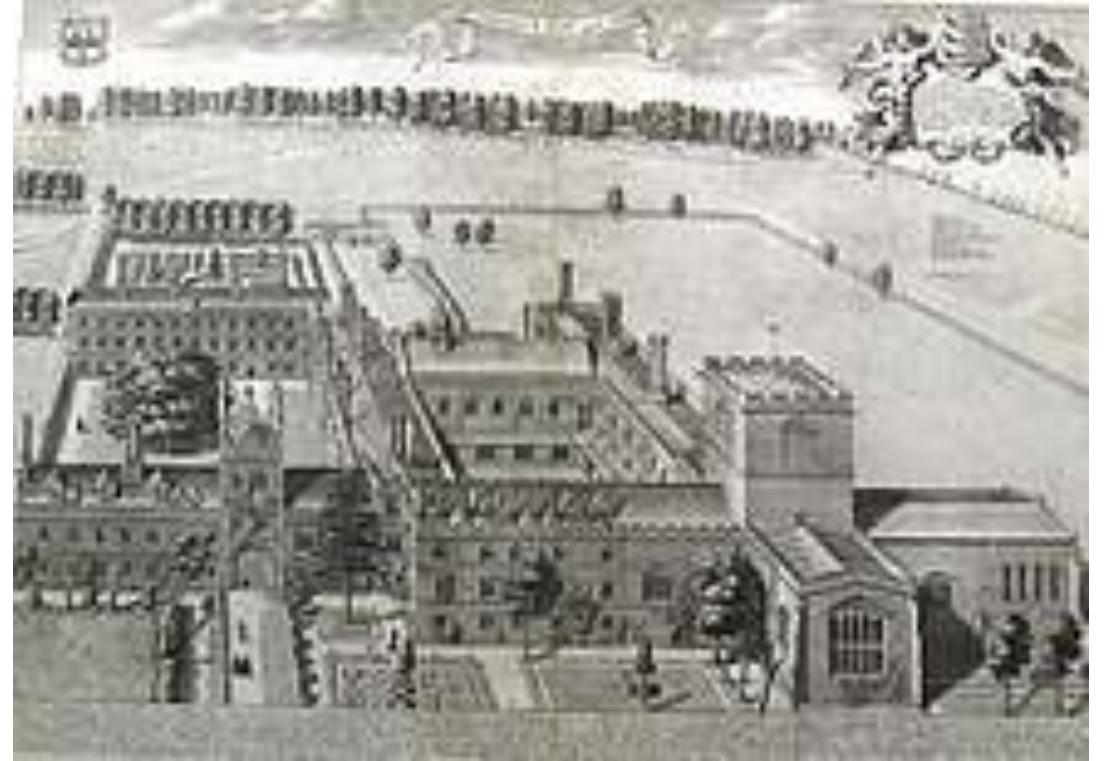
Tobias Rustat Memorial

- Jesus College, Cambridge, is attempting to remove the memorial of Tobias Rustat (1608-1694), a significant benefactor of the college.
- Rustat is controversial due to his investment in the Royal African Company, which was involved in slave trading.
- He was a loyal servant of King Charles II and made considerable donations to Jesus College and other institutions.



Controversy

- In 2019, Jesus's faculty and students decided the Rustat memorial should be relocated to a new space on campus as part of an exhibit on slavery and colonialism.
- A few dons and an organised group of college alumni vehemently opposed their plan. The alumni raised objections, emphasising the need to preserve heritage and questioning the college's approach to history.
- Charles Moore, in the Spectator, described the relocation as an act of “cancellation” that would imperil “education, religion, built heritage, history and the rule of law”. Moore said “His sin was investing in the Royal African Company, one of whose activities was trading in slaves.”
- Memorial remains in place.



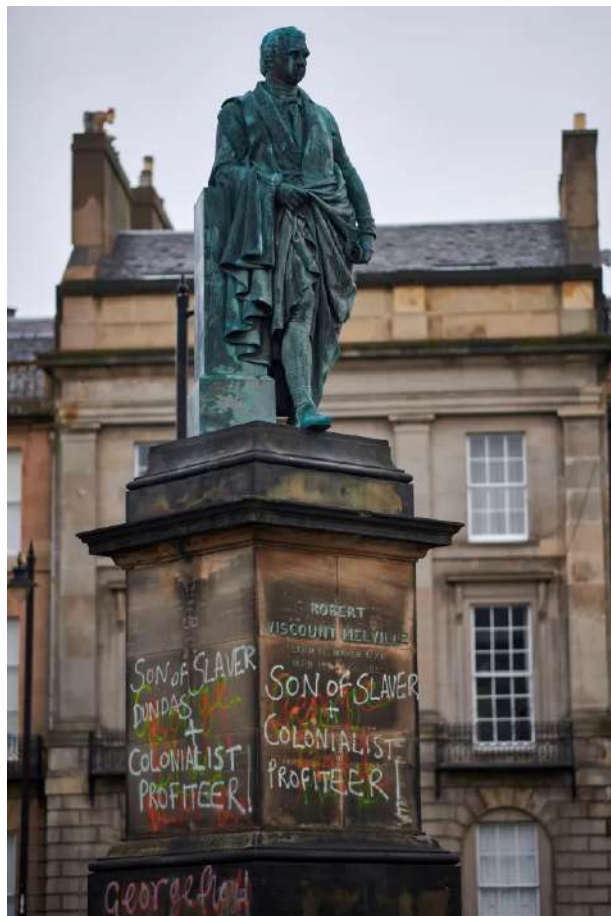
Jesus College, Cambridge by [David Loggan](#) (1690)

Henry Dundas, First Viscount Melville

- Henry Dundas, First Viscount Melville, is commemorated with a statue in St Andrew's Square.
- Protesters call for the removal of the statue and renaming streets associated with him.
- Educated at the University of Edinburgh and became a significant political figure.
- Accused by protesters of delaying the abolition of slavery, contributing to prolonged suffering.
- Allegations of financial misconduct during his tenure as the First Lord of the Admiralty.



Graffiti and removal



Edward Colston: Legacy and Controversy

- Edward Colston, involved in the 17th-century slave trade, has a contentious statue in Bristol.
- Member of the Royal African Company, key in the west African slave trade.
- The statue, erected in 1895, commemorated his philanthropy in Bristol.
- Colston's wealth largely derived from slave trading, contributing to Bristol's development.
- His involvement in slave trade led to the statue's toppling by protesters, reflecting the city's divided opinion on his legacy.



Colston deposited in the River Avon, 2022



Robert Clayton and Thomas Guy

- Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust to remove statues of Robert Clayton and Thomas Guy.
- Clayton, a former Lord Mayor of London, linked to the Royal African Company.
- Guy, founder of Guy's Hospital, invested in the South Sea Company.
- Both companies were involved in the slave trade.



Statue debate not only connected to slavery but to colonialism, racism and imperialism



Baden-Powell Statue, Poole

- Robert Baden-Powell was the founder of the Boy Scouts and a British Army officer.
- His statue in Poole faced removal plans due to racism, homophobia, and pro-Hitler allegations.
- Local residents, including former scouts, formed a protective ring around the statue.
- It is now under 24-hour security, awaiting potential removal.
- Baden-Powell is on a list of UK statues under scrutiny following anti-racism protests.
- A petition with almost 15,000 signatures calls for retaining the statue.



Blackboy Hill, Bristol

- Debate Over Name Origin: The name "Blackboy Hill" has sparked controversy and various origin theories.

Potential References:

- Possibly named after a pub, originally "Blackamoor's Head," referencing North African Muslims.
- Could relate to convicts hanged and tarred nearby.
- Some suggest a link to Charles II's complexion, known as "the Black Boy."
- Association with the Royal African Company and the transatlantic slave trade.

While the exact origin remains uncertain, the name likely reflects historical attitudes and references that are racially charged or linked to the slave trade.



Robert the Bruce Statue, Bannockburn

- Robert the Bruce was a 14th-century Scottish king renowned for leading Scotland during the First War of Scottish Independence against England.
- The monument to the former Scottish king was vandalised.
- Both the statue and the visitor centre were daubed with graffiti.
- There is no known racist history associated with Robert the Bruce.



How do these arguments play out
in Belfast/NI?



Belfast not really part of the 'modern' slavery debate

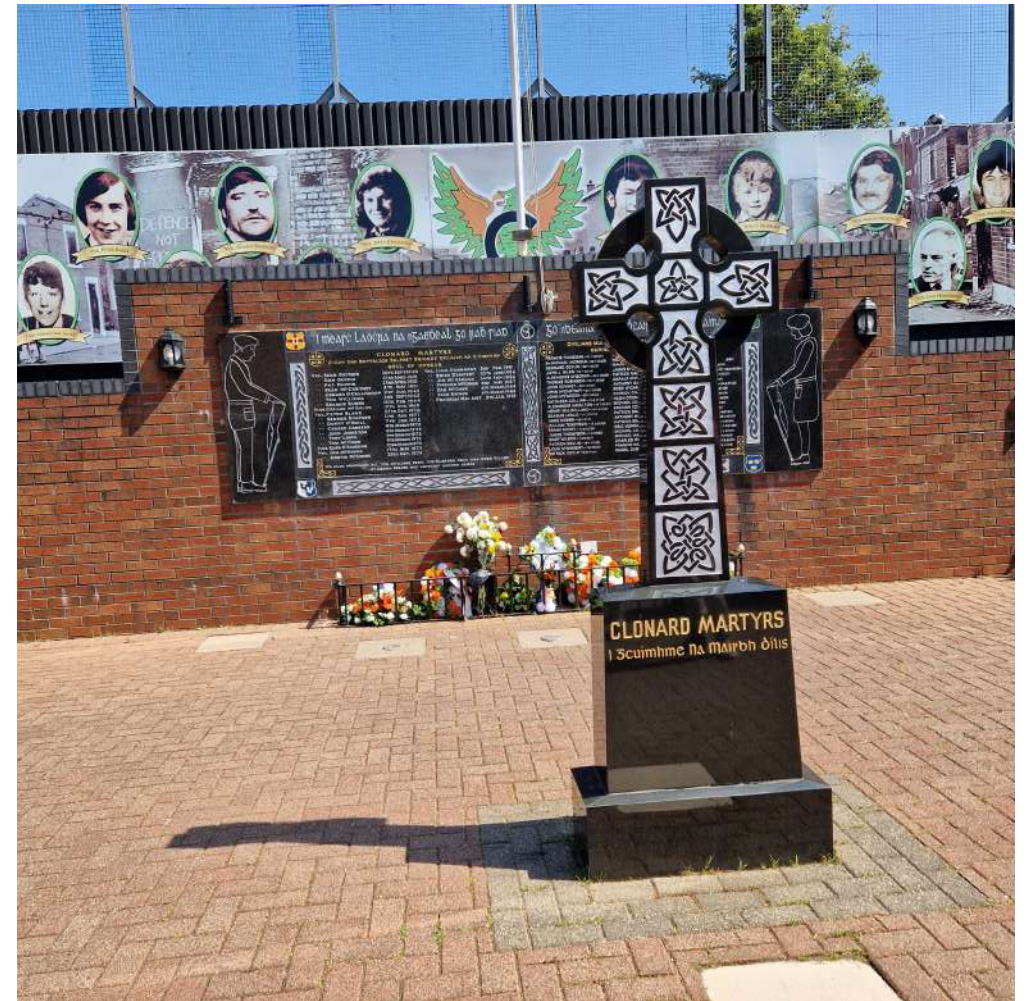
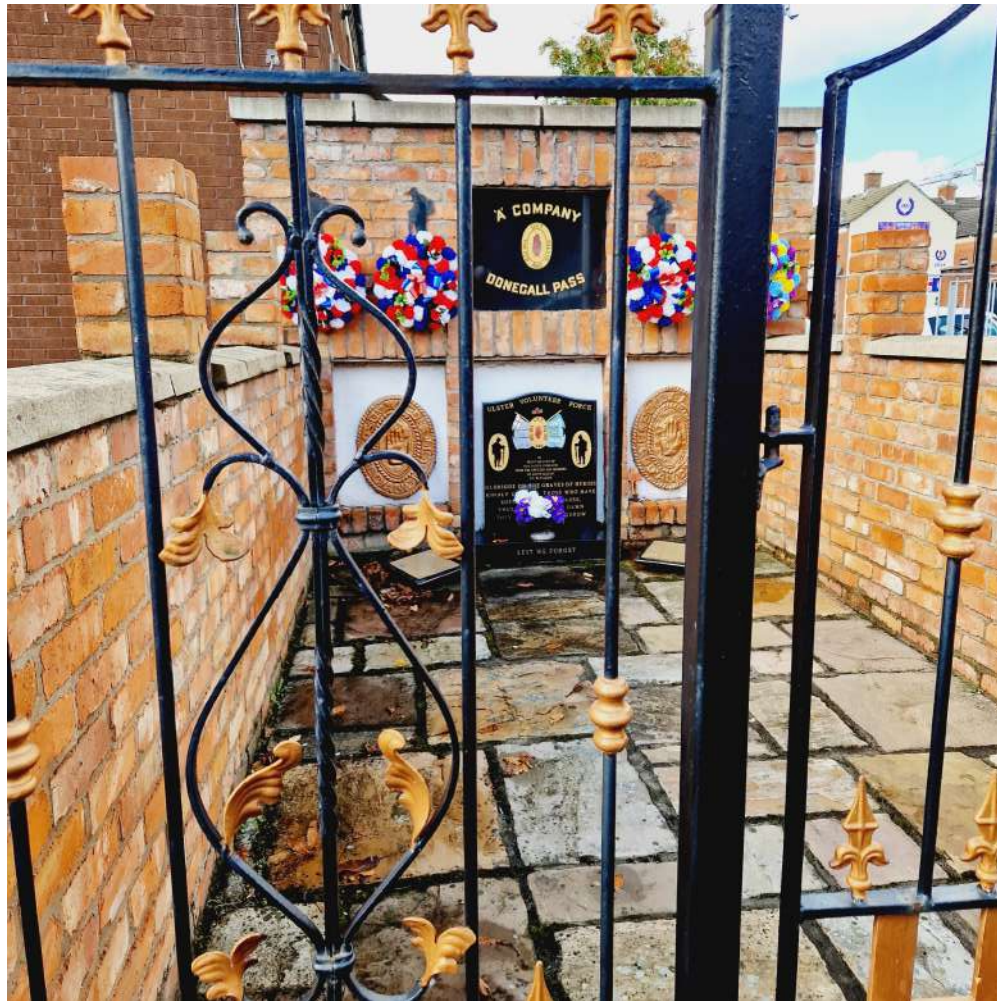
- Strong anti slavery tradition that prevented wide spread involvement (e.g. Thomas McCabe)
- Abolitionism a unifying issue up until the 1850s.
- Victorian city, wealth based on industrial revolution, unlike Georgian cities like Liverpool and Bristol.
- Historical issues shape public space all related to the constitutional issue, troubles and difference.



Belfast's public space are contested and politicised



Memorials and public commemoration



National Trust properties in Northern Ireland

- No property in the NT's slavery report was linked to slavery in their *Colonialism and Historic Slavery Report*.
- A total of 80 claims made by individuals historically associated with the families of 29 places in England and Wales were identified in the database of claims created by the University College London's (UCL) Legacies of British Slave-ownership project.



Mount Stewart

Slavery is seen through prism of the troubles like Palestine/Israel

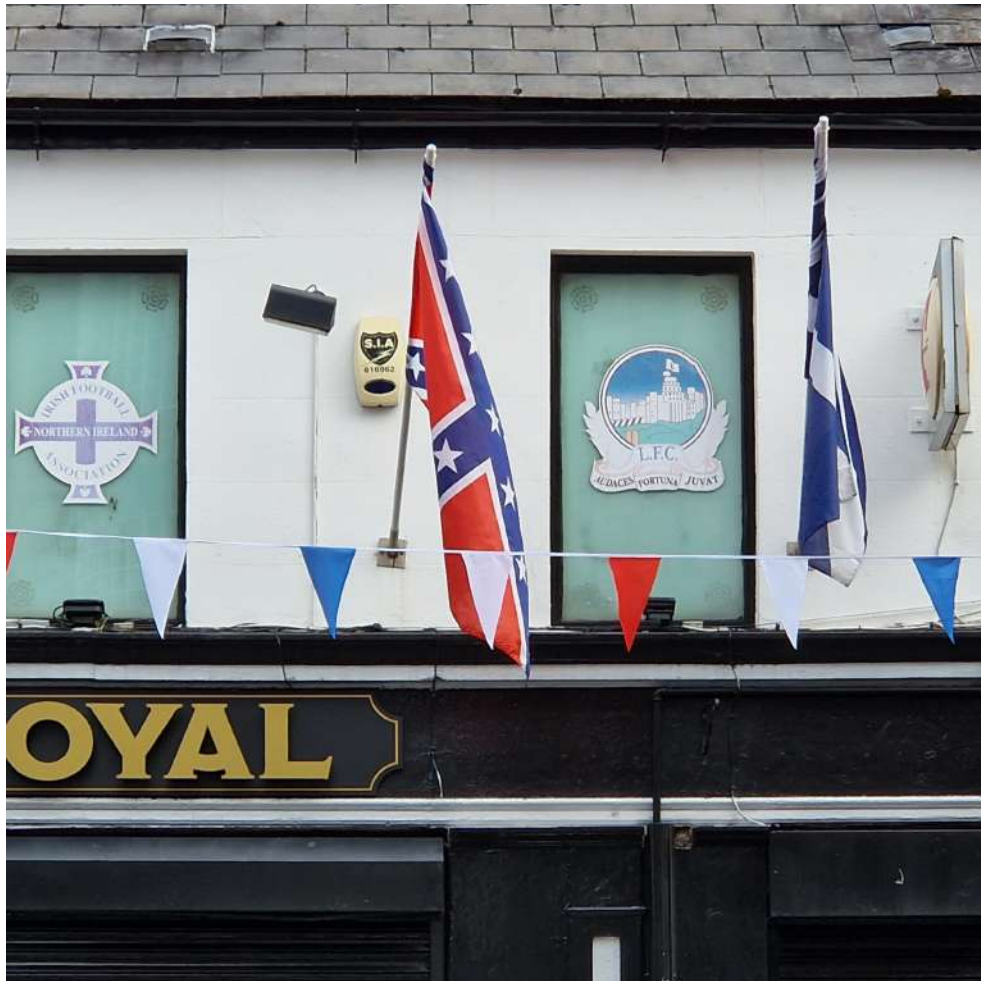


Remembering slavery as a 'political' issue

- The proposal, brought by Sinn Féin at BCC.
- Only SF members there at launch in July 2023.
- No other parties were present.



Confederate 'Battle Flag', Sandy Row, August 2023



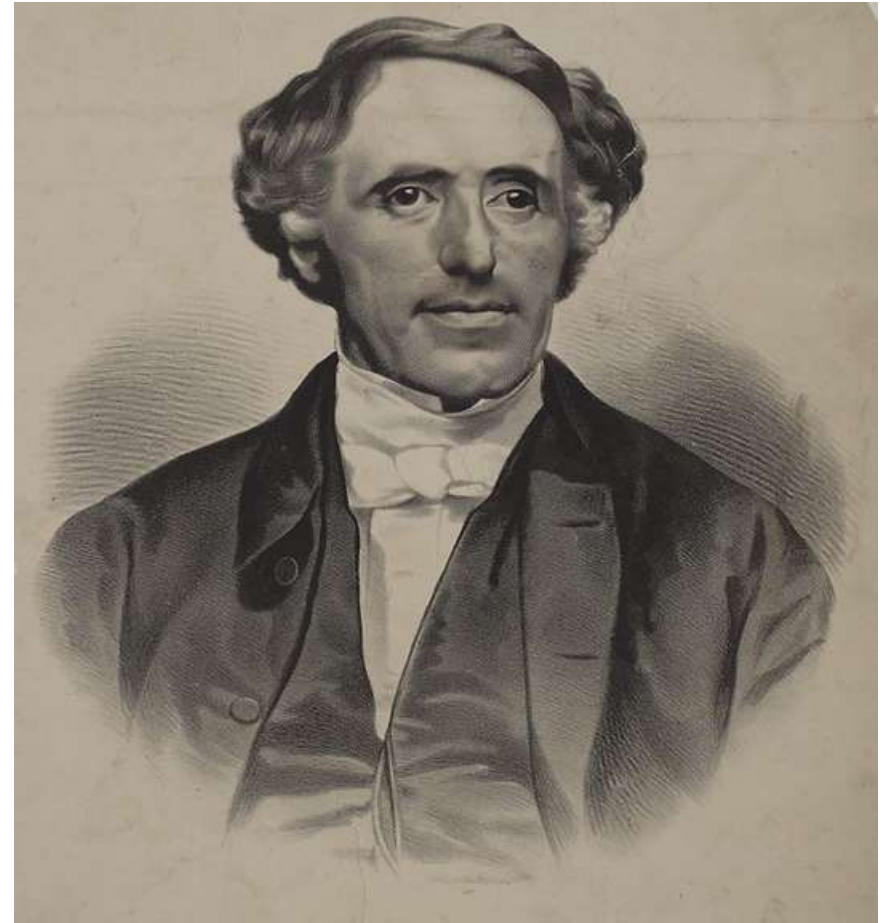
The First National Flag of the Confederacy, Cregeh Road, July 2023

Known as the "Stars and Bars," was adopted in 1861. It consisted of three horizontal stripes: two red stripes at the top and bottom, with a white stripe in the middle. In the upper left corner (the canton) was a blue field with white stars, representing the states of the Confederacy. The number of stars changed as more states seceded and joined the Confederacy.



Anti slavery agenda could be a unionist/protestant one

- Anti slavery activists in 18th century were Presbyterian.
- When Douglass visited it was largely Protestants and Unionists who celebrated his visit.
- Many Protestants were fervent abolitionists and unionists such as Cooke, Drew and Edgar.
- Unionists could point to John Mitchel and his views...



History we don't like to talk about is often shut away?

- Portrait of Cunningham in the clock tower of the Poor House.
- Cunningham was a slave owner and slave trader.
- Not know why the portrait is relegated to the attic but could be to do with his unsavoury past.



Remove John Mitchel statue, 2020

Only statue controversy is that of Mitchel in Newry

Newry men Aidan McQuade, a former Anti-Slavery International chief, and QUB PhD student Patrick Hughes have launched a petition for the removal of their city's monument.

Statue remains in place to this day.



Thomas McCabe vs Frederick Douglass

- Controversy over the erection of the Douglass statue.
- Raymond O'Reardon argued McCabe should have been the man commemorated.
- His argument was that McCabe stopped Waddell Cunningham's Belfast Slave Ship Company in 1786.
- However, there is no physical likeness (i.e. painting, drawing) of McCabe in existence.



MODERN SLAVERY



It's happening in
Northern Ireland.



SVI Scannervision International

Questions