



## Library sources on Quakers and the origins of the abolition movement

### Introduction

The campaign to end the slave trade was begun by Quakers, who saw the trade as a violation of their fundamental belief in equality of all. The British anti-slavery campaign was the first large-scale national campaign devoted to a single cause and resulted in the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act in 1807.

The origins of the Quaker testimony against slavery and the slave trade can be traced back to George Fox when he wrote a letter of caution "To Friends beyond sea, that have Blacks and Indian slaves" in 1657. In 1671 he visited Barbados and urged Friends to treat slaves better; his preaching in Barbados was subsequently published in London in 1676 under the title *Gospel family-order*. Other 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century Quakers to condemn the holding of slaves included William Edmundson, John Woolman, George Keith, William Southeby, John Farmer, Benjamin Lay and Ralph Sandiford.

From the 1750s colonial American Quakers opposed to slavery had called on British Quakers to take action. British Quakers had in 1727 already expressed their official disapproval of the slave trade<sup>1</sup>. On 17 June 1783 London Yearly Meeting presented to Parliament a petition against the slave trade signed by over 300 Quakers<sup>2</sup>. On 20 June 1783, Meeting for Sufferings set up a 23-member<sup>3</sup> committee to consider the slave trade, and a few weeks after six Friends<sup>4</sup> met informally as a separate group. This group wrote and circulated anti-slavery literature and lobbied Parliament. These actions by Quakers were effectively the first lobbying activities in Britain for abolition.

By 1785 Anglicans Thomas Clarkson and Granville Sharp, and the Evangelical William Wilberforce, became interested in the anti-slavery movement, and in 1787 the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade was formed with William Wilberforce as its parliamentary spokesperson. 9 of the 12 founder members were Quakers<sup>5</sup>. Clarkson took on the essential task of collecting every possible source of evidence. This Society distributed anti-slavery literature and stirred public opinion against the slave trade, and anti-slavery societies sprang up all over the country. On 25 March 1807 Parliament

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<sup>1</sup> See London Yearly Meeting minutes, volume 6, 457 - 458

<sup>2</sup> See London Yearly Meeting minutes, volume 17, 298 – 307

<sup>3</sup> Meeting for Suffering Committee on the Slave Trade 1783: Jacob Agar; David Barclay (1729-1809); Adey Bellamy; James Beesley; Richard Chester; Thomas Corbyn; William Dillwyn (1743-1824); Claude Gay; Jacob Hagen (1715-1795); George Harrison (1747-1827); Robert Howard; Thomas Knowles (1734-1786); John Coakley Lettsom (1744-1815); John Lloyd (1750-1811); Daniel Mildred; James Phillips (1745-1799); Foster Reynolds; Joseph Row (1722-1792); Henry Sherry(?); John Townsend; John Wallis; Jeremiah Waring; John Wright

<sup>4</sup> The informal group of six Friends who met during 1783 were - William Dillwyn; George Harrison; Samuel Hoare Jr(1751 – 1825); Thomas Knowles; John Lloyd; Joseph Woods (1738 – 1812)

<sup>5</sup> The 9 Quakers were John Barton (1755 – 1789); William Dillwyn; George Harrison; Samuel Hoare Jr; Joseph Hooper (1732 – 1789); John Lloyd; Joseph Woods; James Phillips; Richard Phillips, cousin to James Phillips (1756 – 1836)

*Dates are given where known*

## Library sources on Quakers and the origins of the abolition movement

passed the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, which abolished slave trade in the British colonies and made it illegal to carry slaves in British ships.

Although illegal in the British colonies the slave trade continued in other areas, and throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century Quakers remained instrumental in the anti-slavery campaign.

Quaker participation was evident in various societies, such as the Anti-Slavery Society set up in 1832, and the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (BFASS) founded in 1839 by Joseph Sturge and his supporters. The BFASS proved to be the most enduring of all the British anti-slavery societies and survives today as Anti-Slavery International.

## Anti-slavery material in the Library of the Religious Society of Friends

Quakers' long-standing and continuing concern against slavery is reflected in the Library of the Religious Society of Friends, which has printed items, archives and manuscripts, pictures and artefacts relating to anti-slavery.

What follows is an outline guide to the different types of resources in the Library and a selection of some of the most significant titles, archive collections and artefacts. It focuses on the abolition movement to 1807, although the Library does have an extensive collection of material relating to the anti-slavery movement throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Most of the printed material can be searched for using the on-line catalogue, Most of the printed material and a growing proportion of archive and manuscript sources can be searched for using the on-line catalogue ([www.quaker.org.uk/cat](http://www.quaker.org.uk/cat)), but for a comprehensive search of holdings researchers will need to consult additional finding aids and catalogues in the Library.

## Printed sources

Printed sources are books, pamphlets, periodicals and news cuttings. For books and pamphlets the main library class number for abolition is 051.69. For a full list of printed sources you will need to search the catalogues to printed items. Most titles are on the on-line catalogue to printed materials [www.quaker.org.uk/cat](http://www.quaker.org.uk/cat), but for supporting material you may also need to search the card catalogue in the Reading Room. Some items are on the open shelves in the Reading Room, but more are on closed access (shelved elsewhere in the Library): to see these in the Reading Room you will need to fill in a call slip. A few items are available only on microfilm.

Below is a selected list of key primary and secondary printed sources on Quakers and the abolition movement. The library shelf reference is given in brackets. Where items are available only on microfilm the reference is pre-fixed with MIC.

### Selected primary printed sources

Please note all the printed primary sources are on closed access – you will need to order them by filling in a call slip.

Thomas Clarkson, *An essay on the slavery and commerce of the human species, particularly the African, translated from the Latin dissertation, which was honoured with the first prize in the University of Cambridge for the year 1785, with additions.*

London: James Phillips, 1786

SR 051.6 CLA

## Library sources on Quakers and the origins of the abolition movement

Thomas Clarkson, *The history of the rise, progress and accomplishment of the abolition of the African slave-trade in the British parliament*. 1808 (2 vols.)

SR 051.69 CLA

William Dillwyn, John Lloyd, *The Case of our fellow-creatures, the oppressed Africans respectfully recommended to the serious consideration of the legislature of Great-Britain by the people called Quakers*. London: James Phillips, 1783

SR 051.6.A2 Vol. 1/2  
MIC 886 & 900

George Fox, *Gospel family-order, being a short discourse concerning the ordering of families, both of Whites, Blacks and Indians*. By G.F. Printed in the year 1676

Box 29/16

Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade (1787 – 1807), *A list of the Society, instituted in 1787 for the purpose for effecting the abolition of the slave trade*. London: James Phillips, 1787

Box 291/3

### Collection of Anti-slavery tracts

By far the most substantial collection of printed material in the Library is a set of 37 volumes of 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century tracts against slavery. Joseph Binyon Forster, a Manchester sugar refiner, assembled volumes 1 – 7 and the remainder were from 3 other largely unidentified collections. Totalling over 600 items the collection includes many tracts from leading abolitionists and local abolitionist societies throughout the country, and there are also a few pro-slavery tracts. The entire collection has been added to the on-line catalogue [www.quaker.org.uk/cat](http://www.quaker.org.uk/cat)

The collection has been filmed in its entirety [MIC 898 – 910], and the microfilms are available commercially from World Microfilms (Microworld House, PO Box 35488, St Johns Wood, London NW8 6WD; 020 7586 4499; [microworld@ntdirect.co.uk](mailto:microworld@ntdirect.co.uk)).

### Secondary printed sources

All the secondary sources listed below are on the open shelves in the Reading Room. Please note this is a select bibliography and further items can be found on our online catalogue [www.quaker.org.uk/cat](http://www.quaker.org.uk/cat)

Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic slave trade and British abolition, 1760 – 1810*. London: Macmillan, 1975

051.69 ANS

Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral capital : foundations of British abolitionism*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2006

051.69 BRO

Brycchan Carey et. al., *Discourses of slavery and abolition : Britain and its colonies, 1760-1838*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2004

051.69 CAR

Brycchan Carey, *From peace to freedom: Quaker rhetoric and the birth of American antislavery, 1657-1761*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012

051.69 CAR

Brycchan Carey & Geoffrey Plank (eds.), *Quakers and abolition*. Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2014

051.69 CAR

David Brion Davis, *The problem of slavery in the age of revolution, 1770 – 1823*. Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1966

051.69 DAV

## Library sources on Quakers and the origins of the abolition movement

Thomas E. Drake, *Quakers and slavery in America*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1950 051.69 DRA

Jerry William Frost (editor), *The Quaker origins of antislavery*. Norwood, Pa.: Norwood Editions, c1980 051.69 FRO

Adam Hochschild, *Bury the chains: the British struggle to abolish slavery*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2005  
051.69 HOC

Judith Jennings, *The business of abolishing the British slave trade 1783 – 1807*. London: Frank Cass, 1997 051.69 JEN

Clare Midgley, *Women against slavery: the British campaigns, 1780 – 1870*. London: Routledge, 1992 051.69 MID

J.R. Oldfield, *Popular politics and British anti-slavery: the mobilisation of public opinion against the slave trade, 1787 – 1807*. London: Frank Cass, 1998 051.69 OLD

J.R. Oldfield, *Transatlantic abolitionism in the age of revolution: an international history of anti-slavery, c.1787-1820*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013  
051.69 OLD

Alan M. Rees, 'English Friends and the abolition of the British slave trade' in *Bulletin of Friends Historical Association*, Vol. 44, No.2. (Autumn 1955), p.74-87 [Periodicals]

Srividhya Swaminathan, *Debating the slave trade: rhetoric of British national identity, 1759-1815*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2009 051.69 SWA

David Turley, *The culture of English antislavery 1780 – 1860*. London: Routledge, 1991 051.69 TUR

## Unpublished sources: Theses and dissertations

Please note all theses and dissertations are on closed access – you will need to order them by filling in a call slip.

Judith Jennings, *The campaign for the abolition of the slave trade: the Quaker contribution, 1757 - 1807*. Thesis (PhD) - University of Kentucky, 1975  
Thesis 051.69 JEN

Patrick Lipscomb, *William Pitt and the abolition of the slave trade*. Thesis (PhD) - University of Texas, 1960. MIC 104

## Periodicals

The Library has substantial holdings of 19<sup>th</sup> century anti-slavery periodicals. Many are listed in the on-line catalogue, but for a full list of periodical titles and their holdings see a *Hand list of Periodicals in the Library of the Society of Friends* (October 2005) in the Reading Room.

## Library sources on Quakers and the origins of the abolition movement

### Archives and manuscript sources

A growing number of archives and manuscripts are being added to our online catalogue ([www.quaker.org.uk/cat](http://www.quaker.org.uk/cat)), but researchers may also need to use card catalogues and lists in the Library.

#### Archives

Archives are defined as the central archives and records of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain. Within the archives the principal source of information on the Society's anti-slavery activity up to 1807 are the minutes of Meeting for Sufferings and London Yearly Meeting, and their committees. The most substantial body of minutes are those of the Meeting for Sufferings Committee on the Slave Trade.

#### Meeting for Sufferings: Committee on the Slave Trade: Minutes 1783 – 1792

MS Box F1/7; Photostat copy and transcript at LL 051.66

The committee first met on 29 August 1783 and was laid down by Meeting for Sufferings in summer 1793.

Please note that the transcript and photostat copy will usually be produced instead of the original minutes for preservation reasons.

#### Minutes of London Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings

References within these minutes can be located through the following indexes, both of which are housed in the Reading Room:

London Yearly Meeting minutes 1668 – 1856. Index to Places and Subjects

Meeting for Sufferings Indexes to minutes 1675 – 1684 and 1700 – 1857

In both indexes the subject terms 'Negroes', 'Slave Trade' and 'Slavery' are used being the terms used in the minutes.

#### Manuscripts

Manuscripts are defined as personal papers and documents, as well as the records of non-central organisations and groups, and non-Quaker bodies closely associated with the Society.

The main manuscript collections on anti-slavery up to 1807 are listed below. In addition there are references to letters and papers within other collections. You will need to consult the manuscript catalogues to locate these, and can start by searching under the heading 'Slavery'.

#### Thompson-Clarkson Manuscripts

MS VOL 325-328; MIC 908 – 909

This collection is intended to represent the complete source materials of Thomas Clarkson's *The history of the rise, progress and accomplishment of the abolition of the African slave trade* (1808). It was put together by Thomas Thompson (1776 – 1861) a lifelong member of the Society of Friends, who tried to collect some printed material, an autograph letter or signature and, where possible, a portrait of every person mentioned in the work. MS vol. 328 is a typescript list and alphabetical index of persons. The collection was made in four volumes; the Library has three volumes but the fourth has not been traced.

## Library sources on Quakers and the origins of the abolition movement

Surviving minutes (7 July – 17 November 1783) of the informal group of 6 Friends  
Only 7 pages of the minutes survive and these are within the Thompson-Clarkson  
MSS, Vol II, p.9 MS VOL 327; MIC  
908

The group was an informal association that met on its own comprising 5 members of the Meeting for Sufferings appointed 23-member committee plus one other. The group decided, “that the public mind should be enlightened” and decided to do this through printing anti-slavery materials and publishing anti-slavery articles in the press. The minutes list the articles selected for publication.

William Dickson: Diary of a visit to Scotland 5 January – 19 March 1792 on behalf of the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. Temp MSS 10/14/1

William Dickson, a former secretary to the Governor of Barbados and the author of ‘Letters on Slavery’ (1789), was engaged by the London Anti-Slavery Society to gain support for the abolition movement in Scotland.

Transcript of Willam Dickson’s Diary Temp MSS 10/14/2

Please note that the transcript will usually be produced in lieu of the original diary for preservation reasons.

Thomas Clarkson letters to Thomas Wilkinson Temp MSS 128/14; MIC 493

Thomas Wilkinson (1751 – 1836) of Yanwith, nr Penrith, was a friend of Clarkson’s who helped Clarkson buy land and build a house in Cumbria. These 52 letters cover the years 1790 – 1832.

## Visual material and artefacts

### Picture Collection

There are a few items in the picture collection relating to the campaign. Some of these are photographs from the illustrations in printed works, e.g. the frontispiece from Mary Dudley’s *Scripture evidence of the sinfulness of injustice and oppression ...* 1828 [Vol. 510/8].

The Library has two versions of the famous plan of a slave ship – one taken from Thomas Clarkson’s *History... of the abolition of the... slave trade ...* 1808 [SR 051.69 CLA], the other from a broadsheet of ca. 1789 [Vol. H/167]. In both cases the original is a folded sheet, which is very fragile.

There is a 19<sup>th</sup> century lithograph engraved by A. Hoffay from an original by I.W.H. Handley entitled “Inside of a slave ship, starboard side.” Little is known about this lithograph.

There is also a photograph taken in 1934 of the “Liberation Tree” or Wilberforce Oak in Keston, Kent – which according to Wilberforce’s diaries is where he first told Pitt he intended to bring a bill against the slave trade in parliament.

There are images of a few of the Quakers involved in the abolition campaign. These include a portrait of William Dillwyn by C.R Leslie, silhouette portraits of Elizabeth Heyrick (1769 – 1831), Mary Dudley (1782? – 1847) and Elizabeth Dudley (1779 – 1849); an engraving of John Coakley Lettsom; and an engraving taken from a relief bust of Richard Phillips.

## Library sources on Quakers and the origins of the abolition movement

Enquiries about obtaining reproductions from the picture collection should be made to the Visual Resources Development Officer at the contact details below.

### Artefacts

The Library has a variety of commemorative anti-slavery china (cups, saucers and plates) with the famous image showing a slave in chains. There is also a silk handbag, which belonged to Rebecca Fox of Tottenham in the 1820s, screen-printed with a picture of a woman slave with a child. This is on long term loan to the Museum of London Docklands, where it is on display.

### Biographical information on Quaker abolitionists

The Library has a number of sources and finding aids to help find biographical information about Quaker abolitionists. Most of these are listed in Library Guide to Genealogical Sources, copies of which can be downloaded from our website or requested from the Library.

## Further information

### Library opening hours:

Tues - Fri.

10.00am - 5.00pm

Please note the Library closes for one week in the spring and one week in the autumn. It is advisable to telephone or email prior to visiting. New readers will need to complete a registration form and show proof of permanent address. The registration form can be downloaded from our website or requested from the Library.

For further information or help in using this Library please contact us by emailing [library@quaker.org.uk](mailto:library@quaker.org.uk), telephoning 020 7663 1135 or writing to:

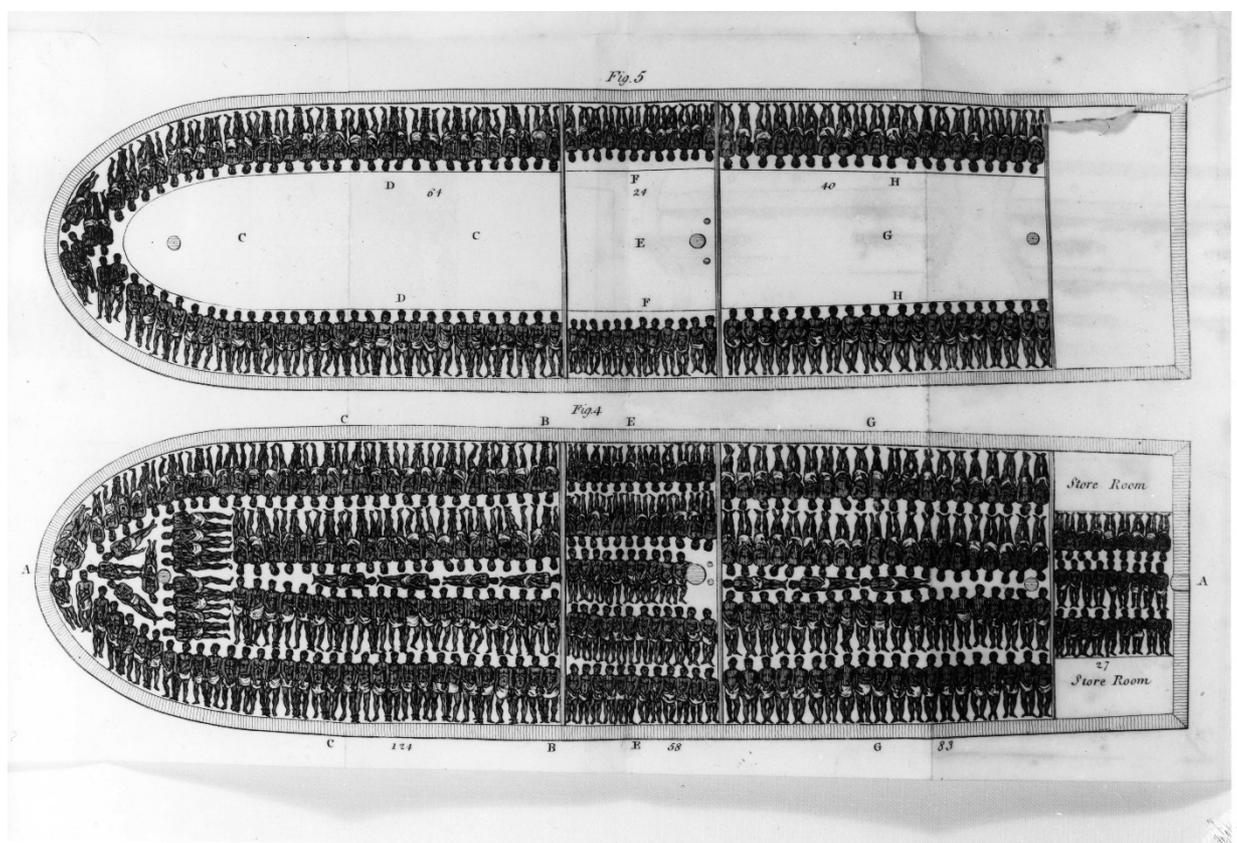
Library of the Society of Friends  
Friends House,  
173 Euston Road,  
London. NW1 2BJ  
[www.quaker.org.uk/library](http://www.quaker.org.uk/library)

*March 2006  
Rev. April 2015*



Quaker Strongrooms blog  
[www.quakerstrongrooms.org](http://www.quakerstrongrooms.org)

## Library sources on Quakers and the origins of the abolition movement



The image above is taken from 'The history of the rise, progress and accomplishment of the abolition of the African slave trade by the British Parliament' by Thomas Clarkson (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, & Orme, 1808), Vol. 2, opp. p. 110

The book itself is at SR 051.69 CLA Vol. 2 and a large copy print is available at 94/AL 16