

Table of Contents

<i>The Transatlantic Slave Trade and Slavery</i>	3
Introduction	3
<i>AFRICA BEFORE THE EUROPEANS</i>	4
Kush	4
The Central West African Empires.....	5
Ghana.....	5
Mali.....	6
Songhai	8
Kanem-Bornu.....	8
The Swahili States.....	9
The Forest States	10
The Hausa Confederation	12
The Role of Women	13
Bibliography	15
<i>THE COMING OF THE EUROPEANS</i>	16
The Arrival of Other Europeans	18
Slavery	18
Bibliography	21
<i>CAPTURE</i>	22
Bibliography	24
<i>SOLD</i>	25
Bibliography	27
<i>SLAVE LABOUR</i>	28
Bibliography	30
<i>EUROPE PROSPERED</i>	31
Pre the 1807 Abolition Slave Trade Act	31
Post the 1807 Abolition Slave Trade Act.....	35
The Church of England	39
The Catholic Church	40
Other Religious Bodies	41
The Church in the Twenty First Century	41
Bibliography	42
<i>RESISTANCE</i>	43

In Africa.....	43
On Slave Ships	44
On the Plantations	46
An Island Revolution	46
Individuals.....	47
Bibliography	50
LEGACY.....	51
For Britain.....	51
Cultural Institutions	53
Public Buildings.....	53
Banking	54
Insurance.....	57
The Twentieth Century - World War I	57
World War II.....	59
Financial Support for the War.....	60
Materials and Labour Support for the War.....	61
The Home Front.....	62
Post 1945.....	62
For Africa.....	63
The Aftermath of the 'Nefarious' Trade	66
The Twenty First Century	68
Bibliography	69
Periodicals & Articles	70
STEPS TO THE ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE.....	71
AND SLAVERY	71

The Memorial 2007 Education Project

The Transatlantic Slave Trade and Slavery

Introduction

“The need to make slaves less than human had its basis in Christianity, for accepting slaves as human beings with souls, created by the same God the white man worshipped would be against Christian ethics. Only if slaves were not real people could the good Christian profess that God had intended slavery as part of his scheme of the world.”

***Dorothy Broderick Images of the Black in Children’s Fiction New York,
London: Bowker, 1973***

The Transatlantic Slave Trade and Slavery was one of the most heinous acts of inhumanity perpetrated against a people based solely on the colour of their skin and the false premise of their ‘inferiority’. ***“Perhaps the true total of those who died in Africa because of the slave trade was as much as double the number of those who were landed alive across the Atlantic. This means that Africa may have lost twenty or thirty million people, because of the trade, during the four and a half centuries that it lasted.” Basil Davidson ‘Discovering Africa’s Past’ Longman 1978***

“The slave trade not only killed far more people than it carried off into captivity, but eventually it killed even these by enabling them to be worked out;....” William Mathieson, Great Britain and the Slave Trade 1839-1865 Longmans, Green & Co. 1929 Never before or since have so many people been forcibly transported from one continent against their will.

It was during the era of this ‘nefarious’ trade that the ideology of racial inferiority began and was reinforced by the eugenics movement. It was argued that African equalled slave equalled savage. However before the arrival of Europeans, African societies showed a level of sophistication not found in many parts of Europe. The Memorial Education Project looks at African society before the impact the Europeans’ arrival had on Africa to the legacies it left. It is supported and illustrated by the Memorial Sculpture as a visual representation of the different stages of this process.

AFRICA BEFORE THE EUROPEANS

“... before ever the British came into relations with our people, we were a developed people, having our own institutions, having our own ideas of government.”

Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford from the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in an address to a London audience 1920

Prior to the arrival of the Europeans and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the African continent composed of peoples of different races, ethnicities, languages, religions and political structures with cultures and societies ***“whose standard of living in terms of food, personal safety and freedom, equalled that of contemporary societies in Europe. In some instances they were even more advanced.”*** Basil Davidson, *Discovering Africa's Past*, Longman 1978

Kush

Great African kingdoms were to be found on the continent with the Kingdom of Egypt created around 3000BC as the world's first sizeable state. To the south of its borders lay the Kingdom of Kush that was spread over modern day Sudan. In the eighth century BC the Kushite king Kashta began the invasion of Egypt. After his death in about 751BC it was continued by his successor Piankhi who recorded this northward sweeping enterprise on a granite stela set up at Jebel Barkal, near Napata. This important source can now be found in the Cairo Museum. Taharqa 690-664BC completed the conquest and ruled lands which stretched from the shores of the Mediterranean to the borders of modern Ethiopia and the Kushite kings became the XXVth dynasty amongst the Pharaohs of Egypt. ***“Kush became a world power and Taharqa briefly entered the European idea of history.”*** Basil Davidson, *The African Past* p. 54. Highly skilled the Kushites worked in a variety of metals: bronze, copper, silver and gold and made heavy gold jewellery worn by queens which was buried with them. Kush was a wealthy kingdom based on trade in gold, ivory, ebony, slaves, animal skins and ostrich eggs. ***“Kush itself produced high quality pottery that was eggshell thin. It was the finest ceramics industry produced in the ancient world. They also produced bronze implements of exceptional quality.”*** Robin Walker, *When We Ruled*, p. 176

The global importance of the Kushites is explained by Derek Welsby of the British Museum ***“Consideration of the Kushites alongside such giants of the***

ancient world as the Greeks, Romans and Egyptians is justified on account of the longevity of the kingdom and of its size, if for no other reasons. At the time when Rome was a small village on the banks of the Tiber and the Greek city states held sway over miniscule territories, the Kushites ruled an empire stretching from the central Sudan to the borders of Palestine.” Cited by Walker, p. 202.

The Central West African Empires

The Central West African Empires of Ghana, Mali, Songhai and Kanem-Bornu were *“advanced in matter of government and economic prosperity Each played an important part in the development of West Africa. Each rose to power in turn and became a vital link in the commercial world of North Africa, which in its turn affected events in Europe – various countries were dependent on their import of Ghana gold through Africa for the stability of their currencies”* Margaret Shinnie, *Ancient African Kingdoms*

Ghana

The ancient state of Ghana was a 1000 miles north and west of modern day Ghana, situated in today’s Mali and southern Mauretania region between the Senegal and Niger rivers. It emerged earliest of the great West African imperial systems. *“The makers of ancient Ghana were authentic West Africans, but they were also influenced by ideas and pressures from North Africa and probably from the Nile as well.”* Basil Davidson *ibid.* p. 27. From about 734AD Ghana was known as ‘the land of gold’ and as Davidson points out *“the fortunes of Ghana flourished on an intelligent local exploitation of a non-local demand for West African gold and other products.”* *ibid.* p. 28 Several European countries were dependent on their imports of Ghana gold through North Africa which was important for the stability of European currencies. *“Ghana’s wealth was based on an extensive trade network. The city of Kumbi-Saleh was the centre of major trade caravans carrying salt from the Sahara, and gold from the Wangara region.”* Walker, *ibid.*, p. 362. In 1076 Ghana was attacked by the Almoravids of North Africa but they were unable to maintain their control. Nevertheless Ghana’s power declined and in 1240 the Malians, also called Mandingas, led by Sundiata Keita, seized and destroyed the Ghanaian capital Kumbi-Saleh. Ghana became part of the Empire of Mali.

Mali

Mali was also an ancient kingdom and at the height of its power in the fourteenth century it included lands now called Senegal, Gambia, Mauretania and Niger. Ibn Battuta, the famous Muslim travel writer of the Middle Ages, described the Malians when he wrote ***“The Negroes are seldom unjust, and have a greater abhorrence of injustice than any other people. Their sultan shows no mercy to anyone who is guilty of the least act of it. There is complete security in their country. Neither traveller nor inhabitant in it has anything to fear from robbers or men of violence.”*** Cited by Walker p. 373

In 1255 Mansa Wali succeeded Sundiata and was the first ruler to take the royal title Mansa. Wali’s largely peaceful reign was followed by years of power struggles when in 1285, a freed slave, declared himself Mansa of Mali. Under the leadership of Mansa Sakura the empire prospered.

Walker cites an Egyptian scholar, Ibu Fadl Al-Umari, who published *Masalik ab Absar fi Mamalik al Amsar* in Cairo around 1342. He records two large maritime voyages ordered by the predecessor of Mansa Musa; Al-Umari does not name this ruler but he has been identified by modern writers as Mansa Abubakari II. ***“..... this king launched two hundred ships filled with men and a further two hundred ships amply stocked with food, gold and water to last for two years. The ruler sent them with a mission to explore the extremity of the Atlantic Ocean.”*** *ibid.* p. 375 One ship returned and the captain recounted his adventures to the Malian king. As a result the king organised a voyage of 2000 ships and sailed with it across the Atlantic but there is no evidence of their return. Whilst there were currents to carry them across the Atlantic there were none to bring them back consequently there is no knowledge of what they may have discovered. This ***“implies that Malians visited the Americas in 1311.”*** Walker points out that ***“this was 181 years before Christopher Columbus ‘discovered’ the continent.”*** p. 377

Ivan Van Sertima, *Evidence for an African Presence, in African Presence in Early America* gives an example of Columbus reporting that he acquired metal goods of West African manufacture from the Native Americans. Howard Lawrence, *Mandinka Voyages across the Atlantic in African Presence in Early America* points out that old maps of the Mexican region, drawn by Europeans, show that the Malians renamed places in the region after themselves. Names such as Mandinga Port, Mandinga Bay and Sierre de Mali exist as place names. Two skeletons of Negro males dated at 1250AD have been recovered from a grave in Hull Bay near the Danish Virgin islands. An inscription written in an old African script called Tifinagh has also been discovered at the bottom of a waterfall in the Reef Bay Valley not far from the African skeletons. Fourteenth

century carvings found in the Americas that depict African men and women, wearing turbans, many with tattoo marks cut into their cheeks have also been found. These may well be depictions of Malians. Cited by Walker *ibid.* p. 377

The discovery of sixteen huge stone carved human heads in Olmec Mexico, all with African facial features, the earliest dated about 1160BC, shows that African influence was far reaching and that Africans must have travelled beyond the shores of the African continent to the New World. Jose Melgar, a Mexican, found one of the carvings in 1862 and in 1869 he wrote a bulletin on it for the Mexican Society of Geography and Statistics: ***“What astonished me was the Ethiopic type represented. I reflected that there had undoubtedly been Negroes in this country, and that this has been in the first epoch of the world.”*** Quoted by Anthony Browden, *Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization*. Cited by Walker *ibid.* p.199

In 1963 an exhibition of Olmec artefacts was held at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Texas. In an introductory essay for the exhibition catalogue, The Olmec Tradition, Alfonso Medellin Zenilil wrote ***“The colossal heads and ‘Monument F’ of Tres Zapotes, principally, have vigorous and precise Negroid physical characteristics, such as prominent cheek bones, thick lips and platyrrhine noses. For a long time there was concern as to what their hair is, or was, since, in the case of the colossal heads, they are invariably covered by a cap or helmet. This doubt has gone on indefinitely, but the discovery of two heads... on which together with the characteristic cheek bones and platyrrhine nose, there is a hair arrangement or head of curly hair.”*** Cited by Walker *ibid.* p. 199

In 1312 Mansa Musa became king and during his reign Mali became known throughout the Mediterranean world and Europe. Davidson suggested that the rulers of Mali were ***“rumoured to have been the wealthiest men on the face of the earth.”*** *Africa, Television series part 3: Caravans of Gold, UK, Channel Four Television 1984* Cited by Robin Walker, *ibid.* p. 378 When he died in 1332AD he left a wealthy prosperous empire and Mali began to appear on maps. One map read ***“This negro lord is called Musa Mali, Lord of the Negroes of Guinea. So abundant is the gold which is found in his country that he is the richest and most noble king in all the land.”*** Shinnie (*ibid*) Cynthia Crossen senior editor of the *Wall Street Journal* wrote ***“You’ve heard about the extraordinary wealth of Bill Gates, J.P. Morgan and the sultan of Brunei, but have you heard of Mansa Musa, one of the richest men who ever lived?”*** She further comments that: ***“Neither producer nor inventor, Mansa Musa was an early broker, greasing the wheels of inter-cultural trade. He created wealth by making it possible for others to buy and sell.”*** *The Rich and How They Got That Way, UK, Nicholas Brealey, 2000.* Cited by Walker, *ibid.* p. 378 After

Mansa Musa's death in 1337 he was succeeded by Mansa Maghan who faced with problems saw the beginning of Mali's decline.

Songhai

On Mali's decline Songhai rose to power and became *"the last of the vast West African empire... and dominated West Africa in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, taking over from Mali"* Walker, *ibid.* p. 383 Timbuktu became a great centre of learning with its University, one of the first in Africa, famous for its scholarship. Morocco had long envied the wealth and power of Songhai and in 1589 the powerful leader El Mansur attacked Songhai and defeated it. This saw the end of the empire. (Research ongoing)

Each of these empires rose in turn, taking power over one from the other. They were all very important internationally because they provided the gold on which many countries depended for their finances.

Kanem-Bornu

Kanem and Bornu were states of Central Sudan. *"Rising obscurely before the tenth century but continuing long into later times, the Kanem-Bornu empire was the political and economic equivalent in the central Sudan of the great systems of Mali and Songhay further to the West. It had links with these but also with the Kezzan in the north, the Nile Valley in the east and the peoples of the forest country in the south."* Davidson, *The African Past* p. 97 Davidson further notes *"Farmers could work their fields in safety. Travellers and pilgrims could follow the roads without fear. Those who lived in towns and market-villages could prosper with the spread of trade that came both from everyday security and from unified rule over a wide country. There was growth of learning in the towns, and of schools in the villages. There was regular traffic between Kanem-Bornu and the Egyptian and Tunisian provinces of the Turkish empire in North Africa."* *A History of West Africa 1000-1800*

This is endorsed by Sir Richard Palmer an acknowledged authority on Kanem-Bornu: *"The degree of civilisation achieved by its early (rulers) would appear to compare favourably with that of European monarchs of that day. Especially when it is understood that the Christian West had remained ignorant, rude and barbarous."* Cited by Walker, *ibid.* p. 429

The Swahili States

On the East coast of Africa a number of major cities flourished between the ninth and the sixteenth centuries. They were known as the Swahili States and were spread over a region of 2,500 miles from Somalia to Mozambique. *“Used for centuries along the eastern coast of Africa, Swahili is a large and flexible African language with an intake of Arabic forms and words. Its very name indicates this, for it derives from the Arabic word for coastland.” Davidson, Modern Africa, p. 164* *“The major city-states were Mogadishu and Brava in Somalia, Lamu, Mombasa and Malindi/Gedi in Kenya, Kilwa and Mafia on islands just off the coast of Tanzania, the islands of Pemba and Zanzibar, and finally Sofala in Mozambique. They were renowned for sophisticated and tasteful architecture. Their mosques were as grand as the medieval cathedrals of Europe and Lamu, one of their cities, was as sophisticated as medieval Venice.” Walker, ibid. p. 468.* One such was Kilwa, an island off the coast of what is now Tanzania, which was described by one visitor as *“one of the most beautiful and well constructed cities in the world.” Cf. Ibn Battuta quoted in G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville ed. East African Coast, Select Documents, UK, The Clarendon press, 1962 cited by Walker ibid p. 37.* The level of luxury was such that *“They are finely clad in many rich garments of gold and silk and cotton, and the women as well; also with much gold and silver chains and bracelets, which they wear on their legs and arms, and many jewelled earrings in their ears.” Duarte Barbosa, Swahili Civilization, in African Civilization Revisited, ed. Basil Davidson, US, Africa World Press 1991, cited by Walker, ibid p. 476.* Other island cities such as Pemba, Kafia and the island of Zanzibar dressed in a similar style with a not dissimilar opulence.

The Indian Ocean trade was important to the Swahili States. They flourished because of the trade in gold, ivory and wax which were the main source of coastal wealth in these areas and *“They imposed taxes and duties on merchant ships that arrived at their ports.” Walker, ibid. p. 468.* East West trade stretched all the way to China and *“in 1414 the city of Malindi sent ambassadors to China, carrying a gift of a giraffe. The gift created a sensation at the imperial court.” Walker, ibid. p. 474.* Davidson commented that *“To those who read of it in Sicily, or heard Idrisi talk of it, this eastern trade must have seemed rich beyond dreams, a strange and glittering El Dorado.” Cited by Walker, ibid. p. 474*

A Time-Life documentary on the Swahili culture entitle *Africa: A History Denied* described the commerce as **“on a scale not seen since the Greek and Roman times.”** Cited by Walker, *ibid.* p. 474

“Six or seven hundred years ago when houses like this (stone and mortar house of many stories with plenty of windows and decorated in the 1920s Art Deco style) first began to be designed and built by Swahili architects for leading men and merchants, there were few houses anywhere else in the world While the inhabitants of London in Elizabethan times were emptying chamber pots out of the window, Swahili residents of Lamu who could afford such a house as this enjoyed the luxury of good sanitation.” Davidson, *Africa, Television series part 3: Caravans of Gold* cited by Walker *ibid.* p. 477.

Walker points out those Chinese records of the fifteenth century mention the Somali city of Brava and note that Mogadishu had houses of **“four or five storeys high”** *ibid.* p. 475. **“Visitors commented on the craftsmanship of the doors, the excellent joinery and the surrounding streams, orchards and fruit gardens.”** Walker, *ibid.* p. 476.

The arrival of the Portuguese saw the destruction of this coastal culture. **“It was at Mozambique, during his first voyage, that da Gama (a Portuguese captain) exchanged the first shots. Back again on the coast in 1502, this time with a score of ships from home (the largest but one of all fleets that Portugal would send to the golden East), da Gama threatens to burn Kilwa unless its ruler will acknowledge the supremacy of the king of Portugal and pay him yearly tribute in gold. Rvasio does the same at Zanzibar and Brava. Meeting resistance, Almeida storms Kilwa Mombasa, burning and destroying. Saldanha ravages Berbera, Soares destroys Zeila, D’Acunha attacks Brava!”** Davidson, *Old Africa Rediscovered.* Cited by Walker *ibid.* p. 476.

The Forest States

Among the forest states on the continent, the Yoruba states were probably the largest and most important. Of all the old civilizations the culture of Ife and Benin is probably the most famous. **“Such was the genius of the Ife metallurgical artists that nothing in the Renaissance surpassed their technique.”** Charles S. Finch, *The Star of Deep Beginnings* cited by Walker *ibid.* p. 329. This view was endorsed by Frank Willett, who felt that Yoruba art **“would stand comparison with anything which Ancient Egypt, Classical Greece and Rome, or Renaissance Europe had to offer.”** Cited by Walker *ibid.* p. 329. Bronze and brass heads and statuettes were found in Benin by the British Military Expedition of 1897 stolen and taken to Europe; others were

discovered at Ife in 1910. These heads are ranked amongst the great art of the world, of a style which had not been seen before, for its excellent workmanship and great beauty. They can be seen in institutions such as the British Museum in London.

Ruling from Ife, the Yoruba by the eleventh century were seen as the leading cultural force in what is today southern Nigeria. German writer Herbert Wendt wrote appreciatively of Yoruba ***“Modern ethnologist have found the art of the Yorubas so astonishingly high in quality that they did not (at first) ascribe it to a Negro race..... The Yoruba Empire consisted of city states similar to those of ancient Greece..... Some of these states had a hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants. Art objects of the highest were found in their ruins - glazed urns, tiles with pictures of animals and gods on them, bronze implements, gigantic granite figures. The Yorubas introduced the cultivation of yams, the preparation of cheese and the breeding of horses into West Africa. They had outstanding artists in metal, gold-casters, cotton weavers, wood-carvers and potters. Their professions formed themselves into guilds, with their own laws, their children were brought up in educational camps, their public affairs were directed by a courtly aristocracy and an exuberantly expanding bureaucracy.” It Began in Babel, UK, Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1963 cited by Walker, ibid. p. 323.***

Such was the Yoruba culture that Professor Leo Frobenius, a German scholar, felt he had discovered remnants of the lost Greek civilisation of Atlantis. Peter Garlake explains why Frobenius could have made such a mistake ***“The calm repose and realism of the Yoruba sculptures were reminiscent of Classical Greece. The pantheon of Yoruba gods, their attributes, their vivid lives and complex responsibilities echoed Mount Olympus. The architecture of the houses and palaces, where rooms opened off enclosed courtyards, open to the sky, resembled the impluvia of early Mediterranean, particularly Etruscan (i.e. Roman), buildings. The Yoruba concept of the universe, their educational system, the organization of their society and their statecraft supported a Greek connection.” The Kingdoms of Africa, UK, Elsevier-Phaidon, 1978, cited by Walker ibid. p. 323.***

The cotton weavers of Yoruba received the praise of a mid-nineteenth century English visitor William Clarke who commented ***“As good an article of cloth can be woven by the Yoruba weavers as by any people in durability, their cloths far excel the prints and home-spuns of Manchester.” Quoted in J.A. Atanda, An Introduction to Yoruba History, UK, Ibadan University Press, 1980 cited by Walker ibid. p. 325.***

The Hausa Confederation

In the region of what is now northern Nigeria the Hausa Confederation known as the Hausa Bakwai, or 'pure' Hausa States was made up of seven independent cities and surrounding territories. These cities were Gobir, the most northerly, Biram, Katsina, Kano, Daura, Rano and Zazzau the most southerly. They flourished *“from the eleventh or twelfth centuries to the early twentieth century.” Walker, ibid. p. 436.*

The basis of each state was the *birni* or walled village. *“The walls enclosed a large self-sufficient community where trade, industry and agriculture took place. Moreover, villagers from the surrounding rural areas could enter the birni in times of emergency cause by threats from enemy armies. Each birni was designed to withstand blockades. Within the walls, exchange took place between farmers and craftsmen. The Hausa unified the different birni and hamlets into towns, and the most important became capital cities. The capitals governed the hundreds of other walled villages and held the seat of government. In each capital, an elaborate hierarchy and administration evolved.” Walker, ibid. p. 437*

The first Hausa Sarki, the king, Bagauda ruled from Kano 999AD to 1063. Successive Sarkis ruled the confederation and in 1438 Abdullah Burja was crowned the eighteenth ruler of Kano. *“Within a few years, he became the most powerful sarkuna in the Hausa Confederation. His general led military campaigns for seven years in the regions to the south. The campaigns attempted to open the trade route to Gwanja on the edge of the forest belt. The Kano cavalry, typical of the time, was equipped with plumed iron helmets and chainmail. Their horses were protected with lifidi – a thick quilted armour made of cloth. Burja’s raids proved successful. Twenty one thousand prisoners were captured.” Walker, ibid. pp. 439-440*

Burja was succeeded by Yakuba in 1452. *“Pursuing a policy of peace and commerce, large numbers of Malian immigrants settled in Kano. Developing the intellectual culture of the city, these Fulani intellectuals introduced the Islamic teachings of dogmatics and grammar. This added to the already established teachings of jurisprudence and the hadith.” Walker, ibid. p. 440.*

Although the Hausa were linked by language for most of their history, they never formed a unified territory which is why they are described as a confederation of independent states. *“Hausa historians also claim kinship with other states in the Nigeria region known as the Banzai Bakwai, or ‘impure’ Hausa States. These were Zamfara, Kebbi, Gwari, Nupe, Yoruba and Kwararafa.” Walker, ibid. p. 92.*

Each state of the Hausa Confederation *“was typically governed by a Council, composed of the great ministers. Apart from the Sarki, there was the Galadima (his deputy or heir apparent), the Madawaki (the commander-in-chief), the Magaji (the minister of finance), the Yari (the chief of prisons), the Sarkin Dogarai (the head of the royal bodyguard) and the Sarkin Yan Doka (the chief of police). The Madawaki was the second most important official on the Council. Apart from the ceremonial functions, he advised the king on appointments to high office. He was also on the panel of kingmakers. Local government was in the hands of the village heads. Some of these were royally appointed. Taxes were imposed on movable property, livestock, annual production, and as tribute on conquered states. Citizens paid in kind. Tribute was sometimes paid by the supplying of slaves.”* Walker, *ibid.* pp. 444 & 446.

The Role of Women

Powerful women such as Princess Amina born around 1533 in Zazzau emerged in the sixteenth century. *“In 1549 she became the heir apparent (Magajiya) to her mother. With the title came responsibility for a ward in the city where she convened daily councils with other officials. She also began training in the cavalry. In 1576 she became the undisputed ruler of Zazzau. Distinguished as a soldier and an empire builder, she led campaigns within months of becoming ruler. She built walled forts as area garrisons to consolidate the territory conquered after each campaign. Some of these forts still stand today. She is credited with popularising the earthen city wall fortifications, which became characteristic of all Hausa city-states since then. Towns grew within these protective walls, many of which are still in existence called ‘ganuwar Amina’, or Amina’s walls. Amina subdued the whole area between Zazzau and the Niger and Benue rivers, absorbing the Nupe and Kwararafa states.”* Walker, *ibid.* p. 93. *“They (the Nupe) enjoyed a high reputation for the quality of their craftsmanship in brass, silver, and glass manufacture. They were also skilled as boat builders, for war and trade.”* Walker, *ibid.* p. 443 The *Kano Chronicle* says: *“Every town paid her tribute. The Sarkin Nupe (i.e. king of Nupe) sent her forty eunuchs and ten thousand kolas In her time all the products of the west came to Hausaland.”* Walker, *ibid.* p. 93.

“Zazzau came to control the trade route from Gwanja and began to benefit from the trade previously enjoyed only by Kano and Katsina, two other Hausa city-states. Amina’s achievement was the closest that any ruler had come in bringing the region now known as Nigeria under a single authority.” Walker, *ibid.* pp .93- 94

At the beginning of the twentieth century the Hausa Confederation fell to the British who incorporated it with the conquered lands of Benin, Igbo and Yoruba to form the modern state of Nigeria.

In 1963 the Oxford historian Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper made the now famous remark *“Perhaps in the future there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none, or very little: there is only the history of Europe in Africa. The rest is largely darkness.... and darkness is not a subject for history.”*

The history of Africa in this early period dispels the notion that it was a backward primitive civilization and illustrates the ignorance of even the most eminent. In fact it was more advanced than many European countries and in the vanguard of overseas exploration and discovery. As Davidson points out *“They have created culture and civilisations, evolved systems of government and systems of thought and pursued the inner life of the spirit with a consuming passion that has produced some of the finest art known to man.” African Kingdoms – The Great Ages of Man, Time-Life Books Inc. 1966*

3000BC	King Menes becomes pharaoh of Egypt
c1100BC	Kashta, King of the Kushites makes Kush independent of Egypt
500AD	The Kingdom of Axim adopts Christianity
570AD	The army of Christian Abyssinia invades Western Arabia
570AD	The Prophet Mohammed is born in Mecca
640-642AD	The Arabs conquer Egypt
700-1200AD	Kingdom of Ghana
1054-1055AD	The rise of the Almoravids, an African dynasty, in North West Africa
1100AD	Swahili City states develop along the East coast of Africa

- 1150AD** **The Almoravid Empire includes all of Mauritania, Morocco, Mali and half of modern Algeria, Portugal and Spain**
- c1200-1500AD** **Kingdom of Mali**
- 1300AD** **The rise of the Kingdom of Zimbabwe**
- 1300-1800AD** **The Kingdom of Kanem-Bornu**

Bibliography

- Basil Davidson, *The Lost Cities of Africa*, Longman 1959
- Basil Davidson, *African Kingdoms – The Great Ages of Man*, Time-Life Books Inc. 1966
- Basil Davidson, *The African Past*, Penguin Books 1966
- Basil Davidson, *A History of West Africa 1000-1800*, Longman 1977
- Basil Davidson, *Discovering Africa's Past*, Longman 1978
- Cheikh Anta Diop, *Precolonial Black Africa*, Chicago Review Press, 1988
- Margaret Shinnie, *Ancient African Kingdoms*, Edward & Arnold 1965
- Robin Walker, *When We Ruled*, Every Generation Media London (UK) 2006

THE COMING OF THE EUROPEANS

“It was an ingenious system, for the ships never needed to travel empty. And it was an enormously profitable system for the planters whose slaves produced the sugar, the merchant capitalists who sold them the slaves, the industrial capitalists who supplied the manufactured goods with which the slaves were bought, and the bankers and commission agents who lent money to all of them.”

*Peter Fryer Staying Power – The History of Black People in Britain, Pluto
1984*

Portugal was the first European country to explore and exploit Africa. When the Portuguese sailed around the Cape of Good Hope they found flourishing ports and coastal towns scattered along the coast of East Africa. The Portuguese came to understand the extent and wealth of the Indian Ocean trade and were determined to control it and access the riches of the countries involved in it. With their superior weapons they were able to subdue the coastal towns and use them as a base. Fears of the Portuguese forced the people to trade and live in friendship with them but as a token of friendship the Portuguese demanded tribute *‘of a certain sum of money, or a rich jewel’* to be paid each year to their king.

Recent research by Cambridge University who have been conducting excavations in the Cape Verde archipelago, 350 miles off the West African coast *“have found the skeletal remains of some of the very first victims of European Atlantic slave trading. The earliest remains almost certainly date from the 1460s and 70s – at least a dozen years before Columbus’s discovery of the New World, and 30 years before the first African slaves arrived there. The investigations so far suggest that African slaves were being transported by Portuguese slave traders to the islands, possibly as early as the mid-1460s. The archaeologists have found substantial numbers of skeletons – at least half of which appear to be of African origin. Some of the individuals were buried still wearing African style ivory jewellery.”* David Keys, *Europe’s medieval slave trade, BBC History Magazine Vol. 10, No. 2, February 2009*

Prince Henry the Navigator of Portugal helped to finance and organise many expeditions. From one of these to Africa in 1415 he learnt about the trade in gold, silver and spices. In 1441 Captain Antam Gonçaves left Lisbon for Africa and sailed to Rio de Oro on the coast of southern Morocco. Twelve Africans were kidnapped, taken to Portugal and given to the prince. One of the captives was of noble birth and he gave the Portuguese valuable information about the land he came from. With this information Prince Henry made plans for

conquest and more enslavement of Africans. He sought the sanction of the Church for this action and sent an embassy to Pope Martin V. The Pope granted ***“to all of those who shall be engaged in the said war, complete forgiveness of all their sins.”*** Cited by Walker, *ibid.* p. 544.

A larger expedition was financed with 235 enslaved Africans taken back to Portugal for sale. When a slave auction was held in Lagos (Portugal) in 1445 it was described by one witness as a ***“terrible scene of misery and disorder”***. By the 1470s the Portuguese had established trade links along the coast as far as states where slaves were traded for weapons. Lisbon the capital of Portugal became the country’s main slave port.

In 1482 Portugal made contact with the Kongo and an exchange of ambassadors took place with the Kongolese royal family being baptised into the Catholic Church. It was seen as an opportunity to spread the Christian gospel and save heathens. Dr. Chancellor Williams writes ***“The Portuguese Christianization of the Kongo created something more than chaos. It was a revolting mess, no matter from what angle it was viewed. To begin with, priests were not only among the leading slave traders, but they also owned slave ships to carry the ‘black cargoes’ to distant lands. Priests also had their harems of Black girls, some having as many as twenty each One of the main attractions that drew thousands of White men was their unlimited sexual freedom with all the Black girls and women who were enslaved and helpless in the power of their masters. These ‘wholesale raids’ on Black womanhood continued to swell the mulatto population, the majority of which became the faithful servants and loyal representatives of the conquering races to which their fathers belonged.”*** *The Destruction of Black Civilization, US, Third World Press, 1987. Cited by Walker ibid. p. 350*

In 1512 a document, the *Regimento*, was issued by King Manuel of Portugal. It was a blueprint outlining Portuguese policy for the Kongo. Based on the premise that all Catholic kings are brothers, it was therefore logical that Manuel would help his brother the king of Kongo build Christianity in his kingdom. Additional support was to be given by the Portuguese ambassador as an advisor to the Kongolese king in reforming his court along Christian lines. ***“In particular, the Kongolese should receive European titles, carry European emblems and adopt Portuguese courtly etiquette. In addition, the Kongolese should pay for the Christianisation programme by exporting copper, ivory and slaves to Portugal.”*** Cited by Walker, *ibid.* 345

Williams’ response to the *Regimento* exposes the Portuguese exploitation of the Kongolese. ***“This is one of the most interesting and significant documents in the history of Black people because it was the first detailed blue print for the***

conquest of the Black man's mind (acculturation via Christianity), his body (slavery), and his country. This historic document, however, was couched in all the endearing words and phraseology of equality and brotherly love"
Cited by Walker, ibid. 346

The Arrival of Other Europeans

In 1562 John Hawkins set out on England's first slaving expedition to the West African coast and began by attacking a Portuguese ship and seizing 200 African captives intended for Portuguese planters in Brazil. He found two kings at war with a third king. Asked for military aid he joined forces with the two kings and led a party of English soldiers into battle against their opponent. The attack was successful and in return for his help the two kings gave Hawkins prisoners of war. With his ship the *Jesus of Lubeck*, the contribution of Elizabeth I to the venture, full of captured Africans, Hawkins sailed for the slave markets of Hispaniola (the island now divided between Haiti and the Dominican Republic)

The French, Dutch, Danes and others also made slaving expeditions to Africa to satisfy the demands of those colonists farming sugar in the Caribbean islands. The demand for enslaved labour increased as exports of sugar boomed to satisfy the sweet tooth of Europe.

Slavery

Forms of slavery existed in Africa before the coming of the Europeans but where it existed it was more similar to what in Europe was known as serfdom. *Walter Rodney's 'History of the Upper Guinea Coast'* points out that "... *'domestic slaves' could not be sold, except for serious offences; they had their own plots of land and or rights to a proportion of the fruits of their labour; they could marry; their children had rights of inheritance; and, if born of one free parent, often acquired a new status. Such individuals could rise to positions of great trust,"* This bore no similarity to the barbaric, inhumane and chattel slavery practised in the Caribbean and the Americas that was introduced by the Europeans.

Slavery as practised by White Europeans towards Africans has been compared to other forms of slavery. *"To the Romans, slaves were merely vulgar and conquered people who had no rights of Roman citizenship. The Greeks thought of their slaves as unfortunate people who had failed to cultivate their minds and wills and were thus reduced to that lowly, but necessary state. But these slaves were still human beings. However, the African who was*

unfortunate enough to find himself on some fast clipper ship to the New World was not even accorded membership of the human race.” Imamu Amira Baraka, Blues People: Negro Music in White America, London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1963

Marika Sherwood points out *“What was different about the enslavement of Africans by Europeans was that they were treated as chattels, as non-human goods at the mercy of their owners There was only one reason to enslave and transport African women, men and children to the Americas: to make money for emigrant Europeans establishing mines, plantations, farms, businesses. Except in the North American colonies, this money was generally repatriated to Europe.” After Abolition – Britain and the Slave Trade since 1807, I.B. Tauris, 2007*

“The British Empire carried more Africans into bondage across the Americas than any other nation. Not only did the British slavers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries do most to hone the art of the ‘Africa Trade’, they also benefited financially more than any of their competitors. Britain became ‘Great’ on the backs of millions of slaves.” James Walvin, Britain’s Slave Empire, Tempus Publishing, 2000

- 1415 Prince Henry the Navigator (Portugal) finances and organises an expedition to the North and West coastline of Africa**
- 1441 Captain Antam Gonçaves sails from Lisbon to present day Mauritania and captures Africans to sell as slaves**
- 1444 Beginning of the Slave Trade with the landing of 235 enslaved Africans in Portugal**
- 1445 Portuguese establish a slave market and fort at Argun (Mauretania)**
- 1482 The Portuguese build a fort at El-Mina (Ghana)**
- 1492 Columbus discovers America**
- 1515 Spanish planters in the Caribbean send home their first cargo of sugar**
- 1518 First cargo of enslaved Africans from West Africa to the West Indies**
- 1550 Portuguese begin construction of a fort at Accra (Ghana)**
- 1562 First English slaving expedition by John Hawkins to what is now Sierra Leone and captures 300 Africans**
- 1609 First English settlement in Bermuda**
- 1618 James I gives a charter of monopoly to thirty London merchants to deal in enslaved Africans**
- 1619 First record of Africans landing in Virginia**
- 1625 First English settlement in Barbados**
- 1626 First enslaved Africans arrive in St. Kitts**
- 1632 English arrive in Antigua**
- 1633 The fort of Argun falls to the Dutch**

- 1637** **El-Mina falls to the Dutch**
- 1642** **Dutch delegation to the King of Kongo**
- 1650** **English establish the first sugar plantation in Antigua**
- 1652** **Small Dutch colony founded in the Cape of Good Hope**
- 1655** **British invade Spanish controlled Jamaica**
10th May
- 1664** **Founding of the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa who sold captive Africans to the newly established sugar plantations in the West Indies**
- 1674** **Betty's Hope – Antigua's largest estate owned by Christopher Codrington**
- 1710** **The Church of England inherits three plantations on Barbados from Christopher Codrington which are managed by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, the missionary arm of the Church**
April

Bibliography

- Basil Davidson, *Discovering Africa's Past*, Longman 1978
- Peter Fryer, *Staying Power – The History of Black People in Britain*, Pluto 1984
- Nick Hazlewood, *The Queen's Slave Trader: John Hawkyns, Elizabeth I and the Trafficking in Human Souls*, New York: Harper Collins 2004
- David Keys, *Europe's medieval slave trade*, BBC History Magazine, Vol. 10, No. 2, February 2009
- Walter Rodney, *History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800*, Oxford University Press, 1970
- Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Bogle L'Ouverture Publications Ltd., London 1988
- Marika Sherwood, *After Abolition – Britain and the Slave Trade since 1807*, I.B. Tauris, 2007
- James Walvin, *Britain's Slave Empire*, Tempus Publishing, 2000
- Chancellor Williams, *The Destruction of Black Civilization, US, Third World Press*, 1987

CAPTURE

“I was early snatched away from my native country, with about eighteen or twenty more boys and girls, as we were playing in a field. Some of us attempted, in vain, to run away, but pistols and cutlasses were soon introduced, threatening that if we offered to stir, we should all lie dead on the spot.”

Ottobah Cugoano, Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery 1787

The enslavement of Africans came about in a variety of different ways. Neighbours' rivalries were frequently exploited by ship's captains. This involved bribing local chiefs who supplied guns and other weaponry to one side in a local conflict to make war on their neighbours. *“Feuds were sedulously fomented; kidnapping encouraged; negroes were bribed to accuse each other and judges to condemn both.” William Mathieson 'Great Britain and the Slave Trade 1839-1865' Longmans Green & Co. 1929.* As a result of this external intervention, factionalism increased along the West African coastline and into inland states. This destabilisation hastened the destruction of African societies although many African chiefs tried to resist the incursion of the slave trade. However such was the pressure that they succumbed and became part of the system. *“Faced with the onward march of Imperialism and European civilisation, local peoples had to make a choice between acceptance and defiance, collaboration and resistance. It is small wonder that for the most part collaboration became the inevitable consequence.” Denis Judd 'The Impact of Imperialism' BBC History Magazine January 2008* Similarly this was the position of African rulers when faced with the arrival of European slave traders to the African continent.

Initially African kings and chiefs entered into friendly agreements with the agents of the Kings of Portugal. They also accepted occasional military help from those such as John Hawkins and sold some of the 'rightless persons' in their kingdoms. These 'rightless persons' were prisoners of war or those sentenced for serious offences. Those found guilty of criminal activity were sold to slave traders. *“With a hellish ingenuity the very crimes of the country seemed to have been made on purpose to serve the interests of slave-sellers and slave buyers. Theft, adultery, witchcraft and the removal of fetishes were falsely imputed for the sake of selling the accused into slavery, and some of the chief men were said to employ the best looking women they could find,*

well dressed, in order to entice the unwary into criminal situations, which ensured their conviction or offered a pretext for selling them to Europeans.” Mathieson, ibid.

They were also pleased to buy European goods and with the increased demand for more captives, white slavers offered more and more guns and gunpowder and alcohol in exchange. Each knew that if one refused to sell captives, another would agree and then the one who had refused would lose his chance of buying guns and other European goods. When they ran out of ‘rightless persons’ in their own areas they began buying such persons from their neighbours. When their neighbours would not sell, they made war for captives

Night time ambushes often took place when Africans were snatched from their environment and as a result many suffered severe mental disorientation.

“Accra’s men rushed into the villages with lighted torches, and set fire to anything that would burn, making at the same time the most hideous yells to frighten and terrify the peaceful Negroes within their huts and cabins. It was not long before the two villages were in flames, out rushed the frightened Negroes for safety, when they were immediately pounced on by Accra’s men, and bound hand and foot with ropes and chains, and then thrown into the canoes. In this way they would kidnap as many as fifty and a hundred men at a time. Down the river as fast as they can go, with their living cargo, to the good ship ‘Thomas’ of Liverpool.” Dicky Sam ‘Liverpool and Slavery’ Centenary Edition Scouse Press 1984 –First Published 1884

When captured enslaved Africans were shackled together, often in pairs and secured at the neck by a length of wood forked at both ends. They would arrive at the coast weakened, having marched hundreds of mile with little food on the enforced journey. *“The slaves were collected in the interior, fastened one to another in columns, loaded with heavy stones of forty or fifty pounds in weight to prevent attempts to escape, and then marched the long journey to the sea, sometimes hundreds of miles, the weakly and sick dropped to die in the African jungle. Some were brought to the coast by canoe, lying in the bottom of boats for days on end, their hands bound, their faces exposed to the tropical sun and the tropical rain, their backs in the water which was never bailed out.” C.L.R. James, The Black Jacobins.*

On the West African coast slave castles were built where the enslaved were held for shipment. The first and largest Elmina, in what is now modern day Ghana, was built by the Portuguese in 1482. When buyers arrived the prisoners were stripped naked and examined by the ship’s doctor. He selected those he thought able to survive the infamous Middle Passage, the sea crossing from Africa to the Americas and the Caribbean. It was during one of these crossings that the infamous Zong Massacre took place in 1781. (For details see Section Sold)

On the rare occasion African traders were invited to dine with the captain on board the ship *“when they were well supplied with drink, the ship would be got under-way, all sails set, and rapidly leave the shore. The traders on awaking would find themselves out at sea; they would be stripped, branded, and put down the hold to share the fate of other slaves.” Sam, ibid*

The position of rulers was difficult and made more so because the slave trade grew slowly infiltrating its way into daily life. A few kings saw the danger, tried to stop it and blamed themselves for the failure. *“It is a disgrace to us and to rulers before us that we, in our simplicity, should have opened the way for many evils in our Kingdoms.” King Garcia V of Kongo 1641*

Simplicity was not the only reason but self defence. Once guns supplied by Europeans became common place in Africa, no coastal ruler could feel safe without a supply of them and he could only obtain guns in exchange for slaves.

Bibliography

Ottobah Cugoano, *The Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery* 1787

C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins*, Penguin Books 2001 first published 1938

William Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade 1839-1865*,

Longmans, Green & Co 1929

Dicky Sam, *Liverpool and Slavery Centenary Edition* – Scouse Press First

Published in 1894

Michael Taylor, *The Interest: How the British Establishment Resisted the Abolition of Slavery*, The Bodley Head London, 2020

James Walvin, *The Zong: A Massacre, the Law and the End of Slavery*,

New Haven, CT, 2011

SOLD

“The Liverpool brand, DD, burnt with red hot irons into the living flesh of African men, women and children, was famous among West Indian planters as a guarantee of prime quality.”

*Peter Fryer Staying Power - The History of Black People in Britain, Pluto
1984*

Enslaved Africans sold by slave traders were usually young able bodied men and women. There were also a proportion of children *“... but people over the age of 30 were almost always rejected.”* Fryer – *‘Black People in the British Empire – An Introduction’ Pluto 1988*

The fit and healthy slaves were branded in a variety of places – breast, buttock or back with the purchasing company’s mark. Branding prevented slave traders from exchanging approved slaves for unfit ones. It also provided information to the buyers in the Caribbean and America as to their likely quality as over time certain brands became associated with standards of quality.

The enslaved shackled in pairs in leg irons would be forced aboard the waiting ships for the transatlantic crossing, the infamous Middle Passage. *“The slaves were always packed often so closely that they sat between each others legs; they were chained by the ankle in pairs, their fetters being, not locked, but riveted; and the boarding above them was in so many cases so low that they could not even sit upright. The bent back frequently stiffened ... The stench arising from bad air and the accumulation of filth was overpowering; the bruising of naked and manacled bodies with the rolling and pitching of the ship in a rough sea was an added torment.... ”* William Mathieson *‘Great Britain and the Slave Trade 1839 – 1865 Longmans, Green & Co. 1929.*

“Captives were forced to sleep, eat, urinate, defecate and menstruate in coffin-like confines which lacked ventilation and sanitation. As a result, infections, infestations and diseases thrived. The captives’ diet consisted of at least one meal a day, a porridge-like substance which did little to fend off scurvy or malnutrition, and they often suffered (and died from) dehydration due to the lack of drinking water. Any attempts at ‘hunger-strikes’ were met with force feeding aided by implements that prized the jaws apart, and thumb screws as a means of coercion.” Lloyd Evering et al, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade and its Legacies, set all free 2007*

“The close proximity of so many naked human beings, their bruised and festering flesh, the foetid air, the prevailing dysentery, the accumulation of filth, turned these holds into a hell. During the storms the hatches were battened down, and in the close and loathsome darkness they were hurled from one side to another by the heaving vessel, held in position by the chains on their bleeding flesh. No place on earth, observed one writer of the time, concentrated so much misery as the hold of a slave ship.” CLR James, The Black Jacobins.

In November 1781 the Liverpool slave ship the Zong on its journey to Jamaica faced a water shortage. As a result the crew threw overboard 133 Enslaved Africans in what became known as the Zong Massacre. When the Gregsons, the owners of the Zong, claimed compensation for the loss of their ‘cargo’ the insurers refused to pay. The insurers were taken to court by the Gregsons and the jury found in their favour. They appealed and the case was heard before Lord Chief Justice Mansfield who ruled against the initial judgement and overturned it.

Granville Sharp, a campaigner against the slave trade, heard about the case from freed slave Olaudah Equiano and tried unsuccessfully to persuade the Admiralty to bring murder charges against the crew. The Zong Massacre focused attention on the barbarities perpetrated on Africans being forcibly transported across the Atlantic Ocean into slavery.

These horrific conditions were exacerbated by the treatment of women who were molested and sexually abused by the crew. The only respite, if it can be called that, the enslaved received was limited exercise on deck but this was to ensure they remained fit and sale worthy. This dehumanisation of a people was in the interests of profit as they were shipped across the Atlantic Ocean.

On arrival ***“At the slave ports they were penned into ‘trunks’ for the inspection of the buyers. Night and day thousands of human beings were packed in these ‘dens of putrefaction’ so that no European could stay in them for longer than a quarter of an hour without fainting. The Africans fainted and recovered or fainted and died, the mortality in the ‘trunks’ being over twenty per cent.”*** C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins*. The enslaved would then be auctioned on shore or sold through a system called the ‘scramble’. The ‘scramble’ involved the captain leaving his ‘cargo’ in the hold or under canvas on the deck of the ship. All buyers having bought a ticket would on orders storm the ship and grab the best of the available cargo.

Bibliography

- Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Anti-Slavery*,
Cambridge 2009
- Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition*,
Chapel Hill, NC 2010
- Peter Fryer, *Staying Power – A History of Black People in Britain*, Pluto 1984
- Peter Fryer, *Black People in the British Empire*, Pluto 1988
- C.L.R James, *The Black Jacobins*, The Black Jacobins, Penguin Books 2001,
First Published 1938
- William Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade 1839-1865*, Longmans,
Green & Co. 1929
- Michael Taylor, *The Interest: How the British Establishment Resisted the
Abolition of Slavery*, The Bodley Head London, 2020
- James Walvin, *England, Slaves and Freedom, 1776-1838*, MacMillan Press
1986
- James Walvin, *The Zong: A Massacre, the Law and the End of Slavery*,
New Haven, CT, 2011

SLAVE LABOUR

“The iron muzzle, thumb-screws are so well known as not to need a description, and were sometimes applied for the slightest faults. I have seen a Negro beaten till some of his bones were broken, for only letting a pot boil over.”

Olaudah Equiano The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, 1789

Enslaved Africans were not seen as human beings but as property. They were stripped of everything: their culture, their language, and their names and forced to take names imposed by their owners. They were at their owner's disposal, bought and sold at will, taken from plantation to plantation with families split up. Slave labourers on the plantations produced crops that satisfied the European appetite and became an important force in shaping the economy of European nations.

Many worked in the fields growing sugar, tobacco and cotton. This was backbreaking work with long hours in the scorching sun. *“Cultivating and harvesting the crop was brutal work. If you were a field hand, you planted cane shoots in holes of trenches you dug by hand, often in marshland where the air was dense with mosquitoes. At harvest time, you carried huge, heavy bundles of cane to the mill. You then fed each bundle twice through powerful vertical rollers that squeezed out the juice, which flowed into large copper vats in the boiling house, where it was simmered, strained, filtered, and allowed to crystallize into sugar.”* Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*. All this hard labour and suffering was simply to gratify the sweet tooth of Europeans.

Others worked in the factories and mills which were often very dangerous. *“The factory work was hot and dangerous as canes had to be fed into the rollers by hand. There was an axe hanging by to cut off tired fingers which became caught up in the rollers. In the boiling house slaves suffered terribly from burns while stoking the furnaces and ladling the boiling sugar from copper to copper.”* William Claypole & John Robottom *‘Caribbean Story – Book One: Foundation’* Longman 1986.

“The mill rollers had no brakes and sometimes the hatchet did not help. A planter described one incident on Barbados: ‘Two Negroe Women, being Chained together, by way of punishment for some offence, were employed

*in a Windmill, one of them unfortunately reaching too near the Rollers, her fingers were caught between them, and her Body was drawn through the Mill. The Iron Chain, being seized by the Rollers, was likewise drawn through &.... the other female Negroe, was dragged so close to those Cylinder, that her Head was severed from her Body.” Cited by Hochschild, *ibid*.*

Life on the plantations could be brutal. Punishments even for minor offences were severe to act as a deterrent to others. Floggings were common place as were amputations and foetuses were aborted by cutting open women’s stomachs, inserting gunpowder into vaginas and setting it alight. *“From 1707, the punishment for any enslaved African who rebelled against their captor was to be ‘nailed to the ground’ and executed by ‘applying fire by degrees from the feet and hands, burning them gradually up to the head.’ Those who committed ‘lesser crimes’ faced castration or the chopping off of half a foot in a coordinated regime of ‘terror (which) must operate to keep them in subjection’, according to a slavers’ manual from the time.” Cited in The Londoner, May 2007* All these abuses were designed to instil fear and maintain order on the plantations.

Other slaves were domestics who worked as butlers, cooks, maids, coachmen and gardeners. Domestic slaves were thought to have a better life than the field slaves because their work was less demanding. Nevertheless *“... Many of the tasks they had to do were humiliating, especially when they were serving one of the planter’s children. One young mistress was described as having three slaves attending her when she took her afternoon nap: two to fan her face and one to lightly scratch her feet. To add to the difficulties of their position they usually had to live in a compound near the great house and away from the other slaves who often treated them as outcasts.” Claypole, *ibid*.*

*“Between 1700 and 1800, Brazil is estimated to have had about 600,000 black miners. Most of them, or their parents, were born in Africa. Around 1800 the vast inland region of Brazil called Minas Gerais had about 15,000 whites and 200,000 blacks. Writing at that time, a Swedish mining engineer with long experience of the country explained that smelting and smithing there were learned from the blacks. He described the methods of iron production then in use throughout the region. His description shows that the methods used were those of Africa. This began to change only after 1800 with the introduction of machinery from Europe.” Davidson, *Discovering Africa’s Past**

New World Africans took over a host of other skilled jobs in South America. With their knowledge of tropical farming the Africans understood how to farm this foreign soil and make it productive. They produced the sugar and other crops that fed the transatlantic trade. By 1800 there were approximately a

million Africans growing sugar in Brazil, 250,000 producing coffee whilst others grew bananas, cotton and other crops. Their experience of cattle breeding also enriched the South American ranches and cattlemen rode the plains whenever ranching was possible.

The treatment of the enslaved in Brazil was no less brutal than that in the Caribbean and North America. A Brazilian writer in a pamphlet published in Rio said that atrocious punishments were common. ***“On the great sugar estates in the north of Brazil it would horrify any humane person to witness the misery of the slaves, whose bodies, covered with wounds sufficiently indicate the treatment of which they are the victims. In the provinces of Piaupy and Paraulian a flogging for nine successive days is an ordinary punishment.”*** The same writer said that ***“Thumbscrews and other instruments of torture were used on the plantations and that slaves were sometimes tied up for a whole night over an ants’ nest or exposed on a cross to the sting of mosquitoes.”*** Cited by Mathieson.

In 2008 on the BBC programme *Who Do You Think You Are?* Dr. Veront Satchell of the University of the West Indies at Mona, Jamaica was in conversation with the celebrity chef Ainsley Harriott. He revealed that in order to maintain their supply of slave labour, plantation owners would pay their overseers bounties to sire children with female slaves. The introduction of the Jamaican Slave Act of 1788 allowed owners of each estate 20 shillings per Negro child and then in 1792 this bounty was increased to £3.00.

Bibliography

William Claypole & John Robottom, *Caribbean Story Book One: Foundation*
Longmans 1980

Basil Davidson, *Discovering Africa’s Past*, Longman 1978

Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Anti-Slavery*,
Cambridge, 2009

Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition*,
Chapel Hill, NC, 2010

Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or
Gustavus Vassa*, 1789

William Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade 1839-1865*, Longmans,
Green & Co. 1929

Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince (1831)* ed Sara Salih, London, 2004
Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, The Londoner,
May 2007

EUROPE PROSPERED

“Rising British capitalism had a magic money machine, an endless chain with three links, sugar cultivation; manufacturing industry; and the slave trade. And the slave trade was the ‘essential link’. The whole system ‘was frankly regarded as resting on slavery’”

Eric Williams ‘From Columbus to Castro’ Andre Deutsch 1970

The ‘Great’ in Great Britain is inextricably linked to the free enforced labour provided by the slave trade and slavery. It was central to the growth of industry in Western Europe and the United States of America whilst simultaneously it depressed and destabilized the economies of African states. Almost every level of British society across the board were beneficiaries of the slave trade, particularly the major slaving ports of London, Liverpool and Bristol.

The single crop economy of the British West Indies was sugar, the ‘white gold’ of the New World. Although there were other crops grown such as tobacco, cotton, ginger, cocoa and coffee, they were of relative minor importance in comparison to sugar. Sugar was ‘King’. Cheap labour was needed to plant, tend, cut the canes and process the sugar and the African slave trade became the foundation of this industry, the basis of West Indies’ prosperity.

In 1663 a new gold coin, the Guinea, was struck. Inspired by the riches of the Guinea coast, Africans and African gold, it bore the image of Charles II with an African elephant below it. English wealth became measured in guineas. The London based slave trading company, the Royal Adventurers into Africa, who were responsible for creating the guinea, had stockholders that *“included the king and queen, the queen mother, a prince, 3 dukes, 7 earls, a countess, 6 lords, and 25 knights. Aristocracy and gentry held about a quarter of the stock; the rest was snapped up by merchants and City men.” Fryer Staying Power* *“Prior to 1783 all classes in English society presented a united front with regard to the slave trade. The monarchy, the government, the church, public opinion in general, supported the slave trade.” Williams, Capitalism and Slavery.*

Pre the 1807 Abolition Slave Trade Act

London was the leading English slaving port until the 1720s when it was overtaken by Liverpool. ***“Between 1672 and 1713, the Royal Africa Company, successor to the Royal Adventurers, sent more than 500 ships on the triangular voyage. These ships carried goods worth £1,500,000 and took on board about 125,000 Africans... At the peak of its activities the company was shipping Africans at the rate of about 5,000 a year.” Fryer, Black People in the British Empire***

Bristol’s involvement in the slave trade was earlier than that of Liverpool. According to C.M. MacInnes the slave trade was of ***‘prime importance’*** to Bristol soon after 1630 so that by 1713 the mayor was calling it ***‘one of the great supports of our people’***. ***Cited by Fryer ‘Bristol and overseas expansion; in Bristol and its Adjoining Counties, ed. C.M. MacInnes and W.F. Whittard (Bristol, for the British Association for the Advancement of Science, 1955)*** By the 18th century Bristol was second only to London in the slave trade and the trade in slave produced sugar.

However both London and Bristol were overtaken by Liverpool which became known as ‘The Capital of the Slave Trade’. In September 1700 the *Liverpool Merchant* sailed from Africa to Barbados with a shipment of enslaved Africans. As the century progressed Liverpool’s trading activity increased as did its population from 5,000 at the beginning of the eighteenth century to 78,000 at its end. It was said of Liverpool that ***“every brick in this infernal town is cemented with an African’s blood”***. ***W.A. Richards, Black Country Guns and the Slave Trade, The Black Countryman, Winter 1975, p. 7.***

“So early as the year 1744 she (Liverpool) employed more than one half of the vessels engaged in that branch of commerce,(the slave trade), and transported annually from Africa more than one half of the slaves purchased by all vessels of Great Britain The number of slave clearances for Africa from Liverpool continued to grow in subsequent years. 53 vessels sailed for Africa from Liverpool in 1751, 69 vessels in 1761 and 107 in 1771. By the 1780s there were nearly twice as many slaving vessels clearing from Liverpool each year as there were from Bristol and London combined. Three out of every four slaves shipped to Jamaica in this decade were carried on Liverpool ships, and all but three of the 19 most important British firms engaged in slave trading were based in Liverpool. a quarter of the ships belonging to Liverpool were engaged in the slave trade. Liverpool had control of over 60% of the British slave trade and of over 40% of the entire European slave trade.” ***Gail Cameron & Stan Crooke ‘Liverpool Capital of The Slave Trade’, Picton Press 1992***

Spain was the only colonising power without a base in West Africa. Consequently it had to turn to a middleman for their supply of slaves. British traders were more than willing to oblige as early as 1663. Under the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, Britain acquired the *assiento*, which was the official contract to supply 4,800 Africans a year to south and Central America, the Spanish West Indies, Mexico and Florida. Eric Williams in *Capitalism and Slavery* cites the involvement of Bishop Robinson of Bristol who in 1713 **“helped to draw up (the Assiento) as British plenipotentiary at Utrecht.”** For his efforts Robinson was promoted to the see of London.

Until 1791, a quarter of the Atlantic slave trade was in British hands and from 1791 to 1806 Britain’s share was over half. The three big slaving ports were not the only cities that prospered and grew. There were other cities whose industries produced the goods with which the enslaved were bought. In Birmingham trade boomed for gunsmiths as over 150,000 guns were exchanged annually for Africans. Violence and tribal wars were fuelled by the plentiful supply of guns and gunpowder into Africa from which Birmingham grew and prospered.

The largest of these gunsmiths was the Quaker partnership of James Farmer and Samuel Galton. They specialised in making guns for the slave trade **“making 500 to 600 guns a week in 1754 and yet they still could not keep abreast of the orders coming in from slave trade merchants. For example in December 1754 the firm received an order for 1,400 guns for the slaving ship ‘Castleton’ at Lancaster, an order for 450 guns for the slaving ship the ‘Swan’ at Liverpool, an order for 300 guns for the slaver ‘Phenix’ at Bristol and an order for 600 Angola muskets for a London slaving ship.”** Galton Papers, 405/1 letter from S. Galton to J. Farmer dated December 9. 175 cited by W.A. Richards, *Black Country Guns and the Slave Trade*. **“S. Galton was collecting all the gunlocks which he could from Darlaston to meet their orders and was asking gunmakers there to work during their June holidays.”** *ibid.* June 3, 1754. They not only supplied guns to **“British, French, Portuguese and other European slave-dealers, but also itself dealt directly in slaves. On one occasion £54,000 of slaves were handled in America.”** Fryer, *Staying Power*, p. 418.

In 1795 Samuel Galton was formally disowned by the Society of Friends, not for trading in slaves but for **‘fabricating and selling instruments of war.’** However, **“he entirely disregarded the disownment and went on attending meetings until his death in 1832”.** Fryer, *ibid.* p. 418. On his death he left a fortune of £300,000. Measuringworth.com gives £265,200,000 as the equivalent amount today – 2022.

The slave trade played an important part in fostering other industrial skills with the ever increasing demand for fetters, chains and padlocks to enslave and restrain Africans. The city also produced other trade goods for the African market such as pots, kettles and wrought iron goods. ***“Iron, guns and brass also figured prominently in this trade and the ancillary West Indian trade. Iron bars were the trading medium on a large part of the West African coast, and by 1682 Britain was exporting about 10,000 bars of iron a year to Africa. Sugar stoves, iron rollers, nails found a ready market on the West Indian plantations. Brass pans and kettles were customarily included in the slave trader’s cargo.” Williams, ibid***

Textiles were made in Lancashire and ***“The British woollen industry was heavily dependent on the triangular trade. A parliamentary committee of 1695 emphasised that the slave trade was an encouragement to Britain’s woollen industry. In addition, wool was required in the West Indies for blankets and clothing for the slaves on the plantations.” Williams From, Columbus to Castro.***

The copper industry of Swansea was boosted by the practice of copper sheathing ships’ hulls first adopted by Britain’s slaving fleet. By the middle of the 19th century Swansea supplied over half the copper needs of the world. Pewter was made in Liverpool and cutlery in Sheffield. With these products went gunpowder, bullets, tallow, tobacco pipes, glass beads, malt spirits and beer from the Whitbread & Truman breweries specially brewed to be exported to Africa. Shipbuilding benefited directly from the slave trade as did its ancillary industries sail and rope making. ***“British and French manufacturers sold their goods to shippers in big Atlantic ports such as Liverpool in England, Glasgow in Scotland, and Nantes in France; metal ware, woollen stuffs, cheap cottons, guns and gun powder. These goods were taken to Africa, mostly West Africa, where they were exchanged for captives.” Davidson, Discovering Africa’s Past***

From the enforced labour of millions of Africans in the sugar plantations Michael Craton has calculated that ***“Over the entire period of slavery the West Indian plantations alone may have brought the planters an aggregate profit of over £150 million at a rate that averaged £1 million a year throughout the eighteenth century.”*** Taking the triangular trade as a whole, he adds that ***“Between 1640 and 1838 private English individuals and concerns interested in slavery may have generated as much as £450 million in profits: two thirds of it in the eighteenth century and half in the century after 1750.” Sinews of Empire: A Short History of British Slavery, Temple Smith 1974***

Profits from the trade were used in a variety of different ways. Some were reinvested in the colonial trade, it bought the manufactured goods needed to run the plantations and Eric Hobsbawm wrote of this ***“rising demand for European goods in the plantations”*** whilst in 1708 John Oldmixon boasted of Barbados ***“When we examine the Riches that have been raised by the Produce of this little spot of ground, we shall find that it has been as good as a Mine of Silver or Gold to the Crown of England.”***

Peter Fryer shows that some profits were invested directly in British industry by enterprising individuals. He cites South Wales where in 1765 Anthony Bacon MP was awarded a government contract to supply ***“seasoned, able and working negroes”*** to the islands of Grenada, the Grenadines, Tobago, St. Vincent and Dominica for which he was paid £67,000. Measuringworth.com gives £127,700,000 as the equivalent amount today - 2022. Bacon invested this money into an industrial development around Merthyr Tydfil, at the time just a hamlet. He took a 99 year lease on 4000 acres and developed iron foundries and coal mines that became known as ‘Bacon’s mineral kingdom’ and made his fortune in the process.

Similarly in North Wales the slate industry which produced roofing slates for factory workers’ dwellings was financed by profits from the transatlantic trade. Richard Pennant MP, first Baron Penrhyn, who inherited the largest estate in Jamaica, used the profits to develop the Penrhyn slate quarries, the building of roads and in 1790 the construction of the harbour of Port Penrhyn near Bangor.

In the eighteenth century James Watt’s original steam engine was partly financed with profits from the slave trade. ***“It as with the money gained from the West Indian trade that capital was eventually found to finance Watt.”***
Cited by Fryer, Staying Power, p. 466

Post the 1807 Abolition Slave Trade Act

There is a clear indication that the passing of the Slave Trade Act in 1807 did not see an end to the trade. This was confirmed by the British & Foreign Anti-Slavery Society at its 1840 Convention when it summed up British involvement. ***“This Convention learns with profound regret that there are British subjects who render immediate support to the slave trade and slavery. Some by supplying the articles necessary for conducting it, some by furnishing, as bankers, the capital employed in it, some by holding shares in mining associations, the purchasers of the victims of the traffic, and some even by the actual manufacture and exportation of the arms and manacles employed in the abduction of these victims.***

That the employment of British subjects, and British capital, directly or indirectly, in support of slavery or the slave trade, is.... a flagrant dishonour to the British name and an outrageous inconsistency with its avowed desire

The 'opulence' of Manchester, as well as that of Liverpool, was admitted in 1841 to be ***“as really owing to the toil and suffering of the negro, as if his hands had excavated their docks and fabricated their steam engines.”*** Herman Merivale, *Lectures on Colonization and Colonies*, cited by Fryer, *Black People in the British Empire*

The advent of the Railway Age, 1830-50, saw the South Yorkshire iron industry, the Liverpool and Manchester Railway and the Great Western Railway all partly financed with profits from the illegal slave trade.

Marika Sherwood has shown that the passing of the 1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade Act was not the great watershed many believe it to be. ***“Britain continued to contribute to and profit from the slave trade well after 1807, even into the 20th century.”*** *After Abolition – Britain and the Slave Trade since 1807*, I.B. Tauris, 2007. She explains that ***“Britain needed the slave worked economies to flourish. For Britain, the produce of slave labour in the Americas was indispensable for its own ‘development’, especially after the demand for exports of cotton manufactures had increased hugely.”*** Sherwood expands her argument by pointing out that ***“Britain also benefited from the increased investment opportunities which emerged as the economies of the slave-worked countries expanded. This explanation was partly, if not mainly, due to Britain lowering the import duty on slave-worked sugar and on the massive increase in imported raw cotton.”*** She asks ***“Could Britain have become the foremost among the industrialised nations without these profits from the trade in enslaved Africans and the profits derived from slavery? No, not just up to 1807, but until the 1880s, when slavery was ended in Cuba and Brazil. That is, was British ‘development’ dependent on slavery?”***

Using a variety of different sources Sherwood describes ***“how slavery remained very much part of British investment, commerce and empire, especially in funding and supplying goods for the trade in slaves and in the use of slave-grown produce. British merchants, shipbuilders, insurers, bankers, and manufacturers, as well as investors, all profited from this trade and the use of slaves on plantations, farms and mines. Their profits underpin British development, perhaps especially that of two of the great industrial cities of the 19th century, Liverpool and Manchester. The financial world of the City in London also depended on slavery, which - directly and indirectly - provided employment for millions of people.”***

Sherwood concludes that ***“Britain made more money out of slavery and the slave trade after 1807 than before”*** and she is not alone in her analysis which endorses that of David Eltis ***“The flow of British resources into the slave trade did not cease in 1807. After this date, British subjects owned, managed, and manned slaving adventures; they purchased newly imported Africans in the Americas, they supplied ships, equipment, insurance, and most important of all, trade goods and credit to foreign slave traders.”*** Eltis, *The British Contribution to the nineteenth-century transatlantic slave trade, Economic History Review* 32/2, 1979. Eltis believes that the ***“Brazilian coastal and interior trade, as well as the slave trade depended on British credit.”*** He also accepts the 1849 estimate of the British consul in Rio de Janeiro that Britain was financing half the Brazilian slave trade. He also believes that this was true of the Cuban trade. Brazil was seen to be so lucrative that a special bank, the London Brazilian Bank, was set up in 1862. Eltis has calculated that British goods, including spirits, gunpowder, muskets and cloth from Manchester, accounted for 80% of the purchase price of slaves imported into Rio de Janeiro.

An estimate by the British Foreign Office shows that 222,834 African slaves arrived in Cuba between 1840 and 1854. In 1855 the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society reported, the number of slaves on the island was about 800,000-900,000 and Britain greatly benefited from their labour. Sherwood states ***“By the 1840s about 20% of the British market in sugar was supplied by Cuba and Puerto Rico. Cuba had become sufficiently important to Britain for a regular mail service to be established. This cost £250,000 per annum. Half the Cuban capital invested abroad was placed in England..... It was with British money (a loan of £2.5m) that Cuba began to build railways as early as 1834. The first line was so successful that ‘small, unconnected railroads, were soon built throughout the sugar cane growing areas of the island..... The skilled labourers on the lines were mainly Irish, the unskilled were slaves. So British money, inventions, skills and labour - and slaves - were used to build railways to aid the export of slave-grown sugar and tobacco, while officially - publicly - Britain was opposed to slavery and the slave trade (after the 1807 Act)”***

She further adds ***“It seems clear to me that far too much money was being made by the bankers, insurers, merchants and manufacturers for any meaningful action to be taken by the government to stop British involvement in the slave trade and slavery. The omnivores had become too powerful as members of parliament and as the money makers who fuelled British prosperity.”*** Sherwood cites that even more cities were involved in slavery after 1807 than before. ***“By this I mean that their business was, one way or another, dependent on slave-grown produce either in the Americas or in Africa. Those involved were not only manufacturers but also banks and insurance***

companies, shipbuilders and dockers, railwaymen and factory workers, seamen and sugar refiners. There must also be many villages which grew from the 'beneficence' of the lord of the manor who derived some or all of his wealth from the profits of slavery." She also takes a closer look at Liverpool and Manchester and cites the former *"as a prime example of a city that grew from both the 'nefarious' trade and from the profits of slavery. Manchester and the surrounding towns would not, I believe, have developed to more than a small fraction of their size had it not been for slave-grown cotton. The two towns became interdependent by the end of the 1820s."*

Sherwood develops her argument by stating *"In 1700, Liverpool was a large fishing village of fewer than 5,000 inhabitants. By 1773, it had grown to a city of 34,000 people. This was due partly to its involvement in the trade in slaves. In 1795, about a quarter of Liverpool ships were engaged in the trade in enslaved African women, men and children. In just two years, 1805-07, 70,294 enslaved Africans were carried to the Americas in 402 slaving voyages from Liverpool. How many were killed in the process of enslavement, while awaiting shipment on the African coast, in the pestilential ships' holds or soon after arrival in the Americas, is not known. Liverpool imported such quantities of slave-grown sugar from the British colonies in the West Indies that its first sugar refinery was built in 1668. By 1774, there were eight."*

Liverpool had not only benefited from sugar but as Sherwood points out *"Slave-grown tobacco from the British plantations in Virginia on the American mainland was also imported by Liverpool's merchants. A book on Liverpool published in 1796 noted that the export of Manchester cloth 'brought out the great burst of prosperity in both Liverpool and Manchester."* Sherwood asks *"How many people in Liverpool and its hinterland were directly and indirectly employed in the slave trade? How many sailmakers, gunpowder workers, ironworkers, sugar refiners, carters, rope-makers, seamen and shipwrights, barrel-makers and copper-smiths, made their living from the trade in, and the labour of, enslaved African women, children and men?"*

After the 1807 Abolition Slave Trade Act, Liverpool continued to expand. Its population grew from about 80,000 in 1807 to 286,487 in 1841. By 1824, the duties collected in the city alone rose to over £1.5m. By 1845 Liverpool had become the second busiest port in the UK after London. Sherwood thinks *"It would be very interesting to see an estimation of how much the development of Liverpool had been dependent not only on the direct trade in slaves but also on slavery."* Manchester similarly grew based on the cotton industry which was based on the produce of slaves. Sherwood states *"In 1841, 22% of Lancashire's population (including Manchester) was directly employed in the cotton industry. Many Manchester and Liverpool cotton merchants and*

processors were closely linked with the southern, slave-worked states of the USA. By the 1820s, one-third of Britain's (i.e. mainly Manchester's) raw cotton imports came from slave-worked plantations in Brazil."

Sherwood does point out that *"Of course, other towns and cities could be, and should be, investigated..... Glasgow, Bristol, Birmingham, London.... There has been no thorough investigation of these cities' histories from the perspective of their dependence on slavery. Nor has anyone, as far as I have been able to ascertain asked: 'What would Britain have become without the profits and the employment provided by cotton?"* She restates the obvious *"Europe owes to Africa a heavy debt for the crimes that have been committed under the slave trade. There has been no account by historians relating to the prosperity of the gun manufacturers of Birmingham to the slave trade and slavery. About 7,000 men, women and children and an unknown number of 'homeworkers' were employed in this industry. The amount of gunpowder shipped from Britain to Africa reached a peak of two million pounds (in weight) in 1790. Between 1845 and 1865, according to one estimate 150,000 'Africa guns' were exported to Africa."* *After Abolition – Britain and the Slave Trade since 1807.*

Without a sound financial system to source it the slave trade would not have flourished as it did. The early history of the British banking system is closely connected with the slave trade, from banks such as Barclays and Barings through to the Bank of England. This also applied to British insurance as slave traders wanted to protect their 'property', enslaved Africans. Such protection and cover was given by companies like Lloyds. (see Legacy)

The Church of England

The Church of England as a body and individuals within it took a proactive role in slavery and shared in its wealth. In 1710 Christopher Codrington left three plantations in Barbados to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, the missionary arm of the Church. They were run for the Church by professional planters but the profits went to the Society. Enslaved Africans on the plantations were branded on their chests with the word 'Society' making it abundantly clear who owned them. Adam Hochschild points out that the *"Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts had a governing board that included the Regius Professors of Divinity at Oxford and Cambridge and the Head of the Church, the Archbishop of Canterbury."* He also notes that *"The clerics on the society board noticed the plantations high death rate, but made no move to change how it operated."* *Archbishop of Canterbury to a fellow Bishop 1760 cited by Hochschild, Bury the Chains*

“I have long wondered & lamented that the Negroes on our plantations decrease, & new Supplies became necessary continually, surely this proceeds from some Defect, both of Humanity, & even of good policy. But we must take things as they are at present.” Ibid.

Beilby Porteus, who became Bishop of Chester in 1777, was concerned about the Society’s involvement in slavery and their treatment of the enslaved. In 1783 he was invited to preach at the Society’s Anniversary Sermon. He criticised the Church’s role as slave owners on its Codrington plantation in Barbados and recommended ways by which the lives of the slaves could be improved. In the audience there were forty members of the Society, including eleven bishops of the Church of England, but his words fell on deaf ears. In 1787 Porteus became Bishop of London and the leading advocate within the Church of England for the abolition of slavery.

Unlike Porteus there were those churchmen, such as Henry Phillpots appointed Bishop of Exeter in 1830, who was an active participant in slavery. With three associates he invested in slave plantations in Jamaica and when slavery was abolished they were paid compensation of £12,729 4s 4d (House of Commons Session Paper, 1837-39 Vol. 48) (cited by Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*) for the loss of their ‘property’: 665 enslaved human beings. Measuringworth.com gives £10,730,000 as the equivalent amount today – 2022. Just as the Bishop of Exeter was financially rewarded from the government’s compensation package so likewise was the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. They received £8,823 8s 9d for 411 slaves. Measuringworth.com gives £7,437,000 as the equivalent amount today - 2022. The Church’s involvement at whatever level gave slavery the cloak of respectability and legitimacy. History shows that Christian scriptures were used to justify the enslavement of millions of Africans and individual Christians and churches benefited financially from the slave trade. Sherlock, later Bishop of London, assured the planters ***“that Christianity and the embracing of the Gospel does not make the least difference in civil property.”*** Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*. Neither did it impose any barriers to clerical advancement as illustrated by Bishop Robinson of Bristol and his involvement in the Assiento.

The Catholic Church

The Catholic Church was also culpable. With a series of fifteenth and sixteenth century papal documents, particularly the letters of Pope Nicholas V, it gave the Catholic powers of Spain and Portugal authority to conquer, invade and enslave the peoples of West Africa. (Research ongoing)

Other Religious Bodies

It was not only the established Church that was culpable but as Williams has shown *“The Moravian missionaries in the islands held slaves without hesitation; the Baptists would not allow their earlier missionaries to deprecate ownership of slaves.”* Many missionaries *“considered that the best way in which to remedy abuse of negro slaves was to set the plantation owners a good example by keeping slaves and estates themselves accomplishing in this practical manner the salvation of the planters and the advancement of their foundations.”* (Cited A. Mackenzie, *The Last Years of the English Slave Trade, London 1941*)

“In 1756 there were eighty four Quakers listed as members of the Company Trading to Africa, among them the Barclay and Baring families” (cited A.T. Gray, *The Political and Economic Relations of English and American Quaker, 1750-1785, (Oxford University D. Phil Thesis, 1935) cited by Williams*) *“Slave dealing was one of the most lucrative investments of English and American Quakers, and the name of a slaver, ‘The Willing Quaker’, reported from Boston at Sierra Leone in 1793, symbolizes the approval with which the slave trade was regarded in Quaker circles”* Williams, *ibid.*

Britain’s prosperity from the slave trade is undeniable as it became the world’s leading slave trading nation. It accrued unprecedented wealth, power and prestige as the world’s major industrial nation of the nineteenth century, all this on the backs of enslaved African labour.

The Church in the Twenty First Century

With the approach of the Bicentenary of the Parliamentary Abolition of the Slave Trade in 2007 the Church of England reflected on its role in slavery and in 2006 an amendment *“recognising the damage done”* to the enslaved was backed by the General Synod of the Church of England. During the debate the Rev. Simon Bessant, from Pleckgate, Blackburn, described the Church’s involvement in the trade and said *“We were at the heart of it.”* He cited the Church’s ownership of the Codrington Plantations in Barbados, the branding of the enslaved with a red-hot iron and the Bishop of Exeter’s compensation. He said *“We were directly responsible for what happened. In the sense of inheriting our history, we can say we owned slaves, we branded slaves, that is why I believe we must actually recognise our history and offer an apology.”* The Synod passed a motion acknowledging the *“dehumanising and shameful”* consequences of slavery. Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of

Canterbury said an apology was “*necessary*” because “*The body of Christ is not just a body that exists at any one time, it exists across history and we therefore share the shame and sinfulness of our predecessors and part of what we can do, with them and for them in the body of Christ, is prayer for acknowledgement of the failure that is part of us not just of some distant ‘them’.*”

Bibliography

- Gail Cameron & Stan Crooke, *Liverpool Capital of the Slave Trade*,
Picton Press, 1992
- Michael Craton, *Sinews of Empire: A Short History of British Slavery*,
Temple Smith 1974
- Peter Fryer, *Black People in the British Empire*, Pluto 1988
- Catherine Hall, Nicholas Draper, Keith McClelland, Katie Donington and
Rachel Lang, *Legacies of British Slave Ownership: Colonial Slavery
and the Formation of Victorian Britain*, Cambridge 2014
- Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, Macmillan 2005
- Joseph Inikori, *Africa and the Industrial Revolution in England*, CUP, 2002
- Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Bogle L’Ouverture
Publications Ltd., London 1988
- Marika Sherwood, *After Abolition – Britain and the Slave Trade since 1807*,
I.B. Tauris, 2007
- Marika & Kim Sherwood, *Britain, the Slave Trade and Slavery,
from 1562 to the 1880s*, Savannah Press, 2007
- Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, The University of North Carolina Press
1944
- Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 3rd Revised Edition, The University of
North Carolina Press 2021
- Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro, A History of the Caribbean
1492-1969* Andre Deutsch 1970

RESISTANCE

“A Black revolution throughout the British West Indies, designed to abolish slavery from below, was ‘widely apprehended’, both in the West Indies and in Britain. And it was in fact the Jamaican uprising of 1831-32, the so called ‘Baptist War’, that proved the decisive factor precipitating emancipation.”

***Peter Fryer – Staying Power – The History of Black People in Britain, Pluto
1984***

Enslaved Africans did not passively accept their lot but played an active and important role in their own liberation. They resisted at every level; within Africa, on the slave ships and the plantations of the Caribbean and the Americas.

Richard Reddie points out ***“While Europe procrastinated about the legitimacy of chattel slavery and whether Africans had the capacity to live as free men and women, Africans took the situation into their own hands and fought passionately for their liberty.”*** *Abolition! The Struggle to Abolish Slavery in the British Colonies p.124*

In Africa

Reddie supports this with a number of different acts of rebellion namely the 1727 ‘Christianborg Revolt’ where enslaved Africans turned on their captors and killed the governor and many of his men at a Dutch run fort on the Gold Coast. Those not wounded in the skirmishes made good their escape while the injured fought off Dutch attempts to regain control of the fort. The Dutch, armed with superior weapons, eventually quelled the insurrection and exacted deadly revenge on the rebels, cutting off the heads of the captured Africans and tossing them into the sea off the African coast. ***“This brutal response had both a punitive and spiritual significance: it not only served as a physical deterrent, but also affected those who believed that a headless being could not be reincarnated. In time other Europeans would hold out this sanction to those threatening to injure others or self harm.”*** Reddie *ibid.* p.111

This African resistance in Africa is endorsed by Marika and Kim Sherwood: ***“In the eighteenth century we know that slave traders on the Coast were often attacked by those Africans not profiting from the trade: for example, the French slaver Phénix was reduced to ashes on the mouth of the Volta in 1730, the Liverpool vessel Perfect’s crew were all murdered in 1758. In 1703 the Royal African Company’s fort at Sekondi in today’s Ghana was seized; the***

Company's agents were captured at least twice and released on payment of ransoms. In 1717 Captain David Francis reported that 'My boats and people are seized at almost every port I send them'. Marika & Kim Sherwood *'Britain, the slave trade and slavery, from 1562 to the 1880s'* p. 53 Savannah Press 2007'

Reddie expands on African resistance by showing that some African rulers tried diplomacy as a way of thwarting the slave trade. Nzinga Mbemba of the Congo, who was baptized into the Catholic faith and adopted the name Afonso I, sent letters to King John III of Portugal in 1526 informing him of his concerns about the slave trade and his wish to end the trade in his country. Likewise, King Agaja of Dahomey (modern day Benin) wrote to the British government stating his intention to end his country's involvement in the slave trade. However, these efforts came to nothing as European leaders ignored these entreaties.

On Slave Ships

Reddie also shows that resistance was not limited to the African mainland. *"One of the earliest recorded revolts took place in 1532, when over 100 Africans on board the Misericordia (mercy in Portuguese) freed themselves during the passage from Saõ Tomé to Elmina, Ghana. Having killed most of the sailors, it is thought the Africans managed to flee the coast."* Reddie *ibid* p. 112.

He cites that from 1699-1865, over five hundred major mutinies occurred on slave ships during the Middle Passage. One such was on the slave ship *Amistad* immortalised by Steven Spielberg's Hollywood film.

In 1753 the *Marlborough Revolt* occurred three days into the journey from Bonny in West Africa. This Bristol registered ship was taking 420 enslaved Africans to the Americas when the captives mutinied and took control of the ship, slaughtering most of the white crew in the process. With the assistance of a handful of their white captives, the Africans subsequently sailed the vessel back to the West African coast. Less successful was the Mutiny on the *Sally* in 1765 which occurred several hours after it had left Calabar. The captain, Mr. Hopkins, threw eighty mutinous Africans overboard before berthing his ship in Antigua.

Some captains were more vigilant than others throughout the Middle Passage and were prepared to use any means necessary to safeguard their 'property'. One particular example of ruthlessness was on the slaver *Ovartus* where rebel Africans had their limbs severed and heads chopped off for their part in a

mutiny. A French captain who ended an on board rebellion hung the culprits by their feet and whipped them to death. Another, a Dutch captain, chopped off the hands of an Ashanti rebel leader and then hung him by the arms. He bled to death in front of his compatriots. Although the punishment for mutiny was severe Africans did not desist from rebelling and according to Reddie it is estimated that there was at least one revolt for every nine ships leaving Nantes in France and at least one for every ten Dutch slavers. ***“One can also assume that ships sailing under a British flag experienced similar experiences, although evidence is hard to obtain due to British reluctance to provide accurate figures out of fear that this would deter investors.” Reddie ibid. p. 113***

Despite being shackled and chained, enslaved Africans seized opportunities to fight for their freedom in whatever way possible. Some demonstrated resistance by suicide preferring it to a life of slavery. ***“... they ran to the forepart of the ship in a body, and endeavoured to force the Barricado on the Quarter-Deck, not regarding the Musquets or Half Pikes that were presented to their Breasts by the white men through the Loop-holes which Occasioned a terrible Destruction: For there were near eighty Negroes kill'd and drowned, many jumping overboard when the Gun was fired.” Insurrection on the Ferrers Galley described by William Snelgrave. A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave Trade (1734)***

“A Captain Phillips wrote of a voyage in 1693-94. He brought his captives aboard under armed guard and in chains and kept them so until the voyage was over. Chains alone could not banish his fear of a revolt. Although the captives were thrust down into holds beneath the deck, he always kept sentries at the hatchway openings of the holds. There they stood, by day and night, ready to shoot down at any captives who should threaten to break free. For other members of the crew, he had ‘a chest full of small arms, ready loaded and primed (with gunpowder), constantly lying at hand on the quarter-deck’. Also on the quarter, he had two-cannon aimed at the main deck, and two pointing through port holes in the wooden wall below.” Cited by B. Davidson, Discovering Africa’s Past

In 1737 when the Bristol slave ship *The Prince of Orange* landed in St. Kitts about a 100 enslaved Africans jumped overboard. The crew saved as many as they could but 33 drowned. In 1753 another ship *The Adventure* was seized off the coast of West Africa by slaves who successfully ran it aground and destroyed it.

“Contrary to the lies that have been spread so pertinaciously about Negro docility, the revolts at the port of embarkation and on board were incessant, so that the slaves had to be chained, right hand to right leg, left hand to left leg

and attached in rows to long iron bars. They undertook vast hunger strikes; undid their chains and hurled themselves on the crew in futile attempts at insurrection. Fear of their cargo bred a savage cruelty in the crew. One captain, to strike terror into the rest, killed a slave and dividing heart, liver, and entrails into 300 pieces made each of the slaves eat one, threatening those who refused with the same torture. Such incidents were not rare.”
C.L.R. James The Black Jacobins, Penguin Books 2001, First Published 1938

On the Plantations

Opposition to slavery took many different forms on the plantations. This ranged from suicide which was a common form of protest and refusal to answering the new names given by their owners, to actions that had a more immediate effect on the running of the plantation. Sabotage was commonplace as were acts of non-cooperation. The slaves deliberately worked slowly feigning ignorance, damaging tools and pretending to be ill, even wounding themselves and poisoning plantation animals.

Others ran away and newspapers frequently advertised rewards for their return. There was open unrest, violent resistance and escapes as in Jamaica. Escaped slaves took to the mountains and formed the Maroon communities. They provided a refuge for runaways, raided the farms of settlers and fought successful wars against the British, hiding in inaccessible areas. In 1739 the British government acknowledged their freedom with a peace treaty and the rights to land they already held. Mistreatment under a new island governor sparked off new conflict in 1795. Some Maroons agreed to surrender areas in return for a new peace agreement but the governor reneged on his promise. The Maroons were captured and transported to the British colony of Nova Scotia.

During Christmas 1831 Sam Sharpe a literate slave and Baptist preacher led what began as a peaceful rebellion in Jamaica. The slaves went on strike and demanded payment for their labour. When this was refused they took action and destroyed property. It took the British troops two months to quell the rebellion and Sharpe was executed on the 23rd May 1832. Before his execution he said ***“I would rather die upon yonder gallows than live in slavery.”***

An Island Revolution

An uprising of enslaved Africans on the French colony of St. Domingue started on the 23rd August 1791. The rebels seized power and abolished slavery, defeating both the French and British armies. Toussaint L'Ouverture, a self

educated freed slave, led the revolt and declared all slaves free. In 1801 he published a new constitution but was challenged by Napoleon who sent an army of 12,000 troops. The French tricked L'Ouverture into meeting them and took him captive. He died in prison in France in 1803.

One of his former lieutenants, Jean-Jacques Dessalines helped drive out the French troops and completed the revolution. On the 1st January 1804 he proclaimed independence for the newly named republic of Haiti and ***“tried and then executed thousands of Europeans for high crimes against the Blacks of Haiti.” Walker ibid.***

Individuals

Two former slaves, captured as young boys in Africa, were in the vanguard of the abolition movement and advocated resistance. From the moment of capture resistance was foremost in Cugoano's mind. ***“When we found ourselves at last taken away, death was more preferable to life, and a plan was concerted amongst us, that we might burn and blow up the ship, and to perish all together in the flames.” Ottobah Cugoano, Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery***

“Ottobah Cugoano was the first published African critic of the transatlantic trade and the first African to demand publicly the total abolition of the trade and the freeing of the slaves – a position which scarcely any white abolitionist had taken by 1787. He declared - and he was the first writer in English to do so – that enslaved Blacks had not only the moral right but the moral duty to resist”

He stated ***“If any man should buy another man and compel him to his service and slavery without any agreement of that man to serve him, the enslaver is a robber, and a defrauder of that man every day. Wherefore it is as much the duty of a man who is robbed in that manner to get out of the hands of his enslaver, as it is for any honest community of men to get out of the hands of rogues and villains.” Fryer, Staying Power, p. 99***

Cugoano also observed ***“Is it not strange to think, that they who ought to be considered as the most learned and civilized people in the world, that they should carry on a traffic of the most barbarous cruelty and injustice, and that many are become so dissolute as to think slavery, robbery and murder no crime.”***

Olaudah Equiano was a former slave whose 1789 autobiography, *'The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa'* publicly exposed for the first time the horrors of slavery. However, *"Equiano's considerable contribution to the anti-slavery battle was not confined to his books and discreet interventions with Granville Sharp. He was a campaigner all over Britain for some years travelling almost incessantly to speak and sell his books in the principal towns of the United Kingdom..... The thought of this Igbo carrying on his campaign for the hearts and minds of the citizens of Birmingham, Manchester and Sheffield in the late eighteenth century in favour (as he put it in a petition of 1788 addressed to the Queen) of 'millions of my fellow African countrymen, who groan under the lash of tyranny' is as impressive as the book itself....."* Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa 1450-1950*

W.E.B. Dubois provided a list of important rebellions by enslaved Africans that *"shows that the docility of Negro slaves in America is a myth:"*

- 1522** **Revolt in San Domingo**
- 1530** **Revolt in Mexico**
- 1550** **Revolt in Peru**
- 1550** **Appearance of the Maroons**
- 1560** **Byano Revolt in Central America**
- 1600** **Revolt of Maroons**
- 1655** **Revolt of 1500 Maroons in Jamaica**
- 1663** **Land given (to) Jamaican Maroons**
- 1664-1738** **Maroons fight British in Jamaica**
- 1674** **Revolt in Barbados**
- 1679** **Revolt in Haiti**
- 1679-1782** **Maroons in Haiti organized**
- 1691** **Revolt in Haiti**

1692	Revolt in Barbados
1695	Palmares: revolt in Brazil
1702	Revolt in Barbados
1711	Negroes fight French in Brazil
1715-1763	Revolt in Surinam
1718	Revolt in Haiti
1719	Revolt in Brazil
1738	Treaty with Maroons
1763	Black Caribs revolt
1779	Haitians help the United States Revolution
1780	French Treaty with Maroons
1791-1803	Haitian Revolution
1794	Cuban revolt
1794	Dominican revolt
1795	Maroons revolt
1796	St. Lucian revolt
1816	Barbados revolt
1828-1837	Revolts in Brazil
1840-1845	Haiti helps Bolivar
1844	Cuban revolt
1844-1893	Dominican revolt
1861	Revolt in Jamaica

1895 War in Cuba

Cited by Robin Walker, *When We Ruled*, p. 558

Bibliography

Basil Davidson, *Discovering Africa's Past*,

Peter Fryer, *Staying Power – A History of Black People in Britain*, Pluto 1984

C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins*, Penguin Books 2001, First published 1938

Richard Reddie, *Abolition! The Struggle to Abolish Slavery in the British
Colonies*, Lion Hudson 2007

Marika & Kim Sherwood, *Britain, the Slave Trade and Slavery, from 1562 to
the 1880s*, Savannah Press, 2007

Robin Walker, *When We Ruled*, Every Generation Media 2006

LEGACY

“Our possession of the West Indies, like that of India gave us the strength, the support, but especially the capital, the wealth, at a time when no other European nation possessed such a reserve, which enabled us to come through the great struggle of the Napoleonic Wars, the keen competition of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and enabled us to lay the foundation of that commercial and financial leadership which Enabled us to make our great position in the world.”

Winston Churchill addressing a banquet of West Indian sugar planters in London 20th July 1939

“Britain’s rise to global pre-eminence was partially dependent on a system of colonial slave labour and, as we recall its abolition, we should also recall our place in its practice.”

Prime Minister Tony Blair New African February 2007

For Britain

“African slavery is not ancient history; the world it made is around us in Britain.” Richard Drayton The Guardian 20th August 2005

The legacy of slavery surrounds everyone in Britain today. Britain’s industrial might largely sprang from the manual labour of millions of unnamed enslaved Africans. The wealth they created in the Caribbean not only fuelled the Industrial Revolution but was also responsible for many other areas of British life.

Britain has a rich history of great buildings and many of these country estates, houses, galleries and museums would not exist but for the slave trade and slavery. Such properties as Harewood House in Yorkshire built in 1759-71 by the architect John Carr of York and decorated by Robert Adam for Edwin Lascelles later first Earl of Harewood. This estate was built on the wealth of the Earl’s slave trading father ***“Henry Lascelles, M.P. who sucked so much wealth from the commission system, from sugar, and from outright fraud, that his successors became earls of Harewood.”***

“... on the eve of emancipation the Earl of Harewood owned two plantations and 344 slaves in Jamaica, three plantations and 745 slaves in Barbados. When these slaves were emancipated, the earl received compensation totalling £22,473, 17s 11d. Fryer Staying Power p. 46.

Measuringworth.com gives £18,940,000 as the equivalent amount today-2022. The present occupant David, the eighth Earl, is the Queen’s first cousin once removed, a great grandson of George V.

Another estate is Dodington Park set in 300 acres of land in south Gloucestershire and built by the architect James Wyatt. This was commissioned by the Codrington family whose fortune came from the sugar plantations in the West Indies. It is now the home of James Dyson, the inventor famous for his vacuum cleaners who paid £20million for the property in 2003. On a less grand scale is Danson House in Kent built in 1764 for John Boyd, son of the St. Kitts planter Augustus Boyd. All these properties were landscaped by Capability Brown the ‘celebrity’ gardener of the day. These buildings are not exclusive to England; other parts of Britain have similar grand estates. The neo-Norman Penrhyn Castle in North Wales was built by the Pennant family who made their wealth from Jamaican sugar and Welsh slate.

Madge Dresser has shown that there was a direct link between the slave trade and Bristol’s 18th century economic and urban development. She sites that ***“Queen Square was developed at precisely the same time that Bristol became Britain’s premier slaving port...” “... Most of Queen Square’s most prominent residents were connected in a dense web of business and kinship interests wither to the African slave trade or, increasingly as the century wore on, to the trade in slave produced commodities.”*** Dresser illustrates this by noting that ***“at least ten out of the twenty four substantial ratepayers on the square were engaged in the African trade in 1730.”*** *Slavery Obscured – The Social History of the Slave Trade in an English Provincial Port*

Dresser expands her argument by pointing out that ***“... enough research exists to indicate that the connections between country house development in the Bristol region and slave generated wealth are much more widespread than has previously been suggested.”*** Paul Fisher, a linen draper, was the son of an important African merchant. He was a member of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa with a financial interest in a Grenada plantation and the West Indian and Carolina trades. By 1747 he had built Clifton Hill House. The infusion of West Indian wealth enabled many to enlarge or renovate their manor houses. The elegance and gentility of many British stately homes were founded on the brutality of plantation life.

Cultural Institutions

It was not only residential properties in Bristol but cultural institutions such as the Assembly Rooms and the Theatre Royal that opened in 1766 that owed their foundations to the slavery business. Dresser concludes that ***“the evidence shows that Bristol’s urban renaissance was exceptionally reliant on the exploitation and dislocation of African labour.”*** ***“There is not a brick in the city but what is cemented with the blood of a slave ...”*** Dresser cites an anonymous comment from 1881

One of Oxford’s finest libraries, the Codrington, was only made possible because of the Codrington family and the wealth their sugar plantations created. Christopher Codrington was born in Barbados in 1668 the son of one of the island’s wealthiest planters. Educated at Christ Church College Oxford, he later became a fellow of All Souls College. After a military career he returned to the Caribbean to succeed his father as Governor-General. During the last years of his life he concentrated on his plantations. When he died in 1710 he left 12,000 volumes of his books and a legacy of £10,000 to All Souls.

Measuringworth.com gives £23,300,000 as the equivalent amount today – 2022. £6,000 was to be spent on building a library and the rest on buying books.

Measuringworth.com gives £13,980,000 as the equivalent amount today – 2022.

Public Buildings

Public buildings like Liverpool’s town hall built in the mid-18th century are a testament as to how the city derived its wealth. Still visible today are the heads of African slaves and African elephants that decorate the building. Jane Longmore cites Jon Stobart who has argued ***“that the late eighteenth-century Liverpool elite were so self-conscious about its reputation for inhumanity that it distanced itself from the slave trade by deliberately embracing a more cultivated image. He asserts that this was embodied in the establishment of cultural institutions, such as the Lyceum Library, the Botanic Garden and the Liverpool Institution, in the first two decades of the nineteenth century.”***

Longmore cites how Liverpool ventured into establishing charitable institutions and that ***“In 1748, as Liverpool outstripped Bristol in the slave trade, the huge Liverpool Infirmary was opened to serve not only the town but, unusually, ‘all parts of this nation and Ireland’; 7 of the 11 original trustees were slave traders as listed in the Liverpool Memorandum Book of 1752. A Seaman’s Hospital, a Lunatic Asylum and a Public Dispensary followed, adding to the charitable facilities. There was also provision for the spiritual needs of the***

town. and more significantly, the diversity of churches and chapels in Liverpool during the era of the slave trade.”

In Glasgow tobacco baron William Cunninghame grew so rich on the back of slave labour that he built an enormous town house in 1778. Today it is Glasgow’s Gallery of Modern Art.

Those involved in the slavery business were also instrumental in setting up some of Britain’s cultural institutions. One such was John Julius Angerstein, who from 1768, until the time of his death in 1823 was a trustee in a property in Grenada and for the last twenty three years its sole trustee. Throughout his life Angerstein collected works of art and on his death his collection became the foundation of London’s National Gallery.

Banking

“The slave trade kept the wheels of metropolitan industry turning; it stimulated navigation and ship building and employed seamen; it raised fishing villages into flourishing cities; it gave sustenance to new industries based on the processing of colonial raw materials; it yielded large profits which were ploughed back into metropolitan industry; and, finally, it gave rise to an unprecedented commerce in the West Indies and made the Caribbean territories among the most valuable colonies the world has ever known.”
Eric Williams ‘From Columbus to Castro – A History of the Caribbean 1492-1969’ Andre Deutsch 1970

To facilitate the furtherance of the slavery business banking was an essential element of this process. Dresser points out that *“A number of African merchants established one of the country’s earliest provincial banks in 1750 and other West Indian and African merchants established more soon after. These banks (which were later to be absorbed into the National Westminster Bank) had originally functioned in part to help finance the West Indian trade.”*

John Hughes, in *Liverpool Banks and Bankers 1760-1837*, explains the origins of private bankers as *“a merchant, or larger trader, who grafted the business of banking on his own affairs. He would have an account with some London banker for the purpose of paying his acceptances for the produce in which he dealt, and for the collection or discounting of the acceptances he received.”* The long term nature of the transatlantic slave trade meant that new banking houses were needed to provide the necessary credit to those trading in enslaved Africans. Francis Hyde, in *Liverpool and the Mersey* endorses Hughes’ theory

“It is, perhaps, a fact that the growth of banking and insurance in the town was coincidental with the involvement of merchants in the West Indian and African trades. Thus some of the more important Liverpool merchants began to exercise the functions of banking. Accordingly, Liverpool was well served by a growth of merchant capital. Among the fourteen banks of any importance listed, after 1750, ten were founded by merchants.” Peter Fryer concludes that ***“The early history of the British banking system, from the first country banks and Barclays right up to the Bank of England, is closely connected with the triangular trade, as is the early history of British insurance.”*** *Black People in the British Empire*

Arthur and Benjamin Heywood were two Liverpool brothers who made their fortunes from the slave trade and became bankers. Their bank Arthur Heywood Sons & Co. was absorbed by the Bank of Liverpool, afterwards Martin’s Bank which in turn was absorbed by Barclay’s Bank. The Quaker brothers, David and Alexander Barclay, were involved in the slavery business, the former a plantation owner who emancipated his slaves. Another Barclay, James, in partnership with his brother-in-law, Joseph Freame, set up a bank Barclay, Bevan & Co. Today Barclay’s, one of the ‘Big Four’, still prospers.

Another Liverpool merchant Thomas Leyland ***“found that dealing in Africans brought him more of what he loved best than did any other branch of commerce. It made him one of Liverpool’s three richest men, with an income estimated locally as tens of thousands of pounds a year. In the years 1782-1807 he transported 3,489 slaves to Jamaica alone.”*** Fryer, *Staying Power*, p. 42. In 1807 Leyland launched his own bank, Leyland & Bullin. His nephew and partner Richard Bullin was also a merchant and ship owner in the slave trade. ***“Within eight years the new bank had assets of over £1,000,000 sterling and rivalled the larger London banks in importance.”*** Fryer *ibid*. According to Hughes ***“Abolition did not appear to dent Leyland’s successful business career: on his death in 1827 he left a fortune of £600,000.”*** In 1901, Leyland & Bullin was absorbed by the North & South Wales bank and that in turn by the Midland Bank in 1908. In 1992 Midland was absorbed by the Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation and renamed HSBS Bank plc in 1999.

The Heywood’s, Thomas Leyland and Richard Bullin, were not the only Liverpool slave merchants who turned to banking. The Bolds, the Gregsons and the Stainforths did the same. ***“Merchants and shipowners very largely insured their own ventures themselves, but the need for discounting facilities arose after 1750 with the growing volume of bills drawn against West Indian merchants. Thus some of the more important Liverpool merchants began to exercise the functions of banking.”*** Francis Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey: an economic history of a port 1700-1950*, Newton Abbot, David & Charles,

1971 Hyde also points out that many other local bankers were West India merchants or *“like John Moss of Moss, Dale and Rogers, owned immense sugar plantations in Demerara (afterwards part of British Guiana). Cited by Fryer, Staying Power, p. 43. “Each of the Liverpool banking houses associated with the slave trade could command assets of between £200,000 and £300,000. Fryer, ibid.*

“The bank that might justly have been called the ‘Bank of the West Indies’ in the eighteenth century was the Bank of England. Black slavery augmented, in one way or another, the family fortunes of many of its directors and governors. Humphry Morice, MP, director of the bank from 1716, deputy governor in 1725-6, and governor in 1727-9, personally owned six slave ships....” Fryer ibid. p. 46 The Bank of England made capital available for slave voyages and the City of London became the financial centre of the slave trade.

Humphry Morice was not the only Bank of England governor to have a close association with slavery. *“Sir Richard Neave, director of the Bank of England for 48 years, deputy governor in 1781-3, and governor in 1783-5, was chairman of the Society of West India Merchants and of the London Dock Company (which built the London Docks in Wapping, opened in 1803). Neave’s daughter married Beeston Long junior, son of Neave’s predecessor as chairman of the West India Merchants; Beeston Long junior in his turn became chairman of the West India Merchants and the London Dock Company – and director ((1784-1820) and governor (1804-6) of the Bank of England. Thomas Boddington, director of the Bank of England (1782-1809) and the London Dock Company, financed the purchase of estates for the Pinneys in the late 1780s. Thomas Raikes, director (1776-1810), deputy governor (1795-7), and governor (1797-9) of the Bank of England..... William Manning – whose father had acquired by marriage two estates on St. Kitts – was agent for St. Vincent and Grenada.... amassed a ‘handsome fortune’, and served as a director (1790-1831) and governor (1812-14) of the Bank of England.” Fryer ibid.*

Another well known name that prospered from slavery was the Baring family. Francis Baring who *“seems to have made his first money out of dealing with slaves when he was only 16”* founded Baring Bros. & Co., a merchant bank that lasted until 1995 when it was brought down by the fraudulent activities of one of its brokers, Nick Leeson.

One of Liverpool’s celebrated slave-owning families was that of John Gladstone. Although not a banker he was chairman of the West India Association and his slaves in British Guiana and Jamaica produced sugar and

rum that made his fortune. At abolition he received £93,526 in compensation for the loss of 2,039 slaves. Measuringworth.com gives £78,830,000 as the equivalent amount today – 2022. At his death in 1851 his estate was valued at about £600,000. Measuringworth.com gives £509,200,000 as the equivalent amount today – 2022. His son William Gladstone, the future Liberal prime minister, devoted his first substantial speech in the Commons to a defence of slavery on the family estates in British Guiana. He gave several speeches in defence of slave owners.

A familiar name in banking circles is that of Rothschild. ***“Rothschild floated (or marketed) the loan for the £20m the British government had promised slave plantation owners in the West Indies as compensation for the loss of their slaves. Together with Barings, Rothschild served as bankers to the main exporter of sugar. Rothschild (later extended its wings) to South Africa by investing in De Beers.” Sherwood ibid.*** Measuringworth.com gives £16,860,000,000 as the equivalent amount today – 2022. Other burgeoning cities such as Birmingham established financial institutions to meet the needs of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and Slavery.

Insurance

Sailing across the Atlantic was a dangerous enterprise in itself and with the harsh conditions of the slave ships, there was a high risk of human and non-human cargo being lost en route. Just as the need for finance gave rise to the growth of banks, similarly the need to protect cargo gave rise to insurance companies. Jane Longmore argues that ***“The development of the insurance infrastructure was particularly important given the amount of capital tied up in slaving voyages. It is no coincidence that five out of the six insurance offices listed in The Liverpool Memorandum Book in 1752 were run by Africa merchants.”*** Britain’s oldest insurance company Lloyds of London underwrote slave ships. One of its underwriters was John Julius Angerstein, involved in the slavery business as a trustee to a plantation in Grenada.

The Twentieth Century - World War I

In the twentieth century Britain called upon those from Africa and the Caribbean time and time again. With the outbreak of World War I in 1914 Britain’s Black population was needed to help the war effort. ***“Black labourers were made welcome in the munition and chemical factories. Black seamen, replacing men needed by the navy, were made welcome in the merchant service.” Fryer, Staying Power, pp. 295-296***

Britain looked to its colonial possessions for manpower to fight in the different arenas of warfare. ***“Although the War Office decided to confine the 3rd and 4th battalions of the West India Regiment to ammunition – carrying and labour services in France – black Bermudans and West Indians were never allowed to be actively engaged in the fighting on the western front – troops from the West Indies and Africa fought bravely and well in many other theatres of war, including campaigns against German forces in Africa”*** *ibid.* p. 296

Sir Harry Johnston, a former colonial administrator, wrote about the contribution of Black soldiers to the British war effort. He spoke of how commanders praised Black troops for their ***‘pluck, gallantry and devotion’***, and ***‘for the tenacity with which they stood up to heavy machine gun fire.’*** *ibid.* p. 296

The war took its toll on both soldiers and seamen who were killed, crippled for life or wounded in the war effort. The British West Indies Regiment, ***“whose rank and file were almost entirely Black troops, lost 185 killed or died of wounds and 1,071 who died of sickness; a further 697 were wounded. The toll on Black seamen was no less great and from Cardiff alone 1,000 were killed at sea, and another 400, rescued after their ships were sunk, went back to the port to die of the effects of exposure.”*** Fryer *ibid.* p. 296

Edward Plaice’s *Tip & Run: the Untold Tragedy of the Great War in Africa* states that the ***“death toll among the 126,972 troops in the East Africa campaign was 11,189 plus 22,000 wounded and missing. The majority of the men in the British territories surrounding German colonies were coerced into manning the supply lines. By the end of the war, 1 million carriers recruited in German East Africa by the British, of whom c. 95,000 died. Deaths: one-third of the Seychelles; 25% of British East African Carrier corps; 41,000 of the Africans conscripted by Britain in occupied German East Africa died.”***

Plaice emphasises that these are estimates the true figures are not known.

Many of these wounded and crippled Black soldiers were treated in military hospitals in Britain. Many were also decorated as war heroes. ***“Sixteen members of the West African Frontier Force (whose white officers customarily referred to their rank and file as ‘the Apes’) and the King’s African Rifles were awarded the DCM, The British West Indies Regiment had 5 DSOs, 9 MCs, 2 MBEs, 8DCMs, 37 MMs and 49 Mentions in Dispatches. Many Black soldiers were demobilized in Britain. So by the end of the war, Britain’s Black population was bigger than ever before.”*** Fryer *ibid.* p. 296

In both the African and West Indian regiments a ‘colour bar’ was imposed where the troops served under White officers. Walter Tull, a famous footballer who had played for Tottenham Hotspur and Northampton Town, was the only

British Black soldier sent to be trained as a commissioned Special Reserve officer.

World War II

World War II again saw the support and participation given by people of Africa and African heritage to Britain despite the racial prejudice they faced. ***“Out of a total population of approximately 31 million in Britain’s African colonies, 372,000 fought for ‘the mother country’: 120,000 were in the Burma campaign; 47,500 served in the North Africa and the Middle East; c.206,000 were in the Home Commands in Africa. There was also a West African Hospital Section of some hundreds of men, who served in southern Europe. A few appropriately qualified Africans and some 300 West Indians (at first mainly light-skinned men) were enlisted in the RAF as air crew; other West Indians, without pilot qualifications and with dark skin were accepted as air crew in the Royal Canadian Air Force. Over 5,500 Caribbeans were brought to Britain to be trained as RAF ground crew; an unknown number were in the Royal Engineers in the Middle East. The 1,200-strong Caribbean Regiment, not recruited till 1944 because the War Office believed West Indians not to be a ‘robust race’ and because their ‘staying power under aerial bombardment was untried’, eventually served in Italy and Egypt. Thousands of Caribbean men and women also served in their Home Commands, which included guarding Prisoner of War camps, and some 80 Caribbean women (at first only whites) served abroad in the ATS.” Marika Sherwood and Martin Spafford Whose Freedom were Africans, Caribbeans and Indians defending in World War II? Teaching Pack, Savannah Press***

In 1936 Italy had invaded Ethiopia so when war broke out in 1939 there was no problem in recruiting for the West African Frontier Force and the Kings African Rifles. Two divisions of the WAFF and the KAR helped to oust the Italians from Ethiopia in 1941. ***“372,000 Africans served abroad and about 206,000 were enlisted in the Home Commands; most served in Labour Battalions/pioneer Corps. It is believed that 3,131 were killed, 5,549 were wounded and 256 were ‘Missing in Action’; but the accuracy of these official figures has been questioned. Conditions for the soldiers were harsh: for example, though the British Army had banned corporal punishment in 1881, flogging was commonplace in the African regiments. While all Africans received much lower wages and shorter (if any) leave than Whites, there was even inequality among Africans. Not surprisingly, this led to various forms of resistance.” Sherwood, We Were There: Misinformation and Omissions, 2009***

Africans were officered by Whites, with one exception: a qualified teacher, Seth Anthony, became a sergeant in the Gold Coast Regiment (WAFR) and was sent to Britain for further training. He received his commission as a Second Lieutenant in 1942; fought in Burma and was raised to the rank of major by the end of the war. The second African officer, T.K. Impraim was not commissioned until 1945.

1st December 1945 “81st and 82nd West African Divisions fighting in Burma – Africans have won 8 DCMs, 74 Military Medals; 134 Mentions in Despatches and 22 Certificates of Gallantry”.

West African Review January 1946, p. 13: Numbers Killed + Missing + Wounded in Burma Campaign:

Nigeria:	563 + 95 + 1737
Gold Coast:	337 + 44 + 998
Sierra Leone:	51 + 20 + 159
Gambia:	47 + 26 + 161
Total:	998 + 185 + 3055

“ The total number of deaths of colonial civilians serving in the war has never been calculated. Using the Commonwealth War Graves Commission data, it has been estimated as 43,000 for the colonies and 87,000 for India.”
Sherwood ibid

Financial Support for the War

Despite low wages, Africans donated over £1.5 million to the War Fund and the West African governments gave Britain £1 million from their meagre budgets as an interest free loan.

Caribbean governments also had to contribute to the cost of the war and the very low waged population was also asked to donate to the war funds. For example, by March 1943 Trinidadians had contributed over half a million pounds, that is one pound per person when wages were between one and two shillings per hour.

“West Africans contributed well over £1.5 million to various war-time funds. When seen in relation to wages of one or two shillings per day, this was a vast sum. On the other side of the Atlantic, the descendants of enslaved Africans also contributed to the war effort from their meagre earnings. For example,

by March 1943 the less than half million people of Trinidad had contributed over half a million pounds to these funds.”

*“The West African colonial governments gave Britain almost £1 million in interest-free loans, while a similar sum came from the Caribbean governments. By the end of 1943 the colonial empire had given Britain £23.3 million in gifts; £10.7 million in interest-free loans and £14 million in loans that were (low) interest-bearing. (Hansard, 21/10/1943) At the end of the war, the colonies’ sterling balances in Britain totalled £454 million – these were monies owed by Britain to the colonies for colonial produce.” Sherwood and Spafford, *ibid*.*

Materials and Labour Support for the War

Raw materials from Africa were in great demand and the companies exporting these products were usually European owned and the workers were Africans, often forcibly conscripted for a fixed period of labour. The total numbers are unknown but as an example in 1944 there were 52,400 ‘forced labourers’ in the Jos coal mines in Nigeria being paid a pittance with no trade union rights.

The raw materials of the colonies were also very important to the war effort. *“Britain was heavily dependent on her empire for raw materials, men and women in India, Africa, the Caribbean and the rest of the colonial empire had to work to support Britain. While the increase in production provided paid labour for some, others were coerced: though forced labour had been condemned by the International Labour Organisation, it was practised in Britain’s African colonies. For example, in Kenya in November 1944 there were 18,053 forced labourers and in Tanganyika there were 23,000 in July of the same year; in the period September 1942 to the end of 1944 about 52,400 Nigerians were forced labourers in the Jos coal mines.” Sherwood & Spafford, *ibid*.*

Sherwood and Spafford show that as the war progressed Britain suffered a severe labour shortage. To fill the void the government recruited labour from the Caribbean. *“880 forestry workers were brought to Scotland from British Honduras (Belize), and 520 men were recruited mainly from Jamaica, Barbados and British Guiana (Guyana) to work in Britain’s munitions factories. (Though recruited as skilled men, the Hondurans were paid the minimum unskilled wage in the timber industry, £3.00 per week; the ‘technicians’ were paid union rates in their respective jobs; the average wage for men placed in Bolton, for example, was £9 per week.)”*

The weekly journal *West Africa* has the following information relating to those of the African continent:-

2nd June 1945 – In response to a question in Parliament re the numbers conscripted for the labour force ***“permitted only for purposes essential for the conduct of the war or the maintenance of life of the community in Kenya, 26,032 till the end of November 1944; 26,256 in Tanganyika till the end of December 1944; permission to recruit 1,000 for food production in Northern Rhodesia”***.

The Home Front

Africans and those of African heritage also contributed to another vital area, the home front. They served their local communities by volunteering as civil defence workers such as firewatchers, air raid wardens, stretcher bearers and mobile canteen personnel. The League of Coloured Peoples’ newsletter praised the work of Black ‘frontliners’: ***“In London especially one is amazed at the numbers of coloured men who have accommodated themselves to the novel circumstances of the war....”***

E. Ita Ekpenyon a headmaster from Nigeria came to Britain to study law before the outbreak of World War II. As soon as war broke out in September 1939 he started training as an air raid warden. He was responsible for running air raid shelters, keeping lists of local residents, helping with rescue work and enforcing the blackout regulations in the borough of St. Marylebone. During his duties he encountered and challenged racism: ***“Some of the shelterers told others to go back to their own countries, and some tried to practice segregation I said I would like to see a spirit of friendliness, cooperation and comradeship prevail at this very trying time in the history of the Empire.” E. Ita Ekpenyon, Some Experiences of an African Air-Raid Warden, p. 10*** He also made several broadcasts for the BBC radio in ‘Calling West Africa’. These were talks or interviews he conducted covering the war situation.

Post 1945

After World War II in 1945 Britain again had a severe labour shortage. Even though the military was being demobilised, one reason for the labour shortage was those leaving Britain for a new life in Australia. Once more it was the people of Britain’s colonies who came to the country’s aid. To deal with the problem the British government turned to the people of the Caribbean to fill the vacancies in industries and services just as they had during the war years. At their own expense, paying a fare of £28.10 shillings, 492 Jamaicans arrived at

Tilbury on the 21st June 1948 on the troopship the *Empire Windrush*. Many of the *Windrush* passengers had helped to achieve victory in 1945 by serving in the armed forces or working in hospitals and factories during the war.

Measuringworth.com gives £2,705 as the equivalent amount today – 2022.

Peter Fryer recalls how as a young reporter on a national newspaper he went to Tilbury to see the *Empire Windrush* and interviewed some of the arrivals.

“Three weeks later his follow-up article, ‘The Men from Jamaica are Settling Down’, reported that ‘76 have gone to work in foundries, 15 on the railways, 15 as labourers, 15 as farm workers, and ten as electricians. The others have gone into a wide variety of jobs, including clerical work in the Post Office, coach building and plumbing.’

The British economy, short of labour, needed these willing hands. The door stood open. To the London Evening Standard some of the Empire Windrush passengers – those who had served here during the Second World War – were making a return to ‘the Motherland’, and its account of their arrival was headlined: ‘WELCOME HOME’.” Fryer Staying Power, p. 372. The Windrush passengers were all British citizens and in Britain by right as the 1948 Nationality Act granted UK citizenship and the right to British passports to all citizens of Britain’s former colonies.

For Africa

“The slave trade did not confer benefits of any kind on West Africa. On the contrary, it was an unmitigated misery... It led in the first place to an unpardonable destruction of population. During the whole period of the trade, it has been estimated that between 30 to 40 million souls were lost to Africa, the victims were often the most virile men and women. The raiding which the trade generated and steadily intensified caused a great deal of misery, bloodshed, destruction as whole towns and villages were burnt down and as many people killed as were caught.” Basil Davidson ‘Discovering Africa’s Past’ Longmans 1978

The slave trading powers, once having got their foot in the door of Africa, were reluctant to withdraw, the rewards were too great to relinquish. Marika Sherwood asks ***“How would African societies, cultures, and industries have developed had the Europeans not intervened? What was the effect of depriving East and West Africa of at least 20 million of its ablest, strongest peoples? Of inducing hundreds of years of warfare? And what was the effect of colonialism, which was about making the produce of Africa available to the West as cheaply as possible and creating a market for Western***

manufacturers?” Sherwood rightly states “All these questions have to be taken into consideration when looking at Africa today.”

During the late 19th century the colonial partition of Africa took place. As Basil Davidson - ‘Modern Africa’ points out *“The colonial partition was the sharing out of Africa among strong empire-building powers such as Britain, France and Germany; and several weaker ones such as Portugal, Italy, Belgium and Spain.”* These powers quarrelled over the share of Africa that each wanted to get. The ‘Scramble for Africa’ was resolved at a conference in Berlin when in 1885 they agreed to invade and take Africa without fighting each other. ‘Spheres of interest’ were marked out and each invaded within its own ‘sphere’. *“...it legitimised and formalised a process of conquest.” “The colonial powers partitioned Africa by agreement with each other. But they still had to invade and occupy the colonies They did this by crushing African resistance wherever it appeared.” “Most African peoples tried to defeat these invasions but the Europeans were too strong, and the partition was almost complete by the beginning of our century (20th). Most of the colonial frontiers – the frontiers, today, of independent African states – were fixed on the map by the end of 1901.” Davidson (ibid)*

“... All the systems... operated with the same assumptions and for the same purpose. Each of them was racist exploitative. They used colonial power to treat Africans as inferior to Europeans, justifying this by a whole range of myths about a supposed ‘white superiority’. The purpose of using colonial power in this way was to make Africans serve the interests of European colony-owners.” Davidson (ibid)

Partition gave no thought or consideration to the ethnic groupings, cultures, linguistic differences, religions and natural borders etc. of the indigenous population and the land that had been forcibly occupied. The national boundaries that exist today were established by these European conquests. There was no respect for the colonised peoples and consequently these boundaries bear no resemblance to any of the earlier civilisations. The legacy of this arrogant high handedness has been played out in the conflicts of the 20th century. The Nigerian Civil War being one such legacy. Nigeria was an artificial state created by the British. Some territories seized by Britain in West Africa were renamed Nigeria. It was made up of Great Benin, the Yoruba States, the Hausa Confederation, the Igbo territories, a part of Borno and other smaller states. Thus Nigeria was made up of different ethnic groups and *“at no time were these states ever one political unit since the cultural differences that separated them were too large.” Walker, ibid. p. 566* By the time of independence from the British in 1960 Nigeria had a population of 60 million made up of nearly 300 differing ethnic and cultural groups. It is therefore not surprising that the twentieth century Nigerian nationalist Obafemi Awolowo,

finance minister during the Nigerian Civil War, said of his country ***“Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression”***. When ethnic tensions broke out with the secession of eastern Nigeria declaring independence as Biafra in May 1967, Britain as the former colonial power took a close and active interest in the conflict. Seeking to preserve Nigeria’s unity Britain advocated a ‘One Nigeria’ policy to resolve the conflict. However, Chibuike Uche, of the University of Nigeria, argues that Britain’s oil interests played a major role in the position she took and intervened to secure her economic interests.

The conflict put in jeopardy Shell-BP’s investment in oil rich Biafra. A note to Prime Minister Harold Wilson stressed the financial importance to Britain. ***“The facts are that Shell and BP have invested at least £250 million in Nigeria on which we now expect a large and increasing return of great importance to the British balance of payments.”*** (PRO FCO 65/157) Nigeria was particularly important to Britain’s domestic economy at this moment in time because the 1967 Six Day War between Israel and its Arab neighbours had disrupted oil supplies from the Middle East. With Britain’s oil interests paramount the only way forward was to support the federal government against the fledgling Biafran state. The military might of the federal government made the likelihood of a Biafran defeat a distinct possibility. Britain could not afford to be on the losing side therefore joint action by the government and Shell-BP ensured Biafra’s defeat.

However, British involvement could not be admitted and Lord Shepherd, Minister of State at the Foreign Office told the House of Lords in January 1968 ***“We are neutral to both sides We certainly are not helping one side of the other.”*** In August 1968 George Thomas, Under Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs said ***“Our supplies (of arms) have amounted to about 15% by value of Nigeria’s total arms purchases, and even in the categories of infantry arms and ammunition our share has been well under half.”*** This was reiterated on the 9th December 1969 by Michael Stewart, the Foreign Secretary, when he said the supply ***“remains about 15% by value of the total purchases by Nigeria. It comprises, overwhelmingly, ammunition, spares, anti-aircraft equipment, and a small number of armoured vehicles.”*** Yet the Nigerian Trade Summary shows that British arms exported to Nigeria in 1960 were valued at £76,846, representing 38% of the total and by 1968 the British contribution had multiplied 35 times to a value of £2,817,560 representing 79% of the total. ***“The Foreign Office now says that 15% was a ‘guesstimate’.”*** (Cited The Nigerian Civil War, The Economist 31st January 1970)

Just after secession, another British Minister of State went to Biafra and reported, after consultation with the oil companies there, that *‘force majeure’* had to be recognised and \$20 million in oil royalties would have to be paid to

the powers in Biafra. However, when the Minister got home, he found that the oil companies' decision had already been countermanded by the Government, which blocked payment of the money and used its majority holding in Shell BP to veto the decision. Consequently Biafra was starved of necessary funds in order to sustain its position. Uche concludes that ***“British oil demands and the need to protect British oil interests played an important role in the decision of the British government to support a ‘One Nigeria’ solution in the Nigerian crisis.”*** Walter Schwarz – Africa Report 1970 sums up: ***“Britain’s role has been a unique mixture of intrigue, bewilderment, disingenuousness and ruthlessness.”***

The three year conflict resulted in an estimated death toll of 3 million due to conflict, hunger and disease exacerbated by Britain’s involvement to protect its oil interest in their former colonial territory. In 1969 John Lennon publicly returned the MBE that he had received in 1965 with the Beatles citing Britain’s involvement in the Biafran War.

The Aftermath of the ‘Nefarious’ Trade

“Neo-colonialism in its many forms, trade inequalities and the exploitative forms of globalisation are among other legacies with us today, usually unrecognised as stemming from greed, from selfishness, from well-engendered senses of superiority, and from the execrable ‘nefarious trade’.”

Marika & Kim Sherwood – ‘Britain, the slave trade and slavery, from 1562 to the 1880s’ p. 84 Savannah Press 2007

Slavery created the belief that Black people were intellectually inferior to White people and better suited to enslavement. The racist ideology expressed through slavery left the African continent depleted of its most able bodied, resulting in under-development reinforced by partition and colonisation. To perpetrate the myth of Black inferiority even the Bible was used. The curse of Ham in Genesis chapter 9 verses 24-27 suggested that Africans had been condemned to slavery for disobedience. Enslaved Africans were deprived of their culture, language, names, heritage, dignity and lives. Whilst Africa and its people were portrayed as uncivilised, ideas of racial hierarchy were accepted as normal.

The explorer Sir Harry Johnson, who served as commissioner for South Central Africa from 1891-1896 and special commissioner for Uganda from 1899-1901, wrote in 1899 ***“that Africans, with few exceptions, were the natural servants of other races: ‘The negro in general is a born slave’, possessing great physical strength, docility, cheerfulness, a short memory for sorrows and***

cruelties, gratitude for kindness, and ability to ‘toil hard under the sun and in the unhealthy climates of the torrid zone’; ‘provided he is well fed, he is easily made happy.’ Fryer, Staying Power, p. 173.

*“The same mythology was expressed in the same period by the respected classical scholar and humanitarian Gilbert Murray who wrote in 1900: There is in the world a hierarchy of races those nations which eat more, claim more and get higher wages, will direct and rule others and the lower work of the world will tend in the long-run to be done by the lower breeds of men. This much we of the ruling colour will no doubt accept as obvious.” Fryer, *ibid.* p. 173.*

Consequently many individuals were left with emotional and psychological issues related to colour and inferiority and as Sherwood says “... *social and psychological effects of enslavement have to be recognised.*” *Sherwood, After Abolition*

Sherwood points out that “*All societies undergo change over time, But there is a vast difference between what one could call ‘natural evolution’, and changes induced by overwhelming outside influences, and then by subjecting people to colonial rule. How would African societies, cultures, and industries have developed had the Europeans not intervened? What was the effect of depriving East and West Africa of at least 20 million of its ablest, strongest peoples? Of inducing hundreds of years of warfare? And what was the effect of colonialism which was about making the produce of Africa available to the West as cheaply as possible and creating a market for Western manufacturers? All these questions have to be taken into consideration when looking at Africa today. We are talking about what was done to women, children and men until not very long ago. We’re not talking about numbers, but about human beings.*” *After Abolition*

“The Transatlantic Slave Trade, which for four centuries served to develop the economies of Europe, underdevelop those of Africa, and set in train ideologies about race, identity and culture still impact on our world today. The after-effects of Transatlantic slavery, a barbaric system based on violence and terror took men and women made in the image of God and sought to reduce them to the position of a subspecies. The undoubted justification for this dehumanisation was the need for Africans to work on European-controlled plantation in the Americas.” Richard Reddie

The Twenty First Century

What now? Benin artist Ramuald Hazoumé expressed it eloquently when he said *“They did not know where they were going but they knew where they had come from. Today they still do not know where they are going and they have forgotten where they have come from.”*

1779	European settlers in South Africa begin a long series of expansion
1797	Britain captures Trinidad from Spain
1806	Cape Colony becomes a British possession
1830	French invade Algeria
1857	British occupy Lagos Island in Nigeria
1867	Diamonds found in South Africa
1874	First British invasion of Ashanti
1881	French occupy Tunisia
1890	British take East Africa Germans take Tanganyika
1896	British occupy Kumasi in Ashanti
1908	Belgians take Congo
1912	French take Morocco
1919	British take over Tanganyika
1935-41	Italian occupation of Ethiopia

Bibliography

- Basil Davidson, *Discovering Africa's Past* Longman 1978
- Basil Davidson, *Modern Africa*, Longman 1983
- Nicholas Draper, *The Price of Emancipation: Slave Ownership, Compensation and British Society at the End of Slavery*, Cambridge, 2013
- Madge Dresser, *Slavery Obscured: The Social History of the Slave Trade in an English Provincial Port*, Continuum London and New York 2001
- E. Ita Ekpenyon, *Some Experiences of an African Air-Raid Warden*, London: Sheldon Press
- Peter Fryer, *Staying Power – The History of Black People in Britain*, Pluto 1984
- Asher and Martin Hoyles, *Before Windrush – West Indians in Britain*, Hansib, 2020
- John Hughes, *Liverpool Banks and Bankers*, Liverpool 1906
- Francis Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey – An Economic History*
- Joseph Inikori, *Africa and the Industrial Revolution in England*, CUP 2002
- Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Bogle L'Ouverture Publications Ltd., London 1988
- Marika Sherwood & Martin Spafford, *Whose Freedom were Africans, Caribbeans and Indians defending in World War II?* Teaching Pack, Savannah Press
- Marika Sherwood, *After Abolition – Britain and the Slave Trade since 1807* I.B. Tauris 2007
- Marika & Kim Sherwood, *Britain, the Slave Trade and Slavery, from 1562 to 1880s* Savannah Press 2007
- Michael Taylor, *The Interest: How the British Establishment Resisted the Abolition of Slavery*, The Bodley Head 2020
- Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro – A History of the Caribbean 1492–1969*, Andre Deutsch, 1970

Periodicals & Articles

Richard Drayton, The Wealth of the West was Built on Africa's Exploitation,
Comment & Analysis, The Guardian, 20th August 2005

The Economist, The Nigerian Civil War, 31st January 1970

Jane Longmore, 'Cemented by the Blood of a Negro'? The Impact of the Slave
Trade on Liverpool: Paper at the Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery
Conference, 16th October 2005

Walter Schwarz, Africa Report, 1970

Jon Stobart, Culture versus commerce: societies and spaces for elites in
eighteenth century Liverpool, Journal of Historical Geography, 28 (2002)

Chibiuke Uche, Oil, British Interest and the Nigerian Civil War, The Journal of
African History, Vol. 49 No. 1 CUP, 2008

Videos

Blitz Spirit with Lucy Worsley BBC 1 First shown 23rd February 2021

Website

Legacies of British Slave Ownership – www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs

STEPS TO THE ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE AND SLAVERY

- 1656 and 1673** **Bermudan slaves stage revolts**
- 1729** **Birth of Ignatius Sancho**
- 1739** **Treaty made in Jamaica in which the British give the Maroons their freedom**
- c1745** **Birth of Olaudah Equiano**
- 1787** **Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade founded with Granville Sharp as president of a mostly Quaker committee**
- 1789** **Publication of Olaudah Equiano's autobiography The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, of Gustavus Vassa**
- 1791** **Slave revolt in St. Domingue (Haiti)**
23rd August
- 1797** **Death of Olaudah Equiano**
- 1803** **Abolition of the Slave Trade in Denmark**
- 1804** **St. Domingue becomes known as Haiti**
- 1807** **Slave Trade Abolition Bill passed in the British Parliament**
25th March
- 1808** **British West Africa Squadron (Royal Navy) established to suppress slave trading**
- 1815** **End of the Napoleonic Wars. At the Congress of Vienna, Britain puts pressure on France, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain to abolish the slave trade**
- 1822** **Freed Black people from the USA founded Liberia**
- 1831** **Jamaican Rebellion led by Sam Sharpe**

- 1833** **Abolition of Slavery Act in the British Empire**
Slavery abolished in the British Colonies in the West Indies
- 1833** **American Anti-Slavery Society formed**
- 1838** **Apprenticeship for former slaves ends in the British colonies in**
1st August **the Caribbean**
- 1839** **L'Amistad Revolt – Slaves seize Spanish slaver travelling**
between Cuban ports
- 1840** **American Foreign Anti-Slavery Society formed**
- 1842** **Britain and the United States of America sign Webster –**
Ashburton Treaty banning the slave trade on the high seas
- 1848** **French Emancipation of their slaves**
- 1851** **Brazil signed an Act to stop the importation of slaves**
- 1861** **President Lincoln issues an Emancipation Proclamation and**
frees the slaves
- 1863** **Dutch announce emancipation of their slaves in Surinam, South**
America after a 10 year apprenticeship
- 1865** **Slavery abolished in the United States of America**
- 1868** **Cuban revolts against Spain**
- 1869** **Slavery officially abolished in Portugal but the trade continued**
in Mozambique until c1900
- 1886** **Slavery abolished in Cuba**
- 1888** **Slavery abolished in Brazil**
- 1928** **Last Act of Abolition in the British Empire in the Gold Coast**
now Ghana