

# Introduction

Liverpool street names have become a contentious issue in recent years due to the fact that many commemorate individuals who prospered from the slave trade. We may not wish to honour these people today, but should we forget their role in the history of our city? The Transatlantic Slave Trade was the biggest enforced movement of people that the world has ever known. The significance of Liverpool's role in that trade is one of the reasons why Liverpool, Maritime Mercantile City was inscribed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. During 2007, the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade in Britain and the 800th birthday of the City of Liverpool, this booklet takes a closer look at the facts behind the naming of places and streets in Liverpool.

In October 2006, English Heritage stated that it would research links to the Transatlantic Slave Trade and abolition amongst the families associated with sites in its care built during the period of the trade – a total of approximately 30 buildings throughout England. It is thought that this work will take about 2 years to complete. In Liverpool English Heritage does not own any buildings – but it does have a special partnership project called the Historic Environment of

Liverpool Project and it is through this project that this information sheet is being produced.

Our aim is to provide factual information about the individuals and families which were involved in both slaving and abolition in Liverpool – and how it was that they came to have places and streets named after them. Contrary to what many people now believe, streets were not named after people because they were slavers. They were honoured in this way because they were landowners, decision makers, politicians, patrons of the arts and powerful business people. Some of these people were prominent slave traders as we will see, and others fought the ideas and beliefs prominent at the time to crush the trade through the abolition movement. The pamphlet does not intend to be a potted history of Liverpool's role in the slave trade. The purpose is to highlight the role that selected individuals played in the development of the built heritage of the city from wealth accrued through plantation slavery and the slave trade.

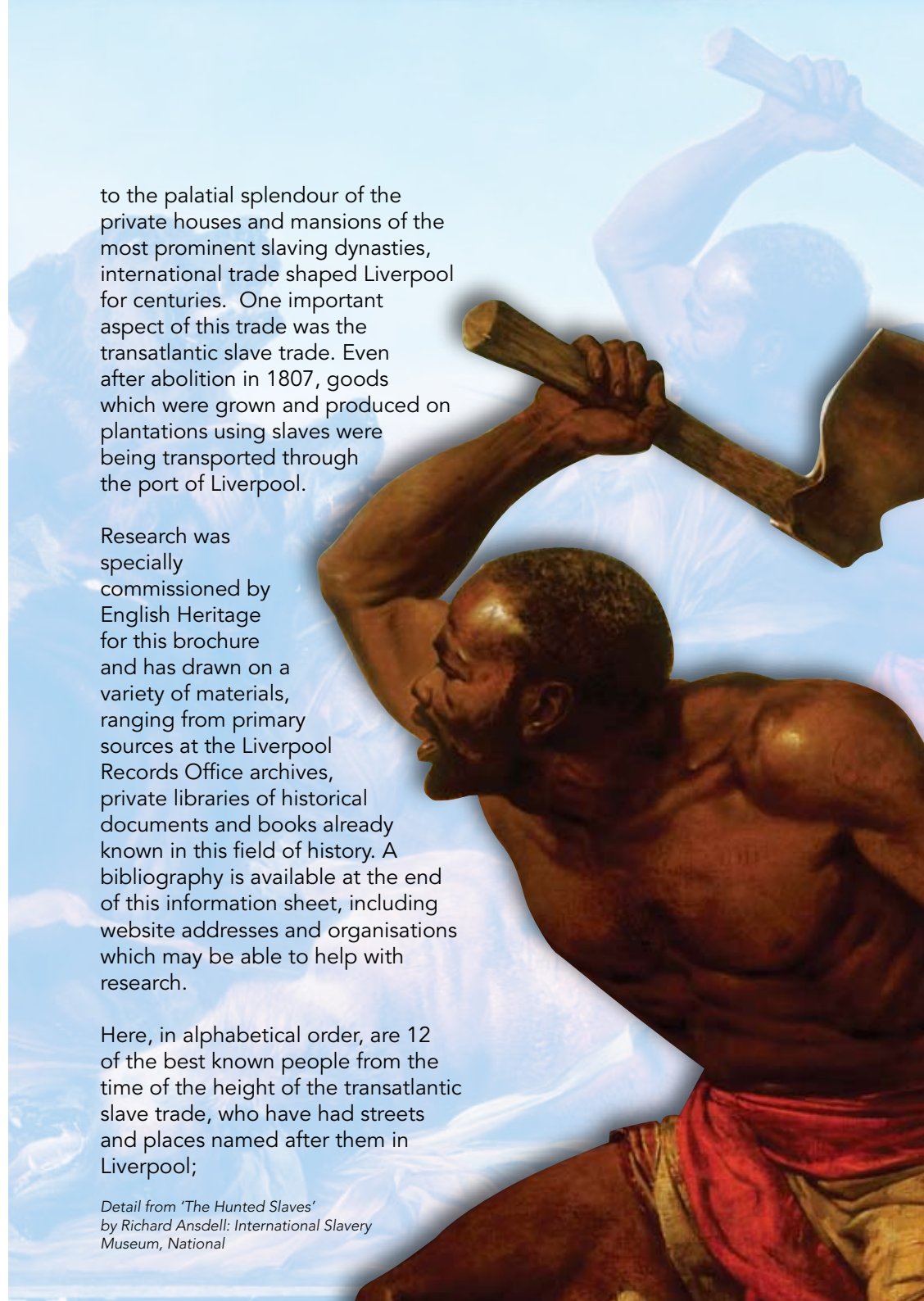
From the sophisticated system of warehousing developed to store cotton, tobacco and other goods imported from the West Indies, North America and elsewhere,

to the palatial splendour of the private houses and mansions of the most prominent slaving dynasties, international trade shaped Liverpool for centuries. One important aspect of this trade was the transatlantic slave trade. Even after abolition in 1807, goods which were grown and produced on plantations using slaves were being transported through the port of Liverpool.

Research was specially commissioned by English Heritage for this brochure and has drawn on a variety of materials, ranging from primary sources at the Liverpool Records Office archives, private libraries of historical documents and books already known in this field of history. A bibliography is available at the end of this information sheet, including website addresses and organisations which may be able to help with research.

Here, in alphabetical order, are 12 of the best known people from the time of the height of the transatlantic slave trade, who have had streets and places named after them in Liverpool;

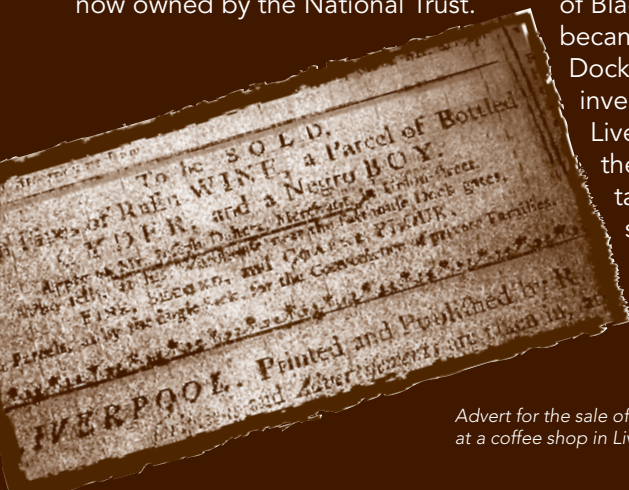
*Detail from 'The Hunted Slaves'  
by Richard Ansdell: International Slavery  
Museum, National*



## Ashton street

### John Ashton (1711-1759)

John Ashton was a salt merchant who also invested in the slave trade. He used his profits from salt and slavery to subsidise the construction of the Sankey Canal, owning 51 out of the 120 shares. His son, Nicholas, used the family fortune to purchase coalmines in Parr, St Helens; he also acquired Woolton Hall in 1772, inviting Robert Adam to redesign the interior, maybe his only completed commission in Lancashire. The Ashton family is also commemorated with other streets that bear their name; **Ashton Square** in Woolton and Ashton Drive in Hunts Cross. The Ashtons were not alone in using the proceeds of slavery to invest in the industrial development of Britain. Richard Pennant, MP for Liverpool-whom Penrhyn Street is named after-used the revenue from his Jamaican sugar plantations to invest in road and dock building and the slate industry in Wales. Richard Pennant's nephew, who inherited the family estates on the demise of the first Lord Penrhyn, built Penrhyn Castle, now owned by the National Trust.



Advert for the sale of a 'negro boy' at a coffee shop in Liverpool.

## Blackburne place

### John Blackburne, (1693-1786)

Originally from Orford near Warrington, John Blackburne was a slave trader who is named on the list of merchants trading with Africa in 1752. John Blackburne senior served as mayor of Liverpool in 1760 and was an active member of the town's elite. Blackburne made a fortune in Liverpool and used some of his wealth to refurbish the family seat, Orford Hall; he also purchased the manor of Warrington in 1764. In addition to slave trading he was a salt merchant who owned the salt works adjacent to Liverpool's second wet dock, which opened in 1753. Originally it was named the South Dock, but due to the proximity of Blackburne's salt works it quickly became known as the Salthouse Dock. Blackburne was also an investor in canal building; many Liverpool slave traders diversified their economic interests to take advantage of industries springing up around southern Lancashire. These included salt manufacture, banking, shipbuilding, rope-making and coal mining.



By the 1780's the Blackburnes had acquired large tracts of land in and around Liverpool and John's son, also named John, used some of this land to build **Blackburne House**, completed in 1790. Following in his father's footsteps, John junior served as mayor of Liverpool in 1788 and was to become a founder member of the Athenaeum Club, along with many of Liverpool's slave traders and abolitionists. The Blackburnes are also remembered in **Great Orford Street**, named after their estate near Warrington where they had a famous hothouse, thought to be the first in the country to grow pineapples, coffee, tea and sugarcane.

**Blackburne Street** in Garston is also named after the family as the Blackburnes moved their salt works there in 1798. John Blackburne Sr was the father of noted American ornithologist, Ashton Blackburne.

## Blundell street

### Bryan Blundell (1675-1756)

Bryan Blundell was a tobacco merchant, sea captain and slave ship owner. No less than three members of the Blundell family are listed as "Merchants Trading to Africa" in 1752. After leaving the sea in 1713 he had acquired the sum of £7,500 pounds and bequeathed 10% of his annual income until his death for the upkeep of the Blue Coat Hospital, a charity school he had helped found in 1708. Blundell served twice as mayor of Liverpool in 1721 and 1728,

and was one of Liverpool's most prominent merchants during the first half of the eighteenth century. He used his influence to get other local merchants to contribute to the building and upkeep of a new home for the Blue Coat in 1718. Although the administration of the school became one of his chief interests he remained a ship owner into his seventies and had the slave ship the Sea Flower built between 1745-48. His sons Jonathan and Richard were both involved in the slave trade, as were his grandsons, Bryan and Henry. The Blundells also invested significantly in the coalmines around St Helens. The Blue Coat Hospital is the oldest building in Liverpool city centre and is one of the very few buildings in the city built in the Queen Anne style. The Blue Coat School still exists but moved from the old building in 1906 to new accommodation in Wavertree. It is one of Liverpool's most prestigious schools and many Liverpool notables have been educated there, including the artist Richard Ansdell RA, who painted "The Hunted Slaves", which can be seen at the new International Slavery Museum. The Blue Coat will be celebrating its tercentenary during Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture. The Blue Coat hospital building has been in use for many years as The Blue Coat Arts Centre, a leading centre for the contemporary arts.

## Bold street

### Jonas Bold (1745-?)

Bold Street was once known as the "Bond Street of the North". It is named after Jonas Bold, who leased the land from Liverpool Corporation around 1785-6. He also owned a plot at the top of the street, which is now the site of St Luke's Church. Bold Street was the home of the Lyceum Club, built by the famed architect Thomas Harrison and opened in 1802. It was built to house the Liverpool Library, which is thought to be the oldest public subscription library in the country. Many of the founder members of the Lyceum traded in enslaved Africans. Prior to Bold acquiring the land it had been home to the rope-works of the slave traders Joseph and Jonathan Brooks, whom **Brooks Alley** is named after. Bold was also a slave trader, sugar merchant, mayor and a partner in the banking firm Staniforth, Ingram, Bold and Daltera: all four men were involved in

the slave trade. Joseph Daltera advertised for sale in the Williamson's Advertiser on June 17 1757: "To be sold 10 pipes of raisin wine, a parcel of bottled cyder, and a Negro boy...." Many of Liverpool's merchants during the 18th century were slave traders and/or purveyors of slave produced goods such as sugar, coffee, tobacco or cotton.

## cropper street

### James Cropper (1773-1840)

James Cropper, merchant and philanthropist, came from Winstanley to Liverpool at the age of 17 and was apprenticed to Rathbone Brothers, the first Liverpool merchants importing cotton from America. Later he established his own company—Cropper, Benson & Co. His business proved to be a highly prosperous one, and the wealth generated enabled Cropper to engage in a number of religious and philanthropic activities. The main focus of his attention was the campaign for the abolition of slavery; he wrote pamphlets and sent them to William Wilberforce at an early stage in the anti-slavery campaign. His activities were very unpopular in Liverpool and many of the West India merchants who owned plantations in the Caribbean criticized him. In 1823-4 he was subject to a series of attacks in the columns of the Liverpool newspapers by Sir John Gladstone,

father of the future Prime Minister. Gladstone was the owner of more than 2000 slaves on his plantations in Jamaica and Demerara. In 1831 Cropper joined forces with his son-in-law, Joseph Sturge, to form the Young England Abolitionists, distinguished from other anti-slavery groups by its outspokenness and vigorous campaigning.

## cunliffe street

### Foster Cunliffe (1682-1758)

Foster Cunliffe was the son of a clergyman of high repute who had acted as chaplain to King Charles II, who in turn stood as Godfather to Foster. As a young man he was intended to enter the church. Instead he was apprenticed to Richard Norris, a merchant and politician in Liverpool, who was a partner of **Sir Thomas Johnson** in one of the earliest legal slave ships to leave the port. Norris and Johnson were also heavily involved in the importation of slave-produced tobacco from Virginia. Sir Thomas Street, off Dale Street, is named after Johnson. Young Foster had a rapid rise in business and was soon established as a slave merchant and civic leader in the town. He was elected Mayor in 1716, 1729 and 1735, he was also an alderman, and often acted as Deputy Mayor. By the middle of the eighteenth century Foster and his two sons had shares in 26 ships; at least four of them were slavers: the *Foster*, *Ellis* and *Robert*, *Bulkely*,

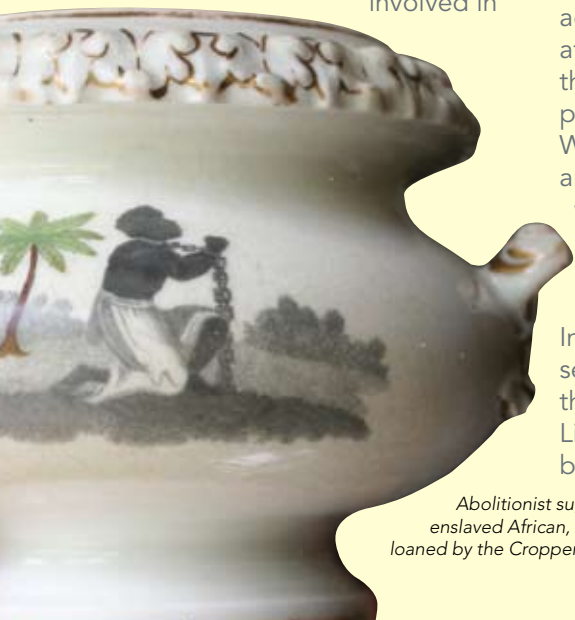
and *Bridget*. Altogether these four vessels held 1,120 slaves and were very profitable for the Cunliffes, allowing them to purchase slave produce such as tobacco, sugar and rum for sale on return to England. When Foster Cunliffe was invited to stand for Parliament, he declined, but nominated his son, Ellis, instead. Ellis won unopposed and stood as MP for Liverpool for twelve years (1755-67); he was also made a Baronet. Foster died in 1758 and was buried in St Peter's Church, Church St.

His grandson, also named Foster (1755-1834), used the family's wealth to purchase Acton Hall and estate near Wrexham. In 1786 he enlarged the Hall and the following year he founded the Society of Royal British Bowmen, archery being a popular pastime for the landed gentry during the late eighteenth century.

## earle road/earle street/earlestown

### John Earle (1674-1749)

The Earle Family of Liverpool were heavily involved in the slave trade over a number of generations as slave ship owners, captains, and plantation landlords. John Earle came to Liverpool from Warrington in 1688, joining the house of William Clayton, MP and a well-known merchant. By 1700, he had established his own



Abolitionist sugar bowl with image of enslaved African, part of a dinner service loaned by the Cropper family

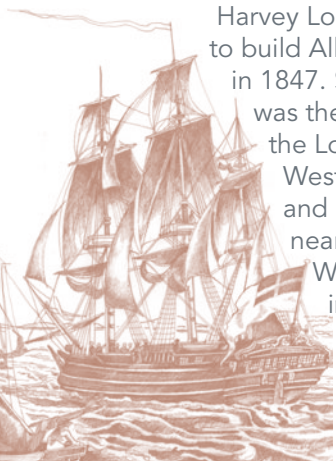


Abolitionist wax seal with the motto 'Am I not a woman and a sister' - loaned by the Cropper family

business and was trading in a range of commodities including wine, tobacco, sugar and iron goods. He was also responsible for establishing the family interest in the slave trade. The Earle family connection with slavery would continue for over a century. In 1709, John was elected Mayor of Liverpool. At his death in 1749, three of his four surviving children - Ralph (1715-1790), Thomas (1719-1781) and William (1721-1788) - were trading in beads, one of a variety of commodities used in slave trading on the African coast. Ralph became mayor in 1769. John's youngest son, William, captained a slave ship and was also a part owner of many slaving vessels.

After William died in 1788, his sons Thomas (1754-1822) and William (1760-1839) took over the family business. Thomas served as mayor in 1787 and by this time had used the family wealth to purchase the Spekeland estate; in 1805 he built Spekeland House close to the site of **Earle Road**. In the 1830s the Earle's acquired a plantation in Berbice, British Guiana (now Guyana), which they acquired as part of a bad debt. Thomas's son, Sir Hardman Earle, 1st Baronet (1792-1877), commissioned

Harvey Lonsdale Elmes to build Allerton Towers in 1847. Sir Hardman was the Director of the London & North Western Railway and **Earlestown** near Newton le Willows is named in his honour.



Plaque to W.E. Gladstone, Rodney Street

## Gladstone Road

**Sir John Gladstone (1764–1851), William E Gladstone (1809-1898)**

Sir John Gladstone, first baronet (1764–1851), was born John Gladstones on 11 December 1764 in Leith, Scotland. Gladstone left school aged thirteen and after serving an apprenticeship entered his father's corn-chandling business in 1781. In 1786 he moved to Liverpool to work with Edgar Corrie. The partnership with Corrie was very successful and they quickly diversified into Virginian tobacco, and it was on a combination of American grain and tobacco that Gladstone's fortune was founded. However, it was not until Gladstone invested in West Indian plantations and their produce that his fortune really skyrocketed. By June 1799 John Gladstone was worth £40,000; by 1812, £145,600; by 1820, £333,600; by 1828, £502,550. Gladstone began sugar and cotton trading in the West Indies in 1803, that year also purchasing the Belmont estate in Demerara, the first of several, the



largest being Vreedenhoop, with 430 slaves, acquired in 1826 for £80,000. Throughout the 1820s John Gladstone increased his sugar estate holdings, adding estates in Jamaica and disregarding the growth of the anti-slavery movement. His wealth enabled him to give his sons the start in life that he never had and thus William was dispatched to Eton in 1821 for his education. His schooling was to provide a springboard for his political career, which culminated in him serving four terms as Prime Minister. Although William Gladstone is renowned as a great Liberal Prime Minister who defended Home Rule for the Irish, in his maiden speech in the House of Commons he argued against the immediate emancipation of slaves. He was also a supporter of the Confederacy during the American Civil War. When the British finally abolished slavery in the 1830s the Gladstone family received over £90,000 in compensation for the slaves they had to free.

## Parr St

**Thomas Parr (1769-1847)**

Parr Street is named after Thomas Parr who in 1799 built the fine house that still stands on the corner of Parr Street and Colquitt Street. Thomas was a slave trader and banker in Liverpool; he owned the massive ship "Parr" which had berths for 700 slaves. The vessel is reported to have exploded off the west coast of Africa in 1798, which may indicate



that it was carrying gunpowder to exchange for enslaved Africans. By 1805 Thomas Parr had sold his Liverpool house and used his wealth to purchase Lythwood Hall and estate in Shropshire. In 1822 the Colquitt Street house became the home of the Liverpool Royal Institution, established by Liverpool merchants in 1814 and founded for "The promotion of Literature, Science and the Arts". Many of the men who helped establish the institution had links to slavery, either as slave traders or owners of West Indian plantations that used slave labour. It was not uncommon for merchants who made fortunes through the slave trade to use their wealth to establish or support philanthropic organisations such as the Liverpool Dispensary for the Sick, which was responsible for providing medicine to the poor.



Memorial to Thomas Parr, Lythwood, Shropshire

## Roscoe street/ Roscoe Gardens/ Roscoe Lane

### William Roscoe (1753-1831)

Roscoe Street is named after William Roscoe, who is considered one of Liverpool's greatest sons. Roscoe was an attorney, author, banker, poet, botanist, politician, art collector and abolitionist. He was one of the founder proprietors of the Athenaeum Club in 1797 and was instrumental in the establishment of The Liverpool Botanic Gardens in 1802, which opened to the public 38 years before Kew Gardens in London. In 1822 his influence led to the opening of the Royal Institution in Colquitt Street and his collection of early Florentine paintings, of world importance, can be seen in the Walker Art Gallery.



After winning election to parliament in 1806

as MP for Liverpool, he voted in support of Wilberforce's motion to end British involvement in the slave trade. His efforts to end the slave trade were not appreciated in Liverpool and on his return from Parliament he was accosted by a mob on Castle Street. Later that night one of his party, Edward Spencer, was murdered during a brawl which, it is thought, was sparked by the incident earlier in the day. This event is said to have soured his opinion of politics and he lost

his enthusiasm for public office. Although reluctantly nominated in 1807, Roscoe was not re-elected.

Roscoe's former home, Allerton Hall, still stands and is now the Pub in the Park at Clarke Gardens.



Mount Pleasant Memorial with plaque to William Roscoe



## sir Thomas street

### Sir Thomas Johnson (1664-1728-9)

Sir Thomas Johnson is known as "The founder of modern Liverpool". He served as mayor in 1695 and was one of Liverpool's earliest recorded slave traders, financing the second documented slave ship to leave the port. In 1700, along with Robert Norris of Speke Hall, Johnson financed the voyage of The Blessing to the Gold Coast (West Africa) and then on to Barbados, where the enslaved Africans were to be exchanged for cotton, ginger and sugar. Johnson was also involved in the "Virginia Trade", which saw Liverpool merchants deal in slave-produced tobacco. In 1708, whilst serving as MP for Liverpool, he pushed for the building of Liverpool's, and arguably the world's, first commercial wet dock, which opened in 1715. This feat was greatly responsible for the increase in Liverpool's overseas trade and many slave ships were to dock here during the eighteenth century. In 1717 he offered to purchase the French section of the Caribbean island of St Kitts for £61000, presumably for the continued production of slave-grown sugar, but the offer was not accepted. He invested heavily in the South Sea Company, whose main interest was the transportation of slaves to the Spanish colonies in the Americas. In 1720 the company went into freefall due to massive over-speculation. Johnson found himself in financial difficulties and lived out his final years on a small pension.

## Tarleton street

### Banastre Tarleton (1754 - 1833)

The Tarleton family produced three generations of slave traders. The most famous member of the family was Banastre Tarleton (1754-1833) who fought famously for the British during the American War of Independence and fought just as valiantly in the House of Commons to prevent the end of the slave trade. Banastre's grandfather was the first Tarleton to trade in enslaved Africans, his father was also involved, as were his three brothers, John, Clayton and Thomas. General Banastre Tarleton used his fame as a colonial war hero to ensure he became MP for Liverpool in the 1790 parliamentary elections, although it was probably a dispute over beer that was the main factor in his success. Once elected he utilised his position as MP to protect his family's business interests, fighting vociferously to ensure that the slave trade was preserved by the British Government. He had a vested interest in the continuation of the slave trade, although as an MP for Liverpool his stance on the African trade was the norm. With the exception of William Roscoe, all of the town's MPs during the late 18th and early 19th



Banastre Tarleton by unknown artist



century, were opposed to the abolition of the slave trade.

A portrait of Banastre Tarleton after Sir Joshua Reynolds now hangs in the National Gallery in London.

Interestingly, the abolitionist Zachary Macaulay travelled as a passenger from Sierra Leone to England via

the West Indies on a Tarleton Brothers slave ship, the Ann Phillipa. During the voyage he kept a diary describing the terrible events he witnessed on board. In order to disguise the contents of the journal from the ship's crew he wrote his entries using Greek letters.

Liverpool is going through rapid change of the like not seen since the city's Victorian heyday. Buildings are being demolished and some streets are disappearing, but new developments are creating new

streets. This may allow the city to discuss naming some of these thoroughfares after men and women, both black and white, who fought to end the inhumane system of slavery at home and abroad.



Sir Banastre Tarleton by James Gilray, National Portrait Gallery

## Bibliography and a selection of websites with information related to this topic;

### **Earle Family and Business Archive:**

Merseyside Maritime Museum

### **Cropper Family Archive:**

Merseyside Maritime Museum

### **The Rise of the Port of Liverpool:**

C. Northcote Parkinson

### **A Merseyside Town in the Industrial Revolution St Helens 1750-1900:**

Barker & Harris

### **Williamson's Advertiser:**

Liverpool Records Office

### **Memorials of Liverpool:** J.A. Picton

### **The Family of Ireland Blackburne of Hale Hall:** Charlotte Blackburne

### **Bury the Chains**

### **Adam Hochschild**

Gore's Liverpool Directories

### **Shropshire Records Office**

### **The Life and Times of William**

### **Ewart Gladstone:** J Ewing Ritchie

### **Liverpool Banks and Bankers 1760-**

1837: John Hughes

### **Grayson's of Liverpool:** Colin Brooks

### **Enfield's Liverpool:** William Enfield

### **History of the Liverpool Privateers**

### **and Letters of Marque with an**

### **Account of the Liverpool Slave**

### **Trade:** Gomer Williams – University

of Liverpool Press

### **Staying Power:** Peter Fryer

### **Hansard's Parliamentary Debates**

(1833)

[http://landing.ancestry.co.uk/intl/uk/barbados.aspx?o\\_iid=31428&o\\_lid=31428](http://landing.ancestry.co.uk/intl/uk/barbados.aspx?o_iid=31428&o_lid=31428) – useful; website for those trying to trace ancestors who were enslaved in the West Indies in particular.

<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/slavery/liverpool.asp> - background information about transatlantic slave trade.

<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ism/> - information about the new International Slavery Museum in Liverpool.

<http://archive.liverpool.gov.uk> – the home page of the Liverpool Records Office. Very valuable resource which tells you how to use the services and where they are based.

<http://www.blackhistory4schools.co.uk/slavetrade/> - generic site with teaching resources about the history of the slave trade.

<http://bbc.co.uk/abolition> - articles, films and information about issues relating to the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and its legacy.

<http://www.stjamestexteth.co.uk> – fascinating site based on work done by Churches Conservation Trust on the church records at St James Church showing free Black people living and working in Liverpool during the 1700's.

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.17483> - up to date information about the work which English Heritage is doing nationally to research the evidence of the slave trade in the historic environment of England. Useful, printable resources.

[http://www.channel4.com/history/microsites/H/history/a-b/britains\\_slave\\_trade.html](http://www.channel4.com/history/microsites/H/history/a-b/britains_slave_trade.html)

<http://www.visitliverpool.com/blackheritage/slavery-trail> - site which gives information about guided tours which cover the history of the slave trade in Liverpool.

<http://www.liv.ac.uk/history/research/CSIS.htm> University of Liverpool, School of History describing current research on this topic.

<http://www.nypl.org/research/sc/sc.html> Site focussing on Black American culture and history with some interesting links to and images of Liverpool.

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/liverpool/localhistory/history\\_howtodo.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/liverpool/localhistory/history_howtodo.shtml) some useful hints and tips on how to do simple historical research

<http://www.google.co.uk/search?hl=en&q=street+names+slavery&meta=cr%3DcountryUK%7CcountryGB> message board on debate about street names and slavery.

<http://www.thebluecoat.org.uk> - site of the Bluecoat Arts Centre



- KEY**
- 1 Ashton street
  - 2 Blackburne place
  - 3 Blundell street
  - 4 Bold street
  - 5 Cropper street
  - 6 Cunliffe street
  - 7 Earle Road (Wavertree)
  - 8 Earle street  
(off old Hall street)
  - 9 Earlestown  
(Newton le willows)
  - 10 Gladstone Road (Garston)
  - 11 Parr st
  - 12 Roscoe street
  - 13 Roscoe Gardens
  - 14 Roscoe Lane
  - 15 Sir Thomas street
  - 16 Tarleton street

The publication is dedicated to Alex Robinson, a history teacher who was prepared to talk about transatlantic slavery and its legacy when others remained silent, and Ivy Jenkins-Darby for being an inspiration.

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Researched and written by Laurence Westgaph



# READ THE SIGNS

Street names with a connection to the transatlantic slave trade and abolition in Liverpool

If you would like information in another language or format, please ask us

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