

# Anti-Slavery Activism in Tewkesbury

by Derek Benson



TEWKESBURY VOICES  
*Retain and Explain*

“*That such a system should so long have been suffered to exist in any part of the British Empire will appear, to our posterity, almost incredible.*”<sup>1</sup>

William Wilberforce, 1823

**O**n 11 March 1792, one of Tewkesbury’s Members of Parliament, the very wealthy financier of the building of the Town Hall in 1788, Sir William Codrington Bt, JP, died aged seventy-two.<sup>2</sup> He had been returned as MP for the constituency six times between 1761 and 1790. Before this, from 1747 to 1761, he had been Member for Beverley in Yorkshire. Over forty years in Parliament yet his only recorded speech throughout this time was in 1762 during a debate on a bill for the better preservation of game birds! In 1754 he was described as a ‘Whig’, in 1761 as a ‘Tory and West Indian’ and in 1763 as ‘doubtful’. He does not appear to have consistently supported either party. Being characterised as ‘West Indian’ would have been due to his ownership of significant slave plantations in Barbados and Antigua, inherited from his father and a cousin, respectively. After his death, a 1792 newspaper report quoted his annual income as £15,000 (perhaps around £2,000,000 in today’s values).<sup>3</sup>

Following the demise of Codrington, a by-election was scheduled in Tewkesbury to select a new MP. The continuation candidate to replace him was a nephew of Codrington’s, **Lt. Col. William Dowdeswell (1760-1828)**. Initially, there were to be three other candidates, **John Embury of Twynning**, **Peter Moore who had made his fortune in Bengal** and **Thomas Lloyd, a naval captain**. The latter was sponsored by a group formed in the town, whose stated aim was to “take into



Sir William Codrington (1719-1792)  
(Tewkesbury Town Hall)

*consideration the most effectual means of Abolishing the Slave Trade*”. During the late 18th century, such anti-slavery groups had a policy of not supporting any parliamentary candidate who did not explicitly support abolition. Having asked Dowdeswell to promise to vote for abolition, they found his answer unconvincing, would not support him and nominated Lloyd. Subsequently, the former published a letter that appeared in newspapers including *The Times*:<sup>4</sup>

## To the Independent Freemen and Burgesses of the Borough of Tewkesbury.

*Being well satisfied of your sentiments respecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade, as expressed in your Petition recently presented to Parliament on that subject, I do hereby hold myself bound to support the said petition with every exertion in my power; and I do further declare, that whenever a Petition is presented to Parliament from this Borough, for the purpose of putting an end to that unnatural traffic, or a motion made with that view, I will, should I have the honour of being returned your Representative, use every means in my power to promote the success of such petition or motion.*

WILLIAM DOWDESWELL  
Tewkesbury, March 15, 1792

This public declaration by Dowdeswell satisfied the committee and following a meeting held at the *Star and Garter Inn*, Barton Street,<sup>5</sup> they published their decision, which also appeared in the same edition of *The Times* as Dowdeswell's letter:

Resolved, - that this Committee are perfectly satisfied that Capt. Dowdeswell, the present Candidate, is a sincere well-wisher to the Abolition of that abominable traffic, and if returned as our Representative in Parliament, will use his utmost endeavours to effect such abolition.

*George Phelps, William Dillon, Jacob Allis, Nathaniel Hartland, John Terrett, John Millard, John Terrett, jun. Philip Humphreys, James Petley, William Bell Crafton, Mackenzie Stuart, Henry Collett.*

In the event all the candidates, apart from Dowdeswell, withdrew and he was returned unopposed. Tewkesbury at the time held two seats in Parliament and he joined the sitting MP, **James Martin**. William Dowdeswell was MP until 1797 but appears to have engaged in very little parliamentary activity as his primary career was in the military. While a sitting MP, he fought with his Guard's regiment in Flanders in 1793 during the war with Revolutionary France. Following his time as MP he was appointed Governor of the Bahamas for five years and later fought in military campaigns in India.<sup>6</sup>

His fellow **Tewkesbury MP, James Martin (1738-1810)** was the wealthy head of the family's bank in London and was a member for the constituency from 1776 until 1807. He was a radical *Whig*<sup>7</sup> and he spoke often against the slave trade and press gangs and against the severity of the penal code. He had the nickname



James Martin (1738-1810)  
(Tewkesbury Town Hall)

of 'Starling' Martin in parliament due to his remark that he "wished there were a starling to perch on the Speaker's chair and repeat incessantly 'disgraceful, shameless coalition'" (the Fox-North Coalition of 1783).<sup>8</sup>

Of the twelve signatories to the resolution made at the Star and Garter, five were *Quakers*: Allis, Hartland, Millard, Petley and Crafton. **Jacob Allis (1751-1842)** ran the *Victoria Temperance Hotel* in Church Street (almost certainly the building that is now the Rosado Lounge at The Cross). **Nathaniel Hartland (1754-1830)** was a wealthy tannery owner and banker who gave land in Barton Road for the building of the *Non-Conformist British School* there (now Elizabeth Wyatt House).

**James Petley (1768-1838)** a draper in the High Street, described as “*a man without guile*” in death notices.<sup>9</sup> These three were among a group of Quakers who had goods seized in 1825 for refusing to pay Church Rates – a periodic occurrence for Quakers.<sup>10</sup> **William Bell Crafton (1750-1798)** was a wealthy maltster of Tewkesbury<sup>11</sup> **John Millard (1738-1792)** was from a long-established Tewkesbury Quaker family and was also a maltster.<sup>12</sup>

On a national scale, the Quakers from their early days in the 17th century campaigned against slavery and expelled any members of the movement involved in owning or trading in slaves. ‘*The Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade*’, formed in 1787, was the first manifestation of the organisation that eventually achieved abolition and had nine out of twelve founders who were Quakers.<sup>13</sup> The movement’s role in the long campaign against slavery is the most consistent and meritorious of all of the religious denominations that were involved.

The seven others listed in the resolution were: **Philip Humphreys (1765-1835)** baptised in the Presbyterian chapel in Tewkesbury, grandson of the noted dissenter minister, educator and hymnwriter, Dr. Philip Doddridge. Humphreys attended Warrington Dissenters Academy and St. Mary’s Hall, Oxford and taught at the *Tewkesbury Dissenters Academy* in Tewkesbury (now the Tudor House Hotel). He was almost certainly the Philip Humphrey who became rector of Portland, Jamaica, where he technically owned slaves who were deemed the property of the parish.<sup>14</sup> **George Phelps (1748-1815)** was from a long-seated prominent family in Twynning. He was a member of the Tewkesbury Corporation (the modern equivalent is Tewkesbury Borough Council), a bailiff and chief magistrate of Tewkesbury.<sup>15</sup> **William Dillon (1751-1830)** was a surgeon who lived at the Mythe and was a committee member of the mixed denomination *Tewkesbury Auxiliary Bible Society*. He left substantial bequests to local hospitals.<sup>16</sup> **John Terrett (1734-1810)** was a surgeon in Tewkesbury. **John Terrett jnr. (1768-1852)** the son, who became a very successful cotton hosiery manufacturer. Throughout his life and in his will, he generously donated to various charities, with a special emphasis on those related to medical causes. He founded a dispensary in Tewkesbury and was a leading figure in the funding and building of Trinity Church in 1837. He also held the rank of ensign in the Tewkesbury Volunteer Infantry, was a

bailiff and freeman.<sup>17</sup> **Henry Collett (1754-1803)** was from a long-established Tewkesbury family. He was in all likelihood the Rev. Henry Collett, a curate at Bishop’s Cleeve, but there were other Henry Colletts in Tewkesbury at the time.<sup>18</sup> The last of the men was **Stuart Mackenzie** but nothing has been found about him.

During the 1770s, court judgements confirmed that fugitive slaves could not be forcibly returned from Britain to the West Indies on the grounds that slavery was not legal on British soil. In this way, by 1774, between 10,000 and 15,000 slaves gained freedom in Britain. This did not, of course, make the trade itself illegal and alarmed slavers formed the ‘*London Society of West India Planters and Merchants*’ (one of several such groups around the country) to impede moves towards abolition.

Since 1787, the Tory MP **William Wilberforce (1759-1833)** had led a group in parliament known as the ‘*Saints*’ in attempts to pass anti-slavery legislation. In 1789 he gave a three-hour speech against slavery in the Commons and in 1792 parliament resolved that the trade ought to be ‘*gradually abolished*’, however, little practical progress was made towards that end. In every year between 1789 and 1806 Wilberforce sponsored Bills calling for abolition of the slave trade. In 1804 the House of Commons voted in favour, but the Bill was rejected by the House of Lords.

In 1806 the strategy of achieving a ban on the trade of slaves with foreign countries was proposed. From Tewkesbury, the ‘*Friends of Abolition of the African Slave Trade*’ sent a letter to the two Tewkesbury MPs, **James Martin** and the Tory, **Christopher Bethell Codrington (1764-1843)** calling on them to “*... support all motions or other proceedings in the House of Commons, for putting an end to this cruel and disgraceful traffic ...*”. The latter was heir to the late Tewkesbury MP, **Sir William Codrington Bt**, who had died in 1792 leaving his slave plantations to him, disinheriting his own son. He was also the cousin of the past Tewkesbury MP, **William Dowdeswell**. Codrington declined to support the Bill insisting on his right to exercise his personal judgment and presenting that his opposition to abolition was not motivated by self-interest. However, he appears to have abstained rather than voting against it;<sup>19</sup> Martin voted for the Bill.

Those that signed the resolution to request the support of the two MPs “*to lend their aid to suppress that traffic, which has too long been suffered to disgrace this Nation*” were:

**Martin Lucas (1742-1813)** a magistrate who lived at Mythe House and was chairman of the ‘Tewkesbury Friends of Abolition of African Slave Trade’. He had been High Sheriff of Northampton in 1799.<sup>20</sup>

**Richard Alcock (1750-1829)** a bailiff, active in campaigning against the Corn Laws.<sup>21</sup>

**Isaac Butterfield (1747-1820)** a Tewkesbury draper and Quaker.<sup>22</sup>

**John Dick (1726-1822)** born in Scotland, a Presbyterian linen draper.<sup>23</sup>

**George Foxton (1762-1844)** Vicar of Twyning.<sup>24</sup>

**Abraham Harris**, Baptist chapel minister and director of the poor in Tewkesbury.<sup>25</sup>

**Benjamin Holland (1762-1840)** surgeon, bailiff, coroner and magistrate.<sup>26</sup>

**John Omwell Lloyd (1769-1851)** botanist, entomologist, geologist, antiquary, lieutenant in the Tewkesbury Volunteer Infantry, bailiff and freeman.<sup>27</sup>

**Nicholas Player (1764-1830)** a cooper of Barton Street.<sup>28</sup>

**Thomas Spilsbury (1752-1828)** minister of the Presbyterian chapel in Tewkesbury from 1795 to 1819. From a long-standing family of dissenting ministers.<sup>29</sup>

**Daniel Trotman (1773-1850)** Baptist chapel minister from 1803 for forty years.<sup>30</sup>

**Henry White (1742-1811)** probably the Henry White who was an attorney practicing in Tewkesbury.<sup>31</sup>

**Joseph Russell** was possibly living at 11 Church Street.<sup>32</sup>

**Nathaniel Hartland and John Terrett jnr.** are the same men who signed the 1792 resolution mentioned above.

The other signatory was **Thomas Edmonds** but nothing more is known about him.

In May 1806 the Bill did get through to become law, the *Foreign Slave Trade Abolition Bill* outlawed the carrying of slaves to territories of foreign powers. This in effect stopped around two-thirds of the British slave trade making it unprofitable. The Bill probably gained the support it needed, due to its purpose largely being to undermine French interests as Britain was at war with France. (Napoleon had relegalised slavery in 1804 after the earlier revolutionary government had abolished it).<sup>33</sup>

This success in 1806 motivated campaigners to increase efforts to achieve a ban on the trade in British territories. In January 1807 a Bill entitled *An Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade* was presented in the House of Lords by the Prime Minister himself, Lord Grenville. This gave great weight to the proposals and first and second readings were passed, the latter by 100 votes to 34, despite opposition from the Duke of Clarence, the future King William IV, and others with financial interests in slavery. After its third reading, the Bill reached the House of

Commons and, after his many years of promoting abolition, Wilberforce received a standing ovation during the debate of the Bill on 23 February 1807. The debate lasted ten hours and **the House voted in favour by 283 votes to 16. On completion of the other stages of legislation, it became law on 25 March 1807.**<sup>34</sup>

A general election was held in 1807, and Wilberforce faced fierce opposition in his Yorkshire constituency but prevailed. Huge sums were spent by the three wealthy candidates, one of whom was Henry Lascelles, 2nd Earl of Harewood, a slave owner and supporter of the continuation of slavery. Wilberforce is thought to have spent around £8,000 in the election, perhaps around £370,000 in modern values.<sup>35</sup> Tewkesbury's **Thomas Caddick (1763-1847)** a Baptist, ran a highly successful combined chemist, tea merchant and grocer shop in the High Street. He was a great philanthropist donating to many causes in Tewkesbury and was known as a 'steady advocate for the abolition of slavery', he donated £72 (£3,350) to

Wilberforce's election campaign. The *John Bull* magazine (generally critical of the abolition movement) commented that "*Caddick is the name of the Tewkesbury abolitionist, who is anxious to check the use of West Indian sugar – and the best part of the joke is, that he is a retired grocer*".<sup>36</sup> The boycotting of West Indian produce was a tactic used throughout the country by anti-slavery groups.

**Although the 1807 Act had ended the buying, selling and transportation of slaves in the British Empire, it did not free those already enslaved.** This now became the focus of the anti-slavery activists who formed a new national organisation, the *Anti-Slavery Society*. Wilberforce retired in 1825 and was succeeded as leader of the movement by **Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton (1786-1845)**, 1st Baronet Buxton of Belfield and Runton. In 1823 he unsuccessfully attempted to convince the House of Commons to abolish slavery slowly by giving freedom to all children born to slaves. The government instead agreed to improve the treatment of slaves as an initial stage towards an ultimate goal of abolition. This policy, known as '*amelioration*', initially only recommended that the slavers abolish the flogging of women and the use of the lash while slaves were working. Needless to say, the '*plantocracy*' carried on as they thought fit as they were a law unto themselves, dominating legislatures, who savagely suppressed the growing number of rebellions attempted by the slaves, for example **Bussa's Rebellion** in Barbados.<sup>37</sup> Efforts were made by Britain to persuade other nations to ban their slave trade. In 1815, Britain paid Portugal £300,000 (£28.7m ed.) for a pledge to gradually abolish their slavery involvement by 1830. The post-Napoleon French government abolished the trade in their dominions in 1818. A payment of £400,000 (£40.4m ed.) was paid to Spain by Britain for them banning their slave trade in 1820. **Slavery however continued, with extensive importation of slaves into Brazil and Cuba – assisted by the United States.**<sup>38</sup>

Petitions to parliament was a tactic used on a large scale by anti-slavery groups from the late 1700s onwards; in 1792 over 519 were received.<sup>39</sup> Tewkesbury regularly sent such petitions, usually presented to parliament by Tewkesbury's Whig MP, **John Martin (1774-1832)**, the son of the previously mentioned, '*Starling*' Martin.

**A petition from Tewkesbury calling for the abolition of slavery in the colonies was also presented in the House of Lords by the Earl of Shaftesbury in 1824.**<sup>40</sup> There was some



John Martin (1774-1832)  
(Tewkesbury Town Hall)

controversy surrounding this particular supplication. A meeting was held in Tewkesbury Town Hall to organise the petition but there were objections because the meeting had not been publicly advertised. It was then resolved to ask the bailiffs of the borough to convene a public meeting.<sup>41</sup> This meeting, described as "*large and respectable*" was held on 19 February, when an amendment was moved to the effect that a petition was "*unnecessary*" and that the meeting should be "*adjourned*". It was recorded that there were "*three dissenting voices*" who supported the amendment, and the meeting went on to agree to raise the petition. The report of the meeting added that "*In few places has the abolition of Slavery met with more cordial or decided support; and the interest displayed on this occasion was truly gratifying*".<sup>42</sup>

There was some suggestion that there had been more than three in support of the amendment, but this was strongly denied. An attendee of the meeting, **Lindsey Winterbotham**, wrote a letter to the editor of the *Gloucester Journal*, stating that the chairman, "*after securing for every speaker a fair and uninterrupted hearing, publicly requested that any who were still averse to the Petition would favour him with their names*". The three who came forward were: **Messrs. Longmore, Senior & Barlow.**<sup>43</sup> **Joseph Longmore (1781-1854)** lived at The Mythe, had West India property and sugar connections and was at various times corporation member, bailiff, director of the poor,

magistrate, commissioner of taxes and roads;<sup>44</sup> **Lewis Goodin Senior (1786-1844)** was a planter and proprietor of slaves and later attorney of the King's Bench and solicitor at the High Court of Chancery.<sup>45</sup>

**Captain Richard Barlow (-1827)**, paymaster of the 22nd Regiment was an occasional actor at the theatre in the Oldbury Road, he died in Jamaica of yellow fever two months after arriving there.<sup>46</sup> The letter to the *Gloucester Journal* implied that Barlow may have been paid to voice his opposition but that aspersion was withdrawn in a later letter that was part of bad tempered exchanges between Winterbotham and Barlow, where personal insults were exchanged and the impartiality of the meeting's chairman questioned. Barlow also criticised the presence of a Thomas Clarkson, "a stranger", at the meeting. This may well have been the prominent anti-slavery activist **Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846)** who was known to tour the country helping to facilitate anti-slavery groups.

Barlow's antagonist, **Lindsey Winterbotham (1799-1871)** was born in Plymouth, baptised as a Baptist, a solicitor then banker, town clerk and mayor of Tewkesbury.<sup>47</sup> The chairman of the disputed meeting was the **Rev. William Prosser (1759-1846)** JP, bailiff, vicar of Chaceley, curate of Bushley and Walton Cardiff and headmaster of the Free Grammar School for many years.<sup>48</sup> He also wrote to the *Gloucester Journal* stating his version of events.<sup>49</sup> **Twenty-seven of the attendees wrote to the newspaper to agree with the correctness of the statements of Winterbotham and Prosser.** Among the twenty-seven were: **John Allis Hartland (1781-1838)** Quaker, wealthy tanner and partner in the Lechmere and Hartland Bank at 99 Church Street, town councillor.<sup>50</sup> **Henry Welsford (1796-1871)** Presbyterian minister in Tewkesbury for fifty years.<sup>51</sup> Also, the previously mentioned Daniel Trotman, John Terrett jnr., Thomas Caddick, James Petley and Nathaniel Hartland.

During the dispute conducted in the pages of the *Gloucester Journal*, a list of those who Barlow maintained had supported the petition-blocking amendment was published.<sup>52</sup> In addition to the three established names there were: **Rev. W.G. Maxwell**, curate of Great Washbourne, bailiff; **Rev. David Parry**, rector of Kemerton; **Samuel Ricketts**, chemist; **Lieut. Bridges RN**; **Thomas Easthope jnr**; **George Williams**; **R. Mutlow** and the **Rev. George Foxton**. The newspaper has the last as "Curate of Kemerton" but he is most probably the vicar of Twynning although, if it is

*"To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament assembled;*  
*"The Humble PETITION of the Inhabitants of the Town and Parish of TEWKESBURY, in the county of Gloucester,*  
*"Sheweth—THAT your Petitioners, duly appreciating the many civil and religious advantages which they enjoy, are earnestly desirous that those blessings should be communicated to every Subject in his Majesty's Dominions.*

*"THAT your Petitioners recur with high expectation and heartfelt pleasure to his Majesty's late gracious and paternal recommendation to Parliament, in which he evinced his anxiety to see the valuable Resolutions adopted by your Honourable House in May last, to impart freedom to the Slave population in his Majesty's Colonies, carried into full effect at the most early, safe, and practicable period.*

*"THAT you Petitioners lament, with the sincerest grief and sympathy, the degradation, wretchedness, and misery which the Slaves endure—the inadequacy of Colonial Legislation for their comfort, security, and protection, (because the Makers of the Laws are the Masters of the Slaves.)—the deep state of error, ignorance, and superstition, in which they are immersed—their general depravity and profligacy—but, above all, the almost total absence of moral and religious culture.*

*"THAT your Petitioners therefore humbly hope and expect, that your Honourable House, notwithstanding the great and manifold, though not insuperable difficulties in which the subject is involved, will take the miserable condition of the West Indian Negro Population into your most serious consideration, and allow them, at such times, and by such modifications, as you may deem most expedient, the gradual enjoyment of those inestimable privileges, which, consistently with the interest of the Planters and the moral and religious instruction of the Negroes, may in your wisdom, justice, and humanity, appear to be most fit and proper."*

1824 Petition  
(*Gloucester Journal 22 Mar 1824*)

him, it is surprising that he is on the list, as he was one of the signatories of the 1806 letter to Tewkesbury's MPs asking them to support abolition proposals.

Two days before the meeting that sparked this controversy, an anonymous pamphlet was published by Bennett's printers in Tewkesbury calling on people to not support the petition as abolition would produce "*anarchy and confusion in our West-Indian Colonies: and total ruin to our Colonial Interests*". Unscrupulous claims were made that "*Although many misguided creatures [slaves] have already forfeited their Lives to the violated Laws of our Colonies, not one, even on the Scaffold, has complained of the treatment of his Master*" and "*The Negro Slaves are, generally speaking, better fed, better clothed, have more attention to their health, and less labour, than the Working Classes of this Country*". The pamphlet does not appear to be Tewkesbury specific and may well have been produced from a template used elsewhere, although it is conceivable that **Richard Barlow** was the author or instigator of its printing as a copy of the pamphlet is among his papers deposited at Gloucestershire Archive.<sup>53</sup>

Following the death of George IV in 1830, a general election was called. The two sitting MPs, **John Martin** and **John Edmund Dowdeswell (1772-1851)**, a brother of the past Tewkesbury MP, **William Dowdeswell**, both received a letter from "*78 respectable Inhabitants, 57 of*

*whom are Electors*" stating that they would only vote for them if they supported anti-slavery legislation in parliament, as "*the toleration of Slavery by the Country is attended with deep moral guilt and effectual measures should be adopted to remove so foul a reproach*". Martin replied that he had and would support all anti-slavery legislation and that he had "*always held not only the African Slave Trade, but also the system of Slavery as it exists in our West Indian Colonies, in abhorrence*". Dowdeswell's reply was more conditional, he said that he had "*uniformly supported all such measures*" in the past and would continue to support legislation "*that shall be compatible with the well-being of the slaves themselves with the safety of the colonies, and with the fair and equitable consideration of the interests of private property*".<sup>54</sup> In the event, the support or lack of, from the 57 Electors was neither here nor there as they were the only two candidates who stood and were duly returned.

**In 1832 the Great Reform Act became law and introduced major changes to the electoral system rationalising constituencies expanding the franchise.** A general election followed at the end of the year and the **Whigs** won with a large majority of 224 seats. Tewkesbury returned two **Whigs**, **Charles Hanbury Tracy (1778-1858)** and **John Martin (1805-1865)** son the previous member of the same name.<sup>55</sup> The defeated candidate was the Tory, **William Dowdeswell (1804-1870)** son of the previous member, **John Edmund Dowdeswell**. Tracy's nomination had been seconded by the abolition supporter, **Thomas Caddick**; Martin's was proposed and seconded by the aforementioned Messrs **Winterbotham and Hartland**. Dowdeswell had been proposed by **Sir Anthony Lechmere Bt.**<sup>56</sup>

Many of those returned in the election were pledged to support the abolition of slavery and the new parliament was bombarded with petitions calling for abolition – some 700 a month as anti-slavery organisations tried to maximise the momentum for reform. In 1833 the government presented proposals for abolition to Parliament and, after much debate and amendment, **on 26 July 1833, the House of Commons passed the third reading, by 206 votes to 89, of the Slavery Abolition Act that brought an end to slavery in the British Empire, freeing over 800,000 of the enslaved.**<sup>57</sup> The ailing **William Wilberforce** died three days later having seen his life's work at last come to fruition.

Excluded from the Act were territories controlled by the East India Company, Ceylon

(now Sri Lanka) and St. Helena, where very different cultural customs, class systems and administration existed which meant that conditions in those regions were not recognised as unambiguous slavery.<sup>58</sup>

**Although the Act made it illegal to own a person, many slaves did not become totally free as a four to six year 'apprentice' system was introduced which in effect kept them tied to their previous owners for small wages.** This was supposedly to prepare them for independent living, but many saw it as '*another name for slavery*'. Initially, slave-owner groups had demanded £30,000,000 in compensation for the loss of 'their property'. The government pledged £15,000,000 but this was increased to £20,000,000 during debates in the Commons. **No provision whatsoever for any payments to the slaves themselves was made.** It is virtually impossible to estimate accurately these sums in modern values – certainly billions, but **the final figure represented 40% of the government's annual income from tax and 5% of British Gross Domestic Product.** Scandalously, there was a proposal to make the payment a loan to be repaid by the freed slaves, the House did not sanction this – and it was deemed to be a gift.<sup>59</sup>

**The actual date of emancipation was 1 August 1834 and various events were held throughout the country in celebration.** In Tewkesbury a dinner of roast beef, plum pudding and beer was given to around 800 school children of the borough. It was served in the market-house (where the Methodist Church now stands) catered by John Edwards, landlord of the Cross-Keys Inn (11 High Street). After the meal the children and their teachers paraded through the main streets of Tewkesbury wearing abolition medals which had been presented to them.<sup>60</sup> An example of the medal is held by Bolton Museum who have it described as the medal distributed in Tewkesbury. It was manufactured by 'Davis' of Birmingham and is probably a generic design produced and used in other places as well as Tewkesbury.

Following abolition, the various anti-slavery organisations regrouped and widened their activities to address slavery in the rest of the world – particularly in the USA. The verbosely titled, '*The Agency Society for the Universal Abolition of Negro Slavery, and the Slave Trade Throughout the World*', concentrated on funding lecture tours in North America. In Edinburgh and Glasgow '*Societies for the Abolition of Slavery Throughout the World*' were formed. The '*London Anti-Slavery Society*' focused on trying to better



Medal Presented to Tewkesbury School Children in 1834  
(©Bolton Museum. From the Collection of Bolton Museum)

British emancipation, especially attempting to abolish the spurious 'apprenticeships'. The 'Sheffield Ladies Anti-Slavery Society' petitioned the new queen, Victoria, deplored the illegal flogging of apprenticed women. In the Midlands, 'The Birmingham Anti-Slavery Society' was formed by (among others) the Quaker and Chartist, Joseph Sturge (1793-1859). He and others toured the West Indies in 1834 and 1836 and reported on the

abuse and injustice of the apprenticeship system that they found there.<sup>61</sup>

This greatly assisted in the eventual abolition of the scheme on 1 August 1838, which some would say is the true date of abolition of slavery in the British Empire and the culmination of the many years of endeavour of activists throughout the country – with Tewkesbury playing its part.



Cruikshank cartoon lampooning Abolitionists, published in 1826. Abolitionists are shown bemoaning slavery, despite deprecations at home, while slaves are depicted enjoying themselves.  
(Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library – licence: [bit.ly/3YyE4PF](http://bit.ly/3YyE4PF))

(Please note that passages emphasised in bold in the article are the Editor's emphasis, not the Author's.)

## HISTORICAL REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> William Wilberforce, *An Appeal to the Religion, Justice, and Humanity of the Inhabitants of the British Empire*, 1823, Internet Archive, [bit.ly/3Aipwf7](https://bit.ly/3Aipwf7) (accessed 30 Oct 2024)
- <sup>2</sup> For a detailed History of Tewkesbury's Town Hall, see John Dixon, 'A History "Set in Iron"?' *THS Bulletin 30*, 2021, THS Website, [bit.ly/4f1qifv](https://bit.ly/4f1qifv) (accessed 30 Oct 2024).
- <sup>3</sup> The History of Parliament, [bit.ly/47Tv5Nv](https://bit.ly/47Tv5Nv) (accessed 7 Oct 2024) for details of his political career; 'Sir William Codrington 2nd Bart.', *Legacies of British Slavery database*, [bit.ly/3NcyYnf](https://bit.ly/3NcyYnf) (accessed 7 Oct 2024); and Coralie Merchant, 'Tewkesbury & the Abolition of the Slave Trade', *THS Bulletin 10*, 2001, for his slavery involvement; income as stated in *Hereford Journal*, 28 Mar 1792.
- <sup>4</sup> 'Slavery Abolition Tewkesbury', *THS Woodard Database*; *The Times*, 2 Apr 1792.
- <sup>5</sup> The Star and Garter was a coaching Inn, which was demolished in 1805 and replaced by the 2nd Baptist Church in the Town. Today the building at 79-80 Barton Street remains as apartments to accommodate young people. (Editor)
- <sup>6</sup> The History of Parliament, [bit.ly/3XXIUWn](https://bit.ly/3XXIUWn) (accessed 7 Oct 2024)
- <sup>7</sup> *Whigs* were 18th century rival of Tories; they sought to limit the royal authority and increase parliamentary power. After this period, *The Whigs* became the *Liberal Party* when the faction merged with the *Peelites and Radicals*. (Editor)
- <sup>8</sup> The History of Parliament, [bit.ly/3A9YNBf](https://bit.ly/3A9YNBf) (accessed 14 Oct 2024)
- <sup>9</sup> *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 1 Mar 1838.
- <sup>10</sup> 'Quakers', *THS Woodard Database*
- <sup>11</sup> *Gloucester Journal*, 5 Mar 1798; *Society of Friends (Quaker) burials 1578-1841*, Find My Past.
- <sup>12</sup> *Society of Friends (Quaker) burials 1578-1841*, Find My Past.
- <sup>13</sup> Derek Benson, 'Quakers: Keeping on their Hats in Tewkesbury', *THS Bulletin 33*, 2024, some details of the Tewkesbury Quakers mentioned are from that article.
- <sup>14</sup> *Independent Chapel Tewkesbury records*, NA TNA/RG/4/758, Find My Past; *Gloucester Journal*, 23 Dec 1799. Derek Benson, 'The 1714 Coronation Riot in Tewkesbury', *THS Bulletin 27*, 2018, THS Website, [bit.ly/3NIyntA](https://bit.ly/3NIyntA) (accessed 30 Oct 2024); 'Rev. Philip Humphreys', *Legacies of British Slavery Database*, [bit.ly/3Y3j6s4](https://bit.ly/3Y3j6s4) (accessed 13 Oct 2024)
- <sup>15</sup> *Oxford University & City Herald*, 24 Jun 1815; *The London Gazette*, 28 Jul 1795. Two 'Bailiffs' were appointed annually, they acted as chief magistrates of the Borough.
- <sup>16</sup> *Gloucester Journal*, 16 Mar 1812; 'Bennett\_Register (974)', *THS Woodard Database*.
- <sup>17</sup> *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, obituary, 11 Nov 1852; Janet Devereux 'Volunteer Infantry', *THS Woodard Database*. A 'Freeman' at this time was a symbolic honour conferring no particular privileges apart from exemption from some minor tolls.
- <sup>18</sup> [www.collettfamilyhistory.net](http://www.collettfamilyhistory.net) (accessed 13 Oct 2024).
- <sup>19</sup> The History of Parliament, [bit.ly/3ALbK4N](https://bit.ly/3ALbK4N) (accessed 9 Nov 2024).
- <sup>20</sup> Merchant as above; *Cambridge Chronicle & Journal*, 15 Jan 1813.
- <sup>21</sup> *Hereford Journal*, 8 Jun 1814.
- <sup>22</sup> *Society of Friends (Quaker) burials 1578-1841*, Find My Past.
- <sup>23</sup> *Sun*, obituary, 25 Jan 1822.
- <sup>24</sup> *Bath Journal*, 31 May 1802; *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 11 Jul 1844.
- <sup>25</sup> 'Baptist Church Book JMM' and 'Bennet Register (787)', *THS Woodard Database*.
- <sup>26</sup> Tewkesbury Abbey plaque; *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 20 Aug 1840.
- <sup>27</sup> James Bennett, *Tewkesbury Yearly Register and Magazine*, Vol I, *THS Woodard Database*; Janet Devereux, 'Public Spirit, Public Order', *THS Bulletin No.6*, 1997, p55.
- <sup>28</sup> 'Will of Nicholas Player', Tyndale – Pull Court connections, *THS Woodard Database*.
- <sup>29</sup> 'Presbyterian or Independent Chapel (Bennett II p45) (W Snarey)', *THS Woodard Database*.
- <sup>30</sup> *Worcestershire Chronicle*, 28 Aug 1850.
- <sup>31</sup> *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 21 Feb 1811.
- <sup>32</sup> 'Church Street (13)', *THS Woodard Database*.
- <sup>33</sup> UK Parliament, [bit.ly/4eTMub8](https://bit.ly/4eTMub8) (accessed 14 Oct 2024).

- <sup>34</sup> UK Parliament, [bit.ly/4eTMub8](https://bit.ly/4eTMub8) (accessed 16 Oct 2024).
- <sup>35</sup> The History of Parliament, [bit.ly/402SB8V](https://bit.ly/402SB8V) (accessed 16 Oct 2024).
- <sup>36</sup> Janet Devereux, 'The Good Man Serving his Generation – Thomas Caddick, 1763-1847', *THS Bulletin 10*, 2001; 'slavery from idealist', *THS Woodard Database*; *John Bull*, 20 Dec 1824.
- <sup>37</sup> See John Dixon, 'Kirton, H.A. of Barbados: Unique Resident', *THS Bulletin 33*, 2024, pp33-34.
- <sup>38</sup> Sir Llewellyn Woodward, *The Age of Reform 1815-1870*, The Oxford History of England, 1962.
- <sup>39</sup> 'British Anti-slavery', BBC, [bbc.in/4f8llRT](https://bbc.in/4f8llRT) [accessed 18 Oct 2024] The Editor wished to be able to study the petitions but ascertained from enquiries at the Glos Hub and National Archives that they have been destroyed.
- <sup>40</sup> *Star (London)*, 12 Mar 1824.
- <sup>41</sup> *Worcester Journal*, 12 Feb 1824.
- <sup>42</sup> *Worcester Journal*, 26 Feb 1824.
- <sup>43</sup> Merchant, as above; '1824 Letters re anti-abolition meeting', *Gloucester Journal*, 8 Mar 1824.
- <sup>44</sup> 'Record 1854 Obituary Joseph Longmore', *THS Woodard Database*.
- <sup>45</sup> 'Senior UCL', *THS Woodard Database*.
- <sup>46</sup> *Worcester Journal*, 20 Dec 1827.
- <sup>47</sup> 'Non-Conformist Births and Baptisms', *Find My Past*. 'Winterbotham Lindsey Town Clerk', *THS Woodard Database*.
- <sup>48</sup> Bennett, as above.
- <sup>49</sup> *Gloucester Journal*, 8 Mar 1824.
- <sup>50</sup> Benson, as above 'Quakers'.
- <sup>51</sup> *Stroud Journal*, 1 Apr 1871.
- <sup>52</sup> *Gloucester Journal*, 22 Mar 1824.
- <sup>53</sup> 'Captain Richard Barlow', Gloucestershire Archives, D6528/1.
- <sup>54</sup> *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 29 Jul 1830.
- <sup>55</sup> For an account of John Martin's political career see, Derek Benson, 'The Elections of John Martin', *THS Bulletin 21*, 2012, THS Website, [bit.ly/4hJEJX](https://bit.ly/4hJEJX) (accessed 30 Oct 2024).
- <sup>56</sup> Bennett, as above. The **Dowdeswells** do not feature as beneficiaries from the Compensation of former slave owners but **Sir Edmund Anthony Harley Lechmere, 3rd Baronet (1826-1894)** does. In March 1866 he was elected at a by-election as one of two MPs for Tewkesbury. When the borough's representation was reduced to one seat at the 1868, he was defeated by the Liberal Party candidate William Edwin Price. He contested Tewkesbury again in 1874, without success, but in July 1876 he was elected at a by-election as MP for W. Worcestershire, and then MP for Evesham until his death. In 1868 the franchise was extended to include skilled working men. (Editor, using Wikipedia and Legacies of British Slavery [www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/) in which 8 members of the Lechmere feature with 12 records).
- <sup>57</sup> Mark Jones, *The Mobilisation of Public Opinion Against the Slave Trade and Slavery: Popular Abolitionism in National and Regional Politics, 1787-1838*, Phd thesis, University of York, 1998, <https://bit.ly/3YrjjFx> (accessed 29 Oct 2024).
- <sup>58</sup> 'Slavery Abolition Act 1833', Wikipedia, reference 27, [bit.ly/3YJKls8](https://bit.ly/3YJKls8) (accessed 9 Nov 2024).
- <sup>59</sup> Woodward, as above.
- <sup>60</sup> Bennett, as above.
- <sup>61</sup> Jones, as above.



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