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**Teesdale School  
& Sixth Form Centre**

# PAST *to* PRESENT

The Journal of the Teesdale  
History Research Group

**Special Issue**  
Diversity and justice in the North East

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*This journal is the product of the work of the Teesdale History Research Group that has met each week in school since 2016 and is made up of students from years 9 to 13.*

*The articles in the journal represent the personal opinions of the authors and do not represent the views of Teesdale School as a whole.*

*A back catalogue of volumes can be accessed at [www.teesdaleschool.co.uk/curriculum/subjects/history](http://www.teesdaleschool.co.uk/curriculum/subjects/history).*

# Foreword

This issue is released to coincide with a study visit to Northumbria University in partnership with the Tyneside Historical Association. Students from the Teesdale History Research Group and others from Teesdale School and Sixth Form, The Academy at Shotton Hall and Easington Academy took part in small group discussions and listened to lectures from academics at the university. At the end of the day, students enjoyed a performance from local rap and hip-hop artist, Kay Greyson, who spoke about her experiences growing up in the region and how her music is an expression of those experiences.

*The following pages present some of the examples of individuals and events that students studied during the day. Readers are invited to read each of the examples and consider how they are connected, explore the ways in which the North East has intersected with the transatlantic freedom struggle and reflect on the duality of Geordie cultural confidence; how the region has exhibited both cultures of welcome and of hate.*

### Editors

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# Charles Grey

**Charles Grey's political career was noted from the start for his advocacy of civil and religious liberty and support for parliamentary reform. This was ironic in view of his uncontested election to the seat of Northumberland at the age of 22 in 1786, made possible by the influence of his father.**

On 6th May 1793, Charles Grey once again introduced a parliamentary reform bill. Grey argued that one of the basic principles established by the Glorious Revolution of 1688 was the freedom of elections to the House of Commons. Grey added

that "a man ought not to be governed by laws, in the framing of which he had not a voice, either in person or by his representative, and that he ought not to be made to pay any tax to which he should not have consented in the same way."

In 1806, Charles Grey became leader of the Whig section of the government. Grey then became Foreign Secretary and leader of the House of Commons and was responsible for the act abolishing the African Slave Trade.

As Prime Minister, Grey presided over the passing of an act for the abolition of slavery in the colonies and the 1833 Factory Act.

# Martin Luther King

**Martin Luther King visited Newcastle University on November 13th 1967 where he was awarded an honorary degree. As part of the degree ceremony he gave a speech...**

"There are three urgent and indeed great problems that we face not only in the United States of America but all over the world today. That is the problem of racism, the problem of poverty and the problem of war and the things that I have been trying to do in our struggle at home and in the struggle that is taking place all over the world has been to deal forthrightly and in depth with these great and grave problems that pervade our world..."

And finally, there can be no separate black path to power and fulfilment that does not intersect white routes and there can be no separate white path to power



and fulfilment short of social disaster that does not recognise the necessity of sharing that power with coloured aspirations for freedom and human dignity. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation, and of all the nations

of the world, into a beautiful speed up the day when all over the world justice will roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream."



# Ida Wells

**Ida Wells, the daughter of a carpenter, was born in Holly Springs, Mississippi, in 1862. Her parents were slaves before the family achieved freedom in 1865.**

On 9th March, 1892, three African American businessmen were lynched in Memphis. When Ida wrote an article condemning the lynchers, a white mob destroyed her printing press.

By the time Wells came to Newcastle in 1894 she was a well-established anti-lynching campaigner.

Wells spoke at a chapel in Brunswick Place and at a Baptist Church in Ryehill. She horrified her audiences with tales of racial violence in the South, how her anti-lynching newspaper had been attacked and how she had been forced to escape her home town. She received sympathy and support from the local press.

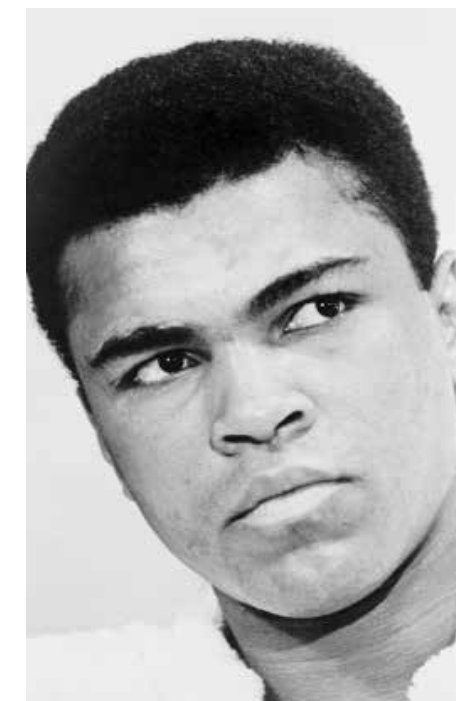


# Muhammad Ali

**In 1977, boxing legend and Heavyweight Champion of the World, Muhammad Ali, came to Tyneside.**

Ali and wife, Veronica, visited a mosque in South Shields to have their marriage blessed. Ali came to the region on the invitation of ex South Shields Boxer, Johnny Walker. He had flown to America to ask Ali in person if he would come on the visit. Walker arrived unannounced in America and rang Muhammad Ali's ranch, after hearing how far he'd travelled, a limousine was sent to collect him and he was greeted at the ranch by Ali himself.

He flew into Newcastle Airport and spent four days visiting the area to raise money for local boys' boxing clubs. Grainger Park Boxing Club was one of the places he visited, shaking hands and sparring with many of the young boxers.



# Anna and Ellen Richardson



**Quaker sisters-in-law Anna and Ellen Richardson, were crucial in the anti-slavery movement in Newcastle.**

Anna and Ellen enthusiastically raised funds and are remembered for purchasing the freedom of escaped slave and African-American social reformer, Frederick Douglass, on 5 December 1846 for £150.

Anna was active at a local level, involving herself in Bible Societies and missions aimed at the working population of Newcastle. She served as a prison visitor, worked to aid refugees, and supported the temperance movement by establishing teetotal refreshment rooms with her husband.

# Equiano



**Following his successful anti-slavery tour around Scotland in the summer of 1792, Equiano arrived in Newcastle in early September.**

His autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative*, was advertised in the local papers. One of his biographers writes: 'At least some of his twenty-eight thousand potential buyers in Newcastle were already familiar with his narrative because it was available to them through a local circulating library. Perhaps because he did not have to work as hard as elsewhere to make himself known, he had the leisure time to go '90 fathoms down St Anthony's Colliery, at Newcastle, under the river Tyne, some hundreds of yards on the Durham side.'

He did this to try and understand the cramped and dangerous conditions that miners had to deal with. Kidnapped in West Africa and sold in the slave market on Tobago, Equiano had a truly remarkable life, going on the same expedition to the Arctic as the young Horatio Nelson, and being able to buy his freedom.

Whilst in Tyneside, he advertised his book and gave a series of lectures while lodging at the Turk's Head Pub in the Bigg Market.



# William Turner

**William Turner can properly claim to be the Unitarian Minister who had a greater influence on his adopted town of Newcastle upon Tyne than any other minister in the history of the Unitarian Church.**

Over almost sixty years of ministry he involved himself in all aspects of the town's development, attracting to the Hanover Square chapel some of the most notable and eminent citizens of the day.

Turner's chapel in Hanover Square was central to the anti-slavery movement on Tyneside in the first

half of the 1800s.

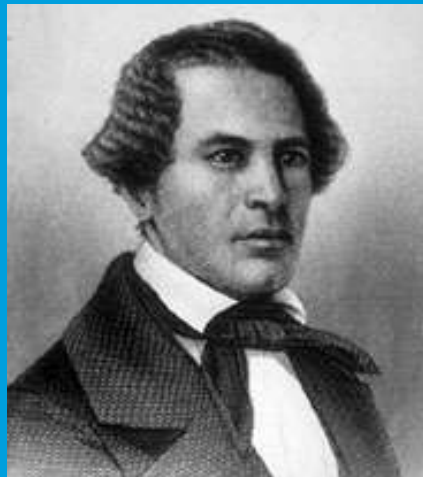
Turner set up the Literary and Philosophical Society in Newcastle in 1793. The society was made up of many reformers and one of its first accomplishments was the publication of a piece of research that used evidence to expose the true horrors of the slave trade.

# William Wells Brown

'In no place in the United Kingdom has the American Slave had warmer friends than in Newcastle' - William Wells Brown, 1852

William Wells Brown (1814 -1884) was born into slavery in America. He escaped and worked as a conductor for the Underground Rail Road before becoming a writer and famous abolitionist. Brown's autobiography, *The Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave*, was published in America in 1847. After this, he gave anti-slavery lectures in Europe which became the theme of his next book, *Three Years in Europe*. He travelled 12,000 miles in Europe

as part of an anti-slavery lecture tour addressing 1,000 meetings between 1849 and 1854 - including places in the North East such as South Shields. Whilst in Newcastle, he stayed with the Quakers, Anna and Henry Richardson, who helped to purchase his freedom. Even before Brown had left America, John Mawson of Newcastle had read about him and invited him to stay with him - which Brown did in 1849.



# Benjamin Sorsbie

**In 1808 Benjamin Sorsbie, Mayor of Newcastle, witnessed a document involving the selling of named slaves, including their future offspring, for £850 from John Howard, the nephew of a Morpeth MP, to Jacob Graham, the uncle of John Graham-Clarke. This was a trade from one Jamaican plantation to another**

**between two wealthy North East landowners.**

Ralph Carr, a Newcastle merchant, was engaged in the Atlantic trade from the Tyne in the 1720s. His ships supplied ports in North America for the domestic market but also Jamaica, Grenada and Barbados, supplying coal for the sugar boilers. They brought back both sugar cane and Jamaican pitch. Produce of Caribbean slave plantations: cocoa, coffee and sugar, supplied local coffee houses,

places where important people of the day made their business deals.

The Graham-Clarke family were linked by marriage to two old Jamaican planter families, the Barretts and Parkinsons. By 1820, John Graham-Clarke, businessman and wealthy landowner had an interest in 6 cargo ships and 13 sugar plantations in Jamaica. Sugar was processed in the refineries he owned in Newcastle and Gateshead.

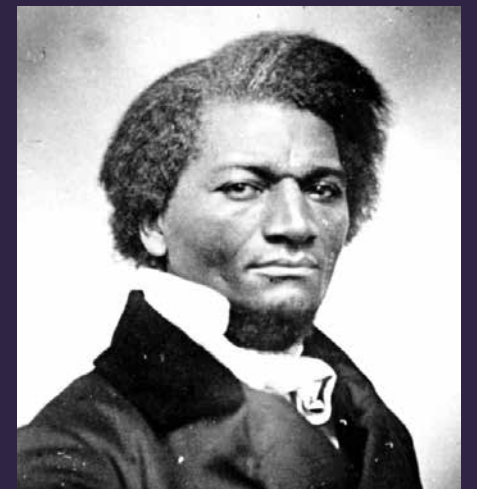
# Frederick Douglass

**Frederick Douglass escaped slavery in 1838 and became a tireless campaigner for black emancipation and racial justice, as well as advocating equal rights for women, native Americans and immigrants.**

Douglass first came to Tyneside in 1846 and, over the course of several visits, spoke in the region on at least 16 separate occasions. In Newcastle, the charismatic ex-slave met and formed a close bond with the Richardson family: Henry, his wife Anna and sister Ellen. The Richardsons were Quakers, abolitionists, and involved in peace activism and campaigns to expand the suffrage, including votes and other rights for women.

Douglass was struck by the peculiar intensity of Tyneside's anti-slavery passions. In late December 1846, he told a cheering crowd of his pleasure at seeing "so large an audience assembled for so noble a cause" and of his joy "that Newcastle had a heart that could feel for three millions of oppressed slaves in the United States".

Douglass had good reason to appreciate this local support. Over the previous few months, the Richardson family had been raising money to formally purchase his freedom. On December 12, 1846, Hugh Auld, brother of Thomas Auld, who was Douglass's nominal US master, registered the bill of manumission that officially made Douglass a free man.



# Henry Brown

**Henry Brown earned the nickname Henry 'Box' Brown after his infamous and miraculous escape attempt from slavery. Born enslaved in Richmond, Virginia in 1816, Brown endured numerous hardships at the hands of his slave-holding family.**

One day, he returned from work to find his wife and children were sold away, never to be seen again, and it was this event that acted as a catalyst in Brown's decision to flee slavery in 1849. Collaborating with a free black man in the city of Richmond, a box was constructed measuring 3 feet long by 2 feet 8 inches, and 2 feet wide for Brown to squeeze into. On the chosen day



of his escape, Brown burned his hand with acid to ensure the day off and prepared for his 27-hour long journey in the prepared box, which was mailed from Richmond, Virginia to Philadelphia. Upon reaching Philadelphia, abolitionists from the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee (who had been pre-warned of Brown's escape) received Brown's box and opened the lid. Brown clambered out and sung a freedom hymn: he was finally free.

He created a stage show about his escape, and while in England he mailed himself around the country - in what he claimed was the same box - to attract publicity. Brown performed his show, *Panorama of Slave Life*, in Newcastle and North and South Shields towards the end of 1852.

# Unrest in the North East

## 1919

**In the years leading up to and including WWI there were almost 2000 members of the black and minority ethnic community living in South Shields.**

After WWI foreign (mainly Arab) seamen found their position was changed from that of being welcome, to now being seen as unwanted guests.

The demobilisation of white British seamen and the onset of the economic depression between the wars resulted in declining employment and intense competition for jobs.

1919 saw the first serious street

violence and racial unrest in areas inhabited by foreign seamen, with attacks on Arab boarding houses and cafés.

Throughout the 1920's and 1930's popular feeling in the town seemed to be firmly against the Arabs.

A constant stream of letters to the Shields Gazette on the subject of the Arab seamen in the town shows the strength of hostility

and racial prejudice. In 1930, a dispute broke out over working practices which the Yemeni seamen felt to be discriminatory.

Fuelled by racial insults from a white worker called Hamilton, the dispute provoked another violent riot at Mill Dam in South Shields.

This time the police dealt harshly with the Arabs, using their batons on them, and attacking the men with force.



## 2015

**February 2015 - About 2,000 protesters have demonstrated against the first rally in Britain by a group opposed to what it calls the "Islamisation of Europe".**

They gathered to oppose the UK branch of German group Pegida which congregated at Newcastle's Bigg Market.

Pegida UK denied claims it was anti-Muslim and had come to "promote expression of hatred".

The counter-rally marched to Newgate Street, within sight of about 400 Pegida UK demonstrators.

Northumbria Police, which had a cordon separating the two camps, said five arrests had been made after isolated scuffles.

Leader of the counter-protest organisers, Newcastle Unites, Dipu Ahad said Pegida UK's agenda was "to promote hatred".

"Newcastle has not had an issue with extremism. Newcastle is not Islamified. So why come

to Newcastle and break our communities?"

Mr Ahad said the choice of Newcastle for Pegida UK's first rally was "bizarre", although the group said it had received "a lot of interest" from the city when it was set up.

The north-east has a proud heritage of accepting different cultures and identities and the examples on the previous pages highlight the significant role that Newcastle, as a major port city, played in the anti-slavery movement. There are considerable links between the north-east and the black freedom struggle that show the importance of the region in a trans-Atlantic context. There are, however, also examples that show the existence of prejudice and intolerance; cultures of hate as well as welcome. These are important reminders that we must continue to be vigilant and challenge xenophobia or racism in all its forms.

## Minstrel shows

In the 19th and 20th centuries Tyneside was exposed to stereotypes of African-Americans through minstrel shows.

Minstrel shows, also called minstrelsy, were an American theatrical form, founded on the comic enactment of racial stereotypes.

In 1918, Kentucky-born African-Americans, Scott and Whaley, performed in both Newcastle and Sunderland. They were later a major part of the BBC's Kentucky Minstrel show that aired from 1933-50.

## Workplace strikes



In April 1968, following Enoch Powell's infamous 'rivers of blood' speech, in which he railed against the dangers of increased immigration into Britain, 500 or so workers at the Dunlop factory in Team Valley walked out for a short strike to show their support for Powell and his ideas.

Local MP, Edgar commented: "There are no coloured people employed at the factory, but the

general feeling among the men is that they would not work with coloured staff...The men fear that the Race Relations Bill will force employers into accepting coloured workmen, displacing Englishmen. There are problems enough in this country without taking in more coloured people."

## Middlesbrough riots

In August 1961, white teenager, John Hunt, was killed in Middlesbrough in a fight with Hassan Said, an Arab seaman.

There were then three days of riots and disturbances in the area around Canon Street in Middlesbrough. This was a poor area with cheap housing where Pakistani and Arab shops served the immigrant community.

A 500-strong mob targeted the area's Taj Mahal café that was run

by a white English lady who was married to a Pakistani man.

The Taj Mahal was set on fire by the mob that were led by ringleader, Mr. Mulreany. Mulreany had been present when John Hunt was stabbed by Hasan Said and had promised to take revenge by attacking the Taj Mahal.

Police reports suggested that Mulreany may have had a hand in provoking Hasan Said in the original incident with John Hunt.





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