

Institution: University College London
Unit of Assessment: 30 – History
Title of case study: Engaging with the legacies of British slave-ownership
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Professor Catherine Hall and her team have instigated a high-profile public debate about British slave-ownership and its long-term influence on British society, economy, politics and culture. The team's research results have been shared with a wide audience through an intense programme of public engagement, including a number of exhibitions, and extensive media coverage in the UK and abroad, as well as indirectly through an acclaimed work of popular fiction. Above all, their research has been made publicly available via an online Encyclopaedia of British Slave-ownership which has encouraged non-academic users to pursue their own research and make active contributions to the project.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Catherine Hall, Professor of Modern British Social and Cultural History at UCL since 1998, has been a prime mover in the establishment of the 'New Imperial History', which argues for the centrality of Empire in the formation of modern Britain and for the necessity of considering metropole and colony in a single analytical frame [a]. Within this context, Professor Hall and her research associates, Dr Nicholas Draper and Dr Keith McClelland, conducted the ESRC-funded project <i>Legacies of British Slave-ownership</i> (1/6/2009–31/5/2012) which established a wider empirical base for research on colonial slave-ownership and substantiated its economic, political and cultural impact on metropolitan Britain.</p> <p><i>Legacies of British Slave-ownership</i> has used the records of the £20m paid in compensation to slave-owners in 1833 for the loss of their 'property' as a starting-point for documenting the c.46,000 individual claims and awards made to those who either owned slaves or benefitted indirectly from ownership. The result is an online <i>Encyclopaedia of British Slave-ownership</i> [b], launched in February 2013, which gives the amounts of compensation awarded to each of the named claimants and establishes the life-trajectories of the c. 3,000 absentee slave-owners in Britain. The legacies of these beneficiaries and their descendants are traced through six strands – commercial and financial continuities (e.g. the compensation money that went into banking, insurance and railways); cultural and institutional legacies (e.g. philanthropic endeavours and collections of artefacts); political affiliations and associational networks created by recipients of slave compensation; historical lineages and memories of slavery (e.g. the national, familial and local histories produced); imperial legacies across the wider circuits of Empire; physical legacies in the built environment (from country houses to urban development).</p> <p>The project's overall finding is that British colonial slave-ownership was of far greater significance to metropolitan Britain's economy, society, polity and culture than has previously been recognised, and that its importance continued beyond the period of Emancipation. A comprehensive approach and the construction of a major new dataset allowed the team to move beyond the case-study approach to provide a systematic account of slave-ownership which strongly supports the view that empire was constitutive of modern Britain, a thesis which has remained highly contested [c, d]. As part of the project, Draper has significantly modified the 'decline' thesis of the decay of the West Indian slave-economy after the abolition of the slave-trade in 1807 by identifying the rise of a new planter class in Britain connected with British Guiana [e]. Among other major research contributions, the team has traced the continuing importance of slave-owners in the development of new sectors of the City of London, especially in the development of the financial structures of the settler colonies and in a commercial 'swing east' by former slave-owners; they have demonstrated the role of slave-owners and their immediate families in the rewriting of slavery after Emancipation to re-denominate the slave-owners as the victims of Emancipation; and they have shown the re-incorporation of the slave-owners into the mainstream of British politics of the 1850s and 1860s, both developments contributing to the 'racial turn' in British thinking in the third quarter of the nineteenth century [f].</p>

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3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[a] Catherine Hall, *Civilising subjects: metropole and colony in the English imagination* (Cambridge, 2002). Winner of the American Historical Association's Forkosch Prize for British History and the Reece Prize for imperial history. Available on request.

[b] *Legacies of British Slave-ownership* (2013) www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs. Website.

[c] Catherine Hall and Keith McClelland (eds.), *Race, nation and empire: making histories 1750 to the present* (Manchester, 2010).

Published by prominent academic publisher, with contributions from many distinguished scholars. Available on request.

[d] Nicholas Draper, *The price of Emancipation: slave-ownership, compensation and British society at the end of slavery* (Cambridge, 2010).

Winner of the Whitfield Prize. Available on request.

[e] Nicholas Draper, 'The rise of a new planter class? : some countercurrents from British Guiana and Trinidad, 1807–33', *Atlantic Studies* 9.1 (January 2012), 65–83.

Peer-reviewed journal. DOI: [10.1080/14788810.2012.636996](https://doi.org/10.1080/14788810.2012.636996).

[f] Catherine Hall, 'Troubling memories: nineteenth-century histories of the slave trade and slavery', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 21 (December 2011), 147–69.

Peer-reviewed journal. Submitted to REF 2.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Legacies of British Slave-ownership (LBS) had an immediate and highly visible impact on public debate. A dramatic example was the response to its findings about the extent to which the prosperity of the City of London, including some of its most distinguished firms, was built on money awarded as compensation to slave-owners. From the moment the project was launched in 2009, this discovery attracted much media attention, including a front-page story in the *Financial Times* which drew largely on research underpinning Draper's book [d]. The media coverage elicited public statements from merchant bank N. M. Rothschild and law-firm Freshfields acknowledging the findings of the project and expressing regret for their past associations with slavery. Draper was invited to meet with senior managers at Freshfields to talk about the project's discoveries and their implications for the firm's view of its own history and McClelland was invited to address the Black and Asian employee group of BP. As a further result of this research, the Royal Bank of Scotland changed their Historical Research Report, 'Predecessor Institutions Research Regarding Slavery and the Slave Trade' to include directors of the bank and its British predecessors who were awarded slave compensation but had previously not been identified as connected to slavery [1].

The project also attracted the interest of acclaimed author Andrea Levy, whose novel *The Long Song* makes extensive and fully acknowledged use of Hall's research [a]. The novel – shortlisted for the 2010 Booker Prize, longlisted for the 2010 Orange Prize for Fiction, a finalist for the 2011 Commonwealth Writers Prize and named as a 2010 *New York Times* Most Notable book – aimed 'to instil pride in anyone with slave ancestors' and has been widely lauded for its ability to evoke the plight of slaves and their relationships with slave-owners. Levy further acknowledged the importance of the LBS project to her work by giving a public reading and speaking at the Neale conference organised by members of the team in March 2012 [2].

To enhance the reach and significance of the project's impact on public awareness and debate, members of the team have spoken to very many diverse organisations and groups about the project and its work. Most importantly, the team organised workshops (6 in 2010, 2 in 2012) in London, Glasgow, Newcastle, Liverpool, Birmingham and Bristol which ensured that members of the public could participate in the research process, sharing ideas and findings. Around 220 people attended, mostly local and family historians from outside academia, librarians, school teachers, museum professionals and community activists. These workshops outlined the findings of the LBS project, focusing on the relevant region or city, and then gave independent researchers the opportunity to talk about their work before opening up the sessions to collective discussion. The feedback forms distributed after each workshop revealed an overwhelmingly positive response. Participants wrote that what they learned was useful to understanding their own family history:

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'Good to have input that makes me think'; 'Will add a new dimension to my local history research'. School teachers commented on the benefit to their work: 'As a teacher it is always useful to know or learn of different approaches to teaching Black History... the topics, relevant, very enlightening'; 'As a school teacher, this information is vital – knowledge of oneself + history of surroundings helps to promote self-value & sense of worth'. Many feedback forms stressed the events' inclusivity and diversity (22 of 97) and their usefulness in helping participants network and make new contacts (23 of 97) [3].

The LBS team created two exhibitions based on research towards the *Encyclopaedia* [b]. 'The Slavers of Harley Street' at the Museum of London in Docklands in 2008–9 was widely reviewed in the local press with all commentators noting that the exhibition enabled them to view the history of the area in a new light: 'new research reveals a sinister side to the noble street that will send shockwaves through consulting rooms and operating theatres across Marylebone' (*West End Extra*); 'lifts the lid on London's middle class investments in slavery, dispelling the myth that the archetypal slave-owner was sitting on a porch in the Caribbean surveying his plantations' (*Ethnic Now*). The Museum of London in Docklands received nearly 159,000 visitors during this year, one-third more than expected. A group of emerging film-makers produced a film inspired by the exhibition: according to a Museum of London Docklands Inclusion Officer, 'it was a subject they knew very little about and their inspiration came from the Museum and gallery space enabling them to produce a touching and informed film'. Draper was invited to give a public lecture on the exhibition at the Museum of London Docklands, which also led to an invitation for him to give a talk to the Marylebone Local History Society in April 2010; the findings presented in his lecture were described as 'quite astonishing' in their newsletter [4].

A second exhibition, 'The Slave-owners of Bloomsbury', was created at UCL to commemorate Black History Month in 2011. An updated version was on display at the Archives Centre in Holborn Library in 2012; after receiving positive feedback from members of the public, library staff transferred the exhibition to the public lending section, ensuring a higher public footfall [5].

The LBS team are also active members of the Facebook groups *Jamaican Colonial Heritage Society* and *Coming to the Table* which have a combined membership of over 2,500 people. The project has its own blog and produces a monthly newsletter with over 200 subscribers [6].

Finally, a very substantial impact in terms of both reach and significance is achieved by the online *Encyclopaedia of Slave-ownership* [b], launched on 28 February 2013. Crucial to its success is its accessibility and usability for the general public. Visitors to the site can search for individuals by surname, forename, age, address, religion, occupation, by level of wealth, by size of slave-ownership, by colony and estate name for each holding or by an open search of the freeform notes – and therefore easily access the data according to the users' wide variety of interests. The team organised a major publicity drive so that a wide audience would become aware of the *Encyclopaedia* and its possible relevance to them. All members gave interviews to the press and the launch of the website was discussed in over 60 broadcasts and publications with a reach of 20 million people, including national and international media – e.g. the *Today* programme on BBC Radio 4 or the *Jamaican Voice* newspaper – but also regional media focusing on the relevance of the project for specific areas. For example, Hall gave an interview to Radio Solent and *This is Plymouth* published a piece on Devon's links to slavery [7].

The *Encyclopaedia* had 137,998 visits from 108,022 unique visitors between the launch in February and 31 July 2013 [8]. The news spread quickly through online shares, likes and tweets. For example, the *Independent on Sunday* article of 28/2 was shared 26,000 times and received over 1,000 comments. Bloggers reported on the broad scope of the project – for example the British GENES blog (which first picked up a tweet about the project from Dianne Abbott MP) – but also used our search functions to report on specific interests – for example, a blog on the Ekklesia website which discussed slave-owning clergymen [8]. Between February and July 2013, the LBS project received and replied to over 500 emails from members of the public, the great majority from descendants of slave-owners and the enslaved. Some e-mails reported personal reactions, many contributed additional information on individuals in the database, and many led to a long correspondence [9]. On numerous occasions the team was able to provide information on ways in which people can pursue their own research beyond the *Encyclopaedia*. Conversely, the *Encyclopaedia* was enriched by their input: over 330 entries in the database [10] now present

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information contributed by members of the public, and 30 to 40 links to other people's websites have been added as a way of providing access to more detailed information.

In sum, the LBS project has not only made its research available to large numbers of people through a wide range of media but helped thousands of non-academics to conduct their own historical investigations. In doing so, it has succeeded in making the legacies of slave-ownership a topic of engaged and informed public debate.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[1] Impact on City firms: *Financial Times* 27/28 June 2009 pp. 1, 3 (and www.ft.com/slavery), and 1 July 2009, p. 4 for Freshfields and Rothschild statements. Royal Bank of Scotland, *Historical Research Report, Predecessor Institutions Research Regarding Slavery and the Slave Trade* (May 2006, updated May 2009): <http://bit.ly/1b412iL> [PDF]; *Glasgow Sunday Herald*, 19 December 2010, p. 13 (<http://bit.ly/eqyhZl>) and p. 11 in 'Opinion' supplement (<http://bit.ly/hcPIMe>). Indicative list of media coverage at <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/project/media>.

[2] Acknowledgement of Catherine Hall in Andrea Levy, *The Long Song* (London, 2010), p. 310; available on request.

Reviews of *The Long Song*: *Sunday Telegraph*, 20/01/2010: <http://bit.ly/bKyKEZ>; *Guardian*, 07/02/2010: <http://bit.ly/aHXLNx>; evidence of impact on the public in reviews on Amazon: <http://amzn.to/17gyvm1>.

Programme of the Neale colloquium including Levy's attendance available on request.

[3] Details of workshops on the LBS events page: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/project/events>. Discussion of one workshop in *North East Slavery & Abolition Group ENewsletter* No. 9, September 2010: <http://bit.ly/19ac5aJ> [PDF]. Other talks, e.g. UCL Lunch Hour Lecture. 'What does London owe to slavery?', 26 October 2010 (<http://bit.ly/GRfaSI>). Feedback dossier from workshops available on request.

[4] Examples of local press coverage: "'Street of Shame": Harley Street's links to the slave trade are examined in a surprising new exhibition', *Marylebone Journal*, 1 February 2009; available on request. 'Slavers of Harley Street' exhibit at Museum of London in Docklands, *Ethnic Now*, November 2008: <http://bit.ly/17gzdzM>. 'Before doctors, Harley Street was floating on "slave money"', *Camden New Journal*, 14 November 2008, p. 5: <http://bit.ly/1e4hnFU>. Museum visitor figures <http://bit.ly/1e8evrx> [PDF] (p. 2). Film makers: Museum of London Docklands Inclusion Officer's personal testimony available at <http://bit.ly/1er77rz>. Draper's lecture: 'Marylebone's connections to slavery', *St Marylebone Society's Newsletter*, No. 329, Summer 2010; available on request.

[5] Corroborating statement from the Archives Officer at Holborn Library available on request.

[6] Blog: <http://lbsatucl.wordpress.com/>. Newsletter subscriber list available on request.

[7] Examples of national media coverage: *Independent on Sunday*, 24 February 2013, pp. 22–23, 'Britain's colonial shame: slave-owners given huge payouts after Abolition' <http://ind.pn/YMtAGQ>. *Today*, BBC Radio 4, 27 February 2013, Catherine Hall interviewed by James Naughty, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-21598782>. *The Voice*, 25 February 2013, 'David Cameron's ancestors received slavery compensation', <http://bit.ly/XcHVgy>. *The Plymouth Herald*, 28 February 2013, 'How Plymouth turned its back on slavery in 1833', <http://bit.ly/Wr10yX>.

[8] Google Analytics report available on request. British GENES, 27 February 2013, 'Legacies of British Slave-ownership', <http://bit.ly/1fdlltz>. *Ekklesia*, 27 February 2013, 'New research reveals how clergy claimed compensation for slave ownership', <http://bit.ly/V8Nb6f>.

[9] Selected e-mail correspondence available on request.

[10] E.g. <http://bit.ly/17nmonf> (slave-owner, and former slave, Laurencine Whiteman identified by a correspondent); another correspondent provided new information about six of her ancestors including Susanna Fletcher Ingram (<http://bit.ly/1e8SpVU>) and Benjamin Travers (<http://bit.ly/16RDv7f>), and in the process corrected a mistake in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.