

## **Parallel Views: Black History in Richmond exhibition, research and learning project**

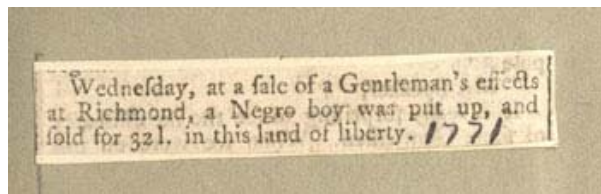
This project, generously supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund as part 2007 bicentenary commemorations, provided a fantastic opportunity for us to develop and deliver an exhibition and learning programmes around the local area's more diverse heritage. The exhibition and its associated community engagement programme explored the relevance of the bicentenary anniversary for communities in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, uncovering local associations with slavery and its abolition. It also told the parallel story of slavery in our twin town Richmond, Virginia, USA.

### **Process**

#### **Research and development**

Preliminary research began in summer 2006, through conversations with local heritage sector partners and historians. We took as our starting point the idea that, as a fashionable and affluent area close to London, individuals living in Richmond upon Thames were likely to have had involvement in the slave trade as well as in the abolition campaign. We felt that it was important for our exhibition to focus upon these specific local links rather than replicating more general exhibitions being delivered on a larger scale elsewhere. While confident that we would be able to uncover local links to slavery and abolition, at this stage we could not be sure of the nature or extent of what we would find - further research would be necessary. At the same time, we met with a representative from Richmond Virginia, USA, to investigate the possibility of including material from our twin town in the exhibition. We felt this had the potential to broaden the scope of our exhibition without losing the specific 'local' focus, allowing us to investigate the transatlantic impact of the 1807 act by using our twin town as a case study.

During autumn 2006, we used initial research findings as the basis for public consultation, attending Black History Month events around the borough with informal taster displays to engage people in the project and open up dialogue about how Richmond should mark 2007 and what kinds of information or material people would be interested to see in an exhibition on the subject. At this stage, we also began to recruit interested people to take part in future steering group discussions. At the same time, we carried out some focussed consultation with local teachers to help us understand what they would like from an exhibition. This consultation ran alongside the first stage of the community research project, as we publicised the fact that we were researching Richmond's hidden links to the slave trade and abolition and asked people to help us by coming forward with ideas, suggestions and information.



Cutting from Gentleman's Magazine, 1771



Above: Community research project

Below: KS3 documentary project at Grey Court School

Research continued as we awaited the outcome of our HLF bid, with community historians and others coming forward with a number of leads to be followed up and a volunteer research intern working on the project. On receipt of confirmation from HLF, we were able to commence detailed planning and research, as well as more extensive consultation and the first of our education projects. Working with a professional broadcast journalist, Year 8 pupils from Grey Court School in Ham took part in a series of workshops investigating the slave trade in Richmond upon Thames and Richmond Virginia before making a short documentary about what they had learnt, to be included in the exhibition and shown to students in Richmond Virginia.



Research continued with the assistance of local voluntary sector historians and the newly recruited exhibition intern, a student from a BME background who received an internship bursary as part of the Parallel Views project. Research allowed us to identify relevant material in our own Borough Art Collection and Richmond Local Studies Collection, while working with curators and archivists across London and in Richmond Virginia allowed us to source supplementary material for digital reproduction within the exhibition. We were particularly indebted to heritage sector partners in Richmond Virginia in helping us develop the American section of the exhibition, which allowed us to highlight the fact that the 1807 act (and its equivalent 1808 act in the United States), while outlawing the transatlantic trade, actually resulted in an increased in the internal U.S. slave trade so that more people were bought and sold in Richmond Virginia after 1807 than before.

Throughout the process of research and development, we shared our ideas with those who had expressed an interest in the project through discussion sessions and conversations.



To complement the exhibition, our team of garden volunteers planted a selection of crops grown on plantations including sugar cane, cotton and tobacco. This planting provided an excellent resource for school groups learning about the triangular trade.

## The Exhibition

The exhibition opened on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2007 and ran throughout the summer, finishing on 30<sup>th</sup> September.

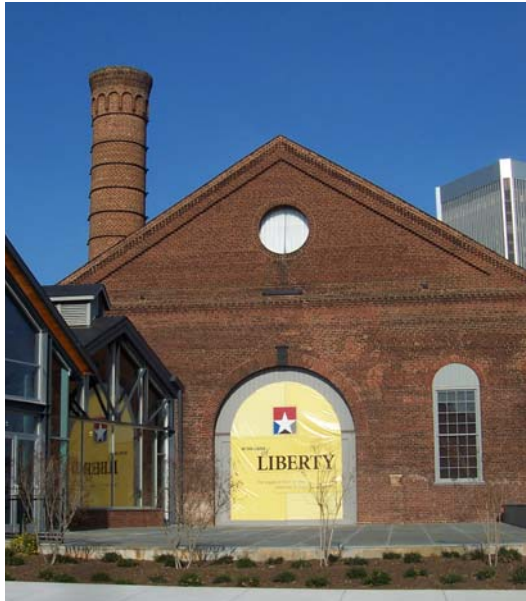


The main body of the exhibition took a thematic approach to the answer the question 'What has the slave trade got to do with us?' *Black History in Richmond?* examined evidence of individuals of African origin who had come to Richmond through the mechanism of the slave trade – some working in domestic service in local properties, others such as Ignatius Sancho contributing to the abolition

campaign. Within this section, a film piece by choreographer and dance historian Dr. Rodriguez King-Dorset explored the use of dance within the free black community in London during the era of abolition. *Profiting from the Slave Trade* focused upon evidence of local individuals with financial links to slavery and the slave trade (whether slave traders, plantation owners, or investors), and how the wealth they acquired allowed them to shape the borough as we know it. Carl Gabriel's sculpture complemented this section, drawing attention to the economic links between consumers in Richmond and the conditions of production of slave-grown crops. *Local Opinion* looked at how local people, including politicians, royalty and literary figures, contributed to the abolition debates on either side.







Upstairs, the story of slavery, slave trading and eventual abolition in Richmond Virginia was examined in *Slavery and Abolition in Richmond Virginia: A Parallel View*. *A Society Built on Slavery* explored the origins of slavery in colonial Virginia, while *Abolition of the Slave Trade? Slave trading in Richmond after 1808* looked at the continuation of the slave trade in Richmond Virginia in the decades after the 1807 act, investigating the more complex outcomes of this act which actually led to an increase in the slave trade within the United States. *Slavery in the City: Life and Work for Richmond's Enslaved Population*

looked at the nature of slavery in the urban, industrial setting of Richmond, while *Escaping Slavery: Rewards, Resistance, Rebellion* told the story of resistance to slavery in Richmond. *Ending Slavery: Civil War and Emancipation in Richmond* covered the eventual abolition of slavery in Richmond, and its enduring legacy. Within this section, the documentary created by Grey Court pupils was on display as well as press cuttings relating to debates concerning statements of regret or apology made by various politicians on both sides of the Atlantic. Visitors were also invited to find out more about the exhibition themes in a reading area or to contribute their responses by adding postcards to an ideas wall.



## Education and Learning

Parallel Views was conceived as an entire package of exhibition, research and education projects, with opportunities for learning integral throughout the process of exhibition development.

We involved local people in the development of exhibition content in a number of ways. Through an awareness-raising campaign in the local press and at Richmond Local Studies Collection, we asked people researching their own family or house histories to look out for relevant material. This allowed us to gather information, but also served to raise public awareness of the existence of less familiar, diverse histories waiting to be uncovered in our area.

In addition to this general awareness campaign, we ran a number of specific projects providing opportunities for target groups to contribute to the exhibition

## Film marks slave trade

School pupils have turned journalists to investigate the abolition of the slave trade on its 200th anniversary.

Pupils at Grey Court School have been making a special documentary to explore the significance of the bicentenary of the Slave Trade Abolition Act.

Year eight students have been working with journalist and ex-pupil Joe Inwood, and staff from Orleans House Gallery, to create a documentary sharing their thoughts and feelings about the slave trade.

Pupils learned the tricks of the trade, trying their hands at filming, interviewing and presenting. They also carried out a research mission, discovering local links to the slave trade that have been uncovered during the gallery's research in preparation for the forthcoming exhibition *Parallel views: Black History in Richmond*, which will explore slave trade links across the borough and in the twin town of Richmond, Virginia, USA.

Members of the public will be able to view the film during the exhibition, which runs from June 30 to September 30.

Councillor Malcom Eady, cabinet member for children's services and education at Richmond Council, said: "The slave trade was a significant chapter in our history and it's hugely important for young people to debate its lasting legacy.

"The making of this documentary has been a fantastic way to continue the debate and also an opportunity to learn new skills in filming, interviewing and debating.

"I suspect I may have seen the work of some future documentary makers."

development. Creating a documentary with pupils from Grey Court school, a secondary school in one of the borough's deprived wards, provided an inspirational insight into the themes of the exhibition not only for the participating pupils but for the many young people who saw the documentary in the exhibition. As well as learning about local links to the slave trade, pupils took part in 'Question Time' style debates and learnt from a professional about the various processes involved in making a documentary, including planning, scripting, interviewing, talking to camera and filming.



Above: Grey Court pupils planning documentary  
Left: Press cutting reporting on the documentary project

We also wanted to involve participants from our targeted family learning programme in the development of the exhibition. During the months preceding the exhibition, we commissioned carnival artist Carl Gabriel to work with local families to create a 'mas' piece to explore the themes of the exhibition. Over a series of workshops, families helped Carl to design and create a sculpture which highlighted the slave-produced commodities, such as sugar and coffee, which people in Richmond would have consumed, reminding exhibition visitors that in addition to individual financial links to the slave trade, many people in Richmond would have been economically linked to slavery through the consumption of these crops.

We were particularly pleased that these workshops attracted high percentages of participants from two of our target groups for family learning provision, BME families and fathers and male carers. Of those participating in the two free family workshops, 34% (workshop 1) and 37.5% (workshop 2) were from non white-British backgrounds. Within the borough population, these groups make up only 12%, so this figure reflects our success at creating a family learning event which appealed to these audiences. We hope that the workshop will provide an effective 'stepping stone' for these participants to



begin accessing our exhibitions programme. 30% (workshop 1) and 43% (workshop 2) of the adults participating in the activity were male. Fathers and male carers are a target group within our local family learning provision, and have been identified as a priority by Campaign for Learning. Currently only 8% of adults taking part in Family Learning programmes nationwide are male, so the number of fathers learning with their children during this workshop was well above average. In terms of encouraging these more diverse audiences to discover our ongoing exhibitions and education programmes, 86% (workshop 1) and 100% (workshop 2) said that they intended to return to the gallery to see the final piece in the exhibition.



Taking part in Carl's workshop

Alongside the exhibition development, the research findings relating to Richmond's links to the slave trade and abolition were used to inform a (separately funded) dance residency commission taking place at Hampton Community College, Richmond's performing arts specialist status college. Pupils worked with dance company Upswing to create a site specific promenade performance to bring to life the stories of the slave trade in our local landscape. The piece, *Homebringing*, was performed in the gallery grounds, introducing a large audience to the themes of the exhibition. Using dance, music and promenade to situate these stories physically in the landscape reinforced these ideas as well as encouraging the young people involved in the project and their families to explore the river landscape. As one visitor commented, "Thanks for an inspiring event today. It was brave to try, and worked well. Acting out historical events makes them so meaningful for actors and audience, and touched every heart." More information about the commission can be found at <http://www.upswingaerial.co.uk/homebringing/>.



Midnite Robber costume created during summer workshops

During the exhibition, we delivered a range of activities for adults and children to enrich opportunities for learning. These included school workshops supporting national curriculum programmes of study for history and art and design for primary and secondary, including special needs and pupils referral units, as well as CPD for local teachers. During the summer holidays, we delivered a number of artist-led workshops for children and young people creating work in response to the displays, including a carnival costume piece which was subsequently included in the exhibition. For adults, we offered a range of practical workshops responding to the exhibition as well as talks and exhibition tours.

Since the exhibition ended, a smaller version has toured to local authority and community events during Black History Month and all borough schools have received a specially created 'What has the slave trade got to do with us?' teaching resource explaining the borough's links to slavery and abolition. Carl Gabriel's sculpture has been relocated to Richmond's Civic Centre where hundreds of members of the public can experience it every day.



Pupils at Strand on the Green school taking part in an outreach workshop



Carl's piece on display at the Civic Centre, Twickenham

## **Legacy**

The Parallel Views project gave us an excellent opportunity to explore our local area's hidden history and bring together information about Richmond's links to slavery, the slave trade and abolition. This information will have an ongoing impact upon how our local histories are understood and presented, particularly in relation to national and global histories. In addition, the more collaborative approach to exhibition development involving members of the local community in research and steering is becoming an ongoing feature of our curatorial practice.

Research findings relating material in our permanent collection to global histories will be added to our collections management records, ensuring that this information is not lost and remains readily available to anyone researching or presenting these objects in the future. This will take place as part of a current project working with the Museum of London through MLA London and the London Museums Hub to apply the Revisiting Collections methodology to our collection. Revisiting Collections seeks to broaden out the categories of data we collect and record about objects in our collections. Already, information uncovered as part of the *Parallel Views* research project has been used in exhibition labels for our current exhibition, *Orleans House: A History*, and is being incorporated in our new heritage display to be installed in the North Stables café as part of our current HLF-funded development.

In addition, the history of Richmond's involvement in slavery and abolition contained within the exhibition text will be available in our online exhibition archive. We are also working with the Twickenham Museum to create an article for their local history website, which is used by people all over the world interested in the history of our area. Text and images from the exhibition, as well as an interview with the curator, will form part of an archive created by researchers at the University of York collating responses to the 2007 bicentenary from across the U.K. (for more details, see <http://www.history.ac.uk/1807commemorated/>).

A teaching resource for local schools, '*What has the slave trade got to do with us?*', has been created and distributed to primary and secondary schools to support local teachers in relating the history of the slave trade to local history. A workshop focusing on this topic, developed during the exhibition, remains available as part of our core provision and has been successfully delivered as outreach to over 300 school children since the end of the exhibition.

Following the exhibition, the gallery has been invited to take part in *Understanding Freedom*, an initiative co-ordinated by MLA London to develop teaching resources for KS3 teachers examining Britain and the Slave Trade. We are also taking part in Learning Links, a citizenship-focused teacher placement scheme administered by MLA London. We are working with Lampton School, a humanities specialist status school in Hounslow, on a history and citizenship project involving KS3 students in researching Hounslow's links to the slave trade and abolition and creating a learning resource for KS2 students.

We hope that the exhibition may also have a legacy in our twin town, Richmond Virginia. 2008 will mark the bicentenary of an equivalent law in the United States outlawing participation in the transatlantic slave trade, and we hope that some aspect of the exhibition content may be used to help mark this anniversary in Richmond VA.



Reconciliation Statue in Richmond, VA



## Outcomes

### Visitor figures

July	1934
August	2127
September	2176
<b>Total</b>	<b>6237</b>

### Learner numbers

School visits	2 (PRS) + 20 (St Richards with St Andrews) + 8 (Oldfield) + 20 (Unicorn) + 10 (sunflower Montessori Parallel Views) + 360 (Strand on the Green Parallel Views) <b>= 421</b>
School projects	503 (HCC landscape dance) + 56 (Grey Court) <b>= 559</b>
Children's activities	Parallel Views summer holiday workshops <b>= 174</b>
Parallel Views Adult programme	14 (consultation) + 12 (life drawing) + 8 (print making) + 5 (Uncanny) + 2 (tour) + 100 (Barnes and Mortlake talk) + 8 (Barnes and Mortlake visit) + 10 (Bridge adult tour) + 30 (BME Carers event) + 250 (York House event) <b>= 439</b>
CPD	<b>50</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>= 1643</b>



## Visitor feedback

Responses recorded in our Visitor Book were generally very positive; they are recorded below, organised in line with the Generic Learning Outcomes identified within MLA's Inspiring Learning For All framework.

## Knowledge and Understanding

*Eye-opening – very interesting exhibition – congratulations.*

*It's important to realise that the slave trade benefited people from the Richmond area.*

*Very interesting.*

*Very interesting + informative.*

*Content very impressive and interesting – well done.*



Colston Road, East Sheen, named after local slave trader and philanthropist, Edward Colston

*Excellent exhibition that effectively shows the linkages between the prosperity of the white in the UK and the slave trade. The riverside painting showing those who benefited from the slave trade (including Alexander Pope) was especially touching and insightful. Very effective research.*

*So interesting.*

*Absolutely fascinating, a revelation – all that research! Well worth the time (1 hour).*



Tomb of plantation owner John Greg, Hampton

*Interesting and different to see.*

*Very interesting – thank you.*

*Very interesting – Thank you.*

*Fascinating historical exhibition.*

*Very informative and enlightening. Written accounts and historical details extremely interesting. Well worth a visit.*

*Wholly engrossing and informative.*

*Very informative and interesting. Guide book would be useful!*

*Excellent educational exhibition – especially good to show the impact in both Richmonds. Especially good to hear slavery and its impact being explained to school children at end of my visit. A guide book would be nice, but I hope the exhibition text folders will be available to the public in the future.*

*A very informative and moving exhibition – many thanks. Well done.*

### **Attitudes and Values**

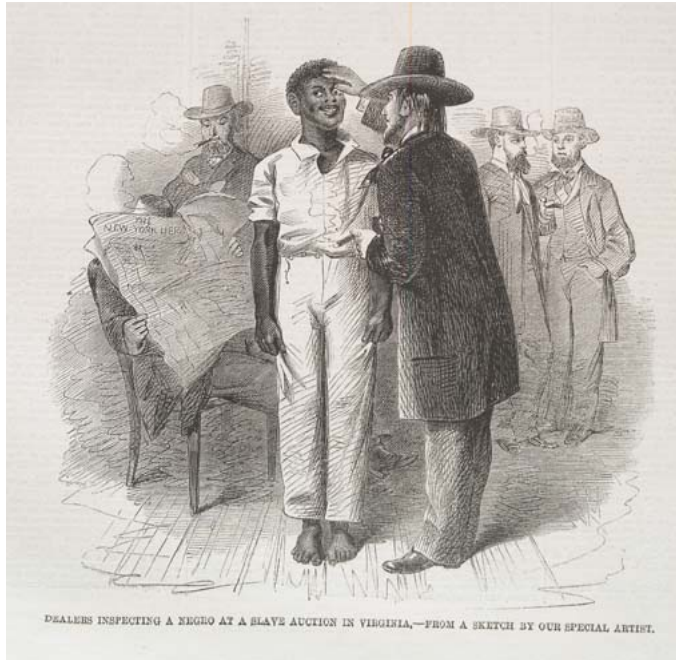
*Very thought provoking exhibition and well worth the visit.*

*Fascinating – very sad in lots of ways. Well done!*

*Yes! Very thought provoking. Thank God it's not done now.*

*It's sad to think our beautiful borough benefited from such a cruel trade.*

*Very good exhibition. A good reminder of what results from people's greed and ignorance.*



Slave auction, Richmond Virginia (*Illustrated London News*)

*Most important exhibition. Beautifully presented. Well done! Very very interesting. Its high time we took responsibility to acknowledge our shameful history.*

*Very thought provoking and compelling.*

*A fascinating and well presented display. Very thought-provoking.*

*Well done. Informative, thought-provoking and captivating. We would love to have a catalogue of it.*

*Excellent consciousness-raising exhibition.*

*Excellent exhibition that effectively shows the linkages between the prosperity of the white in the UK and the slave trade. The riverside painting showing those who benefited from the slave trade (including Alexander pope) was especially touching and insightful. Very effective research.*

*V. interesting – different point of view.*

*Very thought-provoking.*



*Very interesting and moving.*

*Thank you. Father forgive.*

*Compelling and humbling.*

*Most important to remember history of these things.*

*Moved me to tears.*

*A very informative and moving exhibition – many thanks. Well done.*

### **Enjoyment, Inspiration, Creativity**

*Very interesting focus on individual characters. Superb carnival sculpture.*

*Inspiring exhibition. Carl Gabriel's work is beautiful.*

*Well worth the walk here to find the gallery – thank you.*

*Awesome totally cool and fascinating.*

*Very impressive architecture and enjoyed paintings – thanks.*

*The sculpture looks exciting, pretty and scary; it's colossal.*

*Fascinating – I enjoyed reading the 'underground railroad' – watching the film presentation and many other delights!*

*Of those related exhibitions I've seen – this is one of the best. The general facts are known – this is particular, local and wider. Well done.*

*Enlightening!*

### **Activity, Behaviour and Progression**

*Now want to know more about the individual slaves – fascinating.*

*Most important exhibition. Beautifully presented. Well done! Very very interesting. Its high time we took responsibility to acknowledge our shameful history.*

### **Other**

*Video sound distracting, and adult commentary more appreciated.*

*Excellent work – thanks a lot.*

*Excellent.*

## **Acknowledgements**

This exhibition was generously supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Creating the exhibition was a collaborative process, and we are indebted to many individuals and organisations who offered invaluable assistance as we set about uncovering the hidden history of our own borough and discovering the story of our twin town.

In Richmond Virginia, thanks to all who offered advice, including Bill Martin and Meg Glass at the Valentine Richmond History Center; Dr. James Kelly, Jeffrey Ruggles and Meg Eastman at the Virginia Historical Society; Mary Lauderdale at the Black History Museum and Cultural Centre; Ralph R. White at the James River Park System; Rev. Ben Campbell and Councilwoman Delores McQuinn of the Richmond Slave Trail Commission; Elvatrice Parker Belsches; Ellen and Pettus LeCompte and Rick Tatnall.

Special thanks to the many people who contributed to local research, including Jane Baxter at Richmond Local Studies Collection; Geoffrey Morgan, Anthony Beckles-Wilson and John Sheaf at the Twickenham Museum; Valerie Boyes and John Moses at the Museum of Richmond; Joy Lee and Janet Clarke; Les Stratton and Richard Ennals at the Council for Education in World Citizenship; Victoria Bradley and Gary Calland at Ham House; members of the Barnes and Mortlake History Society and of LBRUT Black Workers Support Group. Thanks above all to Dr. T. H. R. Cashmore for being the source of so many ideas.

Thanks also to exhibiting artists Sarah Braun, Carl Gabriel and Rodreguez King-Dorset; staff and pupils at Grey Court school and Joe Inwood; Exhibition Interns Natasha Nanji and Jo Wickham and everyone at Orleans House Gallery.



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