

Abolition & Local Campaigners

It was the strength of the actions and voices of people resisting and campaigning that made the difference in the Anti-Slavery Movement. Along with the revolts of enslaved Africans, local people here contributed towards the end of the slave trade. The Abolition Movement – as it became known – was working with others all around the country to transform Britain. It became Britain's first popular protest movement. Abolitionists believed that owning people as property and treating them inhumanely was wrong.

William Wilberforce, Granville Sharpe and Thomas Clarkson are usually the figures associated with this mass abolition movement. But there are many who are not remembered. Amongst those we should remember are local people from Haringey. Unknown Africans and other white people would also have joined the Anti-Slavery Movement. We remember them too although their names are unrecorded.

The Quakers

The Quakers – now known as the Religious Society of Friends – were a group of non-conformist Christians who had objected to slavery since their formation in the 1600s. Until the Tolerance Acts of 1689 and 1696 their own group had been persecuted and often imprisoned for dissenting views. The name 'Quaker' was a term of ridicule given to describe them.



Quakers were not allowed to preach or meet within a 5 mile radius of the City of London. Places like Tottenham and Highgate became homes for Quakers. A meeting-house in Southwood Lane, Highgate, is said to have been founded in 1662. George Fox, the founder of the Quakers, had visited fellow Friends in Tottenham in 1689. By 1691 the Tottenham Monthly Meeting place was formed, with a permanent Meeting House built by 1714.



In 1783, following the news of the court case of the Zong slave ship when 133 enslaved Africans were drowned, the Quakers gave a petition against the slave trade to Parliament.

William Dillwyn (1743-1824)



In 1774 William Dillwyn, an American Quaker, came to England. He was educated by the eminent scholar, Anthony Benezet, who decided that William would dedicate his life to the ending of slavery. He came to London to campaign to release slaves in this country and America. He decided to live here and joined the Tottenham Monthly Meeting in 1777. He made links with the campaigner Granville Clarke. The young Thomas Clarkson met him to learn more about the slave trade in the United States.

William Dillwyn helped establish the first Anti-Slavery Committee in London in 1787. All but three were Quakers. He was the man attributed to bringing the idea of an Anti-Slavery Movement to England from the Quakers in America. He is buried in the Quaker burial ground on Tottenham High Road.