

Timeline of Events Leading up to the Abolition of the Slave Trade

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
1735	Granville Sharp born
1759	William Wilberforce born
1765	Granville Sharp meets Jonathan Strong
1772	Case of James Somerset The outcome of the case being that any man setting foot in England immediately becomes free
1775-1783	American War of Independence
1776	Granville Sharp publishes various anti-slavery tracts
1778	Mary Sharp born
1779-1781	Zoffany Sharp family portrait painted
1783	Zong slave Ship incident
1783	James Sharp dies
1787	Wilberforce introduced to Thomas Clarkson and the growing campaign against the Slave Trade
1787	Society for Abolition of the Slave Trade formed: Granville Sharp, William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson co founders of the London committee
1788	Over 100 petitions against the slave trade presented to Parliament
1788	Dolben Act passed: tackled conditions on British slave ships
12 May 1789	Wilberforce made his first major speech on the subject of Abolition in the House of Commons, in which he put forward 12 propositions for abolition largely based on Clarkson's <i>Essay on the Impolicy of the African Slave Trade</i>
Jan 1790	Gained approval for a Parliamentary Select Committee to consider the slave trade and examine the evidence.
April 1791	Wilberforce introduced the first Parliamentary Bill, which was defeated by 163 votes to 88. Majority against the abolition: 75 (see Glos. Journal 25 Apr 1791)

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- May 1791 Granville Sharp's statement as chairman of the 'Committee of the Society instituted for the purpose of effecting the ABOLITION of the SLAVE TRADE' is published in the Glos. Journal 9 May 1791. Describes the decision of Parliament as a delay rather than a defeat. 'We will never desist from appealing to the consciences of our countrymen till the commercial intercourse with Africa shall cease to be polluted with the blood of its inhabitants.'
- From then on Wilberforce introduced a motion of favour of abolition during every session of Parliament.
- 1792 Sugar boycott
- 1792 John Sharp, Granville Sharp's brother, dies
- 26 March 1792 (The Times Newspaper p3) 'The number of petitions presented to Parliament, against the Slave Trade on the 19th, amounted to no less than 206, which is precisely double the number presented to Parliament in 1788. On 20th, 36 more were presented and about 100 more are expected.'
- April 1792 Bill defeated by Parliament: First reading in House of Commons saw 158 votes to 109. Majority against the abolition: 49. Adjourned until the following week. House of Commons then passed the Bill with 151 votes to 132. Majority for the abolition of the slave trade on 1 Jan 1796: 19. When this was then sent to the House of Lords it was blocked stating that it was too late in the session to be considered (see Glos. Journal Apr 1792)
- Feb 1793 Bill defeated by Parliament
- 1793-1798 Subject of slave trade continued to be debated in Parliament but the outbreak of war with France in 1793 prevented a more serious consideration
- 1799 Slave Trade Regulation Act passed to reduce overcrowding on slave ships
- 1800 Mary Sharp marries Thomas Baker of Uley, Gloucestershire
- 1804 Bill passed in House of commons by June but was apparently too late in the parliamentary session for it to complete its passage through the House of Lords
- 1805 Bill reintroduced, defeated on second reading. Blocked by House of Lords
- 1806 Passing of the new Foreign Slave Trade Act, which banned British subjects from aiding or participating in the slave trade to the French colonies. This effectively prohibited 2/3 of the British Slave Trade

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- 31 Jan 1807 Publication of 'A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade' formed the basis for the final phase of the campaign
- Feb 1807 Lord Grenville introduced the Bill for the abolition of the slave trade into the House of Lords. Passed by 41 votes to 20. In the House of Commons it was carried by 283 votes to 16
- 25 March 1807** Bill received royal assent
- 1807 British Act of Parliament 1807 meant that part of Sierra Leone became protected and established as a 'free-town', a settlement for former slaves of the British Empire in West Africa. With growing influence in West Africa it was able to negotiate with local Chieftains to stamp out the trading of slaves. It also imposed a £100 fine for every slave found aboard a British ship. The intention was to wipe out the trade but it continued and captains would often throw slaves into the sea to reduce the fine
- 1810 William Sharp, Granville Sharp's brother, dies
- 1812 Mary Baker nee Sharp dies
- 1813 Granville Sharp dies
- Early 1823 Wilberforce published his 'Appeal to Religion, Justice, and Humanity of the Inhabitants of the British Empire in Behalf of the Negro Slaves in the West Indies', which claimed that the moral and spiritual condition of the slaves stemmed from their slavery. Their total emancipation was not only morally and ethically justified, but also a matter of national duty before God
- 1823 Formation of the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery. Later became the Anti-Slavery Society
- 1827 Britain declared that participation in the slave trade was piracy and punishable by death
- 1827 Anti-Slavery Society formed
- 1832 The Great Reform Act introduces new Members of Parliament from groups who are more likely to oppose slavery
The Act gave the vote in towns only to men who occupied property with an annual value of £10, which excluded six adult males out of seven from the voting process. Universal suffrage, with voting rights for women (though not for those under 30), did not arrive in Britain until February 1918.

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- 1833** Abolition of Slavery Act – Britain abolishes slavery and provides for the emancipation of enslaved people in the British West Indies, to take effect in August 1834. The Act declares that the former enslaved people must serve a period of apprenticeship before receiving full emancipation. Originally this period was set at six years, but it was later reduced to four
- 29 July 1833 William Wilberforce dies three days after the bill to emancipate enslaved people is passed.
- 1 Aug 1834** Abolition of Slavery
- 1838** Abolition of the system of apprenticeship whereby slaves have to “earn” their freedom

For more information see

<http://www.nmm.ac.uk/freedom/viewTheme.cfm/theme/timeline>