

Wilberforce and the Slave Trade

William Wilberforce is the most famous British name linked to the fight against slavery. He lived here as a child and Wimbledon is proud of the connection. As an MP, William led the battle to end the slave trade, making the first Parliamentary speech about abolition in 1789.

The testimony of former slaves also played a crucial part in abolition. One of these is Olaudah Equiano, who wrote about his experiences as a slave in his book, *The Life of Olaudah Equiano*. Olaudah and seven other former slaves founded the organisation Sons of Africa, and together they campaigned to end slavery.

It took 20 years for Parliament finally to pass an act to end the slave trade, but it was not until 1833 that slavery was outlawed across the British Empire. By then, it was less central to the British economy than previously, which probably made it easier to ban.

'Olaudah Equiano Or Gustavus Vassa the African'
by Daniel Orme (1766–1837), after W. Denton;
published 1st March 1789 by G. Vassa

Watercolour of William Wilberforce (1759–1833)
by George Richmond (1809–1896), 1833

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Olaudah Equiano,
OR
GUSTAVUS VASSA,
the African.

Published March 1. 1789 by G. Vassa

