
The Scott Trust

legacies of

enslavement report

2023

**The
Scott
Trust**

Contents

1. Background p2

2. Research findings p4

3. Statement and apology

from the Scott Trust board p6

4. Our proposal for a programme

of restorative justice p8

5. Further information p11

Background

The Manchester Guardian was founded in the aftermath of the 1819 [Peterloo massacre](#) in the city, which took place after 60,000 protesters gathered at St Peter's Field to demonstrate in favour of parliamentary reform.

Having witnessed these events, in which at least 15 people died, John Edward Taylor sent reports to London to be published in the Times, and spent time following up to report on injuries suffered by victims. Taylor decided to [found a newspaper](#) that would *“zealously enforce the principles of civil and religious Liberty, in the most comprehensive sense of those terms” and “warmly advocate the cause of Reform”*. Over the next two years Taylor attracted financial backing from a number of associates, with the paper first published on 5 May 1821.

Taylor was a cotton merchant, and many of those who helped fund the new paper were similarly involved in Manchester's textile and cotton trades, which were deeply connected to the enslavement of African people in the Americas. As well as espousing the causes of civil and religious liberty and reform, his founding prospectus stated that the founders' *“commercial connexions and knowledge”* would allow the paper to report *“with accuracy and effect, the condition of Trade and its prospects, particularly as far as regards that most important branch the Cotton Manufacture”*.

Over time, the Manchester Guardian grew in stature, eventually shortening its name to the Guardian in 1959 to reflect the growing importance of national and international affairs in the newspaper, later moving its head office to London. In recent decades the Guardian has become one of the leading high-quality digital news organisations in the world.

In 2020, amid worldwide anti-racism protests and renewed calls for British institutions to examine possible historical links with slavery, the Scott Trust, the owner of the Guardian, commissioned an expert academic review to look into the Manchester Guardian's founders. Alex Graham, then chair of the Trust, wrote to Guardian News & Media staff in July 2020, saying:

“All organisations must understand and discuss their histories, and it is particularly incumbent on media organisations to do so, reflecting on their past and current positions with openness, highlighting mistakes, and facing the future with humility. [...]

We will do our best to hold ourselves to account, just as we do others, and the work will be shared with staff and our readers, once complete. It is incumbent on all of us to examine our histories, understand the injustices which have disadvantaged some and benefited others - and then act, in the present day, in ways which actively encourage progress, not hold it back.¹

¹ Alex Graham's 2020 message to staff announcing this review is published in full in the appendix of this report.

The research

The research we are publishing was conducted in three stages, from autumn 2020 until mid-2022 - first by Dr Sheryllyne Haggerty and Dr Cassandra Goptar of the University of Nottingham's [Institute for the Study of Slavery](#), and later by Goptar and Prof Trevor Burnard of the [University of Hull's Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation](#).

The initial research focused largely on John Edward Taylor's business investments and partnerships, and those of the 11 men who lent him money to found the Manchester Guardian, and their links with slavery. The researchers went on to study the wider personal, familial and commercial networks of these individuals in the context of the slave economy, the wider cotton trade in Manchester generally in the 19th century, and the

global networks that facilitated its growth. The third phase of research focused in part on identifying links with plantations in the southeastern United States and Jamaica, and attempting to identify some of the enslaved people connected to Taylor and his funders.

The first phase of research was completed in December 2020; the second in September 2021; and the third in May 2022.

In addition to the distinguished researchers leading this work, the Scott Trust also commissioned the author and expert Prof Otele as an external adviser on the project. Otele has reviewed the academic findings and made significant contributions to the Trust's discussions on restorative justice.

Summary of research findings

2.1 Taylor's family and business activities

The review has established that John Edward Taylor had links to slavery through his partnerships in the cotton manufacturing firm Oakden & Taylor, and the cotton merchant company Shuttleworth, Taylor & Co.

It can be inferred from data relating to British cotton imports for the period of Taylor's involvement in the cotton manufacturing business from 1805 to 1815 that Oakden & Taylor's raw cotton was almost certainly sourced from the United States, Brazil and/or the British West Indies, and would have been produced by enslaved labour. Shuttleworth, Taylor & Co also acted as an agent for WG and J Strutt, which imported vast amounts of raw cotton produced by enslaved Africans in the West Indies, Brazil, Guyana, Suriname and the southern states of the United States. Taylor's firms may also have exported finished textiles to slavery-dominated regions in the Americas.

Accounts and invoice books from the period show that between the years 1817 to 1824, Shuttleworth, Taylor & Co received £2,300 1s 4d - equivalent to £215,000 in 2021 terms, applying the commonly used Relative Price Worth (RPW) formula² - from the Strutts, stalwarts of the cotton industry in England, for whom Shuttleworth, Taylor & Co were likely cotton brokers. A separate invoice book shows that Shuttleworth, Taylor & Co received cotton from the Sea Islands region of the United States along the coast of South Carolina and Georgia between August 1822 and April 1823, and includes the initials and names of plantation owners and enslavers.

It is clear from this array of commercial interests that Taylor had multiple links to transatlantic slavery.

2.2 Other individuals who funded the Guardian

When Taylor established the Manchester Guardian, he raised loans totalling £1,100 from 11 backers, equivalent to £94,500 in present-day value³.

The names of these 11 men were Edward Baxter, William Duckworth, Sir George Philips, Robert Philips, Richard Potter, Sir Thomas Potter, Samuel Pullein, Thomas BW Sanderson, George William Wood, Thomas Johnson and Thomas Wilkins.

Most of these men were influential members of Manchester society, involved in key networks of the economy and key social, political and cultural circles. The 11 had a mixture of pro- and anti-slavery stances.

A summary of the backgrounds and sources of wealth of these backers can be found in the table below.

Nine of the 11 backers were found to have links to transatlantic slavery like Taylor, through Manchester's cotton and textiles industries.

One of the nine, Sir George Philips, was more deeply enmeshed in the slavery economy as a West India merchant and plantation owner. As a partner in the firm Boddington, Sharp and Philips, he enslaved more than 100 people on a sugar plantation named Success, in Hanover, Jamaica. In 1835, in the aftermath of abolition, he unsuccessfully claimed "compensation" for 108 enslaved people at Success (his business partners made a successful claim).

It has not been possible to identify detailed biographies for the remaining two backers, though it is likely both were involved in the cotton and textiles industries.

Some sources also suggest the Guardian was connected in some way to Samuel Greg, a prominent mill owner and enslaver of people. Our research has not established any evidence that Greg was a Guardian funder or shareholder⁴.

² There are several recognised methodologies for calculating relative worth over time.

³ When the University of Nottingham conducted the first phase of research on our behalf, £1,100 in 1821 was equivalent to £94,500 in 2019 terms, the latest year for which data was available, using the Relative Price Worth method. Using the same online calculation suggests £1,100 in 1821 would be equivalent to £99,800 in 2021 terms.

Research findings

Backer	Connection to transatlantic slavery
Edward Baxter	A wealthy Unitarian cotton merchant and cotton manufacturer in Manchester. Baxter was further linked with the transatlantic slave economy as a calico printer, manufacturer of muslin, member of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, and one of the founders and directors of the Manchester Savings Bank.
William Duckworth	A Unitarian attorney and son-in-law of Robert Philips. Duckworth would have benefited from the cotton trade through his family's property holdings. Along with John Edward Taylor and George William Wood, Duckworth was recorded in 1826 as being in support of "improving the condition of the Slave Population of the Colonies".
Sir George Philips	A wealthy textile industrialist, politician, West India merchant and enslaver, Philips was the Manchester Guardian backer mostly deeply linked to slavery. From about 1805 he was a partner in Boddington, Sharp and Philips, which owned the Success estate in Hanover, Jamaica. In 1835, Philips unsuccessfully attempted to claim compensation from the British government for 108 enslaved persons on the estate; his business partner made a successful claim ⁵ . Philips' Jamaica plantation, his intimate involvement with the Manchester cotton industry, US interests, and inherited interests in the textile industry all demonstrate multiple links to transatlantic slavery.
Robert Philips	The cousin of Sir George Philips, whose connections with slavery spanned partnerships in Philips, Wood & Co (a hat-making firm with strong links to enslaved labour in Brazil), Shuttleworth, Taylor & Co, and familial relations with the Hibbert and Yates families, who were both enslavers.
Richard Potter	Nicknamed "Radical Dick", Richard was the son of a farmer and draper, John Potter. Richard Potter was connected to transatlantic slavery as a manufacturer of, and dealer in, cotton goods, and the owner of a Manchester textile warehouse.
Sir Thomas Potter	The brother of Richard Potter, Thomas was the first mayor of Manchester, serving from 1838 to 1840. In partnership with his brother, Thomas was connected to transatlantic slavery through his extensive involvement in the Manchester cotton and textile industry. His wife's family, the Bayleys, also had links with slavery.
Samuel Pullein	Likely to have been an influential member of the mercantile Manchester community in the 1800s. Pullein was associated with transatlantic slavery as a calico printer and was director and trustee of the Manchester Fire and Life Assurance Company for many years.
Thomas BW Sanderson	A well-connected member of elite Manchester society. Sanderson was linked to transatlantic slavery through his business operations as a merchant and manufacturer of, and dealer in, cotton goods and supplies.
George William Wood	A relative of the Philips family, Wood was considered a leading merchant in Manchester. He was linked to transatlantic slavery as a partner in Philips, Wood & Co and Shuttleworth, Taylor & Co. Twice president of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce and an MP, and considered to be "a leading merchant" in Manchester, Wood is emblematic of the interconnectedness between Manchester cotton merchants and the city's elite social, political and cultural community.
Thomas Johnson and Thomas Wilkins	<p>Thomas Johnson: because of the commonness of his name, it was not possible to research a definitive biography within the time frame. The original Manchester Guardian loan agreement names him as a merchant.</p> <p>Thomas Wilkins: because of the commonness of his name, it was not possible to research a definitive biography. The original Manchester Guardian loan agreement names him as a merchant. A secondary source lists him as a cotton merchant, which suggests a link to slavery, although the researchers were not able to establish this definitively within the time frame.</p>

⁴ There have previously been claims that Samuel Greg, a prominent Manchester mill owner and enslaver with multiple links to the cotton trade, had taken out shares in the newly-formed Manchester Guardian. A supplementary research report, completed in September 2022, found no evidence that Greg was a funder or shareholder in the Manchester Guardian. (More likely he had shares in the Guardian Fire Office, possibly an insurance company.)

⁵ <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/claim/view/14920>

Statement and apology from the Scott Trust board

Summary

The extensive academic research summarised above makes clear that John Edward Taylor, our founding editor, and most of the backers who helped fund the Manchester Guardian had links to transatlantic slavery.

The Scott Trust and Guardian apologise unreservedly for their roles in this crime against humanity.

Below, we set out in more detail our response to these findings, and a set of proposals which we hope respond in a meaningful way to the descendants of those affected.

We are committed to developing and delivering on these proposals in partnership and consultation with affected communities around the world.

Background

Between the 16th and 19th centuries, millions of Africans were trafficked across the Atlantic to the Americas. Subsequently, enslaved people were systematically forced to work - often on plantations - and live in inhumane conditions and subjected to poor nutrition, disease and brutality, leading often to premature or violent death. Under this form of chattel slavery, those enslaved had no freedom or rights, and were listed as "property" in plantation accounts and itemised as such in inventories.

Although Britain's transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans was abolished in 1807, the practice of slavery remained legal within the British empire until 1833, followed by an apprenticeship system until 1838. British businesses, institutions and wealthy families and individuals continued to benefit from slavery in the rest of the world for many decades thereafter. Chattel slavery created inter-generational wealth and political power not only in the American South and the British West Indies, but also in many other parts of the world. Its legacy is a major factor in the racial, economic and social inequalities faced today by Black people across the globe.

The industrialisation of cotton relied on the production of raw materials by enslaved workers across the Americas, and Manchester's 19th-century nickname, "Cottonopolis", illustrates the intertwined nature of the city's identity with its trademark commodity. The wealth created in Manchester, primarily by cotton as well as sugar and other commodities, led to a boom in several other industries.

The city's dominant industry seems also at times to have unduly influenced the Manchester Guardian's editorial positions in the first few decades of its existence. Though the Guardian generally opposed slavery in the Caribbean and South America, when slavery was abolished in Britain in 1833 it supported the award of huge sums of compensation to enslavers. *"We are convinced,"* ran one editorial in June 1833, *"that no plan for the abolition of slavery could have been worthy to be proposed by the government, or adopted by the legislature, of Great Britain, which was not based on the great principles of justice to the planter as well as to the slave."*

In the decades that followed, the paper's editorial position on the US civil war often ran counter to the cause of emancipation, or favoured the Confederacy. As the Guardian's editor-in-chief, Katharine Viner, wrote in 2017, around the time of the American civil war the newspaper *"got too close to the Manchester cotton merchants who paid for the advertising that supported the paper"*.

As is documented in the research we are publishing, the Manchester Guardian's founder and first editor, John Edward Taylor, had significant commercial interests in Manchester's fast-growing cotton and textiles industry and related trades, as did all the financial backers for whom detailed histories are available. Through these personal and commercial interests, nearly all of them were connected to the slavery economy of the period.

One of Taylor's backers, Sir George Philips, was an enslaver of people at the Success plantation in Hanover, Jamaica.

The fact that Taylor and most of the other founders, unlike Philips, did not themselves directly enslave people does not detract from the significance of their links to slavery.

The Scott Trust acknowledges the immoral connections of much of the wealth used to found the Manchester Guardian. Manchester's economy, and Britain's more generally, were deeply entwined with slavery in this period, and the Manchester Guardian often aligned with these powerful economic interests. Its editorial positions sometimes served to support the cotton and textile industry, and therefore the continued exploitation of enslaved people.

Apology

As the owners of the Guardian, the Scott Trust apologises to the affected communities identified in the research and surviving descendants of the enslaved for the part the Guardian and its founders had in this crime against humanity, perpetrated against their ancestors.

We are deeply sorry for the role Taylor and his backers played in the cotton trade, which benefited from the forced labour of enslaved people in the Americas; for Philips' direct enslavement of people in Jamaica; and for the role the paper's journalism played in supporting the economy of enslavement.

These connections are as relevant to the Guardian's origin story as the 1819 Peterloo massacre, and they pose a fundamental question for us: what does it mean to be a progressive organisation that was born out of the profits of human bondage?

The ideology behind slavery was so embedded in 18th- and 19th-century Britain that even individuals and organisations who considered themselves liberal could be complicit in the most despicable crimes; and so our goal in responding to these facts should be to strive to do all we can in the present day to atone for these historical injustices, and to support those who

still live with the legacy of this brutal and dehumanising era.

The Scott Trust's response

We believe it is incumbent upon us to share these facts transparently, recognising the historical injustice, and to commit ourselves to raising awareness of this history, and creating a programme of restorative justice.

The Trust will initiate and fund a programme of work aimed at communities still affected by the legacies of transatlantic slavery, primarily in the US, Jamaica and the UK, where the Manchester Guardian's founders had the strongest connections, as well as in the wider African diaspora.

Throughout this process it has become clear that more work needs to be done to acknowledge and reflect on the wider history of Britain's connection to transatlantic slavery. As the owner of a global news organisation that reaches hundreds of millions of people, we believe we can play a role in advancing a better understanding of Britain's history and the legacies of its long involvement with slavery and the wealth and inequality that was generated. We can also use our reach, our resources and our influence to accelerate and improve the diversity of the media and the stories that are told.

We look forward to engaging in dialogue, particularly with descendant communities, in the UK, the United States and Jamaica, and with our readers and our staff, to carry out this important work.

There is still much to learn about Britain's long-lasting involvement in slavery and its legacy, and expert research is still uncovering new information. We hope that this project can contribute to the broader ongoing discussion on these issues.

Developing a programme of restorative justice

Having received parts one and two of these research findings in 2020 and 2021, the Scott Trust decided to develop a substantial programme of restorative justice as an appropriate response to the emerging findings.

A group of senior Guardian staff from across the organisation developed initial proposals and ideas. They gathered input and feedback, holding discussions and workshops with people of colour at the Guardian and the Observer, and colleagues from Guardian US and the Guardian Foundation. They also sought advice from a number of people with expertise in restorative justice, and from the expert academic advisors who have supported us throughout the review.

The progress of this work has been overseen by a committee of Scott Trust

members: David Olusoga; Matthew Ryder; the Guardian editor-in-chief, Katharine Viner; and the Scott Trust chair, Ole Jacob Sunde. Sunde's predecessor, Alex Graham, initiated the review and was a member of this committee until stepping down from the trust in 2021. The entire Scott Trust has discussed the proposals at regular intervals at its board meetings during 2022 and early 2023.

The proposals we lay out below are only the start of a process. We recognise that any programme of restorative justice requires extensive and meaningful input from a range of stakeholders - most importantly descendant and affected communities. We intend to engage in dialogue around all elements of the proposals.

The Scott Trust's proposed programme of restorative justice

In response to the findings, the Scott Trust plans to fund a meaningful long-term programme of awareness-raising and restorative justice. Our goals are to:

- address our founders' links to slavery in the United States, and Sir George Philips' role as an enslaver of people in Jamaica, through significant partnerships and programmes, developed with local and national communities and organisations.
- support impactful initiatives to improve diversity in the news media sector, including within the Guardian itself.

- raise awareness of our findings, and of Manchester's and Britain's involvement with transatlantic slavery, and of the trade in enslaved Africans more broadly.

In order to share the findings of this research with the Guardian's global readership, with communities that may be affected, and with all those with an interest, the Guardian is publishing a [major journalism series](#) in parallel with this research, which explores the slavery connections of the Guardian's founders, the city of Manchester, and Britain more widely.

Over the next decade, the Trust intends to:

- Fund an increase in the scope and ambition of Guardian reporting on the Caribbean, South America and Africa, and on Black communities in the UK and US. The Guardian will also explore new editorial formats and products which better serve Black audiences.
- Create a substantial restorative justice fund to support community projects and programmes in the south-eastern US Gullah Geechee region, and in Jamaica over the next 10 years. This fund will be developed with extensive community input and consultation with descendant communities.
- Fund the Guardian Foundation to expand its industry-leading journalism training bursary scheme, increasing the number of places available to Black prospective journalists in the UK, and expanding the scheme to our offices in the United States and Australia.
- Explore and fund a new global news sector fellowship programme for mid-career Black journalists.
- Help improve public understanding of transatlantic slavery's ongoing impact

on Manchester and Britain - and of the debates around reparations and restorative justice, through partnerships and community programmes, with a strong focus on Manchester, the city in which we were founded.

- Continue to fund research, through a three-year partnership with the Wilberforce Institute at the University of Hull. This research will look more deeply at our own history and the enslaved people affected, and examine wider questions concerning Britain's historical connections to transatlantic slavery.

Projects and organisations we partner with will be selected on the basis of long-lasting impact in line with the above goals. The Trust plans to allocate substantial funding to the chosen projects and partnerships, and to appoint a dedicated programme director to oversee this work.

This is a long-term commitment. Over the next decade we expect to invest more than £10m, with millions dedicated specifically to a restorative justice fund supporting descendant communities in the Sea Islands and Jamaica.

Next steps and contact details

We intend to consult widely with Black communities and other stakeholders beginning later in 2023, in the UK and in the Americas, to assess what types of projects the Trust may fund.

The Scott Trust welcomes any immediate written observations and feedback in relation to the review's findings and our proposed programme of restorative justice. Views can be shared with us by writing to legacies@theguardian.com.

Appendix

Email from Scott Trust chair Alex Graham to GNM staff, announcing the Trust's review of the Guardian's founders' history

From: Alex Graham

Date: Fri, 17 Jul 2020

Subject: The Guardian's history

To: All GNM staff

Dear all,

Since the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis in May, the Guardian and the Observer have published powerful journalism on the Black Lives Matter movement, in the US, UK, Australia and around the world.

Following the fall of Bristol's Edward Colston statue, we have examined many organisations' histories and called them to account for their connections to slavery and other past injustices. It is right therefore that we look at our own, too.

The Manchester Guardian was founded in 1821 by a journalist called John Edward Taylor, whose prospectus for the paper said it would "*zealously enforce the principles of civil and religious Liberty, in the most comprehensive sense of those terms*" and "*warmly advocate the cause of Reform*". Taylor was the son of a cotton merchant, and many of those who helped fund the new paper's creation also worked in the textile and cotton trades for which Manchester was the global centre at the time - the city's Victorian might was built in large part on cotton wealth.

We have never sought to shy away from the Guardian's history. In the decades following Taylor's death in 1844, the Manchester Guardian did not always adhere to our progressive ideals and values as we know them today - to the point where the paper sided with the slave-owning south in the American Civil War. As Kath wrote in her essay on the Guardian's purpose in 2017, the Guardian "*got too close to the Manchester cotton merchants who paid for the advertising that supported the paper*". The paper's support for the confederacy's "self determination" and its attacks on Abraham Lincoln were stark misjudgements.

The Guardian of today took shape when Taylor's nephew CP Scott, regarded as one of the greatest newspaper editors, took over in 1872. Scott transformed the Guardian, outlining the Guardian's values in a 1921 essay, a blueprint for independent liberal journalism which has been central to our identity ever since. As Scott wrote, a newspaper must have a "*a moral, as well as a material existence*". In 1936 after his death, CP Scott's family established the Scott Trust, which still oversees the Guardian and the Observer, unlike the vast majority of national news publishers, which are owned either by shareholders or billionaires.

We have seen no evidence that Taylor was a slave owner, nor involved in any direct way in the slave trade. But were such evidence to exist, we would want to be open about it. In any event, we must acknowledge that as cotton and textile merchants, some of Taylor and his funders' family businesses would almost certainly have traded with cotton plantations that used enslaved labour.

All organisations must understand and discuss their histories, and it is particularly incumbent on media organisations to do so, reflecting on their past and current positions with openness, highlighting mistakes, and facing the future with humility.

To that end, the Scott Trust has decided to commission research on the Guardian's founding moments and any connections, direct or indirect, with the slave trade. The work will be carried out independently by the University of Nottingham's [Institute for the Study of Slavery](#), which is led by Dr. Sheryllynne Haggerty, a renowned expert in the history of the transatlantic slave trade and the economy of the British Empire.

The review's remit will be to research and investigate any links between Taylor, his associates, their investments and/or business activities with historical transatlantic slavery. Our general counsel Stephen Godsell will be liaising with the Nottingham team on behalf of the Trust and the Guardian.

We will do our best to hold ourselves to account, just as we do others, and the work will be shared with staff and our readers, once complete. It is incumbent on all of us to examine our histories, understand the injustices which have disadvantaged some and benefited others - and then act, in the present day, in ways which actively encourage progress, not hold it back.

If you have any questions about this project, please do feel free to contact me or Stephen Godsell in the first instance.

Best wishes,

Alex

**Alexander Graham
Chair
The Scott Trust**



**The
Scott
Trust**

Further information

The reports

The full academic findings are available to [download and read](#) from the University of Hull's Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation.

Guardian journalism

Read the Guardian's editorial series [Cotton Capital](#).

Acknowledgements

The Scott Trust would like to express its sincere thanks to the experts, academics and institutions involved in the review - Dr Sheryllynne Haggerty of the University of Nottingham's [Institute for the Study of Slavery](#), Dr Cassandra Goptar and Prof Trevor Burnard of the [University of Hull's Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation](#), and our external adviser Prof Olivette Otele - who all provided vital guidance and advice on restorative justice.

We would also like to thank the Guardian's Joseph Harker, the senior editor for diversity and development; Brendan O'Grady, chief communications and marketing officer; Maya Wolfe-Robinson, Cotton Capital editor; Stephen Godsell, company secretary; and Julia Wale, assistant company secretary, for their leadership across many aspects of this work, as well as many other Guardian colleagues who have worked on the project.

**The
Scott
Trust**