



The Spirit of Wilberforce

A Commemoration of the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade

Centre for Contemporary Ministry
Moggerhanger Park
Bedfordshire
MK44 3RW
01767 641005

ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE BICENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

“Sir, the nature and all the circumstances of the Trade are now laid open to us. We can no longer plead ignorance. We cannot evade it. We may spurn it. We may kick it out of the way. But we cannot turn aside so as to avoid seeing it. For it is brought now so directly before our eyes that this House must decide and must justify to all the world and to its own conscience, the rectitude of the grounds of its decision...Let not Parliament be the only body that is insensible to the principles of natural justice.”

William Wilberforce May 12, 1789

1. These were the concluding words of William Wilberforce after introducing the motion in the House of Commons to abolish the Slave Trade. But these words did not conclude the issue of slavery, then or today. It took Wilberforce and his friends 19 years to abolish the Slave Trade and 45 years before the institution of slavery was finally abolished throughout the British Empire. Today slavery still exists in various forms in many parts of the world including Europe and Britain.
2. The year 2007 offers a unique opportunity to commemorate the bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade and to create greater public awareness of the plight of the oppressed, the poor and the vulnerable in the 21st century. It is our objective both to celebrate the achievements of the past and to inform and educate the public about present forms of slavery.
3. **Slave Ship: London**
 - 3.1. **Tower Bridge** To celebrate this bicentenary we are preparing to have a public exhibition based on a 'slave ship'. The ship is a replica of an 18th century square-rigger sailing ship that was used in shooting the film *'Amazing Grace'*. It is currently at Charlestown, Cornwall. We plan to lease it and sail it up the River Thames to moor it in the heart of London near Tower Bridge, arriving on 22nd March 2007. The exhibition will be open to the public for 10 days.
 - 3.2. **Royal Navy** The Navy is keen to co-operate because without their action the abolition of the slave trade could never have been enforced on the high seas. They plan to send a warship to accompany the 'slave ship' visiting Chatham and Greenwich *en route* up the Thames. They are also contributing to the exhibition with material of historical interest.
 - 3.3. **Royal Visit** The Chairman of Moggerhanger House Preservation Trust, Mr Sam Whitbread, Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, has invited HRH The Queen

Team: Dr Clifford Hill, Monica Hill, Charmaine Jelbert, Matt Buttery, Jenny Cooper, John Matthews, Gillian Orpin, Olave Snelling and Beni Wright
Project of CCM (Registered Charity) Charity No: 1022698

Spirit of Wilberforce Proposal

and The Duke of Edinburgh to visit the 'slave ship' during the time it is in London to see the exhibition of 'Slavery Past and Present'.

4. African and Afro-Caribbean Links

- 4.1. We are working in close cooperation with African and Afro-Caribbean church leaders in Britain. One of these churches, *House on the Rock*, based in Euston Road London, has a youth band, *GK Real*. They are popular with youth gigs and are successful in getting the Gospel message to young people. We plan to have them on the top deck of the ship as it sails into London and an Afro-Caribbean choir singing a message of Jesus setting people free.
- 4.2. African and Afro-Caribbean choirs and music groups will be used throughout the time the ship is in London and in Bristol and Liverpool. The choirs will also be used at each of the other exhibition sites including Moggerhanger.

5. 'Slave Ship': Bristol and Liverpool

- 5.1. Bristol and Liverpool City Councils have shown interest in the ship. Plans are being discussed to sail the ship to Bristol and Liverpool, due to their historical involvement in the slave trade. If arrangements can be agreed, we will continue to be responsible for the exhibition on board the ship during the time it is moored in these cities and opened to the public.

6. 'Slave Ship': Exhibitions

- 6.1. One section of the lower deck of the ship will be fitted out with slatted shelves to which the slaves were manacled in the 18th century. This first part of the exhibition on the ship will allow the visitor to re-live the experience of the slaves on the notorious journey across the Atlantic. This will be done through the use of artefacts used in the slave trade on loan from various sources. There will be sounds and images to show the treatment and conditions of the slaves onboard the ship. Captains' logbooks will show records of the inhumane treatment by the traders, such as throwing slaves overboard. There will be an audio recording of extracts from the slaves' personal experiences whilst onboard.
- 6.2. The second phase will show the Abolitionist Campaign, the work of the Abolitionists and their motivation. It will also show the part played by the British Royal Navy in enforcing the law on the high seas.
- 6.3. The final phase on the ship will provide examples of modern slavery and will provide information on how the public can join relevant campaigns. This will be done with our partners who are involved in these modern battles such as Anti-Slavery International, Justice for Children International, Stop the Traffik, Fair Trade, CHASTE and Set All Free. These groups are often not so well known to the public and this will help draw more attention to their causes.
- 6.4. Throughout the time the exhibition on board the ship is open to the public and for schools' visits our staff will be available to answer questions and to assist with educational projects. This is an important part of the objectives in bringing the ship to London and other venues. The ship's crew will also assist in ensuring the safety of the public on board the ship.

Spirit of Wilberforce Proposal

7. South Bank Show

- 7.1. A second exhibition will include performances in an open-air theatre along the South Bank during the summer months. This is a popular area with tourists and local residents, so it is a prime spot to attract many people. We plan some theatrical performances that depict various aspects of the fight against slavery, in different dramatic genres from musicals to monologues. There will be a daily performance and extra performances during the evenings and weekends.
- 7.2. Linked with the open-air theatre along the promenade we plan to have free-standing graphic boards that show depictions of the slaves, the abolitionists and the modern abolitionists. This will allow the public to wander at their leisure along the promenade and freely amongst the display boards.

8. Trafalgar Square

- 8.1. Application has been made to the Mayor of London for permission to mount a poster display in Trafalgar Square. This will depict graphic scenes from 18th century slavery and the work of the abolition campaign. It will also advertise the presence of the replica slave ship moored near the Tower of London and activities in other locations as well as promoting the film *Amazing Grace*. This will help to raise public awareness of the bicentenary commemorations.

9. Moggerhanger Park

- 9.1. A third exhibition will be mounted at Moggerhanger Park in Bedfordshire that was the home of the Thornton family cousins of William Wilberforce and part of the group of Abolitionists who worked in Parliament and in the country for the abolition campaign. This exhibition will have many unique artefacts including Wilberforce's Bible, a first edition of his diaries and a silver tea pot used by the Clapham Sect (on loan from the CMS). It will also have other artefacts on loan from the House of Commons as well as historical details, posters and displays. This exhibition will be open to the public and to schools and colleges from February to March 2007.
- 9.2. A further unique part of the Moggerhanger Park exhibition is likely to be the erecting of the set of the House of Commons used in shooting the film *Amazing Grace*. This is to be put on display in Westminster Hall in March/April 2007. After that, the feasibility is being explored of transporting it and reassembling it at Moggerhanger Park to make it available for schools and colleges.
- 9.3. Some items from the artefacts exhibition will be on permanent unmanned display at Moggerhanger Park with a combined display of the work of the Church Mission Society and modern slavery throughout the summer until September 2007.
- 9.4. A programme of other events at Moggerhanger Park will include a dinner for the descendants of the Thornton and Wilberforce families; a service of commemoration on Sunday 25th March 2007, the actual day of the passing of the abolition of the slave trade; and a full weekend of events at the beginning of June including monologues, meals, lectures etc.

Spirit of Wilberforce Proposal

9.5. There will be a number of other events throughout the summer including open-air drama based on the abolitionist theme and a concert with Afro-Caribbean singers.

10. Schools Education

10.1. We will be inviting schools from a wide area around London, Bristol and Liverpool to bring parties of students to visit the 'slave ship' so that they may experience at first hand something of the horrors of the slave trade and the significance of the work of the Abolitionists. Each pupil will be given an educational pack giving historical facts with action sheets or work-books for completion on the ship or later. This is an important part of the commemoration events and will also introduce students to aspects of modern slavery and on-going action.

10.2. CCM is working closely with *Free for All*, the educational arm of CMS and a full week of visits is planned to schools in Bedfordshire in February 2007.

11. Amazing Grace

11.1. The Hollywood movie, '*Amazing Grace*' produced by Walden Media is due for release in Britain in March 2007 to coincide with the 200th anniversary celebrations. Short trailers of the movie will be shown at the exhibition sites and notice will be given of where the film is being screened. This film, featuring the life of Wilberforce and the work of the Abolitionists, is both entertaining and educational and will form an important part of the commemorations.

12. Publicity

12.1. Widespread national publicity will draw public attention through media coverage, especially focusing on the replica 18th century 'slave ship' with its Royal Navy escort.

12.2. It will be part of Moggerhanger Park's publicity and the main theme of their house tours throughout the summer.

13. Modern Slavery

13.1. An important part of the 'Spirit of Wilberforce' project is to draw public attention to the evidence that slavery in a variety of forms is still virulent today. People trafficking, sex trafficking, drugs and even debt are forms of oppression which enslave many people today. A number of Christian organisations are engaged in humanitarian work to set the victims of oppression free. All the exhibitions in the project will display and promote their work.

14. There is a twofold objective in undertaking this project.

First, it is a unique opportunity to tell the nation that it was **Christians** who led the way in the Abolition of the Slave Trade and they were motivated by the love of Jesus for the poor and oppressed - and **THAT LOVE IS AVAILABLE TODAY!**

Secondly, it is an opportunity to publicise the fight against **SLAVERY TODAY** and to embrace the great humanitarian causes of our own day.

Moggerhanger Park
October 2006