

Bronze Medal 1923.11.dh

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This bronze medal was given to the children to commemorate the abolishment of slavery in Britain.

On one side stands a freed enslaved man with his arms lifted. Around the edge of the medal is the inscription from Psalm 23, verse 18: 'This is the Lord's doing. It is marvellous in our eyes'. Inscribed on the other side of the medal is: 'In commemoration of the extinction of colonial slavery throughout the British Dominions in the reign of William the IV, August 1, 1834'.

It contrasts with Josiah Wedgwood's brass medallion, which shows an enslaved man very differently.

He is kneeling with his hands folded, begging: 'Am I not a man and a brother?', with the message: 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them', taken from the New Testament, Matthew 7, verse 22.



Between the 16th century and 1807, an estimated 12.5 million people were transported from Africa to the Americas and the Caribbean to be enslaved on plantations.

In 1834, the 800,000 Africans who were the 'property' of Britain were freed. This act that abolished slavery also provided financial compensation to the owners of enslaved people for the loss of their 'property'. No compensation was made to the enslaved people themselves. The British government is believed to have set aside £20m as compensation for this loss of 'property'. This sum represented 40% of the total government expenditure in 1834. It is the modern equivalent of between £16bn and £17bn.

Evidence of Scotland's involvement in the slave trade is visible around most of its major cities. However, Glasgow stands proudly behind this heritage much more than other cities, because to this day it honours the men who uplifted Glasgow through their (slave) trading by erecting monuments and buildings. Many streets are named after plantation owners including Glassford Street, Ingram Street and Buchanan Street.

It is well documented that Glasgow gained its wealth from the slave trade and plantation economy. The Gallery of Modern Art's (GoMA) own history as the site of a Tobacco Lord's House and The Royal Exchange is embedded in this story of wealth gained from enslaving human beings to ensure economic growth.

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/african/journey-in-chains/>