

'Anti-Slavery Society, Newcastle', *The Newcastle Courant* (Saturday August 14, 1830, issue 8116)

**ABOLITION OF
SLAVERY.**

A PUBLIC MEETING
WILL BE HELD IN
Brunswick Place Chapel,
IN NEWCASTLE,
On Wednesday, the 11th inst. at 12 o'Clock at Noon,
To consider of the most effectual means for obtaining the extinction of
Slavery in the British Colonies; the foulest Stain upon the Character of this
great and enlightened Nation, and of Petitioning Parliament for that Purpose.

H. Brougham, Esq. M. P.
Is expected to attend the Meeting, and to afford very interesting, and important information
on the Subject.

A COLLECTION will be made in aid of the Funds of the ANTI SLAVERY SOCIETY.

Newcastle, August 9th 1830.

J. CLARK, PRINTER, 11, NEWGATE STREET.

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The anti-slavery public meeting advertised in this poster was held in Newcastle, in the North East of England, on Wednesday 11th August 1830. The meeting was held in the Brunswick Place Chapel, a Methodist place of worship and meeting hall (see image below).



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Elections were taking place in Britain in August 1830, and this was a time of enormous public interest and involvement in political campaigning. Holding a public meeting and inviting a well-known Member of Parliament to speak were excellent ways of attracting the attention of the people of Newcastle to the issue of colonial slavery. The strategy worked, and according to the report in the local paper, the *Newcastle Courant*, “the chapel was crowded to excess”.¹ The meeting was chaired by Thomas Wentworth Beaumont, MP for Northumberland and a supporter of two major political causes of the time: the abolition of slavery and parliamentary reform. Applauded by the crowds attending the meeting, Beaumont described slavery in his opening speech as a “disgrace and curse to humanity”. He stressed that the time was right for a popular campaign to push for an end to colonial slavery – “there never was a time when he believed the voice of the people would have more weight”. Weakened, preoccupied and threatened with reform, at this point Beaumont suggested, Parliament was open to external pressure, and the issue of slavery could be “forced upon them”.

Newcastle, like other growing industrial cities in the United Kingdom, already possessed a strong abolitionist political voice. Campaigning groups like The Newcastle upon Tyne Society for Promoting the Gradual Abolition of Slavery and the Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Association had been active since 1823, and had already held a series of meetings, published pamphlets and contributed to national campaigns. Impatient by 1830, “after years [of] disappointment and delay”, the Newcastle Society was pushing for immediate emancipation of the slaves in the British colonies, and thus was receptive to suggestions made by Beaumont and the key speaker at the meeting, Henry Brougham, that “the iron was hot” and “they had nothing to do but strike”.

MP for Yorkshire and a well-known parliamentary opponent of slavery, Brougham uses the issue as a political campaigning point, describing the outgoing government as weak and reluctant reformers on Catholic emancipation and slavery, and suggesting that they would “never yield the cart whip until they felt it on their own backs [...] or until it was wrested from their power, and the plant of liberty planted in its stead”. Brougham promises that a new government would institute reform, but like all the speakers at the meeting, he also stresses that the people of Britain should play an active part in agitating for the abolition of slavery: “For success in the cause of anti-slavery, he looked less to government than to his fellow citizens”. Making reference to the July 1830 revolution which had recently broken out in France, he argues that the French people had led the way by showing courage and restraint, and should be recognised an example of liberty, despite British reservations: “Englishmen were too fond of praising themselves as a free people; and many of them thought that Frenchmen were not capable of enjoying the blessings of liberty”. Comparing French and British concepts of liberty, Brougham praises the active participation in revolutionary politics of the French. Many speakers at this meeting are influenced by the revolutionary ideal, even implying that a similarly radical approach should be taken by British anti-slavery campaigners, in order to “force” abolition on a reluctant government, “wrest the chain from the hand of the slave”, and “hurl the fiend of slavery from the dominions of Britain”. However, the revolutionary spirit of August 1830 did not extend as far as the inclusion of female abolitionists, one speaker announcing that despite their good work in the cause of humanity, he “did not like to see ladies interfering with politics”.

¹ All quotations are taken from the following article: ‘Anti-Slavery Society, Newcastle’, *The Newcastle Courant* (Saturday August 14, 1830), issue 8116. No page numbers.