



Proslavery Collaborations Between British Outport and Metropole: The Rise of the Glasgow–West India Interest, 1775–1838

Stephen Mullen

To cite this article: Stephen Mullen (2023) Proslavery Collaborations Between British Outport and Metropole: The Rise of the Glasgow–West India Interest, 1775–1838, The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 51:4, 601–643, DOI: [10.1080/03086534.2023.2166390](https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2023.2166390)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2023.2166390>



© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 31 Jan 2023.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 2100



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Proslavery Collaborations Between British Outport and Metropole: The Rise of the Glasgow–West India Interest, 1775–1838

Stephen Mullen

University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK



ABSTRACT

This article provides the first systematic exploration of pro-slavery collaborations between British outport and metropole from the American War of Independence in 1775 to the abolition of plantation slavery in 1834–1838. Examination of a group of individuals commercially involved with the Caribbean trades including absentee planters, merchants, merchant-proprietors and returned sojourners – described here as the ‘Glasgow–West India interest’ – as well as the institutions to which they belonged, provides insights around three key themes. Firstly, what was the relative strength of pro-slavery groups and individuals in Glasgow from 1775 to 1838? Secondly, to what extent, and in what ways, did pro-slavery groups and individuals in Glasgow interact with other outport organisations and especially the London Society of West India Planters and Merchants, the most powerful pro-slavery lobbying group in the British Atlantic world? Thirdly, since pro-slavery groups could not prevent either abolition or emancipation, was lobbying of any benefit to relevant individuals? This article contends that the influence of the Glasgow–West India interest increased after 1778, that this group became a cornerstone of the British pro-slavery cause up to emancipation in 1834, and in turn some accumulated nationally significant fortunes in the abolition eras.

KEYWORDS

British West India interest; Glasgow West India Association; London West India Committee; parliamentary lobbying; pro-slavery collaboration; slavery derived wealth

On 16 January 1833, a missionary based in Jamaica, William Knibb, spoke in Glasgow in Scotland about the necessity to end plantation slavery in the West Indies, in the process recounting how the island’s residents looked to the city as the ‘great den of colonial slavery’. The Baptist minister pointed to the influence of the *Glasgow Courier* – the pro-slavery organ of the city’s West India interest – which was read widely by both the enslaved and free

CONTACT Stephen Mullen  stephen.mullen1@hotmail.co.uk  Scottish History, School of Humanities, 9 University Gardens, University of Glasgow, G12 8QH, Glasgow, UK

© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

population of the island. Under the editorship of James MacQueen – the chief propagandist of the Glasgow West India Association (GWIA) lobbying group – the newspaper mounted a nineteenth-century pro-slavery offensive. From the perspective of the Association, the city's reputation across the Atlantic as *the* 'great den' of slavery was remarkable progress. Founded in October 1807 in the aftermath of an understated campaign opposing the abolition of the slave trade, the efforts of the Association had transformed the city into a 'stronghold of the West India interest' in a generation.¹

The title 'West India interest' was a contemporaneous phrase for the alliance of Caribbean merchants and planters in Great Britain and has been adopted by historians to trace this group's activities.² The term 'interest' thus denotes a particular type of economic and social group but could also refer to that group's efforts to promote their concerns through political action, sometimes in formal organisations.³ However, whilst the West India fraternity in Great Britain was well integrated in the 1760s due to accumulated wealth, political influence and marital connections, merchants and planters were not natural bedfellows.⁴ Conflicts over production and trade were common. The outbreak of the American War of Independence (1775–1783), however, brought the factions together in Great Britain and the pro-slavery partnership lasted to 1838. This was a timely defensive action, for the movements for the abolition of the slave trade and plantation slavery gathered momentum after 1787 and 1823 respectively.

The West India interest's strength was supposedly on the wane in these eras. Trinidadian historian Eric Williams envisioned a 'decline' in the late eighteenth-century West India economy, which supposedly had similar implications for the social status, political influence, and wider relevance of metropolitan West India interests. After 1776, Williams described an 'outworn interest, whose bankruptcy smells to heaven in historical perspective', but one that remained capable of exercising an 'obstructionist and disruptive effect'.⁵ However, it is now generally accepted that the West India economy remained vibrant into the mid-1820s. Williams was too early in setting the origins of economic decline by at least forty years.⁶ The date of political decline is more contentious: Angelina Osborne views the London West India Committee's support for amelioration as an acknowledgement of declining influence from 1823, whilst Michael Taylor argued the 'West Indians remained one of the leading interest groups in British politics' into the 1830s.⁷ By tracing the rise of Glasgow as pro-slavery stronghold, this article tests the Williamsonian vision of a regional West India interest's declining importance and relevance.

Assessing the strength of regional West India interests is no easy task. Some historians of proslavery Britain have traced a monolithic movement with only tokenistic mention of outports.⁸ Although there is a well-developed historiography of London Society of West India Planters and Merchants (LSWIPM), the Liverpool and Bristol West India Associations have received much less attention.⁹ It is therefore no surprise that Douglas Hall's 1971 acknowledgement

of a lacuna in understanding about the relationship with London's West India Committee and outpost associations remains largely true today.¹⁰

Two questions remain: how powerful was the regional West India interest in Glasgow, Britain's last great sugar outpost? And how did the metropole/outpost relationship evolve and operate in practice? Historians who examined West India activities in Glasgow have generally characterised the movement as weak or in terms of failure, effectively endorsing Williams' vision of decline. Douglas Hamilton concluded proslavery groups were 'outdated and outmanoeuvred' as they failed to prevent the abolition of slave trade (1807) and the emancipation of slavery (1834).¹¹ One historian unconvincingly described Glasgow's nineteenth-century West India merchants and planters as a 'localised elite' with a 'modest impact' on the national stage.¹² Iain Whyte claimed there was no West India body in late-eighteenth-century Glasgow, and whilst he acknowledged the city's residents exerted the most powerful 'West India influence' outside of London after 1800, the GWIA's practical defence of slavery was supposedly 'infinitely weaker' than the abolitionist movement.¹³

Much remains to be understood about the nature and extent of pro-slavery collaborations. Lowell Ragatz noted the London Society of West India Planters and Merchants (LSWIPM), the leading pro-slavery lobbying group in the British-Atlantic world, called for support and finance from outposts in 'extreme cases'.¹⁴ B.W. Higman noted Associations were formed in Bristol, Liverpool and Glasgow, claiming only 'Bristol merchants co-operated with London'.¹⁵ In *The Interest*, Michael Taylor accurately noted a 'truly national' West India interest but did not explore the practicalities of metropolitan and outpost collaboration in detail.¹⁶ Taylor envisions a British West India interest from 1787, although arguing the GWIA's commitment to the British campaign opposing emancipation from 1823 was 'proven insincere' (based upon Bristol West India correspondence in 1833).¹⁷

This article casts new light on the origins and consequences of the Glasgow-West India interest's ascent as well as the workings of the British pro-slavery alliance. The term 'Glasgow-West India interest' is deployed here to analyse the alliance of individuals commercially involved with the city's Caribbean trades – absentee planters, merchants, merchant-proprietors and returned sojourners – and those associated with these pro-slavery lobbying groups. Examination of these individuals, and the institutions to which they belonged, provides answers for three questions in this study. Firstly, what was the relative strength of pro-slavery groups and individuals in Glasgow from the American Revolution to the abolition of plantation slavery in the British West Indies? Secondly, to what extent, and in what ways, did pro-slavery groups and individuals in Glasgow interact with other outpost organisations and the LSWIPM? Thirdly, since these groups could not prevent either abolition or emancipation, how did proslavery lobbying benefit relevant individuals?

This article traces the 60-year rise of Glasgow's West India interest, offering the first systematic exploration of outpost/metropole collaborations up to emancipation. This article contends that the influence of the Glasgow-West India interest increased after 1775, especially post-1807, and this group became a cornerstone of the national pro-slavery cause up to emancipation in 1834 (whilst occasionally attempting to implement a unilateral strategy). Paradoxically, at a time when West India commerce remained central to the Scottish economy, the Glasgow-West India interest became increasingly irrelevant in wider society. Nevertheless, political lobbying contributed to delays in abolition and emancipation, which allowed the accumulation of nationally significant fortunes.

Pro-slavery Foundations

Scotland's dependence upon Atlantic commerce provided the foundation for the development of a pro-slavery movement in Glasgow. Scotland's Atlantic slavery economy was unusual in several ways. Direct Scottish participation in the trafficking of enslaved people from Africa was only a small proportion of overall British involvement. As few as twenty-seven recorded 'triangular' voyages cleared Scottish ports between the date of the first and last recorded voyages in 1706 and 1766.¹⁸ This was about 2 per cent of voyages that departed from Bristol or Liverpool over the same period.¹⁹ Nevertheless, it is now accepted that Scottish economic development was more dependent upon Atlantic commerce and chattel slavery – via the mercantile trades – compared to England. Scotland's Commercial Revolution began in c.1730 and Industrial Revolution in 1778 – both much later than respective English versions – which meant commercial growth and industrial transformation were concomitant, unlike England.²⁰

Whilst England had a large, diversified economy, the two leading Scottish sectors – linen production and cotton manufacturing – were dependent upon colonial markets and, by extension, trade with slavery societies. Scotland's low-wage economy and limited population rise between 1755 and 1801 meant overseas trade had a relatively greater influence upon industrial change.²¹ Moreover, the accumulation and investment of colonial merchant capital, in addition to wealth returned from the West Indies, had an important effect in establishing embryonic industries across Scotland.²² Thus, Atlantic slavery and its commerce were integral to the progress and timing of the Scottish Industrial Revolution in a way that was unique in a British context. If Eric Williams' arguments in *Capitalism and Slavery* remain controversial in an English context, they are now orthodox in the historiography of Scottish economic development.²³

Glasgow and its conjoined Clyde ports – Port Glasgow and Greenock, satellite ports around the commercial hub – were crucial to the development of

Scotland's Atlantic slavery economy. The transformation of Glasgow has become synonymous with the Chesapeake trades and 'tobacco lords'.²⁴ The outbreak of the American War, however, ended Glasgow's status as the premier tobacco *entrepôt* in Europe. But specialist West India firms were long-established in Glasgow, and Scots had Caribbean connections going back to the seventeenth century (unlike Liverpool and Bristol). With a mercantile shift to the West Indies, the 1780s marked the 'golden age of the Clyde-Caribbean trade'.²⁵ By 1790, Clyde ports received more shipping (by tonnage) from the West Indies – especially sugar, cotton and rum imported from Jamaica, Barbados and Grenada – than from Europe or America, which propelled a new West India elite to prominence.²⁶ Jamaica was the premier destination. A sample of 1742 advertised voyages that departed Clyde ports for the West Indies between 1806 and 1834 suggests Jamaica received most voyages throughout that period (615 voyages, 35 per cent of total); followed by Demerara (21 per cent), Trinidad (13 per cent) and Grenada (6 per cent) By comparison, St Kitts only received 1 per cent of the Clyde's advertised Caribbean shipping.²⁷

Even with such a dramatic mercantile realignment, Glasgow's West India commerce never reached the same monopolistic levels characteristic of the city's Virginia era. Bristol remained the leading British sugar outpost for 'virtually all of the eighteenth century' which Liverpool only really challenged after 1799.²⁸ Yet, by 1806, Clyde ports had also overtaken Bristol.²⁹ Over the next decade, the West India produce landed at the Clyde increased exponentially, although the hub was once again the fourth British sugar port by the 1830s.³⁰ West India commerce had a transformative effect upon Scottish industrialisation. While Chesapeake commerce (commodity trade in tobacco) had fewer multiplier effects than West India commerce, imports of cotton grown by enslaved people stimulated manufacturing and exports. From 1778 to 1815, Glasgow's West India connections powered Scotland's industrial growth, especially the advance of large-scale textile manufacturing that employed large swathes of the Scottish population.³¹

The development of a major Atlantic economy in west-central Scotland can be contrasted with other outports. Unlike Glasgow, Bristol did not develop large-scale industries that supplied foreign trade (instead developing as a centre for consumption). By the mid-1800s, the port was a minor export centre. Liverpool's West India merchants were superseded by American traders in 1790, around the same period as Glasgow's West India economy took off.³² With two leading sectors dependent upon West India mercantile trades, the west of Scotland economy was arguably more dependent upon Caribbean slavery compared to other outports.

Yet, Glasgow's origins as a pro-slavery hub remains obscured and the city's organised abolition movement is arguably more well-known. The abolition of the maritime trafficking of African enslaved people in 1807 followed a twenty-year campaign by individuals across Great Britain. Scotland was a

hotbed of abolitionist activity. A pamphlet produced by the 'Glasgow Society for the Abolition of the African Slave Trade' in 1791 concluded 'inhabitants of Glasgow, Paisley, and the neighbourhood, whose manufactures and trade are, by the blessing of God, in so thriving a condition, will surely not be averse to ... supporting the cause of justice and humanity'.³³ In 1792, 35 per cent of abolitionist petitions sent to the House of Commons were from Scotland – where around 9 per cent of British population resided – including from Glasgow presbyteries. The lack of counter-petitioning from Glasgow residents that year, according to Iain Whyte, was due to the lack of a West India Association in the city. Douglas Hamilton concurred that Glasgow did not have a formal pro-slavery organisation until 1807.³⁴

However, a West India Club, laid pro-slavery foundations in Glasgow. Similar clubs with a commercial function were also founded in London, Liverpool and Bristol. The Bristolian version was established in 1777, and since it followed Glasgow's example, the latter city's club must have been formed before then (and was thus in existence for almost twenty years).³⁵ Over the next two decades, Glasgow's West India Club had a membership structure comprised of elite merchants in executive positions: Robert Houston was President, John Gordon was chairman whilst John Campbell senior, Robert Bogle, Robert Mackay and Alexander Houston were involved.³⁶ The latter's firm, Alexander Houston & Co., was the most prominent Scottish-West India house: co-partners James and William McDowall were respectively Lord Provost of Glasgow (1790–1792, 1796–1798) and MP for Glasgow Burghs (1790–1802).³⁷

Anticipating the new commercial era after the American Revolution in 1776, the embryonic Glasgow-West India interest established alliances with similar organisations. The West India Club's minutes have not survived, if they ever existed, but other records reveal how members promoted vested interests. In March 1781, for example, Robert Mackay, Robert Dunmore and others petitioned the Town Council to construct a coffee house, sugar sample rooms and a broker's office in the Tontine Rooms.³⁸ Even if the West India Club's primary function was social in nature, bringing this group together facilitated collaborative political action.

On 18 March 1778, representatives of Alexander Houston and Co. corresponded with Richard Neave, the Chairman of the Committee of West India merchants in London, to request a united front in opposing Government measures to allow the direct export of sugar from the Caribbean to Ireland, effectively a 'foreign nation' under the Navigation Acts. According to Houston & Co.'s correspondence, sugar was 'the only Foreign trade of any consequence' still available to Glasgow firms post-revolution and by opposing the measures, the firm sought to maintain the thriving re-export trade in sugar from Scotland across the Irish Sea: a variation of the *entrepôt* trade in Virginia tobacco (before 1775, Glasgow merchants shipped the commodity onto

France). The firm had consulted both the mercantile and planter factions of the Glasgow interest, although they did not have unanimous backing:

Our neighbours ... West India planters ... [are] uncertain how it may operate as to their property, the idea of opening more markets for their produce seems to be for their Interest on the first view, but it is doubtful whither the present plan will not Co-operate with the trading part of the Nation that they will at least remain neuter.³⁹

As the Houstons decided the measures were not in the best interests of the merchants – as it would undermine their monopoly – they hoped planters would at least remain neutral. The firm formally contacted West India bodies in Liverpool, Greenock and Campbeltown. Although the restrictions were indeed removed, the correspondence reveals the incipient state of the Glasgow-West India interest. In 1778, co-operation was possible between merchants and planters – and the former could influence the latter’s position – but they do not seem to have been naturally aligned. Glasgow’s West India interest continued to lobby in the name of the merchants *only* in 1791, suggesting they remained separate factions.⁴⁰

By contrast, the Society of West India Merchants, and the British West India Society (of Planters) united in London from 18 January 1775. They continued as separate bodies but were joined under the auspices of the London Society of West India Planters and Merchants (‘LSWIPM’ here, but also known as the London West India Committee).⁴¹ The year 1778 or thereabouts marked the beginning of the organised British-West India interest as likeminded individuals in Glasgow connected with other bodies across Scotland, in London and other outports. From their perspective, this was timely as the movement for the abolition of the maritime trafficking in African enslaved people gathered pace across the next decade.

As the abolition movement evolved, dozens of pro-slave trade and anti-abolition petitions were sent to the Houses of Parliament from Britain’s Atlantic ports, especially in reaction to the news that William Wilberforce was preparing to advance the abolition question in early 1789.⁴² Six anti-abolition petitions were received from Bristol to the Houses of Parliament up to 1807, whilst Liverpool’s merchants and institutions sent sixty-four.⁴³ Iain Whyte was right to assert there were no anti-abolition petitions from Glasgow in 1792, but, as noted by Douglas Hamilton, there *was* formal support for its continuation amongst the city’s residents three years earlier.⁴⁴ It is almost certain the West India Club’s members were behind the solitary petition sent from Glasgow to the House of Commons on 25 April 1789.⁴⁵ Consistencies with the Glasgow and London petitions and those that followed from Bristol and Liverpool, on 12 and 20 May respectively, suggest collusion. All British petitions in early 1789 reminded Parliament that their activities were sanctioned under British legislature and all invoked mercantilist arguments that abolition would empower rival nations.⁴⁶

The Glasgow-West India interest provided only lukewarm political support for the pro-slave trade cause, and the available evidence suggests financial assistance was also limited. In April 1789, the LSWIPM established a fund to oppose abolition, compelling merchants to charge planters' a flat 'trade rate' (six-pence per hogshead) on imported produce.⁴⁷ Although it seems unlikely all sugar imported to the Clyde was subject to the London trade rate, if it *were* the contribution could have been as much as c.£4,500 in 1791.⁴⁸ Lowell Ragatz claimed that Glasgow's merchants declined to provide any aid at all.⁴⁹

But Glasgow merchants at least *attempted* to levy absentee planters in Scotland. In June 1789, West India firm John Campbell senior charged William Urquhart of Meldrum near Aberdeen his 'proportion of expences defending African Slave Trade'.⁵⁰ There is no evidence of large-scale financial assistance from Scotland, although the London body later requested the policy should continue, inferring at least some funds were received. In May 1792, the 'Sub-Committee of West India Planters & Merchants Appointed to Oppose the Abolition of the Slave Trade' – a sub-body of the LSWIPM established in 1788 – corresponded with Alexander Houston & Co. to request the 'further levying' of the trade rate.⁵¹ Thus, it seems Glasgow merchants attempted mercantile and financial collectivisation, but there was no prospect of sustained national pro-slave trade support. For one crucial reason: a significant cohort of West India merchants and absentees had not yet become established across Scotland, although they would do so later.

In April 1792, the amendment of Henry Dundas, the Scottish Home Secretary in the Pitt administration, introduced 'gradual abolition' in the House of Commons. The opening of war with France in early 1793 strengthened the British Government's resolve to gradual (rather than immediate) abolition. Moreover, West India commerce was a prime source of revenue and abolition would have posed a grave danger to the imperial economy and British military capabilities had it come to pass.⁵² The threat to abolition could only be temporarily delayed – the transatlantic trafficking in African enslaved people was abolished in 1807 – although the Glasgow-West India interest had only a small role in the first phase of British anti-abolitionism.

There were, however, major successes elsewhere. After the uprising in Grenada in 1795 – known as Fedon's Rebellion – the British government provided £1.5 m in loans in order to rebuild the island's slavery economy.⁵³ This was an important lobbying success for William McDowall and Alexander Houston & Co., whose co-partners claimed £240,000.⁵⁴ Henry Dundas, then MP for Edinburgh and Secretary of State for War, acted as surety for a portion of the loan.⁵⁵ The 'Board Commissioners for the Issue of Exchequer Bills' records reveal that co-partners in Glasgow firm John Campbell senior & Co. also claimed £40,000, and alongside the loans to Alexander Houston & Co., it seems that Glasgow firms collected around 18 per cent of the available £1.5million.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, Alexander Houston & Co. was liquidated in

1805. Co-partners William McDowall and Alexander Houston held a monopoly over the position of MP for Clyde Burghs between 1790 and 1806 (and Houston was re-elected in 1809 and 1818), although McDowall's political influence declined due to his worsening financial situation after 1805.⁵⁷ With the demise of this influential mercantile grouping, the political influence of the Glasgow-West India interest declined.

Glasgow's pro-slavery movement before 1807 was much more co-ordinated than previously assumed, yet much less organised than what it was to become. The anti-abolition petition of April 1789 was both a muted response and a bold assertion of a new commercial identity. For a mercantile group with no direct connections to the trafficking of enslaved people from Africa after 1766, the petition, and associated financial support (however small), reaffirmed the merchants' dependence upon transatlantic slavery and laid foundations for organised West India activities. By 1805, another firm, Robert Bogle & Co., took over collaboration with the LSWIPM on matters of trade.⁵⁸ Two years later, the Glasgow West India merchants themselves recognised that existing arrangements were inadequate:

Much inconveniences having been felt and much injury sustained by the want of mutual co-operation in matters affecting the General Interests of the [West India] trade, it was an object of great importance that the different Planters and Merchants ... should form themselves into a Public Association.⁵⁹

The Glasgow West India Association

The Glasgow West India Association was established in 1807 and became one of the foremost outpost lobbying groups. Two volumes of its records – now held in Glasgow City Archives – have informed this study. The first volume (Abstract 1807–1857) is a collation of original minute books. The Abstract was written up between 1867 and 1871, likely due to the poor state of originals. As the title suggests, some material was not included in the later reproduction. The Abstract provides irregular details of Directors and does not always provide non-office bearing members who attended general meetings of the Association. A volume of original Minutes (1832–1853) is more detailed and provides a comprehensive account up to emancipation in 1834.⁶⁰

Established in Glasgow at a meeting held on the 22 October 1807, it was based in the Tontine Rooms, a commercial hub frequented by colonial merchants. The Association met quarterly on the first Thursday of the month, with a new committee decided annually. The first committee – composed of individuals from prominent West India firms – adopted a traditional hierarchical structure. Robert Dennistoun, Francis Garden, Alexander Campbell and Robert Bogle junior were directors whilst John Gordon was appointed chairman. James Ewing was voted secretary, a position he held until 1810 and was

later chairman (1821–1824) and director (1811 & 1825). In his own words, he was fundamental in its establishment:

[I was] aware of the advantage to be derived from a combination of exertions ... and convinced that such a respectable body as the West India merchants of Glasgow should, when united, command a deference that could not be expected from the applications of individuals.⁶¹

Ewing had the vision for an organisation that collectivised resources, capital and connections. By 1809, twenty-nine major Glasgow-West India firms and sixty-three individuals annually subscribed to the Association, raising a pecuniary fund of over £1000 (of which £500 was spent by 1810).⁶² Colin Dunlop Donald succeeded James Ewing as secretary of the Association on 29 May 1810. With a background in Scots law and knowledge of West India commerce, Dunlop Donald was a natural choice as secretary of the Association and he later became secretary-treasurer.

The Association was ostensibly Glasgow's great pro-slavery triumph; if it had once proven difficult to levy merchants and planters across late-eighteenth-century Scotland, the GWIA facilitated the collection of funds at point of sale. In 1831 and 1832, the Glasgow West India Association annually raised around £1200 from sugar sold in the sample room at the city's Royal Exchange. In the grand scheme of things, however, this revenue provided a relatively small budget. For instance, the LSWIPM Literary Committee (a sub-committee established in 1823) had an annual budget of £20,000. By comparison, in 1832 the Glasgow Association's major outlay was Secretary Alexander McGregor's salary (£150 per year) as well as paying for his residency in London. That year, 3 per cent of annual income (£48 of £1201 sterling) was invested in pro-slavery advertising in newspapers such as the *Glasgow Courier*.⁶³

What were the Glasgow West India Association's defining features? Although comprehensive analysis of meetings (and therefore attendees) is hindered due to the incomplete nature of the records, ninety-five institutionally active individuals – who personally subscribed or attended a meeting – have been identified in the Glasgow West India Association's records for the crucial period 1807 to 1838. Forty-three personally subscribed in October 1807, with a further 52 subscribing or attending up to 1838.⁶⁴ Active membership (gauged by comparing numbers of known attendees at meetings as a percentage of estimated subscribers at certain points) was 35 per cent in February 1808,⁶⁵ 25 per cent in November 1812,⁶⁶ 28 per cent in November 1823,⁶⁷ declining to 25 per cent in December 1832.⁶⁸

The Glasgow West India Association membership peaked in 1807, with a declining membership up to 1834. The total membership of 95 across this period was large for an outpost body (with an average active attendance of 16). However, David Beck Ryden estimated 1,500 different men attended the LSWIPM's meetings between 1785 and 1807. But many were London residents

with no tangible West India connections and who attended simply to show 'solidarity'. Ryden noted the 'most active' membership (those with West India connections) was around fifty. Ryden also noted that the executive body of the LSWIPM, the Standing Committee, usually consisted of around fourteen attendees.⁶⁹ In 1832, GWIA membership numbered around 68 (many had died since 1807, and not all remained active up to emancipation) which seems to be much higher than outport counterparts the Bristol West India Association whose membership numbered twenty-nine in 1832.⁷⁰

The Glasgow West India Association was established in 1807 in a town transformed by the rise of the mercantile ranks during an era of Atlantic commerce. There seems to have been no aristocratic or gentry involvement in its establishment. It was mainly a mercantile lobbying body: most subscribers were co-partners in West India merchant firms (55 of 94 known occupations of subscribers/attendees), and these tended to be *arrivistes*.⁷¹ Within this group, thirty-six merchant-proprietors owned estates and enslaved people, many of whom later claimed compensation on emancipation in 1834 (see below). James Ewing, for instance, was initially a West India merchant in the 1790s, but later took ownership of Jamaican estates including Taylor Caymanas in St Catherine.⁷² Absentee planters, such as John Blackburn, a wealthy returnee from Jamaica, were in the minority (3). The GWIA planting interest (41 per cent of subscribers) appear less prominent compared to Bristol's late-eighteenth-century West India merchant community.⁷³

Whilst heavily mercantile-orientated, the Glasgow West India Association's planting interest became increasingly active as debates around emancipation progressed. At one Glasgow West India meeting in December 1832, around 82 per cent of the meeting's attendees (14 of 17) were merchant-proprietors, no doubt anxious to pose questions about the imminent emancipation and prospects of compensation.⁷⁴ This was similar to London. By 1824, the London Standing Committee was dominated by absentee planters, 'who were most engaged in the new antislavery debate'.⁷⁵

The colonial focus of the Glasgow West India Association's membership is revealed in [Table 1](#) which shows the commercial interests of individuals – the principal location which their firm traded, or the location in which they owned estates – which has been identified in eighty-nine cases. Some had more than one colonial interest, and others diversified into other colonies, but a judgment of principal zone has been taken for the purposes of this analysis. Colonial interest could change across the lifecycle of merchant firms. The partners of John Campbell senior & Co., for instance, were initially focused on Grenada from 1783 but shifted to Demerara after 1795.⁷⁶

Glasgow West India Association membership was dominated by Jamaica merchants and planters, followed, respectively, by those focusing on Trinidad, Demerara, Grenada and St Kitts. Colonies have been arranged in [Table 1](#) when they were subsumed into British Empire, according to B.W. Higman's three

Table 1. Membership of the Glasgow West India Association, 1807–1838 arranged by colonial interest.

| | All Subscribers 1807– 1838 | Initial Members (1807) | Subsequent Members (1808– 1838) |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Jamaica (1st phase) | 36% (34) | 44% (19) | 28% (15) |
| Trinidad (3rd phase) | 16% (15) | 7% (3) | 23% (12) |
| Demerara (3rd phase) | 14% (13) | 7% (3) | 19% (10) |
| Grenada (2nd phase) | 12% (11) | 16% (7) | 8% (4) |
| St Kitts (1st phase) | 7% (7) | 7% (3) | 8% (4) |
| St Thomas | 4% (4) | 7% (3) | 2% (1) |
| St Lucia (3rd phase) | 2% (2) | 0 | 4% (2) |
| Antigua (1st phase) | 2% (2) | 5% (2) | 0 |
| Guadeloupe | 1% (1) | 0 | 2% (1) |
| Unknown | 6% (6) | 7% (3) | 6% (3) |
| Total | 100% (95) | 100% (43) | 100% (52) |

Sources: GCA TD1683/1/1-2 Abstract and Minutes of the Glasgow West India Association and *Glasgow Herald* 1806-1834.

phases of English/British colonisation of the Caribbean. St Kitts (colonised 1623) and Jamaica (1655) were classic ‘first phase’ English colonies, whilst Grenada (1763) was colonised in the ‘second phase’. Trinidad (colonised in 1797–1802) was ‘third phase’. As were Demerara, Essequibo, and Berbice which were subsumed into the British Empire in 1796 and merged into British Guiana in 1831.⁷⁷

Around 15 per cent of the Glasgow West India Association membership were known to have been resident in the Americas at some point, especially Grenada and Jamaica. Most were Scots, although William Frederick Burnley took up a prominent role: born in Trinidad, he was the son of William Hardin Burnley, major enslaver and the island’s first *de facto* first Prime Minister.⁷⁸ These men not only brought high-level connections but gained practical experience in the colonies which, as will be shown, added credibility to political lobbying.

Comparing Glasgow-West India firms’ voyages that departed the Clyde for the West Indies between 1806 and 1834 with GWIA membership provides insights on the prominence of colonial interests. The Jamaica proportion of Association membership in Table 1 (35 per cent of shipping compared to 36 per cent of membership) was as expected. Merchants who traded with Trinidad (12 per cent shipping/16 per cent membership), Grenada (6 per cent shipping/12 per cent membership), and St Kitts (1 per cent shipping/7 per cent membership), were disproportionately powerful in membership. However, Demerara merchants were under-represented (21 per cent shipping/14 per cent GWIA membership). Additional insights are facilitated by comparing two sample periods in Table 1: those who personally subscribed on establishment of the Association in 1807, with additional subscribers or attendees whose names appear in the records between 1808 and 1838.⁷⁹ Whilst the Grenada and Jamaica groups remained prominent after 1807, the influx of those associated with new colonies, Demerara and especially Trinidad, was a key factor in Association’s continued success.

As revealed in [Table 2](#), the Jamaica cohort remained prominent in the leadership of the Glasgow West India Association. Twelve chairmen with Jamaica interests elected between 1807 and 1838 have been identified, covering a twenty-five-year period. Across the known years, Jamaica merchants were most commonly in office (12 years, or 48 per cent of known period), followed by merchants from Grenada (20 per cent), Demerara (20 per cent), and Trinidad (8 per cent). Robert Dennistoun, a St Kitts merchant, was elected Chairman in 1809. Archibald Smith of Jordanhill – whose firm Leitch & Smith had interests in Grenada and Jamaica – was elected Chairman on 20 January 1820, although he died just over a year later.⁸⁰ Forty-two directors elected between 1807 and 1835 have been identified.⁸¹ Across that period, the Jamaica cohort was most powerful (20 directors, or 48 per cent of known elected group) and had a majority in each sample period, directors with interests in Trinidad (17 per cent), Demerara (14 per cent), Grenada (12 per cent) and St Kitts (7 per cent). A St Lucia merchant, Robert Kinnier, was elected around 1832. Whilst the contingent from new colonies became increasingly powerful throughout the 1820s and 1830s, there was no real challenge to the Glasgow-Jamaica elite.

Overall, the Glasgow West India Association leadership as well as rank-and-file membership was dominated by a Jamaica cohort who retained control towards the end of Caribbean slavery. Similarly, the LSWIPM was almost exclusively dominated by absentee Jamaica planters and merchants from inception, although their control was weakened in the 1820s due to the influx of merchants and planters with interests in Trinidad and British Guiana.⁸² How did this shape organisational strategy? Angelina Osborne has questioned Ryden's view of a unified London West India bloc aligned behind the Jamaica interest.⁸³ But this really was the case with the GWIA. Unlike London, the GWIA did not form separate sub-groups such as the Demerara & Berbice Committee, remaining a monolithic body.⁸⁴ Moreover, analysis of the GWIA abstract of minutes between 1807 and 1834 suggests there was only limited colony-specific lobbying, usually raised by merchant firms on an issue-by-issue basis.⁸⁵

The Glasgow West India Association responded to major issues such as amelioration, creating an illusion of institutional benevolence in matters concerning plantation slavery. In the response to the Slave Registry bill in 1815 (see below), the group suggested approval for the abolition of the slave trade: 'the

Table 2. GWIA Chairmen's terms (in years) and elected Directors (by number), arranged by colonial interest, 1807-1838.

| | Jamaica | Trinidad | Demerara | Grenada | St Kitts |
|-----------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1807-1819 | 5 (Ch), 7 (Di) | 0 (Ch), 1 (Di) | 0 (Ch), 0 (Di) | 0 (Ch), 1 (Di) | 1 (Ch), 2 (Di) |
| 1820-1829 | 2 (Ch), 4 (Di) | 2 (Ch), 3 (Di) | 3 (Ch), 1 (Di) | 3 (Ch), 2 (Di) | 0 (Ch), 0 (Di) |
| 1830-1838 | 5 (Ch), 9 (Di) | 0 (Ch), 3 (Di) | 2 (Ch), 5 (Di) | 2 (Ch), 2 (Di) | 0 (Ch), 1 (Di) |
| Total | 12 yrs, 20 Dirs. | 2 yrs, 7 Dirs. | 5 yrs, 6 Dirs. | 5 yrs, 5 Dirs. | 1 yrs, 3 Dirs. |

Sources: GCA TD1683/1/1-2 Abstract and Minutes of the Glasgow West India Association and *Glasgow Herald* 1806-1834.

Association are ... satisfied of the wisdom and policy of the grounds on which the importation of slaves was abolished'.⁸⁶ Similarly, the Association leadership appeared to support the improvement of the lives of enslaved people in the colonies. On 15 May 1823, Thomas Fowell Buxton assumed the position of the parliamentary leader of the anti-slavery movement, and called for the gradual abolition of plantation slavery. George Canning, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the House, introduced several resolutions that ostensibly reformed slavery but also slowed the process down (see below). This reinvigorated the strategy known as amelioration which informed imperial governance and estate management during the abolition eras. The London West India interest helped shape ameliorative strategies in parliament in 1796 and, according to Michael Taylor, its members also drafted Canning's resolutions in 1823. Ostensibly intended to improve the lives of the enslaved, the strategy contributed to the delays of both abolition and emancipation.⁸⁷

In a May 1823 petition to the Earl of Liverpool (the P.M., Robert Jenkinson), the GWIA leadership reacted to the clamour for gradual emancipation by supporting an ameliorative strategy. The petition claimed that the 'prosperity of his Majesty's colonies in the West Indies ... depend on the quiet, orderly and contented state of the Negro population which your memorialists have ever been anxious to promote by attention to their comfort and happiness'. At the same time, the Association quoted familiar barriers to emancipation and invoked pro-slavery tropes: only colonial legislatures could assess and decide when the enslaved were ready for emancipation; slavery remained beneficial as it extended the 'privileges' of the enslaved and improved 'their character'; that emancipation would 'deprive' the enslaved of a 'comfortable existence ... [and] expose them to the consequences of that indolence'. The illusion of benevolence came with a warning: the 'preservation of authority' under slavery depended upon the 'influence of mental subordination' and emancipation would lead to 'insurrection, anarchy and bloodshed'. Any threat to the system of slavery, therefore, would endanger white colonial society and the British colonies themselves. Finally, the memorial reiterated the right to hold the enslaved as property (see below).⁸⁸ Whilst robust, the Glasgow West India Association did not attack abolitionists outright (unlike the Liverpool petition which condemned those calling for emancipation as 'disturbers of the peace').⁸⁹

At a meeting of 10 September 1823, the Association donated £100 to the 'Society for the Conversion & Religious Instruction & Education of the Negroe Slaves', which had been established by the Church of England. This donation was reported in *The Scotsman*, alongside the contributions from London, Liverpool and Bristol.⁹⁰ The GWIA donation was unique amongst British outports. The majority of GWIA membership were Presbyterian, and some – such as George Scheviz – contributed to the establishment of St Andrew's Scots Kirk in Kingston, Jamaica in 1813–1814.⁹¹ Contributing to a

pro-slavery Anglican body that ostensibly sought to Christianise the enslaved, whilst supporting the advance of Scottish Presbyterianism in the West Indies, was an ecclesiastical compromise that allowed the Association leadership to promote the ameliorative strategy.

As well as a propagandic function, the Glasgow West India Association lobbied on mercantile and planting issues, although their direct political influence at the national level was restricted in the pre-reform system. After the Union of 1707, Glasgow was a major economic force yet it was politically classified as one part of Clyde Burgh (alongside Dumbarton, Rutherglen and Renfrew). In effect, Glasgow only had a quarter share of an MP, which has been described as a classic case of 'political underrepresentation'.⁹²

Nevertheless, between 1807 and 1832, the GWIA normally retained the support of the Clyde Burgh MP (as well as two of the city's MPs after the Reform Act). Alexander Houston, MP for Clyde Burghs (1809, 1818–1819) had West India connections and petitioned for them on two occasions.⁹³ However, Kirkman Finlay, MP for Clyde Burghs (1812–1818), did not represent West India interests in parliament, with only one example of acting on their behalf in 1816.⁹⁴ That year, Finlay's own mercantile business shifted focus to the East Indies (and he championed free trade) explaining why he was not a committed West India interest ally. He later revealed he did not approve of acting on pledges to potential electors in return for votes (and thus his political stance was not defined by any 'interest').⁹⁵ His tenure as MP for Clyde Burghs saw the Glasgow West India Association without sympathetic parliamentary representation.

However, as will be shown below, although not a GWIA member Archibald Campbell of Blythswood (MP, 1806–1808, 1820–1831) was a resolute advocate of Glasgow West India interests. The GWIA courted support from MPs outside Clyde Burghs, including Lord W.R. Keith Douglas, MP for Dumfries Burghs (1812–1832) in 1830.⁹⁶ This level of political support was like Bristol. In 1832, one of the city's MPs was a member of the Bristol West India Association. Both were outranked by London where around 14 MPs annually attended LSWIPM meetings during the period 1823–1831.⁹⁷

The above analysis of the Association rank-and-file, leadership, strategies, and political influence allows a key question to be posed: what was distinctive about the Glasgow West India Association, if anything? In many ways, the Association was a typical pro-slavery lobbying group usually deferring to London and collaborating other outports. An elite grouping of men with commercial interests in the West Indies made up rank-and-file members and leadership role. It raised modest funds on an annual basis, which it deployed in pursuit of a pro-slavery agenda. Whilst a significant minority were merchant-proprietors, and owners of enslaved people, the planting interest seems smaller than Bristol. This was mainly a mercantile body. Like the London Society, the Glasgow Association was dominated by a Jamaica cohort, who

retained control in leadership throughout the 1820s and 1830s. Individuals focused on new colonies (especially Trinidad and Demerara) added a new dimension after 1808, and often took up leadership roles.

The Glasgow body responded to questions of amelioration in 1823 just like other pro-slavery associations in Britain, although their ecclesiastical compromise was unique. Glasgow's institutional approach to West India lobbying was also unusual. Rather than establishing sub-committees which focused on colony-specific matters, the Glasgow West India Association seems to have had a united approach to West India issues. Perhaps this helps to explain what seems to be another distinctive feature: the GWIA occasionally attempted a stand-alone outpost strategy separate from London, although, as will be shown, with no real prospect of success. Tracing lobbying during key events between abolition and emancipation elucidates this process.

West India Lobbying

In the face of perceived West India decline, the increasingly organised Glasgow-West India interest mounted a sophisticated Association offensive. In the aftermath of the St Domingue uprising and the subsequent disintegration of French competition in the international market, sugar prices boomed during the early 1790s. The increase in production after 1795 however led to declining profits which affected both metropolitan merchants and colonial planters, especially in first-phase colonies such as Jamaica.⁹⁸ The early nineteenth-century Glasgow sugar market was also saturated with low-quality products made from Otaheite cane, recently introduced to the colonies, which further decreased prices.⁹⁹

Even if Eric Williams was too early dating the origins of the West India economy's decline to 1776, a powerful Jamaica interest, feeling threatened by competition from the newer colonies, vociferously argued decline *was* real and lobbied the government on that basis. The Glasgow West India Association was therefore established in an era of perceived economic distress – with a powerful Jamaica cohort dominating rank-and-file well as leadership. The GWIA's early minutes reveal a strategy to address these circumstances. An eight-point manifesto laid out policies to influence commerce, shipping and customs including duties on imports and drawbacks (the reimbursement of duties if imports were subsequently re-exported). The progress of bills in London and parliamentary business was cited as a principal consideration. The long-established strategy of mutual co-operation within a wider West India interest – previously undertaken on an *ad-hoc* basis by merchant firms – was prioritised in order to promote 'the great advantages which would result to all by their associating themselves together for the common good, and the benefit which would naturally arise'.¹⁰⁰

This was a multi-faceted strategy designed for various fronts although the ultimate aim, of course, was to influence legislators. The GWIA and Glasgow Chamber of Commerce collaborated on petitions concerning matters of trade, a policy that continued intermittently throughout the nineteenth century.¹⁰¹ However, the GWIA strategic *raison d'être* was increased collaboration with West India organisations in London and other outports. Indeed, requests for co-operation from such bodies was the first business laid before the directors in 1807. The manifesto therefore granted the Directors authority to appoint agents in Edinburgh and England and the first action of the Association was to formally reply to requests from Liverpool and London to assist:

Such measures as may appear to them most advisable and best calculated to impress on the minds of His Majesty's Ministers the distressed state of the West India Colonies and induce them to afford to the present interests therein the most speedy and effectual relief.¹⁰²

The shared agenda underpinned long-term connections across the British-Atlantic world. In early 1808, an official deputation travelled south hoping to prevent the 'downfall [of the] commercial maritime and financial interests of this kingdom'.¹⁰³ On 10 February, John Blackburn and James Ewing attended an LSWIPM sub-committee meeting – alongside deputations from Liverpool, Bristol, Edinburgh and Leith – to discuss alleviating the distress of the sugar planters.¹⁰⁴ This was the first mention of GWIA in the records of the LSWIPM and marked the establishment of co-institutional pro-slavery collaboration that endured to emancipation.

Correspondence with the Society of Merchant Venturers in Bristol also reveals collusion over many years. In some cases, Glasgow petitions destined for Parliament were simultaneously sent to Bristol revealing co-operation on crucial issues such as defending the institution of plantation slavery.¹⁰⁵ Mutual support with local organisations and other bodies across Great Britain shaped provincial matters and national policies.

The Glasgow West India Association had well-developed strategy that advanced their position in the Houses of Parliament. The Association relied upon individuals with vested interests, preferably with colonial experience, for testimony. Whilst in London in 1808, John Blackburn (formerly of Jamaica) and Colin McLachlan (formerly of the Danish West Indies) gave evidence to a Parliamentary Committee examining the distillation of sugar and molasses later that same year.¹⁰⁶

But discussions of plantation slavery seem to have been completely absent in the early years of the Glasgow West India Association. This was similar to the LSWIPM; as parliamentary discussions around abolition decreased between 1807 and 1815, both organisations focused on mercantile issues such as sugar duties. The London society was spurred into action when the issue of gradual abolition of plantation slavery was raised by Thomas Fowell Buxton in

1823.¹⁰⁷ The Glasgow Association mobilised earlier. The issue of slavery first appeared in the Association records in March 1816, in reaction to the Slave Registry bill that was lodged in the House of Commons the previous year. This administrative exercise – effectively a census – sought to record details of enslaved people in the colonies, which would have the effect of prohibiting illegal importation.¹⁰⁸ The GWIA passed a resolution that:

The West India colonies have been productive of great benefit to the country in general and to this city in particular. That is therefore peculiarly incumbent on this Association to come forward when any attempt is made to attack the rights, privileges or character of the colonies.¹⁰⁹

This was an expression of unreserved solidarity with West India colonists, in opposition to perceived parliamentary infringement on colonial affairs. Requests were made to Kirkman Finlay and the MP for Lanarkshire, Lord Archibald Hamilton, to present a petition in the House of Commons.¹¹⁰ However, there is no evidence that either did so, underlining the inadequacy of the Association as a pro-slavery lobbyist group whilst Finlay was MP (1812–1818). It is perhaps no coincidence that in early 1816, GWIA directors found it ‘necessary to have a person ... to attend to the business of the Association there and to give notice of all motions in Parliament relative to the West India affairs’. They appointed John Richardson, a solicitor in Westminster.¹¹¹

Throughout the next decade, the Glasgow West India Association were unfailingly represented in Parliament by Archibald Campbell of Blythswood, MP for Glasgow Burghs (1820–1831).¹¹² The Association had long campaigned to alleviate perceived West India distress, and with the passing of the West Indian and American Trade Bill passed 24 June 1822 the privileges were seemingly restored. Commerce with American merchants was opened up again and the rights of West India planters to export sugar to Europe was reinstated. Although results were ultimately less impressive than expected, the measures were greeted as a triumph at the time.¹¹³

The Government also consented to refund duties on foreign spirits which placed the West India trades in outports ‘on the same footing with that of London’, which was communicated by James Ewing to the Glasgow press.¹¹⁴ At a general GWIA meeting in the Tontine Tavern on 11 September 1822, formal thanks were offered to Blythswood and Ewing, as the latter had spent two months in London ‘wholly engaged’ with the ‘important public measures connected with the West India Interests’. Blythswood was also singled out for his ‘indefatigable and useful exertions in behalf of West India interests’ and attention to:

The welfare of the city, for the zealous regard which he has always evinced for the prosperity of the Colonial Interest; and in particular, for his cordial and efficient co-operation with Mr. Ewing as representing the Trade.

Blythswood was later honoured at the dinner held 'at the expense of the West India Merchants and Planters' and he reciprocated support for the Association in subsequent years.¹¹⁵

In the 1820s, Archibald Campbell introduced petitions in the House of Commons on behalf of both factions of Glasgow's West India interest. On 17 May 1822, he presented a petition on behalf of the 'certain West India merchants ... praying for a modification of the laws relative to bonded goods'.¹¹⁶ On the same day, he presented a petition from West India planters, lobbying to ensure that duties on East Indies produce remained constant.¹¹⁷ In March 1824, Blythswood presented a petition on behalf of the tradesmen and planters of Glasgow and Greenock, 'praying the house take into consideration the question of continuing the duties on rum' (the 'Duties on Colonial Rum Act' was passed that year).¹¹⁸ He was a vocal critic of the Glasgow abolition movement in May 1826, publicly claiming that an anti-slavery petition was 'signed in a great degree by schoolboys' and 'some of the petitioners had appended their names six or seven times over'.¹¹⁹ In 1828, Blythswood forwarded a memorial from the Association to the Duke of Wellington requesting a reduction of the duties in sugar and rum.¹²⁰

The Glasgow-West India interest thus enjoyed strong Parliamentary representation in the 1820s, which was a dramatic improvement from the previous decade. In terms of shaping policy, the Glasgow West India Association successfully lobbied on the maritime infrastructure of the River Clyde and Broomielaw harbour in March 1809. This resulted in an act that developed the river Clyde for large-scale navigation.¹²¹ It is more difficult to assess the relative importance of regional lobbying in shaping imperial policy. The Glasgow West India Association celebrated the passage of the West Indian and American Trade Bill 24 June 1822 as if they were the leading advocates, but in fact this was the result of lobbying by planters over four decades.¹²² Overall, the GWIA seem to have been less successful at shaping government policy than contemporaries the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, but more effective than the Glasgow Association of Master Cotton Spinners.¹²³ Perhaps the GWIA's greatest achievement was contributing to a national pro-slavery movement, although with a touch of hubris at times, since the Glasgow leadership wrongly assumed they could occasionally pursue a unilateral outpost strategy.

Glasgow and London West India Interests

During the slavery era, The London Society of West India Planters and Merchants (LSWIPM) were the 'leading interest' in Great Britain and were referred to as such at various times in GWIA records. The Association took advice from the leadership in London, in addition to consulting allies in Liverpool and Bristol, on various issues such as freight prices between British ports.¹²⁴ Comparing the records of the organisations in Glasgow and London reveals a

sustained collaborative relationship. Whilst obviously subordinate to London due to the latter group's greater finances and political influence, this period saw a remarkable transformation in the status of the Glasgow interest. In addition to adroitly promoting their own distinctive activities at local and regional levels, the leadership and rank-and-file membership came to be prominently represented in LSWIPM's executive bodies, the Standing and Acting Committees, whilst occasionally attempting to implement a unilateral Glasgow strategy.

The employment of James MacQueen as a colonial propagandist reveals how the GWIA influenced London sub-committees. Born in Crawford, Lanarkshire, MacQueen was employed as a plantation overseer in Grenada in the 1790s. Following his return to Scotland in 1810, MacQueen promoted West India interests, especially via his commercial reports in *Blackwoods Magazine* from 1817.¹²⁵ It is almost certain MacQueen was a member of the Glasgow Association, although when he first subscribed is unknown.¹²⁶ In the early 1820s, MacQueen became editor of the pro-slavery newspaper the *Glasgow Courier* and the LSWIPM awarded him 100 Guineas in approval of his work as early as 1823. In June that year, the 'Sub-Committee to Protect the Interest of the Colonies Through the Press' was formed in London and MacQueen was a natural candidate for collaboration.¹²⁷ On 3 January 1824, James Ewing wrote to his London counterpart, Charles Ellis, recommending MacQueen as someone who 'advocates the cause *con amore* [with love]'. He proposed his almost completed manuscript – which criticised abolitionist Thomas Clarkson – for publication. Ewing advised MacQueen to defer to the 'superior judgement' of the LSWIPM ahead of the publication of his pamphlet which eventually became *The West India Colonies* (1824). The literary sub-committee advised revision of the manuscript – sections were described as 'illegible' – and the omission of entire sections. After a misunderstanding over responsibility for publication costs, the LSWIPM adopted MacQueen's work and reimbursed publisher William Blackwood in early 1825 (probably after the Association refused to pay).¹²⁸

The Glasgow West India Association subsequently paid MacQueen 250 Guineas as well as expenses and ordered six hundred copies of the book.¹²⁹ The London Committee commissioned MacQueen to condense letters related to St Domingue and Sierra Leone (previously published in the *Glasgow Courier*) which became *The Colonial Controversy* in 1825. James Ewing thus recommended MacQueen to Charles Ellis, in the process deferring to superior expertise and greater finances of the London Committee who in turn adopted MacQueen as the paid spokesperson for the British West India interest. By 1829, he was reputed to have been paid up to £15,000 by West India planters.¹³⁰ MacQueen's influence stretched across the Atlantic; he was at the forefront of a plan to establish a printing press in the Caribbean colonies on behalf of the West India interest although it is unclear whether or not this

was eventually established.¹³¹ In any case, MacQueen's work with the *Glasgow Courier* was, of course, well-known in Jamaica and beyond.

Paradoxically, the work of the Glasgow West India Association had limited effect in shaping regional opinion. The leadership attempted to mobilise a wider pro-slavery lobby in Scotland as early as 1824, with the aim of establishing a 'general union & cooperation of the Colonial Interest ... for the Defence of the Common rights ... [and] opening the eyes of the Public'. A minor West India Association was active in northern Scotland. Overall, however, the 'number who declared their acquiescence was comparatively so small' and the directors abandoned the strategy. Douglas Hamilton explains this as an institutional failure to 'extrapolate from coherent personal networks into a nationwide public campaign'.¹³² Indeed, it is evident the Glasgow West India Association failed to engage with, and mobilise, Scotland's manufacturing ranks.

In 1825, the Scottish economy remained dependent upon Caribbean slavery. That year, the British West Indies provided Scotland with more imports (by official value) than the United States, British North America and Asia combined, with a similar relationship in terms of exports.¹³³ In 1825, the two leading sectors of the Scottish economy were inextricably connected to Atlantic slavery. 231,700 people were employed in textiles – cotton manufacturing (154,000 workers) and linen (77,370) – approximately 10 per cent of the Scottish population.¹³⁴ In 1830, the work of around 78,000 handloom weavers, mainly located in west-central Scotland, was import/export-orientated and connected to Atlantic commerce.¹³⁵ Scottish elites were not the only beneficiaries of Caribbean slavery. Yet, it is doubtful if even the great colonial mouthpiece James MacQueen could have mobilised Glasgow's textile workers – even if such employment was inextricably connected with Caribbean slavery – as they were long assumed to be sympathetic to abolitionism and were often characterised in terms of 'white slavery' themselves.¹³⁶

The Glasgow West India leadership also took a more direct approach at influencing London strategy, advising the LSWIPM in late 1825 how to best represent their case in the Houses of Parliament. The strategy, devised by the GWIA Chairman Charles Stuart Parker and other members, was designed to delay or avoid Government measures for emancipation which, according to them, would 'deeply affect the welfare and even the existence of the great interests ... involved'.¹³⁷ London counterparts were presented with a transatlantic scheme to defeat the abolitionist politicians who had escalated parliamentary demands to end slavery in 1826. Firstly, the Association petitioned His Majesty's Government demanding a delay to the measures until evidence was presented by deputations 'as to the effect of such propositions on the Rights of the Colonial Proprietors'. Secondly, they corresponded with West India bodies in London, Liverpool and Bristol as well as various assemblies in the British West Indies. The GWIA demanded cooperation with the 'Standing

Committee of West India Planters and Merchants of London, and not with the Committee of Merchants only'.¹³⁸ This was an important point; the Standing Committee had much more political influence and lobbied on national, not provincial, matters.

The Glasgow leadership thus recommended a transatlantic approach to parliamentary business based around a pro-slavery alliance of merchants and planters in the metropole as well as colonists. However, whilst the LSWIPM agreed on the critical nature of the debate, the leadership was opposed to the involvement of colonial deputations ostensibly due to costs and the impracticality of inviting colonists at short notice.¹³⁹ The strained relationship with colonial assemblies – due to the latter's refusal to implement ameliorative policies, a long-standing issue going back to 1797 – provides ample context for the lack of a co-operative relationship. But the London leadership partially compromised to Glasgow's requests, agreeing a closer approach between metropolis and outports with deputations invited to attend Parliament for the upcoming session.¹⁴⁰

Major debates around the status of enslaved people provided the opportunity to test this strategy. In July 1827, a Privy Council preliminary hearing in London examined proposals related to compulsory manumission of enslaved people in Demerara and Berbice. This followed petitions in November 1826 from planters in Glasgow and planters and mortgagees in London, with both groups appealing to the Privy Council to avert the introduction of manumission.¹⁴¹ Glasgow petitioners included James and Mungo Campbell, co-partners of John Campbell senior & Co. whilst the planters and mortgagees who petitioned from London included Colin Macrae, a Scottish attorney for the same firm. Macrae was based in Demerara but resided in London from June 1826 and attended LSWIPM meetings, including the 'Berbice and Demerara Sub-Committee' established in November that year.¹⁴² This body sent communications in November 1826 'soliciting cooperation' and requesting funds from Associations in outports. The fight against compulsory manumission in Berbice and Demerara (which followed a similar order in Trinidad) was viewed as an important test case and the West India interest hoped to prevent similar measures being implemented in other colonies with independent legislatures.

The respective bodies in London and outports had a difference in opinion over strategy. Whilst Liverpool and Bristol entrusted the London sub-committee to present their case, the Glasgow West India Association took separate legal advice and instructed a London solicitor, James Heywood Markland, with George Hibbert as counsel. Both were heavily involved with the LSWIPM: Markland was described as the 'best informed professional ... on West India affairs' whilst merchant and leading pro-slavery lobbyist Hibbert was employed to represent the cause '*con amore* [with love]'.¹⁴³ As the Privy Council rules prohibited joint-representation on the same case –

and Hibbert was not prepared to argue it was a 'separate interest' – the London case proceeded alone.¹⁴⁴

At the full Privy Council hearing in November 1827, Colin Macrae presented evidence opposing manumission based on almost twenty-five years on Demerara as an attorney and planter.¹⁴⁵ Whilst this effort by the West India interest seems to have brought the Government proposals on manumission to a standstill, the GWIA had little real input. One of their associates evidently delivered strong pro-slavery testimony although probably at the behest of London. Subsequently, the GWIA later refused to contribute to the costs incurred by London and other outports as their aborted attempt in July 1827 had already cost £150.¹⁴⁶ Unable to present a separate case, this episode demonstrated the futility of attempts to pursue a separate outport strategy. The leadership of the Glasgow West India Association may have aspired to implement a distinctive strategy but did not have the appropriate financial or political clout to do so.

The London Society West India Planters and Merchant's Standing Committee was the coordinating authority that traditionally organised official activities. David Beck Ryden has estimated that around fourteen members were usually present at meetings during which members decided agendas and resolutions as well as appointments for sub-committees. Members also organised lobbyists and managed Society finances. However, the executive tasks of the Standing Committee were gradually taken over by a newly established Acting Committee. After April 1829, the Standing Committee had more of a general meeting role.¹⁴⁷ Whilst the powers of the Standing Committee were diluted, the GWIA leadership had an increased presence. Indeed, in April 1829 seven individuals were elected members of the Standing Committee – the most conspicuous group from outport residences – and were therefore able to exert more (nominal) influence than those from Bristol and Liverpool Associations.¹⁴⁸

Glasgow representatives elected to the Standing Committee were involved with elite merchant firms with multiple interests: James Ewing (Jamaica), William Smith (Trinidad), Mungo Campbell and Colin Campbell (Demerara and Grenada), James Eccles (Trinidad), William Hamilton (Jamaica) and James MacQueen. Five of the seven were involved in the Association's executive in the 1820s. These nominations underline just how important Ewing was to the collaborative strategy. As the first secretary in 1807, he initiated stronger connections with London. As Chairman and Director in the early 1820s, he consolidated the relationships. By 1829, Ewing became an outport member of the LSWIPM, the most influential pro-slavery network in the Atlantic world. The mutually beneficial relationship was sealed in December 1830 when a Glasgow representative Mr. McGregor (most likely the secretary) attended Acting Committee meetings and was nominated part of a sub-committee to prepare resolutions on the commercial difficulties faced by West

India planters.¹⁴⁹ Thus, members of the Glasgow-West India interest were represented on sub-committees, the main advisory and executive bodies.

By 1833, Glasgow was again the fourth British sugar port – 22,000 tons of sugar imported, compared to Bristol's 24,000 – and thus contributed the lowest share to the LSWIPM's expenses (£415, 12 per cent of £3,365).¹⁵⁰ If Glasgow's pro-slavery bodies had failed to provide substantial financial assistance in the campaign to oppose abolition before 1807, this was no longer the case during the campaign to oppose the abolition of plantation slavery. Moreover, GWIA subscribers were involved at all levels in London and seemingly took on a more prominent role than representatives from other outports, exemplified by the reconfiguration of the Standing Committee. These close ties were to serve them well, for as will be shown, the Glasgow-West India interest fought a vicious campaign in the final battle against emancipation.

Campaign for 'Full and Ample Indemnity'

At the height of his political career in the 1820s, Archibald Campbell of Blythswood promoted the parliamentary interests of the Glasgow West India Association and allied organisations across Great Britain. On 12 May 1823, he presented a petition to Parliament from 'owners, planters and merchants, residing in London' that reiterated their right to hold the 'negro population' as property and to maintain discipline and preserve order.¹⁵¹ The petition itself was raised around the same time as George Canning laid out his resolutions. In 1823, a renewed abolitionist campaign sought to abolish not only the maritime trafficking in enslaved people, but also the entire system of plantation slavery in the British West Indies. On 15 May, Thomas Fowell Buxton, William Wilberforce's successor, attempted to introduce a proposal which supported full emancipation. However, this was superseded by a series of resolutions proposed by Canning. These slowed the process down by means of a series of gradual ameliorative reforms that offered the prospect of compensation for slave-owners upon emancipation, which effectively ensured further profits for West India merchants and planters until settlement. Canning's resolutions therefore, set the context of the public debate between the abolitionists and slave-owners up to 1838. On the one hand, the resolutions provided practical steps for the improvement of slave conditions and eventual emancipation. On the other, the resolutions provided a basis for compensation and initiated the 'property in men' debate. Both sides cited the resolutions in the years to come.¹⁵²

There is a developing historiography of West India lobbying prior to emancipation, although this has generally been examined from a British perspective.¹⁵³ This regional approach traces how the GWIA influenced public opinion at local and national levels as well as Parliamentary policy. In May 1823, the Association fired an opening salvo in the debate. Representing

themselves as paternalist slave-owners with the right to own human property, the petition to the Earl of Liverpool (the Prime Minister, Robert Jenkinson) outlined their stance:

That as their property has been acquired under the solemn sanction of His Majesty's Government and is held by the same tenure and on the same security as any estates in the British Dominions, they are clearly entitled to the same justice and protection and if on public grounds an infringement should be made on their private rights or an injury be sustained on their private fortunes, they do with the utmost confidence in the faith of their country, enter their claim for full & ample indemnity.¹⁵⁴

Their position was clear: the enslaved were chattel property protected by the laws of Great Britain, a view which was further elucidated by James MacQueen. By the 1830s, MacQueen returned to Glasgow from the West Indies and addressed anti-abolitionist letters to dignitaries such as recently deposed Tory Prime Minister Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington. In advance of publication in *Blackwoods Magazine*, MacQueen contacted West India bodies in Liverpool, London and Bristol in the name of 'the Colonial cause, not for myself'. As a result, he managed to secure five hundred advance orders for the publication ensuring a broad dissemination of pro-slavery views.¹⁵⁵

The Glasgow West India Association again attempted to mobilise pro-slavery interests. To oppose the 'misrepresentation of their enemies' (the Anti-Slavery Society), the Association resolved on 29 October 1830 to form 'local associations' in Scotland and Ireland. Proposals were also forwarded to West Indies bodies in London, Liverpool and Bristol for consultation.¹⁵⁶ Whilst this failed, a relatively high number of pro-slavery petitions were sent from Scotland in 1833, including from Glasgow, Edinburgh, and especially the Black Isle (10 of 16 known place names on the petitions). As Hamilton notes, more were sent from the Black Isle than were sent from England!¹⁵⁷

But there is no suggestion the wider public were persuaded to the pro-slavery cause, exemplified by a meeting in Glasgow in January 1833. Students who attended Old College (now the University of Glasgow) held a meeting in Anderson's College (the predecessor of the modern Strathclyde University) to petition for the abolition of colonial slavery. The chair, Mr Park, noted that 'advocates [of slavery] were so few and far between, and confined only to the bloody scene of oppression itself, or to those who reaped the fruits of it'. A small group of relatives of West India planters and merchants disagreed and, armed with huge sticks, attempted to disrupt proceedings. Abolitionist students 'returned blows with equal vigour'. The West Indians were ejected, and each of the event's subsequent speakers recorded their 'uncompromising hostility to slavery in every degree'.¹⁵⁸ By then in Glasgow, it seems that it was only vested interests who supported the continuation of plantation slavery.

The West India interest did not need to win hearts and minds but instead sought to convince legislators of the validity of their perceived right to hold men as property and if the nature of that property was altered, their claim to compensation. In 1826, James Graham, 4th Duke of Montrose, presented a petition from merchants and planters of Glasgow ‘praying compensation for injury to [West India] property’.¹⁵⁹ Sustained agitation by the West India interest was successful and a Parliamentary Inquiry was appointed in 1831 to investigate conditions. At the resulting meeting of the ‘Select Committee on the Commercial State of the Colonies’ that opened in February 1832, James MacQueen’s detailed testimony underlined the distressed state of the colonies and the sacrosanct nature of West India property (land and enslaved people).¹⁶⁰

After communication with the LSWIPM leadership in early May 1832, GWIA counterparts recommended a further thirty-two potential witnesses – including returned sojourners, plantation owners, naval captains and doctors – who would appear in the upcoming inquiries to provide ‘valuable evidence if required’ on conditions in Jamaica, Demerara, Berbice, Trinidad, Grenada, Tobago, St Lucia, St Vincent and Antigua.¹⁶¹ At the subsequent meetings of the House of Lords Select Committee which sat between May and August 1832 (and only took evidence about Jamaica), 3 of 24 witnesses were Association recommended and delivered rosy accounts of plantation society.¹⁶² Further recommended speakers gave further expert testimony at the subsequent ‘Select Committee on the Extinction of Slavery’ in May 1832.¹⁶³

As the West India question reached crisis point in early 1833, the Association implemented a familiar strategy which was referred to retrospectively in the minutes.¹⁶⁴ By this point, emancipation was *fait accompli* but the enslavers fought for compensation. Firstly, the Association was involved with the commission of a pamphlet entitled ‘The Origin and Progress of West India Slavery’ which presented a nuanced legal and political justification of slave-ownership. According to the pamphlet, the English and subsequently British Parliament passed legislation that had enabled the slave trade and provided land grants for colonists. Thus, the nation’s political legislators were directly responsible for the chattel slavery system. Furthermore, according to them, the acquisition of enslaved people in the West Indies was protected by British property laws, while the nation benefited from related duties and tax. Thus, ‘if it is a sin, it is a sin in which the country has had its full share of guilt, and ought to bear its proportion of the redemption’. The redemption, of course, was full and ample compensation. One thousand copies were produced and published in several newspapers, sent to the LSWIPM and to all Members of Parliament.¹⁶⁵

Furthermore, when it became clear that lengthy Parliamentary inquiries were to be concluded (against their wishes), the Association petitioned Parliament and encouraged other groups and individuals to do the same to demonstrate ‘the importance of the interests’. As in previous campaigns there was

collaboration with other West India bodies, especially London. However, during this critical period, Colin Dunlop Donald was replaced as secretary by Alexander McGregor between 1832 and 1834. A.G. Milne, a commercial associate of John Campbell, senior, & Co., was appointed by the Association in April 1832 to represent their interests in the capital.¹⁶⁶ On 12 May, the Association leadership notified the LSWIPM's Acting Committee that Milne was their agent in London and requested he is afforded 'any facilities in your power in obtaining information for our body'. He attended at least three meetings between June 1832 and February 1833, thus providing the Glasgow-West India interest with representation at the highest level during the debates over emancipation.¹⁶⁷

After 1831, the Association were without their Parliamentary mouthpiece, Campbell of Blythswood, and instead used Lord W.R. Keith Douglas, MP for Dumfries Burghs (1812-1832), who has been described as a 'central figure in the West Indian campaign', to raise petitions in the lower house in 1830.¹⁶⁸ However, the election of James Ewing – one of the first two MPs for Glasgow after the Reform Act in 1832 – restored the Glasgow West India network at the highest level. Just two months before his election in December 1832, Ewing – by then the Lord Provost of Glasgow – was denounced in *The Reformers Gazette* as a West India financier who advanced credit to resident planters and his status as the 'absolute proprietor of numerous gangs ... of Slaves in the Colonies' publicly exposed.¹⁶⁹ In the week leading up to the election, the Anti-Slavery Society – who mounted a nationwide campaign against potential MPs who owned enslaved people – publicly demanded electors should only vote for candidates who supported immediate emancipation.¹⁷⁰ Thus, despite public criticism of Ewing amidst a wider anti-slavery campaign, he was returned by a close majority in December 1832. In what has been described as a 'Anti-slavery parliament', Glasgow's newly enfranchised electorate pushed back, returning the city's *de facto* leader of the West India interest to Parliament.¹⁷¹ Whilst the West India faction in parliament was opposed to reform as it weakened their influence in the House of Commons (and pro-reform MPs helped ease in the Emancipation Act a year later) the election of Ewing ensured the Glasgow interest were well-represented in the battle ahead.¹⁷²

In February 1833, discussions were held between GWIA representatives and the two MPs for Glasgow, James Ewing and James Oswald, as well as Robert Wallace, MP for Greenock. In early March, the Association sent a Memorial to Earl Grey, First Lord of the Treasury, which was also transmitted to Ewing and Oswald to raise in Parliament. The petition reiterated the Association's claim for 'just and ample compensation'. The Association also 'induced' the Chamber of Commerce and banks and banking companies in the west of Scotland to petition for a 'cautious, safe and satisfactory adjustment of the Slavery question', with similar petitions from Port Glasgow and Greenock.¹⁷³ Local

banks subsequently sent a petition to Earl Grey, (Charles Grey, P.M.), in March 1833:

We, the undersigned, Bankers of Glasgow and the West of Scotland ... cannot doubt for a moment ... contemplating such an extensive change ... [that] His Majesty's Ministers have duly considered the various and manifold consequences ... But your Memorialists cannot refrain from stating, that from their knowledge of the financial relations between the colonial trade and the general commerce of the country, any sudden alteration of these relations might produce effects very seriously injurious to commercial credit. And while they hope that every precaution has been taken to prevent that shock [to the] credit of the country ... your Memorialists respectfully, but earnestly, entreat His Majesty's Government make such provisions as will avert so destructive a calamity.¹⁷⁴

This petition invoked a familiar argument that parliamentary interference with West India capital – plantations and resident slaves – would be catastrophic for the British credit system.¹⁷⁵

To achieve their goals, the Association made full use of the national connections. The banking petition was sent to Bristol, perhaps to inform a similar strategy.¹⁷⁶ The GWIA also sent a high-level deputation to London to 'co-operate in the present critical state of affairs with the West India body of the metropolis, and the Delegates from the colonies and the outports'.¹⁷⁷ These representatives left Glasgow for London on 1 May and both Ewing and Oswald provided them with 'valuable services during [the] important negotiations and debates relative to the question of Emancipation'.¹⁷⁸

On 10 May 1833, the Government's proposals for emancipation were presented to the West India interest for consultation. Key points were published in *The Times* three days before it was submitted to Parliament which gave the colonial secretary, Edward Stanley, the opportunity to gauge public opinion.¹⁷⁹ The proposals included a loan of £15million to slave-owners as compensation, as well the right to the labour of former slaves under the Apprenticeship scheme for an unspecified period.¹⁸⁰ These two points were deemed unsatisfactory by the West India interest in London and Glasgow. Consecutive GWIA general meetings were called in the Royal Exchange Rooms in Glasgow on 13 and 18 May, during which members unanimously resolved to send a deputation to London to criticise the plan's impracticality.¹⁸¹ At a subsequent meeting in late June 1833, the Association compiled a memorandum of 'suggestions to His Majesty's Government, in reference to the plan of Emancipation'. Regarding compensation for proprietors of West India estates, they demanded a grant of £20 million as well as an additional loan of £10 million and an extended Apprenticeship of 12 years.¹⁸² These claims were consistent with those made by the West India interest in London, suggesting a degree of collaboration to increase the effectiveness of the pressure.

There is little commentary in the Association minutes about the immediate reaction to the passing of the Emancipation Act, which was given Royal Assent

on 28 August 1833. Slavery in the British colonies was subsequently abolished on 1 August 1834. The Act represented both a defeat and victory for the West India lobby in Britain. Major concessions were made, evidenced by comparing the Act's main points with earlier demands. In the Act, the Apprenticeship period was set at six years (a reduction from the 12 years demanded). However, in a significant increase from the loan of £15 m initially proposed by Stanley, the level of compensation was re-defined as a grant of £20 million.¹⁸³ This remarkable award was widely perceived as an unprecedented concession to West India demands – except by the enslavers themselves, of course.

The Glasgow West India Association pamphlet *The Case of the British West Indies* (1852) noted that whilst the grant was popularly viewed as munificent, slave-owners only received a total of £16million which, the authors argued, represented no more than 15 per cent of the real value of their property, including land, works and machinery rendered useless, which they believed to be worth over £120million. Similarly, the Association complained about the duration of the Apprenticeship scheme. Originally set at six years, the scheme ended prematurely in 1838 which was 'utterly disastrous' for West India proprietors as the loss of forced labour had reduced the plantations to 'nothing but a huge expenditure now rendered incapable of making any return for the capitalist'.¹⁸⁴ Thus, although the West India lobby agreed a solution almost on their own terms, it was not enough. Despite their complaints, the extent of the compensation award was indeed munificent; it constituted 40 per cent of the expenditure of the heavily indebted Government in 1834 and remains one of the greatest financial operations carried out by the British state.¹⁸⁵ By way of comparison, when the American government ended slavery in 1865 not a penny of compensation was paid to slave-owners.

The *Legacies of British Slavery* project reveals at least thirty-two personal subscribers of the GWIA (around 50 per cent of surviving membership) were involved with compensation claims totalling around £370,000 in 1834, equivalent to £335 m in modern values (relative to the worth of average earnings in 2020).¹⁸⁶ Most by value was awarded for enslaved people in British Guiana (59 per cent of total value), followed by claims in Trinidad (19 per cent), Jamaica (12 per cent), and Grenada (8 per cent). All colonies (except Jamaica) were subsumed into the British Empire after the Union of 1707 and Scots had evidently taken full advantage.¹⁸⁷ Two key points arise. Firstly, whilst a major sum, it was only around a fifth of the £2 m compensation collected by members of the London Society of West India Planters and Merchants.¹⁸⁸ Secondly, whilst the Demerara contingent of the GWIA were under-represented in executive positions, the value of their enslaved property in the British West Indies was relatively higher, explained by taking the Compensation Commission's 'ad valorem' award system into consideration.¹⁸⁹ Whilst the Jamaica-dominated GWIA fought a concerted pro-slavery campaign

in the 1820s and 1830s, this was ultimately of greater benefit to their less vocal allies.

Eric Williams' 'decline thesis' may now carry little weight amongst historians but that comes with the acceptance that the West India economy remained vibrant for most of the classical years of the Industrial Revolution (c.1760-1830). This historiographical advance provides a uniquely Caledonian paradox. Whilst Caribbean slavery and its commerce remained central to the west of Scotland economy into the late 1820s, pro-slavery forces still could not mobilise the public. Arguably, the GWIA were the biggest failure of all British-West India groups; failing to mobilise a Scottish society whose leading sectors (especially cotton) was inextricably connected with Atlantic slavery. This study of Glasgow's mercantile factions modifies the Williams thesis about social and political decline. The Glasgow-West India interest became irrelevant in wider society at a time when West India commerce remained uniquely central to the Scottish economy.

But the principal aim of the Glasgow West India Association was the defence of subscribers' Caribbean interests to maximise fortunes, and the subscribers' levels of wealth on death offers another barometer of success. By contributing to the delay of the abolition of plantation slavery – as part of a national West India interest – this prolonged the conditions that allowed some of the Glasgow West India membership to acquire wealth that placed them amongst the richest men in Great Britain. As [Table 3](#) reveals, confirmation inventories have been identified for seventy subscribers who died between 1807 and 1903.¹⁹⁰ On death, they were collectively worth over £2.77M (ave. £39,587). Most left less than £40,000 although eight (four Jamaica merchants, three Demerara, and one Grenada) left personal property valued at £100,000 or more, considered exceptional in nineteenth-century Britain.¹⁹¹ James Ewing possessed the highest fortune, £281,296.¹⁹²

The GWIA may have been a Jamaica-dominated lobbying group, but, in general, financial power rested elsewhere. The average fortunes of the Association's Jamaica cohort (£43,690) were a third-lower than that of Demerara

Table 3. Wealth on death of GWIA Membership, who died between 1807 and 1903.

| | Inventories | Wealth on Death | Ave. | Ave. Rank |
|----------------------|-------------|-----------------|---------|-----------|
| Jamaica (1st phase) | 25 | £1,092,273 | £43,691 | 3 |
| Trinidad (3rd phase) | 11 | £185,878 | £16,898 | 8 |
| Demerara (3rd phase) | 11 | £725,438 | £65,949 | 1 |
| Grenada (2nd phase) | 10 | £430,572 | £43,057 | 4 |
| St Kitts (1st phase) | 5 | £90,937 | £18,187 | 6 |
| St Thomas | 3 | £111,482 | £37,161 | 5 |
| St Lucia (3rd phase) | 2 | £100,575 | £50,288 | 2 |
| Antigua (1st phase) | 2 | £16,904 | £8,452 | 9 |
| Guadeloupe | 1 | £17,053 | £17,053 | 7 |
| Total | 70 | £2,771,112 | £39,587 | |

Source: See Note 190.

merchants (£65,948) who were richest of all. The average wealth of Trinidad merchants in the Association was second lowest of all groupings, yet they wielded significant executive power before 1838. This anomaly can be explained by the declining fortunes of long-lived Trinidad merchants such as William Smith and William Frederick Burnley who died in 1871 and 1903 respectively.¹⁹³ The profits of chattel slavery had afforded them fleeting status but as the wealth declined in the post-emancipation era, so too their political and institutional influence quickly disappeared amidst the Glasgow-West India interest's fade into obscurity.

Conclusion

This article reveals how the Glasgow-West India interest adapted to the new landscape in the aftermath of the American Revolution in 1776; the shift in commercial focus created a pro-slavery culture that led to collusion across the British-Atlantic world. Although any assessment of pro-slavery Glasgow before the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 is hindered by the paucity of source material, the evidence here reveals much about origins and early years. The rise of Clyde ports as a sugar hub was ostensibly a boost for pro-slavery interests. Individuals from elite West India merchant firms – Alexander Houston & Co. and John Campbell senior & Co. – were at the forefront; from 1778 connecting Scotland with London, leading to the petition in 1789 and the collectivisation of finance for London-based pro-slavery groups. 1788–1792. Glasgow's merchants provided modest support during the first phase of metropolitan opposition to Wilberforce's campaign for abolition. Even so, the Glasgow-West India interest, and collaboration across Great Britain, was thus an eighteenth rather than the nineteenth-century phenomenon as inferred by some historians.¹⁹⁴

The establishment of the Glasgow West India Association in 1807 collectivised the wealth and influence of wealthy merchants, planters and returned sojourners in an unprecedented way. The Association evolved into a lobbying group specialising in proslavery petitions and memorials. Its success was based upon the remarkable ability of the old Jamaica interest to retain institutional authority, despite being superseded by Demerara merchants as the wealthiest group in the city. The GWIA leadership connected with the LSWIPM soon after establishment and was ultimately represented in the Standing and Acting Committees as the most prominent outpost group. In terms of strategy, the GWIA attempted to carve out their own institutional path at times but deferred to the greater good of the national pro-slavery cause when it mattered, exemplified by the strategy to oppose emancipation.

Evidence of sustained collaboration from 1807 onwards revises Higman's view that only Bristol co-operated with London. Moreover, Taylor's claim

that Glasgow's contribution to national West India interest in 1833 was 'insincere' might have been accurate with regards Glasgow's *outport* collusion, explained by fact the GWIA leadership *usually* prioritised *metropolitan* efforts.¹⁹⁵ In fact, the GWIA had a long tradition of collaboration with London and outports, especially after 1807, successfully pursuing a policy of semi-autonomous collaboration to become a cornerstone of the national pro-slavery cause up to emancipation in 1834.

How to ascertain the success of the Glasgow West India Association's pro-slavery campaign? William Knibb was correct to assert that Glasgow, and the west of Scotland more broadly, was the 'great den of colonial slavery' in 1833. Vast swathes of the Scottish population worked in textile industries dependent upon Atlantic slavery and, compared to England, a higher proportion of Scottish society was pro-slavery *in practice*. However, there is no evidence that a significant number of Scots ever became pro-slavery *in theory*. The major shortcoming of the Glasgow West India Association was its institutional failure to mobilise Scottish society to the pro-slavery cause. The perception of Glasgow as a 'great den' of colonial slavery was created by a small, elite group of pro-slavery campaigners, especially the high-profile James MacQueen, supported by modest lobbying funding invested in the print press. Ultimately, the 'great den' was an Atlantic illusion: despite an economic dependence on Atlantic commerce, there was no widespread support for the continuation of chattel slavery.

With national opinion shifting against the practices of the transatlantic trafficking of African people and plantation slavery, there was no possibility that the West India interest could prevent either. Nevertheless, they *could* help delay the passage of both, which provided the scope to accumulate more slavery-derived wealth. The West India interest contributed to delays, financially, and also by petitioning legislators and contributing skewed evidence to parliamentary inquiries, thus prolonging both the Africa trafficking and chattel slavery longer than it might have gone on without such co-ordinated opposition. The West India interest helped delay abolition from 1792 to 1807, and later secured an astonishing lobbying victory in the 'property in men' debate on emancipation in 1834.

The delays, and compensation awards, had major implications for the Glasgow-West India interest. The city's Caribbean connections developed after 1783, nine years before the amendment for 'gradual abolition' in 1792, and around a half-century before plantation slavery was abolished in the British West Indies. Approximately three-quarters of the GWIA who possessed wealth on death was born in 1771 or later. Taking up partnerships in West India firms aged 21 – as per Scots law – the vast majority only became mercantile active the year 'gradual abolition' passed. In other words, most of the Glasgow-West India interest's enormous private wealth came through the expropriation of labour from enslaved people in the abolition eras, fortunes which

subsequently ranked many individuals amongst the richest men in nineteenth-century Britain. Political lobbying delayed the inevitable and facilitated continued exploitation with implications across the British-Atlantic world. Not least for the hundreds of thousands of newly enslaved African people whose labour created vast profits that were ultimately invested across the west of Scotland.

Notes

1. Hinton, *Memoir of Reverend William Knibb*, 158-59; Lambert, "Billingsgate."
2. Penson, "London West India Interest"; Williams, *Capitalism*, 85-97; Higman, "West India Interest"; Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 58-76; O'Shaughnessy, "West India Interest"; Ryden, "Sugar, Spirits, and Fodder"; McClelland, "Redefining the West India Interest"; Taylor, *The Interest*.
3. Gambles, *Protection*, 8-9.
4. O'Shaughnessy, "West India Interest," 126.
5. Williams, *Capitalism*, 200.
6. Draper, "Helping to Make Britain Great," 81; Burnard, *Jamaica*, 231.
7. Osborne, "Power and Persuasion," 225, 250; Taylor, "British West India Interest," 1490.
8. Dumas, *Proslavery*.
9. Published studies related to the London Society of West India Planters and Merchants include Penson, *Colonial Agents*; Hall, *West India Committee*; Ryden, *West India Slavery*; Ryden, "The Society." Alongside PhD theses: Franklin, "Enterprise"; Barrett, "Cultures of Pro-Slavery"; Osborne, "Power and Persuasion." The Liverpool and Bristol West India Associations are only briefly covered in texts such as Marshall, *Bristol and the Abolition of Slavery*; and Checkland, *The Gladstones*, 51, 61, 73, 191.
10. Hall, *West India Committee*, vii.
11. Hamilton, "Defending the Colonies," 208.
12. Cooke, "Elite Revisited," 138-39.
13. Whyte, *Abolition of Black Slavery*, 85, 167; "The Upas Tree," 201.
14. Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, 52.
15. Higman, "West India Interest," 7.
16. Taylor, *The Interest*, 52-54.
17. Taylor, *The Interest*, 52; "British West India Interest," 1481, 1509.
18. Duffill, "Africa Trade," 105-08.
19. Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database.
20. Devine, "Did Slavery Make Scotia Great?"; Whatley, *Scottish Society, 1707-1830*, 219; Rössner, *Scottish Trade*, 18.
21. Whatley, *Industrial Revolution*, 41-44.
22. Devine, "Colonial Trades and Industrial Investment," 13, Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean*, 195-215.
23. Richardson, *Principles and Agents*, 10. Devine, "Did Slavery Make Scotia Great?: A Question Revisited."
24. Devine, *Tobacco Lords*.
25. Devine, "Transport Problems," 294.
26. Jackson, "New Horizons," 217-19; Devine "Business Elite," 40-67; Cooke, "Elite Revisited".

27. Advertisements in the *Glasgow Herald* newspaper show 1742 ships departing Port Glasgow and Greenock between 1806 and 1834, revealing colonial interests of Glasgow-West India merchant firms and co-partners.
28. Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade*, 90; "Bristol West India Merchants," 187.
29. *Report from the Committee on the Distillation of Sugar and Molasses* (P.P. 1808, 178), 24445.
30. The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, Alma Jordan Library (UWISTA), SC89 4/1, West India Acting Committee Minutes 1833–1843, fol. 5.
31. Whatley, *Industrial Revolution*, 41.
32. Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade*, 219–25; Checkland, "American Versus West Indian Traders," 142.
33. *Address to the Inhabitants of Glasgow, Paisley and the Neighbourhood, Concerning the African Slave Trade, by a Society in Glasgow* (Glasgow: Alex Adam, 1791), 15.
34. Whyte, *Abolition of Black Slavery*, 85; Hamilton, "Defending the Colonies," 197.
35. Minchinton, *Politics and the Port of Bristol*, xviii.
36. *Reprint of Jones's Directory for the Year 1787* (Glasgow, 1868), 6; *Jones's Directory for the Year 1789* (Glasgow, 1789), 69; *Jones's Directory, for the Year 1790 and 1791* (Glasgow, 1791), 69.
37. Hamilton, "Scottish Trading."
38. Glasgow City Archives (GCA), C1/1/36, Petition of West India merchants, fol. 458.
39. National Library of Scotland, MS 8795, Letterbook of Alexander Houston & Co., fols. 320-2.
40. British Library, Add MS 38393, Liverpool Papers Vol. CCIV, Minutes of the Committee of Trade from (1791–1792): Memorial of the West India Merchants of Glasgow desiring permission to export certain quantities of corn, 22 November 1791, fols. 306, 153.
41. Hall, *West India Committee*, 3–4.
42. Anstey, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, 271.
43. Minchinton, *Politics and the Port of Bristol*, 166; Sanderson, "Liverpool," 162–63.
44. Whyte, *Abolition of Black Slavery*, 85; Hamilton, "Scottish Trading," 113.
45. *Journal of the House of Commons*, Vol. XLIV (20 November 1788–10 December 1789), 294.
46. UWISTA, SC89 2/4, Minutes of the West India Planters and Merchants, 1785–1792, fols. 88, 101; *Journal of the House of Commons*, Vol. XLIV (20 November 1788–10 December 1789), 294, 352, 381.
47. Hall, *West India Committee*, 7.
48. Scott, "History and Progress," 370. 7743 tons of sugar (91,939 hogsheads) were landed that year.
49. Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, 268.
50. National Register of Archives of Scotland 2570/120, Urquhart Family papers: Account of Sales, June 1789.
51. University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, M915/Reel 11, West India Committee: Sub Committee Minutes, 17 May 1792.
52. Hamilton, "Defending the Colonies," 198. Mullen, "Great Delayer".
53. Parliamentary Papers, 1801 (98), *Report on the petition of the proprietors of estates in the Island of Grenada*, 11; Draper, "The British State and Slavery."
54. Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean*, 184–85.
55. UWISTA, SC89 6/3, "Minutes of the Board of Commissioners for the Issue of Exchequer Bills advanced to Persons connected to the Islands of Grenada and St. Vincent appointed by the Act of Parliament, June 1795–1 September 1797," 88–89.

56. UWISTA, SC89 6/3, "Minutes of the Board of Commissioners," 29–30, 34, 40, 59–60.
57. Henry and Thorne, "William, McDowall"; Hamilton, "Scottish Trading."
58. UWISTA SC89 3/2, Minutes from the West India Planters and Merchants, 1805–1822, fol. 46.
59. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract of the West India Association (Abstract), fols.1b-2.
60. See GCA TD1683/1/1-2, Abstract and Minutes of the West India Association, 1807–1853.
61. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fols. 99-101.
62. *Ibid.*, fols. 1-8, 100.
63. Taylor, *The Interest*, 58; GCA TD1683/1/2, Minutes of the Glasgow West India Association (Minutes), fol.3, fols. 3-4.
64. GCA TD1683/1/1-2, Abstract and Minutes of the West India Association, 1807–1853.
65. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fol. 24. At a meeting of 'sugar importers' on 10 February 1808, 15 individuals attended a meeting on the imports of sugar (compared to 43 known subscribers).
66. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fol. 39. At a 'general meeting of the West Indies trade of Glasgow' on 5 November 1812, 16 individuals attended (compared to 63 known subscribers).
67. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fol. 470. At a general meeting of the West India Association on 17 December 1823, 15 individuals attended (compared to 53 subscribers/attendees then known to be alive).
68. GCA TD1683/1/2, Minutes, fol. 2. At a meeting of the West India Association on 11 December 1832, 17 individuals attended (compared to 68 subscribers/attendees then known to be alive).
69. Ryden, *West India Slavery*, 45, 52–58.
70. Marshall, *Bristol and the Abolition of Slavery*, 3.
71. This estimate was ascertained by comparing the GWIA subscribers with newspaper records such as the *London Gazette* and *Glasgow Herald*, family papers well as the *Legacies of British Slave-ownership* database.
72. Stephen Mullen, "Ewing, James (1775–1853), West India Merchant, Slave Owner, and Civic Leader." Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. 6 Oct 2016; Accessed 21 April 2022.
73. Morgan, "Bristol West India Merchants," 193. Morgan shows 29 of 50 Bristol W.I. merchants (58%) owned West India estates.
74. GCA TD1683/1/2, Minutes, fol. 2.
75. Ryden, "The Society," 4.
76. Mullen, "Great Glasgow–West India House."
77. Higman, *Slave Populations*, 43–44.
78. Cudjoe, *The Slave Master*.
79. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fols. 7-8; and GCA TD1683/1/1-2, Abstract and Minutes of the West India Association, 1807–1853 (individuals appear throughout these records).
80. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fol. 360; Mullen, "A Glasgow–West India Merchant House."
81. This analysis assumes GWIA committees were decided by annual election. Sample years (10): 1807, 1811, 1823, 1824–1825, 1832–1833, 1835–1837.
82. Ryden, *West Indian Slavery*, 46; Ryden, "The Society," 9.
83. Osborne, "Power and Persuasion," 64.
84. UWISTA, SC89 6/4, Minutes of the Demerara & Berbice Committee, 1825–1930.
85. There have been no examples of lobbying on Grenada-specific issues identified in the Abstract. The Abstract appears to show limited Jamaica-specific lobbying, except on

- behalf of Robert Bogle & Co., whose ship *Hopewell*, was taken by the French in 1809, see GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fols. 124-5. In 1815 (a year after Demerara-Essequibo was ceded to the British), GWIA members petitioned on colony-specific issues, see Abstract, fols. 222-4. In 1821, Wighton, Gray & Co., and Gray, Roxburgh & Co., both Glasgow-West India firms petitioned the Lords Commissioners of HM Treasury on the "Trade of Trinidad" (and charges on produce landed at intermediary ports). GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fols. 363-4. The most sustained lobbying on an individual colony (and even that was limited) appears to have focused on Berbice, see GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fols. 215, 222, 528-9, 542.
86. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fol. 242.
 87. Ward, *British West Indian Slavery*, 2-7; Taylor, *The Interest*, 63-67.
 88. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fols. 449-452. This petition is undated, but additional marginalia states 'placed between Minute of 21 April & 13 May 1823'. It seems possible the London and Glasgow West India interest colluded in advance of Buxton's speech on 15 May 1823.
 89. Memorial of the West Indian Association, 14 April 1823, quoted in Checkland, *The Gladstones*, 191.
 90. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, f.462. *The Scotsman*, 7 January 1824, 14.
 91. Jamaica National Archives, 5/20/2/1, St Andrews Scots Kirk Minutes, 1814, n.p. See also Mullen, "The Scots Kirk."
 92. Montgomery, "Glasgow and the Struggle," 130.
 93. The GWIA petitioned the Lords of the Treasury on customs issues through Alexander Houston in 1811, and on duties on cotton wool in 1819. See GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fols. 74a, 353.
 94. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fols. 227, 245.
 95. 'Election for Glasgow Burghs', *The Scots Times*, 24 August 1830.
 96. *The Times*, 12 June 1830, 3.
 97. Marshall, *Bristol and the Abolition of Slavery*, 3; Ryden, "The Society," 6.
 98. Ryden, *West Indian Slavery*, 216-54.
 99. *Report from the Sugar Distillery Committee* (P.P. 1806-07, 83), 12-14.
 100. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fols. 1a-3.
 101. For example, GCA, TD1670/1/4, Glasgow Chamber of Commerce: Application of the Sugar Merchants, 16 May 1822.
 102. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fol. 9.
 103. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fol. 35.
 104. UWISTA SC89 3/2, Minutes 1805-1822, fol. 196.
 105. Bristol Archives, (BA) SMV/8/3/4/1/57, Glasgow West India petition, May 1826.
 106. *Report from the Committee on the Distillation of Sugar and Molasses* (P.P. 1808, 178) 23, 173.
 107. Ryden, "The Society," 2.
 108. Taylor, *The Interest*, 28-29.
 109. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fol. 242.
 110. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fols. 242-4.
 111. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fols., 226-7.
 112. Jenkins, "Campbell."
 113. Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, 354-56.
 114. *The Scotsman*, 8 June 1822, 6.
 115. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fols. 240-241; *Glasgow Herald*, 13 September 1822, 2-3.
 116. "House of Commons," *The Times*, 18 May 1822, 2.
 117. *Ibid.*, 2.

118. "House of Commons," *The Times*, 16 March 1824, 2.
119. Jenkins, "Campbell."
120. UWISTA, SC89, 3/5, "West India Acting Committee – Minutes: 20 May 1829–9 July 1833," 6 January 1830, fol. 45.
121. *Glasgow Herald*, 31 March 1809, 3. The Act 49 George III., c. 74. (1809) provided the Town Council with powers to deepen, widen and straighten the river which later facilitated large-scale shipping. See Marwick, *The River Clyde*, 30–31.
122. Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, 355.
123. Cooke, *Rise and Fall*, 188–90.
124. For example, GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fols. 220, 476.
125. Lambert, *Mastering the Niger*, 62–65.
126. MacQueen was part of a committee appointed by the general meeting of the West India Association in the Royal Exchange on the 14th October 1829.
127. UWISTA, SC89, 5/1, Minutes of Sub-Committee to Protect the Interest of the Colonies Through the Press 1823–1829, fols. 6–7. For MacQueen's contribution to wider pro-slavery discourse, see Taylor, "Conservative Political Economy."
128. UWISTA, SC89, 5/1, Minutes of Sub-Committee to Protect the Interest of the Colonies Through the Press 1823–1829, fols. 17–24.
129. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fols. 512/8–9.
130. *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, Vol. II, 1827–1829 (London: Hatchard, 1829), 429.
131. University of Aberdeen Special Collections MS 2564/57, John Ross to James MacQueen, 25 October 1825.
132. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fols. 499–500. Hamilton, "Defending the Colonies," 202.
133. National Archives of the U.K. [TNA], CUST 14/37, Ledgers of Imports and Exports, Scotland (1825), fols. 204–5. In 1825, Europe was Scotland's principal import/export market, but the leading sectors of the export-orientated Scottish textile economy were strategically dependent upon Atlantic commerce. Of £4.9M imports (by official value), 14% arrived from the British West Indies with 13% from the U.S., British North America and Asia combined. Of £5.84M exports (by official value), 29% was exported to the British West Indies, with 24% sent to the U.S., British North America and Asia combined.
134. Cooke, *Rise and Fall*, 57.
135. Murray, *Scottish Handloom Weavers*, 23.
136. Morris, "Problem," 121.
137. UWISTA SW89 3/3, Minutes from the West India Planters and Merchants, 1822–1829, fol. 314.
138. *Ibid.*, fol. 313.
139. *Ibid.*, fols. 312–317.
140. UWISTA SW89 3/3, Minutes from the West India Planters and Merchants, 1822–1829, fol. 316.
141. *Proceedings before the Privy Council against Compulsory Manumission in the Colonies of Demerara and Berbice* (London, 1827), 2, 77, 124.
142. UWISTA SC89 6/4, Minutes of the Demerara & Berbice Committee, 13 November 1826.
143. *Ibid.*, 16 January 1828. See also Donington, *The Bonds of Family*.
144. *Proceedings before the Privy Council against Compulsory Manumission in the Colonies of Demerara and Berbice* (London, 1827), 3.
145. *Slaves: Berbice and Demerara. Minutes of Evidence taken before His Majesty's Privy Council, in the Matter of the Berbice and Demerara Manumission Order in Council – November 1827* (P.P. 1828, 261), 26–39.

146. UWISTA SC89 6/4 min, 22 Jan 1828.
147. Ryden, "The Society."
148. UWISTA SC89 8/9, Standing Committee List. Of the 265 named individuals and locations, there were seven from Glasgow. By contrast, only one Liverpool merchant, John Gladstone, was named and none from Bristol, although further research might show they had relocated to London addresses.
149. UWISTA SC89 3/5, Acting Committee Minutes 1829–1833, fols. 108–113.
150. UWISTA SC89 4/1, Acting Committee Minutes 1833–1843, fols. 4–5.
151. *The Times*, 13 May 1823, 2.
152. Draper, *Price*, 20, 112–13. For a good discussion, see Taylor, *The Interest*, 61–65.
153. Butler, *Economics*, 1–24; Draper, *Price*, 75–124.
154. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fol. 452.
155. BA SMV/8/3/3/2/1, James MacQueen to Bristol West India Association, 3 January 1831.
156. BA SMV/8/3/4/2/41, Glasgow West India Resolutions, 4 November 1830.
157. Hamilton, "Defending the Colonies," 205.
158. *The Times*, 22 January 1833, 1.
159. *Glasgow Herald*, 15 May 1826, 2
160. *Report from Select Committee on the Commercial State of the West India Colonies; together with the minutes of evidence, and an appendix and index* (P.P. 1831–1832, 381), 104–113.
161. GCA TD1683/1/1, Abstract, fols. 576–578.
162. *Evidence upon oath touching the condition and treatment of the Negro population of the British West India colonies. Part I: Island of Jamaica. Taken before a Select Committee of the House of Lords, session 1832* (London, 1833), 9–11, 74.
163. *Report from the Select Committee on the extinction of slavery throughout the British dominions, with the Minutes of Evidence and General Index, 1832* (London, 1833), 311, 407.
164. GCA TD1683/1/2, Minutes, fols. 33–34.
165. GCA TD1683/1/2, Minutes, fol. 15.
166. GCA TD1683/1/1, Minutes, fols. 574–6.
167. UWISTA SC89 3/5, Acting Committee Minutes 1829–1833, fols. 264, 270, 276, 300.
168. *The Times*, 12 June 1830, 3; Taylor, "British West India Interest," 1489.
169. *The Reformers' Gazette*, 6 October 1832, 1–4.
170. "Address of the Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society," *Glasgow Herald*, 14 December 1832, 1.
171. Taylor, *The Interest*, 248.
172. Gross, "Abolition," 65–66.
173. GCA, TD1683/1/2, Minutes, fols. 12–15.
174. BA SMV/8/3/4/4/7, Memorial of Bankers of Glasgow, March 1833.
175. Draper, *Price*, 82.
176. BA SMV/8/3/4/4/7, Memorial of Bankers of Glasgow, March 1833.
177. GCA TD1683/1/2, Minutes, fol. 13.
178. GCA TD1683/1/2, Minutes, fols. 16, 20.
179. Butler, *Economics*, 19.
180. *The Times*, 11 May 1833, 5.
181. GCA TD1683/1/2, Minutes, fol. 18.
182. GCA TD1683/1/2, Minutes, fols. 19–25.
183. Taylor, *The Interest*, 269, 292.
184. *Glasgow Herald*, 3 December 1852, 3.
185. Draper, *Price*, 106–07, 270.

186. See ‘Measuring Worth’. Relative wage or income worth (average earnings), 2020 values have been used here.
187. At least thirty-one subscribers of the Association died before or during 1834. Thirty-two of the surviving members of the Association had a direct interest in the compensation process (fifty percent of known surviving membership at that point).
188. Ryden, “The Society.”
189. Butler, *Economics*, 27–9.
190. These have been culled from National Records of Scotland (NRS), Wills, Testaments and Confirmation Inventories (Scotland) – Ayr Sheriff Court Inventories, 1824–1925, SC6; Dumbarton Sheriff Court Inventories and Wills, 1824–1925, SC65; Dunoon Sheriff Court, 1815–1925, SC51; Edinburgh Sheriff Court Inventories, 1808–1925, SC70; Forfar Sheriff Court, 1824–1925, SC47; Glasgow Commissary Court, 1547–1823, CC9; Glasgow Sheriff Court Inventories, 1804–1925, SC36; Hamilton & Campsie Commissary Court, 1564–1823, CC10; Perth Sheriff Court, SC49; Stirling Sheriff Court, 1809–1925, SC67.
191. The eight wealthiest individuals held £1.33M. Thus, nine percent of the sample held forty-eight per cent of the overall wealth. 53 subscribers (76% of sample) held £918,497, or thirty-three percent of the overall wealth. For great fortunes, see Rubinstein, *Who were the Rich?*, 13, 17.
192. NRS SC65/34/7, “Inventory of James Ewing,” 24 February 1854, 185.
193. NRS SC70/1/153, “Inventory of William Smith,” 12 June 1871; NRS, SC70/1/420 “Inventory of William Frederick Burnley,” 3 February 1903.
194. Whyte, *Abolition of Black Slavery*, 85.
195. Higman, “West India Interest,” 7; Taylor, “British West India Interest,” 1481, 1509.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Simon Newman, Allan Macinnes and David Beck Ryden, who read earlier versions of this article, for useful feedback and comments. An earlier version of this paper was presented at Eighteenth-Century Scottish Studies Society conference at the University of Glasgow, 17–21 July 2018. I am thankful for the expert advice and constructive critiques from two anonymous reviewers which improved the original submission to this journal. I am also grateful to the staff in the Alma Jordan Library, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago for assistance with the West India Committee Records.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council [grant number ES/1902414/1]; and a small research grant from the Royal Society of Edinburgh (2016).

ORCID

Stephen Mullen <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6768-3051>

References

- Anstey, Roger. *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1975.
- Barrett, Ian John. "Cultures of Pro-Slavery: The Political Defence of the Slave Trade in Britain, c.1787 to 1807," Unpublished PhD Thesis, Kings College London, 2009.
- Butler, Kathleen Mary. *The Economics of Emancipation: Jamaica & Barbados, 1823-1843*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995.
- Burnard, Trevor. *Jamaica in the Age of Revolution*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020.
- Checkland, S. G. "American Versus West Indian Traders in Liverpool, 1793-1815." *The Journal of Economic History* 18/2 (June 1958): 141–160.
- Checkland, S. G. *The Gladstones: A Family Biography 1764-1851*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971.
- Cooke, Anthony. *The Rise and Fall of the Scottish Cotton Industry, 1778-1914*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010.
- Cooke, Anthony. "An Elite Revisited: Glasgow West India Merchants, 1783-1877." *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 32, no. 2 (2012): 127–165.
- Cudjoe, Selwyn R. *The Slave Master of Trinidad: William Hardin Burnley and the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018.
- Devine, T. M. "Transport Problems of Glasgow West India Merchants During the American War of Independence, 1775-83." *Transport History* 4, no. 3 (1971): 266–304.
- Devine, T. M. *The Tobacco Lords: A Study of the Tobacco Merchants of Glasgow and Their Trading Activities, 1740-1790*. Edinburgh: John Donald, 1975.
- Devine, T. M. "The Colonial Trades and Industrial Investment in Scotland, c. 1700–1815." *The Economic History Review* 29, no. 1 (1976): 1–13.
- Devine, T. M. "An Eighteenth-Century Business Elite: Glasgow-West India Merchants, 1750-1815." *Scottish Historical Review* 57, no. 1 (1978): 40–67.
- Devine, T. M. "Did Slavery Make Scotia Great?" *Britain and the World* 4, no. 1 (2011): 40–64.
- Devine, T. M. "Did Slavery Make Scotia Great? A Question Revisited." In *Recovering Scotland's Slavery Past: The Caribbean Connection*, edited by T.M. Devine, 225–246. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015.
- Donington, Katie. *The Bonds of Family: Slavery, Commerce and Culture in the British Atlantic World*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019.
- Draper, Nicholas. *The Price of Emancipation: Slave Ownership, Compensation and British Society at the End of Slavery*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Draper, Nicholas. "Helping to Make Britain Great: The Commercial Legacies of Slave-Ownership in Britain." In *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain*, edited by Catherine Hall, et al., 78–126. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Draper, Nicholas. "The British State and Slavery: George Baillie, Merchant of London and St Vincent, and the Exchequer loans of the 1790s." Accessed April 26, 2022. <https://files.ehs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/29060814/de55e1a1-c7f6-450b-9a1a-831601ae46d9.docx>.
- Duffill, Mark. "The Africa Trade from the Ports of Scotland, 1706–66." *Slavery & Abolition* 25, no. 3 (2004): 102–122.
- Dumas, Paula E. *Proslavery Britain: Fighting for Slavery in an Era of Abolition*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- Franklin, Alexandra. "Enterprise and Advantage: The West India Interest in Britain, 1774-1840." Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1992.

- Gambles, Anna. *Protection and Politics: Conservative Economic Discourse, 1815-1852 (The Royal Historical Society Studies in History)*. Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 1999.
- Gross, Izhak. "The Abolition of Negro Slavery and British Parliamentary Politics 1832-3." *The Historical Journal* 23, no. 1 (March 1980): 63-85.
- Hall, Douglas. *A Brief History of the West India Committee*. Barbados: Caribbean Universities Press, 1971.
- Hamilton, Douglas. *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World, 1750-1820*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005.
- Hamilton, Douglas. "Defending the Colonies Against Malicious Attacks of Philanthropy': Scottish Campaigns Against the Abolitions of the Slave Trade and Slavery." In *Jacobitism, Enlightenment and Empire, 1680-1832*, edited by Allan Macinnes, and Douglas Hamilton, 193-209. London: Routledge, 2014.
- Hamilton, Douglas. "Scottish Trading in the Caribbean: The Rise and Fall of Houston & Co." In *Nation and Province in the First British Empire: Scotland and the Americas, 1600-1800*, edited by Ned C. Landsman, 94-126. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2001.
- Henry, D. G., and R. G. Thorne. "McDowall, William (c.1749-1810), of Castle Semple, Renfrew and Garthland, Wigtown." *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1790-1820*. Accessed December 2, 2020. <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/mcdowall-william-1749-1810>.
- Higman, B. W. "The West India Interest in Parliament, 1807-1833." *Historical Studies* 13, no. 49 (1967): 1-19.
- Higman, B. W. *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean, 1807-1834*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1984.
- Hinton, John Howard. *Memoir of Reverend William Knibb*, 2nd ed. London: Thomas Ward and Company, 1849.
- Jackson, Gordon. "New Horizons." In *Glasgow, Volume 1, Beginnings to 1830*, edited by T. M. Devine, and G. Jackson, 217-219. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995.
- Jenkins, Terry. "Campbell, Archibald (?1763-1838), of Blythswood, Renfrew." *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1820-1832*. Accessed December 3, 2020. https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/campbell-archibald-1763-1838#footnoteref10_coy48fk.
- Kumagai, Yukihiisa. *Breaking into the Monopoly: Provincial Merchants and Manufacturers' Campaigns for Access to the Asian Market, 1790-1833*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Lambert, David. "The Glasgow King of Billingsgate: James MacQueen and an Atlantic Pro-Slavery Network." *Slavery and Abolition* 29, no. 3 (2008): 389-413.
- Lambert, David. *Mastering the Niger: James MacQueen's African Geography and the Struggle Over Atlantic Slavery*. London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013.
- Marshall, Peter. *Bristol and the Abolition of Slavery: The Politics of Emancipation*. Bristol: Bristol Historical Association, 1975.
- Marwick, James. *The River Clyde and the Harbour of Glasgow*. Glasgow: Robert Anderson, 1898.
- McClelland, Keith. "Redefining the West India Interest; Politics and the Legacies of Slave-Ownership." In *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain*, edited by Catherine Hall, et al., 127-162. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- 'Measuring Worth'. Accessed July 2, 2022. <https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ukcompare/>.
- Montgomery, Fiona. "Glasgow and the Struggle for Parliamentary Reform, 1830-1832." *The Scottish Historical Review* 2, no. 172 (October 1982): 130-145.

- Morgan, Kenneth. "Bristol West India Merchants in the Eighteenth Century." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Sixth Series* 3 (1993): 185–208.
- Morgan, Kenneth. *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Morris, M. "The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Improvement: David Dale, Robert Owen and New Lanark Cotton." In *Cultures of Improvement in Scottish Romanticism 1707-1840*, edited by A. Benchimol, and G. McKeever, 111–131. London: Routledge, 2018.
- Mullen, Stephen. "A Glasgow-West India Merchant House and the Imperial Dividend, 1779–1867." *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 33, no. 2 (2012): 196–233.
- Mullen, Stephen. "The Great Glasgow–West India House of John Campbell Senior & Co." In *Recovering Scotland's Slavery Past: The Caribbean Connection*, edited by T.M. Devine, 124–145. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015.
- Mullen, Stephen. "The Scots Kirk of Colonial Kingston, Jamaica." *Scottish Church History* 45, no. 1 (2016): 99–116.
- Mullen, Stephen. "Henry Dundas: A "Great Delayer" of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade." *The Scottish Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (2021): 218–248.
- Murray, Norman. *The Scottish Handloom Weavers, 1790-1850: A Social History*. Edinburgh: John Donald, 1978.
- Minchinton, Walter, ed. *Politics and the Port of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century*. Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 1963.
- Osborne, Angelina. "Power and Persuasion: The London West India Committee, 1783-1833." Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Hull, 2014.
- O'Shaughnessy, Andrew J. "The West India Interest and the Crisis of American Independence." In *West Indies Accounts: Essays on the History of the British Caribbean and the Atlantic Economy in the Honour of Richard Sheridan*, edited by Roderick M. McDonald, 126–149. Kingston: The Press - University of the West Indies, 1996.
- Penson, L. M. "The London West India Interest in the Eighteenth Century." *English Historical Review* XXXVI (1921): 373–392.
- Penson, L. M. *The Colonial Agents of the British West Indies: A Study in Colonial Administration, Mainly in the Eighteenth Century*. London: Frank Cass, 1971.
- Ragatz, Lowell. *The Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean, 1763-1833*. New York: Octagon Books, 1928.
- Richardson, David. *Principles and Agents: The British Slave Trade and Its Abolition*. London: Yale University Press, 2022.
- Rössner, Philipp Robinson. *Scottish Trade in the Wake of Union (1700-1760): The Rise of a Warehouse Economy*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008.
- Ryden, David Beck. "Sugar, Spirits, and Fodder: The London West India Interest and the Glut of 1807–15." *Atlantic Studies* 9, no. 1 (2012): 41–64.
- Ryden, David Beck. *West India Slavery and British Abolition, 1783-1807*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Ryden, David Beck. "The Society of West India Planters and Merchants in the Age of Emancipation, c.1816-35." Economic History Society Annual Conference, March 27–29, 2015. Accessed April 26, 2022. <https://files.ehs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/29060813/e389027d-9708-42cb-a13d-85106e90e947.pdf>.
- Rubinstein, William D. *Who Were the Rich? A Biographical Directory of British Wealth-Holders, Vol. I., 1809-1839*. London: Social Affairs Unit New Edition, 2009.
- Sanderson, F. E. "Liverpool and the Slave Trade: A Guide to Sources." *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 124 (1973): 154–176.

- Scott, Andrew. "The History and Progress of the Four Leading Articles of Foreign Origin Which were First Imported Into Great Britain About Two Centuries Ago." *Transactions of the Glasgow Archaeological Society* 1, no. 4 (1866): 354–387.
- Sheridan, Richard B. *Sugar and Slavery*. Kingston: Canoe Press, 1994.
- Taylor, Michael. "Conservative Political Economy and the Problem of Colonial Slavery, 1823–1838." *The Historical Journal* 57, no. 4 (2014): 973–995.
- Taylor, Michael. "The British West India Interest and Its Allies, 1823–1833." *English Historical Review* CXXXIII, no. 565 (2018): 1478–1511.
- Taylor, Michael. *The Interest: How the British Establishment Resisted the Abolition of Slavery*. London: Penguin, 2020.
- Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade – Database. Accessed November 25, 2020. <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database#results>.
- Ward, J. R. *British West Indian Slavery, 1750–1834: The Process of Amelioration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Whatley, Christopher A. *The Industrial Revolution in Scotland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Whatley, Christopher A. *Scottish Society, 1707–1830: Beyond Jacobitism, Towards Industrialisation*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.
- Whyte, Iain. *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery, 1756–1838*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006.
- Whyte, Iain. "The Upas Tree, Beneath Whose Pestiferous Shade all Intellect Languishes and all Virtue Dies": Scottish Public Perceptions of the Slave Trade and Slavery, 1756–1833." In *Recovering Scotland's Slavery Past: The Caribbean Connection*, edited by T.M. Devine, 187–206. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015.
- Williams, Eric. *Capitalism and Slavery*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944.