

Women Against Slavery

Hannah More was an important figure in the anti-slavery movement in the 1780s and 1790s. She was a poet and a playwright and close friend of John Newton* and William Wilberforce. She wrote anti-slavery poems including the famous poem *Slavery* to coincide with the first parliamentary debate on slavery in 1788. Her other writings about slavery would have reached thousands of readers.

Lucy Townsend was inspired by Thomas Clarkson to found the first women's anti-slavery society in 1825. Women paid to join and the funds were donated to the movement. Her daughter Charlotte produced a leaflet aimed at children.

Anne Knight formed the Chelmsford Female Anti-Slavery Society, organised public meetings and helped draw up and collect petitions. George Thompson wrote, 'Where they (women) existed they did everything ... In a word they formed the cement of the whole Anti-slavery building, without them we should never have been united.'

Campaigning

Women were particularly effective in the late 1820s.

- **They were good at canvassing – going from house to house to persuade people to support the**

campaign, giving out propaganda leaflets and tracts and getting people to sign petitions. Sophia Sturge is said to have made some 3,000 such calls. In Birmingham 80% of all homes had been visited by women.

- **Women played a crucial role in the sugar boycott which hit plantation owners and raised awareness of the movement. They persuaded grocers to stop selling sugar produced by slaves and families to stop eating it.**
- **Women wrote and distributed information in the form of leaflets, tracts and periodicals. One pamphlet was called, 'What does your**

sugar cost?' which explained how slaves suffered to produce it.

- **Women reworked the now famous image produced by Wedgwood as 'Am I not a woman and a sister?' and encouraged women to wear anti-slavery brooches and pins. They also wore clothes made from Indian cotton rather than cotton picked by slaves in the southern states of America.**

* For more on John Newton, a slave ship captain turned campaigner, see Information Sheets 10a and 10b.

