

Initial survey of objects at St James parish church
as part of a review of issues of contested heritage.

(October 2021)

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1 Introduction

The Church Buildings Council and the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England have produced guidance for cathedrals and parish churches in connection with contested heritage, called *Contested Heritage in Cathedrals and Churches*,¹ (henceforth, *Contested Heritage*).

The purpose of *Contested Heritage* is, briefly, to provide a practical framework for addressing issues of contested heritage, that is, how the church manages objects that people may find troubling because of their depiction or commemoration of, or association with, oppression or marginalisation. It specifically addresses racism and slavery.² The report offers a range of reasons for assessing the church building and memorials it displays. One reason is that it is an act of courtesy and consideration to ensure the heritage on display is not troubling for those who worship at, or visit the church.

It stresses the need for transparency and consultation, and notes that church leaders should not assume, from an absence of complaints, that there are no issues around contested heritage. The process enables us to consider 'how items of contested heritage and wider issues of under-representation affect our ability to be a Church for all in the 21st century.'³

Contested Heritage describes in considerable detail a recommended process⁴:

- A survey to find out what objects are present
- Stage 1: Assessing objects
- Stage 2: Assessing the need for change
- Stage 3: Considering the options for change
- Stage 4: Seek relevant permissions if required
- Stage 5: Recording and communicating decisions

In response to that guidance a survey of St James' by the Park was carried out, and this document summarises the findings, that is, it covers the Survey and Stage 1.

The survey shows that most objects at St James' are simple memorials with very little biographical or historical information.

Only a few objects were found with wider historical relevance. The church leadership, in consultation with relevant interested parties, should consider carrying out Stages 2 - 5 in relation to those few objects, which are discussed in Section 4.1.

2 What the survey includes

For the survey, the following places were checked and any monuments etc. photographed :

- inside entrance
- toilet near entrance
- Jacob Room
- Crèche Room and toy cupboard (one locked cupboard not checked)
- Kitchen
- Disabled Toilet
- Nave and chancel
- Vestry
- Equipment cupboard near kitchen hatch
- Stairwells either side of chancel
- Gallery
- Churchyard (only most prominent objects noted)

(images are referenced on a spreadsheet 'contested_heritage_key.pdf')

Exceptions: the tower and crypt were not checked, whilst only cupboards routinely used by parishioners were checked. Most of the gravestones now used to bound the churchyard are illegible from weathering or overgrown or inaccessible, and were not checked; of the few remaining monuments in the churchyard, only the most prominent are listed. There are a handful of other items (book rests, chalices etc.) bearing inscriptions but these were not regarded as problematic.

The following further checks were then made on more notable individuals commemorated in and around the church:

- The 'Terrier', a formal register of property of the church, was checked.
- In an effort to identify any names with connections to the slave trade, names were checked against those on the UCL's *British Slavery Database*⁵ which lists known recipients of compensation payments to slave owners following the abolition of slavery (i.e., on who owned slaves), and to Mawers *Sugar Refiners & Sugarbakers Database*,⁶ which aims to record those involved in an industry which relied upon slave labour for raw materials.
- Brief biographical details of the more prominent individuals or those who had held military or naval commands were also checked, principally on the *WikiTree* web site,⁷ in case of significant activities which might be regarded as racist or supporting slavery.

The survey itself was mostly completed on Monday 2nd August, so is a 'snapshot' of the church at that moment. It is likely that other objects would come to light if a thorough search was made of other parts of the building, or if changes are made (i.e. there is a memorial to Henry Cawte in the cupboard in the crèche room). Since the survey, a hatchment, has appeared in the balcony, where it was stored in a cupboard. It commemorates Admiral Sir Charles Bullen, whose memorial is in the nave.⁸

In an increasingly diverse society in which groups interact with buildings and objects in different ways, heritage that is currently uncontroversial might become contested. More diligent research might throw up connections with slavery and racism which this report missed, and the survey itself may have missed or not appreciated objects that others might find striking. So it should be seen as open to additions and corrections.

3 Findings

An initial assessment of objects at St James' (based on the process and questions described on pp.19-20 of *Contested Heritage*) is outlined in this section. Within the limitations of the research, none of the objects mention or celebrate aspects of the slave trade or racism, and no evidence was found to link any of the people commemorated with the promotion or active support of slavery or racism.

However, Section 4.1 highlights a few objects which the church leadership should consider.

3.1 About the objects themselves.

Almost all the objects commemorate one or more individuals, and many of those indicate that the individuals named are buried at St James'. A few mark a gift or donation to the church. There are no objects such as sculptures or paintings that were donated to the church, except for the stained glass windows in the chancel. A few more functional items are in use but the donors are not notable. No statues were found.

Without consulting widely in the congregation and community we cannot be sure that any object is problematic for them, or not. However, most of the objects simply record an individual's death, and very few refer to individuals remembered today. Most objects provide almost no information about the past, and therefore, offer almost nothing of historical interest or of attitudes to past events. Most of the objects are not problematic according to the criteria of *Contested Heritage*.

Artistic merit is difficult to gauge, but none of the objects are noted as having any artistic merit in the other published information about the church which was checked.⁹

No attempt has been made to establish the significance of the objects to any surviving family members, or other interested parties (except in one case discussed below), but if the church leadership decided to make any changes to specific objects, we should check this.

There are a handful of exceptions which are addressed in the next section.

3.2 Objects which relate to historic events or notable individuals:

3.2.1 Donors to the building of the church

St James' by the Park is a Grade II listed building (no. 1092006),¹⁰ dating to 1836. The ground was donated by Nathaniel Newman Jefferys. On the funding of the building itself, the Church Commissioners' 'Million Pound Fund', the Rev James Orger (the first Vicar) and Jefferys were probably involved in securing, if not providing, funds.¹¹ Balconies were added in the late 1830s and the chancel was added or enlarged in 1881, to a design by J.M. Mitchell.

Shirley Common had been enclosed in 1829-30, and this area (around the present church) saw the development of fashionable villas in spacious grounds for the professional classes.¹² Jefferys himself built a large villa, Hollybrook House, 'a two-storey mock-Tudor mansion', in about 1835.¹³ The church was probably built to serve the genteel community of the area, and certainly reflects it still (see Section 6.2)

Inevitably, wealthy families whose lives were closely linked to the British Empire would almost certainly owe some of their wealth, directly or indirectly, to both racism and slavery. For example, Jefferys was bequeathed £5,000 (very roughly half-a-million pounds in 2021 values), by John Knowlys when the latter died in about 1846. Some of Jefferys' fortune therefore came from Knowlys, who is known to have had considerable interests in refining and wholesaling sugar, a trade heavily reliant on slavery for its raw materials.¹⁴ However, the land for the church was donated before Jefferys' inheritance from Knowlys, and none of the individuals concerned are notable (in the way that, for example, Cecil Rhodes is).

3.2.2 The Sotheby's and India

The memorial to the Sotheby's (image NC7191244.JPG) has references to 'martyrs' in the 'calamitous massacre at Cawnpore' in June 1857. However, it does not name the the Indian Rebellion or Mutiny (the name is contested), which was against the rule of the British East India Company, in 1857-8, and in which George Sotheby died. Though the East India Company became a quasi-state organisation, the Sotheby's worked for what we would now call the private security arm of an international corporation.

3.2.3 Admiral Sir Charles Bullen

The memorial to Admiral Sir Charles Bullen GCB KCH (1769 - 1853, image NC7191251.JPG) refers to a Royal Navy officer whose successful career, and his service at the battle of Trafalgar (linking him with the fame of that event and with Nelson) gives him a modest public profile.¹⁵ His memorial glorifies several Royal Naval actions against other European powers and the forces of the American Revolution. Sources refer to him carrying out anti-slavery operations off the west coast of Africa in the 1820s, as part of the Royal Navy's wider campaign to stamp out slavery in the region.

There is also, in a cupboard in the balcony, a hatchment bearing his arms (image OC020152.JPG). We should be aware that his career, and status as a 'Trafalgar Captain' means others beyond the church are also interested in his memorial and the hatchment, and in promoting his memory (both memorial and hatchment are illustrated on the '1805 Club' web site).¹⁶

3.2.4 Other notable individuals

The number of individuals who served in the armed forces is striking, but apart from Charles Bullen, none are particularly famous (though many had interesting careers). Biographical details, where they exist, are sketchy; for example, we know that Gen. Richard Blunt served in Jamaica, which might implicate him in the slave trade, but there is no evidence for that.

3.2.5 Flags

The report does not address national flags; they tend not to be found in most churches. The flags on the balconies at St James' are a sign of our desire for the church to welcome people of all nationalities.

However, the evidence suggests that flags function differently for different communities - consider the impact of displaying the popular American Confederate flag on African Americans in the USA, for example, or what British ex-servicemen would feel if we displayed the new flag of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.¹⁷

Among the flags we do have displayed are those of Japan, South Korea and the People's Republic of China. Relations between South Korea and Japan remain tense due to (still living) memories of the brutal occupation of Korea by Japan (c.1910-45); refugees from Hong Kong might find themselves worshipping below the flag of People's Republic of China; and doubtless other flags will mean other things to other communities.

4 Next steps in relation to problematic objects

4.1 Recommendations

The memorials to Nathaniel and Catherine Jefferys: (images JR7191220.JPG, DT7191272.JPG):

- no action.

The Sothebys' memorial (image NC7191244.JPG):

- we could consider asking Indian citizens, or those with a background in India, if the this monument is problematic for them.

Memorial to Admiral Sir Charles Bullen (image NC7191251.JPG):

- no action.

Hatchment of Sir Charles Bullen (image OC020152.JPG):

- the church should consider displaying, storing, or disposing of the hatchment, to ensure its protection.

Flags:

- the church could consider its use of flags.

(The Sothebys' memorial and Bullen's memorials are illustrated below.)

Finally, the *Contested Heritage* includes an example SWOT template to assess the actions taken by the church when considering the objects listed in this section.

4.2 Options

Contested Heritage lists a range of options in response to controversial objects:

- No change: (note, this is not the same as 'no action taken', it is a decision).

- Interpretation: adding contextual information explaining different perspectives.
- Addition: additional material, such as an art work.
- Non-permanent alteration: for example covering up a statue, or re-locating it, to a store, or another institution such as a museum.
- Permanent alteration
- Destruction

5 Some good news!

It should be noted that many of the individuals researched were instrumental in promoting justice and contributed generously to charitable causes, and it would be a pity not to remember the positive aspects of the heritage of the church. Sarah Shaw, remembered as 'a truly good mother'; Jefferys' charitable acts; Admiral Sir Charles Bullen and the Royal Navy's campaign against the slave trade in West Africa; Sir Edward Montagu Manning, who as Vice-Chancellor of Sydney University gained the admission of women with privileges on an equal footing with male students in 1881, and many others, demonstrate that the memory of some who strove for righteousness can be a blessing (Prov. 10:7).

6 Appendix

6.1 Explanation of contested_heritage_key.pdf

The table is self-explanatory, but the following note may be useful.

Column headings:

image: File name of the digital image of each object

surname: Surname of person memorialised

forename(s): Forename(s)

died: Date of death where that is shown

inscription (or part of): Inscriptions tend to be formulaic (name, died, related to, comforting text for example) but if the inscription or part of it appears to add useful information it has been entered here.

slave Index: Result of search on UCL's *Slavery Database*

notes: some background information specific to the memorial, where that was thought to be helpful.

wiki if app.: Reference number on the genealogy site *WikiTree*

Image filenames are prefixed as follows, which may be useful in finding them or assessing their impact on the liturgical space of the building:

CB: Cupboard by kitchen hatch

CR: Crèche room

DT: Disabled toilet

JR: Jacob room

NC: Nave/chancel (the main body of the church)

OC, OJ, ON: Misc. objects/views, some not fixed, currently in cupboards, the building or the vestry.

EX: External object in church grounds

6.2 Context of St James' church building

Centuries of use have left many ancient churches (for example, St Michaels Church in Southampton) with a rich and varied heritage reflecting very different periods of British history. However, St James' and the largely 19th century monuments inside reflect the British Empire at its zenith, and very little else. Of the fifty or so objects with dates, around forty are within 1836 and 1899. The building and its monuments are thus set at the heart of the period widely recognised as Britain's 'Imperial Century',

1815 to 1914. The attitudes to race and slavery in this very hierarchic, patriarchal society are reflected in the building.

To mention only some of the most prominent evidence of Britain's global dominance in that period:¹⁸ in science and engineering, Michael Faraday (electromagnetic induction, 1831), Charles Babbage (the conceptualisation of a programmable computer, 1837), and Isambard Kingdom Brunel (the first steam powered, screw-driven, iron hulled passenger liner, 1843 to name but one result of his genius), were all active in this period. It was also an age of change and reform: the 'Swing Riots' of 1830, which were particularly bitter in Hampshire, the passing of the 1832 Reform Act, the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 (and consequent compensation of slave owners) and the Factory Acts (a series of legislation from 1809 to 1863). Wider imperial events include: the First and Second Opium Wars (1839-42 and c. 1853-58), saw the British wring trade concessions from China, forcing it to import narcotics; the Crimean War (1853-56), fought for reasons which remain somewhat opaque; the Indian Rebellion, or Mutiny (the name is contested, 1857) against the British East India Company; and the Boer Wars (1880-1 and 1899-1902) in southern Africa.

Hence, many of those commemorated are implicated in British imperial rule, for better and worse.

6.3 The National Burial Grounds Survey

The Church of England has announced 'The National Burial Grounds Survey', which aims to record in detail the grave memorials of churchyards using some advanced scanning equipment. In future this may result in a digital record of all the memorials in the churchyard at St James'.¹⁹ This data will eventually be available online. The project is expected to last seven years, and it is not yet clear when (or if) the churchyard at St James' will be scanned.

6.4 Acknowledgements

My special thanks to Theresa Bowen for information and practical help, and Trevor Pickup for general advice and invaluable help with a wealth of biographical detail. Thanks also to those who pointed out errors in the first draft, errors remaining are mine.

6.5 Declaration of interest

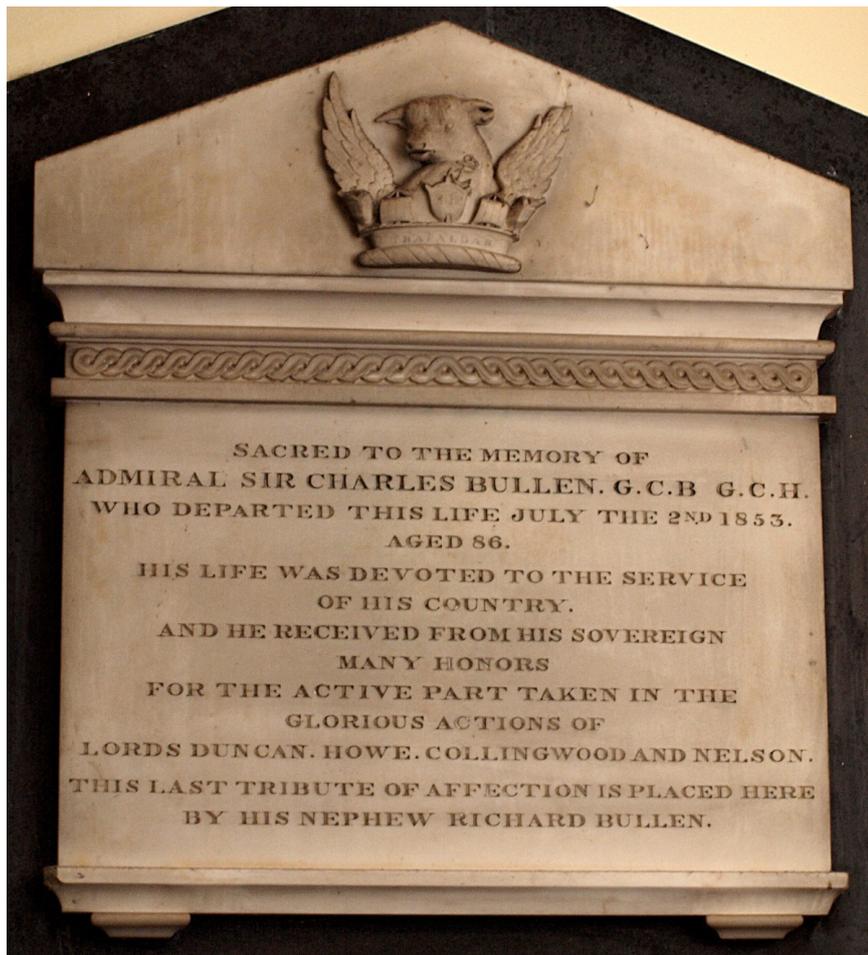
My preference would be for a building free of the burden of the past. But given the building we have inherited, we have to address the heritage we are responsible for. I have tried to keep this survey as dispassionate and neutral as possible.

7 Illustrations of the Sothebys' and Bullen's memorials (see Section 4.1)

The Sothebys' memorial (image NC7191244.JPG):



Memorial of Sir Charles Bullen (NC7191251.JPG)



Hatchment of Sir Charles Bullen (image OC020152.JPG - in use, the hatchment would be set at an angle as a diamond shape):



- 1 Anon., *Contested Heritage in Cathedrals and Churches*, v.1.1 (London: The Church Buildings Council and the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England, 2021).
- 2 *Contested Heritage*, p.7.
- 3 *Contested Heritage*, p.7.
- 4 Summarised in *Contested Heritage* pp.19 and 28.
- 5 Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery, *The LBS Database*, 2019 (ongoing) <<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs>>, [accessed 26 August 2021].
- 6 Brian Mawer and others, *Sugar Refiners & Sugarbakers Database*, 2000 (ongoing) <<http://www.mawer.clara.net/intro.html>> [accessed 26 August 2021].
- 7 WikiTree is a free, shared social-networking genealogy website, which operates with a high level of transparency and democracy, and with entries that are well-referenced. See Anon., 'Wikitree Help: About Wikitree', 2008 (ongoing). <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Help:About_WikiTree> [accessed 23 October 2021].
- 8 My thanks to Victor Humphrey for spotting this significant item and bringing it to our attention.
- 9 Charles O'Brien and others, *The Buildings of England: Hampshire: South* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018), p.670; Wikipedia contributors, 'Shirley Parish Church', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 5 June 2020 <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Shirley_Parish_Church&oldid=960954693> [accessed 2 September 2021]. Contemporary reports indicate there was a picture of the Crucifixion by local artist William Shayer when the church was opened, but this doesn't appear to be extant.
- 10 Historic England, *The National Heritage List for England* <<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list>> [accessed 26 August 2021].
- 11 See O'Brien (p.670), and Lawley-Levene, (Michaela Lawley-Levene, *St James' Park. From Shirley Rec to Renovation 1907-2014*, Southampton: Friends of St James' Park, 2015), (p.5).
- 12 O'Brien, p.670; Lawley-Levine, pp.3-5.
- 13 Jessica Vale, 'The Country Houses of Southampton', *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club Archaeology Society* (39, 1983), p.179.
- 14 WikiTree contributors, 'John Knowlys' *WikiTree* <<https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Knowlys-16>> (accessed 26 August 2021).
- 15 See the extensive entry in W.R. O'Byrne, *A naval biographical dictionary. The life and services of every living officer in Her Majesty's Navy ...* (etc.), 3 vols., (London, John Murray, 1849, also available on Google Books), p.142-3. Bullen has a *Wikipedia* entry. See also WikiTree contributors, 'Charles Bullen GCB KCH (1769 - 1853)', *WikiTree* <<https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Bullen-756>> [accessed 26 August 2021].
- 16 The 1805 Club is an influential charity (registered no. 1071871), whose 'aim is to inspire greater understanding of the achievements of the maritime world of the 18th and 19th centuries'. See: 'The Association for Scholars and Enthusiasts of the Georgian Maritime Era, 1714-1837', *The 1805 Club* <<https://www.1805club.org>> [accessed 26 August 2021].
- 17 For Confederate symbols and flags in the USA, see: P. Morris, 'Reclaiming History', *National Geographic*, (February 2021), 100-123.
- 18 These highlights mostly drawn from J. Cannon (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to British History Oxford*, (Oxford, OUP 1997).
- 19 For further information see: The Church of England 'The National Burial Grounds Survey', *ChurchCare News* <<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/churchcare-news/national-burial-grounds-survey>> [accessed 2 September 2021].