

Cake & Cockhorse

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Much, rightly, is being made of the bicentenary of the passing, on 25th March 1807, of the bill to abolish the slave-trade. It was the culmination of many years of campaigning by William Wilberforce and others. This had started in April 1792 with the passing of what turned out to be an ineffective bill for abolition. Three days earlier parliament had received over fifty petitions in support. One was from the Mayor, Aldermen and Capital Burgesses of Banbury. Even the 1807 act left loopholes, and on 27th June 1814 Banbury was again one of many places petitioning, this time in connection with the recent Treaty of Peace with France, which left opportunity for trading slaves from French possessions in the Caribbean. The petitions appear to have achieved their object.

My thanks for bringing these petitions to my notice go to Andrea Benfield, of Thames Valley Tonight television, to David Rymill of the Hampshire Record Office (whose ancestors were cork-cutters in Banbury), and to Colin Harris and Hannah Chandler at the Bodleian Library.

The announcement of plans for the celebration of our Fiftieth Anniversary at Wroxton Abbey on Saturday 20th October has had a great response. Over sixty have already made provisional advance booking, and with space strictly limited we shall have room for only a dozen or so more. Remaining places will be allocated on a first come, first serve basis, so, if you wish to come and have not already received a request for confirmation of your booking, hurry! Would that we had the space available to the organisers of the great dinner to celebrate Queen Victoria's Coronation in 1838 (see page 47).