

Report on the Statue to Dame Eleanor Allan on College House, City Campus

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Key points

- The statue of Dame Eleanor Allan on Northumbria University's campus is the city's only public statue of a historic non-royal woman. It was erected in 1882 in a niche on College House, a building opened that year as the new site of Dame Allan School.
- Dame Allan was the philanthropist who financed the foundation of a charitable school for 40 poor boys and 20 poor girls in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1705.
- It was not previously understood what exactly motivated the Allan family to fund the establishment of a charity school for poor boys and girls. New research helps us to situate their actions within the national context of the Anglican charity school movement and the formation of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK).
- A 1923 history of Wallsend linked Dame Allan to the tobacco trade, stating the family business was that of tobacco merchant. No earlier records that we have yet identified confirm this link, although it remains possible.
- 93 tobacconists are known to have lived in Newcastle before 1800, including 19 operating from The Side, the same area where the Allan family had their shop.
- Whilst Newcastle's ships were more involved in the coal trade (with Bristol, Liverpool and Glasgow the key ports linked to the Transatlantic Slave Trade) we know that residents of Newcastle did own slaving vessels and shares in them during Allan's lifetime.
- Where we celebrate Allan's achievements as a businesswoman and philanthropist, we need to be mindful of the complex and often problematic ideologies, agendas and financial sources that potentially underpinned them. This should remind us of the importance of paying the same careful consideration to the operations of business and philanthropy within our present society.

Background

A statue to Newcastle businesswoman and philanthropist Dame Eleanor Allan (c. 1629-1708) currently sits on the outer wall of College House on College Street, once the location of Dame Allan's School (est. 1705) and now the property of Northumbria University. This report summarises recent research undertaken to better understand Allan's business activities and philanthropy. Following a wider conversation in recent years about the legacies of Atlantic slavery in Britain, including the responsibilities of public institutions in acknowledging, understanding, and addressing those legacies, this report pays particular attention to any possible connections between Allan's life and the Atlantic slave trade. This report provides a brief summary of research findings; a more detailed essay examining available sources; and a list of sources consulted.

Summary

Although later historical sources claimed that Eleanor Allan and her family were ‘tobacco merchants’, no contemporary sources can confirm that the Allan’s firm were involved in the growing, shipment, or even sale of tobacco, an industry that, by the early eighteenth century, was closely entwined with the violent, oppressive transatlantic system of chattel slavery. This does not mean that these later historical sources — the earliest being a 1923 history of Wallsend — are incorrect. It appears most likely that after the death of her husband John Allan (identified in sources as a corn merchant), Eleanor Allan worked with her son Francis to accrue some reasonable wealth (enough to buy land in Wallsend) as owners of a shop in the Pink Tower Ward, near The Side. If tobacco was sold through this premises, it was probably bought from wholesalers in England or Scotland, rather than imported directly from plantations in the Americas, placing Eleanor Allan’s business further along the economic chain of the slave-grown tobacco trade. Yet it is nevertheless important to recognise that any tobacco leaves that did flow through her premises would have likely been picked by enslaved people on plantations in the Americas.

Allan undertook philanthropic work in establishing a charity school for poor boys and girls in Wallsend (now Dame Allan’s School in Fenham), the reason for which a statue of her now sits at College House. Whilst the extent to which her wealth was derived from the tobacco trade remains unclear, it is important to note that her philanthropy was encouraged by wealthy individuals in Newcastle and Northumberland with wider family ties to the slave trade (e.g. the wealthy Ord family), and a religious organisation, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, whose missionary work in the British colonies sought to convert enslaved and indigenous peoples to Anglicanism.

Dame Eleanor Allan, Tobacco, Philanthropy, and the North East of England’s connections to the Atlantic slave trade

Dame Eleanor Allan (c. 1629-1709), daughter of goldsmith William Link, married John Allan in 1649. Very little is known about John’s working life apart from that in 1647 he was ‘found conformable and soe dismissed’ from an apprenticeship to George Lewen. By 1657, he had formerly joined the Merchant Adventurers of Newcastle as a boothman: a corn merchant who typically sold grains such as wheat, rye, barley, oats, and maize.¹ Until the sixteenth century, the term ‘merchant’

¹ Parish Records, Northumberland Archives; Rev. J. R. Boyle and F. W. Dendy, *Extracts from the Records of the Merchant Adventurers of Newcastle-upon-Tyne* (Durham: Andrews & Company, 1895), 161; Folio 77, GU.MA/8/1, 23 September 1657, Incorporated Company of Merchant Adventurers, Newcastle records, Tyne & Wear Archives. For the Merchant Adventurers, see Matt Ridley, *The History of the Merchant Adventurers of Newcastle upon Tyne* (London: Delpha, 1996).

applied to anyone who bought and sold goods manufactured by others, but soon took on a narrower definition, normally meaning wholesale traders, especially those dealing overseas. By the late seventeenth century, the Merchant Adventurers served as a complex network for interregional and transnational trade, tying Newcastle economically to continental Europe and beyond. Partly because of groups like the Merchant Adventurers, visitors to Newcastle during the late-seventeenth century were ‘struck by the vibrancy of a town energised by trade’.²

The Merchant Adventurers of Newcastle’s records reveal scant information about John Allan’s business, aside from his membership with the organisation. Hearth tax records from 1665 show that he was resident in the Pink Tower Ward of Newcastle’s Quayside, which stretched from the Castle Stairs, along Sandhill, round into the lower half of the Side and along that thoroughfare to near Dog Leap Stairs.³ Those deemed exempt from the tax had only one hearth; mansion-sized homes had up to sixteen. Allan’s home, meanwhile, was taxed for four hearths, giving some indication of the size of his property, and, potentially, his modest wealth at that time. In 1677, after the death of Eleanor’s father, she and John entered into a legal dispute with her brother, Richard Link, over the inheritance of their father’s property in Newcastle.⁴ These subtle indications of the Allans’ wealth do not exactly align with a 1923 history of Wallsend which identifies John Allan as a ‘merchant who could not make his tobacco shop successful’ and who, in 1679, two years after their legal dispute, ‘died in poor circumstances’. The same author, William Richardson, also claims that Eleanor and their son Francis, by their ‘frugality and their energy’, subsequently converted the business into a ‘sound paying concern, and laid up considerable wealth’.⁵ Early twentieth century sources suggest John Allen was poor and not terribly successful in business and there is no solid evidence to suggest where Eleanor and Francis got the wealth needed to establish a school: a 1910 *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* article notes that John Allan ran a ‘small shop’ and ‘died in poor circumstances’, but gives no further detail of the wealth that enabled Eleanor Allan to establish her charity school.⁶ Richardson’s account,

² Lawrence Robinson, ‘The Merchant Community of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1660-1750’ (Durham University, 2019), 1, 86.

³ Richard Welford, ‘Newcastle Household in 1665: Assessment of Hearth or Chimney Tax’, *Archaeologia Aeliana* 37 (1911): 49–76. Welford maps the locations of properties documented in the Hearth Tax data using John Brand, *The History and Antiquities of the Town and County of the Town of Newcastle Upon Tyne: Including an Account of the Coal Trade of That Place and Embellished with Engraved Views of the Publick Buildings, Vol. 1* (London: B. White & Son, and T. & I. Egerton A.D., 1789).

⁴ Legal proceedings, ‘Short title: Allen v Luck. Plaintiffs: John Allen and Eleanor Allen his wife ...’, 1677, Item: C 10/131/6, National Archives, Kew.

⁵ William Richardson, *History of the Parish of Wallsend: The Ancient Townships of Wallsend and Willington; General, Ecclesiastical, Industrial and Biographical* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Northumberland Press Ltd., 1923), 90.

⁶ ‘Allan’s Endowed School’, *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 21 January 1905, 9.

therefore, is the earliest known reference to the Allans' involvement in the tobacco trade, written two centuries after she had died.⁷

Tobacco in Newcastle

While John Allan was earning his living as a boothman in the 1650s, tobacco was fast becoming mass consumed in Britain, not least in Newcastle.⁸ The city's Chamberlains' Accounts record the regular import and export of goods into Newcastle by port and road during this period. The vast majority of ships coming into the Tyne brought ballast and took out coal, but a small number of vessels traded in other commodities such as tobacco.⁹ The Merchant Adventurers of Newcastle included a few tobacco merchants, some of whom were fined and their tobacco ceased by the organisation because they traded within the liberties of the town without membership.¹⁰ Although some Newcastle tobacconists are known to have been Merchant Adventurers, the majority were members of the Company of Feltmakers, Curriers and Armourers.¹¹ By the 1670s, there were already several self-identified 'tobacconists', 'tobacco men', 'tobacco-cutters', and 'tobacco-spinners' working in Newcastle and Gateshead; there were likely many more traders who sold tobacco but did not identify selling the product as their primary profession. The tobacco trade in the North East of England was dominated by those who bought tobacco from wholesale suppliers domestically, or re-exported tobacco to continental Europe, but there were some individuals in the city involved with the shipment of tobacco

⁷ Earlier historical texts that reference Allan's biography and charity school, but not her involvement in the tobacco business, include: Henry Bourne, *The History of Newcastle Upon Tyne: Or, the Ancient and Present State of That Town. By the Late Henry Bourne ...* (Newcastle upon Tyne: John White, 1736), 79; William Hutchinson, *A View of Northumberland: With an Excursion to the Abbey of Mailross in Scotland* (Newcastle: W. Charnley, Vesey & Whitfield, 1778), 401; *The Picture of Newcastle upon Tyne: Containing a Guide to the Town and Neighbourhood, an Account of the Roman Wall, and a Description of the Coal Mines* (D. Akenhead and Sons, 1807), 39; Eneas Mackenzie, *A Descriptive and Historical Account of the Town & County of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Including the Borough of Gateshead* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Mackenzie and Dent, 1827), 445; Thomas Oliver, *A New Picture of Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Or, an Historical and Descriptive View ...* (Newcastle upon Tyne: S.p., 1831); William Whellan and & Co., *History, Topography, and Directory of the County Palatine of Durham: Comprising a General Survey of the County, with Separate Historical, Statistical, and Descriptive Sketches of All the Towns, Boroughs, Ports, Parishes, Chapelries, Townships, Villages, Wards, and Manors. To Which Are Subjoined A History and Directory of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and a List of the Seats of the Nobility and Gentry* (London: Whittaker and Company, 1856), 951; 'The Streets of Newcastle: Northumberland Street and Its Offshoots', *The Monthly Chronicle of North Country Lore and Legend*, April 1889, 159; 'Dame Allan's Charity', *Newcastle Courant*, 2 May 1879, 6; John McQuillen, *The Church of St. Nicholas: With a Brief Sketch of the History of Newcastle* (Newcastle upon Tyne: s. p., 1903), 44.

⁸ Carole Shammas, 'Changes in English and Anglo-American Consumption from 1550 to 1800', in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1994), 179–81.

⁹ Lloyd J. Edwards, 'Tobacco Pipes, Pipemakers, and Tobacconists in Newcastle and Gateshead until c. 1800: An Archaeological Study' (Doctoral Dissertation, Durham University, 1986), 19.

¹⁰ Rev. J. R. Boyle and F. W. Dendy, *Extracts from the Records of the Merchant Adventurers of Newcastle-upon-Tyne* (Durham: Andrews & Company, 1895), xl, 151, 150.

¹¹ Edwards, 'Tobacco Pipes, Pipemakers, and Tobacconists', 84.

from the Americas.¹² Some women were involved in this transatlantic trade. In the 1680s, Eleanor Partis, widow of Thomas Partis I, owned a sixteenth share in two ships, one of them called the *Potomack Merchant*, captained by her son, Charles Partis. It is likely that the *Potomack* carried tobacco given the ship was named after the Potomack River, a renowned tobacco trading route that flowed through Virginia to Port Tobacco, the county seat of Charles County, Maryland.¹³ During this period, tobacco was the chief commodity crop for Maryland planters. The labor intensive cultivation and processing of tobacco at first was handled by indentured laborers drawn from the British Isles. When tobacco prices declined in the late seventeenth century, many planters turned instead to cheaper enslaved labor. The first Africans taken as slaves to Maryland arrived in 1642. A 1664 Act in the state ruled that all enslaved people and their children could be held in slavery for life. In theory, the Act also enabled the enslavement of Native Americans and African Creoles. Although the peak of the importation of African slaves to the Potomac River was 1732-1772, by as early as the 1690s, most of the tobacco from the region was now picked by enslaved labor from Africa.¹⁴

It is not unimaginable, then, that a widow like Eleanor Allan could have invested financially in the shipment of tobacco. Still, no known sources about tobacco in Newcastle refer to the Allan family. The Allans are not mentioned in, albeit incomplete, records for the Company of Feltmakers, Curriers and Armourers or the Chamberlain Accounts; nor are they named in a 1986 archaeological study of the 93 known tobacconists known to have lived in Newcastle before 1800.¹⁵ The last wills and testaments made by Eleanor and Francis Allan and accompanying probate records do not mention tobacco (Francis is described as a ‘merchant’).¹⁶ Of course, the absence of documentation cannot be taken as evidence that the Allans did not sell tobacco. The Allans’ shop was situated within reach of both the parishes of All Saints and St. Nicholas Parish where, parish records show, the tobacco trade in Newcastle was most strongly established because of their river frontage.¹⁷ 19 of the 93 tobacconists mentioned in the above study were based in The Side, the specific neighborhood where the Allans’ shop was based. With a shop situated at the heart of the tobacco trade in Newcastle, and potentially a small inheritance from her father, there is reason to speculate that the Allans at some stage drifted into selling tobacco, and Richardson was drawing this information from a legitimate, if as-of-yet

¹² Alexander Taylor, ‘Venting Smoke: The Trade and Consumption of Tobacco in Early Modern England and Wales, c.1625-1685’ (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Sheffield, 2018), 204.

¹³ Edwards, ‘Tobacco Pipes, Pipemakers, and Tobacconists’, 86.

¹⁴ Donald M. Sweig, ‘The Importation of African Slaves to the Potomac River, 1732-1772’, *The William and Mary Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (1985): 507–24. Men, nevertheless, were the primary traders of tobacco during this period. Alexander Taylor speculates that around 4.2 per cent of the total importers of tobacco in Bristol during this period were women: Taylor, ‘Venting Smoke’, 107.

¹⁵ Edwards, ‘Tobacco Pipes, Pipemakers, and Tobacconists’.

¹⁶ Elianor Allan, will bond, penal sum £1,000, 10 June 1709, DPRI 3 1709 B59; Elianor Allan, will, 22 November 1708, DPRI 1 1709 A11-2; Francis Allen, Will, 6 March 1705, DPRI, 1, 1705, A2, England, Durham Probate Bonds, 1556-1858, Special Collections, Palace Green Library, Durham University, Durham.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 83.

unknown, source. If this is correct, it is most likely, given both the relatively marginal place of Newcastle in the British tobacco trade, and the seeming absence of surviving documentation about the Allans' involvement in tobacco, that the family bought relatively small amounts of tobacco domestically, either from distributors within Newcastle or from suppliers nearer to western English and Scottish ports like Liverpool or Glasgow.¹⁸

Philanthropy and Colonialism

It was not previously understood what exactly motivated Francis and Eleanor Allan to dictate in their wills that the rents from their Wallsend property should be used for the establishment of a charity school for poor boys and girls. However, this new research helps us to situate their actions within the national context of the Anglican charity school movement. The turn of the eighteenth century was marked by a shift from aristocratic to entrepreneurial philanthropy, of which the charity school movement was one manifestation.¹⁹ Charity schools were established in the 1690s with the view of opposing and defeating, in the words of one seventeenth-century historian of Newcastle, the 'pernicious effects of the seminaries set up by the Papists during the reign of King James the Second'.²⁰ The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK, est. 1698), based in London, had a great influence on the charity school movement in Newcastle, and seemingly Allan in particular. In the decade following the founding of the first parochial school of St. Johns in Newcastle in 1705, six further schools were founded and 300 children were being educated, housed and/or clothed across Northumberland (which, at that time, included Newcastle). Rev. Thomas Bates of St John's Church, Rev. Nathaniel Ellison and Rev. Robert Thomlinson, later rector of nearby Whickham and afternoon lecturer of St. Nicholas Church, were key figures in connecting the SPCK to wealthy individuals in the North East of England (all of whom would take on roles as the first trustees of Allan's school). Allan was one of several figures on the SPCK's radar. William Blackett MP, 1st Baronet of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, was gradually persuaded by Bates, Ellison, and Thomlinson to fund the St. Andrew Charity School. The same year as Eleanor Allan funded her charity school, local attorney John Ord funded the St John's Charity school, by anonymous donation. Thomlinson petitioned Newcastle Common Council to provide a 'house fit and convenient for [Ord's] purpose'.²¹ Both Blackett and Ord were prominent figures in the North East of England whose families had their own ties to the slave trade. A relative of Blackett's, John Erasmus Blackett, who later inherited the

¹⁸ Tobacco trade between Scotland and England existed prior to the Act of Union (1707) but was considered illegal: Taylor, 'Venting Smoke', 57.

¹⁹ Charles Harvey, Mairi Maclean, and Roy Suddaby, 'Historical Perspectives on Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy', *Business History Review* 93, no. 3 (2019): 443–71.

²⁰ Brand, *The History and Antiquities of the Town and County of the Town of Newcastle Upon Tyne*, 274.

²¹ Common Council Order Book, 18 December 1705, Common Council Order Books, 1699-1718, MD.NC/2/3, Tyne & Wear Archives.

former's estate at Wallington Hall, apprenticed for prominent Liverpool slave-trader Foster Cunliffe and imported slave-produced Jamaican rum. (Both these Blacketts were also members of the Merchant Adventurers of Newcastle).²² In 1753, a few decades after John Ord's death, one of his sons, James Ord, is documented as owning 43 enslaved people on a plantation in St Andrew, Jamaica.²³ William Ord, another of John Ord's sons, owned a ship called *The Sugar Cane*, which voyaged from Newcastle to London, the island of Madeira (off the West African coast), and onwards to St. Vincent in the Caribbean; the classic triangular Atlantic slave route.²⁴ Elsewhere in the country, the SPCK encouraged wealthy figures with more direct, unequivocal ties to the slave trade to donate to their cause: the now infamous Bristolian slave trader Edward Colston donated funds to SPCK-related charity school projects.²⁵

Rev. Bates' correspondence to the SPCK in 1704 provides the earliest contemporary report of Allan's philanthropy outside of Newcastle. 'Mrs Allen', he writes, 'has settled in the Hands of Trustees a Dean & Chapter Lease ... for 2 Schools one for Boys, the other for Girls. This Charity to Commence at her Death, who is now 80 years of Age'.²⁶ In 1744, Rev. Thomlinson, in a letter to the SPCK reflecting on what he saw as the lost zeal for founding charity schools since the flurry of activity near the turn of the century, recalled the 'remarkable Charity and Assistance of my good friend Mr. Jn. [John] Ord then a very rich Attorney ... for he was the first person, whom I prevailed upon to set up and endow a Charity School in that Town and to his Interest and persuasion it was chiefly owing that Mrs Allan (wid. [widow] of a Freeman) left an Estate for the Endowment of 2 Charity Schools more'.²⁷ John Ord, as well as establishing his own charity school, was Allan's

²² Blackett Street in Newcastle city centre is named after him: Allan Kirtley, Patricia Longbottom, and Martin Blackett, *A History of the Blacketts: The Story of a Remarkable North-East England Family Over Seven Centuries* (Surrey: s.p., 2013).

²³ Colonial Office correspondence, 'A List of landholders in the Island of Jamaica together with the number of acres each person possessed taken from the quit rent books in the year 1754', CO 142/31, National Archives, Kew. Also see Ord's entry in the Legacies of British Slavery database, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146655405>. Ord's descendent, William Ord MP, later stood on the Select Committee on West Indian slavery (1832): Margaret Escott, 'ORD, William (1781-1855), of Whitfield Hall, Northumb. and 17 Berkeley Square, Mdx.', in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1820-1832*, ed. D. R. Fisher, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), available at <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/ord-william-1781-1855>.

²⁴ 'Insurance policy effected at Newcastle of William Ord for merchandise carried in ship called Sugar Cane from Madeira to London', 1787, NRO 324/f.2/32, Blackett-Ord [Whitfield] Manuscripts, Northumberland Archives.

²⁵ Abstracts to letters between Edward Colston (Bristol) and SPCK, Folios 688, 1704, and 1758, Abstract Letter Books, 1699-1783, GBR/0012/MS SPCK/D2, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge Collection, Cambridge University Archives.

²⁶ 'Minutes (Typed transcripts), 1704/11/9-1707/10/30', GBR/0012/MS SPCK/A1/77, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge Collection, Cambridge University Archives.

²⁷ Robert Thomlinson, Abstract Letter, 21 August 1744, Abstract Letter Books, 1699-1783, GBR/0012/MS SPCK/D2, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge Collection, Cambridge University Archives.

attorney: he is a signatory on her will and worked on behalf of her school for several years after her death.²⁸

Beyond copious references in archived correspondence between individuals in Newcastle involved in the charity school movement and SPCK headquarters, SPCK's influence on Newcastle's charity schools is detectable in the similarity between the school's rules and those provided in the SPCK's accounts books. The SPCK sent religious texts and bibles to the schools themselves, often via figures like Thomlinson and Bates. The SPCK's involvement with charity schools mirrored domestically its evangelising efforts abroad in the Americas and Asia. In an early text that sketched out the SPCK's aims, the financial support (e.g. pensions and Parochial Libraries) for missionaries in 'attempting the conversion of the Negroes or native Indians' in 'plantations abroad' was listed as an utmost priority of the organisation.²⁹ Here we see the two-sided coin of philanthropy in eighteenth-century Britain: the charity for the education of the poor at home existed alongside, and at times hand-in-hand, with an oppressive system of colonialism and a racially motivated mission to 'educate' or 'civilise' so-called 'savages' abroad. Early in its history, those involved with the SCPK noted the direct parallels between catechetical work at home and evangelical work abroad. The SCPK's greatest mover and shaker in Newcastle, Rev. Ellison, wrote to the organisation in 1699 to inform it that 'That the Towne of Newcastle hath made the Education and Catechizing of youth very easy and Cheap, and that many poor are taught gratis - That the Towne hath provided two Catechetical Lectures'. He then expressed his hope that 'traders to America will furnish Libraries there' and that 'every Author of an usefull Book should send one or two copies to the plantations'.³⁰

Hundreds of pounds was sent abroad annually, largely to fund the distribution of books from the SPCK's own publishing house, including the prolific output of its founder, Thomas Bray.³¹ 'The whole appearance and habits of the population', a later history claimed, 'were greatly improved' by the work of the SPCK. Other of Bray's projects and legacies, such as the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts and the Associates of Dr. Bray, were more active than the SPCK in

²⁸ 'Account book "Z" of John Ord July 1709', NRO 324/E/5, and 'Account Book "O" of John Ord', NRO 324/E.6, Blackett-Ord [Whitfield] Manuscripts, Northumberland Archives.

²⁹ William Bray, 'A General Plan of the Constitution of a Protestant Congregation or Society for Propagating Christian knowledge', reprinted in William Osborne Bird Allen and Edmund McClure, *Two Hundred Years: The History of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1698-1898* (London: E. & J. B. Young, 1898), 22.

³⁰ Rev. Nathaniel Ellison, Abstract Letter, 27 Jan 1699, Abstract Letter Books, 1699-1783, GBR/0012/MS SPCK/D2, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge Collection, Cambridge University Archives.

³¹ For Bray's missionary work with enslaved people, see Verner W. Crane, 'Dr. Thomas Bray and the Charitable Colony Project, 1730', *The William and Mary Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (1962): 49-63; John C Van Horne, ed., *Religious Philanthropy and Colonial Slavery: The American Correspondence of the Associates of Dr. Bray, 1717-1777* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Antonio T. Bly, 'In Pursuit of Letters: A History of the Bray Schools for Enslaved Children in Colonial Virginia', *History of Education Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (November 2011): 429-459; Terry L. Meyers, 'Benjamin Franklin, the College of William and Mary, and the Williamsburg Bray School', *Anglican and Episcopal History* 79, no. 4 (December 2010): 368-393.

their work in the colonies, though the SPCK was active in evangelical work in the West Indies (especially Barbados, Antigua, Guiana, and Trinidad), building churches, chapels, and reading schools for the ‘use of the Plantation negroes’ (children and adult slaves), well into the nineteenth century. In 1832, a slave rebellion led to a disclination among some planters to allow education, especially reading skills, to be provided to slaves. After the Emancipation Act (1833), the Society enlarged its efforts to ‘assist the Bishops [in British colonies] in preparing the minds of the negroes for the gift of freedom’ and ‘obliterate, as much as possible, all feelings of a painful nature’ among the enslaved.³²

Following its establishment, the Allan school received donations from a variety of local figures, from local parishioners to prominent business people in the area like John Fenwick (part of the large, illustrious Northumberland family that included the founder of Fenwick’s department store) and Aubone Surtees, part-owner of the Exchange Bank, otherwise known as Surtees and Burdon (father of Bessie Surtees, whose family house remains a tourist attraction in Newcastle).³³ As of yet, it appears no significant annuities for the school came from individuals involved in selling enslaved people or slave-grown produce (although it is possible that wealth in North East of England that derived from enslaved labour may have been financially bound, in one way or another, to banks such Surtees and Burdon).³⁴

The Statue

The school moved location several times over its history, including in 1882 to College House on College Street. Notably, Dr Ernest Roland Wilberforce, first Bishop of Newcastle (1882-1896), and grandson of abolitionist William Wilberforce, was in attendance at the laying of the new school’s foundation stone.³⁵ It is not known who designed the statue of Allan on the gable end wall of the College House building, completed the same time as the new school in 1882, although it is possible that it was the building’s architect, R. J. Johnson.³⁶ In 1924, the school’s premises began to be used,

³² William Osborne Bird Allen and Edmund McClure, *Two Hundred Years: The History of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1698-1898* (London: E. & J. B. Young, 1898), 314–18.

³³ ‘Bond between Thomas and Elizabeth Bates and Joseph Blenkinsop for property in the Side, 17 December 1742, E/NC42/1/2, Tyne & Wear Archives; ‘Fennick’s Annuity’, E.NC42/2/1-3, Tyne & Wear Archives; ‘Surtees Annuity: bond for securing a permanent annuity of £2. 5 shillings to the Charity School, 23 March 1791’, E/NC42/3, Tyne & Wear Archives.

³⁴ Maberly Phillips, *A History of Banks, Bankers, & Banking in Northumberland, Durham, and North Yorkshire, Illustrating the Commercial Development of the North of England, from 1755 to 1894, with Numerous Portraits, Facsimiles of Notes, Signatures, Documents, &c* (London: E. Wilson & co, 1894).

³⁵ E. D. Smith, *Dame Allan’s Schools, Newcastle upon Tyne 1705-2005* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Governors of Dame Allan’s Schools and E. D. Smith, 2005), 45.

³⁶ ‘Dame Allan’, Public Monuments and Sculpture Association, VADS, University of Creative Arts, available at <https://www.vads.ac.uk/digital/collection/PMSA/id/2058/>, accessed 6 October 2021. Johnson designed many buildings in the city, including Newcastle University’s Armstrong Building. The school’s historian, E. D. Smith,

initially temporarily, as an evening College of Commerce, one of the three colleges that amalgamated in 1969 to form Newcastle Polytechnic, precursor to the University of Northumbria. The Allan school moved to Fenham in 1935, where it remains today, and, in 1944, the College of Commerce finally bought the College House building.³⁷

During the nineteenth century, people in Newcastle typically referred to Allan in glowing terms. An influential 1801 history of Newcastle described how the ‘honourable and laudable’ charity school came into existence because of the ‘pious benevolence of a worthy lady, Mrs. Eleanor Allan, of Newcastle’.³⁸ In the 1880s, the city’s council expressed members’ hope that the soon-to-be reconstituted school would live up to Allan’s ‘far-seeing benevolence’.³⁹ Another writer of that period described Allan as a ‘good lady’ for her work in establishing the school.⁴⁰ On the 200th anniversary of the school’s foundation, Rev. Crawford Amour spoke of Allan as a ‘saintly person’.⁴¹ The statue’s design reflected this trajectory in how Allan was remembered in the centuries after her death. Allan appears aged, much like the ‘ancient gentlewoman’ described in a 1708 account of her charity school, and wears anachronistic medieval dress with a bible in hand.⁴² No known portraits survive of Allan, and the statue’s use of anachronistic dress makes it highly unlikely it was made after a true likeness. The statue of Eleanor Allan on College House is an idealised image of a woman whose life and actions played an important role in Newcastle’s history, but are still little understood. In commemorating Allan’s life, therefore, we need to be attentive, equally, to what we know and what we *do not* know. Where we celebrate her achievements as a businesswoman and philanthropist, we need to be mindful of the complex and often problematic ideologies, agendas and financial sources that potentially underpinned them. These questions, of course, remain highly relevant today, and suggest the importance of paying the same careful consideration in relation to the place and actions of business and philanthropy within our present society.

argues that the statue emphasised that the school was ‘now known as Allan’s Endowed Schools’, rather than St Nicholas Charity School, its most common name up until that point: Smith, *Dame Allan’s Schools*, 48.

³⁷ Joan Allen. *Rutherford’s Ladder: The Making of Northumbria University, 1871-1996* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Northumbria University Press, 2005), 43.

³⁸ John Baillie, *An Impartial History of the Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne and Its Vicinity, Comprehending an Account of Its Origin, Population, Coal, Coasting, & Foreign Trade, Together with An Accurate Description of All Its Public Buildings, Manufactories, and Coal Works* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Vint and Anderson, 1801), 278.

³⁹ *The Proceedings and Reports of the Town Council of the Borough of Newcastle ...* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Newcastle-upon-Tyne council, 1882), 28.

⁴⁰ ‘The Streets of Newcastle: Northumberland Street and Its Offshoots’, 159.

⁴¹ ‘Allan’s Endowed School’, *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 21 January 1905, 9.

⁴² *An Account of Charity-Schools Lately Erected in England, Wales and Ireland; with the Benefactions Thereto, and of the Methods Whereby They Were Set Up, and Are Governed. Also, a Proposal for Enlarging Their Number, and Adding Some Work to the Childrens Learning, Thereby to Render Their Education More Useful to the Publick.* (London: J. Downing, 1708), 25.

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