

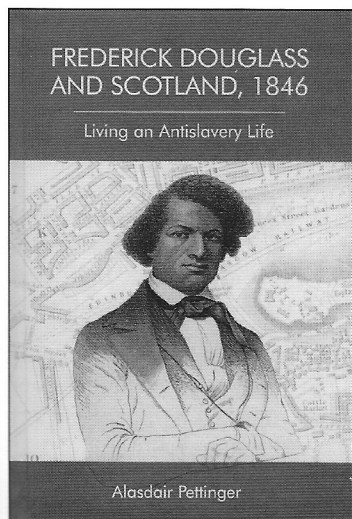
health, happiness, and the virtue of our girls – the sooner the mills are run down the better'. A week later the paper was obliged to publish a response from eight mill girls, objecting to the reflection cast upon their character and confirming 'we are able to live on our wages ... without the degrading assistance of prostitution'.

Carolyn O'Hara has carefully selected extracts from her great-grandfather's 'Oculus' column and published them in twelve subject chapters, linked by her own sympathetic commentary which takes care to highlight aspects of the writer's unique style, embracing humour, invective and the intermittent use of phrases in Scots, for emphasis. She has adopted separate techniques for the provision of 'Notes' and 'References'. She offers forty-seven 'Notes' on individual people mentioned in the column extracts or on other points of interest. These are flagged in conventional style by the use of superscript figures through the main text, with a numbered key at the end of the volume. This 'Notes' key is followed by 'References', a chapter-by-chapter guide to the longer, indented quotations from the *Ayrshire Post*, each identified by 1-4 introductory words and citing the date of the issue in question. Without doubt the book provides a very effective local snapshot in time. It is perhaps fortunate that the year 1898 was chosen by a family member to grace with a scrapbook of Oculus cuttings because there was much local innovation to report on that year: gramophones, electric street lighting, motor cars and tarred roads (in John Loudon McAdam's home town). However, William Gilmour Wallace's Oculus column was ongoing for about fifty years (1891-1940), so in theory it would be possible to publish many more annual volumes of edited extracts from the column, using files of the *Ayrshire Post* in Ayr's Carnegie Library or on-line digitised issues. But perhaps that is asking too much of the author! Instead, the present volume can stand as a reminder of the value of the Oculus column to anyone researching the social history of Ayr over the period that the column was published. *Don Martin*.

**Pettinger, Alasdair**  
***Frederick Douglass and Scotland, 1846:***  
***living an antislavery life.***

**Edinburgh University Press, 2018, pp.374, £80 (hardback)**  
**ISBN 978 1 4744 4425 5**

**Also available in paperback and e-book format, £24.99**



After a flying start with a fascinating account of the abuse Douglass experienced in his voyage over from America which is presumably designed to immediately engage the reader, the author's methodology and format of this highly commendable book is laid out in pages 25-26 at the end of the first chapter – in lieu of an introduction. It is worth repeating part of this section as it is clearly intended to set the reader's expectations. In it, Pettinger states that while: 'the main body of this book is framed by accounts of Douglass's

outward and return sea voyages in Parts I and V, it does not offer a chronological narrative of his speaking engagements in Scotland. Instead, each of the three intervening Parts focuses

on a different set of encounters with notable Scots in order to suggest the vital role they played in transforming Douglass'. In particular, it explains the way they prompted far-reaching changes in his style of speaking and writing, also his choice of heroes [Scott and Burns] and how he identified with them, and the fervour with which he attempted to control the way he was represented verbally and pictorially.

This not to say that with an approach based on literature and cultural synthesis the interest of the local historian is not catered for. Between his arrival at Ardrossan harbour on the *Belfast* steam packet in mid-January and his departure by rail from Edinburgh in late October 1846, Douglass spent nearly six months on tour in Scotland and addressed approximately seventy meetings in civic halls, meeting rooms and churches. Appendix I is an updated list of the venues at which Douglass spoke; and Appendix II offers four maps of his visits. The first map locates the seventeen town and cities, from Aberdeen to Ayr. The remaining three maps relate to specific venues of interest in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee. A foreword gives a very useful outline of the principal characters in the Slaveholder and Abolitionist worlds in the British Isles and America as well as the key players in the fiery 'Send Back the Money' debate.

Part I: 'The Voyage' launches this historical/ literary review with an opening chapter entitled 'Throw Him Overboard'. This tells of the racially motivated abuse endured by 'fugitive slave' Douglass during his passage from Boston to Liverpool on the British & North America packet SS *Cambria* at the hands of some of his fellow passengers. These antagonistic supporters of slave-holding succeeded in having Douglass denied the use of his ticketed cabin accommodation. Following the direct intervention of the captain, Douglass avoided a potentially lethal situation by accepting third class accommodation which denied him a place at the dinner table and use of the saloon. This incident provided Douglass with powerful images of flagrant discrimination under the British flag with which to stir up his audiences.

Part II: 'Dark, Polluted Gold' examines Douglass's part in the 'Send Back the Money' campaign which was in full flow by the time he arrived in Scotland. By accepting donations – albeit small amounts – from kindred presbyteries in the southern slave states of America, the leaders of the newly formed (and cash-strapped) Free Church of Scotland had laid themselves open to the indictment that by taking this 'blood money' they were 'de facto' in communion with slave owners. This meant that Douglass faced ready-charged audiences, knowledgeable about the horrors of American slavery upon which to advance and perfect his rhetorical and writing skills.

In the following chapters, the author makes a diversion to discuss the arguments between Douglass and his promoters and the Free Church leaders – notably Thomas Chalmers and William Cunningham – as to the direction of Abolitionist strategies which had already split into two camps. Douglass had been recruited to the radical wing of American anti-slavery led by William Garrison and so rejected all compromises and the taking of the stained money.

In Part III: 'Douglass, Scott and Burns', the analysis moves further away from the progress of his visit to explore the various ways in which Douglass shrewdly harnessed the legacies of the canonical high Tory, Walter Scott, and the ploughman, Robert Burns, to align himself with his audiences. He had been previously inspired to change his surname to emulate the heroic freedom fighter, the Black Douglas, in Scott's hugely successful epic poem: 'Lady of the Lake'.

Less well understood in America is the influence of Scott's gothic revival, with its image of feudal warriors – like Ivanhoe

and Rob Roy – driven to great deeds of valour by a sense of family honour and fealty. Such sentiments fitted perfectly with the southern plutocracy's view of themselves as 'noble patriarchs' upholding their distorted traditions of freedom while acting as guardians of their 'child-like' black slaves. Indeed, the author quotes Mark Twain's 'wild proposition' that 'Sir Walter had so large a hand in making the Southern character as it existed before the [Civil] war, that he is in great measure responsible for the war'. All of which gives much food for thought.

Similarly, with Burns, Douglass intuitively knew the power of the sentiment of 'a man's a man for a' that' upon a Scottish audience, having bought a copy of his works on his escape from slavery. Douglass's veneration of the bard reached a climax during his visit to Ayr and a meeting with Burns's aged sister in March 1846. The author reviews the use that Douglass made of his affinity for Burns both in Scotland and later on his return to America.

Part IV: 'Measuring Heads and Reading Faces' relates to Douglass's brief encounter with George Combe, the founder of Phrenology. Combe's pseudo-science claimed to be able to determine the mental development, strengths and weaknesses of an individual character from observations of the shape of the cranium and the set of the facial features. By the time of Douglass's arrival this 'school' had firmly taken root in America and was incorporated into the growing body of 'scientific racism'. In addition, Scotland's music halls had embraced the insidious 'black faced' minstrel shows from America which ridiculed the black American as a simpleton. The author covers well this struggle for 'hearts and minds' against the 'Ethiopian shows' in the run up to the American Civil War. He goes to some length to relate the concern Douglass had to establish and nurture his public image away from one of a 'runaway slave' to that of an orator of distinction and an emerging leader of the Abolitionist movement in his own right.

In Part V: 'The Voyage Home' Douglass chose to return to America on the SS *Cambria* under the same Captain but under somewhat changed circumstances. Pettinger challenges the claim that Douglass was satisfied with the arrangement whereby he was allowed to use the Captain's stateroom but still had to remain out of sight of his white fellow passengers for the duration of the voyage. It took a letter of assurance to the morning papers that such racial segregation would never happen again, by the proprietor of the shipping company, Samuel Cunard, to draw a line under this well-publicised outrage.

In Part VI: 'The Affinity Scot' the author relates the use Douglass made of his Scottish experiences in returning back home, notably as a speaker at Burns suppers, to promote the Abolitionist cause. He concludes with a survey of what has (or rather has not) been done to establish commemorative plaques to celebrate Douglass's visits to Scotland. It should be noted that this book does not cover Douglass's second short visit on the eve of the outbreak of the Civil War.

This referenced and illustrated book is very well written and it includes an extensive bibliography. It should appeal to a broad spectrum of readers. Although not presenting any new research, the author provides a fascinating analysis of the impact of contemporary Scottish culture on Douglass (and vice versa). The author's message is clear – Douglass's experiences on the Scottish lecture circuit in 1846 moulded the nature of a man who is forever the icon of Black America's ongoing struggle. Scotland should therefore do more to embrace Douglass's memory. *Eric Graham.*

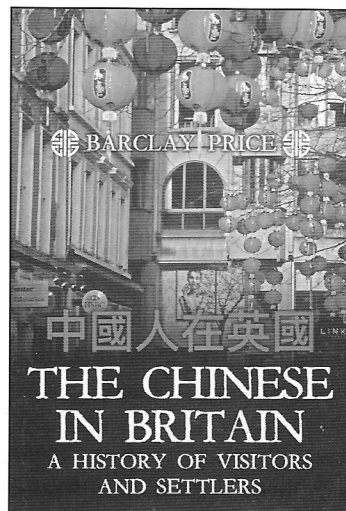
**Price, Barclay**

***The Chinese in Britain: a History of Visitors and Settlers***

**Amberley, Stroud, 2019, pp.288, £20.00**

**ISBN 978 14456 8664 6 (hardback as reviewed)**

**ISBN 978 1 4456 8665 3 (ebook)**



If the discipline of history mostly engages with 'the great and the good' (and the bad), local history often concerns itself with the smaller person at the local level. For many people, this is one of the key attractions of local history – people can engage with 'locals' at the level of the locality. This engagement brings the local area alive: who lived where and when, when that house was built, when and why that mill flourished and then died, and so on. A history of a foreign ethnic group in an area or a country is slightly

different in that it might involve some 'great and good' but it will always involve the many smaller folk who came and went, often disappearing from the history after they have left. By definition, it must engage with the smaller folk because they are in fact 'the story' – it was they who came, whatever the reason for coming (and perhaps leaving again) in the first place.

As its title indicates, this book aims to recount the history of Chinese people coming to Britain, why they came and why they stayed, if they did. This history is different from the history of Chinese in, say, California or Australia. Well before Europeans arrived, Chinese visited the latter, seeking the food delicacy sea cucumber. But the major story of the Chinese going to the New World concerns indentured labour and then the gold rushes of the mid-nineteenth century. Many Chinese stayed on after the gold rushes, commonly becoming itinerant merchants and hawkers, and then latterly market gardeners around the big cities. The same history does not pertain in Britain, many of the early visitors being curiosities in travelling shows or coming to Britain in relation to missionary activities (for example, in chapter 8). Chinese seamen were also common, leading to large Chinese communities in London's East End (Limehouse) and Liverpool, and eventually being widely used in both twentieth century world wars. The main Liverpool shipping companies employed 20,000 Chinese in World War 2 but these were paid only about 'one third of the wages of British seamen and were denied the war-risk bonus paid to the British' seamen (p.142). In port in Liverpool, the Chinese were crammed into miserable hostels often with sixty men in a single room. And yet, the press praised the Chinese as our 'plucky Allies' (p.181) and – a fact unknown to this reviewer – Chinese servicemen fought alongside the Allies. Indeed, 700 Chinese servicemen are thought to have died in the Normandy landings in 1944 (p.182). After the war, something like 80,000 Chinese Labour Corps members cleared mines and recovered bodies. The French allowed the Chinese to stay in France if they so wished, but 'Britain refused entry to all the Chinese workers' (p.191).

Some Trades Unions were opposed to the employment of Chinese in shipping, and early twentieth century Glasgow saw racial violence against Chinese and black seamen, with local trade union leaders promoting segregation in the port and even calling for expulsion of all blacks and Chinese from the shipping industry (p.140). The story is not by any means