

WORDS TO LEARN

CHATTEL SLAVERY

A form of slavery in which a person is treated as property belonging to their owner. An enslaved person under this system has no rights, and they remain enslaved for life. Any children born to an enslaved person are also enslaved for life.

COLONISATION

When a government or ruler takes over other regions and countries, occupying them with settlers and exploiting their natural resources and land to gain wealth and power.

COMPENSATION

Payment or something given to make up for a loss or injury.

DECOLONIAL

Questioning how histories of empire and colonialism played a key role in shaping our present-day society. It can go hand-in-hand with work that looks to challenge inequalities and working towards fairness for all.

EMPIRE

Where a central or main power rules over other territories outside its own border.

EXPLOITATION

Treating someone unfairly to benefit from their work or resources. It can involve the overuse of natural resources and abuse of nature.

IMPERIALISM

The idea of expanding territory to grow power and influence over other regions. This is done by creating colonies or taking over other colonies.

MERCHANT

Someone who buys and sells goods produced by other people, often coming from long distance trade.

RACISM

Treating someone differently based on their assumed race, ethnicity or country they come from.

TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

The practice of buying and selling human beings against their will. The transatlantic slave trade peaked between the 1500s and 1800s, when European powers colonised the Americas and needed a cheap labour force to work on plantations and mines. This led to the enslavement and trafficking of Black African people.

PLEASE NOTE: THIS TRAIL DISCUSSES SENSITIVE TOPICS LIKE EXPLOITATION OF ENSLAVED PEOPLE AND COLONIALISM. THESE MAY BE UPSETTING FOR SOME VISITORS. IT IS IMPORTANT TO HIGHLIGHT AND ENGAGE WITH THESE TOPICS AS THEY ARE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE HISTORY OF GLASGOW AND BEYOND AND THEY HAVE SHAPED OUR PRESENT. IF YOU FIND THESE TOPICS CHALLENGING YOU CAN SKIP SECTIONS OR TAKE A BREAK.

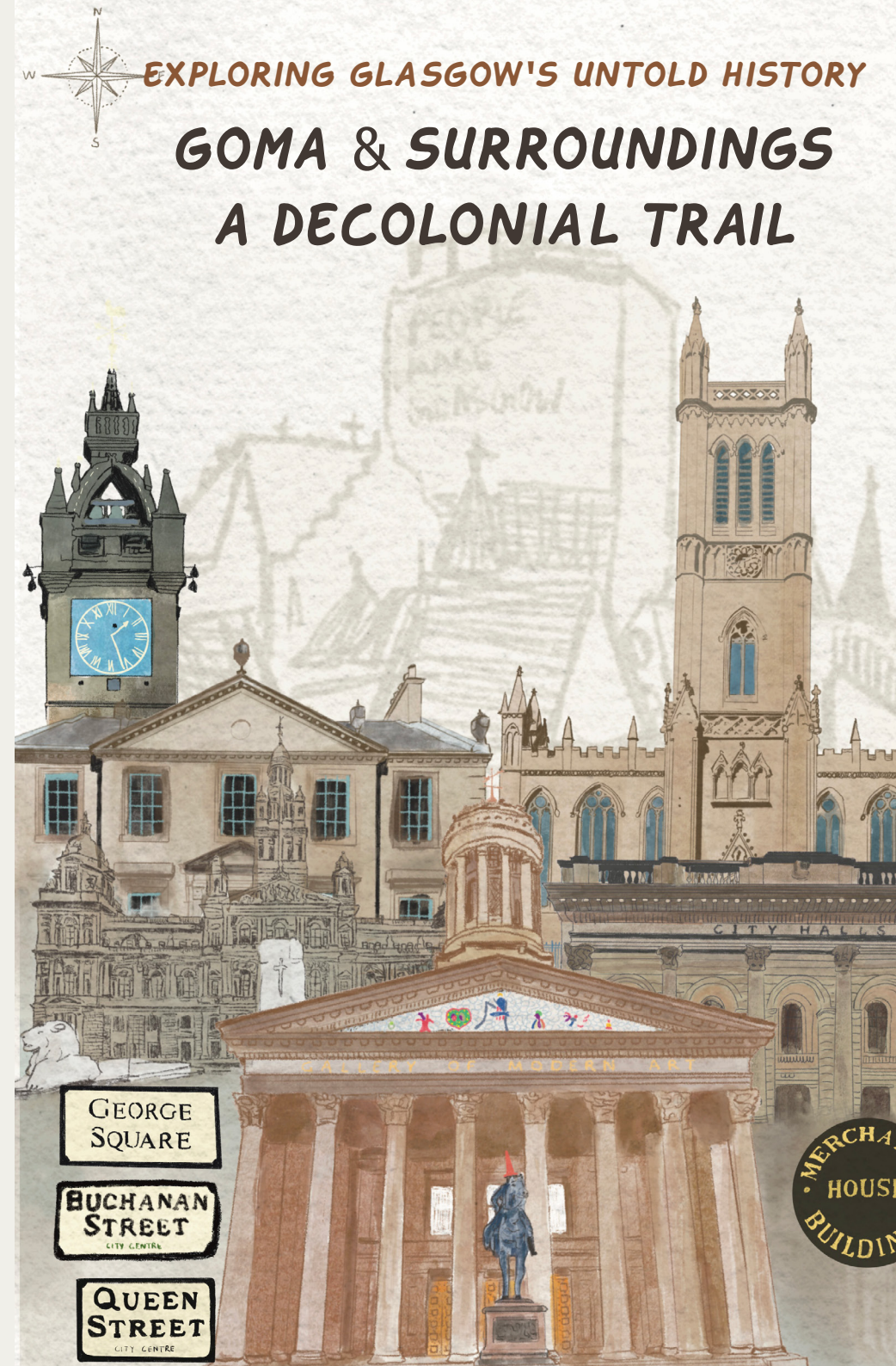
WELCOME TO OUR 'GOMA & SURROUNDINGS, A DECOLONIAL TRAIL' WHERE GLASGOW'S COMPLEX HISTORY UNFOLDS BEFORE YOU.

DISCOVER THE HISTORY OF THE GALLERY OF MODERN ART, ONCE OWNED BY WILLIAM CUNNINGHAME. LEARN ABOUT GLASGOW'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE TRADE OF TOBACCO AND SUGAR, A CRUEL TRADE WHICH RELIED ON THE LABOUR OF PEOPLE WHO WERE ENSLAVED.

FOLLOW THE TRAIL AND LEARN ABOUT GLASGOW'S IMPERIAL CONNECTIONS THROUGH MERCHANTS HOUSE, RAMSHORN THEATRE AND TRONGATE.

AS YOU EXPLORE THE CITY CENTRE, CONSIDER HOW GLASGOW'S ECONOMIC GROWTH IS LINKED TO COLONIALISM AND SLAVERY.

THIS TRAIL REMINDS US OF GLASGOW'S COMPLEX PAST AND ENCOURAGES US TO LEARN FROM HISTORY TO BUILD A MORE JUST AND COMPASSIONATE FUTURE.



1 GOMA

The building now hosting the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA) was initially the city mansion for tobacco lord William Cunninghame. Cunninghame made a fortune from tobacco produced by enslaved people on plantations in Virginia. He was one of many Glaswegian merchants who profited from enslavement across the Americas and Caribbean, which made Glasgow's economic growth possible. Slavery connections can be seen in buildings and street names we see today, including Jamaica Street and Virginia Street. The GoMA building was later the Royal Exchange, a centre of commerce with a newsroom, a reading room, bankers' offices, trading rooms and an exhibition room. One of its founders was James Ewing of Strathleven, whose story is also connected to the Merchants House - can you see this other building on the map?

2 BUCHANAN STREET

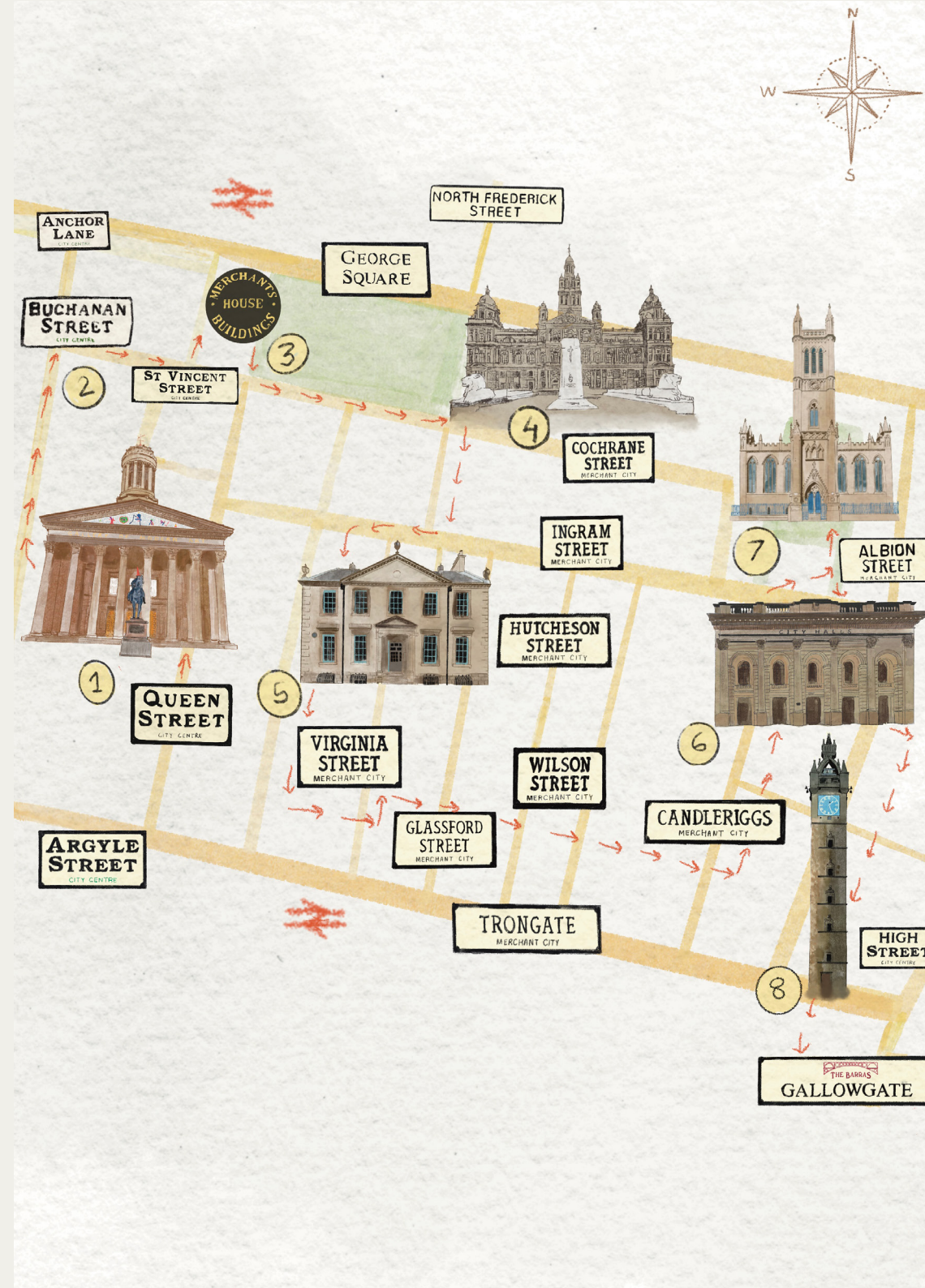
Just along from George Square lies Buchanan Street, one of Glasgow's main shopping streets. It is named after Andrew Buchanan, who made a lot of money by selling tobacco that was grown by many enslaved people on the plantations he owned in Virginia, US. In 1740, after many years of gaining influence, he became Lord Provost of Glasgow, which made him the leader of the council at that time. What other things in Glasgow can you think of are named after Buchanan?

3 MERCHANTS HOUSE

The Merchants House building in George Square was built in 1874 and was used as a base for the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, where business owners gathered to support their own business and other local businesses. A known Dean of the Guild, meaning someone who is head of an organisation, was James Ewing, also one of the founders of the Royal Exchange (see GoMA, no. 1). This was a role only given to the most successful businessmen in Glasgow. James Ewing was an enslaver who owned sugar plantations in Jamaica. When slavery was abolished in 1838, large sums of money were given to enslavers to compensate for their loss of 'property'. Ewing, along with his business partner, claimed for a minimum of 586 enslaved persons and 5 plantations in Jamaica which were compensated over £9328. In today's currency that is approximately £617,400.11. After his death, Ewing left £1000 of his wealth to the Dean of the Guild and the directors of the Merchants House.

4 GLASGOW CITY CHAMBERS

Glasgow City Chambers is the main office for Glasgow City Council and sits at the east side of George Square. The Square will be remodelled between 2025 and 2027, when all the statues will be temporarily removed. If you could put new statues, who would you honour? Or would you do something different with the space and remove the statues altogether?



5 42 MILLER STREET

42 Miller Street, also known as The Tobacco Merchant's House, was built in 1775 and is the oldest surviving house in the Merchant City. It was owned by different tobacco traders, often called Tobacco Lairds, who were less wealthy merchants than the well-known Tobacco Lords. One of these Lairds was Robert Findlay, whose family owned a tobacco plantation in Virginia exploiting enslaved people. The earnings from this trade would have been kept in this house which, for this reason, had an iron door, as well as several iron safes (some still existing today).

6 CITY HALLS

The City Halls, the first performance venue in Glasgow, was a focus for events ranging from orchestral concerts to political rallies and anti-slavery meetings. The venue is a key site of Black history in Glasgow. Several African American abolitionists spoke out against enslavement at the City Halls, including Frederick Douglass (1818-1896) and Rev. Josiah Henson (1789-1883). Douglass escaped from slavery in Maryland in 1838 and became a leading campaigner against enslavement. Henson was an enslaved person who had escaped to Canada in 1830 and dedicated his life to helping free enslaved people via the underground railroad. This was a network of secret routes and safe houses that helped enslaved people escape to freedom in the United States. He also founded a town for free Black people in Canada.

7 RAMSHORN THEATRE

The Ramshorn Theatre (once St. David's Church) stands on parts of the remains of the Ramshorn cemetery. This was the preferred burial ground for the 18th century upper class. At least two well-known tobacco Lords are buried there, John Glassford (1715-1783) and Andrew Buchanan (1690-1759) as well as, possibly, Archibald Ingram (1699-1770). Glassford and Ingram were business partners who owned tobacco plantations in Virginia and Maryland. Like Buchanan (see no. 2), they still have two main roads in the Merchant City dedicated to them. Can you find them on the map?

8 TRONGATE

The Trongate is one of the oldest streets in Glasgow and used to be the centre of the first merchants' business. It contained the Toolboth, of which only the steeple remains. This was the main municipal structure for Glasgow but was also the place where merchants looked out for their cargos and then weighed the goods coming from Virginia and the West Indies. It contained a paved area known as the *plainstones* (Scots for "the pavement or a paved area in a town or city"), where the Tobacco Lords used to meet. The Tontine rooms, also located in Trongate, can be considered the predecessors of the Royal Exchange (see GoMA, no. 1). Subscribers of the Glasgow Tontine society could access these rooms, which included a hotel, coffee room and assembly hall.