

Portrait of Joseph Marryat (1757 -1824) c 1826. Gifted to the Lloyd's in 1965

Joseph Marryat

Joseph Marryat became a member of Lloyd's between 1791 and 1798. He features more prominently after he acted as parliamentary spokesman for Lloyd's in the 1810 parliamentary inquiry into marine insurance.

From 1811, Marryat led the administrative and constitutional reform of Lloyd's. This stemmed from an internal accusation that Lloyd's was withholding intelligence from its Subscribers. In response, a Committee of twenty-one was formed in May 1811, chaired by Marryat. Their report, authored by Marryat, proposed a new set of rules and regulations covering: the election of members by ballot; the introduction of a Trust Deed, signed by Subscribers, binding them to the rules of the Society; the oversight of intelligence being provided to the membership by Committee members; the re-organisation of the services for Subscribers and the ability to appoint Agents to act for the benefit of Lloyd's Subscribers on shipping intelligence. The 1811 Deed of Trust formed the basis of Lloyd's incorporation in 1871.

After the report the whole Committee stood down. Marryat was voted Chairman on 15 August 1811 and served until his death in 1824, overseeing the reorganisation of Lloyd's constitution. Under the new rules and regulations, election of the Chair and Committee was required annually, indicating the strong support for Marryat as leader. Under Marryat's Chairmanship the Committee was heavily weighted towards protecting the West Indian interest and a pro-slavery position and included notable allies, such as Horatio Clagett, James Swanzy and Robert Sheddon all of whom were involved in the business of slavery.

Alongside his constitutional reform, Marryat's chief success was the rapid development of the system of Lloyd's Agents making Lloyd's, as *The Times* described, "the demi-official organ of public information".

Provenance

The portrait of Joseph Marryat in Lloyd's Collection is a half-length oil on canvas, attributed to the artist John

Hayes (British, 1786 - 1866). Hayes was a portrait painter, especially of military and naval officers, who first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1814. The portrait was presented to Lloyd's in February 1965 by Marryat's great-granddaughter, Mrs Marie Marryat Milliken

Marryat and links to historic enslavement

Marryat migrated to Grenada in the mid-1780s. Catherine Hall states he 'was one of the new generation of settlers who took advantage of the opportunities offered by the colonies acquired by the British in 1763. He was active as a merchant, living in Grenville, the island's second port, and engaged in inter-island trading. By 1789 he was established enough to be elected to the House of Assembly.

On a trading voyage to New England he met and married Charlotte von Geyer (1772/3–1854), third daughter of Frederick von Geyer, a merchant. Their marriage in Boston on 17 December 1788 cemented his links with North America. In 1791 he sold up his business in Grenada and left for London. An inheritance enabled him to set up as a merchant and to invest over time in plantations and enslaved people in Trinidad, Grenada, Jamaica, and St Lucia.¹ Marryat had two 'mulatto' children, Ann and Joseph, by Fanny, 'my negroe woman slave'. He manumitted his illegitimate family in 1790, although he publicly opposed the manumission of illegitimate children as 'dangerous' in a pamphlet he wrote in 1816.²

Marryat was an important figure in the West Indian interest defence of slavery in Parliament through his association with the Society of West India Planters & Merchants. He was admitted to the Standing Committee in 1806 and remained one of its most frequently attending members until his death. The purpose of the Standing Committee was to lobby against abolition and they regularly appointed Marryat to represent their interests before the Treasury, Board of Trade and the Colonial Department.

His expertise in West India commerce, parliamentary politics and marine insurance was highly valued. He acted as colonial agent for Trinidad (1807-1815) and later Grenada (1815-1824) and MP for Horsham (1808- 1812) and Sandwich (1812-1824). In 1807,

¹ Catherine Hall, entry on Joseph Marryat, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 1816.

² Joseph Marryat, *Thoughts on the Abolition of the Slave Trade and Civilization of Africa With Remarks on the African Institution and an Examination of the Report of Their Committee*, 1816

Marryat acting as the agent for Trinidad, petitioned the Commons against the abolition of the slave trade. When he became a member of parliament he consistently defended West Indian interests and wrote pamphlets to defend these interests.³

Marryat's motivation for his pro-slavery stance and his representation of the risk abolition presented relates to the concentration of his assets in his absentee plantation holdings in Grenada, Jamaica, St. Lucia and Trinidad.

Marryat died before the slave compensation scheme of the 1830s,. The extent of his holdings can be gauged

from the compensation claims of his sons, Charles and Joseph, who inherited his estates. Overall, [Charles](#) and [Joseph](#) Marryat made 18 successful claims as owners, trustees and mortgagees for 1477 enslaved people.

Lloyd's Collection

We have been exploring our archive to better understand our historical links to the transatlantic slave trade through a research collaboration with Black Beyond Data, from John' Hopkins University, and independently funded by the Mellon Foundation.

The research will be published in November 2023 along with our plan of action to create a more inclusive and equitable future for Black and ethnically diverse individuals in our market and communities. .

Harmful content

You may encounter harmful content and language especially as we contextualise items in Lloyd's Collection which records enslaved people experiencing trauma and harm. We believe it is important to bring to the foreground the absent and hidden histories of enslavement. If you have any feedback or comments about the issues raised please email archives@lloyds.com

³ Marryat's significant pamphlets relating to slavery and colonialism include: *Concessions to America the Bane of Britain, or the cause of the present distressed situation of the British Colonial and Shipping Interests and the proper remedy suggested, 1807; Thoughts on the Abolition of the Slave Trade and Civilization of Africa With Remarks*

on the African Institution and an Examination of the Report of Their Committee, 1816 and More thoughts still on the state of the West India Colonies and the proceedings on the African Institution' of 1818