

“Tom, an African Slave Boy” c. 1871-1884

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Arrived in Scotland in 1883

This intriguing marker stone raised the question: Why was an African slave boy buried in an Edinburgh cemetery in 1884, fifty years after the 1830 Abolition of Slavery Act?

Tom’s death certificate revealed that “Thomas Clark” died 19 April 1884 11h 45m p.m., Lochrin House, Lochrin, Edinburgh, aged 13 years. Under parents’ names: "A native of Africa". Cause of death: “Haematemesis 1 day Ulceration of Stomach as certified by George Mackay M.B.”. The death was registered on 22 April by “Joseph Clark, Guardian, present”. Haematemesis is the vomiting of blood, especially as the result of a bleeding ulcer.

A short paragraph in the *Dundee Courier*, Friday 25 April 1884, added a little more information. Headed "Death of a Congo Lad in Edinburgh", the paper reported: “On Tuesday the remains of Black Tom, a little Congo lad, were interred in the Grange Cemetery. On Saturday morning he burst a blood-vessel, and in the evening he died. He had a companion named Theo, also from Congo. Mr Clark, who was sent by the Livingstone Inland Mission to the Congo about six years ago, returned on furlough last year, bringing with him the two boys. The one who died had been purchased by himself, while the other was also a slave, claimed by three different chiefs.”



Map from John Brown Myers, *The Congo for Christ – The Story of the Congo Mission* [1895]

Joseph Clark, who came from Aberdeenshire, went to the Congo as a missionary in 1880 and returned to Scotland on leave in 1883 bringing Tom and Theo with him. He married Eliza Ann Milne at Lochrin House a few days after Tom died and they spent much of their lives as Baptist missionaries in the Congo, where Joseph died in 1930.

No further information has been found about Theo and one mystery which remains is why the children of Rosehall United Presbyterian Church raised the money for Tom’s stone.

We would love to hear from anyone who can shed any more light on this sad story.