

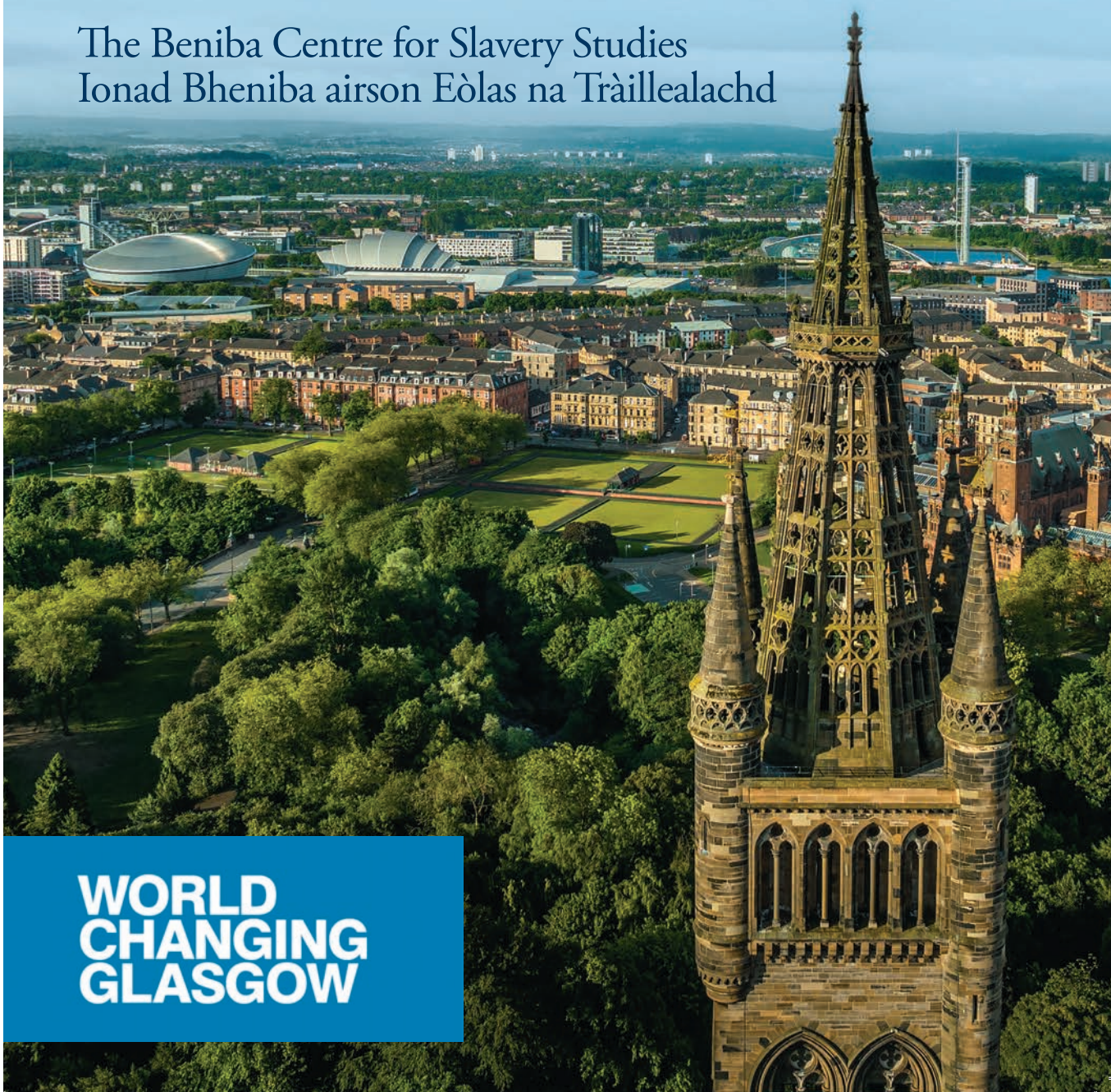


University
of Glasgow

ILLUMINATING THE PAST, SHAPING THE FUTURE

The Beniba Centre for Slavery Studies
Ionad Bheniba airson Eòlas na Tràillealachd

**WORLD
CHANGING
GLASGOW**



CONFRONTING OUR PAST, TRANSFORMING OUR FUTURE

For over 550 years, the University of Glasgow has been at the forefront of innovation and discovery. Yet, like many institutions with deep historical roots, our past intertwines with the painful legacy of slavery. In 2018, we embarked on a groundbreaking journey of self-reflection and action by publishing our *Slavery, Abolition and the University of Glasgow* report and recommendations, becoming the first British university to comprehensively investigate our historical links to slavery. This pivotal moment gave birth to the Beniba Centre for Slavery Studies.

“The Beniba Centre for Slavery Studies is more than a research institution. We are a catalyst for change, a space where the silenced voices of history can finally be heard and amplified. Our work spans centuries and continents, examining not just the transatlantic slave trade but also its far-reaching tentacles into every aspect of our modern world.”

DR PEGGY BRUNACHE,
DIRECTOR OF THE BENIBA CENTRE FOR SLAVERY STUDIES

A beacon of reparative justice

The Beniba Centre for Slavery Studies is a dedicated hub for research and education on this complex history. Our centre is named after Beniba, an enslaved mother and field labourer owned by an 18th-century former rector of the University. It stands as a testament to our commitment to highlighting and honouring the experiences, voices and legacies of enslaved Africans and their descendants.

This naming is not merely symbolic; it represents a fundamental shift in how we approach the study of slavery and its enduring impacts at the University of Glasgow. We centre the nuanced and dynamic experiences of enslaved Africans and their descendants too often erased or silenced in archives of slavery. When you say the name ‘Beniba’, you speak her back into existence. Our research highlights Black contributions to society, past and present, that challenge structural modes of racial oppression and inequality.

As a key component of the University’s reparative justice initiative, we are committed to:

- **Rigorous, interdisciplinary research:** We delve into the complexities of slavery’s history, its abolition and its ongoing legacies.
- **Education and awareness:** We are dedicated to decolonising curricula, providing resources for educators and engaging the public in nuanced discussions about slavery’s impact.
- **Community engagement:** We actively collaborate with communities, particularly those of African and Caribbean descent, to address ongoing inequalities and injustices.

- **Policy influence:** Our research and advocacy aim to shape policies at local, national and international levels.

- **Global partnerships:** We foster collaborations with institutions worldwide, particularly in the Caribbean through our partnership with the University of the West Indies, to ensure our work is truly global in scope and impact.

Pioneering research: uncovering hidden histories

- **Resistance to slavery:** Exploring the multitude of defiant acts to either bring about a revolutionary end to slavery or assert complex and nuanced strategies for contesting enslavement through subversive and clandestine ways.
- **Dark roots of global commodities:** Revealing links between commodities such as coffee, linen and oil with slavery and forced labour and their ongoing legacies in modern economic systems.
- **Slavery in Scotland:** Highlighting stories of enslaved Africans labouring in Scottish cities and the rural areas.
- **Struggles over slavery in Sierra Leone:** Analysing the complex dynamics of abolition, colonisation and the ‘repatriation’ of formerly enslaved people to West Africa.
- **Runaways London:** Tracing the journeys of enslaved individuals who sought freedom in 18th- and 19th-century Britain.
- **Liberated Africans in Grenada:** Underscoring the experiences and cultural legacies of the understudied population of liberated Africans sent to the island of Grenada during the post-emancipation era.

“The Beniba Centre for Slavery Studies stands as a beacon of reparative justice, unearthing hidden histories and transforming education to confront the legacies of slavery. Through rigorous research, global partnerships and community engagement, the centre is not just studying the past – it’s actively shaping a more equitable future.”

PROFESSOR JO GILL,
VICE PRINCIPAL & HEAD OF THE COLLEGE OF ARTS & HUMANITIES

EDUCATION FOR CHANGE

In 2020, the Beniba Centre for Slavery Studies and its academics launched a groundbreaking free online course with the University of the West Indies to explore the history of British colonial slavery in the Caribbean, revealing its deep connections to racial inequalities and current global protests.

This transformative course takes participants on a 350-year journey from West Africa and the Caribbean through the Windrush Generation to the present day. The four-week free online course on the *FutureLearn* platform – **History of Slavery in the British Caribbean** – is open to everyone. This course delves into the renewed debate in the UK about colonial symbols and the impact of global Black Lives Matter protests, encouraging reflection on the country’s history of racism rooted in slavery.

Then in 2023, the Universities of Glasgow and the West Indies joined forces again to welcome the first students to the world’s pioneering master’s programme in Reparative Justice. **The Reparatory Justice MSc/MA programme** is an innovative field of study aimed at students passionate about reparative justice from diverse backgrounds, disciplines and interests.

This programme offers:

- Study opportunities at campuses in Barbados, Glasgow or Jamaica.
- Access to unparalleled primary sources and archives.
- Instruction from world-leading experts in slavery studies and reparative justice at the University of the West Indies and Beniba Centre for Slavery Studies.
- Practical skills development in archival research, policy analysis and community engagement.

This initiative marks a significant step towards understanding and addressing the historical and ongoing impacts of slavery and racism.

CASE STUDY:

TEACHING SLAVERY IN SCOTLAND

The Beniba Centre for Slavery Studies, working with teachers and historians elsewhere in Scotland, has built a network to develop history teaching in Scotland about Atlantic slavery and Black history. This award-winning initiative, funded by the Scottish Government and endorsed by Education Scotland, includes:

- Training sessions and interactive workshops.
- Reading groups and discussions.
- A residential weekend featuring presentations from experts in West African history, Caribbean life and the transatlantic slave trade.
- Development of new teaching resources and ethical guidelines for addressing this sensitive topic.

The programme's interdisciplinary approach not only brought together historians and teachers but creative artists, journalists and archivists. Teachers are given the opportunity to examine 18th-century documents related to the slave trade, enabling them to bring authentic historical sources into their classrooms.

“I have already changed my entire course from everything I’ve learned. I’m challenging other staff about their language and thoughts, not just in my department but across the entire school. It’s changed how I approach teaching all difficult topics, not just the transatlantic slave economy.”

QUOTE FROM
PARTICIPATING TEACHER

Empowering educators: educational outreach

Building on the success of initiatives like Teaching Slavery in Scotland, we've also expanded our educational outreach:

- Teaching Glasgow's slavery past: To impact the teaching of the 70,000 pupils in the city's primary and secondary schools focusing on Glasgow and Scottish-specific relationships with slavery. It is a partnership with Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Life and is funded through the Arts & Humanities Research Council Impact Acceleration Account.
- Development of curriculum resources that centre African and Caribbean voices.
- Creation of a graphic novel and online teaching resources for the Runaway Slaves in Britain: bondage, freedom and race in the 18th-century database and website.
- Annual Summer Teacher Institute at Balliol College, Oxford.

Honouring Black excellence: the James McCune Smith legacy

Dr James McCune Smith, born into slavery in New York, became the first African American to earn a medical degree at the University of Glasgow. As part of our reparative justice work and through the research on Dr Smith's legacy by the Beniba Centre for Slavery Studies, we honour his legacy at Glasgow through:

- The James McCune Smith Learning Hub: our flagship learning facility.
- New scholarships for UK students from a Black Caribbean background.
- Curriculum updates to include diverse voices and perspectives.
- Annual James McCune Smith Lecture that hosts world-renowned scholars to speak on their groundbreaking and award-winning research to a free and public forum.

“At a time when universities are too often on the back foot in public debates about value and relevance, Glasgow stood out as a shining example of what a university should be: institutions of courage and action, uniquely placed to tackle the biggest issues facing the world.”

IN 2020 GLASGOW WON THE TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR FOR ITS REPARATIVE JUSTICE INITIATIVE.

Global impact: leading the charge for change

Our work at the University of Glasgow has sparked a global movement in higher education:

- First UK member of the Universities Studying Slavery network.
- Supported other UK universities in conducting similar studies.
- Established the Glasgow-Caribbean Centre for Development Research.
- Annual Day of Remembrance (23 August) for victims of the slave trade.
- Partnerships with museums and heritage sector.
- International collaboration with American, European and African activists, centres and institutions to engage in global reparative justice work.
- Consultancy work for public engagement and impact with UK-based trusts (National Trust for Scotland), museums (such as the University of Cambridge's Fitzwilliam Museum), as well as science, music, theatre, and cultural events and festivals (such as Lyric Hammersmith Theatre, London and the National Theatre of Scotland).

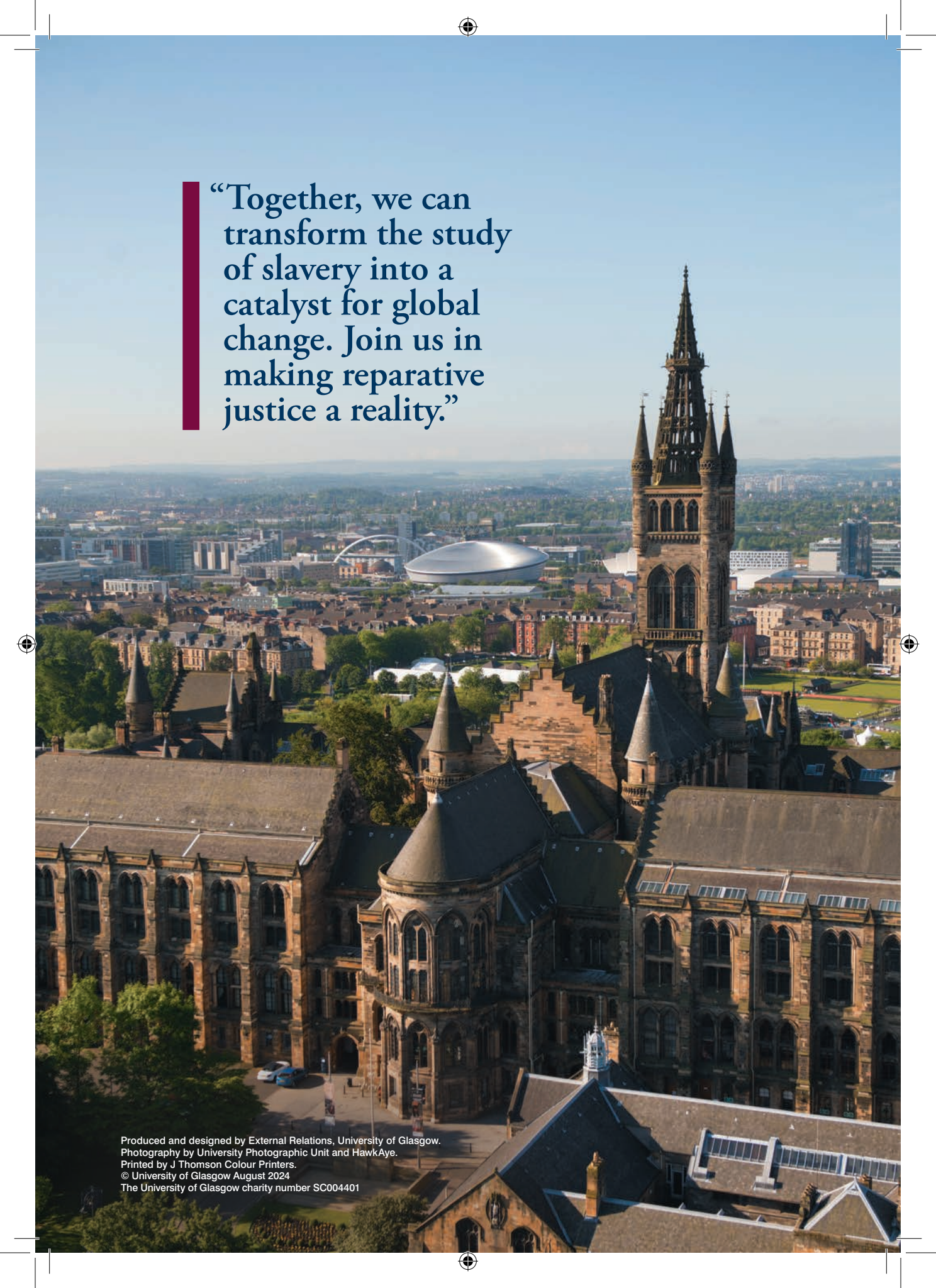
JOIN OUR WORLD-CHANGING MISSION

The Beniba Centre for Slavery Studies is more than a research institution – it's a movement for justice and reconciliation. Here's how you can be part of it:

- Attend our public lectures and events.
- Access our digital archives and educational resources.
- Collaborate on research projects.
- Apply for our degree programmes or scholarships.
- Take our free online course *History of Slavery in the British Caribbean* to learn more about this field of research.
- Support our research and scholarship through a World-Changing Glasgow gift: philanthropy@glasgow.ac.uk.

Contact us

glasgow.ac.uk/research/az/slavery
glasgow.ac.uk/colleges/arts
[X x.com/UofGBenibaCtr](https://x.com/UofGBenibaCtr)



“Together, we can transform the study of slavery into a catalyst for global change. Join us in making reparative justice a reality.”

Produced and designed by External Relations, University of Glasgow.
Photography by University Photographic Unit and HawkAye.
Printed by J Thomson Colour Printers.
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The University of Glasgow charity number SC004401