

# Slavers of Harley Street

## Researching slave-owners further: a guide

### 1. Introduction

You may want to find out more about British slave-owners and slave-ownership. There is plenty of interesting archive material on slave-owners, but it has not yet been organised into a single publicly available source which would allow you, for example, to find out whether a specific person you're interested in who lived in Britain in the period before Emancipation was in fact a slave-owner or had other connections to slave-ownership. Work is underway towards this kind of research aid, but it will be several years before it becomes available.

However, there are paths now to discovering more about known slave-owners, to helping you confirm suspected slave-owners, and in some cases to linking enslaved people to the men and women who under British and colonial law of the time were held to 'own' them. This guide sets out some places to start and provides an introduction to the sources at the National Archives in Kew, which houses the records of the compensation paid to the slave-owners under the Abolition Act of 1833.

### 2. London Boroughs

A number of local libraries in London boroughs have collected material on the past linkages of their districts to slavery. Some of this research is available online. For example, for Lewisham there is a timeline highlighting the borough's links with slavery, including some slave-owners, at:

[www.lewisham.gov.uk/LeisureAndCulture/Libraries/Abolition200/SlaveryInLewisham](http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/LeisureAndCulture/Libraries/Abolition200/SlaveryInLewisham)

Local historians have written about specific areas in London, often published through local history societies. For example, Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society published *The Grange, with emphasis on the Lane family and the slave-trade*, by David Ian Chapman (2007), and Waltham Forest Arts Council supported the publication of *Remembering slavery and its legacy 1807-2007* by Peter Ashan (2007).

### 3. Cities and towns outside London

Many cities and towns undertook work at the time of the commemoration of the bicentenary of the Abolition of the slave-trade in 2007 on the links of their areas with slavery, and the results often include details of local slave-owners.

Museums in Manchester collaborated in producing material available at [www.recoveringhistories.org.uk](http://www.recoveringhistories.org.uk). For Newcastle and the north-east, see [www.tyneandweararchives.org.uk](http://www.tyneandweararchives.org.uk) and *Hidden chains: the slavery business and north-east England 1600-1870*, by John Charlton, published by Tyne Bridge Publishing (2008). For Bristol and Liverpool's involvement in the slave-trade, see [www.portcities.org.uk](http://www.portcities.org.uk).

#### **4. Family Histories of Slave-owners in Harley and Wimpole Streets**

There are a number of biographies of the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning (50 Wimpole Street), including that by Margaret Forster (1988). Richard Barrett's *The Barretts of Jamaica* (Wedgestone, 2000) focuses on the family's close ties with slavery. There are good histories of two other slave-owning families. Richard Pares *A West Indian fortune* (London, 1950) is the story of the Pinney family (46 Wimpole Street), who made their fortune in St Kitts and Nevis before returning to the West Country and London. Simon Smith's recent *Slavery, family and gentry capitalism in the British Atlantic: the world of the Lascelles, 1648-1834* (Cambridge 2006) is a scholarly account of the Lascelles (43 Wimpole Street), the family of Queen Elizabeth II's cousin the Earl of Harewood, which made its money in Barbados before entering the upper ranks of the British aristocracy.

#### **5. Using the Parliamentary Return**

Almost all the men and women awarded compensation under the 1833 Abolition Act are listed in what is called a Parliamentary Return, an official reply by a government body to a request from an MP, in this case Daniel O'Connell, the Irish MP. The return is often referred to as the *Slavery Abolition Act: an account of all sums of money awarded by the Commissioners of Slave Compensation* while its full title is *Accounts of slave compensation claims; for the colonies of Jamaica. Antigua. Honduras. St. Christopher's. Grenada. Dominica. Nevis. Virgin Islands. St. Lucia. British Guiana. Montserrat. Bermuda. Bahamas. Tobago. St. Vincent's. Trinidad. Barbadoes. Mauritius. Cape of Good Hope.*

It can be found in House of Commons Parliamentary Papers 1837-8 (215) vol. 48 and is 365 pages long.

Major research libraries, such as the [British Library](#) or [Senate House Library, University of London](#) have sets of the Parliamentary Papers, but they are also available online through subscribing organisations.

Information about the online version can be found [here](#) (the publisher's description of the project) and [here](#) (the home page of the online version).

(If you are unfamiliar with using Parliamentary Papers and have access to the online version, you will need to enter 1837-38 as the Session and 215 as the paper number in the search page to find the full text.)

The lists are printed and are easy to read. The awards are organised by colony (or, for Jamaica by parish). The Parliamentary Return shows the name of the person awarded compensation, the number of enslaved people for which the award was made, the date of the award, the amount of the award in pounds, shillings and pence, and the unique Claim Number claim within the colony (again, for Jamaica, the parish) in which the enslaved people covered by the award were registered. No names are given for the enslaved in this source.

There are four different lists for each colony: uncontested claims; contested claims, where two or more people claimed the same compensation; Chancery cases, where the award was paid into court in Great Britain until a lawsuit affecting the ownership of the enslaved was resolved (often only after decades of dispute); and List E cases, where the award was paid into court in the colonies until, again, a lawsuit affecting the ownership of the enslaved was resolved.

If you want to track a slave-owner or other recipient of compensation you have found in this source, you will need to make a note of the claim number, for example Trinidad # 1661 (which shows James William Freshfield and John Beadnell, who were representing the London bankers Smith, Payne & Smith). This claim number will run all the way through the underlying records of the Commissioners of Slave Compensation in the National Archives, and allow you to track the same claim across different documents.

If you are using the online version, there is a facility for searching the whole text. However, note that the search facility is not infallible: if, for instance, you are searching for 'Daley' you might need to try the spelling variants such as 'Dalley', 'Daly' and 'Daily'.

Unfortunately, the Parliamentary Return is not organised alphabetically by the name of the person awarded compensation, but instead is organised by colony and then within the colony by Claim Number. Therefore, to use the Parliamentary Return to find a particular person who you think was a slave-owner, you would need to have an idea which colony he or she was an owner in, and then you will have to browse through the pages for that colony to find the name in the lists. For most colonies, there are fewer than 1,000 awards, in some cases only a few hundred, so it is possible to pick out a name from these lists. The lists for British Guiana, Cape of Good Hope, Mauritius and Barbados however contain thousands of names, and finding a particular name for these colonies is time-consuming. There are, however, indexes available in the National Archives.

If you cannot find a name in the Parliamentary Return, and have checked all the sections (uncontested claims, contested claims; Chancery and List E) for the relevant colony or parish:

- a. it may be that the person died before the award was made. Only those slave-owners owning the enslaved as of August 1 1834 were entitled to claim compensation. Any slave-owner who sold or transferred his or her slaves before that date will not appear in the Parliamentary Return. Any slave-owner who died before that date will not appear, the compensation if due will have been paid to executors, trustees or heirs.
- b. Similarly, any slave-owner who died after August 1 1834 but before the award was made will not appear: the money will have been awarded to their executors.
- c. the slave-owner may have lost the compensation to one of his or her creditors, in whose name the award will be made.
- d. the award may have been made after 1838, in which case there will be no record of it in the Parliamentary Return. Edward Barrett, Elizabeth Barrett-Browning's father, is one of these.
- e. If you are using the online version, the search engine may have missed the name you are looking for.

You should also note that someone appearing in the Parliamentary Return as having been awarded compensation was not necessarily a slave-owner. These lists also show those who were the representatives of slave-owners, as executors or trustees (as is believed to be the case with James William Freshfield and John Beadnell in the Trinidad # 1661 claim mentioned above, although they are identified apparently in

error as owners on the face of the claim), as well as slave-owners themselves. In order to find out the capacity in which the people in the Parliamentary Return were acting, you will need to look at the underlying records of the Commissioners of Slave Compensation.

## **6. *The Slave Registers and the records of the Commissioners of Slave Compensation***

The National Archives at Kew (see No. 7 below) holds the *Slave Registers* and the records of the *Commissioners of Slave Compensation* both under the Treasury Papers T71 reference number, as well as two other series which are of more specialised interest in looking at slave-owners, the Audit Office certificates and the National Debt Office registers. Each of these are described below in turn.

### **The Slave Registers (T71/1-T71/671)**

The National Archives holds a complete set of the Slave Registers compiled every three years from 1812 for Trinidad and from around 1820 for most other colonies, until the eve of Emancipation.

These registers, organised in separate volumes by colony (and for Jamaica by parish), list every enslaved person with the name given to them in slavery, their gender, their age. The registers give the name of the estate or town where the enslaved lived, the name of the person who registered the enslaved, and in most cases the name of the absentee owners. The information within each slave register is generally organised alphabetically by the name of the slave-owner, but in some cases small proprietors are listed alphabetically and the larger slave-owners appear under the names of the estates, again incorporated alphabetically. Most individual volumes have some form of alphabetical index at the front, but in some cases these have become detached and lost. Using these volumes can therefore be trying, but these are rewarding sources. If you know the name of the slave-owner and the colony, or the name of the estate of interest to you and the colony, with patience you will be able to tie this to the slave register.

Almost all of the Slave Registers can be viewed at [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) (or [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)). A subscription to this site costs is £12.95 per month (if you take out an annual subscription), although a two week trial is available for free. When you have logged on to the site, click on "Search" on the top horizontal tool bar and then click on "Card Catalog". A box appears on the left of the screen entitled "Search titles". Enter "Slave Registers" into the title field and one match will be returned: Slave Registers of former British Colonial Dependencies, 1812-1834. Click on this match and then you can search by name of slave or name of owner. Other details such as colony, residence and year of birth can be entered in order to narrow down the search. You can then view a photograph of the original image.

Below the search box is a short description of the slave registers. Click on the "For more information..." link and you can find out the exact dates and colonies each register was compiled in. There is also a short list of those registers which have not been included on ancestry.com but which can be viewed on paper at the National Archives.

You should also be aware that the *Jamaica Almanacks* list estate-owners by parish alphabetically for most of the years of the early nineteenth century. The National Archives holds copies of the Almanack for 1821, 1823 1826 and 1833, and there is a

reliable source at [www.jamaicanfamilysearch.com](http://www.jamaicanfamilysearch.com) which provides access for subscribers to transcriptions of the *Almanacks*, as well as a host of other material, some of it free, on Jamaican history and people. This is a relatively cheap source for anyone undertaking larger-scale research projects on Jamaican genealogy.

### **Indexes to claims (T71/915-T71/942)**

For alphabetical organisation of the compensation awards, consult these indexes, organised by colony. These show the names of the people awarded compensation, and very often the name of the estates they owned, which is vital information. For the whole of *Jamaica*, the people awarded compensation for enslaved people have been organised alphabetically for the whole island, and the printed list is at T71/915. The other lists are manuscript, but are still generally clearly readable.

### **Tracking claims**

Once you have identified the colony and claim number, you can trace the claim through several stages:

- a. the valuers' returns (T71/685-T71/851) show the value placed on the enslaved in the colonies, organised by colony and then claim number. The enslaved are classified according to whether they were 'attached', i.e. worked on the land, or 'unattached', i.e. worked as artisans in towns and villages or as domestic servants on the estates and in towns.
- b. the original claims (T71/943-T71/1153) filed in the colonies, showing the name of the claimant and the capacity in which the claimant made the claim. Often for absentee slave-owners the claim would be filed by the local agent or 'attorney' but would also identify the owner and give some details of his or her address. These claims include the name of the estate to which the enslaved were attached.
- c. the original claims are collated by colony and claim number in the Registers of Claims (T71/852-T71/914), which are manuscript books summarising the content of the claims. The entries give the name, sometimes address, of the claimant, show details of any counterclaims and include the amount and date of the award.
- d. the lists of awards approved by the Commissioners once they had made or 'adjudicated' the awards are to be found in AO14/37-48. The recipient had to take their own certificate to the National Debt Office to collect their compensation, usually a Treasury Cheque.
- e. At the National Debt Office, the recipients or their agents had to sign for the compensation itself. These signature books are at NDO4/1-37A. Here you can find, for example, William Gladstone signing to collect the compensation on behalf of other slave-owners (NDO4/1 Manchester claims # 339 and 411).

In many cases, two claimants tried to obtain the same award. These 'contested' cases generated additional material as the Commissioners tried to unpick who was entitled to receive the compensation money. The second claimant had to file a counter-claim in the colonies, and then the original claimant was given the right to reply to reassert his or her claim, known as the 'replication'. These counter-claims and replications are stored by colony in T71/1174-1293. These often contain

affidavits or other valuable background material describing the history of the estate or the enslaved in dispute, and setting out how the counter-claim arose.

The Commission's decisions are included in T71/1294-T71/309, but often these are highly summary accounts of why the award was made to one person rather than another.

### **Letter-books**

It is worthwhile looking at the correspondence of the Commissioners with slave-owners and other claimants to see whether there is correspondence about compensation between the slave-owners in whom you are interested and the

authorities in London. T71/1599-1601 shows the in-letters classified by date. The original letters are in T71/1602-20, organised roughly by colony.

## **7. The National Archives**

The National Archives is at Kew, in Surrey. The nearest tube station is Kew Gardens on the Richmond branch of the District Line, about 10 minutes walk away from the Archives: follow the signposts from the station.

You will need a Reader's Pass to use the slave compensation material in the archives, but the process is simple. You can get a pass on the day of your visit, as long as you bring two pieces of identification, one signed (like a passport or bank card) and one with your address on it (like a utility bill or driving license).

There are six Research Guides for slavery available for the National Archives. They are classified under 'Slave Trade, British Atlantic' in the alphabetical index of Research Guides. The most helpful on colonial slavery itself is the Guide entitled 'British Atlantic Slave Trade: Slavery'. To find the index of Research Guides A-Z, go to the home page for the National Archives, [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk) and then look down the left-hand side under *Learning and Research*.