

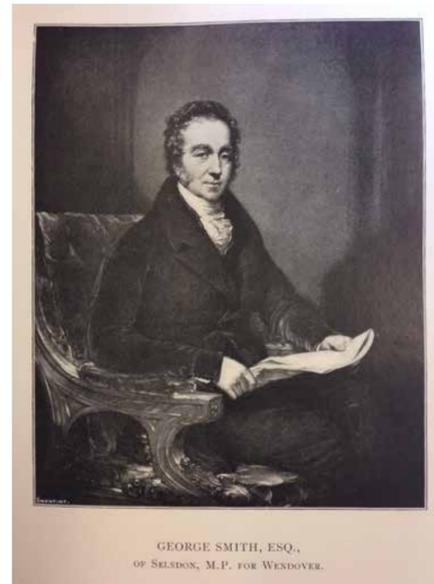
LEGACIES OF BRITISH SLAVE-OWNERSHIP

Selsdon Park

George Smith bought Selsdon Park in 1805 and largely rebuilt it: his son George Robert Smith lived there until his death in 1869. George Smith was an ancestor of the Queen, being the great great grandfather of the Queen Mother. Both George and George Robert were bankers, among the richest men of their time. Their bank, Smith, Payne & Smith, lent money secured on estates and enslaved people in Jamaica and British Guiana.



Selsdon Park in Croydon, Surrey, home of the Smith banking family and now a country park hotel.



George Smith, Esq. from a portrait by J. Partridge and J. Jackson, published in Harry Tucker Easton, *The History of a Banking House (Smith, Payne and Smiths)* (1903).

After one of their clients, a London West Indian merchant firm called Manning & Anderdon, failed in 1831, the bank scrambled to recover its money, seizing estates in St Kitts, and the enslaved people who lived on them, who were security for debts owed to Manning & Anderdon. The 'slave compensation' paid to the bank helped it to survive the crisis and it flourished until its merger in 1902 with Union Bank of London, later part of NatWest and now owned by the RBS Group. Similar connections to slavery existed for predecessor firms of Lloyds and Barclays as well as the RBS Group.

CROYDON AND SLAVERY [1]

Addington Palace

The history of Addington Palace is steeped in slavery. The building was started by Barlow Trecothick (c. 1718-1775), a North American and West India merchant who owned 'slave property' in Grenada and Jamaica. He bought the 5000 acres of the Addington estate for £38,000 in 1768 and started work on the house in 1772. The house was later finished by his nephew James Ivers, who changed his surname in 1775 to Trecothick when he inherited Barlow Trecothick's property in England and the Caribbean. The enslaved people on the Boston estate and James Trecothick's other Caribbean estates were finally emancipated in 1838 but James Trecothick, who received compensation for the freeing of over 500 enslaved people in the 1830s, still owned the estates – which were by then worked by the formerly enslaved people as wage-labourers – on his death in 1843. He had sold Addington Palace in 1802 to another Caribbean-related family, the Coles.



Portrait of Mrs Trecothick, full length, in 'Turkish' masquerade dress, beside an urn of flowers, in a landscape by Joshua Reynolds (1771). Ann was the wife of Barlow Trecothick, who bought the Addington estate in 1768; work began on the building in 1772.



Addington Palace, home of several generations of slave-owning families.

The Coles Family

The Coles family had a long association with Croydon in the 19th century. Thomas Coles bought the Addington estate from James Trecothick in 1802 after Trecothick's Grenada estates suffered some years of losses.

Thomas Coles was a London merchant and sugar-brokers and a trustee of James Trecothick. Thomas Coles' son, Thomas Coles of Thornton Heath, was Treasurer of Bridewell and Bethlem Hospitals and was accused of dishonestly handling their funds. Together with his nephew William Coles the younger, Thomas Coles of Thornton Heath received slave compensation for the enslaved people on the mortgaged Hatton Garden estate in Dominica. The Rev. George Coles, curate of St James's, Croydon from 1829 to 1865 and chaplain of the Whitgift Hospital, was the brother of William Coles the younger.



The Whitgift Almshouses, part of the Whitgift Hospital where Rev. George Coles acted as curate from 1829 to 1865.

Social mobility

John Swindell died at Victoria Villa, Lansdowne Road, Croydon in 1863, after a long career in the Caribbean as first a manager of other people's estates and enslaved people and then as a slave-owner himself on St Kitts. He left £30,000 (worth around £3 million today). One of his executors was Benjamin Buck Greene, who had himself been in St Kitts running his family's estates in the last years of slavery and who later became Governor of the Bank of England.

As I have used Mr. Swindell's letter, I may state who he is: he was the agent of Lord Combermere for a great number of years, in the island of Barbadoes, and he also was the attorney for a great many absent proprietors, in the island of St. Kitts, and was a very successful one; he afterwards purchased two estates, from which he retired a few years ago, and is now living in England upon his fortune. This gentleman was the first to introduce the cultivation of potatoes into St. Kitts, about 25 years ago, which was attended with immense benefit to the island, first by supplying at a cheap rate food for the negroes, and next in the great improvement afforded by a rotation of crops.

John Swindell was discussed in Benjamin Buck Greene's evidence to a Parliamentary select committee in 1848: here is the description of him given in the Seventh Report of the Select Committee of Sugar and Coffee Planting (1847-8) p.117