

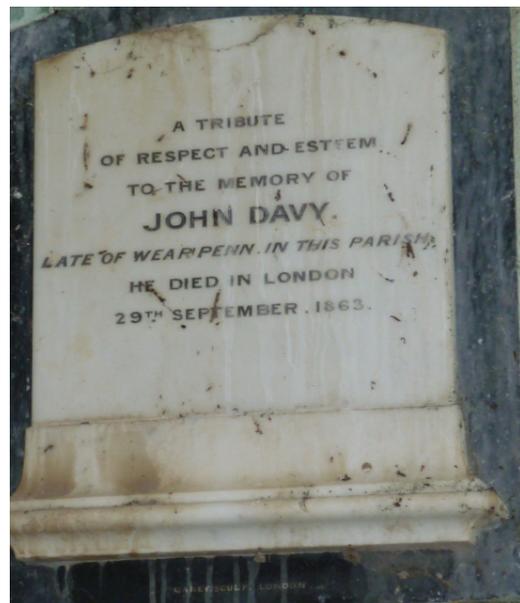
Three enslaved girls: Joan, Jane and Caroline

by Gillian Allen

I lived in Jamaica for many years so I have an interest in links between Devon and Jamaica. I'm going to talk about three enslaved girls on a Jamaican cattle farm in the early nineteenth century. I'm going to explain how I know about them and how their stories form part of the social legacy of slavery. I hope to reveal something about them as human beings and not simply as undifferentiated "slaves".

The three girls bring together three families. One of these families is called Davy; I researched this family because their ancestors lived on the very road that I now live on, Glasshouse Lane in Countess Wear, Exeter, and had properties in the part of Jamaica I lived in. The second family is called Glanville; I researched this family because their descendants in Jamaica are close friends, and their ancestors came from Ottery St Mary.

A 'Who do you think you are?' programme in 2008 showed Ainsley Harriott being taken to a part of Jamaica where his ancestors were enslaved. Ainsley's is our third family. He was shown looking at this plaque to John Davy, the man who used to own his ancestors.



Plaque to John Davy in Wear Pen Church, Manchester, Jamaica

Meanwhile, on a cattle ranch in Western Australia, one Geoffrey Davy got a phone call saying 'Dad! Turn on the TV; that's our family!' That set Geoffrey on the road to tracing his slave-owning ancestors in Jamaica. He contacted me through a history website and I was able to offer him the benefit of the research I'd done on his family.

So, in 2011, Geoff and other family members decided to visit Devon to discover their ancestors. In Clyst St Mary churchyard we looked at the tomb of James Davy of Jamaica, who (with his son John) had owned Ainsley's ancestor.

Then we went on to Jamaica, to the Wear Pen church where Ainsley had been looking at the John Davy plaque, next to the Davys' Wear Pen cattle farm. Here they raised stock to be draft animals on the sugar estates. You can see that the rolling green hills would have reminded them of their Devon home. In this work they used the enforced labour of 80 Africans – who are listed in the 1817 Slave Register.



Geoffrey Davy visits Wear Pen Church

The slave registers were part of the programme of amelioration, in which the British government, under pressure from the Abolition movement, tried to get slave owners to improve the conditions of their enslaved people. The idea was to account for any deaths of enslaved people and to detect any illegal slave trading.

<i>Mintie</i>	<i>Caroline Davy</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>Creole</i>	<i>Sarah Vaughan. Christened</i>
	<i>Charlotte</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>Creole</i>	<i>Venus.</i>
<i>Mamba</i>	<i>Louisa Davy</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>Creole</i>	<i>Ellen Davy Christened</i>
	<i>Jane Granville</i>	<i>Mulletto</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>Creoles</i>	<i>Sarah Vaughan</i>
	<i>Chance</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>Creole</i>	<i>Gynthia</i>
	<i>Peggy</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Creole</i>	
<i>Annie</i>	<i>Annie Kaffall</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Creole</i>	<i>Abigail christened</i>
	<i>Joan</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>Creole</i>	<i>Eve</i>

Slave register for Wear Pen, 1817, girls

This part of the list has been expanded to make it more legible. I'm interested in three of these three girls – Joan, Jane and Caroline. The columns show the former name, full name, colour, age, birthplace, whether they had been christened, and the mother's name. Creole

in this context means ‘born in Jamaica’, as opposed to ‘African’ which means ‘born in Africa’. From information given in the TV programme, I think Joan is Ainsley’s ancestor – a 3-year-old creole negro – i.e. black and born in Jamaica.

Former names	Names	Colour	Age	African or Creole	Remarks
	Sylvia	Negro	60	African	
Daphne	Sarah Vaughan	Negro	30	Creole	Sylvia. Christened
	Eve	Negro	26	African	
Mintes	Caroline Davy	Negro	7	Creole	Sarah Vaughan. Christened
	Jane Glanville	Mulatto	10	Creole	Sarah Vaughan
	Joan	Negro	3	Creole	Eve

Selection from 1817 Slave Register for Wear Pen

Parts of the register have been typed out here to make them clearer. The register shows that Joan’s mother was Eve, a 26 year old African. So Joan’s mother was a young woman who was born in Africa – probably an Ibo from eastern Nigeria – and was captured by slavers and endured and survived the middle passage. To what extent did Eve keep her Ibo heritage going? Did she talk and sing to her daughter in the Ibo language or had she already been forced to change to an English patois? It is noteworthy that, although the West Indian slave plantation system had been operating for over 150 years by this time, half of the Wear Pen slaves had been born in Africa, so their personal and family histories of slavery were quite short.

Fathers’ names did not appear on register – indicating how slavery destroyed the family unit? It is now questioned to what extent slaves lived as nuclear families. But fathers could not fulfil the role of providing for their children or protecting them. The present day ‘absent black father’ is often seen as a legacy of slavery.

The girl I'm most interested in is Jane Glanville. She differs from Joan in that she has a surname. On this list, children with surnames also have mothers with surnames. These mothers are a bit special because they have been christened. This suggests that they were house slaves rather than field slaves; they were probably domestic workers in the great house where the slave owners lived and therefore had a closer relationship to the whites. To be christened had a great significance in the slavery system as it was an acceptance as a full human being, rather than as little more than a commodity.

Jane's mother was Sarah Vaughan (30, negro, creole), and her grandmother was Sylvia (60, African – not christened, no surname).

But the most interesting thing about Jane is that she is a mulatto - mixed white and black. This suggests that her father could be Samuel Glanville, the ancestor of my present-day Glanville friends, who went to this area of Jamaica from Ottery St Mary in the early 1800s. He was probably employed as an overseer or book-keeper on the Wear Pen estate belonging to James Davy. Indeed, a search of the baptism records in the Island Record Office in Jamaica confirmed that he was Jane's 'reputed father'. But Samuel's daughter was still a slave because her mother was a slave, and children took on the status of their mother under the slavery system. Did Samuel take an interest in his mulatto daughter? Did he try to free her? It was quite common for white overseers to father slave children but not easy to obtain their freedom as the price of a slave could be equivalent to several years' salary.

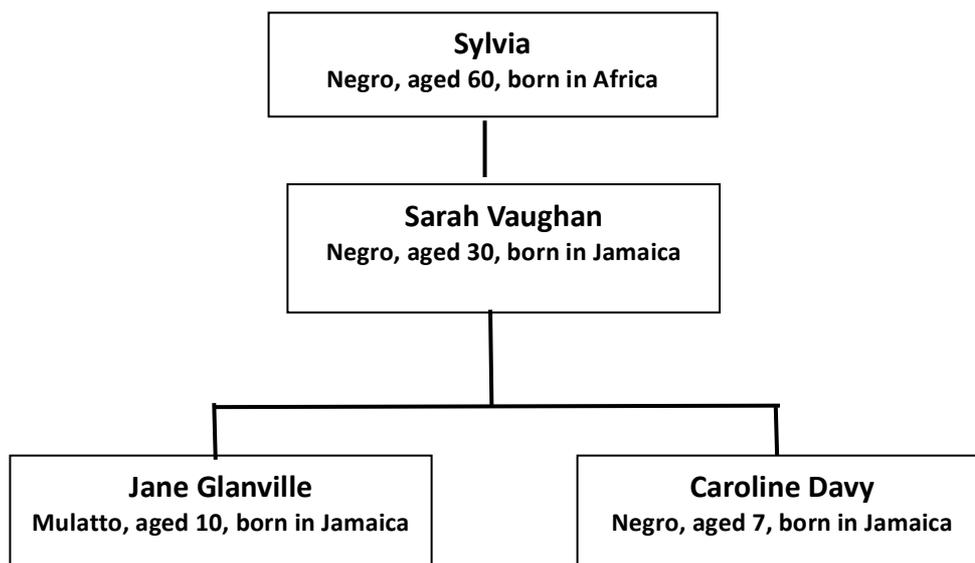
The slave registers were updated every two or three years to show the increases and decreases in the numbers of slaves and the reasons for them. This one shows that, six years after the previous register, Jane Glanville had obtained her manumission, or freedom. It was signed by John Davy but witnessed by Samuel Glanville, who by now owned the property next to Wear Pen and was a slave owner in his own right. So it is heartening to see that Samuel Glanville managed to obtain his daughter's freedom, apparently when the owner, James Davy, became incapacitated and handed control of Wear Pen to his son, John.

This is another legacy of slavery, the creation of a free brown section of West Indian society that was later to form the middle class – a buffer section between the rich white plantation owners and the black working class, often landless and desperately poor. I realise now that

many of my A-level physics students in Jamaica were members of this brown middle class, descendants of mulattos like Jane Glanville.

Many years later, in his will of 1862, Samuel Glanville left Jane an annuity of £26 p.a. So he still remembered her and helped her to fund a comfortable later life, though nothing like the amount he left to his octroon (one eighth black and seven-eighths white) daughters by his common law wife, who must have been able to live a life of luxury in Ottery, Bath and Exeter on the £5,000 odd he left each of them. One of these octroon daughters lived just round the corner from the venue for this talk, on Richmond Road, Exeter, in the 1890s.

The last of the three little girls on the list is Caroline Davy, a 7 year old negro girl. Despite her surname 'Davy' she was a black child and therefore not fathered by any of the white Davy family of her owners but, like several of the Davy slaves who had been christened, they took the Davy surname. But notice who her mother was – Sarah Vaughan again! So Caroline was a younger half-sister to Jane, with a black father (presumably another Wear Pen slave, who remains unknown). This shows the family tree that can be built up from the slave register.



Family tree from 1817 Slave Register

What happened to Caroline Davy after Emancipation in the 1830s? Many of the freed slaves were left with nothing and had to continue working for their former owners on the plantations. But Caroline seems to have done quite well for herself – apparently with some help from Samuel Glanville from his Greenvale estate. In his 1862 will, he stipulates that “Caroline Davy, who has for many years lived at Greenvale, be allowed to graze her stock”. So he had allowed Caroline (his daughter’s half-sister) to live at his family home and graze her horses and cows there – indicating that she had acquired a certain amount of wealth for herself. This is confirmed in the following decade in the 1878 Almanac where she is recorded as the ‘keeper of a lodging house’. So it seems that, despite being black, but with a few lucky breaks, Caroline herself managed to enter the emerging Jamaican middle class.

Coming back to Joan, the Who do you think you are? programme reported that she herself had a mulatto child by a white overseer of the next generation when she was in her teens, shortly before Emancipation, and this child became Ainsley’s ancestor.

What I have tried to show here is the intersection of race, gender and class in the lives of enslaved girls on a Jamaican plantation in the final decades of slavery and the first decades of freedom; and how that formed part of the larger social legacy of British slave ownership.

But to finish the story of our visittwo centuries later the two families met again in Jamaica – our friends the Glanvilles and the visiting Australian Davys!

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