

## Researching slave-owners further: a guide

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.

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

There are a number of biographies of the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning (50 Wimpole Street), including that by Margaret Forster (1988). Richard Barrett's (Wedgestone, 2000) focuses on the family's close ties with slavery. There are good histories of two other slave-owning families. Richard Pares (London, 1950) is the story of the Pinney family (46 Wimpole Street), who made their fortun

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

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.

The National Archives at Kew (see No. 7 below) holds the \_\_\_\_\_ and the records of the \_\_\_\_\_ 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.

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.

\_\_\_\_\_d 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 \_\_\_\_\_ 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 as well as a host of other material,

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.

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