



***The Slave Trade,
Abolition &
Derbyshire***

**Notes to accompany slides shown to the Archives
Workshop at Derbyshire Record Office, December 2007**

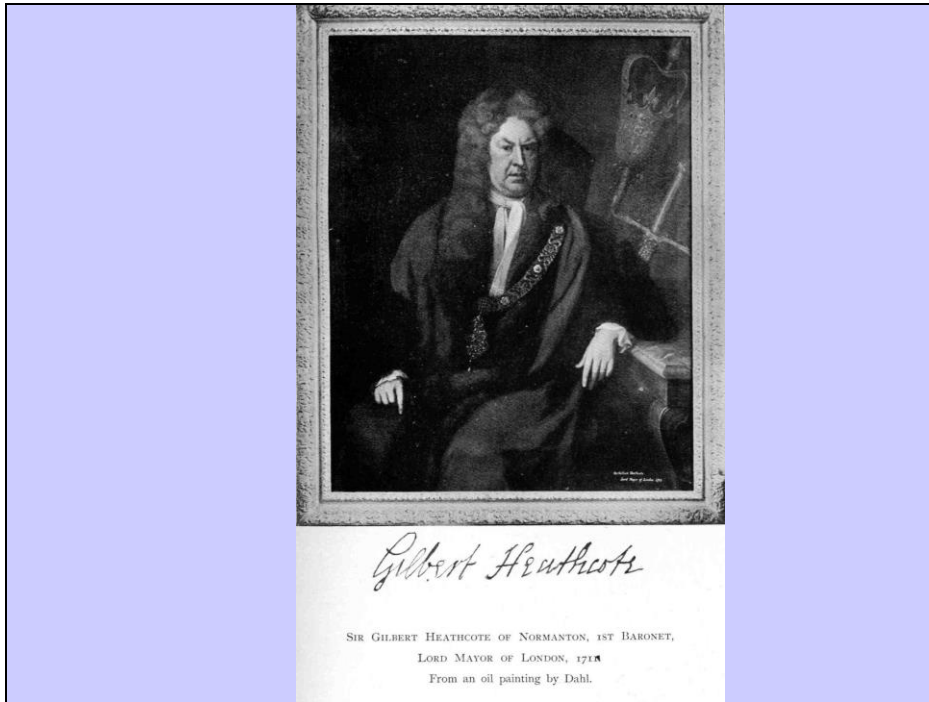
Mark Smith

2007 has seen commemorations of an important bicentenary: in 1807, an Act was passed through parliament prohibiting the buying or selling of human beings within the British Empire. The anniversary is of the abolition of the slave trade, not the abolition of slavery: it did not mean that you instantly became free if you had been enslaved before 1807, nothing changed. In fact, even if you were born after 1807 to slave parents, you were still the legal property of your parents' master. There was another long, hard struggle towards full emancipation, which eventually happened with an Act of 1833, which enforced a period of apprenticeship on the slaves which lasted until 1838 – only at this point did they become legally free

Britain was not the first country to be involved in the slave trade, nor the first country to ban it. The Portuguese, with their seafaring expertise and proximity to Africa, were the first nation to make a serious business out of kidnapping or buying slaves from that continent and transporting them across the Atlantic to the New World. However, Britain began to displace Portugal after about 1640 and, during the eighteenth century, with the trade at its height, Britain had the largest share of the slave trade. We can never know for sure exactly how many people were transported in this manner, but it was certainly many millions – a recent estimate suggests around 11 million – with many millions more dying at sea, or on their way to the African coast. The conditions on arrival were brutal in the extreme, and mortality rates for slaves were high.

The first European country to outlaw the slave trade was Denmark, with legislation which came into force in 1803. However, there are two crucial considerations about Britain's decision to outlaw the trade that make it rather more important. One is that, by contrast with Denmark, Britain carried out the most enormous volume of trade that was dependent on slavery as a mode of production, usually in commodities such as sugar and cotton. The other is that it had the naval power to restrict the slave trade as carried out by other countries: countries that had not yet banned it.

Derbyshire families involved in the slave trade and use of slave labour: some examples:



Gilbert Heathcote (1652-1733): born to a family of merchants who had their origins as bell-founders and metalworkers. He became successful in his own right and went on to be Lord Mayor of London and one of the founders of the Bank of England. He also had extensive West Indian business interests, and was licensed to trade in slaves, sending a ship to West Africa for this purpose in 1702.

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Picture: Derbyshire Record Office (Strutt Library)



The FitzHerberts of Tissington came into properties in the West Indies through marriage. The properties included the Turner's Hall plantation in Barbados (in the mid 18th century) and several estates in Jamaica (in the early 19th century). Derbyshire Record Office collection D239 includes letters of William FitzHerbert (1748-1791) managing the Barbados estates for his father.

D239 M/E 18048: part of the FitzHerbert family's Blue Mountain estate, Jamaica

The enslaved people themselves: how their lives were recorded

N. Mens.	Names	Occupations	Value
1.	Apollo	Boiler	60.
2.	Abraham	Watchman Leprosy	5.

This is an example of an inventory, including names of slaves. Note the differing values, explained in part by the word “leprosy”.

D239 M/E 16388: inventory, Vere plantation, Jamaica

Scotland	
Edinburgh	
Sterling	
Aberdeen	
Keith	with Yaws
Forrest	Iboe Boys
Murray	
Telfer	
Andrew	
Stewart	

Here is another inventory. Note the arbitrary assignation of names with Scottish overtones, and ethonym “Iboe” (now spelt Igbo), meaning they would have come from around the Niger delta region of West Africa.

D239 M/E 18028: 1773 inventory, Blue Mountain, Jamaica

Decrease of Negroes 1770		
Jan 1	On the Estate this day	240
Feb 13	Did in Child Bed - Quashba	1
Mar 16	Did of a fever - Quemin	1
	25 Murray & Tom died of a pleuritic fever	2
Apr 11	Lamba died distempred & blotted	1
May 16	Old Venus hangd herself	1
July 23	Dick died, distempred & blotted	1
	26 Cyax died - ditto for a long time	1
Aug 6	Kid shot by a white Man on Surge Island	1
	22 did of a pleuritic fever - Kingston	1
Sep 13	Jacob died in the Hot House being blotted	1
Oct 25	Chance died blotted & distempred	1
Dec 8	Small - do - do - do	1
		13
		227
	Increase	14
		241

This part of the inventory records the decrease in slave numbers over the course of a year, and shows the dangers of slave life: note the causes of death include fever, child birth, being "shot by a white man" and, in the case of Old Venus, suicide.

D239 M/E 18028: 1773 inventory, Blue Mountain, Jamaica

Decrease of Negroes 1771		
Jan 1	On the Estate	241
Feb 25	Budgee died being blotted	1
Mar 10	Grace died hav. been a long time obstructed	1
July 10	Sarry died of the Colic	1
	22 Carpenter Joe died of old age	1
Aug 14	Robert died, was given to eating of dirt	1
Oct 2	Tolly died, a long time obstructed	1
Nov 15	One of the New Negroes hangd himself	1
	Sam sent to Grange Hill by Mr. Laing desire being troublesome on this Estate Sept. 17 th	1
		8
		233
	Increase	18
		251

The next year, we see deaths from Yaws and another suicide. Note also that a man called Sam was sent from Blue Mountain to Grange Hill estate by estate attorney Robert Laing for being "troublesome".

D239 M/E 18028: 1773 inventory, Blue Mountain, Jamaica

Advertisements for the return of runaways: two examples from a West Indian newspaper, 1832

ABSENT from the Subscriber's service, her two black Carpenters, *ISAAC GREEN* and *SAMBO*, brothers, and both very young men.—The latter commonly goes by the name of *Dunker*. *Isaac* is tall and slender; *Dunker* has larger limbs, and a fuller chest. A reward of **FOUR DOLLARS** will be given for apprehending *each* of these run-aways, and lodging him in jail; and *no more* will be offered, for this very good reason, that the undersigned has no more to give. These two carpenters have been seen often of late at St. Ann's, and are supposed to be now at work there; but after this notice, it is hoped that no gentleman will continue to employ them without the permission of their owner, who is an indigent orphan, with little to support her except the labour of these men. The undersigned, though she has little money, is not without friends; and most assuredly the law will be taken of all persons who after this advertisement shall be found harbouring or employing her slaves without leave.

HARRIET PIGGOTT.

St. James's, November 3—t.f..

Advertisements such as this were very common in West Indian newspapers. This example comes from 1832.

D239: M/E 20595: newspaper clipping

SIXTEEN DOLLARS REWARD

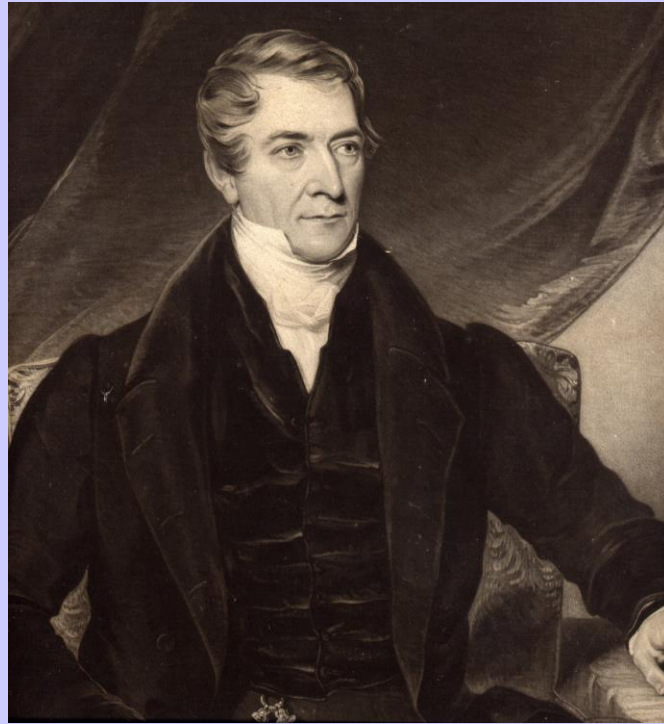
WILL be given by the Subscriber for the taking of his negro woman named *AFFEE THOMAS*, a washer of linens; she carried off with her on the 11th of December, her female coloured child named *RENECCA ROSS*, aged three years—the mother has lost a front tooth, the child has a scar on the temple from a fall; it is likely she may be shewing a false pass as looking for an owner, or passing for a free subject; she has many acquaintances—some on the *River* Plantation in Saint Phillip's; also the Plantation called *Franklin's*, and at Mr. Goodin's; her mother *Jane*, and her cousin *Mary Jang*, live in Nelson-street, where it is likely she may be off and on with them, or at Mr. Martindale's by the old Parade ground, where her mother since the storm has pitched her camp; she has a cousin named *Thomas*, who is either under groom at Pilgrim or at the Garrison, where she may be, as he called on her a few days before she left my place—she may be washing linens hereabouts. All persons are forbid concealing, harbouring, or otherwise employing either of the said Slaves, if they do, the Law will be carried to the extent against the person so doing; and whatever may be recovered by the Detinue Act, will be given to the Informer; but should she return without putting me to expense, she will be pardoned.

January 16—t.f.

JAMES STOREY.

This is another example from the same paper.

D239: M/E 20595: newspaper clipping



Some Derbyshire opponents of slavery:

Henry “Redhead” Yorke (1772-1813), apparently born in the Caribbean, but brought up in Little Eaton and politically active in Derby. Derby at this time was an intellectual centre, a bastion of enlightenment values. Scientists, writers and thinkers were highly active in the town.

Thomas Gisborne (1758-1846), a clergyman, writer, member of the Clapham Sect, and friend of William Wilberforce.

Thomas Bentley (1731-1780), a porcelain manufacturer, born in Scropton. He was the partner of Joseph Wedgwood, and both were prominent opponents of slavery.

Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802), the noted scientist, and grandfather of Charles. He was a resident of Breadsall and educated in Chesterfield. Derbyshire Record Office has some of his letters.

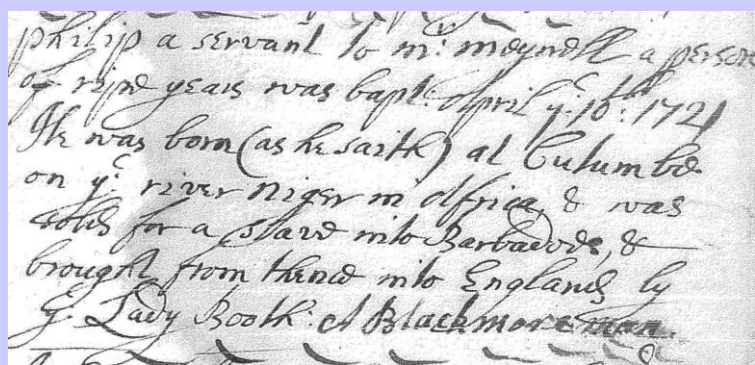
William Ward, editor of the Derby Mercury. As early as 1787, he began publishing articles against the slave trade. This decision was inspired by a meeting with Thomas Clarkson, the abolitionist who collected data from around the world and sought to publicise it.

Thomas Denman (1779-1854), later Baron Denman of Dovedale, fought to abolish slavery altogether. As MP for Nottingham, Denman delivered a ten-hour speech on the subject of slavery, and he retained his convictions in his later role as Lord Chief Justice.

Robert Greville (1794-1866), from the parish of Edlaston and Wyaston, where his father was the vicar. He became a noted botanist, and was one of the Vice Presidents of the Anti-Slavery Convention of all Countries, in London, 1840

D2327: Picture of Thomas Denman

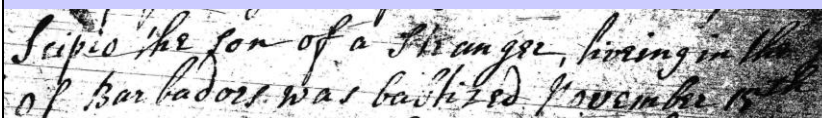
Evidence of slaves and former slaves in Derbyshire's parish registers: three examples



Philip a servant to m: meynell a person
of ripe years was bapt: April 10: 1721
He was born (as he saith) at Cutumbe
on the river Niger in Africa, & was
sold for a slave into Barbados, &
brought from thence into England by
J. Lady Booth: a Blackmore man.

Here we see a record of the baptism of "Philip, a servant to Mr Meynell, a person of ripe years" on 10th April 1721. "He was born (as he saith) at Cutumbe on the river Niger in Africa and was sold for a slave into Barbados and brought from there into England by the Lady Booth: A Blackmore man". Wealthy families had black servants. Slavery not enforceable in English courts after 1772 Somerset case.

Parish register for Bradley, 1721



Scipio the son of a Stranger, living in the
of Barbados, was baptized November 19: 1722

Scropton register records baptism of Scipio, "the son of a stranger, living in the island of Barbados", on November 19th 1722. Note name of classical origin (Scipio Africanus was a Roman general who fought Hannibal for control of Carthage, North Africa).

Parish register for Scropton, 1722



Mercury Mallows, a black man, serv. to Jos. Jebb Esq. 22

Chesterfield burial register for 1801 records the burial, on July 22, of "Mercury Mallows, a black man, servant to Josiah Jebb", who was a local landowner.

*Chesterfield parish burial register,
1801*

