



Slavery to Freedom:

John Malden, Director of the Paxton Trust

Paxton House, in the Scottish Borders, was built between 1758 and 1763 to a design by John Adam for Patrick Home of Billie. The house was sold in 1769 to Patrick's cousin Ninian Home, who owned two sugar plantations on the island of Grenada, one at Waltham on the west coast, and one at Paraclete on the east. Ninian Home employed Thomas Chippendale, both senior and junior, to furnish the house, which currently holds the largest collection of Chippendale furniture in Scotland on view to the public.

The Home of Wedderburn Papers, deposited in the National Archives of Scotland by the Home Robertson family, is one of the most complete country house archives in Scotland. Among the papers are some 2,000 documents relating to the Grenada properties from the 1760s until the 1840s when the plantations were sold.

During that period there was a steady stream of correspondence between Grenada and Paxton, and a wealth of documents about the plantations and the slaves. Also, on display in Paxton House, is a unique set of eight watercolour paintings of Paraclete.

For 2007, the Paxton Trust has obtained a Heritage Lottery Grant to digitise all the documents relating to Grenada, so that they be made more available to researchers and also so that the

Two of the eight watercolour paintings of Paraclete which can be seen at Paxton
Right: The Descendants Youth Group visit Paxton



Grenada to Paxton

archives on Grenada may have easy access to this aspect of their heritage. A booklet and small exhibition is also being prepared which will be available during 2008, the 250th anniversary of work starting to build Paxton House.

In parallel with this, as part of the same project, links have been made with Grenadians living in London. There is a very active youth group called Descendants, based in Acton, where most of the young people are of Grenadian descent. In July, some 20 young people aged between 6 and 16, and 26 adults, visited Paxton, giving a display of art work, dance, songs and stories based on their heritage. Staying for two nights in the Coldingham Youth Hostel on the Berwickshire coast, getting them away from the beach was quite a problem!

Whilst both sides were a little apprehensive at the beginning, the visit proved to be a resounding success and it is hoped to build on this by encouraging schools in the Berwickshire area to twin with schools in Grenada, especially those at Waltham and Paraclete, with the eventual aim of exchanging young people, possibly through the Scouting movement.

The Paxton Trust feels that this project is the best way in which to build on what has gone before in the most positive way possible, so that future generations may be made aware of and learn from what has happened in the past.

