

## EMANCIPATED SLAVES AT SOUTHAMPTON

These extracts are taken from a description by Lydia Prideaux of Plymouth, of the journey, in 1855, of a group of emancipated slaves from Havana, Cuba to Lucomi in Africa, via several places in England, including Southampton.

The group consisted of 14 men, 12 women and 22 children.

Several of the men had worked as porters, loading and unloading ships on the wharves, and a number of the women as laundresses. They had in many cases been in Cuba for substantial periods of time, some for over twenty years and in one case as many as forty eight. The group had mostly bought their own freedom for sums ranging from \$300 to \$1000.

“The price paid for their freedom was in most cases four or five hundred dollars. The mason had paid 1000, the shoemaker 800, the old cook who was grey headed but did not know his age had served one family 25 years and at last purchased the remnant of his last days for 300 dollars...”

The group eventually arrived at Southampton by boat and from there were sent on to London, before being taken to Plymouth to await the African packet which would take them to Lagos from which they could travel to their native Lucomi.

## “CRYING ALL NIGHT” - LEANDRO’S STORY

One member of the group called Leandro Llopas, had become separated from his parents in London, who had no idea what had happened to him. On the morning the group were due to depart for Lagos, a letter arrived from Leandro in which, “the place of his sojourn was very obscurely written”. Unfortunately it was too late to delay the groups departure but a clergyman named Mr Townsend, who had recently returned from Abbeokuta and had been helping to interpret for the party, promised to search for him. He began in London, but it transpired that Leandro had been walking through Hampshire in search of his family.

“It seems Leandro had accidentally missed his way in London when going out to procure some necessaries for their use on board the Steamer, and on returning found the party were gone. Without friends, – home, – money, – or intelligible speech, he had wandered two days and a night about the Streets, ‘Crying all night’. He then found the Spanish Consul, and was by him sent to the Southampton Railway Station; for Leandro hoped the party might have returned to Southampton... Being unable to pay the fare by the Railway he set out on foot, guided by the Telegraph wires.”

“In five days he reached Winchester getting a bed and supper each night by the kindness of the Police and by pence given him on the road. The only word he could say to be understood was Africa and it drew out kindly feelings. At Winchester his fatigued appearance excited compassion. A gentleman paid for his bed and supper, and the next morning he had a Railway ticket given him for Southampton. But he found no parents there. A Spanish Innkeeper generously took him in and maintained him five weeks without any prospect of recompense. At length a Traveller came to the Inn, and said there were a number of black people at Plymouth. Leandro hoped it might be their party, and wrote the letter which we may believe providentially arrived in time to relieve his sorrowing Parents...”

Fortunately Leandro was eventually rediscovered and sent to Plymouth where he spent some weeks before following the rest of the party to Lagos and then his native Lucomi.

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This image is one of two engravings bound into the account by Lydia Prideaux. Despite her decision to include them it becomes clear from her writing that Lydia did not approve of the illustrations that had been made of the emancipados, commenting that:

“All the females... wore their dresses very long... the elder [children], as well as the Women were more fully clothed, and very modest in their behaviour. In this respect the Sketch in the Church Missionary Intelligencer does not do them justice; any more than it does their faces, which are grotesquely caricatured, and such is the case with the other Sketches I have seen.”

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