

## **Atlantic and Indian Ocean Worlds: Uncovering connections between the East India Company and the British Caribbean colonies through the British Library's Collections**

Uncovering the linkages between the East India Company and Caribbean slave economy is a complicated process. During the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century an ever growing network of connections spread across Britain's imperial possessions, linking England, Scotland and Wales with the colonies and also the colonies with each other. This finding aid, based on preliminary research, seeks to establish a starting point for further investigation by suggesting some of the ways in which India, the Caribbean and Britain were intertwined during the hundred years between 1757 and 1857—and how these links can be traced in the British Library's collections. Initial efforts have uncovered only a tiny portion of a far larger picture that requires much more archival and family research to build a fuller understanding. It is our hope that this guide may be of use to others interested in unearthing the links that connected India and the Caribbean.

The organisation of the British Library's archival collections means it is not immediately obvious how to go about exploring the ways in which these spheres, conventionally considered in isolation by historians, were connected through the movement of officials, merchants, families, ideas, money, trade, material objects and, later in the period, colonial peoples. This guide offers an introduction into how to explore potential connections through the British Library's collections. It provides a brief historical context of the East India Company and Caribbean slavery at the start of the nineteenth century before suggesting how other researchers might start to think about the connections between India and the Caribbean. The third section surveys which British Library archival collections and resources will prove helpful in revealing these links. This is followed by a case-study of one family who had constructed a global network linking the Caribbean, Britain and India. The finding aid finishes with a list of suggested secondary reading.

- i. [Historical Background](#), pp.1-9
- ii. [What were the connections between the East India and the Caribbean?](#), pp.9-12
- iii. [Researching the connections in the British Library collections](#), pp.12-28
- iv. [Case Study: The Martins – Tracking a West Indian plantation owning family to India through the British Library's collections](#), pp.29-39
- v. [Further Reading](#), pp.40-42

### **Historical Background**

The 18<sup>th</sup> century saw a massive expansion of British imperial power. Even after the loss of the North American colonies during the War of Independence (1775-83), Britain retained a permanent presence on every continent. Strategically and economically the most important of Britain's possessions were in India and the Caribbean. Profits gained from trade in Asia and North America created an injection of wealth in British society that supported the expansion of the landed elite and helped to establish the City of London as one of the world's premier financial markets.

## The Caribbean

Permanent British settlement in the Caribbean started in the 1620s and 30s, with the cultivation of tobacco growing in St Kitts, Barbados, Nevis, Antigua and Montserrat. Unlike in India, British settlement was based upon the cultivation of land that could be passed between generations. As the numbers of migrants from Britain increased so crop production diversified to include cotton, indigo, ginger and, most profitable of all, sugar. In 1655 the British seized Jamaica from Spanish control, which 'marked an enormous change in the balance of Caribbean power relationships' by giving the British more arable land than on their other five islands combined.<sup>1</sup> A series of wars in the early eighteenth century, rising production costs, natural disasters, disease and falling numbers of migrants all limited the expansion of British plantation production from existing colonies. From the mid-eighteenth century onwards domestic demand for sugar exploded and with it Caribbean production. At the same time, the seizures by Britain from France of St Vincent, Grenada, Dominica and Tobago in 1763 added to Britain's slave empire in the Caribbean. This growth was sustained by a huge increase in the number of slaves imported from Africa, with the slave population more than doubling in the years 1700-48, rising from 114,300 to 258,500, an increase matched by annual sugar exports which in the same period rose from 22,017 to 41,425 tons.<sup>2</sup> After 1750 the slave trade became even more intense with British ships transporting nearly 2 million slaves between 1750 and abolition of the British trade in 1807.<sup>3</sup> In a last spasm of expansion of its slave empire, at the very moment of abolition of the slave trade, Britain between 1800 and 1815 took from France and its Spanish and Dutch allies the slave-colonies of Trinidad, St Lucia and what became British Guiana, as well as of Mauritius and the Cape of Good Hope.



*The Slave Trade, from the Legacies of British Slave-ownership exhibition, 'Slave-owners of Bloomsbury'.*

The colonial slave system was structured around the 'triangular trade' that saw British manufactured goods exchanged for slaves along the West Africa coast, to be shipped to the Caribbean where tropical cash crops were loaded for sale in Britain. Between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries when the Atlantic slave trade persisted it is estimated that at least 12.5 million people were shipped by European nations from Africa to the Americas – at least 1.7 million of whom died during the 'Middle Passage', as the crossing was termed.

British ships carried at least 3.2 million enslaved peoples and at its height during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century this British trade accounted for 40% of the total traffic.

The British trade was largely coordinated from Bristol, London and, increasingly, Liverpool as the dominant centres of slave merchant activity. Despite its declining involvement in the shipping of

<sup>1</sup> Richard Sheridan, 'The formation of Caribbean plantation society, 1689-1748', in Peter Marshall ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume II: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1998), 394-414, p.395.

<sup>2</sup> Sheridan, 'The formation of Caribbean plantation society, 1689-1748', p.401.

<sup>3</sup> David Richardson, 'The British empire and the Atlantic slave trade, 1660-1807', in Peter Marshall ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume II: The Eighteenth Century*, p.442.

slaves, London remained central to the funding of the trade. City merchants provided the capital investment that allowed traders to undertake voyages and also provided loans to planters in need of funds. Many of the same individuals who were involved in the Caribbean slave economy also invested in the East India Company. Families such as the Barings and Lushingtons maintained a prominent position straddling the financial worlds of Indian and Caribbean trade. From 1783-87 East Indian goods comprised 28% of the £2.3 million of exports from Liverpool to Africa and were largely supplied by London merchants.<sup>4</sup> As David Richardson makes clear, while Liverpool ‘has to be regarded as the most successful slave port of the Atlantic world in the eighteenth century. It is unlikely, however, that the city’s slave trade could have reached the extraordinary heights it did after 1750 without London’s financial contribution.’<sup>5</sup>



*Fonthill Abbey, built by William Thomas Beckford (click on image to go to BL's digital galleries for more information)*

Growth brought many plantation owners huge wealth, which allowed them to dominate island politics and accrue significant influence in Britain. As the eighteenth century progressed increasing numbers returned to live in Britain as absentee landlords, leaving their estates in the charge of managers and attorneys. The appearance of Caribbean sugar barons in the metropole created unease amongst established elites. Depicted as men who combined reckless temper and dissolute habits, with great industry and ambition, they appeared as a group ‘caught up in a race between quick wealth and quick death.’<sup>6</sup> ‘West Indians’ reputation for ostentatious spending was captured by William Thomas Beckford’s use of his family’s vast

Jamaican sugar fortune on the building of the gothic Fonthill Abbey. Although Beckford was declared in the press to be the ‘richest commoner in the land’, his extravagant lifestyle and spending on art and buildings left him heavily in debt, forcing the sale of his Jamaican plantations. By the time of his death little was left of the huge fortune he had inherited. Perhaps the most notorious, Beckford was nevertheless not typical of all West Indians living in Britain. Much Caribbean wealth was successfully repatriated and passed between generations during the late eighteenth century. Like the large fortunes returning from India, this money was reinvested in the architectural and business landscape of Britain. A strong West Indian interest group flourished in London. Comprised of merchants, absentee landlords and financiers, all of whom had a vested interest in defending the Caribbean trade, the West Indian lobby represented a significant force in Parliament and the City.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Richardson, ‘The British empire and the Atlantic slave trade, 1660-1807’, p.449.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, pp.449-450.

<sup>6</sup> Edmund Burke, *An account of European settlements in America*, Volume II (London, 1760), pp.106-107

<sup>7</sup> B.W. Higman, ‘The West India ‘interest’ in Parliament, 1807–1833’, *Historical Studies*, 13:49 (1967), 1-19.



*'Planting the Sugar Cane, Antigua', from William Clark, Ten Views in the Island of Antigua, 1823 (click on the image to go to BL's Digital Galleries for more information).*

The efforts of this group became increasingly defensive during the late eighteenth century as the public campaign for the abolition of the slave trade gathered momentum. A combination of falling sugar profits, exacerbated by the protracted period of war from 1776 until 1815, and public resentment at the incongruity between rising sugar prices on the one hand and the perceived luxuriant wealth of returning planters on the other, left the West Indian lobby increasingly beleaguered. A hard fought rear guard action delayed the abolition of the slave trade during the 1790s and won a few

concessions from the British government to protect West Indian trade in return for amelioration of slave conditions and treatment. Nevertheless, the popular campaign for abolition gathered momentum at the turn of the nineteenth century and culminated in Parliament's decision by 283 votes to 16 to abolish the British slave trade in 1807. Many abolitionists resisted the urge to demand the complete end of slavery, hoping that without a ready supply to replenish the perennially declining slave population, owners would gradually be forced to concede that slavery was doomed and look for alternative systems to run their plantations.

Although amelioration had a modifying effect on birth-to-death ratios amongst the enslaved population, it certainly did not create the conditions depicted by many artists and travel writers sympathetic to the slave-owners, who portrayed life on a Caribbean plantation as idyllic. Allusions to the violence and repression imposed upon slaves emerged even in sympathetic accounts of the slave system, as captured by the illustration from Richard Bridgens' 1830s publication, *West India Scenery, with illustrations of negro character, the process of making sugar, from sketches taken during a voyage to, and residence of seven years in, the island of Trinidad*. The uncomfortable juxtaposition of smiling 'negro heads' above depictions of slaves wearing a mask of metal – either as punishment or to prevent the practice of 'dirt eating' – and an iron collar, highlights the complacent indifference to violence that underpinned the strategies of racialised "othering" deployed to endorse slavery. Even after 1807 the West Indian lobby continued to defend their interests in Britain in a manner that defied any naïve hopes that Caribbean slavery would simply fade away. Abolition did not destroy the sugar trade nor did it represent the final acknowledgement from the British government that the Caribbean had ceased to be economically



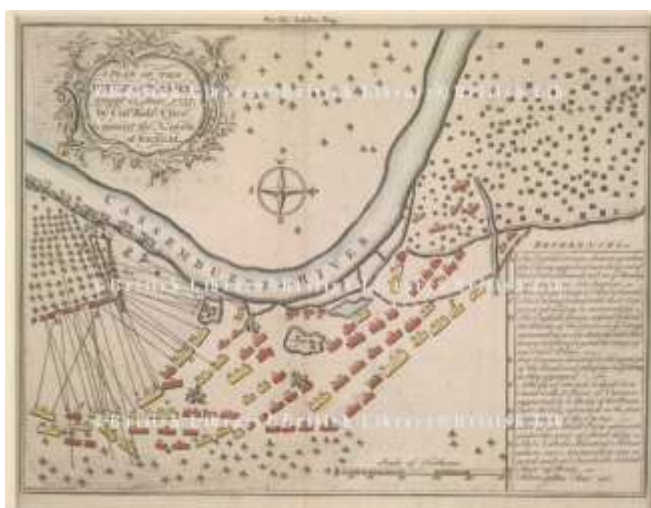
*'Negro Heads', from Richard Bridgens, West India Scenery, with illustrations of negro character (c.1836). (Click on the image to go to BL's Digital collections for more information).*

viable; however, it did signal the start of a steady decline in support for slavery within Britain. A series of slave revolts in the 1810s and 1820s raised the profile of complaints over the injustices of plantation life, whilst the evangelical movement increased its efforts to publicise the horrors and brutal repression upon which slavery survived. By the 1830s public opinion in Britain was animated by a desire for emancipation, spurred by an uprising by enslaved people in western Jamaica in 1831. Parliamentary reform in 1832 made politicians more sensitive to public opinion and a year later slavery was finally outlawed in the British Empire.

Yet, even in the moment of emancipatory moral triumph, the reality was more ambiguous. Emancipation did not mean freedom for all slaves. The ‘apprentice system’ that replaced slavery demanded that all emancipated slaves over the age of six continue to work on their former owners’ plantations for forty hours a week, unpaid for a further 4-6 years. In addition, the British government resolved to pay slave owners £20 million of public money – about forty per cent of the annual national budget – to compensate them for their loss of property. In the ensuing ‘feeding frenzy...over the compensation money’ the depth of penetration of the slave economy into metropolitan fortunes was revealed as thousands of Britons were drawn ‘into asserting their ownership of the enslaved once the state attached specific and immediate monetary value to the claims of ownership.’<sup>8</sup> Across Britain individuals from disparate backgrounds – including aristocrats, planters, merchants, clergymen, doctors, widows, spinsters, MPs, EIC officials and even some abolitionists – rushed to secure their share of the compensation. Amongst these were numerous individuals with personal or family connections to India, suggesting an empire that was far more connected between east and west than has hitherto been explored.

### **The East India Company**

Before 1858 British authority in India rested with the Honourable East India Company (EIC). Established by Queen Elizabeth I in 1600 as a merchant company, the EIC controlled British trade with India, South East Asia and China. Their monopoly offered access to a wealth of new goods and commodities not readily available in Europe. Tea, indigo, silk, cotton textiles, spices, coffee, saltpetre and later opium generated huge profits that sustained a commercial network of global reach, catered to a consumer revolution in eighteenth-century Britain and drew the EIC further into India. Over the course of



*A plan of the Battle of Plassey, 1757 (click on the image to go to BL's Digital Collections for more information).*

<sup>8</sup> Nicholas Draper, *The price of emancipation: slave-ownership, compensation and British society at the end of slavery* (Cambridge, 2010), p.4

the century the British presence in India was transformed from commercial traders into ‘conquerors and rulers’, whose power ‘was to engulf the Indian subcontinent.’<sup>9</sup> Victory at the Battle of Plassey in 1757 set in motion a period of aggressive expansion that led in 1765 to the British assuming direct rule over the province of Bengal. This acquisition alone extended EIC control over twenty million people, provided £3 million a year in revenue and proved the catalyst for similarly far-reaching expansion in southern India around Madras (present-day Chennai) and in the west from Bombay (present-day Mumbai).<sup>10</sup> In all three ‘Presidencies’ – Bengal, Madras and Bombay – EIC armies fought both local rulers and European rivals in an attempt to secure British interests.



*View of East India House, Leadenhall Street, London, 1817 (click on the image to go to BL's digital galleries for more information).*

This transformation necessitated that the EIC massively expand from a series of coastal trading ‘factories’ (fortified warehouses) into a complex governmental bureaucracy, supported by a large and modern army. As a result numerous lucrative and prestigious career opportunities emerged. The Company was run by a Court of Directors based at East India Company House Leadenhall Street. Twenty-four directors were elected from amongst the Company’s several thousand shareholders.<sup>11</sup> Anyone, including women, could buy shares in the

Company. Shareholders were entitled to attend the four annual meetings of the Court of Proprietors to elect directors, to oversee their activities, and to debate policy. Most appear to have been largely quiescent in shaping Company policy, remaining content as long their dividends were paid.<sup>12</sup> It was the directors’ responsibility to coordinate trade, represent the Company in Parliament, appoint recruits and oversee the administration of India, although vast geographical separation made the latter task almost impossible. Subsequently, great responsibility was transferred to the Governor-General, who was expected to organise the Company’s interests in India and oversee officials on the ground. Before 1780 senior officials in India had normally risen through the ranks of the Company itself, with their success often reflective of the wealth they accumulated. Despite a growing cacophony of complaints from London that the Company’s focus should be on trade not conquest, the lack of central control led to a period of almost ceaseless expansion and warfare during the latter half of the eighteenth century. By 1815 the EIC occupied over 70 million acres of cultivated land and millions more of uncultivated land, in which over 40 million people were resident.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Peter Marshall, ‘The British in Asia: Trade and Dominion, 1700-1765’, in Peter Marshall ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume II: The Eighteenth Century*, 485-507, p.485

<sup>10</sup> Marshall, ‘The British in Asia’, p.492

<sup>11</sup> Huw Bowen, *The business of empire: the East India Company and imperial Britain, 1756-1833* (Cambridge, 2005), chapter 5 ‘People: company men’, 118-150

<sup>12</sup> Bowen, *The business of empire*, pp.84-117

<sup>13</sup> Patrick Colquhoun, *Treatise on the wealth, power and resources of the British Empire* (London, 1815), p.61

Prior to the 1770s little attention in Britain was paid to the activities of the EIC in India. The first generation of officials after Plassey frequently returned home in possession of huge fortunes, accumulated through either private trade within India – until 1813 the EIC held a monopoly on all trade between Britain and India – or as a result of war. Caricatured in Britain as ‘nabobs’ – a clumsy transliteration of the Bengali title Nawab, meaning person of power and standing – these individuals used their vast, new wealth to purchase grand landed estates, Parliamentary seats and fund investment in a range of new business ventures, not infrequently in the Caribbean. This growing East India lobby exercised a powerful influence in Westminster and the City, one that increasingly appeared as a rival to their West Indian counterparts and an intimidating threat to older, established elites.<sup>14</sup>

In the 1780s the nabobs faced a backlash of metropolitan opinion. Commentators fretted over the dangers posed to the national character by aggressive expansion overseas and the subsequent return of corrupt fortunes;<sup>15</sup> if British officials succumbed so easily to tyranny, vice and greed in empire then how long was it before its corrupting impact attacked Britain’s cherished liberties at home?<sup>16</sup> Expressed most famously and forthrightly by Edmund Burke during the trial of Warren Hastings (1787-95), accusations that the nabobs relied upon extortion in their plunder of India’s wealth proliferated. Critics charged the EIC with neglecting its responsibilities to native peoples in pursuit of quick profit.<sup>17</sup> In 1784 the mounting spirit of disapproval was captured, in characteristically acerbic tones, by Horace Walpole who denounced the East India Company as ‘a nest of monsters...spawn of nabobs.’<sup>18</sup>



*'Count Roupee', 1797 – Paul Benfield (1741-1810), EIC official and later West Indian merchant (click on the image to go to BL's Digital Collections for more information).*

Subsequent government reforms in 1784 sought to eradicate the unrestrained acquisition of personal wealth by providing increased supervision of the EIC’s activities. Efforts at reform were enhanced by the appointment of Lord Cornwallis as Governor-General in 1786 and his successor Lord Richard Wellesley (1797-1805). Unlike Hastings before them, both were appointed from outside the EIC and were directly accountable to the government rather than the Court of Directors. It was their express objective to tackle corruption and establish stable government across British controlled India. Greater government supervision mitigated the worst of abuses and appeared to appease

<sup>14</sup> Lewis Namier & J. Brooke eds., *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1754-1790*, the members ‘East Indians’, available online at <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/survey/iii-members>

<sup>15</sup> Tillman Nechtman, *Nabobs: empire and identity in eighteenth-century Britain* (Cambridge, 2010), pp.76-77

<sup>16</sup> Peter Marshall, ‘Empire and authority in the later eighteenth century’, in Peter Marshall, *‘A free though conquering people’: eighteenth century Britain and its empire* (Aldershot, 2003), essay ii, 105-122

<sup>17</sup> Edmund Burke’s speech on Fox’s India Bill, *The writings and speeches of Edmund Burke*, volume V., p.380; Nicholas Dirks, *The scandal of empire: India and the creation of imperial Britain* (London, 2006), *passim*

<sup>18</sup> Horace Walpole to Sir Horace Mann, 30/3/1784, in Paget Toynbee ed., *The Letters of Horace Walpole: fourth Earl of Oxford, Volume 13*, (Oxford, 1905), p.138

many of the public's concerns. At the start of the nineteenth century only a few dissenting voices in Britain remained unconvinced that Britain's presence in India was positive for both the native population and British nation at large.

Although opportunities to accrue vast fortunes had been closed off, the 1780s and 90s reforms meant that a career in the EIC achieved fresh endorsement through its association with service to nation and 'civilisation', both concepts that flattered the ruling elite's proclaimed noblesse oblige. Even so, altruism alone was by no means the sole incentive to the post-1790 Company official. Lord Cornwallis greatly increased official salaries in the hope of curbing officials' zeal for supplementary profit. As such an EIC career presented as attractive a proposition for elite young men in 1800 as it had done thirty years earlier. It combined authority and adventure, with social cachet and financial reward. The principal points of entry into the EIC were either as a writer in the Company's civil service or as a cadet in its army. Other appointments were made for surgeons, chaplains, sailors in the navy and warehousemen, but in terms of numbers these never rivalled the army appointments and in status fell far below the prestigious civil service. Officials progressed up a well-defined hierarchy that could see them reach the highest rank of senior merchant within twelve years. From this position some were made members of the Governor's Council or appointed to senior judicial roles. Cadets processed through a similarly clearly laid-out hierarchy in the army. Promotion tended to be based upon seniority rather than merit, although being able to call on the support of people of influence could deliver lucrative rewards. Death rates amongst officials, and even more so for soldiers, were high. Disease, warfare and the climate took a heavy toll on Britons serving in India, and contributed to the representation of India as a deathscape amongst a domestic audience.<sup>19</sup> The memorials that were constructed to commemorate those who died overseas captured how the British conceived of their empire and imperial responsibilities; premature death was depicted as a sacrifice to empire, nation and family in the service of those less fortunate.



**Robert Clive, 1st Baron Plassey (1725-1774)**  
**Governor of Bengal (click on image to go to**  
**BL's Digital Collections for more information).**

Appointments were tightly controlled through the patronage system, with all recruits having to be nominated by a sitting director. Without access to persons of influence or a family association with the EIC it was increasingly difficult to obtain an appointment. The appointment system helps to explain why some families established such a long-lasting and self-perpetuating association with careers in India as '[m]en who had served in India sought election to the Directors and used their patronage to send their sons to India, who became Directors in their turn.'<sup>20</sup> Many EIC families also intermarried constructing complicated networks that supported family ambition within the

<sup>19</sup> David Arnold, *The tropics and the travelling gaze: India, landscape and science, 1800-1856* (Delhi, 2005), pp.41-61

<sup>20</sup> Peter Marshall, *East India fortunes: the British in Bengal in the eighteenth century* (Oxford, 1976), p.11



Company. Before 1740 recruits tended to come from a merchant background, reflecting the EIC's origins and priorities. There was a wide geographical spread across the United Kingdom in recruits' origins, with many Scots and Irish building successful careers in India. As the cachet of an EIC appointment swelled as the eighteenth century drew to a close, so the Company began to attract recruits from more eminent backgrounds, with a growing number of public school educated sons of the gentry seeking appointments.

Historians' attention has often been drawn to the striking continuity of a tradition of service over successive generations amongst leading Company families; however, this focus has distracted attention from the attraction of an EIC career amongst families who derived their wealth from the Caribbean. By the early 1800s a growing number of 'West Indians' were looking to obtain positions for their sons in the EIC. They used established networks that linked Britain and the Caribbean to lobby for EIC appointments. For instance the Barbados planter John Rycroft Best (1778-1852) relied on his former school friend and EIC director James Daniel to nominate his son. Daniel was also a member of the prominent Bristol West Indian merchant family who held mortgages on several of Best's plantations. Scandal in 1809 over the sale of appointments highlighted the price a writership could command among those without access to established EIC patronage networks. Director George Woodford Thellusson was disqualified in 1807 after it emerged several of the nominations he had passed onto business acquaintances had subsequently been sold for around £3000 each. A full Parliamentary enquiry was launched during which it emerged that Emperor Woodford, one of Thellusson's cousins and a man with connections to the Caribbean, had been hawking Thellusson's nominations to the highest bidder.<sup>21</sup>

By 1833 the East India Company's annual revenue surpassed £22 million. The EIC had become a force of governance, organising the bureaucracy and administration of India through a carefully structured civil service and maintaining order through a large, well-trained army. It comprised a substantial number of elite young men from Britain, and within its ranks counted many who had strong Caribbean connections.

### **What were the connections between the East India and the Caribbean?**

Connections between India and the Caribbean emerged in multiple forms and carved out numerous channels of colonial cooperation and communication. At present our understanding of many of these linkages remains superficial. It is perhaps helpful to identify some of the broad ways in which these connections can be conceived:

- i. Intra-generational: Families such as the Lushingtons, Wedderburns, Raikes and Hankeys constructed complex networks that spread across the globe and supported members in positions of influence in a range of diverse locations. It was common for

---

<sup>21</sup> Hansard 1809, Appendix No IV, Volume XIII, pp.cxxvi-clxxviii; see also Stephanie Seymour & Sheryllyne Haggerty, 'Slavery connections of Brodsworth Hall, 1600-c.1830', Report for English Heritage, 2010: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/slavery-connections-brodsworth-hall/slavery-connections-brodsworth-hall.pdf>

numerous relatives to be based across Britain, India and the Caribbean. The intricate networks that they supported facilitated the movement of capital, goods and individuals around the empire. For instance, Matthew Lushington (1808-39) followed family precedent by joining the EIC Army – his grandfather, great-uncle, brothers, uncle and numerous cousins all served in India. However, following a dishonourable discharge for ill-discipline he was sent to his father's estate in Jamaica. Similarly, his cousin William Lushington (1772-18??) left the EIC to join the West Indian merchant firm in which his father (also a retired EIC official) was a member. The family owned numerous plantations in Grenada and Mustique. These networks tended to be wide and complicated with subsequent marriages creating further connections between east and west.

- ii. Inter-generational: As abolition and then emancipation became increasingly likely during the first third of the nineteenth century, so more Caribbean families looked to relocate eastwards by obtaining employment for sons in the EIC, e.g. Udnys and Ricketts, or expanding business interests into India, e.g. the Gladstones. Rarely did this mean a complete abandonment of Caribbean interests, with officials in India often inheriting land and wealth from Caribbean holdings and sometimes slaves. Before 1800 this movement did not only operate in one direction, with several retuning EIC officials using their wealth to fund investment in the Caribbean e.g. the Oakeleys and Alexanders. After retiring from India, Claud Alexander (1752-1809; Paymaster-General of Bengal) and Sir Charles Oakeley (1751-1826; Governor of Madras, 1790-94) funded family members in West Indian business ventures [you can see their sons' claims for compensation after emancipation by clicking on the following links to the UCL *Legacies of British Slave-ownership* database: [Edward Oakeley](#); [Boyd Alexander](#)]. Wealth from India directly bolstered the Caribbean economy, whilst the movement of individuals from India into the West Indies was also facilitated through these networks.
- iii. Marriage: Marriage connections between India and the Caribbean can be hard to pinpoint, often because they took place in Britain where few explicit references to the origin of family wealth were recorded in marriage registers. Nevertheless, marriages between EIC families and their Caribbean counterparts were common and provided a crucial means of amalgamating wealth from across the globe and expanding access to opportunities into new areas, e.g. Sir John Shore (Governor-General, 1793-97) married Charlotte Cornish, from a prominent Devon family with long connections to the Caribbean. Once these connections had been established they provided future generations with access to career opportunities across the empire. For example, Henry Lushington (1775-1863) – son of EIC director Sir Stephen Lushington (1744-1807) – married Fanny Maria Lewis (1777-1862), daughter of a major Jamaican plantation owner and sister of the Gothic novelist and MP Matthew 'Monk' Lewis (1775-1818). Matthew Lewis left the family estates in Jamaica to his two sisters (the second of whom had also married into a family with

Caribbean and EIC connections, the Sewells). As a result, Henry Lushington modelled himself as a 'Jamaican planter' despite not residing there. As mentioned above, the couple's sons followed family tradition by dispersing across the globe to both India and the Caribbean. Several others in the Lushington family also gained Caribbean connections and resources through marriage. These included links to slave owning families such as the Bolderos, Hibberts and Gascoynes. The British Library's collections contain an excellent example of how these connections were negotiated and formed in the shape of the marriage settlement of Jamaican plantation owner George Poyntz Ricketts (1749-1800) and Sophia Watts (1753-1830), daughter of the nabob William Watts (1722-64). This shows the transfer of money between the families and also how wealth was repatriated to Britain from India and then transmitted into a Caribbean economy [Add MS 38472/85, 106-108]. Access to sources of Indian wealth became crucial to the development of George Poyntz Ricketts' Caribbean plantation and improvement of his estate in Britain.

- iv. Patronage: Patronage was crucial to gaining an appointment in the EIC and was often controlled by wealthy, landed elites who had established themselves at the heart of British power. Many with West Indian interests would subsequently serve as patrons for EIC appointments, either through having been appointed to the EIC Board of Directors or because of a wider influence as landowners or MPs. All EIC candidates for writerships or cadetships had to be nominated by a sitting Company director, many of whom had concurrent West Indian and East Indian business interests. This information is listed on the submission forms held in the India Office Records [see below for more information] and can be used to construct a better understanding of patronage networks. For example, Sir William Johnstone MP (1729-1805) had significant family interests in the Caribbean – his grandson appearing in the *Legacies of British Slave-ownership* database as a major claimant – as well as being a significant landowner in Dumfriesshire. He used his influence to obtain appointments in the EIC for four sons of his neighbour George Malcolm (1729-1803). Despite the Malcolm family's origins as small-scale Scottish farmers the sons went on to establish themselves as a major EIC dynasty thanks initially to having access to Johnstone's patronage.<sup>22</sup>
- v. Money: Capital moved between India, Britain and the Caribbean in considerable quantities. Several individuals and firms operated simultaneously in both spheres, constructing expansive business networks that allowed them to build a global investment portfolio. London merchants often functioned as the nexus between East Indian and Caribbean trade, investing heavily in both and using their wealth to support a range of business activity. For example, both the Lushingtons and Barings operated at the centre of a network of global investment, moving money around the empire whilst also supporting family members in India and the Caribbean. Other

---

<sup>22</sup> Emma Rothschild, *The inner life of empires: an eighteenth-century history* (Princeton NJ, 2011), *passim*

merchant houses based in India such as Palmer, Mackillop, Cockerell, Defell and Ashburner also had connections to the Caribbean or were heavily involved in the Indian Ocean slave economy centred upon Mauritius and Bombay. It can be particularly difficult to track the movement of capital and goods; however, the EIC's accounting records represent a good place to start [Series IOR/L/AG].

### **Researching Caribbean and East Indian connections in the British Library Collections and beyond**

- [Getting started](#) – online resources to help focus your research (pp.12-17)
- [Into the British Library's Collections](#):
  - o Asian and African Studies and India Office Records (pp.17-23)
    - [Open shelf material](#)
    - [India Office Records](#)
    - [Other BL material relating to the East India Company](#)
  - o The Caribbean Collections (pp.23-25)
    - [Genealogical guides & almanacs](#)
    - [Caribbean Manuscript Collections](#)
- [Electronic resources available through the British Library](#) (pp.26-28)

#### **i. Getting started**

Before you begin to explore the collections it can be incredibly helpful and time saving to narrow your search through websites and electronic databases. Although many genealogical sites require a fee there are several excellent free database sites that offer valuable initial information. The British Library's electronic resources are of huge help and can be accessed from any computer in the reading rooms, whilst some of the resources listed below are freely available.

##### **a. The British Library India Office Family History Search**

This online database provides a quick and accessible way to search hundreds of thousands of records regarding those who served in India from 1600-1948.

The database that you are able to search includes:

- 300,000 births, baptisms, marriages, deaths and burials in the India Office Records – although this represents only a small part of the British Library's total biographical sources for those who served in India.
- Biographical notes for mainly British and European people in India c.1600-1949.
- Biographical notes for people in other countries connected with the history of the British in India.

A quick search of the database will reveal that several hundred of those who served in India were born in the Caribbean, with the majority joining the East India Company before 1850. Although this is by no means comprehensive in terms of the total number of EIC recruits who had Caribbean connections, it does provide an important point of access to establish family heritage and biographical trajectory.

The website is free to use and accessible anywhere: you do not have to be in the British Library to search it. More information about what is included and how to use it is included on the website: <http://indiafamily.bl.uk/UI/Home.aspx>

b. British Library Online Catalogue – Explore the British Library (Explore)

With Explore the British Library you can search, view and order items from the Library's main catalogue of nearly 57 million records, or search the contents of the Library's website. Explore the British Library searches nearly 57 million items:

- Circa 14 million records for the Library's holdings of books, journals, newspapers, conferences, maps, scores etc.
- 37 million journal article records, from our electronic table of contents system
- Thousands of records for British Library web pages
- 5 million records of Library's Sound Archive items
- Web Archive links (freely available on the web)
- Thousands of electronic journal and book records and hundreds of database records (most subscribed; some freely available on the web)
- More than 450 Research datasets records (freely available on the web)
- BNB records, for items held in the British Library collection.
- Records for Trade Literature collected since mid-1980s. Our website provides details of our earlier trade literature collection.

The search option allows you to search a combination of words (e.g. Jamaica, India) and will bring up all records that contain this reference. In navigating such a large collection this electronic tool can be hugely useful in focussing your research and suggesting new leads that would not emerge from the hand catalogues. Explore can be freely accessed freely from any computer, you do not need to be in the British Library to use it: [Explore the British Library](#)

c. Legacies of British Slave Ownership Database

This extensive new online resource provides the first comprehensive coverage of those who claimed compensation for loss of property from the British Government upon emancipation in 1833. Over 40,000 individuals spread across Britain, the Caribbean, Mauritius and the Cape claimed part of the £20 million of public money that was allocated for compensation. None of the enslaved were entitled to

compensation, and subsequently do not appear on the database. However, the second phase of this UCL based project seeks to establish a chronology of plantation ownership in the Caribbean from 1750 to 1840 and intends to include far more information on those who were enslaved.

The database includes the names of all who appeared in the compensation records, the originals of which are held at the National Archives, Kew. Each entry details the value of the claim, its location and the number of enslaved who were claimed for. In addition it has a comprehensive and ever growing amount of biographical information of each claimant. In a cache of some 40,000 names this is inevitably an on-going process and one that means the information for some is far greater than others, but also one to which your research can help contribute. The project is keen to hear of anything that you may find and will add seek to add any information shared to the database.

Importantly, in the context of India/Caribbean connections, the database displays the 'imperial legacies' of compensation claimants, flagging up where those who were active in the Caribbean also had links to India. While this is not at present definitive, it again provides an excellent point of access to identify potential east/west connections: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/>

d. The National Archives

The National Archives holds key documents relating to the British state and government. Its Documents Online facility provides access to scanned copies of, for example, naval records and English wills. There are many online catalogues and finding aids: [www.nationalarchive.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchive.gov.uk)

The National Archives holds large amounts of material specifically relating to British involvement in the Caribbean. Some of this is available online, alongside several digital exhibitions covering various aspects of Caribbean history. The National Archives has also produced a range of finding aids specifically relating to the Caribbean and slavery, as well as a printed guide to their: Guy Grannum, *Tracing Your Caribbean Ancestors* (London, 2012).

More information on researching navigating the National Archives' Caribbean and slavery collections can be found at: [Colonial histories](#); [Slavery and the slave trade](#)

e. East India Company at Home Project

This major UCL based research project offers a series of online, interlinked case studies (of people, objects and homes in England, Scotland and Wales), which interrogate the acquisition, use, meaning and circulation of Asian luxury goods within British country houses during the hundred years between 1757-1857. The

case studies explore the position of returning people, wealth and objects from India within their wider social, cultural, political and economic contexts. This offers an insight into the late eighteenth-century processes of family formation and reproduction, the creation and maintenance of trade networks, and the operation of political and military systems (for example, through webs of patronage).

The project has explicitly sought to integrate academic and museum-based research on the global genealogies of British country house interiors with research findings generated by amateur local and family historians. Much of this research is freely available on the website, along with bibliographical tools for the study of Anglo-Indian culture at home in Georgian and early Victorian Britain, and a searchable online database of the houses, individuals and objects considered: <http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/eicah/home/>

f. Ancestry – Slave Registers

Ancestry is a commercial site and cannot be accessed from the British Library without your own private membership. However, it does include one vital resource in establishing connections between India and the Caribbean in the shape of several hundred of the slave-registers for British Caribbean plantations. Established initially in Trinidad in 1812, by 1817 all Caribbean colonies were expected to return a triennial record of all slaves owned in the colony. These are generally organised by estate, listed owners, managers and the names, race and age of the enslaved. The registers can be searched electronically and offer a valuable resource when trying to expand information on an individual's Caribbean interests. In addition, Ancestry also includes a huge amount of genealogical information from British sources that is invaluable in building a fuller picture of an individual's life picture. Although much of the content on Ancestry requires a fee to access, the Slave Registers are available to search free of charge: <http://www.ancestry.co.uk/>

g. Families in British India Society (FIBIS)

FIBIS is an organisation devoted facilitating research into family histories connected with British India and the background against which these people led their lives. Its resources cover the period 1600-c.1947, taking in both the East India Company and Raj (Crown control) periods. Although the focus is entirely upon India, not the Caribbean, much useful information can be garnered that will help to fill in the jigsaw of east/west connections. The Society's free resources include:

- Search a database of more than 1,017,000 individual names (FIBIS database)
- Find out more about the lives your ancestors lived (fibiwiki)
- Keep up-to-date with the latest news in the world of British India Family History by following our blog

Paid membership offers more options, including:

- Connect with other people searching for your ancestors using the FIBIS Social network (members area)
- Learn more about researching British India with beginner to expert guides (FIBIS Research and FIBIS Books)

The Society seeks to provide help and advice on researching it both in England and abroad, and all EIC stations, including those outside the Indian sub-continent. Its journal is available in the Asian and African Studies Reading Room at the BL and the website contains much more information: <http://www.new.fibis.org/>

h. Find My Past

The British Library will be launching online resources for family history in partnership with findmypast.co.uk. The large-scale digitisation will include returns of baptisms, marriages and burials from the archives of the East India Company and the India Office together with applications for civil and military service: <http://www.findmypast.co.uk/>

i. Burke's Peerage

A genealogy of the British aristocracy and landed gentry. The detailed family trees that these editions contain are invaluable in making connections between India and the Caribbean. They explicitly highlight how connections were made and the complexity of many families' involvement across empire. They are also revealing in what they omit. Rarely do you find illegitimate or mixed race children listed in Burke's despite their prevalence in families living across empire. Encounters in empire had the potential to radically redraw the lines of family structure that Burke so explicitly celebrates, uncovering these provide an important means of understanding how empire impacted on family identity and had the potential to radically alter the structures that were considered to be the foundation of the nation. Even so, for what it includes Burke's is a vital starting point for research into connection between India and the Caribbean: <http://www.burkespeerage.com/>

j. Access to Archives (A2A)

Part of the UK archives network, A2A provides a search tool for access to the online catalogues of many local and national archives in England and Wales. The material, which includes information on persons, places and things, dates from the 8<sup>th</sup> century to the present. The Advanced Search allows you to search by repository and to limit your search by date. This is a wonderful resource, but it's important to remember that it is not fully comprehensive—and due to funding cuts, new information is no longer added to this database: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/)



k. National Register of Archives

This is a key source if you are searching for archival material on notable people in England's past. It can be searched by name or place name, and there is also a family and estate index. The site provides good links to the local and national archives in which materials are held: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nra/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nra/)

l. FamilySearch

FamilySearch is a free online genealogical resource provided by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with indexes, transcripts and digitised images of family history sources worldwide. There are many thousands of entries based on information taken from the India Office Records returns of baptisms, marriages and burials: <https://familysearch.org/>

m. London Lives

London Lives makes available, in a fully digitised and searchable form, a wide range of primary sources about eighteenth-century London, with a particular focus on plebeian Londoners. This resource includes over 240,000 manuscript and printed pages from eight London archives and is supplemented by fifteen datasets created by other projects. It provides access to historical records containing over 3.35 million name instances. Facilities are provided to allow users to link together records relating to the same individual, and to compile biographies of the best documented individuals: <http://www.londonlives.org/index.jsp>

n. National Archives of Scotland

The archive includes manuscript records of Scottish history from the 12th century to the present. In addition to the online catalogues of its own collections, the website hosts useful finding aids such as the *National Register of Archives for Scotland*, a database of private collections of historical materials. The catalogues are particularly useful if you are researching the links between Scottish families, the East India Company and the Caribbean: [www.nas.gov.uk](http://www.nas.gov.uk)

o. National Library of Scotland

The National Library of Scotland offers a wide range of online resources on Scottish and family history (including the history of Scots abroad). These resources include online bibliographies and maps, which again are of particular use to those researching Scottish engagement with India and the Caribbean: [www.nls.gov.uk](http://www.nls.gov.uk)

p. National Library of Wales

Available in both English and Welsh language editions, this resource provides material relevant to Welsh biography, family history and online versions of wills, among other offerings. The Library holds over 65,000 Welsh portraits, some of which can be accessed via its 'Digital Mirror'. This is of particular use to those interested in the connections between Welsh families, India and the Caribbean: [www.llgc.org.uk](http://www.llgc.org.uk)

q. National Maritime Museum

This collection includes print-based and archival materials as well as many objects associated with Britain's maritime and imperial histories. Two of the museum's major exhibitions consider British trade with Asia and the Atlantic world and slavery. Online versions of these are available. The online catalogues of documents and objects are searchable: [www.nmm.ac.uk](http://www.nmm.ac.uk)

### Into the British Library's collections

The British Library collections are divided in a way that does not automatically appear to connect India and the Caribbean. However, by using a combination of Explore, printed material held in the BL's collections and manuscript records much can be garnered regarding the links between east and west.

a. Asian and African Studies

The papers of the East India Company and India Office can be consulted in the Asian & African Studies Reading Room. They have been extensively catalogued and the reference staff are hugely knowledgeable and unfailingly supportive in helping readers navigate the collection, so it is worth consulting them on how to narrow down your search. A comprehensive guide to using the records can be found on the India Office Collections website, which also provides an excellent introduction to consulting the records: [India Office Records](#)

#### **1. Open Shelf Material**

The Asian and African Reading Room has a wealth of open shelf material that offers a quick and accessible way to identify individuals and chart the trajectory of their careers. These resources include:

- *India Office Library and Records: A Brief Guide to Biographical Sources* – Ian Baxter, (London, 1979; second edition, 1990)

An essential starting point for research in the India Office Records (IOR). It provides invaluable guidance on exactly

where biographical records can be located throughout the IOR for more than forty different categories of people, as well as providing a bibliography of published sources. Very usefully, the volume also includes a glossary of terms used in the administration of British India.

- **India Office Lists**  
From the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century these were published yearly and include the names of all those serving in India, the Presidency to which they were appointed and rank. The lists are divided by Presidencies and show both civil and military appointments. They also include a list of private merchants and firms operating in India.

- **Memorials of Old Haileybury College**  
Lists all those who attended the East India College at Haileybury between 1806 and 1857. It lists each individual's college prizes, final appointment, date of retirement and death where known.

The introduction also provides a history of the college and East India Company structure, as well as a list of East India Company Directors from 1800-1857.

- **Lists of EIC Shareholders**  
Although this information is also included in the annual India Office lists, these three volumes provide a revealing insight into all those who held EIC shares in 1795, 1806 and 1838.

Although no direct links can be drawn from the lists regarding Caribbean connections they are invaluable in terms of cross-checking whether individuals with Caribbean investments were also investing in India.

- **Presidency records of Service**  
Bengal  
Madras  
Bombay

These provide a complete career profile for all EIC civil servants who served in a particular Presidency. The Madras edition also includes a complete list of EIC Directors and Chairman from 1708 to 1858.

- **Presidency Gazettes**  
Each Presidency published an annual gazette containing information on postings of officers in the civil service and army. They also include more detailed information on private companies and merchants operating in each presidency, particularly regarding main business interests and partners.
- *Directors of the East India Company 1754-90* – James Gordon Parker, PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1977 (OIR 354.5.P)  
Links between India and the Caribbean were often forged through investment and trade. The directors of the EIC were based in London and comprised a combination of former officials and City merchants. Many had business interests in both India and the Caribbean, with this comprehensive study giving a profile of each director. It is very helpful in suggesting potential connections and for directing subsequent searches of the catalogues.
- *Bengal Obituary* (Calcutta, 1848)  
A compilation of tablets and monumental inscriptions from various parts of the Bengal and Agra Presidencies. Also includes biographical sketches and memoirs of eminent persons in British India from the early 18th century to 1848. The website should contain full transcriptions of the entries in the book. The British Library shelf-mark is OIR.929.5. Also available online: [Bengal Obituary](#)

## 2. India Office Records

Once you have pinpointed an individual's presidency and role, you should consult the comprehensive India Office indexes of each series of records that will allow you to identify the primary sources regarding their service. The composition of the records can be found on the IOR website outlining the content of each series: [India Office Records - Series Summaries](#)

In terms of identifying and exploring potential links to the Caribbean the most useful series are as follows:

### IOR/J&K: East India College, Haileybury, Records, and Records of other institutions 1749-1925

The Haileybury records relate to the recruitment and training of the Company's writers and civil servants at the East India College, Haileybury (1806-1857), and include earlier recruitment records from 1749 onwards. The records of other institutions are those of: Addiscombe Military Seminary, which trained cadets for the artillery and engineer branches of the Company's armies (1809-1861); Pembroke House and Ealing Lunatic Asylums, which took care of Company and India Office servants who were certified insane while serving in India (1830-1892); and the Royal Indian Engineering College, which trained entrants to the Public Works Departments of the Government of India (1869-1925). A catalogue has been published: A.J. Farrington, *The records of the East India College, Haileybury, & other institutions* (London, 1976).

The submissions for appointment that all candidates had to present include important information on the lines of patronage that facilitated an appointment and family background. Most submissions include the name of the nominating EIC Director, the candidate's baptism and education records, and often father's name.

Following a series of scandals over the selling of appointments in the early 1800s more information was demanded of an applicant, including a brief examination that required information on father's profession, relationship to the patron and whether any money had been exchanged in the procuring of a nomination. The nominating director was also required to state his relationship to the candidate's family and reason for granting the nomination, as well as stating whether he was doing so on behalf of someone else.

IOR/L/MAR: Marine Records

These records cover the organisation and operations of the Company's maritime service, the Bombay Marine, the Indian Navy and the Bengal Pilot Service. Besides administrative papers (chiefly surviving papers of the Company's Committee of Shipping and Marine Branch for the years 1803-04 and 1813-34) the bulk of the records consist of the official journals and log-books kept by the commanders of ships employed in the Company's service, a series which was maintained until the withdrawal of the Company's shipping monopoly in 1833.

The hand-list for the ship journals and logs can be searched by ship, owner, ship's officers or annual sailing season, thus giving an invaluable insight into the merchant connections that linked India and Britain. In turn, these may raise connections also with the Caribbean by showing which merchants had invested in both areas. For instance, it is possible to see that William Lushington owned the 'Canton', which undertook six voyages from London to India and China between 1790 and 1804. During the same period he was also investing heavily in West Indian estates and had established a London based firm of West Indian merchants, as well as acting as Parliamentary agent for Antigua from 1795 until 1815.

IOR/L/MIL/9: India Office: Military Department Records 1708-1959

The L/MIL series contains the whole spectrum of military affairs both of the East India Company's armies and of the armies of the Government of India. Much information can be garnered on the backgrounds and careers of those who entered the EIC's army, including potential links the Caribbean.

The L/MIL/9 series contains all cadets' submissions (the equivalent of writers' submissions for the civil service) and again includes important family and background information, including parents' names, baptism records and the nominating director.

IOR/L/AG: India Office: Accountant-General's Records c1601-1974

The Accountant-General's Department dealt with the comprehensive and systematic recording of receipts and disbursements by the Company and the India Office, with the staff of the home establishment and their salaries, with the estates and wills of persons dying in India, and with the leave and furlough pay and pensions of members of the Indian civil and military services.

Among financial activities peculiar to the Company period are the ledgers of the early joint-stock voyages and the registers of Company stockholding and stock transfers. The records reflect almost all the functions of the Company and the India Office, and also include the records of the London offices of various Indian railways, irrigation and canal companies

Detailed indexes of the wills, inventories and administrations – giving name, year of death and presidency – are available in the reading room to help focus research. Early wills and inventories are particularly revealing with regards the wealth and domestic status of EIC officers.<sup>23</sup> Wills demonstrate how wealth accrued in India was passed on and repatriated to Britain, and amongst families with Caribbean connections was made available for re-investment. Some inventories contain valuable lists of an individual's possessions. Particularly, revealing is the presence of domestic slaves being bequeathed in wills and listed in inventories as personal property. This information is invaluable in charting the presence and practices of slavery on the sub-continent and can provide clues to its importance in shaping white family status.<sup>24</sup>

#### IOR/N: Returns of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials 1698-1969

Returns of baptisms, marriages and burials, relating mainly to European and Eurasian Christians in India, Burma and other areas administrated by the East India Company and the Government of India. The returns were transmitted by chaplains and ministers to the Government of India, and thence to the India Office, primarily for record purposes. Apart from the series for the three Indian presidencies (Bengal 1713-1948; Madras 1698-1948, and Bombay, 1709-1948), there are returns for St Helena (1767-1835), Fort Marlborough (1759-1825), Penang (1799-1829), Macao and Whampoa (1820-1833), Burma (1937-1957), India and Pakistan (1949-1968), Kuwait (1937-1961), and Aden (1840-1969). Copies of the contemporary indexes and microfilm of many of the registers are available on open access in the Reading Room.

---

<sup>23</sup> See also Margot Finn's 'Colonial Possessions: Personal Property and Social Identity in British India' project report, which undertook a database analysis of over 1,000 wills from Britons in late 18<sup>th</sup> century India. The report also offers a summary of the findings, analysis of the data from the wills, a glossary of key terms and notes on the cultural context of late eighteenth century British India. A PDF of the report can be downloaded at the bottom of the page: [Colonial Possessions: Personal Property and Social Identity in British India Project Report](#)

<sup>24</sup> Margot Finn, 'Slaves out of context: domestic slavery and the Anglo-Indian family, c.1780-1830', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Volume 19/December 2009, 181-203

### IOR/O: Biographical Series 1702-1948

Various series and compilations of a biographical nature, which do not fall into the main archive classes, are brought together here: bonds, agreements and warrants for civil servants and other residents in India; records relating to Europeans in India; and "personal records" compilations made at East India House.

### **3. Other material relating to the EIC in the British Library's Collections**

#### Indentured Labour

Emancipation of plantation slaves in 1833 created a new demand for cheap and plentiful labour. The subsequent movement of some 500,000 people from India and China to the Caribbean represents one of the largest migrations of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and created an entirely new order of east/west connections.<sup>25</sup> The IOR holds substantial material detailing this movement and an excellent online research guide that gives a comprehensive historical background and a detailed guide to navigating the material: [Guide to researching Indians overseas](#)

Other items of interest to research into indentured labourers are an 1805 EIC plan to transport Chinese labourers to Trinidad [Add MS 13879/42]; as well as several printed sources including John Scoble, *Hill Coolies, exposure of deplorable conditions in British Guiana* (1842), which can be ordered from Explore.

#### The India Office Private Papers

These comprise about 300 collections and over 3000 smaller deposits of papers relating primarily to the British experience in India. Though often including papers similar to or complementing the much more extensive official archives of the India Office Records, the Private Papers are distinguished from the Records by their provenance from private sources. The papers include letters, diaries, memoirs, and documents of every type, which give an insight into both official responsibilities and a more intimate window into the private lives of Britons living and working in India. The collection can be searched either online through the BL's [online catalogue of archives and manuscripts](#) or through the hand-lists available in the Asian and African Studies Reading Room.

---

<sup>25</sup> James Walvin, *Black ivory: slavery in the British Empire, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* (London, 2001), p.281



*People and Places: A guide to materials relating to India at the British Library Western Manuscripts Collections – Dorota Walker (2011)*

This guide covers all India-related material in the rest of the British Library's (non IOR) manuscript collections. Since the guide was written Western Manuscripts have been renamed Historical Papers; however, the comprehensive index is now available online as a searchable PDF [India Office family records page](#).

**b. Caribbean Collections**

The British Library's Caribbean collections are spread across the Manuscripts and Rare Book collections. As the collection is spread more diffusely than the India Office records across the British Library's collections it is harder to pin down specific series that will be of especial use in establishing initial connections; however, the following may well be of help:

Genealogies

- *Genealogies of Barbados Families*, James C. Brandow (1983) – see [Google Books](#)
- *Freedmen of Barbados: names and notes for genealogical and family history research*, compiled by Jerome S. Handler, Ronald Hughes and Ernest M. Wiltshire (BL Catalogue UIN BLL01010520719).

Island Almanacs

A few islands produced yearly almanacs that included valuable information on residents, officials, trade and plantation ownership. Although detailed information is limited these can provide an excellent source to check if an individual was resident in the Caribbean and their position within island society. Almanacs for the following islands are available:

Jamaica

- *An Almanack and register for Jamaica, 1776* (BL Catalogue UIN BLL01001147447)
- *The New Jamaica Almanack and Register – 1787-1805* (BL Catalogue UIN BLL01001151284)

Tobago

- *"An Almanack for the Island of Tobago", 1810* (Manuscript Catalogue reference: Stowe MS 923)
- *Tobago Almanak & Kalendar, 1810* (Manuscript Catalogue reference: Stowe MS 923)

**Caribbean Manuscript Collections**

The Caribbean collections contain a range of personal papers, maps and images that can help illuminate an individual's involvement in both the West Indies and India.

**K.E. Ingram, *Manuscript sources for the history of the West Indies* (Open Shelf Manuscripts Room, MSS 980)**

This represents the most comprehensive list of archived personal papers relating to British involvement in the Caribbean. Although it is not specific to the British Library, listing collections across the world, it is sorted by collection location and includes a large section on the BL's holdings. It is incredibly helpful in providing a summary of what is held and identifying individuals who were involved in slave and plantation ownership. Published in 2000 it does not include any more recent acquisitions and thus does not provide an all-inclusive catalogue of the BL's material.

**Index of Manuscripts in the British Library, 10 vols (Open Shelf Manuscripts Room)**

Held on open shelf in the Manuscripts Room this gives a complete list of all individuals who appear in the British Library's collections, including collection, reference and folio number. No additional information on content is provided but this can be a very useful resource to scope the range of individuals who appear in the BL's catalogue and as an excellent tool to cross-reference with Ingrams. The information included in the printed edition is available through Explore.

*N.B. The British Library is currently preparing a more detailed bibliography on its Caribbean holdings, which is pending during 2013.*

## **Electronic resources available through the British Library**

### 1. Times Online

The British Library subscribes to *The Times* online digital archive, which can be accessed from all public terminals in the reading rooms. This archive includes digital copies of every edition of *The Times* from 1785-1983 and can be electronically searched for words, phrases or names. To add specificity your search can be refined by date and article type.

*The Times* database is a fantastic resource to search for family intelligence (such as births, marriages or deaths), public honours, business reports or Parliamentary debates, all of which might suggest connection between India and the Caribbean.

### 2. London Gazette

The London Gazette is London's oldest newspaper and is freely searchable through its electronic archive. It contains information on investments, bankruptcies, military promotions, official news and much more, making it invaluable in piecing together the connections that linked India and the Caribbean. A more comprehensive account of the Gazette's content and its history is available on the [website](#).

### 3. The History of Parliament

Another free and hugely rich resource. The History of Parliament website contains biographies of all MPs who served from 1386-1832. These include their family backgrounds, business interests, properties, and career biographies, as well as containing important source references for future research. Many East India officials and Caribbean planters returned to Britain and purchased seats in Parliament. The History of Parliament provides a fantastic insight into the types of men who entered Parliament after careers overseas and their priorities once in office. The biographies are also useful in revealing important connections between those who served in India and the Caribbean: [History of Parliament](#) (it is also available in published form in several of the BL's reading rooms).

### 4. Oxford Dictionary of Biography Online

The electronic version of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* offers biographies of more than 58,500 men and women who died in or before the year 2009. Many of the leading figures who served in India or made fortunes in the Caribbean have entries, written by leading historians. All biographies also include a guide to secondary reading and manuscript collections. In addition, the online version offers 502 'Theme' articles for reference and research, several of which reference India and the Caribbean.

This is a subscription website so, unless you are a subscriber, is only available from the BL's reading room terminals. It is fully searchable either by name or word: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/>

5. Burney Collection Online – 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> Century Newspapers

This provides access to the newspaper collection of the Reverend Dr Charles Burney, acquired by the British Museum following his death in 1817. The Burney Newspapers comprise the most comprehensive collection of early English newspapers anywhere in the world, providing an unparalleled resource for students and researchers. Newspapers are among the most ephemeral productions of the printing press, and digitisation reveals the immense range of this unique collection, while making its content fully accessible for the first time.

The present digital collection, that helps chart the development of the concept of 'news' and 'newspapers' and the "free press", totals almost 1 million pages and contains approximately 1,270 titles. Many of the Burney newspapers are well known, but many pamphlets and broadsides also included have remained largely hidden. Newly digitized, all Burney treasures are now fully text-searchable in Gale Digital Collection: [Burney Collection Online](#)

6. Digital Library of the Caribbean

This free resource provides access to newspapers, archives of Caribbean leaders and governments, official documents, documentation and numeric data for ecosystems, scientific scholarship, historic and contemporary maps, oral and popular histories, travel accounts, literature and poetry, musical expressions, and artefacts: <http://www.dloc.com/>

It includes a huge amount of intelligence on those who lived or owned plantations in the Caribbean and can be used to help construct family trajectories. Of particular use is *Caribbeana*, a miscellany of news and information published by the British during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: [Caribbeana](#)

7. British Newspaper Archive

The British Library has recently launched a fantastic new database in partnership with Brightsolid online publishing to digitise up to 40 million newspaper pages from the British Library's vast collection over the next 10 years. The British Library's newspaper collections are among the finest in the world, containing most of the runs of newspapers published in the UK since 1800. The first stage of this project focuses on runs published before 1900 and will include titles from cities such as Birmingham, Derby, Manchester, Nottingham, Norwich, Leeds and

York, along with local titles from London boroughs. Newspapers which aimed for county circulation - from Staffordshire to Sussex - will also feature prominently, providing an unrivalled picture of provincial life spanning the whole of the 19th century: <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>

The database allows you to search:

News Articles - read about national events, as well as issues of local and regional importance. News articles are your window into daily life in historical Britain.

Family Notices - search for your family's birth, marriage and death notices plus related announcements including engagements, anniversaries, birthdays and congratulations.

Letters - read letters to the editor written by the newspaper's readers, including illuminating contemporary debates, aspirations and anxieties.

Obituaries view a wealth of contemporary information on the lives of notable individuals and ancestors.

Advertisements - these include classifieds, shipping notices and appointments. Illustrations - see photographs, engravings, graphics, maps and editorial cartoons.

This resource requires payment to use. The newspapers are available to subscribers to findmypast and freely accessible in the British Library.

8. [archive.org](http://archive.org)

The Internet Archive is non-profit digital library of Internet sites and other cultural artefacts in digital form. Like a paper library, it provides free access to researchers, historians, scholars and the general public. The archive contains many contemporary publications relating to India and the Caribbean and can be electronically searched: <http://archive.org/>

9. [Jamaican Family Search](http://jamaicanfamilysearch.com/)

An online genealogy library aimed at those researching their family history in Jamaica, especially before the period before 1920. The site contains transcriptions of various documents, including nineteenth century Jamaica Almanacs (which list property owners and civil and military officials), Jamaica Directories for 1878, 1891 and 1910, extractions from Jamaican Church records, Civil Registration, Wills, Jewish records, and excerpts from newspapers, books, and other documents. There is information on immigration and on slavery: <http://jamaicanfamilysearch.com/>

### **Case Study: The Martins – tracking a West Indian plantation owning family to India through the British Library’s collections**

Numerous family, trade and financial associations connected India and the Caribbean. More research needs to be undertaken to identify the full range of families who maintained a direct and simultaneous involvement in both the Atlantic and Indian Ocean world. However, early indications from the LBS Database suggest that these cross-associations were far more common and intricate than previous scholarship has recognised. The following case-study of the Martins represents just one of the many examples of the families who navigated the shifting and expanding imperial world of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The family offer an excellent illustration of how connections between the Caribbean, Britain and India can be explored through the British Library’s collections.

The Martin family were of Irish descent and first arrived in North America in the mid-1600s having fled Ireland after the defeat of the Royalists during the civil war [John Martin, ‘Samuel Martin’, ODNB – BL electronic resource]. Branches of the family spread across the Caribbean and the Carolinas, where many established profitable plantations. For the Martins, North America represented a realm of opportunity in which new identities could be forged and prospects cultivated. Like many others who left Europe during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the Martins did so as outsiders on the periphery of national identity. Their Royalist sympathies during the civil war meant they were excluded from the political nation and alienated from their lands. Empire offered the chance to remake their identity by securing wealth, land and status in a new arena, albeit at the expense of the lands and liberties of indigenous peoples. By the early nineteenth century the Martins’ experience across empire had established them at the centre of the British ruling elite. They procured wealth in the Caribbean as slave owners, political status as MPs in Britain, prominence in the Royal Navy, imperial authority in India and public recognition through landed titles. Over the course of 150 years the family’s identity had been utterly transformed from ostracised, peripatetic speculators operating on the periphery of empire to members of Britain’s imperial elite who stood at its very heart.

In the context of exploring Caribbean and Indian connections through the British Library’s collections it is the Martins of Green Castle estate Antigua who hold particular interest. The family papers form part of the Martin Papers [Add MS 41346-41475] in the British Library’s manuscripts collections.<sup>26</sup> They include letter books, wills, genealogical information, plantation information, all of which reveal the family relationships and structures that existed across time and space. They document how the traditional binary of separate public and private spheres was far more porous than historians often acknowledge, and was in many instances consciously subverted in order to further family prospects. Like many other successful Caribbean and EIC families, by 1800 the Martins of Antigua had spread across three continents, gaining prominence in politics, the Royal Navy, the East India Company and as plantation owners. The family papers give an intimate insight into the management of a plantation and slaves, the culture of the Caribbean planter elite and the challenges of maintaining relationships across vast geographical distances.<sup>27</sup> Letters circulated around the Atlantic world

<sup>26</sup> For an excellent summary and analysis of the family’s Caribbean situation see Natalie Zacek, *Guide to the microfilm edition of the papers of Samuel Martin, 1694/5-1776, relating to Antigua from the collections of the British Library* (2010): <http://www.microform.co.uk/guides/R71446.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Sarah Pearsall, *Atlantic families: lives and letters in the later eighteenth century* (Oxford, 2008), pp.28-55

between parents and children, siblings and kin. Although no correspondence to or from family members in India survives in the collection, it is clear from several references that news of those in the EIC disseminated through the family network to form an important element of collective identity.

Some of these gaps in the family's narrative can be filled through the India Office Records, which reveal the depth of involvement in the EIC. Patronage records, career summaries, marriage, death and birth records, along with official correspondence provide a detailed picture of the Martin family in India. Connecting these worlds can prove challenging. It is not always possible to ascertain from the archival sources how the family network was constructed and maintained but supplementing the family papers with other resources available in the British Library's collections, such as contemporary newspapers, periodicals and pamphlets, helps create a fuller picture. These can be further strengthened by the wealth of secondary literature that exists more broadly around British involvement in the Caribbean and India during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Where historians have looked specifically at the Martins they have tended to focus overwhelmingly upon their Caribbean context.<sup>28</sup> This has revealed important new understandings of how family relations were structured across the Atlantic world, as well as giving an insight into life on their Green Castle plantation. However, rarely has the family been situated in a broader global context that considers how connections between the Caribbean, Britain and India were constructed, sustained and deployed to further the family's prospects. Inevitably, using the archive to explore the dynamics of family life across three continents and through multiple generations is not straightforward. Nevertheless, the richness of the British Library's collections makes it possible to begin to unravel this fascinating and intricate global family history.



*Map of the island of Antigua (c.1732) by Herman Moll (click on the image to go to BL's Digital Galleries for more information).*

<sup>28</sup> Richard B. Sheridan, 'Samuel Martin, innovating sugar planter of Antigua 1750-1776', *Agricultural History*, 34:3 (1960), 126-139; Natalie Zacek, 'Cultivating Virtue: Samuel Martin and the paternal ideal in the eighteenth-century English West Indies', *Wadabagei: a Journal of the Caribbean and its Diasporas*, 10:3 (2007), 8-31

George Martin first arrived in what is now modern day Suriname in the 1650s, but following the Dutch invasion in 1667 his son, Samuel, migrated to Antigua, where British planters were just beginning to establish a permanent presence. Here he set-up a successful estate named Green Castle, in the west of the island [Figure 1 – [BL Online Galleries](#)]. Samuel went on to launch himself as a respected and prominent member of the island’s planter elite, serving as a colonel in the militia and Speaker of the Assembly. Samuel Martin’s reputation amongst his fellow planters did not spare him from a violent death. In 1701 he was murdered by a group of his slaves after he had tried to make them work on Christmas day; although other sources suggest that Martin’s murder was a result of his sexual exploitation of female slaves. Several slaves broke into the family house and hacked Martin to death with the same hoes used to cultivate the sugar cane. Martin’s corpse was left mutilated but his family escaped by hiding in neighbouring fields. His seven year old son and heir, also named Samuel, survived through the bravery of his nanny – who was enslaved – when she hid him from the attackers. She was later given her freedom in recognition of her courage [*Travel Journal of Sir Henry William Martin*, Add MS 74757/135].

After his father’s death the young Samuel Martin went to live with relatives in Ireland, leaving the estate in the control of other family members. His mother remarried Sir Edward Byam, Governor of the Leeward Islands, establishing a close and lasting connection to the Byam family [Rev. William Betham, *The Baronetage of England: Or The History of the English Baronets*, Vol. 4 (1804) – BL Explore reference, 000304909]. After attending Cambridge University, Samuel returned to Antigua where he married Frances Yeamans, the daughter of the attorney-general and Lieutenant Governor of the Leeward Islands. In 1728 the family left the island again to raise their family in England, relying on the profits from the plantation to support the comfortable lifestyle of the landed gentry. After the death of Frances in around 1730, Samuel married Sarah, widow of William Irish of Montserrat and daughter of Edward Wyke, lieutenant-governor of Montserrat. Samuel’s marriages show him to have been a well-connected and prominent member of planter society. Over both marriages Samuel Martin had a total of twenty-one children, of which only five survived. From his first marriage a son, also named Samuel, and a daughter, Henrietta; and from his second, three sons Henry, Josiah and William Byam [Add MS/41474/2].

Left in the hands of managers and attorneys for twenty years between 1728 and the late 1740s, Martin’s Green Castle estate suffered the same deterioration as many other absentee-owned plantations. Frustrated by falling profits Martin returned again to Antigua determined to undertake the management of the plantation himself. Improvements in cultivation techniques and the living conditions of his slaves, combined with investment in infrastructure helped Samuel Martin restore Green Castle to profitability. During these years Martin became increasingly concerned by the dissolute culture of Antigua’s white planter society. In an attempt to offer guidance he was motivated to write an essay on the good management of an estate, advocating a paternalistic approach towards one’s slaves, sobriety and dedication in attitude and careful management of finances – a combination that would reveal ‘the art of managing



[Accounts of Sugar and Rum from Estates of Samuel Martin, Antigua, 1756](#) (click on image to go to BL’s Digital Galleries for more information).



a sugar-plantation to the best advantage' [*An Essay upon Plantership, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1765* – BL Explore reference, 002401801]. Martin hoped that his advice would not merely improve production but more importantly mould men in the virtues of good character.<sup>29</sup> Although his advice did not always elicit the positive improvements he intended, in reputation Martin quickly established himself as the model planter with an estate to be envied [Richard Sheridan, *Sugar and slavery; an economic history of the British West Indies, 1623-1775* (1974), pp.200-203 – BL Explore reference, 013845287]. By 1767 he valued his estate as being worth £31,416 [Add MS 41353/82].

Although scholars have contrasted Martin's 'paternalistic approach' to his slaves with the more brutal tendencies of his contemporaries,<sup>30</sup> it is impossible to recreate the experience of the enslaved people on his estates or to gauge how far, if at all, it differed from the enslaved people on neighbouring estates. Martin did remain vehement that plantation owners should treat their slaves 'with humanity and benevolence, as our fellow creatures, created by the same Almighty hand, and under the same gracious providence, to whom the best and greatest of the human species owe their existence...' [Samuel Martin, *An essay on plantership*, p.1]. Even so, there is little to suggest that Martin conceived of his slaves as anything other than property possessed to increase the estate's profitability. Their lives never emerge into focus throughout the family correspondence, remaining as a constant but indistinct backdrop to the family's growing wealth and status. Only one small insight into the personal experience of the enslaved who lived and worked on Green Castle remains in the form of a letter from a freed slave. Cudjo Philip wrote to Samuel Martin's son in London, praising his 'most honourable master' who 'by his bounty the greatest blessing that Heaven can bestow on poor slave, tho' were so happy in that station, which is my freedom.' Trained as a carpenter Cudjo Phillip offered his continued services to the family, as well as requesting to be sent a 'present' that Martin had promised of shoes, a Russian coat and carpentry tools [Add MS 41353/97-98]. Even in its praise for Martin, Cudjo Philip's letter reveals the inescapable inequalities that delineated the relationship between owners, their slaves and those they 'deigned' to free. Rarely did Martin's slaves materialize beyond 'my negroes' in the regular correspondence with his children in England, which was far more likely to recount the effectiveness of his changes and improvements instituted on the estate [Martin Papers Add MS 41346-41348], as well as requesting substantial deliveries of crockery, sundries and even cheese and bacon [Add MS 41353/91]. Convinced that passing on the lessons of good management was the best way to ensure the plantation's continued success he frequently expressed the hope that one of his sons would assume the running of the estate upon his death [Samuel Martin Snr to Samuel Martin Jnr 25/6/1751, Add MS 41346/22].

---

<sup>29</sup> Natalie Zacek, 'Cultivating Virtue: Samuel Martin and the paternal ideal in the eighteenth-century English West Indies', pp.14-15

<sup>30</sup> Natalie Zacek, Introduction to *Guide to the microfilm edition of the papers of Samuel Martin, 1694/5-1776, relating to Antigua from the collections of the British Library*, p.8

The Martin family occupied a prominent and celebrated position within Antiguan society. Like his



*Estimate of the value of Samuel Martin's Sugar Plantation, 1768 (click on image to go to BL's Digital Galleries for more information).*

father before him, Martin served as Speaker of the Assembly and Colonel of the island's militia, being commended with warm gratitude by the Assembly upon his retirement [Add MS 41353/73-74]. His younger brother Josiah was also a member of the island's assembly and a plantation owner but he centred his business interests in New York, where he became a successful West Indian merchant. Despite their father's hopes, none of Samuel Martin's five surviving children returned permanently to Antigua. In 1768 Samuel Martin completed an inventory of his plantation in preparation for sale, lamenting that 'I am grown old, wishing to retire from the world, and no one of my children in all probability will reside here, I am willing to sell my whole property...' Martin listed 605 acres of land – 400 of which were cane lands – which he valued at £30 an acre; a large stone boiling house with twelve copper boilers, a curing house, 'a very large still house; two stone windmills, 2 leaden pumps and a large well – improvements that had cost him £10,000 to build; 217 'working negroes...at £45 per head', 28 'young negroes' at

£20 per head and 37 children at £5 per head. Slaves who had been trained as artisans and craftsmen commanded a higher price, whilst four 'elderly women' were valued at £20 per head. Following the inventory of his slaves, Martin listed livestock, slave living quarters and the stock of cane, all of which came to a total value of £44,333 but which he was willing to sell for £32,000 [Add MS 41353/84-86]. Ultimately, the plantation was not sold and was instead bequeathed to his eldest son Samuel upon his death in 1776 [Will of Samuel Martin snr, Add MS 41353/88-89].

Nevertheless, none of his sons undertook personal responsibility for managing the plantation. After three successive generations of direct involvement in the Caribbean plantation economy stretching back to the 1660s, Samuel Martin's children looked elsewhere in the empire to establish successful careers. This did not mean the dissolution of the family's Caribbean connections. Rather these were woven into a far wider network of opportunity, news and wealth that spanned India, Britain and North America [see for instance letter from Captain Nevill Parker of the EIC Army to Samuel Martin Jnr giving news of his brother in India and requesting Martin's patronage, 5/12/1766, Add MS 41353/104/106].

Samuel Martin's eldest son – also Samuel Martin – and heir became an MP and Deputy Agent for Antigua, Agent for Montserrat and for Nevis, in which role he was charged with protecting the island's interests in London and lobbying Parliament to grant various economic concessions [Samuel Martin, [History of Parliament](#)]. He later served as Secretary to the Treasury under Bute and then as Treasurer to the Princess of Wales, for which he was granted substantial pension. He was well acquainted with Hogarth, who painted his portrait, and fought a duel with John Wilkes. Even whilst his father was alive Samuel Jnr played an important role coordinating the family's management from London. He assumed the mantle of head of the family and was responsible for supporting, scolding and furthering the prospects of his extended family network. He organised his brothers' education and careers, and managed their finances whilst their father was in Antigua. He was his father's principal point of contact in England, and regularly received letters disclosing paternal concerns over

the younger children's prospects [Letter books of Samuel Martin Jnr, Add MS 41346-41348, 41353]. Although Samuel Martin Jnr never married he remained close to his siblings, nephews and nieces and upon his death bequeathed the plantation to his younger brother Henry.

Henry Martin entered the Royal Navy in 1751. After a slow start to his career, during which his father and brother worried about his prospects, Henry eventually rose to become Comptroller of the Navy in 1790 and was elected MP for Southampton in the same year. Although he made little impact as an MP, his successful naval career led to him being awarded the Baronetcy of Lockynge in 1794, also the year of his death [Sir Henry Martin Papers, Add MS 41364]. Professional success did not translate into personal wealth and Henry Martin died heavily indebted. Nevertheless, like his own father, Henry showed himself active and interested in shaping his children's career prospects. He had sought to obtain an East India appointment for his oldest son Samuel, but deferred to his wish to join the navy. Samuel's early death whilst serving in the Caribbean caused great sadness in the family and led to Sir Henry's title and the Green Castle plantation passing to his second son Henry William.

Despite inheriting his father's considerable debts, Henry William kept Green Castle and was also able to invest money in EIC shares [Proprietors of East India Stock, 1806 – Asian & African Reading Room, open shelf OIR.354.5]. In 1836-37 he visited Antigua for the first time in twenty years, taking his own son with him to see Green Castle. His trip included a whirl of social engagements and a tour of many of the Windward and Leeward Islands. He was impressed with his estate but showed no inclination to return permanently. Indeed, he appeared mildly surprised that his former slaves, by 1837 'apprentices', were 'a little refractory' with 'perhaps some twenty wanting more land tho they have all good gardens, more than sufficient. They said other estates gave more land and more pay and more advantages!! Well, I said, you are all free people! Therefore you had better give your month's notice and hire yourselves to those estates, but remember if you go, you must bring back very good characters or you will never be received here again'. Despite impressing himself with his reasoned argument and careful articulation of his beneficent nature, Sir Henry was disconcerted that his words had little effect. Instead, he was forced to resort to the more menacing discipline of his plantation manager who identified one 'elderly woman, who spoke for the rest' as a ringleader and ordered her to be taken before the magistrate to be punished with hard labour [Add MS 74757/97-99].



[Digging or Rather Hoeing the Cane Holes, Westerhall Estate, Antigua, William Clark, 1823 \(click on the image to go to the BL's Digital Galleries for more information\).](#)

The account of Henry William Martin's visit to the family plantation offers a valuable insight into the character of Caribbean society and attitudes of absentee landlords in the immediate aftermath of emancipation. His outlook highlights the sentimental detachment that many absentee owners had from the harsh daily challenges posed by life on the plantation. Sir Henry consistently praised the bountiful land, living quarters of former slaves and even the warm reception he received from many 'black labourers' [Add MS 74757/87]. There is a clear sense of pride at the fecundity of his lands and

an impression that his view of the family's former slaves was not dissimilar to that of an English landlord regarding his tenant farmers – a strain of paternalism of which his grandfather would have been proud.<sup>31</sup> However, his romanticised impression offers little sense of the more brutal reality. Even after the end of slavery coercion remained an important means of controlling newly emancipated 'apprentices', even whilst many living in Britain reflected that it was only their generous conditions of employment that kept their 'workers' on the plantation.

Other family members also found success through Britain's expanding imperial horizons. Henry William's younger brother Thomas Byam Martin, followed their father into the navy, where he enjoyed a similarly successful career also rising to the position of Comptroller. Although not directly connected with the Caribbean or slavery he nevertheless showed himself a keen supporter of the West Indian interests, which had been crucial to the augmenting of the family's status, in the build-up to emancipation. In 1833 he spoke at a meeting in the City of London of the West India planters and merchants asserting that it was 'the duty of every man to come forward and lend a helping hand to the cause of the colonists [slave owners] at a time when he saw them in a most perilous situation' [Nicholas Draper, *The price of emancipation* (Cambridge, 2010), p.34 – BL Reference YC.2010.a.3728]. Another brother, Josiah, did return to Antigua as a Collector of Customs, where he also helped look after his elder brother's export interests, as well as supplying information on the weather and crops [Add MS 41372/81]. However, after eighteen years in the Caribbean Josiah was eager to escape the climate for the sake of his health and in 1813 lobbied the Prime Minister, Lord Liverpool, to secure a return to Britain [Add MS 38253/39].

Initially, it had been intended that Samuel Martin's third son Josiah would be trained in the management of the estate and established as a West Indian merchant; however, his father worried about his temperament as a young man, describing him as 'mulish' and indolent [Add MS 41346/91]. At the outbreak of the Seven Years War Josiah was allowed to return to London to train as a barrister but soon decided instead to join the army as a 'soldier of fortune' [Add MS 41353/82]. Military service across North America culminated in Josiah becoming the final royal governor of North Carolina, a position he gained through the patronage of his brother Samuel's connections in Westminster but in which he worked hard to subvert the colony's support for independence. His attitude to colonial administration was heavily influenced by his father's 'espousal of efficiency, accountability, and humanitarian concerns as the basis of his new personal outlook and imperial perspective' [Carole Watterson Troxler, 'Josiah Martin', *ODNB* – BL electronic resource]. During the War of Independence, Martin contributed significantly to Britain's southern strategy and in 1780/81 won the trust and praise of Charles Cornwallis – the future Governor General of India – during his southern campaign. After the British defeat, Josiah returned with his surviving family to London. In 1761 he had married his cousin Elizabeth, daughter of Josiah Martin of Antigua and New York, in defiance of his father's wishes. Together they had nine children, six of whom survived infancy. Josiah left his eldest daughter with relations in New York but took his three other daughters and two sons to London with him, where they settled alongside many other notable Caribbean families near Grosvenor Square. In England he was active in supporting American loyalists' claims for

---

<sup>31</sup> For similar attitudes displayed by the English land elite towards their slaves and Caribbean estates see Susanne Seymour, 'Estate and empire: Sir George Cornwallis's management of Moccas, Herefordshire and La Taste, Grenada, 1771–1819', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 24:3 (1998), 313–351

compensation, and despite losing an estimated £6,500 himself was still able to purchase a large country estate near Richmond, Surrey.<sup>32</sup>

The Martin family's connection with India came through the final brother William Byam – named in honour of his father's business partner in Antigua and in recognition of the family's close connection to the Byams. An earlier association with the EIC did exist through Samuel Martin Snr's cousin Matthew Martin, but this did not appear to influence William Byam's career choice. Matthew Martin was a London merchant and an EIC director in the 1730s and several of whose own children joined the Company. However, he died in 1749 and for the Antigua Martins it was William Byam's appointment in 1765 that signalled the start of a lasting connection with the EIC. Born in 1746, William Byam obtained a writership through the patronage of director Charles Chambers. Chambers was a successful wine merchant in Madeira – a key nodal point in supporting connections between India, Britain and the Caribbean – and although the Martins' connection with him is not explicitly clear, it seems likely that Samuel Martin Jnr, by then an MP, took responsibility for obtaining the appointment [IO/J/1/5/159-64]. Three years later Samuel Snr wrote to Samuel Jnr regarding William Byam's prospects. The brothers had asked their father to advance William Byam his inheritance early so that he could use it to better establish himself in India. It was assumed that while he needed quick funds at the outset of his EIC career, William Byam would go onto make a considerable fortune by which time there would be little need for his father's legacy. Samuel Martin Snr fretted whether his youngest son could be trusted with such a large amount. However, upon Samuel Jnr's assurances he eventually assented and instructed his eldest son to arrange the transfer by selling £2000 of invested stocks [Samuel Martin snr to Samuel Martin jnr 13/5/1768, Add MS 41350/88].

William Byam served in the EIC for fifteen years, retiring to Britain in 1780 'with a most handsome fortune and very unblemished character' [William Byam Martin obituary, *The Gentleman's Magazine*, April 1806, p.388 – open shelf access, Rare Books Room, Rar.052]. During his time in India he served as an official in Bengal, forming an acquaintance with Warren Hastings, and rising to the position of Resident at the Durbar in Bengal [James M. Holzman, *The nabobs in England: a study of the returned Anglo-Indian, 1760-1785*, p.153 – BL reference 010803.h.3]. In 1776 he married Charlotte Yorke in Calcutta [IOR/N/1/2 f.135], daughter of an artillery officer, with whom he had three sons. In July 1776 William Byam's niece excitedly wrote to Samuel Martin Jnr informing him that she had received a letter from 'a young lady in the East Indies, who says my Uncle Byam is well, and is resident at the Durbar, a place of great honour, as well as profit, and that she imagines he will come home in a very few years possessed of a splendid fortune' [Mary Ann Fitzgerald to Samuel Martin Jnr, 19/7/1776, Add MS 41353/124-125]. William Byam Martin did indeed return possessed of a splendid fortune. Settling in Berkshire – 'the English Hindoostan' – he purchased the mansion and estate of White-Knights near Reading from Sir Henry Charles Englefield for £13,400 and was made High Sheriff of Berkshire [*New Reports of Cases Heard in the House of Lords*, vol.6, pp.125-130 – BL reference 006781660]. Martin commissioned the EIC surveyor-general and prominent architect, Samuel Pepys Cockerell, to 'greatly improve and beautify' the house [*The Gentleman's Magazine*]. Although images of the changes to White-Knights have not survived, Pepys Cockerell was renowned for his architectural mix of oriental and classical design, captured most famously at his cousin's house – Charles Cockerell, East Indian merchant and slave mortgagee in Mauritius – Sezincote. William Byam Martin sold White-Knights shortly before his death to the Duke of Marlborough, at

---

<sup>32</sup> V.O. Stumpf, *Josiah Martin: the last Royal Governor of North Carolina* (Durham NC, 1986), see [Google Books](#)

which point he appears to have moved to Bath, a city with which the family had long been connected. He died in 1806 intestate, with his obituary praising his 'humanity, kindness and charity' and as man 'universally esteemed by his friends' [*Gentleman's Magazine*].

William Byam's success clearly endeared India to other family members. Two of his sons entered the EIC. His eldest and namesake, William Byam Jnr, left Eton and obtained a writership in 1799 upon the nomination of Thomas Fitzhugh [IOR/J/1/17/228-31]. He was trained at the new college at Fort William, set-up by Governor-General Wellesley in 1798 to provide a more rigorous training for EIC officials. At the college he impressed in his study of oriental languages, winning the prize for Bengali writing, and gained his 'degree' in 1803 [*The Monthly Magazine*, July 1804, pp.566-568 – BL reference 002849146]. Posted initially to Fort Marlborough – the EIC's base on Sumatra – in 1805, William Byam impressed as Assistant Resident to Thomas Parr and was soon deputising for his superior whilst he was absent in Bengal. In December 1807 Martin, Parr, his wife and another EIC official George Murray, came under attack from 'a body of Malays amounting to not less than 300 men, who were believed to be in the interest of the Pangeran of Soongey'. This group stormed the Resident's country house and murdered Parr in his bed chamber. Byam Martin escaped to the servants' quarters where he 'assembled them [servants] together and placed them in the best position of defence, which their circumstances would permit. A conflict ensued in which some of the Malay leaders were killed.' Martin was commended by the Governor-General for his 'active executions' in 'securing the public safety and providing for public tranquillity under circumstances which required most vigorous, prompt and decided measures.' Even so, Byam Martin's subsequent summary retribution proved more controversial after he ordered the destruction of a 'fortified' village in the vicinity of the Bencoolen River. Official reaction was mixed and Byam Martin was initially sanctioned for his actions. However, more damaging was Mrs Parr's complaint to the Government of Bengal accusing Martin of cowardice. This led to a committee of enquiry, which ultimately cleared and vindicated Martin's actions. His career flourished after this incident and he was soon promoted away from Fort Marlborough to Bengal, receiving many positive commendations for his 'abilities' [IOR/O/6/7/787-813].

After success in Bengal, Byam Martin returned to Sumatra in 1811 as Resident of Amboyna during the British occupation of the Dutch East Indies during the Napoleonic Wars. He again won plaudits for his service and was complemented for upholding the law, spice trade and peace without recourse to violent force. However, his role also connected him to older family traditions as he was responsible for managing and returning 'slaves' to their Dutch owners [IOR/6/7/800]. Praise was forthcoming once more in 1817 when Byam Martin oversaw the restoration of the Dutch Indies to the Netherlands with 'calm and patient resistance of immeasurable demands without departing from those principles of liberality and public honour which should ever characterize the proceedings of a British Representative.' Yet, whilst he was commended by the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Charles Lushington – another man whose family had intricate EIC and Caribbean connections – for his transfer of spices and military stores, any reference to slavery was omitted from the official dispatch – with the slaves presumably collapsed into the category of 'public property' that Byam Martin also successfully returned [IOR/6/7/801-804].

For the next twenty years William Byam Martin Jnr served with success across India [for his official reports and correspondence see series IOR/F/4], occupying the prominent positions of Resident to Hyderabad (1825-30), Delhi (1830-32) and Indore (1832-34) [H.T. Prinsep, *Register of the HEIC's*

*Bengal Civil Servants 1790-1842* (1844), p.232 – Asian & African Studies Reading Room, open shelf access, OIR.354.54]. In Hyderabad he was caught-up in the scandal over the Nizam's finances, during which it emerged that William Palmer – the mixed-race brother of the Calcutta 'Prince of Merchants' John Palmer and son of another EIC West Indian émigré William Palmer – had been lending money to the Nizam at usurious rates. Byam Martin escaped being implicated in the exploitation but it was felt that his failure to regulate the Nizam's spending and close relationship with some of the conspirators made a precipitous transfer to Delhi necessary [IOR/O/6/17/761-770]. His promotions brought ever growing remuneration and although never rivalling his father's wealth, William Byam Martin Jnr earned a salary and allowances of 96,663 rupees as Resident of Delhi in 1831 [IOR/O/6/17/780]. In 1833 he was appointed to the Council in Bengal, but returned to England in 1834 on furlough before retiring from the EIC in 1836. In England he settled in Kingston, Surrey where he lived with fifteen servants. He died unmarried in 1869. Two images of William Byam Martin survive in the India Office prints collection, one a portrait of him upon leaving Eton and the second in old age where he appears as an archetypal Victorian gentleman sitting in his drawing room [IOR/Photo/532/1-2].

His younger brothers did not enjoy such success or longevity. Henry Yorke Martin joined the Madras cavalry as a cadet in 1801 [IOR/L/MIL/9/112/179-80], but died of fever in 1808 [*The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1809, p.477]. The third brother, Samuel Coote, joined the regular army and was killed during the Peninsular War; however, his son William Henry Martin became the third successive generation to serve in India when he was appointed to a Bengal writership in 1826 [IOR/J/1/40/140-47]. Family connections were crucial to his obtaining an appointment, with the nominating director, John Bebb, recording 'Mrs Byam Martin is a very old friend of mine - Regard for her and for the memory of her deceased husband William Byam Martin were my inducements' [IOR/J/1/40/144]. He served for twenty-years before resigning because of ill-health and dying in 1845 [Bengal Obituary, p.295 – BL Reference 10605.f.8] A cousin, Josiah Henry Martin, son of Governor Josiah Martin, also embarked on an EIC career in 1791 [IOR/J/1/13/319] but died in India shortly afterwards.

By 1833, the year of emancipation, the Martins had successfully established themselves in prominent positions across three continents. They were a family who had derived wealth from Britain's presence in the Caribbean slave economy, gained access to the highest levels of the state in Westminster, risen to the top of the Royal Navy and forged personal fortunes and Company conquest in India. Despite none of the family having lived in Antigua since the death of Samuel Martin Snr in 1776 the Martins retained ownership of the Green Castle plantation. In 1835 Sir Henry William Martin submitted a claim for compensation, through his attorney Charles Barnard, for 319 enslaved people at a value of £4454 2S 6D – the equivalent of roughly £3.5million today.<sup>33</sup> From Antigua to London, onto India and back again the Martins were a family of truly global reach who navigated the expanding contours of the late eighteenth century world through a family network that spanned the empire and which in turn was supported by the wealth derived from overseas.

---

<sup>33</sup> Calculated according to average wages today; Henry William Martin, LBS Database: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/927>

### Further Reading

Academic research into the links between India and the Caribbean remains at an exploratory stage. However, several excellent secondary works that start to enquire into these connections have been published, whilst a wealth of scholarship is available on British involvement in India and the Caribbean respectively.

#### Indian and Caribbean Connections

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Pub.</u>	<u>BL UIN Reference</u>
Bindman David & Gates Jr Henry Louis	<i>The image of the black in western art, volume 3, part 3</i>	2011	BLL01015618604
Bowen Huw	<i>Elites, enterprise, and the making of the British overseas Empire, 1688-1775</i>	1996	BLL01010675731
Bowen Huw, Manke Elizabeth & Reid John G. eds.	<i>Britain's oceanic empire: Atlantic and Indian Ocean Worlds, c. 1550-1850</i>	2012	BLL01016044571
Cain P.J. & Hopkins A.G.	<i>British imperialism 1688-2000, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition</i>	2002	BLL01010700847
Checkland S.G.	<i>The Gladstones: a family biography, 1764-1851</i>	1971	BLL01000675042
Colley Linda	<i>Britons : forging the nation, 1707-1837</i>	2003	BLL01007405514
Devine Tom	<i>Scotland's Empire: The Origins of the Global Diaspora</i>	2003	BLL01008083159
Fryer Peter	<i>Staying Power: the History of Black People in Britain</i>	1984	BLL01009106856
Hall Catherine and Rose, Sonya eds.	<i>At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World</i>	2006	BLL01013552545
Harper Marjory ed.	<i>Emigrant Homecomings: The Return Movement of Emigrants, 1600-2000</i>	2005	BLL01013023670
Lambert David & Lester Alan eds.	<i>Colonial lives across the British Empire: imperial careering in the long nineteenth century</i>	2006	BLL01013517147
Marshall Peter	<i>'A free though conquering people': eighteenth century Britain and its empire</i>	2003	BLL01006629677
Marshall Peter	<i>The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India and America c. 1750 – 1783</i>	2005	BLL01013079740
Marshall Peter ed.	<i>The Oxford history of the British Empire, volume II: the eighteenth century</i>	1998	BLL01009534665
Rothschild Emma	<i>The inner life of empires: an eighteenth-century history</i>	2012	BLL01015762295
Schwarz Bill	<i>The White Man's World (Memories Of Empire)</i>	2011	BLL01015829950
Shepherd Verene	<i>Maharani's Misery: Narratives of a Passage from India</i>	2002	BLL01012454148
Walvin James	<i>Fruits of Empire: Exotic Produce and British Taste, 1600-1800</i>	1997	BLL01010677469
Webster Anthony	<i>The Richest East India Merchant: the Life and Business of John Palmer of Calcutta, 1767-1836</i>	2007	BLL01013689698
Wilson Kathleen	<i>The island race: Englishness, empire and gender in the eighteenth century</i>	2003	BLL01011727808



East India Company

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Pub.</u>	<u>BL UIN Reference</u>
Bowen Huw	<i>The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756-1833</i>	2006	BLL01013301662
Bowen Huw, Lincoln Margarett, Rigby Nigel eds.	<i>The Worlds of the East India Company</i>	2002	BLL01008782790
Collingham, E.M.	<i>Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj, c.1800-1947</i>	2001	BLL01009823794
Dalrymple, William	<i>White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India</i>	2003	BLL01009376370
Dirks Nicholas	<i>The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain</i>	2006	BLL01013397379
Edwardes Michael	<i>The Nabobs at Home</i>	1991	BLL01010659323
Ghosh Durba	<i>Sex and the Family in Colonial India: the Making of Empire</i>	2006	BLL01013517158
Holzman, James	<i>The Nabobs in England: A Study of the Returned Anglo-Indian, 1760-1785</i>	1926	BLL01001720849
McCarthy Angela ed.	<i>A Global Clan: Scottish Migrant Networks and Identities since the Eighteenth Century</i>	2006	BLL01013321618
McGilvary George	<i>East India Patronage and the British State: the Scottish elite and politics in the eighteenth century</i>	2008	BLL01014700058
McLaren Martha	<i>British India &amp; British Scotland, 1780-1830: career building, empire building, and a Scottish school of thought on Indian governance</i>	2001	BLL01010457417
McMillan Margaret	<i>Women of the Raj</i>	1988	BLL01008744206
Major Andrea	<i>Slavery, abolitionism and empire in India, 1772-1843</i>	2013	BLL01016064327
Makepeace Margaret	<i>The East India Company's London Workers : Management of the Warehouse Labourers, 1800-1858</i>	2010	BLL01015589816
Marshall Peter	<i>East Indian Fortunes: the British in Bengal in the eighteenth century</i>	1976	BLL01012599702
Nechtman, Tillman	<i>Nabobs, Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain</i>	2010	BLL01015550735
Spear Percival	<i>The Nabobs: A Study of the Social Life of the English in Eighteenth-Century India, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition</i>	1980	BLL01012500651
Sutherland Lucy	<i>The East India Company in Eighteenth-Century Politics</i>	1962	BLL01009530020
Williams Clive	<i>The Nabobs of Berkshire</i>	2010	BLL01015746158

The Caribbean

<b><u>Author</u></b>	<b><u>Title</u></b>	<b><u>Pub.</u></b>	<b><u>BL UIN Reference</u></b>
Beckles Hilary	<i>Centering women: gender relations in Caribbean slave society</i>	1999	BLL01008794951
Beckles Hilary & Shepherd Verene eds.	<i>Caribbean slavery in the Atlantic world: a student reader</i>	1999	BLL01008794948
Burnard, Trevor	<i>Mastery, tyranny and desire: Thomas Thistlewood and his slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican world</i>	2004	BLL01012931562
Draper Nicholas	<i>The price of emancipation: slave-ownership, compensation and British society at the end of slavery</i>	2010	BLL01015371277
Hall Catherine	<i>Civilising subjects: metropole and colony in the English imagination, 1830-1867</i>	2002	BLL01011724641
Hamilton Douglas	<i>Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic world 1750-1820</i>	2005	BLL01015751502
Higman Barry	<i>Slave populations of the British Caribbean 1807-34</i>	1994	BLL01007916432
Higman Barry	<i>Plantation Jamaica, 1750-1850: Capital and Control in a Colonial Economy</i>	2005	BLL01013452032
Lambert David	<i>White Creole Culture, Politics and Identity during the Age of Abolition</i>	2006	BLL01013099856
Pearsall Sarah	<i>Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century</i>	2008	BLL01015594282
Petley Christer	<i>Slave-holders in Jamaica: colonial society and culture during the era of abolition</i>	2009	BLL01015262120
Sheridan Richard	<i>Sugar &amp; slavery: an economic history of the British West Indies 1623-1775</i>	1974	BLL01012363995
Smith Simon	<i>Slavery, Family, and Gentry Capitalism in the British Atlantic: the World of the Lascelles, 1648-1834</i>	2006	BLL01013495492
Walvin James	<i>Black ivory: slavery in the British Empire, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition</i>	2001	BLL01008048817
Walvin James	<i>Atlas of slavery</i>	2006	BLL01006962638
Williams Eric	<i>Capitalism &amp; slavery</i>	1944	BLL01011699603
Zacek Natalie	<i>Settler Society in the English Leeward Islands, 1670-1776</i>	2010	BLL01015566352
Zahedieh, Nuala	<i>The capital and the colonies: London and the Atlantic economy 1660-1700</i>	2010	BLL01015415025

Dr Chris Jeppesen, University College London, July 2013