



The Hundred Parishes

An introductory article about SLAVERY CONNECTIONS

In 2017, two trustees of the Society attended an interesting talk at the Saffron Walden Library. It was given by Dr Nick Draper of University College, London, and entitled “Forgotten Slave-owners of the Hundred Parishes and Beyond”. This was the first time we had encountered an ‘outsider’ referring to the Hundred Parishes.

Although this was never how we expected the definition of our geographic area to be used, we were delighted that our objective to raise recognition of the Hundred Parishes as a definable area had borne fruit in academic circles.

Dr Draper was the leader of research at UCL into various aspects of slavery. His talk focused largely on recipients of the very large compensation payments that were made to British slave-owners when slave ownership in the British colonies was made illegal in 1833. Ownership of plantations and slaves in the West Indies was common throughout the UK.

Draper concluded that a number of mansions around the Hundred Parishes appear to have been built or rebuilt with income from plantations with slaves or from compensation received after granting slaves their freedom. These included Pishiobury in Sawbridgeworth and Much Hadham Hall and Moor Place in Much Hadham, all built in the 18th century.

Our subsequent review of the data accumulated by the Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery revealed further evidence of local slave-owners or people connected with them as either their representatives or lenders who held mortgages over estates in the West Indies. These included . . .

Birchanger: Maynard Clarke – see below.

Birchanger: Mary Raynsford (nee Steward), the wife of Robert Raynsford.

Eastwick & Gilston: William Mitchell Kerr of Terlings Park.

Much Hadham: James Gordon (senior and junior) and Ann Gordon (nee Langton) of Moor Place.

Much Hadham: John Hopkinson and John Tharp, both living at Hadham Palace lunatic asylum in 1841.

Saffron Walden: Thomas Mead who died in Saffron Walden; his will, proved in 1781, included 15 slaves.

Sawbridgeworth: various residents of Pishiobury including Edward Gardiner, Roland Alston, Jeremiah Milles and Rose Milles.

Shalford: Richard Marriott and Sophia Lucy Marriott (nee Stephens) of Abbotts Hall.

Thundridge: Daniel Giles (a governor of the Bank of England) and Daniel Giles junior, both of Youngsbury.

Stanstead Abbotts: William Kent Thomas who died in Stanstead Abbotts in 1858.

Steeple Bumpstead: Edward Fitch or Finch of Old Hall.

Steeple Bumpstead: Ellys Anderson Stephens, William Layton, Frances Layton (nee Stephens) and Mary Ann Walton (nee Stephens), all of Bower Hall.
Takeley: Sir Peter Parker of Bassingbourn Hall.
Westmill: Andrew Ross of Knights Hill.
Wyddial: Charles Heaton Ellis of Wyddial Hall.

One specific finding related to Maynard Clarke of Birchanger. In 1756 he and his family attended the baptism at Hunsdon of two adult black servants, James March and Francis Dyer. Maynard Clarke died in Jamaica a few years later; the valuation for probate of his estate in Jamaica included 211 slaves.

You can read more about the UCL project at www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/

In the parish of Thundridge, beside the old A10 just north of Westmill, there is an obelisk which marks the spot where Thomas Clarkson paused on his journey in 1785 and resolved to devote his life to the abolition of slavery. He was a close associate of William Wilberforce and they did indeed succeed, after many years, in securing the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and then the freeing of slaves in 1833.

The obelisk was erected in 1879 by Arthur Giles Puller of Youngsbury. Just a few generations before, the Giles and Puller families, like so many with wealth, had invested in plantations in the West Indies which almost certainly had slaves.



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Any comments or suggestions for improvement may be submitted by using the Feedback form on the website. The website has many short articles on various aspects of The Hundred Parishes, as well as introductions to individual parishes and to a number of local celebrities, and an extensive What's On section. More than a hundred walk route descriptions can be freely downloaded, with each of the hundred parishes featuring in at least one walk.