

# **A TYPOLOGY OF DEVON SLAVE-OWNERS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

There has recently been increased public interest in Britain's slave-owning past. In this paper, the demographic characteristics of Devon-based owners of enslaved people in the British West Indies at the end of slavery in 1835 are summarised using the University College London's 'Legacies of British Slavery' project together with data from the 1851 census. Based on this information, the 78 slave-owners identified are divided into six distinct types based on the amount of compensation they received at the abolition of slavery. This typology encapsulates the wide range of slave-owners, from extremely wealthy British-born men to much more modest Caribbean-born women. It offers a helpful basis from which to research and debate the role and extent of Devon residents' involvement in the slave/plantation system.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The recent 'Black Lives Matter' movement and Windrush<sup>1</sup> scandal have heightened interest in Black British history and the historical role of this country in colonialism and slavery. There has been ongoing local interest in the part played by Devonians in this history, which was given a boost by the establishment of the 'Legacies of British Slave-ownership' (LBS) on-line database by University College London (UCL) in 2013. This source provides a searchable database of all those living in Britain who applied for compensation for the loss of their enslaved 'property' after the passing of the Slavery Abolition Act in 1835. These individuals would generally be white British people who owned enslaved people of African descent working on plantations in the West Indies growing crops such as sugar and coffee for export. Absentee owners living in Devon would have been receiving profits from their plantations and expecting to be compensated for the loss of their valuable human property. Slave-ownership was distinct from the slave trade, made illegal in 1807, which refers to the capture, transport and sale of Africans across the Atlantic. It should be emphasised that the formerly enslaved received no compensation for

their years of labour. There has been debate over the extent of involvement (MacKeith, 2003; Gray, 2007, 2020, 2021) in the slave/plantation system by individuals living in Devon. This paper provides a significant and new contribution to this debate, which could be controversial in the current social and political climate.

The LBS database arose from research by Draper (2010), who made a systematic quantitative study of the 1838 Parliamentary Return of the 46,000 claims made for compensation for loss of 'slave' property arising from the 1833 Abolition Act. Draper gives information on types and monetary amounts of these claims, the numbers of enslaved claimed for, and the geographical distribution of the British addresses of owners and their West Indian properties. Based on this historical data, and much other archival material, he drew out three major distinctions among slave-owners: absentee/resident, mercantile/rentier, and large scale/small scale. Since Draper's original research, much biographical description and estate description has been added to the LBS database by amateur historians. As the database is publicly available, it possible for other researchers to distinguish types of slave-owner by the amount of compensation, number of enslaved, size and nature of agricultural holding, and the owner's demographic characteristics.

In this paper, the following questions are addressed: "How many slave-owners lived in Devon at the time of compensation?"; "What sorts of people were they?" and "Can they be divided into distinct types based on the amount of compensation received?" The latter question could lead to a typology based on the above characteristics. The purpose would be to elaborate on the extent and structure of slave-ownership in this county to enable a more informed debate on Devon's slave-owning past.

Since starting this research, a major work has been contributed to this field by Todd Gray (2021), in which he attempts to count the number of Devon slave-owners and classify them into types. He identified 34 Devon slave-owners and divided them into four types on the basis of their place of birth: Devon-born, British-born, colonial-born and armed services. It will be seen that the present research identifies a larger number of slave owners and classifies them by amount of compensation rather than place of birth.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

Data were obtained from the 'Legacies of British Slave-ownership' database with some extra input from the 1851 Census (Ancestry.com). Entering 'Devon' in the Quick Address Search box on the LBS 'Search the Database' page produced 278 individuals whose record had some mention of Devon. Those who were not relevant were eliminated: namely, those living in Devonshire Place (London) (42) or Cornwall (26); those who had a Devon connection but who were clearly not living in Devon at the time of compensation (perhaps born or died in Devon) (24); those who were already dead by 1835; or who were not slave-owners, but had some other connection (such as executors, trustees, attorneys, beneficiaries, assignees, legatees or relatives). This process of elimination produced a final list of 78 slave-owners.

The LBS database does not state definitely where the claimant was living at the time of the claim. Some individuals had more than one home, and many moved around the country and world a lot, especially those in the navy or those who had one house in London and another in the country. Thus, these figures are estimates based on the biographical information given in the LBS database. As a result, 18 of these 78 were only possibly living in Devon at the time of compensation.

The legal status of the individuals in the compensation records is complicated and it is often not obvious whom to classify as a 'slave-owner'. Someone might have been owning and running a sugar plantation, but then did not receive any compensation because they were indebted to a merchant or banker. Such a creditor may have received the compensation for a plantation which they had never visited or had any responsibility for. Others, generally women, may have had a legal claim on the income from an estate, but were not considered to be the legal owner. Sometimes the evidence is contradictory. To be consistent, the criteria for inclusion/exclusion of these cases are listed in Table 1. It should be noted that these criteria were deliberately stringent in order to produce a reliable but shorter list than might be obtained by using looser criteria.

**Table 1: Criteria for inclusion as a Devon slave-owner**

1	Alive in 1835
2	Residing, or probably residing, in Devon in the 1830s
3	Listed as “awardee” <sup>2</sup> , “awardee owner-in-fee”, or if there was some other reason to believe they were the legal owner of the enslaved. The owner is the person with exclusive rights and control over property - in this case, human beings.
4	If “unsuccessful claimant”, the reason was ascertained. If the person was an owner from other evidence, but owed the money to a creditor, then they were included. If the person was a creditor who was trying, unsuccessfully, to reclaim their loan, then they were not included.
5	Agents, such as administrators, executors, and trustees, were not included as they did not have full rights of ownership.
6	Beneficiaries <sup>3</sup> from an estate (e.g. annuitants, assignees, judgment creditors, legatees, mortgagees) were also not included for the same reason.

Another complication was that, in the awarding of compensation, the awards were sometimes shared between people who had different sorts of claim on the property. The LBS site sometimes states the amounts each one received, but sometimes it does not. In the latter cases, an equal division between parties was assumed. There was no attempt to divide the number of enslaved between the different parties, but simply to state that they were ‘shared’. This approach was adopted because the sharing of compensation was based on the owners’ shares in the ‘investment’ in monetary terms rather than on individual enslaved people, each of whom had a different monetary value anyway.

Some demographic information on the slave-owners was obtained from the LBS website, while the Ancestry website contributed the date and place of birth of those still alive and registered in the 1851 census. Information on crops grown on plantations was obtained from the Estates section of the LBS database, or inferred from the geographical location of the plantation such as the territory or whether located in the hills or on the lowland (see Higman, 1988), together with the number of enslaved (holdings of less than 100 enslaved persons would be unlikely to be sugar plantations) (Beckles, 1990).

## RESULTS

Table 2 shows the resulting 78 slave-owners residing, or probably residing, in Devon at the time of compensation, which have been listed in order of the amount of compensation received. The reason for the heavy horizontal lines will be explained later.

**Table 2: Devon slave-owners in the 1835 Compensation Records**

Name	Sex	Age	Devon address	WI island	Comp. received £	Number enslaved	Main crop	Place of birth
Attlay, S.O.	m	x	Teignmouth	Jamaica	0	141	sugar	x
Binny, A	f	28	Tiverton?	Jamaica	0	x	coffee	Devon
Clarke, C.H.	f	29	Sidmouth	Jamaica	0	613	2 large sugar	London
Cox, H	m	x	Devonport	Jamaica	0	517	2 large sugar	Jamaica
D'Urban, M.E.S.	f	32	Topsham	Grenada	0	113	x	Devon
Fisher, J	m	x	Otterton	Jamaica	0	359share	Sugar, livestock	x
Fisher, J.C.	m	45	Merton	Jamaica	0	359share	Sugar, livestock	Somerset
Fortescue, J.D.I.	m	50	Torrington	St Vincent	0	88share	x	Devon
Fortescue, J.I.	m	77	Torrington	St Vincent	0	88share	x	Devon
Garner, N.R.	m	79	Exeter	Barbados	0	112	<i>Several small sugar</i>	x
Highatt, H.S	m	8	Brampford Speke	Jamaica	0	25	sugar	London
Holder, J.H	m	56	Torquay	Barbados	0	x	<i>sugar</i>	x
Napier, A.	f	55	Exeter	TT	0	123	x	Scotland
Vassall, W.	m	82	Berry Pomeroy	Jamaica	0	198	sugar	USA
Burke, D.B.	f	x	Exeter	Antigua	26	2	sugar	x
Taylor, M.	f	x	Dawlish	Jamaica	29	1	urban	Jamaica
Moody, M.	f	50	Exeter?	Guyana	35	1	army	WI
Cox, J.G.	m	57	S. Molton?	St Vincent	45	2	army	St Vincent
Hinds, E.L.	f	35	Plympton	Barbados	47	2	x	Barbados
Martell, J.	m	39	Devonport	Jamaica	64	3	urban	Jamaica
Bryan, E	f	43	Ilfracombe	Jamaica	128	6	x	Foreign
Rowe, J.J.	m	39	Kentisbury	Jamaica	153	44 share	<i>coffee</i>	Devon
Clarke, J.T.	m	40	Withycombe R.	Jamaica	163	34	cattle	Jamaica

Toby, A.	f	40	Plymouth?	TT	172	107share	x	Scotland
Toby, I	m	41	Plymouth?	TT	172	107share	x	Devon
Seaman, C.	f	45	Teignmouth	Jamaica	186	8	cattle	Jamaica
Scott, J.J.	m	28	Lynmouth	Jamaica	213	371share	x	London
Dixon, M	m	78	Exmouth	Jamaica	271	91share	x	x
Abell, E	f	27	Alphington	Jamaica	288	17	<i>Cattle, coffee</i>	Jamaica
Kearton, M.G.	f	44	Barnstaple?	St Vincent	301	10	Domestic/urban	St Vincent
Windsor, H.G.	m	50	Budleigh S.	Barbados	318	15share	Domestic/urban	Barbados
Nembhard, H	m	40	Bideford?	Jamaica	333	48share	cattle	Jamaica
Williams, A.	f	59	Exeter	Jamaica	382	43	<i>Coffee, cattle</i>	Jamaica
Huggins, E.R	m	46	Plymouth	Jamaica	385	23	x	Hants
Wallen, E.A.	f	44	Exeter	Jamaica	478	18	<i>coffee</i>	Jamaica?
Rowe, E.W.	f	x	Kentisbury	Jamaica	602	67 share	<i>Coffee, cattle</i>	Jamaica
Griffith, C.C.	f	61	Bishops Tawton?	Jamaica	685	37	x	London
James, E	f	67	Exeter	Jamaica	806	57	<i>Coffee, cattle</i>	Jamaica
Walrond, B.	m	34	Cullompton	Antigua	863	423share	<i>sugar</i>	London
Rossiter, T	m	63	Tiverton	Jamaica	1,064	55	x	Devon
Passley, J.P.	m	x	Teignmouth	Jamaica	1,096	429share	<i>sugar</i>	x
Davy, T	m	62	Ottery	Jamaica	1,101	59	coffee	Devon
Burn, W.G.	m	43	Torquay?	Jamaica	1,243	57	cattle	x
Lousada, E.	m	52	Sidmouth	Bd, Ja	1,390	126share	sugar	London
Barnes, H.	f	x	Dawlish	Jamaica	1,410	276share	cattle	x
Doyle, J.H.	m	30	Exeter	Antigua	1,704	102	x	London
Stuart, H.	m	x	Sidmouth	Grenada	1,942	71	x	Scotland
Rich, J.A.W.F.	f	x	Stoke Damerel	Guyana	2,146	124	x	x
Tharp, T.R.	m	36	Topsham	Jamaica	2,236	99	<i>Coffee, cattle</i>	Jamaica
Broomfield, A.S.	m	36	Torquay?	TT	2,411	45	sugar	x
Teschmaker, J	m	43	Ilfracombe	Guyana	2,647	106share	<i>sugar</i>	Guyana
Pole, W.T	m	53	Shute	St Kitts	2,648	340share	sugar	Devon
Anderson, J	m	42	Kenton?	Jamaica	2,686	537share	sugar	Jamaica
Strickland, M.M.	f	40	Dawlish	TT	2,877	58	cocoa	TT
Stewart, H.	m	44	Devonport	TT	2,998	143	<i>sugar</i>	?
Halliday, W.S.	m	42	Countisbury	Jamaica	3,169	165	<i>sugar</i>	x
Howell, H.	m	26	Shobrooke	Barbados	3,195	174	<i>sugar</i>	Barbados
Drane, T	m	41	Torquay?	Mauritius	3,434	206share	<i>sugar</i>	London
Cary G.S.	m	53	Follaton	St Kitts	3,548?	438share	<i>2 sugar</i>	Devon
Hamilton, A.H	m	52	Topsham	Grenada	3,784	140	<i>2 sugar</i>	Scotland
Dalzell, M.E.	f	46	Ilfracombe?	Barbados	3,826	176	<i>sugar</i>	WI
Campbell, J	m	79	Budleigh S.	Jamaica	4,009	204	sugar	x
Phillips, P.L	m	30	Torquay?	Barbados	4,105	292	<i>sugar</i>	Barbados
Rolle, J.	m	84	Bicton	Bahamas	4,333	377	<i>Livestock, fishing</i>	Devon
Cole, G.	m	50	Dawlish	TT	4,509	100share	Several	Devon

							small sugar	
Pearse, G	m	x	Brandninch	Jamaica	5,229	57	cattle	Devon
Haynes, E	m	54	Exeter?	Barbados	5,649	272	1 large sugar	x
Hall, T	m	x	Exmouth	Jamaica	5,866	314	Sugar, cattle	x
Haughton James, P.	m	40	Sidmouth	Jamaica	6,420	342	Sugar, cattle	Huntingdon
Bovell, W	m	39	Plymouth	Barbados	7,300	326	Several sugar	Barbados
Teschemaker, T.	m	34	Tiverton	Guyana	8,289	273share	<i>Several sugar</i>	Guyana
Phillips, J.R	m	76	Torquay?	Barbados	8,326	405	<i>Several sugar</i>	x
Heaven, W.H	m	35	Lundy	Jamaica	11,743	638	2 sugar, cattle	Bristol
Cunningham, J	m	55	Sidmouth?	Jamaica	14,461	761share	2 sugar, cattle	Scotland
Porter, T (II)	m	45	Rockbeare	Guyana	19,295	385	1 large sugar	Guyana
Robley, C	f	58	Tiverton	TT, St Vincent	34,301	1,651	Many large sugar Wife of merchant	London
Porter, H	m	44	Clyst St Mary	Guyana	35,961	709	1 v. large sugar	Guyana
Daniel, T*	m	73	Stoodleigh	Ant, Bd, Gy, Ja, Ne, Mon, TT	135,765	2,098 (4,632)	Many sugar Merchant	Barbados

### *Explanatory notes for Table 2*

Modern names for territories are used.

x = no information; ? = uncertain; ? under 'Devon address' means that it is uncertain whether the person was living at that address in the 1830s, although they were living there at some point in time.

Abbreviations: m = male; f = female; Ant = Antigua; Bd = Barbados; Gy = Guyana; Ja = Jamaica; Mon = Montserrat; Ne = Nevis; TT = Trinidad and Tobago; WI = West Indies.

Where crops are in italics, these are not given on the LBS database, but have been deduced as described in the text.

\*Merchant with successful and unsuccessful claims. Number in bracket is the total number of enslaved claimed for; number not in bracket is number successfully claimed for.

It is clear from Table 2 that the term 'slave-owner' covers a wide range of different sorts of people with different levels of wealth. It may be surprising to note that they were not all very wealthy men, but that some were women of modest means. Figure 1 and Tables 3 and 4 summarise the information in Table 2 to give a general description of these 78 Devon-based slave-owners.

## ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

*Who were the slave-owners in terms of age and gender?*

This demographic information is fundamental to understanding who the slave-owners were. From Table 2, of the 78 individuals, 55 were men (70%) and 23 were women (30%).

Their spread across age groups is summarised in Figure 1. The male predominance was spread across nearly all age groups. Owners tended to be in their middle years or elderly, but with a few (six of the 66 of known age) being under 30 years old.



The existence of women and very young slave-owners raises the question of how they had become slave-owners<sup>4</sup> which would be a fruitful avenue for future research. The number of men aged over 70 suggests that they had made their money through slavery and had moved to Devon to enjoy their retirement.

*Where were their enslaved workers located?*



The location of the properties on which workers were enslaved is pertinent to an understanding of the type of agricultural holdings and the history of their ownership. For example, properties on Barbados were likely to be sugar plantations established in the seventeenth century, whereas those in Guyana were still expanding in the early nineteenth century and so their ownership was likely to be more recent. Table 3 shows the West Indian territories in which these individuals held the enslaved. The total number of properties in these territories comes to more than 78 because some owned properties in more than one territory.

**Table 3: Territories where enslaved people were held**

W.I. territory	Number of properties owned
Antigua	4
Bahamas	1
Barbados	12
Grenada	3
Guyana	7
Jamaica	40
Mauritius (not in W.I.)	1
Montserrat	1
Nevis	1
St Kitts	2
St Vincent	5
Trinidad and Tobago (TT)	9
Total properties	86

It is clear that Jamaica accounted for about half of all the properties mentioned (being relatively large and long held by Britain), followed by Barbados (longest held but small in area). The more recently acquired territories of Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana were catching up in terms of the number of their sugar plantations. The remaining islands are much smaller in area and so had fewer plantations.

The ownership of property on West Indian islands does not, however, mean that the owners themselves had been born on those islands or had even lived there. This disconnect is because of the high rate of absentee ownership. Draper (2010, p.151) estimated that almost half of the compensation awards of over £500 had been paid to absentee owners. Indeed, the fact that the 78 owners in question were living in Devon at the time of compensation indicates

that, at that time, they were absent from their property, although this absenteeism may not have been the case all their lives. While information was not available on their travels across the Atlantic to visit their properties, places of birth were captured in the 1851 British census, which goes some way to elucidating the extent of their connection to the West Indies.

*Where were the slave-owners born?*

Table 4 lists slave-owners' places of birth as reported in the LBS database or the 1851 census.

**Table 4: Slave-owners' birthplaces**

Region of birth	Place of birth	Number
Devon		13
Other parts of Britain	London 9	18
	Other England 4	
	Scotland 5	
West Indies	Barbados 6	28
	Guyana 4	
	Jamaica 13	
	St Vincent 2	
	TT 1	
	Unspecified 2	
Other foreign		2
Unknown		17
Total		78

Therefore, of the 61 slave-owners residing in Devon at the time of compensation for whom a birthplace can be identified, almost half (28) had been born in the West Indies. A total of 18 had moved to live in Devon from other parts of Britain, while only 13 were of Devon origin. Of the 28 born in the West Indies, the territory of their birth was the territory in which they owned property (though Thomas Daniel owned extra properties on other islands).

These data also give strong indications about how these individuals had become slave-owners. At least the 28 born in the West Indies had come from families actively involved in running slave plantations or owning domestic slaves, and had then become absentee owners. Of course, those born in Devon or in other parts of Britain might have lived at times on their West Indian plantations too. The data also suggests that up to one-half of the slave-owners

living in Devon in 1835 (i.e. those 31 born in Devon or other parts of Britain) could have been permanent absentees without direct contact with their enslaved workers. The relatively high number born in London (nine) gives a clue to the origin of the slave-ownership of these individuals, as several of them were baptised in Marylebone, the part of London with a high concentration of the wealthiest slave-owners at that time (Draper, 2010). It gives a strong indication that they came from families whose great wealth had been gained from earlier generations of slave-ownership.

Addressing the question of how far Devon people were 'involved' in slave-ownership, the statistic that only 13 (of the 61 of known birth place) of those slave-owners residing in Devon at the time of compensation were born in Devon suggests quite a small involvement of the Devon born and bred. However, this figure does not show the number of Devonians who were still living on their West Indian plantations. The figure also excludes those of the 28 born in the West Indies whose forebears had emigrated from Devon in earlier generations to participate in the plantation economy, or those of the nine born in London whose families may have originated in Devon before they acquired their wealth. It also does not include the Devonians who were beneficiaries of legacies from slave plantations, the many family members who were dependent on the head of household's slavery income, or the merchants who received compensation from their indebted slave-owning clients. This figure (13/61) is therefore an underestimate of the extent of Devonians' involvement in slave-ownership.

#### *How much compensation did Devon slave-owners receive?*

The amount of compensation represents the central piece of information around which this essay is organised. It was the opening up of the compensation records by Draper (2010) which brought the extent of British slave-ownership to public attention. The amount of compensation provides vital information about the wealth of individual Devon slave-owners at the close of West Indian slavery. The Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 provided about £20 million in compensation to be paid to the British owners of the approximately 800,000 enslaved people throughout the British West Indies. This global sum meant that each British slave-owner would receive on average about £25 for

each enslaved person that they 'owned'. The actual amount varied from individual to individual, and from territory to territory, according to the productivity of the person and of the land. The more recently acquired British territories of Trinidad and Tobago and what became Guyana were more productive than the older islands of Barbados and Jamaica, where the soil had become exhausted over the years. Thus compensation payments were larger in the former places. As a comparison, the contemporary annual wage of an adult male British farm labourer was about £30 (Williamson, 1982).

From the data, a total of 77 of the Devon slave-owners between them received £239,300, whilst one (Thomas Daniel, a merchant from Bristol) received as much as £135,765, producing a total of £375,065. It is problematic to convert these sums into today's money, with multipliers varying from about 100 if price inflation is used, to about 1000 if wage inflation is used<sup>5</sup>. Thus, this total compensation would be worth roughly £37 million on the former method and £370 million on the latter.

From Table 2, the amounts of compensation awarded varied from zero to the unsuccessful claimants up to £35,961 to Henry Porter of Clyst St Mary for the 709 enslaved on his sugar estate in Guyana (apart from the exceptionally large payment to Thomas Daniel already mentioned). The median<sup>6</sup> amount of compensation, awarded to the 39<sup>th</sup> person on the list of 78 slave-owners, was £1,024 to Thomas Rossiter of Tiverton for the 55 enslaved persons on his Jamaican plantation.

#### *How many 'slaves' did they own?*

As explained above, it has not been possible to identify the exact number of 'slaves' owned by each individual, but using the mean of £25 per head shows that 77 of the Devon-based owners received compensation for roughly 9,600 enslaved between them (while Daniel claimed successfully for about 5,500 more). In addition, a further approximately 2,370 'slaves' were owned for whom no compensation was received. In total, about 17,500 enslaved people were owned by Devon residents. This statistic represents a large number of individuals who were dominated and exploited by this relatively small number of Devon residents. It points to the vast amount of human suffering that lay behind the comfortable lives of these Devonians.

In summary, the data in Table 2 give an overall description of the 78 Devon slave-owners in the 1830s. Although most were men, a sizeable minority (23/78) were women, and while most were middle-aged or elderly, a few (six of the 66 of known age) were under 30 years old. Rather less than half (28 out of 61 of known places of birth) had been born in the West Indian territory, where they had owned their enslaved property, compared with slightly under a quarter (13/61) who had been born in Devon, with the remaining 20 born elsewhere. Devon residents owned properties with enslaved workers across the West Indies, although the concentration was in Jamaica (40/86). The Devon slave-owners received a total of £375,000 in compensation for approximately 17,500 enslaved people, with the median payment being about £1,000 for 55 enslaved.

Having given a general description, the next task is to re-examine Table 2 to ascertain whether the Devon slave-owners of 1835 can be divided into distinct types based on amount of compensation received.

### **A TYPOLOGY OF DEVON SLAVE-OWNERS**

A typology groups people by similarities. Typologies are widely used in the social sciences to provide frameworks for better understanding social phenomena. Therefore, it is pertinent to ask whether the Devon slave-owners on the list in Table 2 – which is ordered as a continuum according to amounts of compensation received – fall into distinct types with different demographic characteristics in different regions of the continuum. An attempt has been made to construct a typology by drawing boundaries to divide the list into groups that are meaningful in terms of the financial situations of the slave-owners, the types and sizes of their agricultural property, amount of human ‘property’, age, gender and birthplace. This classification yields six categories. The boundaries between categories are shown by heavy lines in Table 2. Table 5 summarises this information. It should be noted that the boundaries are not uniformly spaced by amount of compensation as this would obscure the detail at the lower end of the spectrum.

**Table 5: Typology of Devon slave-owners according to amount of compensation received**

Type	Amount of compensation received £	Approximate number of enslaved	Description of typical property	Number of slave-owners	Description of slave-owners
1	0	100s	Large sugar plantation	14	Unsuccessful claimants Indebted Mainly men Mainly born in UK
2	1–99	1–9	Domestic and urban slaves	6	Predominantly women Born in WI
3	100–999	10–49 or a larger number shared	Small coffee plantation	19	Half women Majority born WI
4	1000–2999	50–99 or a larger number shared	Medium sized coffee plantation/cattle pen; or shared sugar plantation	16	Almost all men Mixed birthplaces
5	3000–4999	100–299 or a larger number shared	Average sugar plantation	10	Almost all older men Mixed birthplaces
6	≥5000	300–2000	Large or several large sugar plantations	13	Some merchants Almost all men Mixed birthplaces

Table 5 demonstrates that, although the term ‘slave-owner’ covers a range of different sorts of people, they do fall into distinct types when grouped by the amount of compensation received. Some of the information in Table 5 is illustrated in Figures 2 and 3, which show that the groups differ in their composition by gender and birthplace.



Figure 2 shows the predominance of men in the groups which received a large amount of compensation (over £1,000) as well as among the unsuccessful claimants who received nothing. Women predominated in the small claims of less than £1,000.

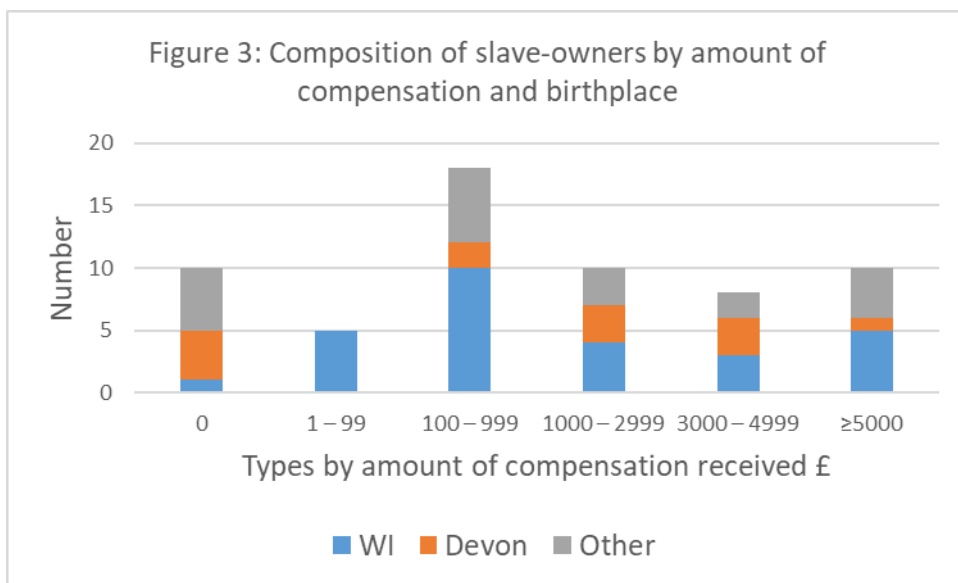


Figure 3 shows the composition of the types of slave-owner by birthplace for the 61 with known birthplace. It illustrates the particular predominance of West Indian born slave-owners in groups 2 and 3 (£1-£99 and £100-£999; the domestic/urban and small coffee establishments), in contrast to group 1 (unsuccessful claimants) who were mainly Devon and 'other' born. The Devon born are distributed across most of the categories.

Information from Table 5 and Figures 2 and 3 is now used to describe the groups and to suggest reasons for the emergence of their differences.

### Description of the types of Devon slave-owner

Type 1 - Unsuccessful claimants. These 14 owned large sugar plantations with hundreds of enslaved, but had become indebted. The fact that these (mainly) men were UK-born suggests that they had inherited their WI plantations, but were life-long absentees without knowledge of, or interest in, their Caribbean property, which they had consequently neglected, resulting in financial disaster. They had probably been living beyond their means.

Type 2 - Owners of domestic and urban enslaved. These six, who received less than £100, present a contrast. These six were mainly women who were born in the West Indies and had probably had their own domestic 'slaves', perhaps given to them by their fathers or husbands, or bought by their own industry. They had retained their 'slaves', perhaps as an investment, when they moved to Devon.

Type 3 - Owners of small coffee plantations. These 19 were those who received £100–£999 from ownership of 10–49 enslaved. They were, again, mainly women and born in the West Indies. They tended to own small estates growing coffee and raising cattle, often in the hilly interior of Jamaica. It may be that they came from wealthy sugar-growing families, who had branched out into coffee growing when this option became a possibility; but how they acquired their property is a question needing further exploration.

Type 4 - Owners of medium coffee or shared sugar plantations. The fourth group received £1,000–£2,999 for generally 50–99 enslaved; predominantly men, their holdings were similar to those of the previous group but tended to be larger, or they owned a share of a sugar plantation. Sugar was the most lucrative crop, grown on the flat coastal plains of the islands, with plantations requiring a large workforce of at least 200 to reach their maximum efficiency, and needing investment in factory buildings and machinery. Sugar planting was therefore only an option for people with access to capital, and might be why those in the fourth group tended to have only a share rather than outright ownership.

Type 5 - Sugar planters. These were the really wealthy, who received £3,000–£4,999. These, mainly older, men owned their sugar plantations with their 100 to 299 enslaved outright. With their mixture of birthplaces, it is likely that they had inherited their WI property and lived there for part of their lives so that they understood the business and kept an eye on its management. They did not end up in the 'unsuccessful claimant' category. They had probably retired to Devon once they felt comfortable leaving their property to be managed by others. It would be interesting to delve further back into history to learn how long they had had a slave-owning interest.

Type 6 - Sugar barons. These received £5,000 or more (much more in the case of Thomas Daniel!). These (mainly men) owned large or several large



sugar plantations with up to two thousand enslaved. Some were also merchants who would have advanced credit to plantation owners and claimed the compensation when the latter could not meet their debts.

Examples of individuals in each category and their biographical details can be obtained from Table 2 in conjunction with the LBS database and Gray (2021).

In summary, this analysis has shown that the title 'slave-owner' covers a range of different types of people living in Devon in 1835. Some, in categories 1, 5 and 6, were the wealthy West Indian planters associated with great country mansions and familiar from the novels of Austen and Thackeray. At the other extreme were the smaller owners, mainly women, in categories 2 and 3, who may have acquired their 'slave' property whilst living in the West Indies and had retired to Devon to live on this 'retirement fund'. The men in category 4 were in-between these two extremes.

## **DISCUSSION**

This analysis differs from those of Draper (2010) and Gray (2021) in several ways.

Firstly, the number of 78 Devon-resident slave-owners who received compensation in the 1830s differs from that arrived at by Gray, who concluded that the number was only 34. This discrepancy is because Gray restricted his criteria to those who actually received money (i.e. excluding the unsuccessful claimants) and to those who can be positively identified as being Devon residents on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1834, the day before the Slavery Abolition Act came into force. The analysis in this paper has included the unsuccessful claimants because they were, nevertheless, slave-owners. Those who were probably resident in Devon in the 1830s were included because, as explained earlier, their exact locations were not recorded on the LBS database, and the compensation payments were spread over several years, especially if there were counter-claims.

Secondly, while Draper described different types of slave-owner, his analysis was based on the national picture, in contrast to the focus in this paper which applies to Devon only. Of course, there is a great deal of similarity, and these types may well be found across the country, but it is likely that the proportions would differ from place to place. For example, the port cities of Bristol and

Liverpool would have more merchants than were found in Devon. Gray's analysis is, like mine, restricted to Devon.

Thirdly, this analysis is unique in that it identifies six types based on amount of compensation received. Draper, by contrast, uses dichotomies as described earlier and within these identifies specific types, such as 'widows and orphans' and 'Anglican clergymen', while Gray uses place of birth as his framework.

### **Advantages of this typology**

The new typology has several advantages. Firstly, it is based on firm information from the compensation records provided by the LBS website and not on the information only partially available on place of birth. Secondly, amount of compensation captures something more fundamental about the slave-owners than does their place of birth. It gives an indication of their wealth and social status, which are fundamental to their way of life and probably to their culture and beliefs, just as social class measures are based on economics but also indicate differences in life experiences, culture and beliefs. Thirdly, amount of compensation is closely linked to other characteristics, such as gender and type of plantation. By linking amount of compensation to gender, it illuminates the role of women in the slavery system, but also highlights their subordinate position to male slave-owners through their generally much smaller awards. By linking amount of compensation to type of plantation, it opens the possibility of learning more about the everyday experiences of both the owners and their enslaved workers on their different types of agricultural holding with their different labour demands and seasonal rhythms.

It is suggested that, despite the limitations of the data, this new typology of Devon slave-owners at the end of the West Indian slave/plantation system makes an important contribution to the understanding of slave ownership, which might have relevance to other parts of the UK.

### **CONCLUSION**

This analysis could form a useful basis for further research into Devon slave-ownership, which could lead to better informed debates. Debate has tended to be based on generalisation and over-simplification, but could, instead, recognise the more nuanced and complicated nature of slave-ownership. The

new typology devised in this paper, for example, might be used to make comparative studies with other counties, to recognise where individual slave-owners fit into the social hierarchy, and to assess the role of women in slave-ownership. It could hopefully play a part in recognising the roles of Devonians as part of the transatlantic slave/plantation system, which produced great wealth for Britain, but left the formerly enslaved in a disadvantaged economic and social position both in the Caribbean and in this country. It could help to inform the debates currently taking place throughout British institutions on the extent of their past debt to slavery and how this should be acknowledged and addressed.

### **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

The author spent many years in Jamaica, where she was wife of a coffee planter, raised a mixed-race family, and taught in local high schools.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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### **NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Black Lives Matter is an international movement for the recognition of the racism suffered by black people, sparked by the 2021 murder of George Floyd in the USA. The Windrush scandal is the denial of British citizenship to people of Caribbean origin who came to Britain legitimately as children before 1973 but who do not have the correct papers; part of the British government's 'hostile environment' towards immigrants.

<sup>2</sup> See [ucl.ac.uk/lbs/project/individuals](https://ucl.ac.uk/lbs/project/individuals) for definitions of these terms.

<sup>3</sup> Draper (2010) included these beneficiaries in his analysis because he was mainly concerned with the flow of money associated with compensation, whereas the present research is interested in slave-ownership as a 'moral category'. Therefore, it is restricted to the fact of ownership and omits the wider beneficiaries, who were, in any case, a large and indefinite number.

<sup>4</sup> A recent analysis by Christine Walker delves into this question. Walker, C. (2020). *Jamaica Ladies: Female slaveholders and the creation of Britain's Atlantic empire*. Chapel Hill: The Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture.

<sup>5</sup> Relative Price Worth (RPW) uses average price of a range of goods in the base year and compares it with the current year (i.e. a measure of price inflation). Relative Wealth Index (RWI) calculates relative value on the basis of change in purchasing power, using average earnings for all workers (i.e. a measure of labour/income value). Since compensation was for agricultural labour, the RWI seems the most appropriate. See Renton, A. (2021). *Blood legacy*. Edinburgh: Canongate Books, p. ix.

<sup>6</sup> The mean payment was much higher than this, at £4,808 per owner, due to a small number of very high claims. The median gives a fairer estimate of average than the mean for a skewed distribution such as this.

## ABBREVIATIONS

LBS Legacies of British Slave-ownership; in 2021 renamed Legacies of British Slavery

UCL University College London

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## **CAPTIONS TO FIGURES AND TABLES**

Table 1: Criteria for inclusion as a Devon slave-owner

Table 2: Devon slave-owners in the 1835 Compensation Records

Table 3: Territories where enslaved people were held

Table 4: Devon slave-owners' places of birth

Table 5: Typology of Devon slave-owners according to amount of compensation received

Figure 1: 1835 Devon slave-owners by age and gender

Figure 2: Types of slave-owner by amount of compensation and gender

Figure 3: Types of slave-owner by amount of compensation and birthplace

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