

Kresen Kernow guide to sources about the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Caribbean

This guide is the start of a project to identify key collections and items in our collections relating to Black histories. This is a significant piece of work, designed to make it easier to find items and to reveal previously hidden histories. The project will be wide ranging, but we are starting by considering what our collections reveal about Cornish connections to the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Caribbean.

This document is designed to be an introduction to the types of sources we hold which may be of use in your research. It is not a comprehensive list. We strongly recommend searching our catalogues using the key terms below in order to discover the full range of documents.

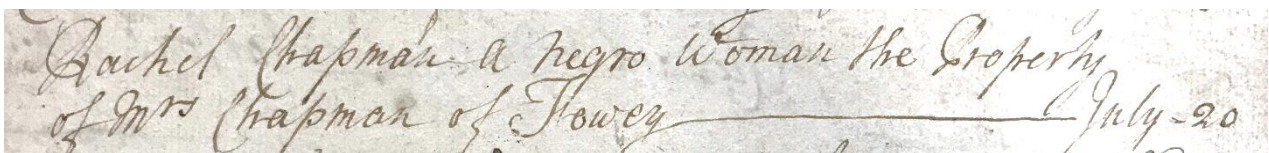
Key search terms: Caribbean, Transatlantic Slave Trade, Black history

Records tagged with these terms are those with the greatest relevance to the history of these places and themes. We have also included several key published sources in this introductory guide.

Please note: We recognise that our catalogue contains some terms which are offensive, and some whose meaning has changed over time. Such terms exist within some original records and have been retained to inform users of the nature and content of the sources concerned. They do not reflect the views of the Archives and Cornish Studies Service. We apologise for any offence that our inclusion of these words may cause.

Parish registers

Several of our parish registers include baptisms, marriages and burials of Black people, who were likely enslaved – or formerly enslaved. These include:



P204/1/2 – baptisms of "Samuel Chapman a Negro Child aged nineteen Months ye Property of Mrs Anne Chapman" in 1743 and "Rachel Chapman a Negro Woman the property of Mrs Chapman of Fowey" at St Sampson in Golant church in 1746 (pictured).

P22/1/6 – marriage of "John Rodney of this Parish mariner a Negro and Elizabeth Stotten[?] of this Parish spinster" who married at Budock church on March 10 1804. This marriage was witnessed by "Joseph Emedy" (or Emidy – the violinist and formerly enslaved person who lived in Falmouth). For more information on Emidy see:

Music and musicians in early nineteenth-century Cornwall: the world of Joseph Emidy - slave, violinist and composer by Richard McGrady, 1991

The tin violin: the adventures of Joseph Emidy: a true Cornish tale by Alan Kent, 2008

Autobiography of James Silk Buckingham, 1855 in two volumes. Volume one, pages 165-171 cover Joseph Emidy.

Sir Charles Lemon of Carclew is also named in documents relating to plantations in the Caribbean, for example, he is listed as a party in: WH/1/1756 - Draft release, sugar plantation, Spring Garden, Jamaica, c1830.

The UCL Legacies of British Slave Ownership database contains additional names:

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/maps/britain>.

Trade and shipping

Goods from the Caribbean, produced by the labour of enslaved people, easily reached Cornish shores through the busy network of maritime trade, including through the packet ship service out of Falmouth. Individual items such as ships' logbooks refer to victualling ships in the Caribbean as well as to shipwrecks and accidents in the region.

Useful collections and items include:

FOX – The Fox family were merchants and ship agents in Fowey and Falmouth.

AD749/4 - Freight book, Falmouth Packet Boats, 1786-1791, records imports and freight on Falmouth-based packet boats, including with America and the Caribbean, 1786-1789

EN/1784-90 – Isaac Rogers' letterbooks, including 'West Indies' trade, 1798-1805

AD2330 - Journal of Grace Gilbert, voyage to Antigua aboard Montagu Packet ship, 1822-27

Shipping registers often record foreign-born crew, including several from the Caribbean. For example: MSR/23/4 - Account of crew for the 'Annie Whitburn', 1865-66 includes "Joseph Wilson, 23 years, of Jamaica" who deserted on Jamaica in 1866.

The Falmouth Packets 1689-1851 by Tony Pawlyn, 2003

The history of the sailing packets to the West Indies by L.E. Britnor, 1973

The Cornish mariner: Captain Joseph Banfield edited by Charlotte Mackenzie, 2017

Merchants and smugglers in eighteenth century Cornwall by Charlotte Mackenzie, 2019

The forgotten trade: comprising the log of the Daniel and Henry of 1700 and accounts of the slave trade from the minor ports of England, 1698-1725 by Nigel Tattersfield, 1991

Letters of a West African trader: Edward Grace, 1767-70 published by Council for the Preservation of Business Archives, 1951

Wills

Travel to the Caribbean was dangerous, and many settlers swiftly died from unfamiliar diseases. Individuals made their wills before they travelled, or in haste on their deathbeds. Some wills in our collections also mention passing on the ownership of enslaved people. These can all be found by searching 'Caribbean', but include:

AP/T/872 - Will of John Trout of St Martin by Looe, 1661 – “now at Plymouth redde to shipp in a voyage for the Caribde [Caribbean] Isleland for beinge a greate hazard of my life”

AP/B/2495 - Will of Thomas Barbar, mariner, of St Ives, 1699, on board HMS Foresight in the Caribbean

RH/6/2/1 – Will of the Reverend Walter Trevelyan, 1831, mentions estates on Grenada with “negroes, rights and appurtenances”

Administrative affairs, wars and politics

Documents related to the colonial administration of the Caribbean also appear in our collections, including recommendations for employment. Many Cornish families played prominent roles in governing the different islands of the Caribbean and their family collections (e.g. the Trelawnys) could be revealing. During much of the period in question, wars were fought across the Caribbean and islands changed hands multiple times. Some of this turmoil is reflected in the collections, which also include service records.

AD175/3 - Order to pay salaries, Leeward Islands, West Indies, 1711

QS/1/4/557 - Letter, widows and children of soldiers arrived from West Indies, 1780

AD2115/13 – Letters from Captain William Rogers, 1809

Individual letters and references

Many of the items we look after provide only a glimpse of the history they are connected to. These can be individual surviving letters which provide an insight into the thoughts and opinions of one person at the time, or there are legal documents, such as leases, which refer to the parties being “of Jamaica”. Further contextual research might provide more information about the records. Examples include:

AD1996/1 - Transcript, licences to pass beyond the seas (extracted from original records held at The National Archives), 1632-1635

CN/3478 - Letter, from Paschow Morshead in Barbados, May 1674

G/1969/2 – Letter from H Peters in Jamaica, 1739: “I am afraid I shall not be able to send you any Citron Water from hence. Barbadoes is ye best place for that Commodity & other fine Drams.”

MA/B/35/69 - Letter relating to Fowey Man of War sailing and accounts sent from Jamaica, 1744

EL/B/2/3/14 – Letter from Richard Eliot, 1748 – “we are destroying and taking all in the East and West Indies out too late to avail our selves much by our conquests there”

X694/6-7 – Letters from Barbados, family news, 1797

X326/70 - Letter, William Richards at Port Royal, Jamaica, to wife in Camborne, 1832: “I am verry sorry to here that you should Take such steps as you have done, in getting with Child”

Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade

The collections at Kresen Kernow contain several letters, petitions and speeches connected to the abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

RO/5304 - Notice by mayor calling public meeting to discuss petition against the transatlantic slave trade, Helston, 1792

BPENR/484 - Draft petitions, inhabitants of Penryn, slave population in West Indies, c1821

BIVES/104 - Case for legal opinion, 1825 – “Case for opinion of Mr Brougham concerning French vessel 'Pearl' lying in St Ives harbour with cargo of slaves, manacles and provisions... is vessel liable to seizure and would suppliers of stores be guilty of felony”

RO/5326 – Petition in favour of the abolition of slavery, Helston, 1826

The fall of slavery poem by John Harris, 1838 in *John Harris, the Cornish poet: a lecture on his life and works* by John Gill, circa 1884

Suppression of the Transatlantic Slave Trade

After Britain abolished its Transatlantic Slave Trade in 1807, the British Royal Navy launched the West Africa Squadron to try and stop the remaining ships trading in enslaved people across the Atlantic.

EN/2626 – Journal, Captain Henry Rogers, 1848-1852. In his journal Henry describes his role in the suppression of the slave trade, capturing vessels, the treatment of enslaved people, burning slave ships and more. A full transcript is available (see EN/2627).

Sweet water and bitter: the ships that stopped the slave trade by Sian Rees, 2009

Environment

The Caribbean landscape and environment were of interest to scientists, botanists and early travellers. Some of these interests are reflected in our collections. For example, there are records of rock and specimen collecting in the Caribbean and, later, photographs of plants.

R/5757/2/27 - Letter from William Gregor to P Rashleigh, 1803 regarding the “The black sand from the Island St Nevis...”

HB/A38/1-15 – Maps of Jamaica, including names and plantations, surveyed 1888-1897 (pictured)

EN/1913/9 – Photographs of Trinidad, 1903-1906

The voyage: a poem: written at sea, and in the West Indies, and illustrated by papers on natural history by Edward Osler, 1830

Plants, seeds, and currents in the West Indies



and Azores: the results of investigations carried out in those regions between 1906 and 1914 by Henry Brougham Guppy, 1914

Lectures on the study of chemistry, in connexion with the atmosphere, the Earth and the ocean: and discourses on agriculture, with an introduction on the present state of the West Indies, and on the agricultural societies of Barbados by John Davy, 1849

Additional publications

Contemporary published sources

The interesting narrative and other writings by Olaudah Equiano, 1995, originally published in 1789. The 1815 edition is also held at Kresen Kernow. Equiano first landed at Falmouth. See also *Sold as a slave* by Olaudah Equiano, 2007.

Reasons why the people called Quakers cannot so fully unite with the Methodists in their mission to the Negroes in the West India Islands and Africa as freely to contribute thereto: with a few queries consonant therewith by Catherine Phillips, 1792.

Local newspapers are also usually a great source of information about contemporary events and opinions.

Articles

Cornwall's honoured slave (Philip Scipio) by Joan Rendall in *Old Cornwall*, volume 9, part 3, p.116-118

English indentured servants and the transatlantic colonial economy by David Souden in *International labour migration: historical perspectives* edited by Shula Marks, 1984

The Virgin Gorda Copper Mine by Frank and Margaret Birchall in *Journal of the Trevithick Society*, number 20, 1999, pages 23-34

An enslaved African escapes to Falmouth – The life of John Alice (1835-1902) by Anthony Tibbles in *Cornwall Association of Local Historians Journal*, Number 73, Spring 2021, pages 44-46

General histories

Cornish in the Caribbean by Sue Appleby, 2019

Devon and the slave trade: documents on African enslavement, abolition and emancipation from 1562 to 1867 by Todd Gray, 2007

The defeat of John Hawkins: a biography of his third slaving voyage by Rayner Unwin, 1962

Black Tudors: the untold story by Miranda Kaufmann, 2017

Fiction

Richard Tregellas: a memoir of his adventures in the West Indies in the year of grace 1781 by David Lawson Johnstone, 1891