

*Cymdeithas Hanesyddol Tyddewi a Phebidiog*  
*St Davids and Dewisland Historical Society*

**Slave Owners in Pembrokeshire & their Legacies**

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The English Civil War and execution of a king sent Britain on a very different course from the rest of Europe ... powered by a craze for sugar! In 1700 the consumption of sugar per annum was 4 lb per head, by 1800 it increased to 18lb per head and 1900 it had reached 100 lb! The powerful combination of slaves and sugar generated opportunities for enormous wealth - for those in a position to take advantage of it. Also in the C18th Britain owned many of the Caribbean islands - covering millions of acres of prime sugar-growing land (Jamaica 4mill, Bahamas 5mill, British Honduras 5mill). Sugar cultivation generated a great demand for labour and the need for slaves created the Triangle of Trade - based on Bristol ... where ships carrying trade-goods (alcohol, tobacco, cloth) sailed to West Africa where they traded with Slavers who captured whole families from villages across North Africa. Ships full of slaves sailed for the Caribbean (expected loss of life of 14%). Once their human cargo was off-loaded the ships, swept clean, were loaded with the sugar crop before returning to their home port of Bristol. Vast profits were made by the ship-owners at every stage and this was re-invested in more ships ... and more land was cleared for more plantations ... increasing the demand for more slaves! Sugar even helped 'fuel' the Industrial Revolution - as the plantations needed powerful - and bigger - mills for extracting the sugar from the sugar cane so the demand for machinery resulted in money being ploughed, accelerating the growth of industry.



- **Nathaniel Phillips** 1730-1813 Jamaican plantation owner/ pro-slavery - born into family of plantation owners and marrying into another ... returning to UK purchases included Slebech Park. He was even made High Sheriff and married into the Philips family of Picton.
- **General Sir Thomas Picton** of Poyston Hall - aged 40 was made governor of Trinidad and began rule of terror by employing horrendous means of putting people to death. Eventually brought to trial but took so long he fought in the Peninsula War, alongside Wellington, and died at Battle of Waterloo.
- **Henry Leach** of Loveston 1794-1864 son of family of slave-owners (420 of them) bought Corston House.
- **Sabine Gascoyne** 1759-1840 Colourful career included being captured by the French, changing his name and inheriting plantations and 322 slaves from his mother! Bought Haroldstone House and a papers discovered in the refer to his father as Joseph Gascoyne.
- **Joseph Foster Barham** 1759-1832 He inherited plantations, slaves, ships and a merchant company from both father and mother. Unusually for the time he instructed his plantation managers to treat all his 780 slaves fairly and well - insisting the children were well-housed, educated and provided with health care. Aimed to ensure slaves received payment for work and supported total abolition - not just of Slave Trade. 1819 also sought Criminal Law Reform.
- **Charles Mathias** 1778-1851 His Aunt married William Smalling - owner of extensive plantations and slaves which her nephew subsequently inherits. 1823 he buys the ruins of Lamphey Bishops Palace and constructs Lamphey Court - with the aim to have Capability Brown create 100 acre gardens with the picturesque ruins as a feature!

Between them Pembrokeshire gentry owned in excess of **2332 slaves** between them. The leading abolitionists at the turn of C18<sup>th</sup> ... Granville Sharp, William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson ... spread the true story of slavery with the aid of the horror stories told by sailors returning to Bristol, from the ships having completed the voyages throughout the Triangle of Trade! Gathering testimonials and presenting these before the House of Commons the First Bill was defeated in 1791, the Second Bill of 1792 had unacceptable amendments proposed so it took till 1807 for Slave Trade to be abolished and 1823 Pembrokeshire petitioned for the abolition of slavery and not just the trade! 1826 Earl Cawdor - 7<sup>th</sup> biggest landowner in UK - came out in support of abolition but even in 1852 (20 years after the abolition of slavery) there were still almost 3 million people being held in slavery!