

EMMANUEL COLLEGE AND RESEARCH INTO THE LEGACIES OF ENSLAVEMENT:

THE STORY SO FAR EASTER TERM 2021

In April 2019, the University of Cambridge launched the [LEGACIES OF ENSLAVEMENT INQUIRY](#), a two-year academic study into the ways that the University contributed to, benefited from, or challenged the trade in enslaved people across the Atlantic. Although a final report is expected by mid-2022, the University's Advisory Group has already noted and welcomed several important collegiate initiatives to further our understanding of Cambridge's historical links to enslavement and its legacies. In the Summer of 2020 a group of interested Emmanuel members came together to consider how best to shape Emmanuel's own response. The [MINUTES OF THE EMMANUEL HISTORIES WORKING GROUP MEETINGS ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE](#).

What follows is an account of the work in progress at this point in the College's investigations, with some indication of the aims of future activity.

Since its formation, the Working Group has begun to identify the sources of historical evidence closest to hand in the College archives and in University and online national databases. From this initial scoping exercise, it is possible to build a sense of Emmanuel's connection, through its members, to the transatlantic world of the long eighteenth century, (for our purposes, c.1660-1833). It is clear that some of the men admitted to study at the College, between the beginning of the trade in enslaved African people, and the abolition of enslavement in the British colonies, participated in the legislative, financial and mercantile cultures of slavery. Many of these men owed their wealth and social status to the trade in enslaved men and women, and its auxiliary activities. The networks formed by these alumni brought political influence as well as some material legacies, within and well beyond the College walls. From the archival evidence we can also see that the College community was a site for the exchange of ideas and arguments that challenged public understanding of enslavement. It is possible to note the presence of dissenting groups agitating for Parliament to dismantle the legal basis for the system of slavery, whilst we can also trace the vested interests which retarded the process of abolition.

Early in the process, the College Archivist, Amanda Goode, wrote an invaluable memo for the Working Group, on the primary source materials necessary to any investigation into Emmanuel's historic links to enslavement. The first step, she advised, would be the compilation of a list of alumni who were enslavers themselves or who had connections to enslavers. The principal resource is the lists of Cambridge University alumni, up to and including students matriculating in 1900. This listing, *Alumni Cantabrigiensis*, known as 'Venn' after its original early 20th century compilers, is now [FULLY DIGITIZED](#). Venn contains all biographical details given in college admission registers and University matriculation and

degree lists, as well as later career details (where these could be established) taken from clergy lists, law lists and selected parliamentary records. The search page has fields for name, college, and related location, and although details are often cursory, the information allowed searches to be made for 'Emmanuel' in conjunction with locations such as 'Barbados' or 'Jamaica'. The names resulting from such a search could then be cross-referenced with two other databases: the list of Benefactors held in the College archives, and the online database maintained by the Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery, based at University College, London.

Emmanuel's list of Benefactors is not yet available in digital form, and recent pandemic conditions have prevented access to the physical archive, but as part of the inquiry work has started on transcribing the list into a searchable format. The UCL database represented a significant source of information in this stage of the inquiry. It offers a picture of British enslavers, working backwards from the Parliamentary Act of 1833 which abolished slavery in the British Caribbean, Mauritius and the Cape. This Act, passed 26 years after Britain outlawed the trade in enslaved African people in 1807, awarded £20 million of taxpayers' money in partial compensation to the British enslavers obliged to give up the people whom they held as property. The remainder of the buy-out had to be worked off by enslaved people in the form of fixed-term, unpaid 'apprenticeships'. This settlement by the state left detailed records of all those in receipt of compensation in the 1830s, and has since been augmented by a further phase of research identifying the ownership histories of a further 4000 estates. Initial searches by Amanda Goode and Mai-Linh Ton identified the names of around fourteen Emmanuel alumni on the UCL database.

Here we present three brief case studies from these findings, as windows on the connections between the College and enslavement in the long eighteenth century.

Burch Hothersall. Hothersall, who was admitted to Emmanuel in 1682, came from a prominent plantation-owning family in Barbados. He is listed as a College Benefactor, having donated a sum of money (variously reported as £120 to £140) between 1682 and 1686 for the purchase of an organ for the recently completed college chapel. You can read more about this gift in an article by David Hughes [IN THE EMMANUEL MAGAZINE](#). Nothing remains of the original organ; it was partially replaced in the 1870s and an entirely new instrument was installed in 1909. An English estate, Gidea or 'Giddy' Hall in Havering, Essex, descended to the Hothersalls through Burch's father's Uncle, John Burch. [THE UCL WEBSITE NOTES](#):

When John and Margaret Burch returned to England from the Hogsty Plantation, Barbados in 1664 they bought Giddy Hall and brought with them as maidservant 'Cumba', who was and remained an enslaved woman until her death in April 1668. It is not known whether she was born in Africa and endured the middle passage or whether she was born in Barbados. She was buried at St Edward's Church, Romford.

Barbados is a particularly important location in the growth in enslavement, as it provided one of the legislative models on which the Atlantic slaveholding system was based. The 'Slave Codes' implemented on the island from 1661 established the status of enslaved people of African descent as 'chattels', and protected enslavers from liability if enslaved Black people were killed or maimed in the course of punishment. It is also clear from the records for this period kept on 'Venn', that there were a number of students at Emmanuel with connections to the island, including Nicholas Prideaux (born 1671), son of a planter and President of the Council of Barbados, and Walter Caddell (admitted 1755), son of the Barbadian Treasurer.

Robert Hibbert. Hibbert was born in Jamaica in 1769, and entered Emmanuel College in 1787, the year in which William Pitt challenged campaigning MP William Wilberforce to bring a motion in parliament for the abolition of the trade in enslaved people. Whilst in Cambridge Hibbert was closely connected to a circle of Unitarian thinkers, including the clergyman and social reformer William Frend, who became his lifelong friend. Hibbert's theological sympathies did not prevent him taking his B.A. in 1791, for which he would have had to subscribe to the Articles of the established Church of England. Unitarians were prominent anti-slavery campaigners, and although Hibbert seems to have been unpersuaded by his friendships to relinquish his ownership of up to 531 enslaved people, in 1817 he dispatched a young Unitarian minister, Thomas Cooper, as a missionary to the enslaved men and women he held on his plantation in Hanover, Jamaica. When Cooper returned in 1821, he reported in detail to Hibbert regarding the abuses he had witnessed. Robert Hibbert was by this time resident in England, and engaged in philanthropic work such as his provision of almshouses for widows in Luton. Cooper took pains to stress the relatively generous provision made by Hibbert for the enslaved persons on his plantation, and to attribute the cruelties he had seen to 'the slave system' working in the absence of the landlord of the estate; but Hibbert was evidently inclined to disparage Cooper's evidence, and after the report found its way into the Unitarian periodical *The Monthly Repository*, [A PAMPHLET CONTROVERSY](#) ensued into which Cooper's wife Ann was also drawn in defence of her husband's character. She published the story of Sarah Brissett, a young enslaved woman made pregnant by a white overseer on the estate, and employed as nursemaid to the Coopers' children. When Sarah's baby was stillborn, lawyers for Hibbert deducted a sum from Thomas Cooper's stipend to represent the loss of a potential enslaved person to the estate. Robert Hibbert received compensation of over £10, 530 from the British government in 1835.

The Longs of Jamaica. At least five sons of the Long family, one of the dynasties of the 'plantocratic' ruling class of enslavers in the Caribbean, attended Emmanuel during the eighteenth century. The first of these appears to have been Charles Long of Hurts Hall (admitted to the College in 1724), the owner of the Lucky Valley estate in Clarendon, Jamaica, and father of two more Emmanuel men, Charles Long of Saxmundham and Dudley Long, both of whom matriculated in 1766. A brother of the elder Charles Long, Beeston Long Sr, was a London West India merchant and partner in a firm that held estates and enslaved people as mortgagees-in-possession: two of his sons, Charles Long (later Baron Farnborough) and the Reverend William Long, were admitted to Emmanuel in 1779 and 1781. The family name is better known for its association with Edward Long, a colonial administrator, Jamaican enslaver and author of a controversial work, *The History of Jamaica* (1774). Edward Long's father was the half-brother of Charles Long of Hurts Hall. *The History of Jamaica* is a political and economic survey of the island, but it is now notorious for its polemical defence of slave ownership, which comes from Long's theory of white supremacy and the racial inferiority of people of African descent.

Whilst at Emmanuel College, the Charles Long who became the first Baron Farnborough does not seem to have taken a degree, but during his time in Cambridge made many of the connections that would help launch his career in politics. One of the closest friendships he made at Cambridge was with William Pitt the Younger, under whom he served at the Treasury until 1801, when Pitt became Prime Minister. [A LETTER FROM LONG TO PITT AT THIS DATE](#) respectfully requests a Pension of £1200 a year, since, 'You probably know that independently of the Treasury I am not rich'. Pitt obliged with an annuity of £1500. In 1811, after a fire caused damage to some of the central college buildings, the four Longs from this generation of the family made gifts to Emmanuel of £50 or £100 each for repairs. In later life, Charles Long, 1st Baron Farnborough, gained a reputation as an arbiter of taste in the visual arts: his advice to George IV earned him the title of 'the King's spectacles', and he was a Trustee of the British Museum and the newly instituted National Gallery, to which he bequeathed paintings by Canaletto, Rubens and Joshua Reynolds.

Some Support for Abolition

Members of Emmanuel College also made a number of donations to the Abolitionist cause in the late eighteenth century, during the Mastership of the literary scholar Richard Farmer. The brief references in the College archives are these: Bennet's Book (COL.9.1) records two donations from the College to petitioners for the Abolition of the slave trade. William Bennet was elected a Fellow of Emmanuel in 1769. He was appointed Bishop of Cork in 1790. During his Fellowship he compiled two volumes of lists, notes and memoranda concerning Emmanuel's history. Two references to abolitionist causes appear on p.87 of Vol. 1 of Bennet's Book Vol 1, under the heading 'Remarkable Items in the Poores Bag'. The 'Poores Bag' was the receptacle for money given at the Sacraments in Chapel which were 'applied to the support of distressed objects'. Bennet's extracts, evidently from a register now lost, cover the years 1719-1798. The relevant extracts are:

- Decr 4. 1787: Towards the Petition to the House of Commons to consider the case of the Negroes in the West Indies. £2-2s-0d
- May 1792. To the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. £2-2s-0d.
- The Bursary Long Book, 1748-94 (BUR.8.6) also records a donation in or around 1789. The Long Books are the main College account books for that period. In the years 1787-1793 there is one entry relating to abolition:
- 1789 LD (that is, payments made since March 25th, 1789): Slave petition. £2-2s-0d.

Future Work

Each of the individual biographies sketched above forms part of a history of Emmanuel bound by multiple ties to the transatlantic world and beyond. The picture that is beginning to emerge is of a set of legacies in the most extended sense, radiating from and returning to Emmanuel College and its position in the cultural, intellectual and material history of the long eighteenth century. We have barely troubled the surface of these stories in the work we have begun. There is more to discover with respect to the identities and communities of the enslaved persons named or unnamed in the accounts cited here, and greater potential to investigate the influence of Black abolitionists such as Olaudah Equiano, who campaigned alongside like-minded alumni of the University, and whose eldest daughter is buried in the churchyard of St Andrew's, Chesterton. The long eighteenth century is a period of transformational thinking and conflict on a global scale, and in its next phase the Working Group aims to contribute to public understanding of the history of Emmanuel and its links to historic enslavement within these multiple contexts. In summer 2021 the College Council agreed the Working Group's recommendation that a dedicated Visiting Fellowship should be advertised, to allow a specialist in the field to build out from the available resources, widening and deepening the knowledge we all have of our College's role in this part of global history.