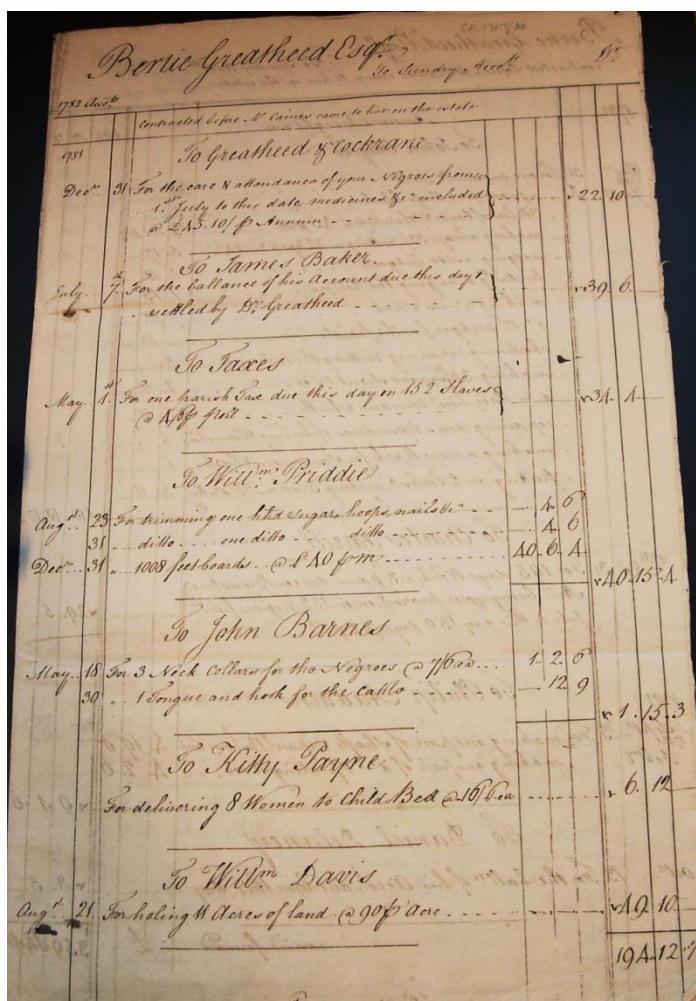


Sugar and Slavery – a Warwickshire story

CR1707/30

Britain's history of slavery may seem a million miles away from picturesque Warwickshire, but there are closer connections than many may think. We have taken from our collection the accounts of a sugar plantation in St Kitts from 1782, when it was owned by the Greatheed family of [Guy's Cliffe](#).



Bertie Greatheed Esq.		
1782 due to		
Contracted to pay to Dr. Cairnes for his care in the estate		
Decr. 31	To Greatheed stockman	
Decr. 31	In the care & attendance of your negroes from 1 st July to this date medicines for included @ 2/6 10/6 per annum	22 10
July 7	To James Baker	
July 7	In the balance of his account due this day settled by Dr. Greatheed	39 6
To Taxes		
May 1	In one barrell due this day in 152 Slaves @ 1/6 per head	24 1
To Wm. Priddie		
Aug. 23	In trimming one 1/2 cask sugar, hoops, nails etc.	4 6
31	ditto one ditto	4 6
Decr. 31	1089 feet boards @ 1/10 per foot	10 6 4
		10 15 4
To John Barnes		
May 18	In 3 sick collars for the negroes @ 1/6 each	1 2 6
30	1 tongue and hook for the castle	12 9
		1 15 3
To Kitty Payne		
	In delivering 8 Women to Child Bed @ 10/6 each	6 12
To Wm. Davis		
Aug. 21	In hiring 11 Acres of land @ 90p per acre	9 10
		19 12 7

We can see from the accounts that by 1782, the plantation was paying tax on 152 slaves. These slaves may have worked under better conditions than many, as the accounts show bills for 'care and attendance of your negroes' with medicines included, as well as midwifery services for eight women.

1782 Dec^r

Bertie Greatheed Esq.

To Sundry Acc^{ts}

Contracted before M. Cairnes came to live on the estate

1781	To Greatheed & Cockerane		
Dec ^r	31 For the care & attendance of your Negroes from 1 st July to this date medicines &c included @ £15.10/p Annum	22	10
July	To James Baker For the ballance of his Account due this day & settled by B ^t Greatheed	39	6
May	To Taxes For one parish Tax due this day on 152 Slaves @ 1/6p poll	34	4

Detail of the accounts for medical attendance of the slaves at St Kitts

Bertie Greatheed had inherited the plantation from his father Samuel (the Whig MP for Coventry 1747 to 1761) but, radically for his time, Bertie opposed slavery. He was a supporter of William Wilberforce and referred to the plantation as 'that odious property'. He also opposed bloodsports and the terrible conditions of workers in local textile factories.

To Kitty Payne

	For delivering 8 Women to Child Bed @ 10/4 ea	6	12
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The cost of midwifery on the plantation

Britain's love of sugar

Sugar was to the 18th and 19th centuries what oil is to us today. Wars were fought over it and some argue that Britain eventually lost her US colonies because her military was too busy protecting the sugar plantations to quell the revolution.

We may be doing our best to avoid it these days, but in days gone by we couldn't get enough of the white stuff.

Sugar had long been a status symbol in the UK, with many an upper class dining table adorned with creations made from pure sugar (often coloured and fashioned into shapes) as well as sugar loaves. These were huge cones of sugar that would be hammered into smaller pieces and then pinched into usable chunks using special tools.

British colonists called it white gold as consumer demand drove the slave trade in the Americas, and the resulting profits helped to fuel the Industrial Revolution in Britain.

The legacy of the slave trade

While the UK saw massive expansion and progress through the industrial revolution, which was partly paid for by the profits from sugar and the associated slave trade, slavery was abolished by Act of Parliament in 1833. That same act also provided for compensation to be paid to slave owners. Many then redeployed their wealth into other investments.

Further reading:

Warwickshire County Record Office references CR1707/117, 118, 119, 121, 126.

Haydon, Colin. *John Henry Williams (1747-1829) Political Clergyman*. [Rev.]

Williams was Bertie Greatheed's best friend and the book offers more information on his political views including his active opposition to slavery.]

This topic relates well to [Black History Month](#), and their website is well worth visiting.

University College London [has put together a searchable database of those who received compensation and the various commercial, cultural and historical interests into which they invested their legacies.](#)