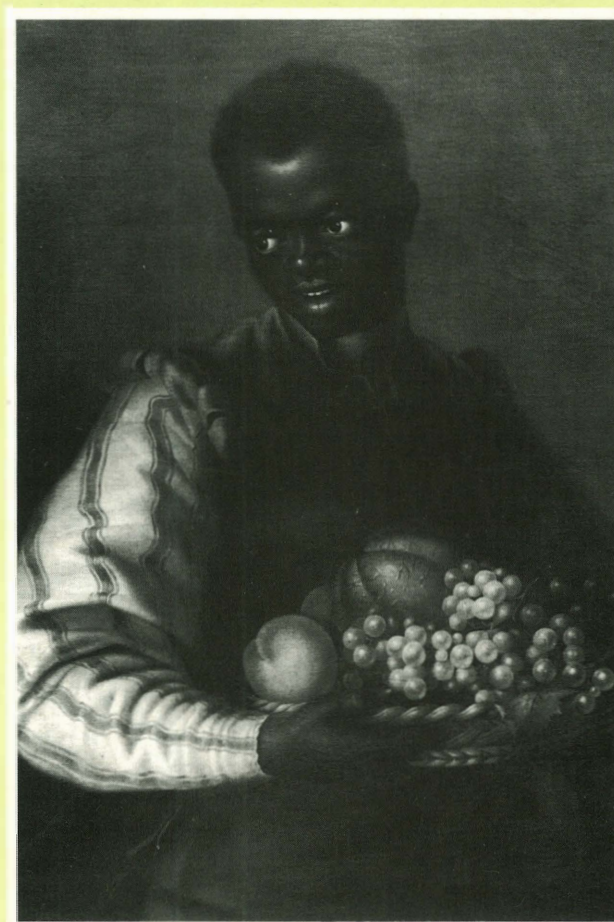


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THE BLACK POPULATION OF BRISTOL IN THE 18TH CENTURY



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The Black Population of Bristol in the 18th Century is the eighty-fourth pamphlet in the local History series published by the Bristol Branch of the Historical Association. The pamphlet is the result of several years' research by the authors who work in the City Museum.

There were so many sources that it was impossible to include them as footnotes in the text. However, a fully annotated copy of the text will be deposited at the Bristol Record Office for those seeking detailed information on the sources.

The publication of a pamphlet by the Bristol Branch of the Historical Association does not necessarily imply the Branch's approval of the opinions expressed in it.

The Historical Association is a national body which seeks to encourage interest in all forms of history. Further details about membership and its activities can be obtained from the Secretary, The Historical Association, 59A Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4JH.

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Cover illustration: The Black Boy by Thomas Jones. Victoria Art Gallery, Bath City Council.

THE BLACK POPULATION OF BRISTOL IN THE 18TH CENTURY

This book aims to look at the presence of Africans in Bristol predominantly in the 18th century, the principal years of the transportation of slaves from Africa to the Americas and West Indies. A good deal is already known about the Slave Trade – the routes, cargoes, ships and merchants involved, its growth, decline and abolition. This publication deals primarily with those Africans who lived and worked in Bristol.

The Arrival

Slaves from Africa were transported by what became known as the Triangular Route: goods from England to Africa; African slaves to the West Indies/Americas; goods from there to England. It was these latter goods which brought great prosperity to Bristol: sugar, molasses, rum, tobacco, hardwood, dyewoods, cotton, etc.

British involvement in this trade began with John Hawkins' first slaving voyage in 1562. Eventually the British, Dutch, Danish, Swedes and French shipped Africans to the West Indies, seeking to break the strangle hold on the Portuguese and Spanish in the slave trade. The Spaniards found that the native Americans died too easily, and when the local populations were drastically reduced, by introduced illness, hard work and ill usage, they looked elsewhere for a workforce. After trying to import criminals and bonded servants from Europe, it was eventually discovered that Africans were better than Europeans when it came to survival and sustained labour in the hot, humid climate.

Bristol's part in this trade in the early days is poorly recorded, perhaps because until 1698, it was technically illegal. Not only did the Spanish insist that trade, other than that carried out by Portuguese

ships, under licence, within their Empire, was illegal, but the London-based Royal African Company held a monopoly of trade in slaves that other ports broke, of course theoretically, legally at their peril.

Apart from supplying the colonies in the West Indies, by 1619 ships from London, and perhaps Bristol, were providing African slaves for British settlements in Virginia in North America.

There is no evidence that any significant number of Africans were brought to Bristol in the 16th and 17th centuries. One African servant, however, is recorded in Bristol in c. 1560. A witness in a Court of Star Chamber case against Sir John Young of Bristol, stated that he 'did appointe a blacke moore to keep possession of his garden', presumably of his 'Great House' in what is now Colston Street.

Another of Bristol's earliest recorded black inhabitants is mentioned in May 1625 in the Bristol Probate Inventories No. 18. She is Cattelena, a single woman living at Almondsbury, described as 'A Negro'; she left an estate valued at £6-9-6. There is no mention, however, as to whether she was ever a slave, and even, in that event, Bristol was not seriously active in the Slave Trade until the very end of the 17th century. Cattelena is one of the few Blacks mentioned before the turn of the century.

Most of the early trading was carried out from the port of London. In 1698, however, despite opposition from the Royal African Company, the slave trade was legally opened by Act of Parliament to vessels from all ports. Bristol at this time had about 10 ships engaged in the African Trade, and had been involved for some years, albeit without the 'official' blessing of Parliament.

In the West Indies and America, written records furnish documentary evidence for the arrival and sale of large numbers of African slaves. The same cannot be said of Bristol. One of the most persistent stories associated with the slave trade in Bristol is that ship-loads of Africans were landed at the docks, although we have no ship's manifest, no bill of purchase or sale, no advertising and no contemporary accounts of such arrivals. The whole purpose of the Triangular Trade was to take goods from Bristol to Africa, slaves from Africa to the West Indies, and cargoes like sugar, tobacco and rum back to Bristol, not to bring African slaves to England.

The largest possible number of slaves to come into Bristol at one time may be indicated by the voyage of the *Jamaica Snow* (a 3-masted brig) in 1730, owned by William Gordon & Co., Thomas Quircke, Master. From Cape Verde, they went to the West Indies with 179 slaves; 41 were left for sale in Barbados and 130 went to Virginia. This leaves 8 unaccounted for – they may have come back to Bristol.

Four may have been the property of the Captain and the First Mate; the other four may have been claimed by the owners of the ship. One possibility is that they were too old or ill for sale, and were brought to England as the only recourse of the ship's Master, to protect himself against accusations by the owners for loss of the 'cargo'. This instance, however, was very much the exception – slaves purchased in Africa rarely came back to England.

Even disallowing the arrival of cargoes of Africans, recently captured, a variation on this idea is the story that merchants from the West Indies returned in triumph to Bristol, having made their fortunes, with a vast retinue of black servants, such as they would have employed on their plantations. This, too, is untrue. All the existing evidence points to servants returning with their owners in ones and twos.

The Pinneys, who are often held up as an example of a family whose wealth was derived from the West Indies, only appear to have had one black servant in Bristol. There are many examples of black servants in family portraits throughout the country, dating to the 18th century but, despite local rumours to the contrary, none of the known portraits of the Pinneys in Bristol features a black servant.

In July 1772, John Pinney and wife sailed from Nevis on their honeymoon to Philadelphia, with two negro servants, 'viz Pero and Nancy Jones'. Pero had been purchased on 4th July 1765 aged 12. In May 1798 when the Pinneys were living in Bristol, Pero was still with them until he was taken ill, and died after a few months. Pinney remembered that 'he has waited on my person upwards of thirty two years, and I cannot help feeling much for him.'

Maids and body servants seem to account for quite a few of the arrivals in Bristol. In 1739 the vessel, the *Baltick* Merchant ship, sailed for Bristol, her home port, from Charleston, South Carolina. Apart from her cargo, she carried passengers: John Braithwaite, his wife, three children, and two negro servants; Sarah Class, her child, and a negro servant, and Susannah Hume and her negro servant. The ship was seized by Spanish privateers on the voyage, and the unfortunate passengers, with their negro servants, were obliged to make their way to England via France, after the captured ship was taken to the Spanish port of St. Sebastian. Here, then, were four negro servants coming to Bristol with three families (probably one man, serving Mr. Braithwaite, and three women as ladies' maids or nurses).

William Holland, Master of the *Mary and Catherine*, wrote to Isaac Hobhouse, the ship's owner, from Mountserat. The letter is dated 30th January 1723, and Captain Holland says, 'I have not as yet received

any money for my wages or privilege slaves'. He, then, had taken his two from the cargo and was obliged to find money to feed them on the return voyage, presumably to be reimbursed later.

It is worth noting that the far greater number of slaves who came to Bristol were young males. The instructions given to the Master of the *Dispatch* were to try and purchase young men, aged 10–25, healthy and strong. Obviously men would be of more immediate use for labour on the plantations; it is also possible that it was not in the merchant's interest to ship too many young women, lest the need for importing slaves should be diminished by a growth in the local population. The Africans who supplied the traders with slaves may also have been loath to part with too many women, and ships' captains may have felt that they were an unnecessary temptation to the crew. Thus we see that most of the advertisements in the Bristol papers of slaves for sale or who had absconded, refer to young men.

Once back in Bristol, Latimer reported in his *Annals of Bristol*, that the Captains promenaded the fashionable walks of the city attended by their gaudily dressed slaves; perhaps, after the fashion of the time, the slave would be wearing a silver collar with the owner's name and crest engraved on it (examples survive, although not with Bristol connections; the *London Gazette* of 1685 carried an advertisement for the return of a runaway, John White, a black boy, wearing a silver collar with Colonel Kirk's 'coat-of-arms and cypher'), so that when the time came for the captain to sail again, he could sell these 'exotic' servants to the fashion-conscious families amongst the well-to-do.

To this end, notices for sale of slaves often featured the owners as ship's captains, and baptisms and burials featuring the title of Captain to the name of the owner. In 1715, Capt. Nightingale left in his will, 'the proceeds of his two boys and girls, then on board his ship'. Here the ship's captain's prerogative of purchase is indicated. This may be Captain Daniel Nightingale, Master of the *Africa* Sloop, who sailed for Guinea and Jamaica in July 1715.

In November 1744, at St. Andrew's Church, the baptism of John Ancoo, a negro servant to Captain Jos. Smith, was recorded. Other church records of slaves owned by Captains include the baptism of John Anthony, negro to Captain Heney at St. Andrew's Church in 1762; the Burial of Capt. Caster's black man in 1766 at the Church of St. Augustine the Less, and the Burial of Capt. Harwood's black boy in 1770, at the same church.

Some of the owners of slaves can be identified from uniting church records and shipping documentation. Unfortunately, given the spelling

of the day, this is not always easy. The Captain John Gwythen who offered a negro man for sale in 1723, may have been the same as the John Gwither, Master of the *Dover*, trading to Jamaica in 1716.

Even where the name is not confusing, there is the problem of precise identification. The Captain Foye who offered £5 for the return of his slave, Scipio, in January 1713, may have been Matthew Foye, Master of the *Medway* Gally, or Edward Foye, Master of the *Wakeing Lyon*, sailing to Jamaica in 1699, who may also be that Edward Foy, who was Ships Master, then Sheriff in 1718 and Mayor in 1730.

When trying to identify slave owners more precisely, it becomes obvious that certain families provided merchants, ship owners and Masters. Any vessel could be owned or hired by more than one person, all of whom had a share in the cost of the goods sent out for trade, the cost of the voyage (fitting the ship, wages, etc.) and who shared in the profits. These families are prominent for several generations, and inter-married, as well as providing apprentices for each other.

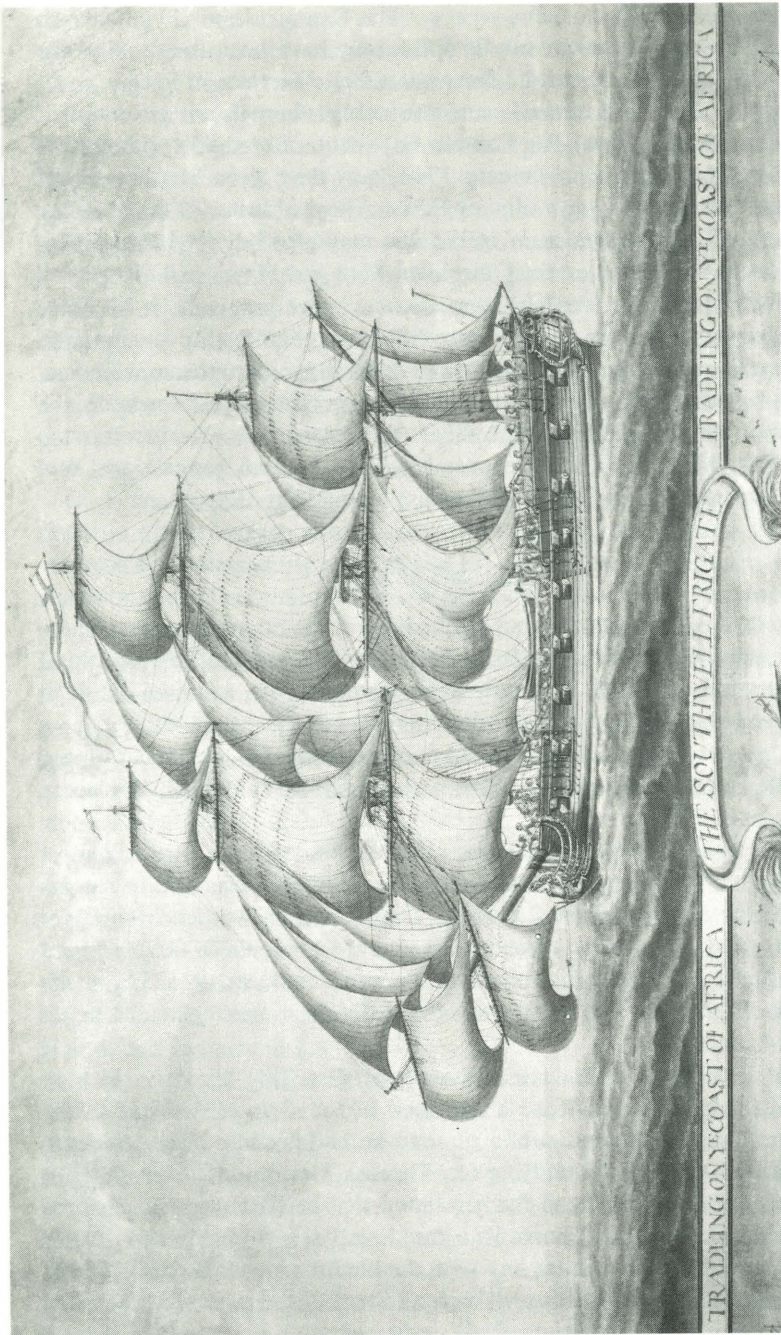
The Sale of Slaves

The evidence of sales comes exclusively from the newspapers. There is no recorded evidence in Bristol of a public auction, or for the sale of more than one slave at a time. The picture of the warehouse full of slaves being auctioned on the dockside is entirely unfounded.

One slave was, in fact, not sold, but bequeathed in a will. In October 1718, Becher Fleming, merchant, left to Mrs. Mary Becher, 'my negro boy, named Tallow'.

As previously mentioned, the sales of slaves seem to refer almost exclusively to young men, and the seller is often a Captain. In August 1723, in *Farley's Bristol Journal*, Capt. Joyhn Gwythen offered for sale, 'a negro man aged about 20 years, well limb'd, fit to serve a gentleman or to be instructed in a trade'. In January 1754, in the *Bristol Intelligencer*, there was offered for sale, 'newly landed, a lad of 14 years'.

At least one Captain must have regretted selling his slave. In May 1768, Captain John Read advertised in the *Bristol Journal* to the effect that, contrary to public rumour, he had not murdered his negro servant, and sold the body to Dr. Thomas Montjoy of Whiteshill for dissection. Captain Read further stated that he had, at great personal trouble and expense, borrowed the slave back from his new owner and would display him to any who doubted his word. He also offered a reward of £10 to anyone who could identify the person who started the rumour!



The *Southwell Frigate*, trading on the coast of Africa. Print by Nicholas Pococke (1740–1821), c. 1760.
City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery

Where Slaves were Reputedly Kept in Confinement

Various locations around central Bristol are favoured in legend as being the places where slaves were held on arrival:

a) The Docks: there are no records of dockside buildings ever being used to house slaves.

b) The cellars or 'caves' in the centre of Bristol: these held various merchandise, including Bristol's famous sherry wine. In fact, the centre of Bristol was closed to heavy traffic for many years, so that the vibrations of carts in the street over the vaulted cellars should not disturb their construction; another reason also given was that it was to protect the wine in its underground stores. Samuel Pepys visited Bristol in June 1668, and recorded in his Diary that he was taken into the cellars to try the sherry; he also marvelled at the absence of carts in the street, goods being transported on sledges and, according to Pepys, 'dog-carts'.

c) The Redcliffe caves: these show no sign of human habitation, and seem to be exclusively associated with Bristol's famous glassworks, used as quarries for the sand needed in the manufacturing process.

d) The crypt of St. Mary Redcliffe church: this was used to house men, but they were 50 Dutch prisoners of war, not slaves. These unfortunates were held in Bristol in 1665, prisoners of the Dutch Wars fought during the reign of King Charles II. In 1666 they were finally removed to Chepstow Castle. There is nothing to indicate that slaves were kept here, or indeed in any church in Bristol.

e) The cellars of the Red Lodge: this building was at one time a girls' reformatory, and chains installed in the cellar were more probably used to confine recalcitrant girls, not slaves.

f) 'Caves' in the grounds of houses in Clifton: this story appears to have derived from the fashion for grottoes in the larger Clifton homes of the wealthy.

All these locations look very much like the sort of places slaves might have been kept. There is no actual evidence, as we have seen, for large numbers of slaves in Bristol at all or for their actually being kept in any of these places.

The Nails in Corn Street are another victim of wishful thinking. A story concerning them is that they were used to display slaves for sale; they are, however, far too small to hold a child, let alone an adult. They were placed in the street to act as 'counters' to lay out money (hence the expression, 'cash on the nail') and to shake out grain samples for inspection. The building outside which they stand is the Corn Exchange, in the heart of the city's business quarter.

Attitudes and Actions towards Slaves

When looking for instances of cruelty towards blacks, several things should be borne in mind. One is that when the Quakers began their campaign for the abolition of slavery in Bristol, drawing up a pamphlet, they were obliged to look to Hull for an example of horrible cruelty towards a black slave, presumably as they couldn't find one locally. None of the Abolitionist literature in Bristol refers to any such cases, only to the abhorrence of the very state of slavery applied to any human being of whatever colour, and especially to black slaves, who had been stolen from their homes.

One of the few actual recorded acts of violence towards a Black man was in St. James Church records: In September 1745, there occurred the burial of John Foly, a Black, 'murdered'. Unfortunately, there is no corresponding item in the local press, so we have no idea of the circumstances that led to his murder, or whether he was a slave or a free black sailor.

When negroes offended against the law, there is no evidence that they were treated any worse, or any more sympathetically, than anyone else. *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* recorded many local trials. In one, a negro man called Landoverly was charged, in August 1759, with stealing soap and sugar from Michael Miller and Edward Nicholas, merchants. In September, he was found guilty, and sentenced to be transported for 14 years. This kind of sentence was standard for the period; for example, at the Bristol Quarter Sessions for April 1818, John Jones was sentenced to transportation for life for stealing one pocket handkerchief.

The earliest group to recognise the incompatibility of slavery with Christian belief, was the Society of Friends, known as Quakers. As early as 1671 they were advocating that slaves in Barbados who had served 'a considerable term of years' should be freed, and by the turn of the century they were openly condemning those who 'steal and rob men' and those who buy these people from them.

The London Yearly Meeting in 1727 warned against 'reaping the unrighteous profits arising from the iniquitous practice of dealing in slaves'.

The Bristol and Frenchay Monthly Meeting records for 1775 stated that the Society had agreed that *all* servants from Quaker households, who could provide a certificate to that effect, were to be admitted to the Society as members. In 1785 these Quakers were pleased to announce that they were almost clear as regards slave ownership, excepting some few members who still had interests in plantations in

the West Indies and Americas, although they were hoping to sell these interests as soon as was practicable.

The Methodists were also vocal opponents of slavery. In 1744 John Wesley preached against it and said that those guilty of the foul act could only be saved by repentance and support for emancipation.

The attitudes of other religious bodies are harder to gauge. The church of St. Andrew recorded baptisms for several blacks at the end of the 18th century – Richard Hurle and Isabella Byron in 1796, John White in 1797, Richard Lemon in 1799 and William Hope in 1801.

The Mansfield Judgement in 1772 was the first major breakthrough in emancipation legislation. In 1765 Grenville Sharpe, the reformer, took up the case of the slave called Somerset, owned by David Lyle; he mistreated his slave and when Somerset was ill and unfit to work, abandoned him. Sharpe took him in, and when Lyle realised his slave was once again fit and healthy, demanded him back. The whole case came to a head in 1772 when Lord Mansfield found that James Somerset (supported by Sharpe), by the fact of having landed in England, became subject to English law which forbade the practice of slave owning. In effect, this meant the abolition of black slavery in the British Isles.

Thus, after 1772, those people mentioned in church records are free men and women, employed by Bristol families or in the city, who had come from the West Indies rather than from Africa, or had been left behind when their ex-owners moved on. Africans therefore could be welcomed into a church community in their own right, not just because of their owners.

Employment and Advancement

The professions open to blacks in Bristol were limited, mostly to domestic service; however, there were chances for advancement, even of making considerable sums of money, in other fields.

Household Servants

In 1640, one of the earlier examples of negro domestic servant is found in Frances 'the blackymore maid . . . a servant to one who lived upon ye Back of Bristol . . . which thing is somewhat rare in our days and nation, to have an Ethiopian, or blackamoor, to be . . . truly converted to the Lord Jesus Christ, as she was.' ' . . . this poor Ethiopian's soul sorrowed much for God, and she walked very humble and blameless in her conversation to her end'.

One of Bristol's, and indeed England's most famous negro servants lies buried in Henbury Churchyard. Dying in December 1720, Scipio Africanus' burial is accompanied by a lengthy inscription:

'Here lieth the Body of Scipio Africanus Negro Servant to ye Right Honourable Charles William Earl of Suffolk and Bradon who died ye 21 December 1720 aged 18 years:

I who was born a PAGAN and a SLAVE
Now sweetly sleep a CHRISTIAN in my Grave
What tho' my hue was dark my SAVIOURS sight
Shall change this darkness into radiant Light
Such grace to me my Lord on earth has given
To recommend me to my Lord in Heaven
Whose glorious second coming here I wait
With saints and Angels Him to celebrate.'

Under a pennant stone slab in the churchyard of St. Andrew, Clifton, lies buried another servant, remembered by his employer:

'In memory of SAMUEL THOMPSON late servant to WILLIAM THOMPSON of Jamaica Esqr., who was unfortunately drowned in the Avon on 16th August 1806 Aged 20 years. This stone is laid as a testimony of the Regard his Master bears to him, memory for his services which since the early Age of 7 years he has discharged faithfully and with integrity. He died lamented by his Master and all who know him.'

The event was of some local importance and interest, since an account appeared in *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* on 23rd August 1806. The paper said that the youth was bathing in the river opposite St. Vincent's Rock, was seized with cramp and drowned; his body was not found until the following morning.

Even after negroes in England were granted their legal freedom, some of those already resident stayed on, perhaps in the same employment. In 1831 the city was torn by the Bristol riots, and great damage was done to property in the Queens Square area. At Mr. Claxton's house, his negro butler helped save the premises from plunder and arson by throwing one of the looters who broke in, out of an upstairs window.

At this point, in relation to black servants, and especially pages, it should be re-stated that the road known as Blackboy Hill in Bristol has no connection with the slave trade, and particularly no connection with black pageboys. Whiteladies Road seems to have taken its name

from an estate called Whitelady's before 1627 (and may be a reference to a medieval order of nuns who wore a white habit), and Blackboy Hill was given its separate name in about 1860, named after the Inn, the Black Boy (originally the 18th century 'Blackmore's Head'), which stood at the top of the hill. In this context, a 'blackmore' may refer to a Moor, that is, an Arab; this particular style of inn sign is reputed to originate from the time of the Crusades against the Moors.

Other 'Professions'

It is certain that some black men followed the profession of seaman. One example is to be found in the baptism, in October 1771, of Peter Stephens, described as 'a free negro, adult mariner of Marsh Street'.

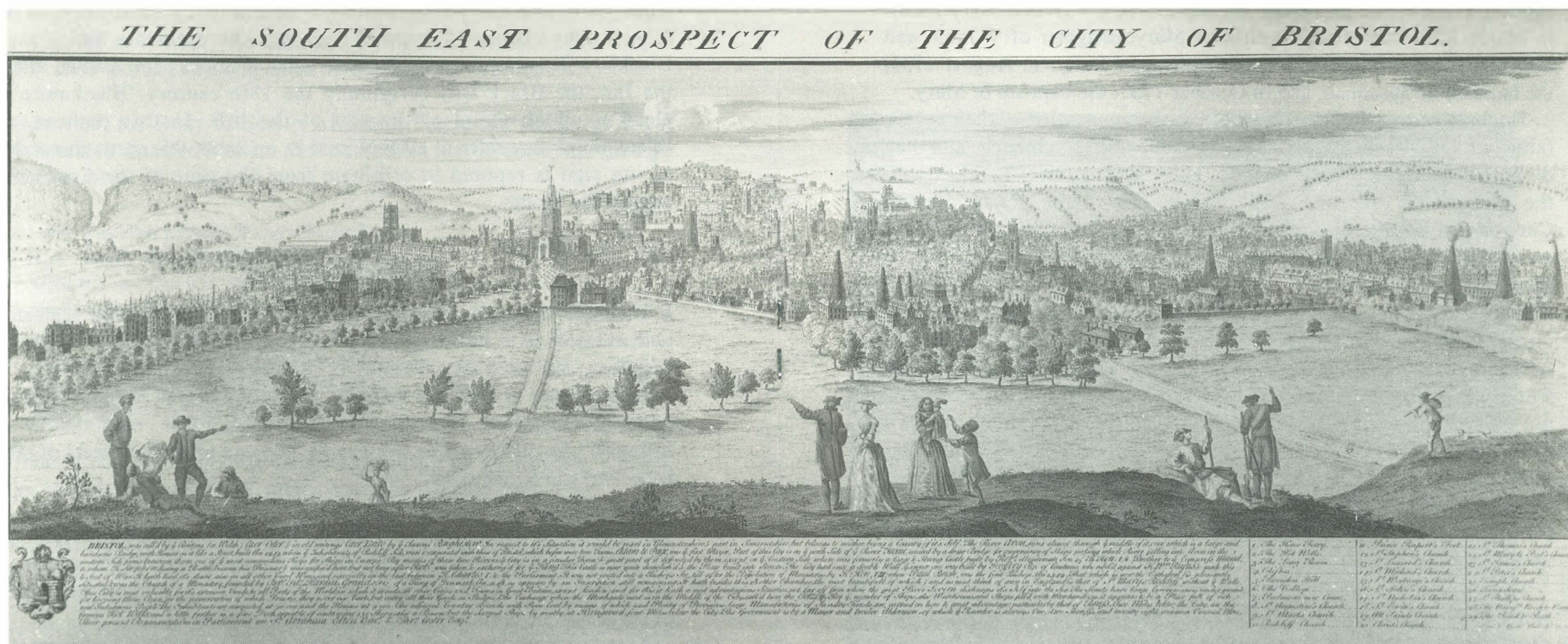
At least one of Bristol's African population seems to have been a miner at Kingswood. In autumn 1748, an assault was committed by a negro on 'the master of the fire engine, and one of the overseers of the cole-works in Kingswood'.

In a slightly less respectable field, *Felix Farley's Journal* for 12 October 1754 carried a story about four surveyors of the Port of Bristol who were robbed on the Bath stagecoach near Marlborough – the robber was 'a very tall large black fellow . . . from the appearance of his hands, he seems to have been used to hard labour'.

Entertainment and sport offered two other fields of advancement. The following information appear in *Felix Farley's Journal* of 4 June 1752:

'We are assured that the AFRICAN PRINCE, or Surprising NEGRO, and the famous new CHIEN SAVANT, or learned DOG will be exhibited both together at our ensuing ST. JAMES Fair at the Three Tons on St. James Back. The said NEGRO in a most accountable manner brings his hands flat clasp'd over his head, back and under his legs and this he does backwards as well as forwards without ever disengaging them. He likewise does several new and astonishing performances on the slack-wire and has had the honour to be seen by the Royal Society at their General Meeting in December last in Crane Court, Fleet Street, LONDON with universal admiration.'

We know of at least one musician, who 'eloped' in March 1757. His absconding is advertised in the *Bristol Journal*; his name was Starling, 'who blows the French horn very well'. He was owned by a publican in Prince's Street who offered the sum of 1 guinea reward for his return.



Map of Bristol, 1734, by S. & N. Buck
City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery

Sport as well as entertainment provided openings for the strong. In the Central Reference Library is an album of newspaper cuttings dated 1816–1823. Amongst other topics, they record various boxing matches held in Bristol. This is the type of boxing done without gloves where a match could have an indefinite number of rounds, only ending when one participant could no longer continue. The prizes, however, could be very large, by the standards of the day. Two particular bills mention fighters called ‘Robin the Black’ and ‘Joseph Stevenson . . . and Sam Robinson, both blacks’.

On a more mundane level, some Africans undoubtedly served owners in ordinary occupations, which they might then take up independently. On 3rd September 1721, Commodore married Venus at St. Michael’s Church; he is described as a gingerbread maker.

In the Community

Apart from the rare occasions when they appear in newspaper articles, records of slaves in church registers seem to indicate that they lead relatively normal lives.

At least one family shows two generations (the second are not referred to as ‘black’ or ‘negro’). September 1728 saw the marriage at St. Augustine the Less, of William Rice and Rebecca Neale, ‘Blacks’. There is also a similar record of the baptism of Rebecca, the slave of Mr. Neale, who may be one and the same as William Rice’s wife.

Then there are the baptisms of four daughters (the first and last share the same name, Mary, suggesting that the elder died before the age of six; she may indeed be the Mary Reece who was buried 22

January 1737, 9 months before the baptism of the second Mary Rice): in March 1731 comes the baptism of Mary, daughter of William and Rebecca Rice; in April 1733, the baptism of Betty; in August 1735, the baptism of Susannah, and in October 1737, the baptism of Mary.

The baptisms of the Rice daughters make no mention of their colour (although the burial of Mary Reece refers to her as 'a black'), and they disappear from the church records. There were several families with the surname of Rice in Bristol, and the girls were given common Christian names, Betty, Susannah and Mary, so that their future lives are unknown. William may have been connected with the family of Rice, the ironfounders.

It seems that negroes were able to amass personal property, a circumstance that may be supported by the will of Cattelena of Almondsbury, mentioned previously, and the sums of money a few were able to lay out for their burial. These latter sums, however, may have been paid by their employers/owners. There are two examples from the Church of St. Augustine the Less: in December 1763, there was the burial of William Waters, 'black man', from Pipe Lane, for whom £3.0.0 was expended. In November 1778, Phillis Jackson, Black, of Frog Lane, left or otherwise provided £4.0.0. for her burial.

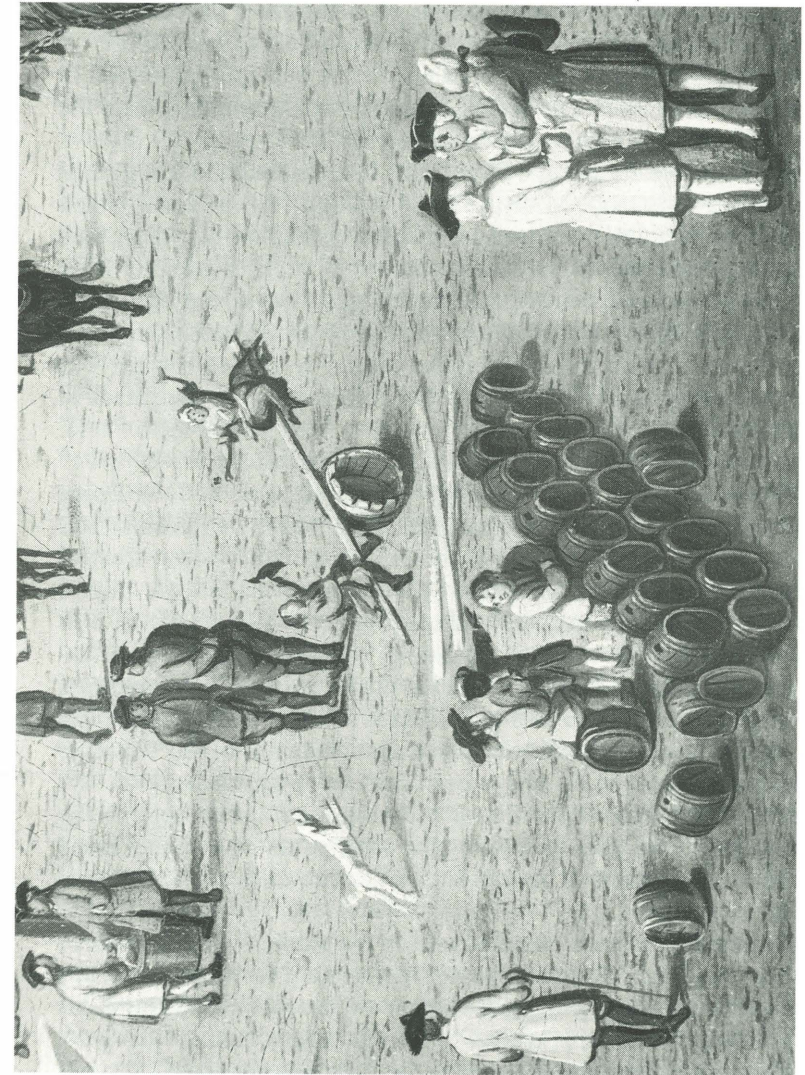
These two (William Waters and Phillis Jackson) not only have £3 and £4 spent on their burials respectively, they also indicate the addresses at which they were living at the time of death. Indeed, all available records seem to place the black population in the city centre, particularly in the area of the dockside.

'Elopements'

As slaves, blacks must sometimes have found life miserable; some of them absconded, the men probably hiding in the area of the docks where they could hope to be accepted as sailors, and where their colour would not be so noticeable.

There are many records of the presence in Bristol of free black sailors. They may originally have been slaves, or been shanghaied in Africa to serve on board the merchant ships, or have become sailors as a chosen profession. They may have been visitors to the city when they were mentioned in local records, or some may have made their home in what was after all one of Britain's foremost trading ports.

Some of the 'elopements' pre-date the Mansfield Judgement, so, before 1772, the motive cannot have been to gain freedom from a



Detail from oil painting of Broad Quay, Bristol, c. 1735, British School
City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery

master by seeking other free employment. There must have been some hope of permanent escape. It also suggests that the runaways had a grasp of basic English and could hope to remain at large and, presumably, to leave England, and certainly the vicinity of Bristol.

The fate of one of the runaways may be indicated by the burial of an unknown black man, presumably a traveller, in Colerne churchyard.

Nothing, however, seemed to dampen their attempts to escape. In November 1746, in *Felix Farley's Journal*, Capt. Eaton advertises the loss of his slave, Mingo, whom he had owned for 8 years:

'Runaway, the 7th instant, from Capt. Thomas Eaton, of the *Prince William*, a NEGRO MAN, named Mingo, of a good black complexion, smooth face, wears a black wig, had on two short blue waistcoats, and brown breeches, about 5'5" high, his legs a little bent, his upper teeth scagg'd and broken, has a cut on his right wrist which stands up in a Bunch. He speaks pretty good English, has been fit and out of this city about eight years.' A guinea reward was offered. 'All persons are hereby forbid entertaining the said Black at their peril.'

The same newspaper carried a similar story in January 1754:

'Whereas a Black Negro Man known by the name of John Lopes Constant, has run away from his master, John Young on Redcliffe Hill in the City of Bristol, this is to forwarn all persons not to trust or entertain the said negro Man, upon the danger of the law, for this he will pay no debts the said negro shall contract. JOHN YOUNG. NB: The said black is about 5 ft high, had on when he went away a Blue-Grey coat and white Holland Waistcoat, A pair of black cloth breeches, a loriged cap, and a pair of light coloured Worsted Stockings, one of his legs broke and stands much out upon the shin bone. Whoever brings the said man to his said master, shall rec. a handsome rew.'

It may well be that the threat of being sold and/or sent to the plantations in the West Indies was the catalyst that forced the young men to flee. It appears to be well known that life there would be brutal and cruel.

Hannah More wrote several poems on the subject of the horrors of slavery. One was 'The Sorrows of Yamba, or The Negro Woman's Lament', published by Edward Walker of the Newcastle Religious Tract Society; another, printed in 1788 was simply called, 'Slavery – A Poem'. It made an impression on the Bristol artist, Samuel Coleman, a Quaker and an opponent of slavery. In his painting, 'St. James's Fair', on display in the City Museum and Art Gallery, Bristol, a Quaker couple are running a bookstall, and a sign on it reads, 'In the Press. Slavery. A Poem'. In the 1820s, Coleman painted

a 'Portrait of a Negro Gentleman'; unfortunately we have no information on the identity of the sitter, or the present location of the painting.

Things were, however, not wholly unpleasant for black people. Sometimes the white authorities would take the part of the black, and it was even possible to make a joke about relationships at the expense of the white person.

In 1768 the London Magistrate, Sir John Fielding, had written a lengthy report on his opinion of the legal status of the Black at that time. He maintained it was not the job of the authorities to chase runaways, who were, in any event, usually protected by the white mob, since, 'Justices have nothing to do with Blacks, but when they offend against the law, by the commission of Fraud, Felony or Breach of the Peace.' This attitude by the officers of the law may explain why it was necessary to offer large, public rewards for the re-capture of runaway slaves.

In July 1667, The Court of Aldermen recorded in its minutes that 'Dinah Black had lived 5 years as a servant to Dorothy Smith, and had been baptised and wished to live under the teachings of the gospel; yet her mistress had recently caused her to be put aboard a ship to be conveyed to the plantations. Complaint having been made, Dinah had been rescued, but her mistress (who had doubtless sold her) refused to take her back; and it was therefore ordered that she should be free to earn her living until the case was heard at the next quarter sessions. From the peculiar manner in which she is described, it may be assumed that Dinah was a negro woman captured on the African coast, and had lived as a slave in Bristol.' Unfortunately, we don't know the fate of Dinah Black, although plainly her deep religious beliefs had won her powerful friends.

Slaves should not always be seen as pathetic servants or terrified runaways. At least one success story is known: The 1814 Report of the Directors of the African Institution, London, mentioned James Martin of Bristol as one of their benefactors; he had been bought as a slave in the Indies, yet he died a free Englishman, leaving a legacy to the African Association for missionary work in Africa.

Comic use of colour in stories may say something about attitudes of the day. The humour is of the basic kind, popular for the period. Here is a quote from undated *Bristol Broadside*s, held in the Central Reference Library, Bristol:

Bristol Broadside No. 9. 'A full, true and particular account of A Lady who Longed for Charcoal, and was safely delivered this morning of A Fine Black Boy, in the neighbourhood of Guinea



Bristol hard-paste porcelain figure of 'Africa' c. 1770-3
City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery

Street'. The text mentions '... visits of a black young man, a Mate of a Ship, who had brought her some sweetmeats from abroad ...' The lady in question tried to convince her husband that the infant's colour was due to her having had a passion for eating charcoal during her pregnancy; she almost had him convinced, when he opened the cupboard door in her bedroom and found the entire supply of charcoal there, uneaten.

Legislation and Decline

The growth and decline of the transportation and sale of slaves were linked to Parliamentary legislation, economic trends at home and abroad, and to English public opinion.

The first major breakthrough was in 1772 with the Mansfield Judgement. However, the sale and ownership of slaves was still legal in the Americas and West Indies. In 1788 Parliament had examined the question of the transporting of slaves and, for the first time, set out a legal requirement of space for each person (5' length and 16" breadth). In the same year, the first anti-slavery meeting took place in Bristol. Both indicated the growing public opinion against the iniquity of trading in human beings under foul and barbaric conditions.

These events, coupled with the Mansfield Judgement, a decline in the West Indian sugar trade and a spate of financial difficulties amongst Bristol's merchant families, indicated the trend toward a decline in the slave trade. By 1796, of 100 ships involved in slaving, 66 were from London, 28 from Liverpool, but only 7 from Bristol.

It is not surprising then to find Bristol slave owners in the 1790s selling their 'property' on to plantation owners in the West Indies and Americas, rather than lose their value, even though, technically, such transactions were illegal. A slave, whilst classed as free as soon as he landed in England, was still classed as a slave in the West Indies; all that had to be done was to get them out of England.

An example of this is to be found in *Bonner's Bristol Journal*, December 1792, which carried the story that, when her Bristol master of many years sold her to another for £80 Jamaican, a negro woman was seen boarding a ship for Jamaica; 'her tears flowed down her face like a shower of rain.'

The authorities had little power to help anyone seized in this fashion. If the crew hired to make the capture, timed it to the hour or so before the ship was due to leave, it would take too long to mobilise the legal machinery for a writ of *Habeas Corpus*, which then had to be served by a single officer of the court against a boatload of armed men who were about to leave the country. A prominent Bristol merchant

and ex-Captain, James Caton, was seized by the Press Gang in the Corn Exchange, and it took his very influential friends some time to arrange his release! Indeed, the city's MP, Edmund Burke, was obliged to make representation to the Admiralty.

It was not until 1806 that it was made illegal to traffic in Africans to the West Indies, and 1834 before slavery was finally abolished in British territories.

After 1834

One persistent myth is that the present Afro-Caribbean population of Bristol is the direct descendant of the slaves of the 18th century. In fact many of them are second or third generation English people, whose immediate ancestors came to England in the 1950s from Africa and from the Caribbean.

It is possible that some of them may be descended from slaves brought to Bristol and then shipped to the Indies in the late 18th–early 19th century. This, however, is probably the closest link.

In fact 18th century slaves in Bristol soon become more difficult to trace from the records. They had, in the main, very English names – Joseph and Mary Thompson, William Worcester, Thomas Smith, William and Rebecca Rice, Robert Harley, Faith Danby, Thomas Wootton, John Jackson, Thomas Paine, Penelope Webb, Anthony and Elizabeth Bass, John Bristol, William Walters, Ann Cambridge, Sybella Ring, Jasper Guy, John James, Joseph Ireland, Samuel Sampson, Isabella Byron, John White, Richard Lemon and William Hope.

Unless they were singled out for special mention, perhaps in the Press, it seems that most of the Africans in Bristol led relatively normal lives. Their descendants may well still live in Bristol, under any of the above-mentioned surnames.

Given the high rate of mortality normally suffered by the citizens of the day, the Africans did not have a particularly short life expectancy. Pero, the Pinney's servant, served his master for 30 years; Ann Atkins lived 17 years between her adult baptism and her burial; William and Rebecca Rice lived in married state for at least 9 years, with Rebecca giving birth to four children, three of whom seem to have survived infancy; William Waters lived 18 years between baptism and burial.

Comparative Attitudes in Bristol

Cruelty and indifference to the suffering of blacks was not peculiar to that group. There are many examples of cruelty to whites, including

the bond-slave trade, and the trade in prisoners-of-war. The flourishing trade in European slaves to the Middle East should not be forgotten.

In 1648, after Cromwell's victory over the Scotch Royalists in Lancashire in August, several thousand of the invaders were captured, whereupon, as recorded in the *Bristol Commons Journal* for September, 'the gentlemen of Bristol applied to have liberty to transport 500 prisoners to the plantations'; their request was at once granted.

September 1652 saw the drawing up of a remarkable corporate ordinance. It premised that many complaints had been made of the 'inveighing, purloining and stealing away of boys, maids, and others', and transporting them beyond the seas, and there disposing of them for private gain, without the knowledge of their parents and friends. 'This being a crime of much villany', all servants being sent abroad should henceforth have their Indentures enrolled in the Tolzey Book. A fine of £20 was to be made on anyone who failed to do this.

In March 1729, as recorded in the *Gloucester Journal*, a water bailiff was sent to rescue a young man held in irons on board a ship bound for Jamaica. He had been kidnapped because of an £800 inheritance. The rescue was not successful – the bailiff was held at bay by threats of violence until the ship was ready to sail.

From 1718, criminals were transported to the colonies as virtual slaves. A Captain was paid a bounty for transporting them, and then sold them at the other end, at New York or Baltimore. In 1727, Mr. W. Jefferis, Mayor and Merchant, received 12 gs. for transporting four felons.

In the spring of 1787 the first convicts were sent to Botany Bay in Australia. In June 1789, The Bristol Civic Accounts read: 'Paid Daniel Burges, what he advanced in London to pay the passage of 9 female convicts to New South Wales and his law charges thereon, £83.1s.6d.'

The pauper, the madman, the prisoner, all lived under conditions of appalling degradation and cruelty, in an age that claimed enlightenment in many fields, but which we see as barbaric in many others.

In July 1747, Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, ransomed 34 poor debtors, with debts of under £10. Seven were prisoners found innocent, but not released because they could not pay their jail fees. The authorities calculated the cost of keeping a prisoner on remand, and expected to have this sum reimbursed before the innocent party was released.

Dr. Johnson, in an essay, estimated that out of 20,000 poor debtors in English prisons, one quarter perished yearly from 'the corruption of the air, want of exercise, and food, contagion of disease, and the severity of tyrants.'

Conclusions

The number of Africans who actually lived in Bristol is almost impossible to assess. The examples quoted above, and others recorded during research, can only provide a loose guide to the population level at any time.

There may have been Africans in Bristol whose presence was never recorded, or who came to the city for brief periods. Church records would only list members of the congregation, and we know that although initially Africans are referred to as 'black' or 'negro', these terms are not always used and, in at least one instance, ceased to have any relevance by the second generation of churchgoers.

There were also the negro sailors who visited the port, as well as family servants who left the city with their employers, some of whom went on to the plantations in the West Indies, especially when emancipation in England was imminent.

Some of the names of the blacks are obviously of African origin. The Coromanti, a Gold Coast tribe, often named their children for the day of the week on which they were born, thus:

	Male	Female
Monday	Cudjo	Juba
Tuesday	Cubbenhah	Beneba
Wednesday	Quaco	Cuba
Thursday	Quaw	Abba
Friday	Cuffee	Phibba
Saturday	Quamin	Mimba
Sunday	Quashy	Quasheba

In July 1704, at St. John the Baptist, the baptism of George, son of George and Benebo [Beneba] Belford, was held; another mis-spelled 'Beneba' may be Sarah Baribo, baptised at St. James, aged 18, in August 1783. Another Sarah, baptised at St. Stephen's in September 1720 had the surname of Quashabrack – possibly a mis-spelling of Quasheba.

There are several recorded instances of men and women with the surname of Quaco; there are a small number of Coffees (possibly a mispronunciation of Cuffee) – John Coffe, baptised at the Cathedral in December 1747, a Henry Coffee, accused of stealing iron hoops from Mr. Lucas, Hooper, in July 1769. A man named Joseph Cudjoe was buried at St. Mary Redcliffe in February 1803.

Possibly a second-generation African was Harriet Quyman, baptised

at St. James, aged 19, in February 1785; her father could have been called 'Quamin'.

Other names also suggest African origin, like Thomas Ancoo, baptised at St. Andrews in 1744; Mingo, Captain Eaton's absconding slave in 1746, and John Gambo, buried at St. Werburgh's in January 1751. John Tillaboo, convicted of stealing sugar in April 1771, may also have an African name, as may John Saggee, buried at St. Augustine's in December 1781. A fairly obscure reference is to a ghost said to haunt a West Country churchyard (unspecified) of 'black Queen Anstis' – negro woman, or West Country version of the North Country demon, Black Annis?

On one occasion the nationality of the name is confirmed: Ossion ('his negro name'), the slave belonging to Captain Foye, absconded in 1713.

We cannot assess the attitudes or the lifestyles of these Africans, since they have left no contemporary personal records. It is only by examination of the surviving documents that a picture can be constructed of the life of Africans in Bristol in the 18th century.

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