



The Centre for the study of the  
**Legacies of British Slavery**



INSIDE THIS WINTER 2024 ISSUE OF *TRACES*, A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



**DIRECTOR'S EDITORIAL**

Journeys to Any Place

*Matthew Smith*



## FEATURE PROJECT

---

The Register of Returns of Enslaved People,  
Memorialisation, and Black Genealogical Practice

*Jess Hannah*



## FEATURE REVIEW

---

Ways of Showing: A Review of *Entangled Pasts, 1768–Now: Art, Colonialism and Change*

*Matthew Smith*



## ADVANCED SEARCH

---

Profile: Anti-Racist Cumbria

*Jess Hannah*

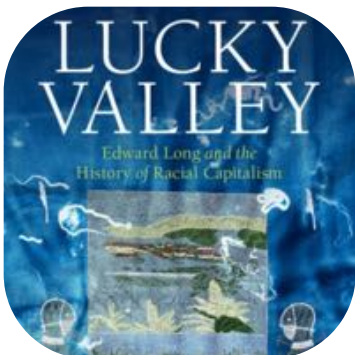


## FEATURE PROJECT

---

Global Threads

*Matthew Stallard*



## FEATURE REVIEW

---

The Launch of *Lucky Valley*:

*Edward Long and the History of Racial Capitalism*



## EVENT ANNOUNCEMENT

---

Black Family History:

Genealogy, Storytelling and Ethics in the Wake of  
Slavery



## OF THIS AND THAT

Moments from Year So Far

---

### DIRECTOR'S EDITORIAL

## *Journeys to Any Place*

---

**PROFESSOR MATTHEW J. SMITH**

*Director of the CSLBS*

---

***Jamaican-born Mary Seacole has been the patron saint of this season's newsletter. I have noticed her in so many different places visited over recent months, most memorably on the wall of the small café named after her at the London School of Tropical Hygiene on Tavistock Place.***

This seems fitting, as Seacole's life was not only one of devoted service, but also one of multiple homes. Her fame was as a nurse in the Crimean War, but she moved back and forth between Jamaica and London, leaving footprints in each place. The women's hall of residence at the University of the West Indies campus in Jamaica is named after her. In 2016, a statue in her honour--the first of a Black woman in London--was installed in front of St. Thomas' Hospital. In fact, the celebration of Seacole was something that started in her lifetime. In 1871, a decade before her death, she posed for Count Gleichen at his studio at St. James' Place. The bust, titled *Mary Seacole, the Jamaican Nurse and Heroine of the Crimean War*, appeared in the 1871 summer exhibition at the Royal Academy.

It says a great deal about the strength of Seacole's legend and our own changing times that her Victorian poise in the Gleichen bust is freed of its seriousness in the more recent representation of her at the Royal Academy. As seen on the cover of this Spring issue of *Traces*, the 2024 Seacole is imploring and commanding with arms extended to the skies. This representation of Seacole was created by Bahamian artist Tavares Strachan as part of his spectacular contribution to the Royal Academy's major *Entangled Pasts* exhibition. The exhibition--reviewed later in this issue--is a remarkable example of a journey to come to terms with the multiple legacies of enslavement and colonialism that public museums and art institutions have embarked on since the racial justice protests of 2020.



*Mary Seacole statue, St. Thomas' Hospital, London*

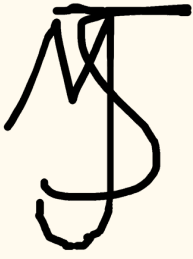
We have been proud to work with several of these institutions. Most recently, the CSLBS was commissioned to work with the Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery as part of the British Textile Biennial. Under the leadership of Matt Stallard, our researchers were able to connect a small sample of West Yorkshire Penistone cloth with an enslaved community in Barbados that wore it. The commission for the Biennial emerged from our larger Manchester-based project, Global Threads, which has grown in exciting ways.

We continue to be inspired by communities who have drawn on our work to build their own projects. Thanks to Sharon Pope, a volunteer with the CSLBS, we recently became aware of Anti-Racist Cumbria, an active charity in the northwest that has been doing impressive work. Jess Hannah discusses the group in *Advanced Search*.

Also included is a feature on a winter project that forms part of ongoing *Valuable Lives* research with two UCL postgraduate Research Assistants, Holly French and Zanté Hylton-Johnson. As Jess Hannah details in the first piece in this issue, Zanté and Holly worked on the connections between Jamaica and Britain through memorialization and family connections.

Family connections between the two places are also at the heart of Catherine Hall's recent book on Edward Long, whose launch we were glad to co-host with UCL History in March. A few photos of the launch are included later in this issue.

I close by returning to Seacole. At the end of her 1857 autobiography, *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole*, she noted that at the point of her departure from Crimea she was ready to take "any journey to any place where a stout heart and two experienced hands may be of use." This "any place" ended up being England and a flat in Paddington where she drew her last breath. Her travels and life showed her slavery, racism, death, and caring. The stories carried by travellers like Seacole and captured in their reminiscences and in the exhibitions and projects we cover in this issue are reminders of journeys still being taken.



---

**Matthew J. Smith**

---

FEATURE PROJECT

## *The Register of Returns of Enslaved People, Memorialisation, and Black Genealogical Practice*

---

**JESS HANNAH**

*Custodian of the LBS Database*

---

***Valuable Lives is a major CSLBS project aimed at creating the first and most comprehensive publicly available database on black lives under British slavery.***

The project's main source is the Register of Returns of enslaved people recorded every three years between 1817 and 1832 in each British Caribbean colony. In the study of British slavery, no other data set is more textured, systematic, and detailed in documenting black lives in the final fifteen years leading up to the end of enslavement.

Our focus in the first stage of this project is to present to a global public transcribed and linked records of every enslaved person and community in Jamaica to open up vast potential for new understandings and engagement with detailed histories of experiences, places, and connections during a crucial period.

By developing a permanent, publicly accessible database of historical black lives created in dialogue with their descendants in Britain and Jamaica, our long-term project is founded in the moral responsibility of examining the past to confront the roots of racial inequality.

35

*Jamaica. A Return of Slaves in the Parish of Saint Andrew in the possession of John Thomas Gustaves married at Oance, and in right of his wife Martha Francis on the 28th day of June in the year four 1817.*

<i>Names</i>	<i>Color</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Species</i> <i>or</i> <i>sex</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
<i>Males</i>				
<i>Sam</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>African</i>	<i>In right of my wife</i>
<i>Alfred</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>African</i>	
<i>Kanga</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>African</i>	
<i>Spencer</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>African</i>	
<i>Richard</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>African</i>	
<i>Calo</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>African</i>	
<i>James</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>African</i>	
<i>John</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>Irish</i>	<i>In right of my wife</i>
<i>Joseph</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>Irish</i>	<i>Married since 13th October 1815</i>
<i>Females</i>				
<i>Clancy</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>African</i>	<i>In right of my wife</i>
<i>Ann</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>Irish</i>	<i>Daughter of Thomas Clancy &amp; Mary</i>
<i>Maria</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>Irish</i>	<i>Daughter of Ann</i>
<i>Eliza</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>Irish</i>	<i>Daughter of Ann</i>
<i>Mary</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>Irish</i>	<i>Daughter of Ann</i>
<i>Nancy</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>African</i>	<i>Wife to Sam</i>
<i>Sarah</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>Irish</i>	<i>Daughter of Nancy</i>
<i>Marianne</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>African</i>	} <i>In right of my wife</i>
<i>Clarissa</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>Irish</i>	
<i>Henry</i>	<i>Negro</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>Irish</i>	

A page from the Slave Registers of former British Colonial Dependencies, 1813-1834 (St Andrew, Jamaica, 1817)

Research into practices of memorialisation of enslavement and of genealogical practices in the Caribbean are crucial to the development and success of this project. In January 2024, two Research Assistants joined the CSLBS team to work on Valuable Lives.

Zanté Hylton-Johnson, a journalist and current Master's candidate in History at UCL, joined the team to research genealogical practice and networks in Jamaica especially and uses of the Registers in genealogical research more widely. Holly French, a PhD candidate in History at UCL and a member of CSLBS's [New World Royalists](#) project team, conducted research into creative or artistic engagements with the Registers and practices of memorialisation of enslavement.

---

**"By developing a permanent, publicly accessible database of historical black lives created in dialogue with their descendants in Britain and Jamaica, our long-term project is founded in the moral responsibility of examining the past to confront the roots of racial inequality."**

---

Over the past three months, our Research Assistants have undertaken detailed research into the past, present, and possible futures of users of the Registers of enslaved people. They have done so with a view to informing how CSLBS will present the material in the Registers in a way that is informative, useful, and ethically responsible, and one which accounts for historical and contemporary practices of both memorialisation and genealogical research. Both Zanté and

Holly were guided by a common research question: *How can we use the Registers in effective, valuable, and creative ways to tell the histories of Jamaicans and Jamaica?*

Zanté and Holly developed their expertise in the subject areas by way of a great deal of independent research and specialist training workshops. A workshop on the possibilities and challenges of using the Registers for genealogical research in the Caribbean and the diaspora was guest-led by [Suzanne Francis-Brown](#), a preeminent expert in the field.



Part of Holly French's research for *Valuable Lives*.

Over the course of the project, our researchers each produced detailed articles that will inform the implementation of *Valuable Lives* in the coming year. Through her research into Jamaican professional and amateur genealogical communities, Zanté was able to identify some of the key challenges and practices of doing black Caribbean genealogy and ways in which Caribbean genealogical researchers collaborate and access training and resources.

In her research, Holly examined how artists, media, creatives, and communities have used the Registers and other records of enslaved people in memorialization and artistic interpretations. In doing so, Holly explored a diverse array of creative responses, from Jamaican-British artist Kevin Dalton-Johnson's statue *Captured Africans* to Black British playwright Juliet Gilkes Romero's stage play *The Whip*. She has also curated a catalogue of projects and sites created for the purposes of remembering the history of the transatlantic slave trade and commemorating enslaved people.

---

**"Our Research Assistants were guided by a common research question: *How can we use the Registers in effective, valuable, and creative ways to tell the histories of Jamaicans and Jamaica?*"**

---

In the second part of their research activities, Zanté and Holly produced detailed resource packs for future workshops on their areas of specialism. Zanté's workshop plan provides all the necessary materials for a workshop that introduces participants to the *Valuable Lives* project and what it hopes to contribute to the history of enslaved black people as well as the role and evolution of genealogy and family history for Jamaican descendants.

Holly's workshop plan focuses on the ethical, cultural, and practical questions around

memorialisation of the transatlantic slave trade and of slavery. One of Holly's workshop activities, for example, has participants share their responses to examples of memorial sites located around Britain and Jamaica and reflect on which memorials are most effective at conveying remembrance of enslaved people.

**Key Individuals**  
Some leading scholarly figures in Jamaican (and Caribbean) genealogy and family research

**Suzanne Francis-Brown**  
A Jamaican journalist-turned-historian whose contributions to Jamaican genealogy is made evident through her own research using the slave registers of the Mona and Papine estates. Brown has also appeared on the popular Television Series *Who Do You Think You Are?* assisting celebrities with their Jamaican genealogical research.

**Guy Grannum**  
Former Caribbean heritage specialist at the National Archives, where he was employed for 36 years. Grannum had been researching his own Bajan ancestry for many years, and in doing so he has gained first hand an in-depth knowledge of how to research West Indian ancestry. Grannum is the author of multiple genealogical guides and articles which are available on the National Archives Website.

**Barry (B.W.) Higman**  
A retired Australian historian of Caribbean studies. Higman taught at the University of the West Indies between 1971 and 1996. Higman's groundbreaking work, *Slave Population and Economy in Jamaica, 1807-1834*, was the first which conducted an in-depth analysis of the slave registers, deeming them legitimate sources. It was so ahead of its time that it was, and continues to be, the go-to for researchers who are using the registers in their research.

Part of Zanté Hylton-Johnson's research for *Valuable Lives*.

The meticulous work undertaken by Holly and Zanté have already begun to inform and reshape the *Valuable Lives* project. We look forward to sharing further updates on this major project with the Traces community soon in coming editions of the newsletter.

---

## FEATURE REVIEW

# Ways of Showing: A Review of *Entangled Pasts: 1768- Now: Art, Colonialism, and Change*

---

**MATTHEW J. SMITH**  
Director of the CSLBS

***The Royal Academy of Arts' (RA) brilliant recent exhibition, Entangled Pasts, is a piece with the exploration of British histories of enslavement and colonialism which have re-emerged in museum spaces since 2020. Indeed, in the foreword to the exhibition catalogue, President Rebecca Salter identifies the "urgent public debate about the relationship between art and history" in 2021 as its impetus. In critical ways, however, the exhibition is quite unlike anything the RA or most other exhibitions have done in recent years. It is an imaginative confrontation of the physical and epistemic heritage of the RA which has since 1768 been largely a projection of White metropolitan visions.***

The recentring starts quite literally from the outside. In the courtyard of Burlington House, Tavares Strachan's majestic *The First Supper* calls visitors to examine their own blind spots in



Black history. The twelve figures sat at Strachan's table festooned with golden and black soursops, cassava, and meats, include Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I, Derek Walcott, Mary Seacole, Shirley Chisholm, and even dub music maestro Osbourne "King Tubby" Ruddock. The parallels with Da Vinci's *Last Supper* exist largely in outline. Tavares' piece aims to focus not on the messianic figure at the head (Selassie) but each of the disciples around him, including the artist himself who is humbly perched, hands clasped, at the far right.

*The First Supper* is a coup of sorts, a forced unsettling of expectations that carries through elegantly in the exhaustive gallery spaces. Portraiture dominates the first two rooms where classic paintings of Ignatius Sancho and Francis Barber are placed in new light. The famous 1779 David Martin *Portrait of Dido Belle and Lady Elizabeth Murray*, presented in this new context, draws the eyes to Dido and her story as less the ancillary but central lady of the artist's vision. In the same space, the placement of Pietro Antonio Martini's *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy (1787)* is an arresting step back into the past when the room itself was wrapped with paintings of imperial glory in which prestige and wealth were defined by property in places and persons who appear subordinated in the paintings. Joshua Reynolds' *Portrait of George, Prince of Wales, later King George IV* is exhibited where it first appeared, and this time it is impossible not to see the Black courtier slightly bowed at the Prince's waist. A not too subtle move occurs a few feet over, where spaces once reserved for European monarchs are occupied by Richard Evans's nineteenth-century portraits of Haitian monarch King Henry Christophe and his son. Hew Locke's breath-taking *Armada*, a collection of suspended boats, ships, and ships carrying boats (with HMT *Empire Windrush* miniaturized and placed aboard a barge) bind the story of travel and colonization that connected the figures in the paintings with the very space of the gallery.



Frank Bowling, *Middle Passage* (1970)

It is a theme that is unbroken in the other rooms. The curators consciously place classic eighteenth century art in conversation with more contemporary works to dissolve the distance between them. US Black painters Kehinde Wiley, a celebrated portraitist whose paintings blend worlds and techniques old and new, and the reflective Kara Walker, shine with their peers in rooms they share with White nineteenth-century painters Edwin Longsden Long and William Mulready. Walker's work evokes the exhibition's title powerfully. Monochromatic silhouettes present the world of empire and slavery in deep black with mixtures of white and areas of steel

grey. Appropriately it is Walker's 2010 piece *no world*, from *An Unpeopled Land in Unchartered Waters*, that adorns the promotional materials for the exhibition.

Some of the displays are autocritiques of the Royal Academy. Scottish painter Thomas Stuart Smith's 1869, *The Pipe of Freedom*, was rejected from an 1869 exhibition for political reasons, likely because it featured a pasted copy of the United States 1863 Emancipation Proclamation in the background. Frederick William Ewell's *The Royal Academy Selection and Hanging Committee, 1938*, a depiction of fourteen white men, speaks volumes of who is not at the table.

Elsewhere, the exhibition issues quiet revolts. Keith Piper's *The Coloureds' Codex, An Overseers' Guide to Comparative Complexion* (on loan from the ISM in Liverpool) raises the spectre of colour, a colonial companion to racial categories of human difference. Isaac Julien's velvet-draped section centres his 2019 immersive film *Lessons of the Hour*, a meditation on Frederick Douglass and his trip to Britain in the years before emancipation in his homeland. The climax, in which Douglass gives stirring oratory on human equality and the power of the image, fills the gallery space with speech that defines what is inaudible in the portraits.



Detail from Tavares Strachan's *The First Supper*

At each corner there is a glimmering story. From Betye Saar's *I'll Bend But I Will Not Break*, and Bharti Parmar's *Gossypium Hirsutum* (both of which consider the pain of commerce made by unfree Africans and their descendants) to Mohini Chandra's *Imaginary Edens/Photos of my Father, 2005-15*, in which the artist's father exists in silhouette, the visitor is forced into contemplation. The Singh Twins' *Indiennes: The Extended Triangle* is a palimpsest of imperial domination and resistance; and the placement of Karen McLean's 2010 *Primitive Matters: Huts* beside Agostino Brunias' *View on the River Roseau* raises questions of who inherits the spaces

created in what Orlando Patterson famously called “the artificial societies” of colonial slavery.

The penultimate rooms are devoted to Lubaina Himid’s 2004 *Naming the Money*, which fills the rooms with one hundred colourful paperworks of black ceramicists, herbalists, painters, shoemakers, mapmakers, dog trainers, toy makers, and musicians. Their presence, according to Himid, “tell[s] the story of the slave/servant but also of the émigré and the asylum seeker. Each cut-out has a real name, each one is able to say who they actually are but each one lives with their new name and their new unpaid occupation attempting somehow to reconcile the two.”

---

***"The triumph of the exhibition is how through the Royal Academy's self-reflection, the components of modern British art are conjoined with painful experiences of unfree people who laboured well beyond the Academy's impressive halls."***

---

By presenting these many sides of a large History, *Entangled Pasts* intelligently communicates how much reconciliation is an ongoing project. To see its subversion of expectations as its central radical achievement is to miss all the subtlety and incredible care that has gone into its presentation. African, Caribbean, and Asian experiences dominate, but the curators have not erased White experiences of power and control. The triumph of the exhibition is how through the RA’s self-reflection, the components of modern British art are conjoined with painful experiences of unfree people who laboured well beyond the RA’s impressive halls.

The exhibition was held at the RA from 3 February to 28 April 2024. A catalogue, featuring insightful essays from curators Esther Chadwick, Dorothy Price (with Sarah Lea), and Cora Gilroy-Ware, is available at the RA.

---

ADVANCED SEARCH

## *Profile: Anti Racist Cumbria*

---

**JESS HANNAH**

Custodian of the CSLBS database

---

***In this Spring issue, we highlight the work of an outstanding organisation that has drawn innovatively on CSLBS research and the LBS database in its practice.***

[Anti Racist Cumbria](#) began life in 2020 as a voluntary organisation with a simple mission: to make Cumbria the first actively anti-racist county in the UK. Starting from a grassroots basis, the organisation has expanded into the wider community. Today, Anti Racist Cumbria is a registered charity with an impressive catalogue of programming and community support to embed anti-racism into the structures of the county of Cumbria.

In just four short years, Anti Racist Cumbria have put together specialist training for local organisations, free lesson plans for schools, an anti-racist book club, theatre sessions, a volunteering programme, and a free community safe space for healing racial trauma. Anti Racist Cumbria has also seen three annual summits; [the most recent one](#), last November, saw some four hundred delegates convene in the Lake District for a full day of wellbeing practices, music, art, panel discussions, and workshops, as well as a keynote lecture by historian David Olusoga.



© Anti Racist Cumbria

---

***"In just four short years, Anti Racist Cumbria have put together specialist training for local organisations, free lesson plans for schools, an anti-racist book club, theatre sessions, a volunteering programme, and a free community safe space for healing racial trauma."***

---

The organisation also has an impressive online presence. In a blog post titled "[Resources: The Financial Legacy of Slavery in the UK Today](#)," Anti Racist Cumbria cite CSLBS research extensively and recommend the CSLBS database as "an invaluable resource which users can use to unpick the long-term legacy of slavery in the UK." In [a blog post on Cumbria's connections to enslavement](#), Kelle Pearce draws on CSLBS work to explore the history of the Jeffersons, who ran one of the oldest family-owned wine merchants in the UK and traded from the same premises in Whitehaven, Cumbria, for over two centuries, which is now home to the [Rum Story](#) museum. With the help of the LBS database, Kelle tracks the Jefferson family back to the eighteenth century, when the family exploited more than four hundred enslaved people on sugar plantations in Antigua and shipped the sugar to Whitehaven.



© Anti Racist Cumbria

In [another blog post](#), father and daughter Rob and Merry Fowler reflect on their visit to the International Museum of Slavery, Liverpool in light of changing attitudes to enslavement. Their post demonstrates the influence of the work of the Centre on approaches to enslavement. Merry and Rob reflect, for example, on having learned from the work of the CSLBS that there is "no doubt that people other than major plantation owners 'benefited' from the slave trade [...] but the many aspects of this trade - the resulting cheap labour for the production of cotton and sugar of course benefitted many people in European society."



ARC Summit 2023 / © Anti Racist Cumbria

At present, Anti Racist Cumbria are working on an exciting new partnership with The Rum Story in Whitehaven. The team at CSLBS look forward to more of the commendable output of Anti Racist Cumbria and to fostering an ongoing dialogue with them.

---

#### FEATURE PROJECT

## *Global Threads: The Penistone Cloth*

---

**MATTHEW STALLARD**

*Research Associate at the CSLBS*

---

***Global Threads is a research and engagement hub co-led since 2019 by the Science and Industry Museum, Manchester and the CSLBS.***

At the core of our approach is providing fully-paid opportunities for emerging scholars to produce case studies tracing global connections from the industrial history of Manchester and the North West and to collaborate on engagement activities and creative responses to those histories.

During the second half of 2023 we were commissioned by the [British Textile Biennial](#) to conduct research and write a timeline weaving together the narratives of colonisation, industrialisation, and enslavement that underpinned the growth of the Pennine textile industries as part of the [Penistone Cloth exhibition](#) at Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery.

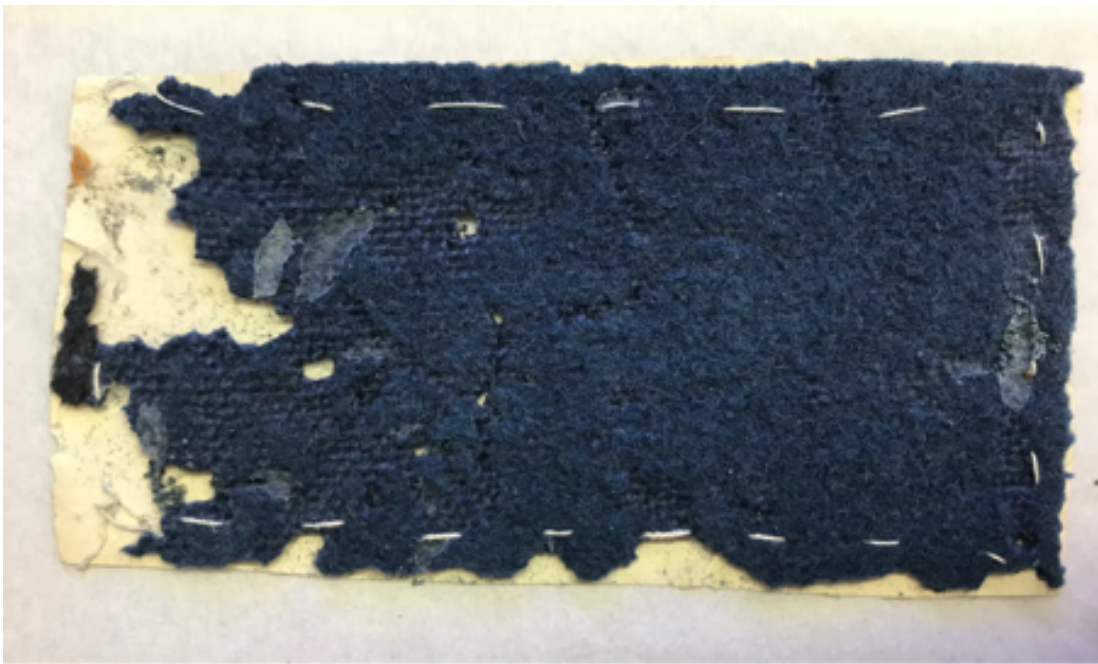


Members of the Global Threads team at the British Textile Biennial

At the centre of the exhibition was a unique object: a [fragment of cloth](#) from the archives of the Fitzherbert family in Derbyshire, labelled as *Pennistone sent for negro clothing 1783 which for substance strength and unchangeable colour, is best adapted to that purpose.*

Penistone was a type of rough, cheap, woollen cloth particularly associated with West Yorkshire. This small sample is believed to be the only surviving example of British-made “slave cloth” – a physical link between the millions of enslaved people in the Americas who were clothed in similar wools, linens, and cottons, and thousands of workers in Lancashire and Yorkshire whose livelihoods relied on producing these fabrics.

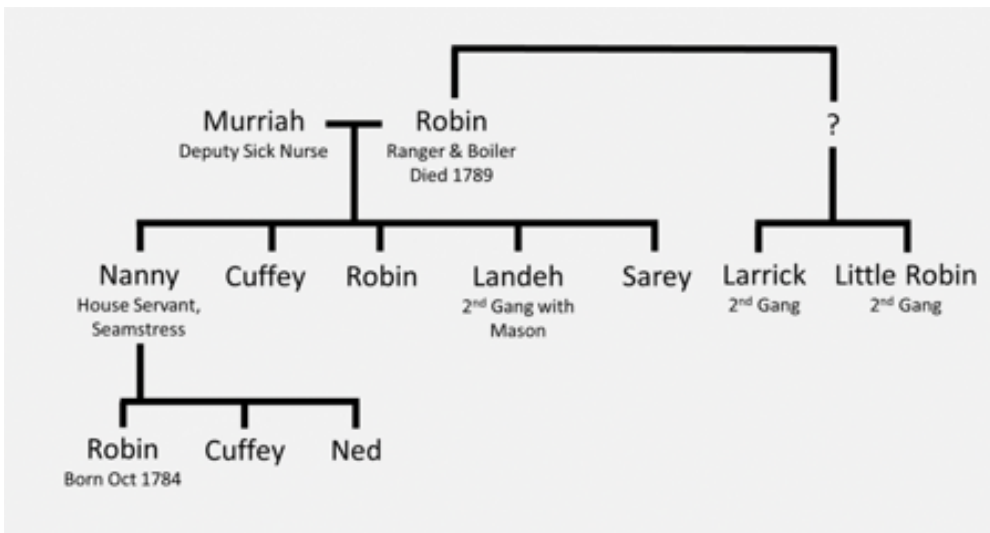
Thanks to archival evidence, we know exactly who this clothed: the community of enslaved people held at Turner’s Hall, Saint Andrew Parish, Barbados. In an online case study entitled “Fabric of Injustice,” Global Threads team member [Serena Robinson](#) has used estate records held at Derbyshire Records Office to [retrace the story of an enslaved family](#) across three generations during the 1770s and 1780s; that of Robin, head watchman and sugar boiler and Murriah, a sick nurse.



*The pennistone cloth sample*

Being able to focus on the experiences and family life of enslaved individuals, we are able to offer a powerful correction to the previously-dominant narratives, as Serena outlines:

“While family histories of rich enslavers are very well documented, the vast majority of enslaved families and communities are absent and erased [...] The same records of the Fitzherbert family’s profits from Turner’s Hall plantation also open a window onto the lives of the 139 individuals who lived on the plantation in 1759 and the 166 held there in 1771.”



*A family tree of enslaved individuals produced by the Global Threads team*

We were able to use this sample as the starting point for discovering two further original sources which opened the door to new understandings of the uses of this material:

“I saw a woman with a sucking child, but I don’t know where she came from. When she went out to work in the gang, she tied the child to her back, and put it under a tree when she got into the field. If it rained, she was allowed to stand aside and shelter it with her pennistone cloak.”  
(Excerpt from the account of Jeannette Saunders, an apprentice on Orange Valley Plantation, Jamaica)

“One day, while I was dancing on the mill, I fainted on it, and dropped down. My hands dropped out of the straps and I fell down to the ground. I did not know anything of it myself until next morning, when my friends told me that I had fainted, and that they were obliged to burn pennistone and put to my nose to restore me.”

(Excerpt from the account of Betty Williams, an apprentice to Hiattsfeld, in Jamaica)

[Megan Bridgeland](#) uses these excerpts as the basis of her online case study “[Cloth, Clothing and Apprenticeship in the British Caribbean](#)” to explore the context of the apprenticeship system which replaced slavery in 1834 before full Emancipation. Megan explains how “Janette and Betty’s stories, drawn from mentions of penistone cloth in accounts given by formerly enslaved people, reveal first-hand the experiences of African and African-descended people forced to labour on British-owned plantations. Despite daily attempts by planters and the state to exploit, dehumanise and oppress, enslaved and apprenticed people, these incidents are two rare surviving examples of how people made creative use of their extremely limited resources.”

---

***"While family histories of rich enslavers are very well documented, the vast majority of enslaved families and communities are absent and erased [...] The same records of the Fitzherbert family's profits from Turner's Hall plantation also open a window onto the lives of the 139 individuals who lived on the plantation in 1759 and the 166 held there in 1771."***

---

The exhibition itself featured the penistone cloth sample as the only object on display, set in the centre of the room, beneath a projected light installation created by design agency [Illuminos](#). The projection drew on themes and images researched and shared by the Global Threads team, telling a visual story of the global chain of events covered in our timeline.

The exhibition panels, which drew upon historic typefaces, were created by Lancashire-based designer and artist [Made by Mason](#). Each one featured a different event from the timeline and interpretative text produced by our Global Threads team. A longer version of this text can be found on our [website](#) and in the [exhibition guidebook](#), also designed by Made by Mason.



*The exhibition space*

Each of the seventeen panels contain motifs from the animation projected on the ceiling above and are arranged in chronological order, joined by a series of overlapping woollen threads, evoking the way in which these interwoven global narratives are joined to the cloth and to each other in tangled, complex ways. In reference to the origins of the cloth itself, the thread



used is a blue-dyed British wool made by West Yorkshire Spinners. At the end of the timeline, our woollen threads continue onwards: dangled, tangled, frayed, and untied, waiting to be woven or knitted together with the next stage of the story.

It was a privilege to work with such a talented team of collaborators from the British Textile Biennial, Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery, Illuminos, and Made by Mason. Most of all, we are pleased and proud that hundreds of visitors were able to engage in person with this unique object and explore its place and ours within the web of textile and industrial histories stretching from the Pennines to South Asia, West Africa, and the Americas.

---

***"At the end of the timeline, our woollen threads continue onwards: dangled, tangled, frayed, and untied, waiting to be woven or knitted together with the next stage of the story."***

---

We would like to conclude this piece with a few of the comments from visitors to the exhibition:

*"This is such an important and impressive research project. The booklet is superb. It deserves a large print run and should be in every museum, school, college, historic home etc. This history matters."*

*"Such a moving experience to witness this tiny fragment."*

*"We learn all about the cotton industry and the Industrial Revolution, but nothing of where cotton came from, or sugar, or why our costal cities and towns were so rich [...] I just don't think we were taught enough to make those connection whilst still in school."*

*"We're taught such a small part of history that the dots don't connect. The Industrial Revolution is [presented as] all about innovation and not class war, working and women's rights or the global impact such as slavery. It's so limiting."*



We look forward to updating *Traces* readers in future on our upcoming 2024 arts and engagement collaborations. In the meantime, we will continue to publish blog posts and case studies on our site in the coming months.

---

FEATURE REVIEW

## The Launch of *Lucky Valley: Edward Long and the History of Racial Capitalism*

---

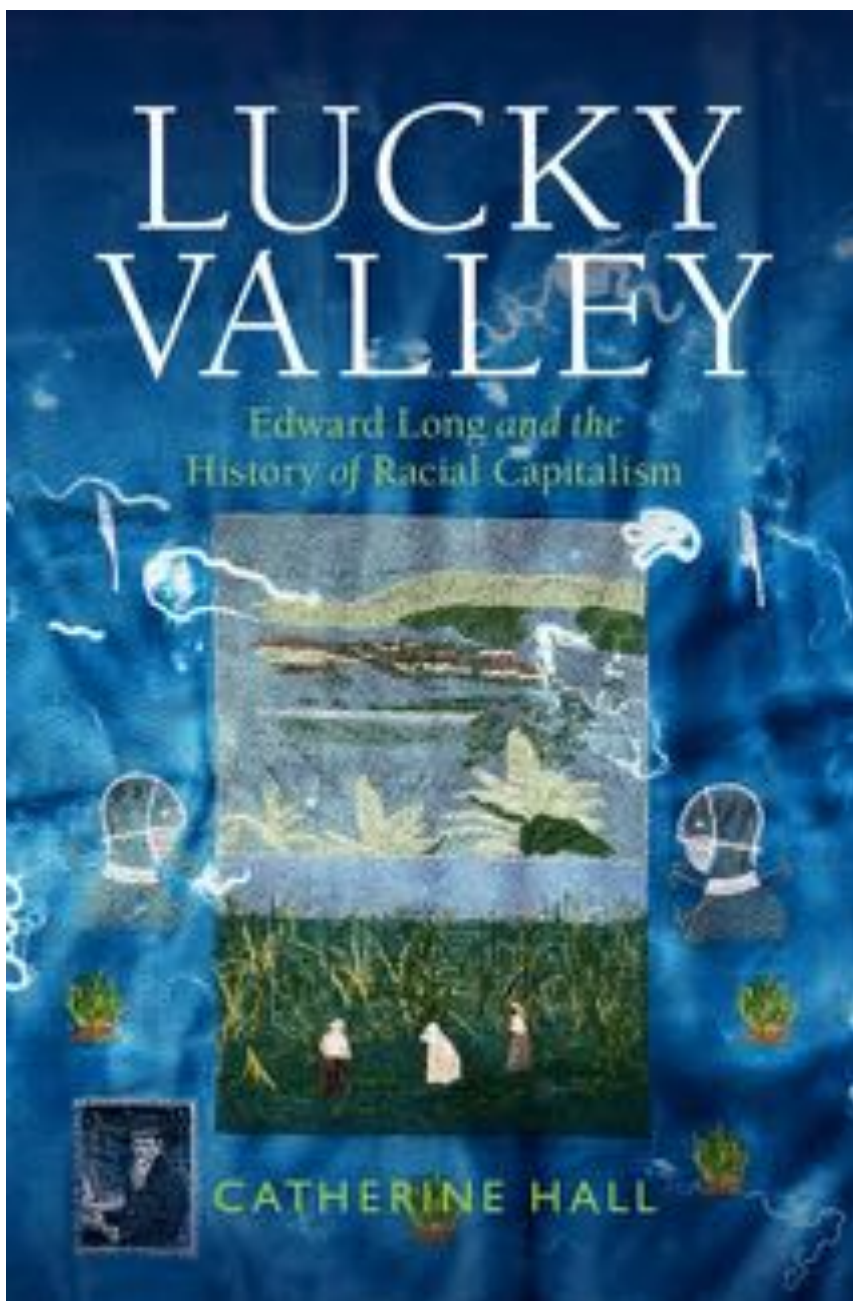
***CSLBS Chair Catherine Hall's acclaimed book Lucky Valley: Edward Long and the History of Racial Capitalism was published by Cambridge University Press earlier this Spring. The book has been called a 'magisterial and moving analysis,' a 'subtle and incisive intervention' and a 'magnificent counterhistory of racial capitalism.'***

The launch party for *Lucky Valley* was held at UCL at the very end of the Winter Term. The event was a great success, and saw speeches by David Scott (Professor of Anthropology at Columbia University), Margot Finn (Professor of History at UCL), Becky Hall, and Catherine Hall. For more details about the book and how to place an order, please see the [Cambridge University Press website](#).

*Why does Edward Long's History of Jamaica matter? Written in 1774, Long's History, that most 'civilised' of documents, attempted to define White and Black as essentially different and unequal. Long deployed natural history and social theory, carefully mapping the island, and drawing on poetry and engravings, in his efforts to establish a clear and fixed racialized hierarchy.*

*His White family sat at the heart of Jamaican planter society and the West India trade in sugar, which provided the economic bedrock of this eighteenth-century system of racial capitalism.*

*Catherine Hall tells the story behind the History of a slave-owning family that prospered across generations together with the destruction of such possibilities for enslaved people. She unpicks the many contradictions in Long's thinking, exposing the insidious myths and stereotypes that have poisoned social relations over generations and allowed reconfigured forms of racial difference and racial capitalism to live on in contemporary societies.*



Catherine Hall © Cambridge University Press 2024. Cover artwork by Joy Gregory.

Earlier in March, Professor Hall delivered the 39th Annual Elsa Goveia Memorial Lecture, “Unsettling Accounts: Britain’s Troubled Relation with Slavery,” at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica. The lecture, titled can be viewed via YouTube [here](#).

---

#### EVENT ANNOUNCEMENT

## *Black Family History: Genealogy, Storytelling and Ethics in the Wake of Slavery*

---

**We are delighted to announce that in collaboration with the Sarah Parker Remond Centre and the Next Economy Trust, the CSLBS will co-host "Black Family History: Genealogy, storytelling and ethics in the wake of slavery" at UCL on 28th May 2024.**

The shared geographies, histories and contemporary legacies of the abduction and enslavement of Africans continues to be revealed, researched and written into public understanding. With the veil of denial and amnesia in the UK being slowly lifted, Black people are increasingly being confronted by, and are reckoning with, complex and traumatic stories and family ancestries inseparable from these transatlantic connections with slavery. Yet the

research required to excavate those ancestries, and their associated narrative histories entails complicated transnational genealogical craft, as well as careful ethical consideration. Bringing those stories to life for a broader public requires deep thought around the politics and responsibilities of transatlantic storytelling and visualisation.

This conversation between journalist and filmmaker Keme Nzerem, and genealogist and author Bernice Bennett reflects on these issues in the context of their work together on a documentary film project tracing Nzerem's own complex ancestry. They discuss the genealogical craft required to navigate archival gaps and silences, as well as the ethics of unearthing and sharing histories of enslavement. What are our responsibilities and duties of care with respect to telling these stories, in particular to descendants of the enslaved? How do people - especially Black Britons - process their own personal connections with the enslavement of Africans? What are the deeply felt imperatives for Black people to discover, share and heal, without imposing uninvited trauma on fellow Black citizens? And what indeed is the value and role of uncovering and sharing stolen ancestries in contemporary British society?



© Keme Nzerem

5pm, Tuesday 28th May at UCL, followed by a drinks reception. For full details, see the [Eventbrite page here](#).

---

OF THIS AND THAT

## *Moments from the Year So Far*

---



A gallery space at the *Entangled Pasts, 1768–now* exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts



Profs Catherine Hall and David Scott at the launch of *Lucky Valley*



Mural of Mary Seacole at the Coventry Caribbean Association Limited; photograph by Matthew Smith on a visit to the University of Warwick



A tribute to Seacole in a Bloomsbury café bearing her name



Valuable Lives team members Jess Hannah, Matthew Smith, Matt Stallard, Zanté Hylton-Johnson, and Holly French at the Royal Academy of Arts



The brochure for the Penistone Cloth exhibition at the British Textile Biennial

**Two small corrections to the Winter edition of *Traces*:**

The co-principal investigators of the Caribbean Digital Scholarship Collective are Schuyler Esprit, Alex Gil, Kaiama L. Glover, Mirerza González Vélez, Kelly Baker Josephs, and Nadjah Ríos Villarini; and Judith Ricketts' website can be found [here](#).



The Centre for the study of the  
**Legacies of British Slavery**

[ucl.ac.uk/history/csibs](http://ucl.ac.uk/history/csibs)  
[csibs@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:csibs@ucl.ac.uk)