

Papers relating to the Blagrove family, West Indian plantation owners, 1755-1764

This document describes a collection of records held by NatWest Group Archives, including details of their background; summary of the contents of the collection; related materials elsewhere in the Archives; publications (if any) relating to them; and information (where known) about related records held in other archives.

Collection reference

GM/443

Background history

At the time of his death, John Blagrove senior (?-1755) owned 5 Jamaican plantations. He bequeathed 3 estates, Pembroke, Magotty, and Cardiff Hall, to his son Thomas, and 2 estates, Orange Valley and Unity, to his grandson John Blagrove junior (1753-1824). However, Thomas died (at the age of 21) before John senior's will had been awarded probate, and so in 1756 all 5 estates passed to John Blagrove junior. As John Blagrove junior was only 3 years old, he and his estates were placed under guardianship. The number of enslaved labourers on these 5 estates at this time amounted to around 1100.

Although born in Jamaica, John Blagrove junior spent his childhood and early adulthood in England under the guardianship of London merchant Colin Currie (1730-1814), a second cousin and close family acquaintance. John was educated at Eton and Oxford, and in 1774 embarked on a 'Grand Tour' of the continent, a trademark of wealth and privilege. John would go on to marry his guardian Colin Currie's niece, Anne Shakespear, the daughter of Colin's business associate Alderman John Shakespear.

While John was a minor and living in England, his Jamaican estates were managed on his behalf by his uncles John Campbell of Orange Bay and Archibald Campbell. The extended Campbell family, including John's uncles and cousins, were well established in Jamaica as plantation owners. The accounts of the estates were managed at the time of Thomas' death by Hutchinson Mure & Co, London merchants.

In 1777, 24-year-old John and his wife Anne moved from England to Jamaica and took over the management of Blagrove's 5 Jamaican estates from his residence at Cardiff Hall. Blagrove's plantations produced sugar, rum, molasses, and pimento (also known as allspice). Blagrove also bred cattle at some of his estates and imported English horses for racing. At the time of his death in 1824, the number of enslaved labourers on Blagrove's plantations amounted to around 1500.

Our archive holdings

These records were found among the papers of Glyn, Mills & Co. The exact nature of their connection to the bank is not known. It is possible that the papers came to Glyn, Mills & Co through Hutchinson Mure & Co, the London merchants who managed the accounts of the Jamaican estates of Thomas Blagrove after his death, then belonging to John Blagrove junior. Hutchinson Mure & Co held an account with Child & Co, bankers in London. In 1924 Child & Co was sold to Glyn, Mills, Currie, Holt & Co, which was acquired by The Royal Bank of Scotland in 1939.

GM/443/1 Copy of the will of John Blagrove senior, grandfather of John Blagrove junior, c.1755.

GM/443/2 Accounts concerning 5 estates owned by Thomas Blagrove, and later John Blagrove junior, in Jamaica, West Indies: Pembroke, Magotty, Orange Valley, Unity, and Cardiff Hall estates, 1756-1764.

GM/443/3 Working papers for the production of the annual accounts for Orange Valley, Unity, and Cardiff Hall estates, 1757.

GM/443/4 Balance of estates of the deceased Thomas Blagrove, 1757.

Related materials at NatWest Group Archives

GM/868 Journal concerning the account of Thomas Blagrove deceased in account with Mure & Campbell, 1754-1768.

SPS/311 (f.14, 15, 108) Accounts of John Blagrove junior, Elizabeth Witter, and the estate of Thomas Blagrove in a customer account ledger, 1762-1765, probably relating to the merchanting business of John Payne, an East India merchant who was also a partner in the London bank Smith, Payne & Smiths.

Related resources and publications

- [University College London Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery](#) (pages relating to Thomas Blagrove, John Blagrove, and additional Blagrove and Campbell family members; pages relating to the Jamaican estates)
- [Jamaican Family Search Genealogy Research Library](#) (page relating to the will of John Blagrove; documents and letters of the Campbell family)
- J Shakespear, *John Shakespear of Shadwell and his descendants, 1619-1931* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Northumberland Press, 1931), pp. 82-96

Archives held elsewhere

- [University of Bristol Archives](#): Copy articles of agreement re plantations and estates late of John Blagrove 1838; copy indenture, Robert Hawthorn and William George Shedden to trustees and executors of the will of John Blagrove 1838 (Ref: DM 1353/3);
- [National Library of Jamaica](#): Maps of John Blagrove's estates, 1794-1798.
- [Jamaica Archives](#): John Blagrove records, largely concerning property, 1789-1854 (Ref: Private 4/67); Accounts Produce or Crop Accounts (Ref: 1B/11/4).
- [The National Archives](#): Memorandum book concerning the Blagrove family and their estates in Jamaica (Ref: D/EX 1271/1).

A copy these materials (GM/443) are also available at the National Library of Jamaica.