



Thomas Gullen, a black boy living with Mrs Hamilton of Bristol

Volunteer Researcher: Clive Nicholas

Note to readers:

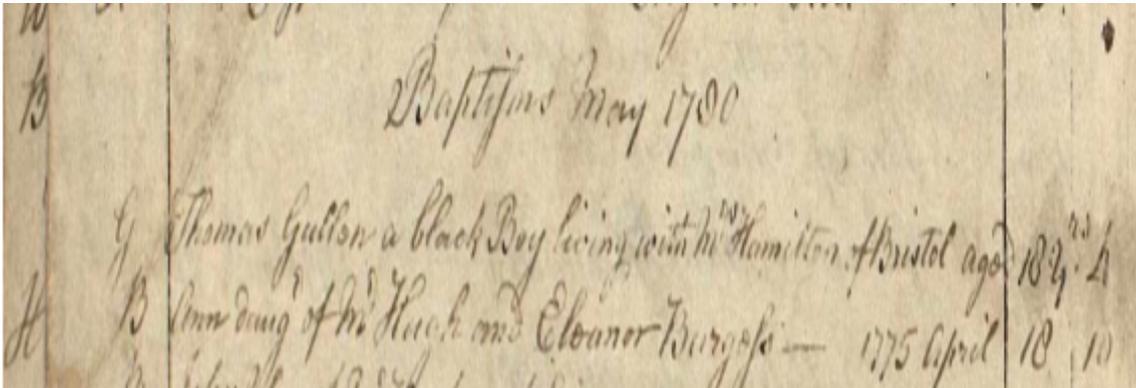
Our research files have been compiled by a committed and diligent team of volunteer researchers.

Please be aware that while our volunteers have received training in basic research skills, they are not professional historians.

We welcome further use of our research-files (with due credit). However, we encourage you to perform your own fact-checking / research processes before relying on any of the information contained here.

A Baptism

The parish registers of St Peter's Church at Tiverton contain an unusual entry recording a baptism that occurred on the 4th of May 1780.



Tiverton St Peter's Church Parish Register of Baptisms 1780

It reads, *Thomas Gullen a black boy living with M^{rs} Hamilton of Bristol aged 18 y^s.*

The record of baptism for Thomas Gullen is of interest not only because it indicates the presence of a black boy in Tiverton in the late eighteenth century but also because it contains information about his age and the fact that he was living with a Mrs Hamilton of Bristol. This gives rise to some thought-provoking questions. Who was Thomas Gullen? Where did he come from? Who was Mrs Hamilton of Bristol? Why was Thomas Gullen, a black boy, living with her? Why was he baptised at Tiverton?

The presence of black people in Devon during the eighteenth century was not commonplace but equally was not unknown. The Friends of Devon's Archives Black History Project, for example, has identified 35 entries, largely baptisms and burials, in Devon parish registers for black people over a period of ninety years from 1708 – 1798. There are also various references to black people in other documents but overall the evidence suggests that the population was very small when compared to the total population of Devon of approximately 340,000 around the end of the century.

Thomas Gullen – Origins in Slavery

It is likely that contained within the information there is some connection to slavery and the slave trade. Although Devon's economy was not dependent on the slave trade during in the eighteenth century, black people in slavery made a significant contribution to the wealth of members of eminent families, merchants, financiers, lawyers and others who had business interests that were associated either directly or indirectly with slavery.



During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries black slaves were brought to England by slave traders, plantation owners, merchants, government officials, and military and naval officers returning from overseas. Other black slaves were retained by the masters of slaving ships and sold privately or at auctions. The majority of slaves were involved in field-work on plantations but others were domestic servants. It has been estimated that in the latter half of the eighteenth century Britain had a black population of around 15,000 people of which at least 10,000 lived in London, with a further 5,000 spread throughout the country.

During the period it became fashionable among the aristocracy and wealthy families to have black servants. Black servants, such as butlers, pages or maids, were seen as status symbols. The Friends of Devon's Archives Black History Project, mentioned previously, found a total of eighty African servants, possibly waged or enslaved, in Devon in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries spread across the county in thirty-two places including Alverdiscott, Ashburton, Awliscombe, Aylesbeare, Bideford, Bishopsteignton, Buckland Monachorum, Chulmleigh, Churston Ferrers, Colyton, Dartmouth, East Budleigh, Exeter, Exmouth, Hatherleigh, Heavitree, Ilfracombe, Instow, Kingskerswell, Lymptstone, Morchard Bishop, Petrockstow, Pilton, Plymouth, Roborough, Sidmouth, Stoke Damerel, Stoke Gabriel, Tiverton, Topsham, Wembury and West Ogwell.

The fact that Mrs Hamilton is described in the parish register entry as being 'of Bristol' is significant. By the mid eighteenth century Bristol had risen to prominence as a major port city engaged in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The trans-Atlantic slave trade was built on a triangular trading route from Bristol to Africa, to the Americas and back to Bristol. The outward voyage involved merchants exporting goods to Africa in return for enslaved Africans, gold, ivory, spices and other commodities. The ships then sailed across the Atlantic to the British colonies in the Caribbean and Americas where the Africans were sold for sugar, tobacco, cotton and other produce. The Africans were sold as slaves to work on plantations and as domestic servants. The goods were then transported to Bristol. There was also two-way trade between Bristol and Africa, Bristol and the Americas and between Africa and the Americas.

It is estimated that between 1698 and 1807, some 2,108 ships left Bristol for Africa to exchange goods for enslaved Africans and take them to slave labour in the Caribbean and Americas.

There are three key pieces of evidence that might help us to determine if Thomas Gullen's origins are to be found in slavery – i) baptism in adulthood; ii) a given surname that is same as that of a slave-owner, a master or owner of a slave vessel; and iii) birth in Africa or in the British colonies including the Caribbean and America.

Baptism in Adulthood

We have already seen that Thomas was 18 years old and, although described as a *black boy*, was essentially an adult when he was baptised. In eighteenth century



England, it was popularly believed that baptism made a slave free. Some early legal judgments on slavery referred to slaves as heathens as a justification of the slave trade, and passages from the Bible were used to suggest that becoming a Christian conferred freedom.

However, the Yorke-Talbot ruling of 1729 held that under English law – i) a slave's status did not change when he came to England; ii) a slave could be compelled to return to the colonies from England; and iii) that baptism would not manumit (free) a slave. Nevertheless, a popular belief persisted that coming to England and being baptised released a slave from slavery though not necessarily from servitude.

As a consequence, slaves brought to England by their masters often sought baptism through a sympathetic clergyman and English godparents. Such baptisms are recorded in parish registers of the major port cities, London, Liverpool and Bristol, other ports and in towns and villages throughout the country.

In general, the legal status of slaves in Britain and its colonies was unclear in the eighteenth century and remained so until the early nineteenth century and abolition. For example, the Somerset (Mansfield) ruling of 1772, concerning a slave's liberty and status as property, held that no slave could be forcibly removed from England and sold into slavery because they had deserted their master. Many mistook the ruling to mean that slaves were emancipated which was incorrect.

Despite the ruling, slave owners continued to recapture runaway slaves and ship them back to the colonies. Contemporary newspaper advertisements show that black slaves were still openly bought and sold in England.

Given Surname

If we examine the origins of the name Thomas Gullen, there are references in various documents and other sources that identify a Thomas Gullan as both a master of slave vessels and an owner of slave plantations in America and the West Indies.

In contemporary texts and later research publications, the names of appear variously as 'Gullen', 'Gullan', 'Gulland', 'Gallen' and 'Gallan'. For sake of clarity, in this document we shall refer to Thomas Gullen, baptised in Tiverton in 1780, as *Thomas Gullen*, and Thomas Gullan, ship's master and plantation owner, as *Captain Thomas Gullan*, even though the form in which the name appeared in the original source text may vary between the two ways of spelling.

The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, developed by a team of international researchers and based on archival material on slave trading voyages, provides information about vessels, routes, and the people associated with them, both enslaved and enslavers. It contains details of slave voyages where Thomas Gullan was captain of a slave vessel. The data is shown in the table below.

Slave Voyages – Thomas Gullan Slave Ship Master

Ship	Voyage began	Place of Slave Purchase	Destination	Arrived	Slaves	Ship's Master/s
Roebuck	Bristol	Bonny	Charleston	1760	420	Thomas Gullan/James Maxwell
Roebuck	Bristol	Bonny	Upper James River	1762	383	Thomas Gullan
Sally	Bristol	West Central Africa and St. Helena	Charleston	1764	330	Thomas Gullan
Sally	Bristol	Anomabu	St. Kitts	1766		Thomas Gullan
Constantine	Bristol	West Central Africa and St. Helena	Savannah	1768	250	Thomas Gullan
Cornwall	Bristol	Windward Coast	Barbados	1769	262	Thomas Gullan/John Smiley
Roebuck	Bristol	Anomabu	Grenada	1771		Thomas Gullan
Roebuck	Bristol	Gold Coast	Jamaica	1773	340	Thomas Gullan
Roebuck	Bristol	Gold Coast	Jamaica	1776	310	Thomas Gullan

Source: Adapted from The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database

Further details of these voyages are found in original sources including Lloyds List, a newspaper reporting shipping movements and other maritime news; contemporary newspapers; and research documents on the slave trade.

Lloyd's List of 9th December 1760 reports the Roebuck at Bonny –

The Roebuck, Galland, with 350 slaves, and the Molly, Jenkins, with 150 ditto, both of Bristol, were at Bonny the 16th of July, all well.

The London Chronicle of 8th-10th January 1761 records the arrival of the Roebuck in South Carolina –

The Roebuck, Gullan, of Bristol is arrived at South Carolina from Bonny, with 410 slaves, after a passage of sixteen weeks.

Again, the London Chronicle of 31st-April 2nd March 1761 Ship News under Arrived on Thursday April 2nd records the return of the Roebuck –

Roebuck, Gullen, from S. Carolina, at Bristol.

The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette of 15th April 1762 mentions the Roebuck arriving at Africa –

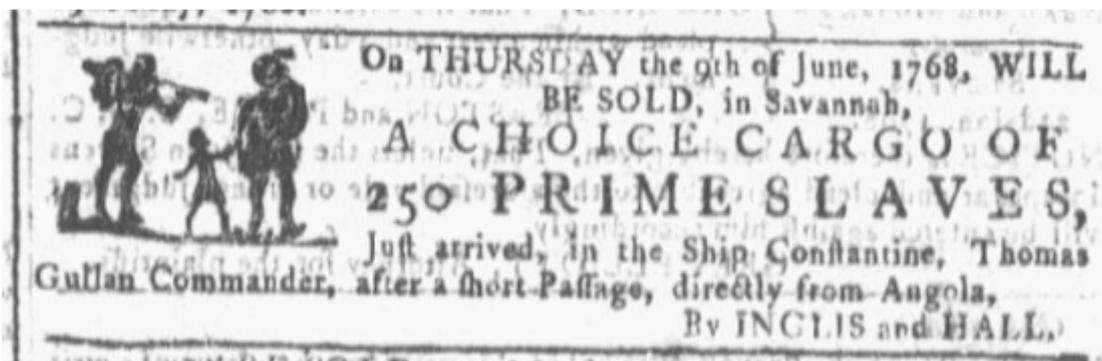
Bristol April 14

Arriv'd, At Africa, the Defence, Bothwick, the Roebuck, Gullan, and the Elizabeth, Maxwell, all from this port; at Antigua, the Sally, M Taggart, from Africa, with 300 slaves.

Lloyd's List of 3rd August 1764 reports the arrival of the Sally at South Carolina –

The Sally, Gullan, from Angola with 330 slaves, and the Jenny, M'Ghee, from Whiddaw, with 290 ditto, are both arriv'd at S. Carolina.

The Georgia Gazette of 8th June 1768 carries a notice of a sale of slaves just arrived on the Constantine under the command of Thomas Gullan –



The Georgia Gazette 8th June 1768

Details of the Roebuck's voyage to Grenada leaving Bristol in 1770 are included in the Bristol Record Society's *Bristol, Africa and the Eighteenth-Century Slave Trade to America, Vol. 4, The Final Years, 1770-1807* edited by David Richardson –

ROEBUCK

1770/25

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| (1) 100 tons; 6 guns | (8) Anamaboe |
| (2) 30 outward | (9) |
| (3) Plantation | (10) Grenada |
| (4) | (11) c. 5 July 1771 |
| (5) Thomas Gullan | (12) |
| (6) David Duncomb & Co. | (13) |
| (7) 5 August (pass 28 June) | (14) 10 October (22 October) 1771 |

According to its pass and newspaper reports the vessel was bound for Africa and Jamaica. It was reported to be at Anamaboe Road on 9 October 1770 and was expected to sail from the coast about 15 May 1771. Its muster roll shows that the vessel left Bristol with 35 crew and returned with 28. Of the original crew, 32 reached Grenada where 4 were discharged on 5–25 July 1771.

Sources: E190/1228/2; ADM 7/96; BT 6/3; SMV Muster rolls, 1771–2, no.52; Felix Farley, 30 June, 11 August 1770, 23 February, 14 September, 12 October 1771; LL, 19 April, 9 August, 10 October 1771

Similarly, details of the Roebuck's voyage to Jamaica leaving Bristol in 1772 are con

ROEBUCK

1772/27

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| (1) 100 tons; 4 guns | (8) |
| (2) 35 outward | (9) |
| (3) Plantation | (10) Jamaica |
| (4) | (11) c. 11 June 1773 |
| (5) Thomas Gullan | (12) 340 |
| (6) David Duncomb & Co. | (13) c. 26 June 1773 |
| (7) 26 January (pass 5 December 1771) | (14) 8 August 1773 (18 February 1774) |

According to its muster roll the vessel left Bristol with 35 crew. One further crewman was enlisted at the African coast on 10 April 1773. The vessel was reported to have passed Barbados on 4 May 1773 on its way to Jamaica with 340 slaves, all well. The vessel arrived at Jamaica with at least 28 crew, discharging 22 there on 11–26 June 1773. The vessel sailed for Bristol with only 6 crew, discharging 3 on 8 July and the remaining 3 crew on 8 August.

Sources: ADM 7/96; BT 6/3; SMV Muster rolls, 1773–4, no. 220; Felix Farley, 7 December 1771, 1 February, 22 August 1772, 19 June, 31 July 1773; LL, 25 August 1772, 15 June, 2 August 1773

Lloyd's List of 15th June 1773 reports the Roebuck passing Barbados bound for Jamaica –

The Roebuck, Gullan, from Africa for Jamaica, passed Barbadoes [sic] the 4th of May, with 340 slaves.

Lloyds List of Friday 19th April 1776 records the Roebuck passing Barbados bound for Jamaica –

The Roebuck, Gullen, of Bristol, passed Barbadoes [sic] for Jamaica, with 310 slaves.

The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette May 16th 1766 mentions the Roebuck arriving at Jamaica –

Bristol Tuesday, May 14

Arrived, at Jamaica, Antelope, Wright, fr. Africa; and Roebuck, Gullan, fr. ditto.

Again, details of the Roebuck's voyage to Jamaica leaving Bristol in 1775 are included in Bristol Record Society's *Bristol, Africa and the Eighteenth-Century Slave Trade to America, Vol. 4, The Final Years, 1770-1807 –*

ROEBUCK		1775/17	
(1)	100 tons; 6 guns	(8)	Gold Coast
(2)	30 outward	(9)	330
(3)	Plantation	(10)	Grenada/Jamaica
(4)		(11)	c. 18 February 1776 at Jamaica
(5)	Thomas Gullan	(12)	310
(6)	D[avid] Hamilton & Co.	(13)	c. 25 April 1776
(7)	28 February (pass 23 December 1774)	(14)	6 (5) July (7 October) 1776

According to its pass the vessel was bound for Africa and Jamaica. Its muster roll shows that the vessel left Bristol with 30 crew and returned with 21. It arrived at the Gold Coast on 9 June and sailed for the West Indies with 330 slaves on 3 November. It delivered gunpowder and guns at Anamaboe between August and October 1775. It was reported to have passed Barbados with 310 slaves bound for Jamaica. The vessel appears to have reached Jamaica with 27 of its original crew, discharging 13 there between 18 February and 23 April 1776. Seven new crew enlisted on 25 April.

Sources: Bristol Presentments; ADM 7/100; BT 6/3; T 70/1234; T 70/1541; SMV Wharfage books; SMV Muster rolls, 1775–6, no. 215; Felix Farley, 24 December 1774, 4 March, 7 October 1775, 20 April, 11 May, 6 July 1776; LL, 3 March 1775, 19 April, 14 May, 9 July 1776

Evidence suggests that Captain Thomas Gullan was well known in the slave trade. The Chester Chronicle of 22nd May 1789 contains a report on Wilberforce's debate on the abolition of slavery held in the House of Commons on Tuesday 12th May during which reference was made to Captain Gullan –

Mr Gullan, a captain from the port of Bristol, preserved 300 slaves for the fortnight that immediately preceded their arrival at Barbadoes, by distilled sea-water.

In addition to being a master of a slave ship, there is evidence to show that Captain Thomas Gullan was a slave owner. In his will of 16th January 1775, for example, he bequeathed, lands, plantations and buildings together with *negroes*, mules, horses and cattle situated in South Carolina, Georgia and elsewhere in America and the West Indies.

So far we have been unable to determine exact connection between Thomas Gullen, the black boy, and Captain Thomas Gullan. There are several possibilities. Masters of slave ships and plantation owners often took black children as personal servants who remained with them and took their name. Furthermore, it was commonplace for ships masters and white slave owners to have sexual relations with female black slaves that led to the birth of mixed race children known at the time as mulattoes. Sexual relations were often violent and exploitative but on occasion owners were known to have maintained close consensual relationships and to have married black female slaves. It is possible therefore that Captain Thomas Gullan was the father of Thomas Gullen.

We can gain some possible insight into the way in which Captain Thomas Gullan treated black female slaves, and slaves in general, through the writings of a former slave recounting his experiences of slavery in South Carolina. In the text, there is an account of a particularly callous murder of a male black slave whose wife refused sexual relations with a Captain Gullan. Although we cannot be absolutely certain that this is Captain Thomas Gullan of Bristol the balance of evidence taking into account the name and the place would suggest that it is him.

About ten miles from town, one Captain Gullan had an estate, upon which were about fifty negroes; and amongst them was a very handsome young married woman, named Juno, who had taken the captain's fancy: and he, too, be it observed, was a married man. The captain had first attempted, by what his brother white men here call fair means – that is, by the offer of a little favour or indulgence, or a few dollars – to seduce poor Juno; but she resisted all the overtures of the white libertine. The captain, however, would not be thus repelled, but persecuted her from day to day. One evening, after her field-task was over, he paid her a visit in her little hut; her husband being present, and their only child, an infant. "Juno, I wish to see you this evening at the house," said the captain; "you will call up after dark. My wife is in town at present, and I wish you to come particularly; so do not disappoint me, or, by the Lord! I shall make it a bad business for both you and Billy here." Poor Billy sat apart, and never opened his lips; but Juno, clasping her hands together, said, imploringly --"Do, dear massa, excuse

me – do, for God's sake, excuse me. I know you want me for no good. Oh! dear massa, haven't you a dear, sweet, good lady of your own? Why will you take trouble for a poor negro woman? I will serve you night and day: but do not ask me to be faithless to my poor Billy." – "Hold your jaw now, you neegur," said he, "and give me none of your sermons. Come up as I bid you." But Juno held out, and did not go to the house. So the following day Captain Gullan came down on horseback to Juno's hut, early in the morning, just as the negroes were standing at their doors, preparing to go to their task in the field. He called out, and the woman came to the door with her husband. "Come this way, Juno," said the captain, and whispered something in her ear. At this the poor woman renewed her supplications that he would let her alone. "Take that, then, you d-d neegur," said he – "and that" cutting her over the head and shoulders with his horse-whip. "By God! I shall make you obey me." Billy rushed between his wife and her brutal assailant, holding up his hands to ward off the blows from her, and crying out – "Do, for God's sake, massa, let us do our work in peace, and let poor Juno alone!" – "Do you dare to lift up your hands and attempt to resist me, you infernal black dog?" said the captain. "Take that, and be d-d;" and he drew a pistol from his pocket, and shot poor Billy through the heart. The whole of the negroes around, at this horrible deed, set up a shout of horror; and, as chance would have it, at this moment two of the neighbouring planters made their appearance quite unexpectedly. "Why, captain," said one of them, "What is all this? You really have gone too far, I expect;" and stooping down to the now dead negro, he added, "why, you have killed one of your best negroes! God bless me, captain, do you know what you have done?" – "Done!" said the murderer, quite coolly; "yes, I know what I have done. Do you think I would allow a cursed negro to lift his hand to me, and not make him pay for it? I was only acting in self-defence." – "Massa! massa!" exclaimed some of the negroes, "poor Bill only held up his hands to save Juno." – "Peace! You confounded rascals," cried the captain; and riding amongst them, he struck right and left with his whip, and dispersed them. He then returned to his two white neighbours, and said – "Did not both of you see that black rascal with his hands uplifted to me before you came forward?" – "Why, captain, I believe I did see him with his hands up," said one; "but I question if it was to strike you. I think you have been too rash; and I can tell you, captain, that I do not envy your position any how." The captain then threw down a few dollars on the ground, and said to the poor bereaved widow – "There, Juno, you may tell the gang that no work need be done today. You can send for some rum to treat them, and get Bill buried." He seemed a little softened; but he rode back to his own house with his two friends, and no more was heard of the matter. This murder, like many others perpetrated on black people in Carolina, remains unpunished to this day.

We have not yet been able to find conclusive documentary evidence that Captain Thomas Gullan took Thomas Gullen into slavery or fathered him with a black slave woman. In both cases Thomas Gullen's life would be that of a slave.

However, based on the evidence, it is not unreasonable to assume that the boy Thomas Gullen baptised at Tiverton in May 1780 was named after Captain Thomas Gullan, slave ship master and slave owner.

Place of Birth



Similarly, no evidence has been discovered so far to identify the place of birth of Thomas Gullen. If it assumed that Captain Thomas Gullan acquired Thomas as a slave or fathered him, there are two main possibilities concerning the birthplace of Thomas Gullen – first, he could have been born on the continent of Africa and second, his birth might have been on a slave plantation.

It is difficult to find written documents of the geographic origins of black people taken into slavery from Africa since in general no meaningful records were kept other than accounting transactions. However, it is known that children were taken as slaves. If we look at the slave trading voyages of Captain Thomas Gullan, we can see that slaves were taken mainly from the West Coast of Africa including Bonny (modern Nigeria), West-Central Africa (modern Angola, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Gabon), Anomabu and Gold Coast (modern Ghana).

Alternatively, if we assume that Thomas Gullen was born on a plantation owned by Captain Thomas Gullan, the will of the latter indicates estates situated in South Carolina, Georgia and elsewhere in America and the West Indies.

Based on our three key pieces of evidence that i) he was baptised in adulthood; ii) his given surname is same as that of a master of slave vessels and owner of slave plantations; and iii) he was born in Africa or in a British colony including in America or the Caribbean, we can reasonably conclude that Thomas Gullen's origins lie in slavery.

Freedom in South Carolina 1775

The case for Thomas Gullen's origins in slavery is considerably strengthened by a reference to the manumission of a slave named *Thomas Gullan*. On 12th July 1775, Dr. George Millegen (also spelt Milligen or Milligan) freed his slave, *Thomas Gullan*, for a token payment of £5 in South Carolina currency in consideration of the favour and affection which he held for him.

Manumission was the formal act of freeing a slave. In South Carolina slaves could be manumitted by one of two ways. Manumission could be given privately by an individual or it could be done officially by state law. Private manumission was rare and restricted. It was regulated by a South Carolina statute of 1712 when the colonial legislature decreed that slaveholders or the colonial governor or provincial council could manumit enslaved persons for good cause.

Later legislation stated that manumitted blacks had to leave the colony. From 1722 slave owners were required to provide means for freed slaves to leave the colony within twelve months of receiving their freedom. In 1735 the time allowed for departure from the colony was reduced to six months, and any former slave who returned within seven years could be re-enslaved.

Many freed slaves in South Carolina gained freedom in recognition of faithful service to their owner, commonly contained within a will. In addition, owners were known to have freed their slave mistresses and their mulatto children. The number of freed slaves in South Carolina in the eighteenth century never exceeded around two percent of the

black population. Although black people were freed through manumission, they were never the equal of the white elite in society and in law.

Dr. George Millegen held a royal commission as Chief Surgeon to His Majesty's Forces in South Carolina. He was a highly visible loyalist and was forced to leave South Carolina early in the American War of Independence (1775 – 83).

Millegen sailed for England on 22nd August 1775 aboard the Eagle, a Falmouth packet ship under the command of Captain William Nicholls, which arrived at Falmouth in Cornwall on 28th September of that year. Given the legislation surrounding the manumission of slaves in South Carolina, particularly the requirement for owners to provide means for freed slaves to leave the colony within twelve months of being granted freedom, it is possible that Thomas Gullen accompanied him but so far we have no evidence to substantiate this. At the time he would have been thirteen years old.

Mrs Hamilton of Bristol – Connection to the Slave Trade

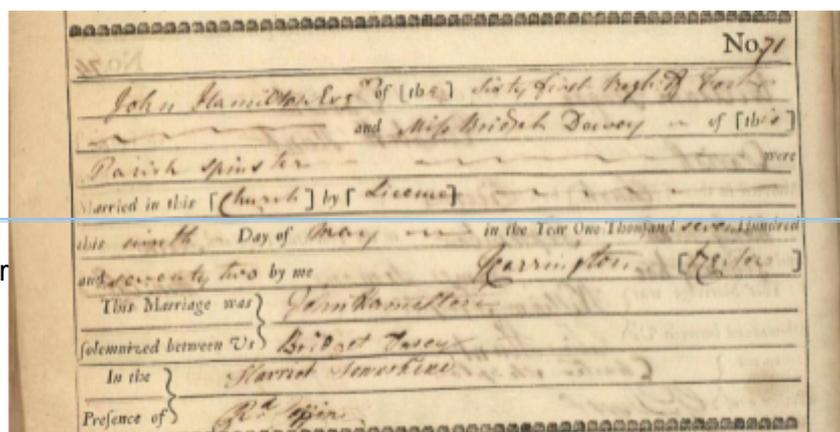
We turn now to identify *Mrs Hamilton of Bristol* and how she was connected to the slave trade and Thomas Gullen, the *black boy*.

In a footnote in his History of Tiverton, Mike Sampson refers to *Mrs Hamilton of Bristol, who had inherited Gotham House from her father, George Davey*.

William Harding in his History of Tiverton records the death of George Davey in 1784 and identifies his daughter, Bridget, as sole heiress, who married John Hamilton –

This year died George Davey, esquire, a lineal descendant of John Davey, who with J. Barnfield, were the two first burgesses returned to parliament for the borough of Tiverton, under the charter of January 1st, in 1616. He married a daughter of John Rich, esquire, of Uplowman, and died 17th December, leaving an only daughter and heiress Bridget, who married Captain John Hamilton, of Gawiston, in the County of Fermanagh, of the 61st regiment of infantry, who died at Lisbon, 1780, leaving three daughters, and one son, the present Colonel Hamilton, late of the Coldstream Guards, who is the representative of this respected family.

Bridget Hamilton would have inherited Gotham House after the death of her father in 1784 and the death of her husband in 1780. Bridget Davey married John Hamilton by licence at St Martin's Church, near to the Cathedral Close in Exeter, on 9th May 1772.



Mike Sampson therefore identifies *Mrs Hamilton of Bristol* as Mrs Bridget Hamilton, daughter of George Davey and wife of the soldier John Hamilton, but no evidence has been discovered so far to connect Mrs Bridget Hamilton directly with the slave trade or with Thomas Gullen. Our research, however, shows that *Mrs Hamilton of Bristol* was, in fact, Mrs Elizabeth Hamilton, the wife of David Hamilton, an eighteenth century Bristol merchant heavily involved in slavery.

We have previously seen that in the Bristol Record Society's *Bristol, Africa and the Eighteenth-Century Slave Trade to America, Vol. 4, The Final Years, 1770 – 1807*, there is a record of the slave ship, Roebuck, leaving Bristol in 1774 to acquire slaves on the Gold Coast and ship them to Grenada and Jamaica. The master of the vessel is Thomas Gullan and the owner is David Hamilton and Co.

The record is particularly significant because it provides clear evidence of a connection between Captain Thomas Gullan and David Hamilton, merchant and ship owner. Both Gullan and Hamilton were heavily engaged in the Bristol trans-Atlantic slave trade and were plantation owners in the colonies. It is therefore likely that they would have been well known to one another in the merchant community of the city.

David Hamilton was a mariner before becoming a merchant in the Bristol. In *A Treatise Upon the Trade from Great-Britain to Africa*, its author, John Peter Demarin, makes reference to Mr David Hamilton of Bristol as a mate of a ship in 1753. Records in *Bristol, Africa and the Eighteenth-Century Slave Trade to America, Vol. 3, The Final Years, 1746 – 1769* show him to be a ship's master from 1751. The table below shows slave voyages undertaken by David Hamilton as ship's master over a period of thirteen years from 1751 to 1764.

Slave Voyages – David Hamilton as Master

Ship	Departed from Bristol	Place of Slave Purchase	Destination	Arrived	Slaves	Returned to Bristol
Pelham	1751	Anamaboe	Jamaica	1754	247	1754
Pelham	1755		Barbados Jamaica	1755 1756	247	1756
Polly	1757	Angola	South Carolina	1758	377	1758

Polly	1759	Vessel reported lost				
Antelope	1759	Angola / Melimba	Antigua	1760		1761
Albany	1764	Angola	Barbados Havana	1764	378	1765

Source: Adapted from *Bristol, Africa and the Eighteenth-Century Slave Trade to America, Vol. 3, The Final Years, 1746 – 1769* (Bristol Record Society).

David Hamilton progressed from mariner to the ownership of vessels involved in the slave trade.

The table below shows slave voyages where David Hamilton, frequently listed as David Hamilton and Co., was owner of the vessel.

Slave Voyages – David Hamilton [and Co.] as Owner

Ship	Departed from Bristol	Place of Slave Purchase	Destination	Arrived	Slaves	Returned to Bristol
Andrews	1766	Old Calabar	St Kitts	1767		1767
Betsey	1766	Angola	St Kitts South Carolina	1767		1768
Roebuck	1767		St Kitts			1769
Andrews	1768		Antigua	1769		1769
Betsey	1768		Barbados Dominica	1769		1769
Mercury	1768	Angola	South Carolina	1769	252	1769
Constantine	1769		Grenada	1770		1770
Mercury	1769		Grenada St Vincent	1770		1771
Betsey	1770	Angola	Dominica South Carolina	1770	280	1770
Constantine	1770		Grenada	1771		1771
Betsey	1771	Angola	South Carolina	1772	285	1772
Constantine	1771		Grenada	1771		1772
Mercury	1771		Tobago	1772		1772

			Grenada			
Betsey	1772					
Constantine	1772		Jamaica	1773		1773
Mercury	1773		Jamaica	1773		1773
Betsey	1773	Gambia	South Carolina	1773		1773
Betsey	1773	Gambia	South Carolina	1774	128	1775
Constantine	1773	Anamaboe	St Vincent Jamaica		376	1774
Elizabeth	1773	Bonny New Calabar	Vessel reported lost			
Antelope	1774		Jamaica	1774		1775
Constantine	1774	Gold Coast	St Vincent Jamaica	1775	380	1775
Mercury	1774		Grenada Jamaica	1775	307 (at St Vincent)	1775
Antelope	1775	Bonny New Calabar	Barbados Jamaica	1776	403	1776
Roebuck	1775	Gold Coast	Grenada Jamaica	1776	310	1776
Constantine	1776	Gold Coast	Grenada	1777	600	1771
Constantine	1778	Cape Coast Castle	Grenada Jamaica	1778	391	1778

Source: Adapted from *Bristol, Africa and the Eighteenth-Century Slave Trade to America, Vol. 3, The Final Years, 1746 – 1769* and *Bristol, Africa and the Eighteenth-Century Slave Trade to America, Vol. 4, The Years of Decline, 1770 – 1807* (Bristol Record Society).

David Hamilton was also a leading sugar merchant in Bristol and owned an estate in Grenada. Records show him active in the sugar trade during 1776-8 and 1773-9 where he imported 3,740 hogsheads of sugar. Blocks of sugar were packed into large wooden barrels known as hogsheads. Each hogshead weighed between 800 and 1,500 pounds.

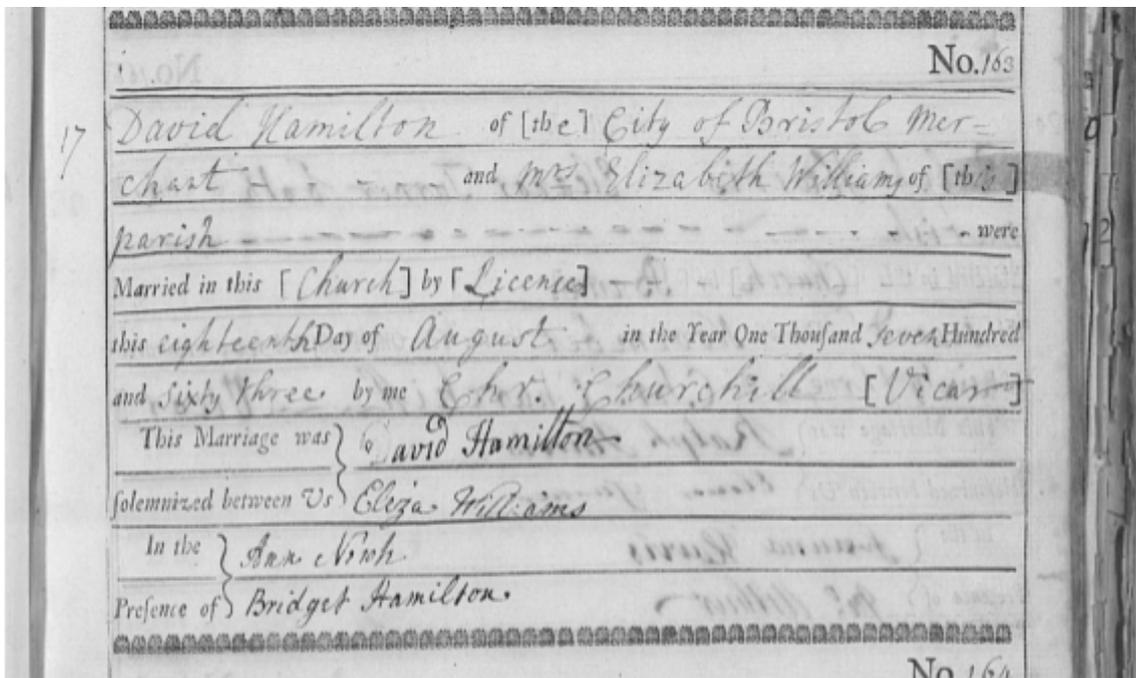
Sketchley's Bristol Directory of 1775 shows Davy (David) Hamilton, a merchant, living at 6 Park Street. This was a fashionable district of Bristol and living nearby were others embroiled in the slave trade such as Richard Farr, a ship owner engaged in slave voyages to Grenada and Jamaica trade, or Edward Neufville, a South Carolina merchant involved in the slave trade. On the corner of Park Street and Great George Street lived Henry Cruger Junior, a Member of Parliament, also involved in the slave trade.

Telling our stories Finding our roots

David Hamilton died on 25th January 1779 and there is a monumental inscription to him in Bristol Cathedral. In his will of 22nd December 1771, amongst others, he mentions his wife, Elizabeth, his daughter Elizabeth, and his brothers, William, Thomas, Daniel, and Alexander.

Mrs Elizabeth Hamilton was the daughter of William Williams of Exeter, a doctor of 'physic' (medicine). William Williams married Elizabeth Oliver at Exeter Cathedral in 1718. They had three daughters, Elizabeth, Bridget and Anne. Elizabeth married David Hamilton, the merchant of Bristol, in 1763; Bridget married Daniel Hamilton, brother to David, in 1757; and Ann married Samuel Newte, Rector of the Tidcombe portion of, Tiverton St Peter's parish, in 1743.

The witnesses to the marriage of Elizabeth and David Hamilton were her married sisters, Ann Newte and Bridget Hamilton.



St Thomas the Apostle's Church Parish Register of Marriages 1763

There are clear links to Tiverton in the relationships of the Williams sisters, Hamilton brothers, and the Reverend Samuel Newte.

Daniel Hamilton, formerly an Army Major, was appointed to the office of Receiver-General of the Land and Window Tax for Tiverton in 1765. He took up residence in Tiverton shortly after his appointment and lived at 61 Bampton Street. Prior to this he was living at Exeter. By 1769 he had left the post and returned to Exeter. He was involved in establishing a private bank in Exeter in 1769 as Duntze & Co, also known as Exeter Bank. The founding partners were John (later Sir John) Duntze, William Mackworth Praed, Joseph Sanders and Daniel Hamilton. Duntze was a leading woollen merchant and MP for Tiverton.



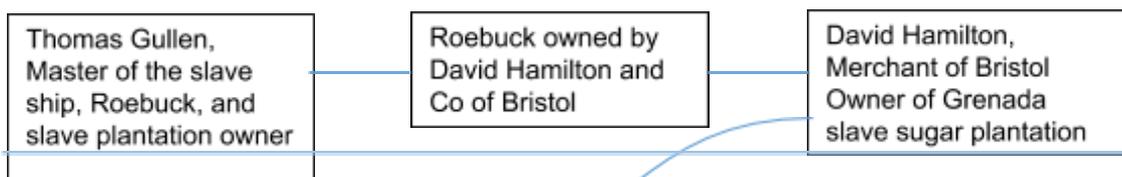
Major Daniel Hamilton

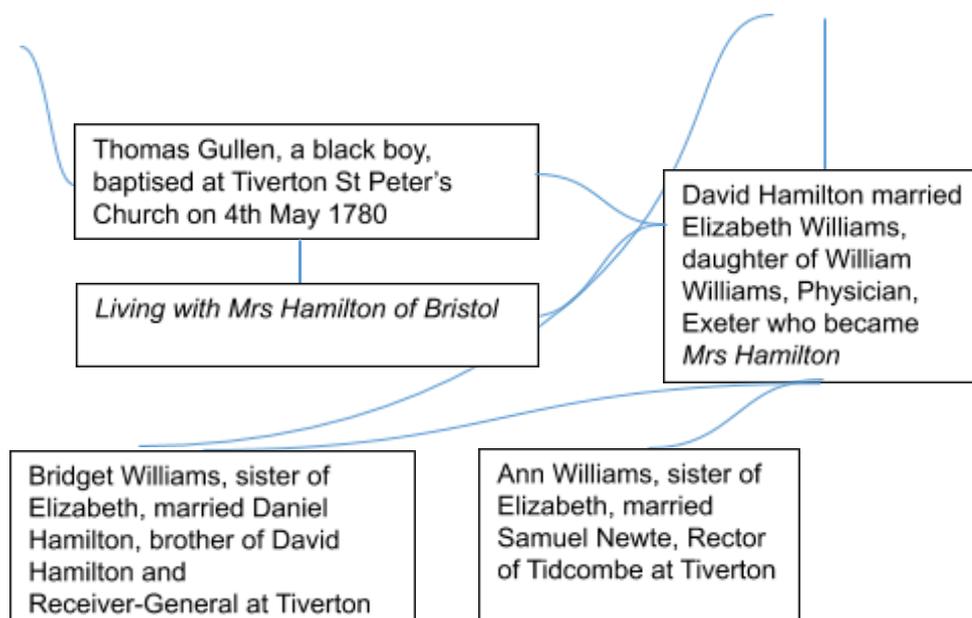
The Exeter and Plymouth Gazette of 3rd June 1895 reported that the Rev. A. H. Hamilton had donated a portrait of the late Major David Hamilton to the Royal Albert Museum at Exeter. It can still be found there. The report contained information on his life. Daniel Hamilton was the younger son of a Scots laird, in the country of Lanark, and was born around 1722. He was an Army surgeon and took part in the Battle of Culloden, under the Duke of Cumberland, in 1745. Later, he became a Major in the 70th Regiment of Foot. His wife Bridget died in November 1769 and was buried at the Church of St Thomas the Apostle, Exeter where they had previously married in 1757. In 1774 he married Mary Carew at Exeter Cathedral. Mary was the widow of John Carew and daughter of Charles Webber, Chapter Clerk at the Cathedral. Daniel Hamilton died in 1810 and was buried with his first wife, Bridget at Church of St Thomas the Apostle.

Samuel Newte, Rector of the Tidcombe was part of the Newte family which had long played a prominent role in Tiverton. Henry Newte, the elder, was Town Clerk of Tiverton. His son Henry Newte, the younger, also served as Town Clerk of the town from 1625 to 1655 and was also twice its Mayor, and in 1660 the MP for Tiverton. The Newte family were also Rectors of Tidcombe portion stretching back to the mid seventeenth century. Richard Newte, son of Henry, the elder, became Rector of Tidcombe and Claire portions in 1641; John Newte, son of Richard, succeeded him as Rector of Tidcombe and Pitt portions in 1678; Samuel Newte, senior, son of Richard and nephew of John, followed as Rector of Tidcombe and Pitt in 1716; Samuel Newte, junior, son of Samuel who married Ann Williams, became Rector of Tidcombe in 1742. Samuel was succeeded at Tidcombe by his son John Newte in 1782.

As a Rector in the parish, Samuel Newte would have been able to baptise Thomas Gullen at St Peter's Church. The relationships that connect Thomas Gullen to Mrs Elizabeth Hamilton are shown in the figure below.

Relationships surrounding Thomas Gullen and Mrs Elizabeth Hamilton





So far we have not been able to link the Hamilton's and Bristol to Thomas Gullen's former owner, Dr George Millegen. The only evidence we have of a presence in Bristol is the fact that Millegen's wife, Mary, died in 1797 at College Green, Bristol which leads on to Park Street where the Hamiltons lived in 1775.

However, we do know that Elizabeth died on 2nd December 1808 at Exmouth in Devon. The Exeter Flying Post of 8th December 1808 reported –

EXETER, WEDNESDAY, Dec. 7.

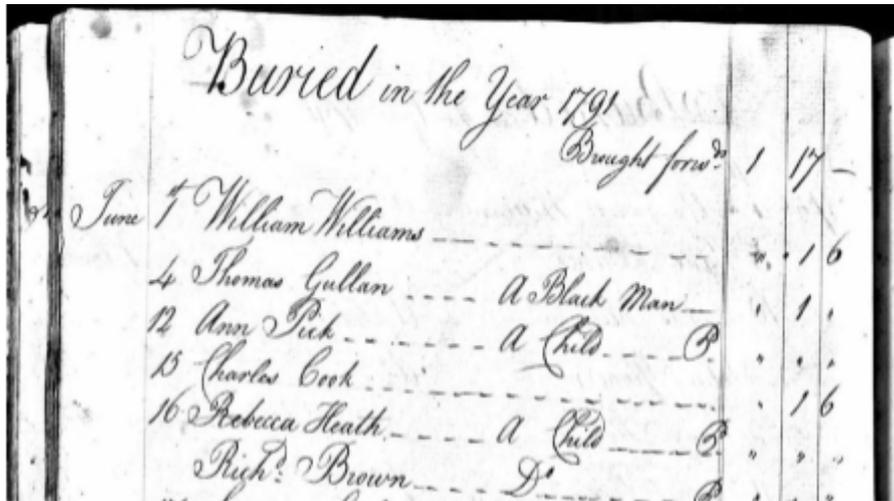
Last Friday morning died at Exmouth, Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton, aged 85 years.

The will of the Rev. Samuel Newte, who married her sister Ann, mentions a property in Exmouth.

In the will of Mrs Elizabeth Hamilton made at Exmouth in 1798 we have clear documentary evidence of her connection with Thomas Gullen. In the document she grants Thomas *Gallan* the protection of her son George and daughter, Mrs Elizabeth Stevens, 'as a faithful honest good servant'. The granting of protection had a particular significance since it meant that Thomas Gullen's status as a free man and his American citizenship would be protected by her surviving children. At the time, free black men in England might be forced back into slavery or might possibly be impressed by a press gang into the Royal Navy.

Burial in Bristol 1775

Thomas Gullen died in 1791, around 29 years old. The Parish Register of St Augustine the Less in Bristol (next to Bristol Cathedral) records the burial of Thomas Gullen on 4th June 1791 and describes him as 'a black man'.



St Augustine the Less Church Parish Register of Burials 1791

It is curious that the will of Mrs Elizabeth Hamilton made in 1798 mentions Thomas Gullen when he had died seven years earlier. It might have been that for some reason she was unsure of his whereabouts and did not know of his death.

Conclusions and Further Research

This research has enabled us to gather evidence to provide credible identities of Thomas Gullen, the black boy baptised at St Peter's Church on 4th May 1780, and Mrs Hamilton of Bristol.

We have seen that Thomas Gullen had the given forename and surname of Captain Thomas Gullan, slave ship master and slave plantation owner in South Carolina and elsewhere in the British colonies. Captain Thomas Gullan was associated with David Hamilton, the Bristol merchant, who owned Gullan's vessel, the Roebuck in 1774. David Hamilton was connected to Exeter and Tiverton through the Williams sisters of Exeter – Elizabeth, Bridget and Ann. Elizabeth married David Hamilton in 1763, Bridget married Daniel Hamilton, brother to David, in 1757, and Ann married Samuel Newte, Rector of Tiverton St Peter's Church, in 1743. Daniel Hamilton was involved in the governance and local politics in Tiverton and banking in Exeter in the mid eighteenth century. The Reverend Samuel Newte was clearly in a position to have baptised a *black boy* living with his sister-in-law, Elizabeth Hamilton of Bristol.

We have documentary evidence that Dr George Millegen freed his slave named [Thomas Gullan](#) on 12th July 1775 in South Carolina. We also know that Dr Millegen left



the colony for England arriving at Falmouth on the packet Eagle on 28th September 1775 and it has been suggested that Thomas Gullen accompanied him. We have seen that Thomas Gullen was mentioned in the will of Mrs Elizabeth Hamilton of 1798.

In addition to gaining further knowledge and documentary evidence of what has been discovered so far, further research is needed to –

- 1) determine Thomas Gullen's time and place of birth, his exact relationship to Captain Thomas Gullan and the circumstances of his enslavement and manumission;
- 2) prove that Thomas Gullen came to England with Dr George Millegen, his former owner;
- 3) discover what happened after Thomas Gullen arrived in England and the circumstances of how he came to be living with Mrs Hamilton in Bristol in 1780; and
- 4) establish whether Thomas Gullen spent time living in Tiverton or elsewhere in Devon.

References

Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette, 15th April, 1762.

Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette, 16th May, 1776.

Bristol Museums, Bristol and the Transatlantic Slave Trade: Myths and Truths, <https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/stories/bristol-transatlantic-slave-trade-myths-truths/> / accessed 13/09/2019.

British Newspapers Archive 1710 – 1953, The British Library (available from the partner website <http://www.findmypast.co.uk>, accessed 31/08/2019).

Bristol: St Augustine-the less Parish Registers 1235 – 1961, Bristol Archives Catalogue Reference P.St Aug/R, Bristol City Council.



Chester Chronicle, 22nd May, 1789.

Demarin, P. D. (1772), *A Treatise Upon the Trade from Great-Britain to Africa* (R. Baldwin).

Exeter and Plymouth Gazette, 3rd June, 1895.

Exeter Flying Post, 8th December, 1808.

Exeter: St Martin's Parish Registers, Marriages and Banns 1754 – 1812, Devon Archive Catalogue Reference Number 302A/PR/1/5, South West Heritage Trust.

Exeter: St Martin's Parish Registers, Baptisms, Marriages and Burials 1739 – 1812, Devon Archive Catalogue Reference Number 302A/PR/1/2, South West Heritage Trust.

Exeter: St Thomas' Parish Registers, Baptisms, Marriages and Burials 1743 – 1808, Devon Archive Catalogue Reference Number 4781A/PR/1/3, South West Heritage Trust.

Friends of Devon's Archives Preliminary Report of the Black History Project, <http://www.foda.org.uk/main/projects/blackhistoryrefs.htm> accessed 23/09/2019.

Georgia Gazette, 8th June, 1768.

Grant of Probate: Will of David Hamilton, Merchant of Bristol, 15th April 1789, Reference PROB 11/1063/303, The National Archives.

Grant of Probate: Will of Elizabeth Hamilton, Widow of Exmouth, Devon, 6th March 1809, Reference PROB 11/1494/58, The National Archives

Grant of Probate: Will of Reverend Samuel Newte, Clerk of Tiverton, Devon, 5th April 1781, Reference PROB 11/1077/44, The National Archives

Grant of Probate: Will of Thomas Gullan, Mariner of Bristol, 26th August 1778, Reference PROB 11/1044/334, The National Archives

Harding, W. (1845), *The History of Tiverton in the County of Devon, Vol. 1* (F. Boyce).

Harris, W. J. (2009), *The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah : A Free Black Man's Encounter with Liberty* (Yale University Press).

Historic England, Black Lives in England, <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/the-slave-trade-and-abolition/sites-of-memory/black-lives-in-england/> accessed 27/09/2019.

Hoskins W. G. (1954), *Devon* (Collins reproduced Phillimore, 2003).

Little, B. (ed.) (1971), *Sketchley's Bristol Directory 1775* (Kingsmead Reprints).



Lloyd's List, 9th December, 1760.

Lloyd's List, 3rd August, 1764.

Lloyd's List, 15th June, 1773.

Lloyds List, 19th April, 1776.

London Chronicle, 8th –10th January, 1761.

London Chronicle, 31st March – 2nd April, 1761.

Major Daniel Hamilton, portrait attributed to John Opie c. 1786, Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, Exeter City Council, <https://rammcollections.org.uk/object/9-1894-2/> accessed 16/10/2019.

Maunder, P. (2018), *Tiverton Cloth – The Story of the Town's Woollen Trade 1475 – 1815* (Short Run Press).

MacKeith, L. (2003), *Local Black History: A Beginning in Devon* (Archives & Museums of Black Heritage).

Morgan, K. (1993), *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press).

Morgan, K. (1993), *Bristol West India Merchants in the Eighteenth Century* (*Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Vol. 3, 6th Series*).

Neilson, P. (ed.) (1847), *The Life and Adventures of Zamba, an African Negro King, and his experience of slavery in South Carolina*, (Smith, Elder and Co.).

Olenkiewicz, J. S. *British Packet Sailings and Mail Boats Falmouth – North America*, <https://www.rfajola.com/mercury/Falmouth%20Packets%20NA.pdf> accessed 20/09/2019.

Powers, B. E. Jr. (2016) *Free Persons of Colour* (South Carolina Encyclopaedia, University of South Carolina, Institute for Southern Studies) <http://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/free-persons-of-color/> accessed 03/10/2019

RBS Heritage Hub, <https://www.rbs.com/heritage/companies/sanders-snow-and-co.html> accessed 05/09/2019.

Reynell-Upham, W. U. and Tapley Soper, H. (eds.) (1910), *The Registers of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials of the City of Exeter, Volume 1, The Registers of the Cathedral* (The Devon and Cornwall Record Society).

Richardson, D. (ed.) (1991), *Bristol, Africa and the Eighteenth-Century Slave Trade to America, Vol. 3, The Final Years, 1746 – 1769* (Bristol Record Society).



Richardson, D. (ed.) (1996), *Bristol, Africa and the Eighteenth-Century Slave Trade to America, Vol. 4, The Years of Decline, 1770 – 1807* (Bristol Record Society).

Ryan W. R. (2010), *The World of Thomas Jeremiah: Charles Town on the Eve of the American Revolution* (Oxford University Press).

Sampson, M. (2004), *A History of Tiverton* (Tiverton War Memorial Trust).

Slaves Voyages, The Transatlantic Database,
<https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database> accessed 13/09/2019.

The History of Parliament Member Biographies, Henry Newte of Tiverton 1609 – 70,
<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/newte-henry-1609-70> accessed 09/09/2019.

Tiverton: St Peter's Parish Registers, Baptisms and Burials 1760 – 1797, Devon Archive Catalogue Reference Number 2960A/PR/1/6, South West Heritage Trust.