

# Telling Our Stories, Finding Our Roots: Okehampton



## Life at the Crossroads

### A Town's Connection with Slavery and Emancipation

Okehampton's history is intimately connected with emancipation – but also with slavery.

The name Okehampton had evolved by the 10th century. It derives from the town's river 'Okement'. The first record of the town in 980 AD states that slaves were freed at the crossroads, suggesting that Okehampton was a place of hope for early settlers.

Despite Okehampton's early associations with emancipation, the town also has connections to the international slave trade of the 18th and 19th centuries. Research has found two people directly connected to the slave trade and to Okehampton.

John Campbell, politician and courtier, elected Member of Parliament for Okehampton 1820-26, was awarded compensation of £6630 5s 6d for 379

enslaved people on the Hope estate (plantation) in St Andrew, Jamaica on 25 July 1836 (Legacies of Slave Trade database).



Elizabeth Thornhill Hinds then Howell (nee Rock) who was born in Barbados was living with her daughters at Rectory House, Bridestowe. Records show that Elizabeth T. Howell registered 39 enslaved persons in 1834, and was awarded £798 0s 2d in compensation after slaves were freed.

***"I liked the idea that we're slaves and this historic town is known for a place where you can set yourself free and you choose your own destiny. I kind of see that now as well in my life. I feel like I've been here for ten years and slowly slowly it's taken this time to become more free."***

Anna Georghiou, British-Cypriot, Okehampton resident

Top photos: Left: Okehampton sign post. Top right: West Bridge, c.1900. Bottom right: The East Ockment River Bridge.

Right inset: The Society for the Abolition of Slavery in England's seal (used 1780's onward).

Bottom photos, left to right: Marriage of a Land Girl to an American soldier (1944); Okehampton Castle; US troops on parade during WW2.

### Exploring the rich multicultural history of Devon



[www.tellingourstoriesdevon.org.uk](http://www.tellingourstoriesdevon.org.uk)

