

The slavery connections of Marble Hill House

Dr Laurence Brown
School of Arts, Histories and Cultures
University of the Manchester

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This report was commissioned in November 2008 as part of a project to explore the slavery connections of four historic properties in the stewardship of English Heritage. Archival research was carried out on Bolsover Castle, Brodsworth Hall, Marble Hill House, and Northington Grange to examine the impact of slavery-generated wealth on the development of these properties.

The research follows the 2007 survey by Miranda Kaufmann on the family history of 33 English Heritage properties and their slavery connections. Using databases on the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the compensation paid to British slave-owners in the 1830s, Kaufmann's study focused on those who owned property in slave colonies, held government office in such colonies, invested in slaving or traded in slave produced goods, were engaged in abolitionist debates or legal decisions on slavery, or who owned black servants.

The aims of this report are to provide more detailed information on the economic, social, and cultural connections that linked Marble Hill House to Atlantic slavery. The report examines the relative importance of slave-generated wealth in the fortunes of Marble Hill's occupants and how these changed over time. It then details the extent to which wealth from slavery shaped the physical development of the estate and its aesthetic design.

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*My House was built but for a Show,
My lady's empty Pockets know:
And now she will not have a Shilling
To Raise the Stairs or build the Ceiling*

*Some South-Sea Broker from the City,
Will purchase me, the more's the Pity,
Lay all my fine Plantations waste,
To fit them to his vulgar Taste*

Extract from Jonathan Swift, "A Pastoral Dialogue" (1727)

1) Executive summary

Observing the construction of Marble Hill House in Twickenham, Jonathan Swift in June 1727 juxtaposed the classical refinement of its owner Henrietta Howard (c.1688–1767) with the empty materialism of London's investors in the South Sea Company. Yet Howard's elegant Palladian villa had been partially financed by investment in the South Sea Company's engagement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Although its architecture and landscaping evoked an Arcadian utopia, core elements of the interior and gardens at Marble Hill House were linked to Atlantic slavery.

Built between 1724 and 1729, Marble Hill House is one of Britain's leading examples of the Palladian revival which sought to emulate the country houses designed by Italian Andrea Palladio (1508–80) for the ruling merchant elites of Venice.¹ Constructed by Henry Herbert (1693–1750) and Roger Morris (1695–1749), Marble Hill House had three-stories which were stucco-faced with stone dressings. The symmetry and balance of the mansion's façade were paralleled by its entrance hall whose square arrangement of columns was intended to evoke the central court of a Roman villa.² The focus of the interior was the cubic Great Room which was richly decorated with ornate gilded carvings, yet the financial pressures which shaped the house's construction probably resulted in

¹ Marie P. G Draper, *Marble Hill House and its Owners* (London: Greater London Council, 1970), p. 3.

² Julius Bryant, *Marble Hill House, Twickenham* (London: English Heritage, 1988), p. 6.

the absence of an exterior staircase which had been part of the design for the villa published in 1725 by Colen Campbell (1676–1729).³

Marble Hill House was one of a series of country villas that were constructed along the Thames between Hampton Court and Richmond during the first half of the eighteenth century. Facing south, the house looked down to the river across a great terrace and gardens that had been designed in 1724 by the royal gardener Charles Bridgeman (1690–1738) and the poet Alexander Pope (1688–1744). The open lawn, small wilderness areas and woodland contrasted to the geometry of formal French gardens.⁴ Marble Hill House was owned by Henrietta Howard until her death in 1767, where it passed to her nephew John Hobart (1723–1793) and his family until it was sold to Jonathan Peel (1799–1879) in 1825, who then added an Italianate flower garden to the property.⁵ From 1903, Marble Hill has been open to the public, managed firstly by London County Council and then by English Heritage since 1986.

³ *Ibid*, pp. 3 & 29.

⁴ Julius Bryant, *Marble Hill: The Design and Use of a Palladian Estate* (Twickenham: Borough of Twickenham Local History Society, 1986), p. 8.

⁵ David Jacques, "Design History at Marble Hill", typescript, August 2005, p. 12.

1.1) Slavery connections of the families living at Marble Hill

There are no sources suggesting that domestic slaves or Africans involved with the abolitionist movement visited Marble Hill House, however Henrietta Howard did have direct connections to at least two owners of enslaved Africans in Britain. Her husband's nephew, Charles William Howard, 7th Earl of Suffolk (1693–1722) owned a slave Scipio Africanus (1702-1720) whose elaborate grave at Henbury near Bristol suggests that he must have had considerable significance for the Howard family. Henrietta Howard's friend and correspondent Catherine Hyde, Duchess of Queensberry (1700-1777) received a ten year old boy in 1764 from St Kitts as a present whom she renamed Julius Soubise.⁶

After Henrietta Howard's death in 1767, Marble Hill passed to her nephew John Hobart, second earl of Buckinghamshire (1723-1793) who occupied the house for the rest of his life. Hobart's father, Sir John Hobart (1693-1756), had married, as his second wife, Elizabeth Bristow (d. 1762) in 1728. She was the daughter of Robert Bristow (1643-1707) a planter and merchant who owned extensive estates in Virginia on the coast of Mobjack Bay. After the Navigation Acts restricted inter-colonial trade, Robert Bristow migrated from Virginia to London in 1677 so that he could continue his business as a merchant. In 1702,

⁶ Soubise was a friend of the prominent black abolitionist Ignatius Sancho (c1729-1780), who had been born into slavery and brought to England as a young child. Soubise was educated as a gentleman and frequently portrayed as a "fop" and sexual adventurer who was forced to leave England in 1777 after he was accused of rape. Markman Ellis, "Ignatius Sancho's Letters: Sentimental Libertinism and the Politics of Form" in Vincent Carretta and Philip Gould, *Genius in Bondage: Literature of the early Black Atlantic* (Knoxville: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), pp. 199-217; Folarin Shyllon, *Black People in Britain 1555-1833* (London: Institute of Race Relations, 1977), p. 41.

Bristow is listed as one of eight owners of the vessel *Calabar Merchant* which embarked 238 enslaved Africans at the port of Calabar (in South-East Nigeria) for Virginia. A quarter did not survive the Atlantic crossing.⁷ Upon Bristow's death he left his estate and slaves in Virginia to his grandson, so the Hobart's do not appear to have directly benefited from these plantations.⁸

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Marble Hill was occupied by two other women with significant connections to Atlantic slavery. The Countess of Bath rented the house perhaps from 1796 to 1808, followed by the Duchess of Bolton until 1809. Henrietta Laura Pulteney, Countess of Bath (1766-1808) had received the extensive American properties of her father Sir William Pulteney, including plantations in the West Indies, on his death in 1805. Katharine Lowther, Duchess of Bolton (1736-1809) was the daughter of a former Governor of Barbados who also owned a plantation in the south of the island.

In 1816, Marble Hill was inherited by Sir George Robert Hampden- Hobart, fifth earl of Buckinghamshire (1789-1849). Three years latter he married Anne Glover (d.1878) who was the illegitimate daughter of leading West Indian lobbyist, lawyer and politician Sir Arthur Piggott (1749-1819). Unfortunately there are few sources available from which to establish whether Piggott had a continuing relationship with Glover.

⁷ www.slavevoyages.org, voyage 21258, *Calabar Merchant* (1702)

⁸ Ludwell Montague, "Landholdings in Ware Neck 1642-1860", *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 60: 1 (1952), pp. 69-71

1.2) An assessment of the slave-generated wealth of the families at Marble Hill

Seeking greater financial independence from both her husband and the royal household, Henrietta Howard invested in two companies that were significant participants in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The French *Compagnie des Indes* and the South Sea Company in England offered Howard high returns before the stocks of both crashed during 1720. From her surviving correspondence held at the British Library, it is not clear to what extent Henrietta Howard profited from these speculative investments.

In 1722, Henrietta Howard had received a financial settlement from George II to support her after she left the royal court. The most significant part of that settlement was £11,500 of stock, of which 70% were shares in the South Sea Company. This was at a time when the South Sea Company was intensifying its slave trading activities. The trans-Atlantic slave trade was therefore crucial in funding both the acquisition of the land and the building of Marble Hill House.

Of the property's later owners, the fortune of the Peel family which was based on the early industrialization of the cotton industry may have some connections to Atlantic slavery. Cotton was a key commodity both for the purchase of slaves on the West African coast and as a product of slave labour in

the Americas. However, given the limitations of existing archival collections on the Peels it is difficult to quantify what percentage of their business depended on supplying textiles for the slave trade or had been produced by enslaved workers, and how much of this slave-related income had been passed on to Jonathan Peel as the fifth son of Robert Peel (1788–1850).

More significantly, the economic position of the Lowther family had been dramatically transformed by the profits of plantation ownership and government office in Barbados during the early 1700s. Slavery had directly supported the social and economic position enjoyed by Katharine Lowther when she rented Marble Hill at the end of her life. Henrietta Laura Pulteney owned slave plantations in Tobago and Dominica, however the profits from these were overshadowed by her father's investments in the North American mainland.

1.3) Property development and slave-generated wealth

Although it is difficult to categorically show a direct relationship between the South Sea Company shares and Howard's construction of Marble Hill, the timing and size of the bequest from the king suggests that they were certainly decisive in funding both the purchase of land and the building works of the mid 1720s. There was also a formal connection between the king's settlement and Howard's project at Marble Hill, in that the latter was directed by Archibald Campbell, Earl of Ilay and later third duke of Argyll (1682–1761), who was also a

trustee of the king's bequest. Campbell had acted as a financial agent for Howard before the king's settlement, but after 1722 his involvement in the acquisition of land at Marble Hill and the payment of the architect Roger Morris suggests that as a trustee he was drawing directly on funds from the king's settlement.

1.4) Slavery-related symbolism and design at Marble Hill

Marble Hill House exemplifies Philip Ayres argument that classical culture was claimed in eighteenth-century England by an elite keen to imagine itself as embodying an oligarchy of 'civic virtue' to parallel those of ancient Rome or Greece.⁹ Palladian architecture therefore gave historical roots and civic legitimacy to those of uncertain fortune such as Howard. One of the key interior elements of the house were the Roman landscapes of Italian artist Giovanni Paolo Panini (1691-1765) that dominated the Great Room. Strikingly one of these paintings from 1738 focused on the Arch of Constantine whose summit and base were marked by scenes of classical enslavement.

Another aspect of interior design at Marble Hill with slavery connections was the use of mahogany in the mansion which was increasingly being harvested by slave labour in central America during the 1720s. From its grand staircase and the floorboards of the Great Room to its furniture, mahogany was a pervasive design feature of Marble Hill House.

⁹ Philip Ayres, *Classical Culture and the Idea of Rome in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

Neither the design nor planting of the gardens at Marble Hill appear to have drawn on products or practices from the Atlantic economy. The Earl of Ilay was an enthusiastic plant collector and amateur botanist, however it is unlikely that the tropical “exotics” at his property at Whitton were transplanted to Marble Hill. It was therefore the physical fabric of Marble Hill rather than its landscaping or furnishings which were most directly connected to Atlantic slavery.

2) Henrietta Howard

Born in 1688, Henrietta Howard (*nee* Hobart) was raised in the family of Henry Howard, 5th Earl of Suffolk (1627–1709) after the death of her parents when she was aged thirteen. In March 1706 she was married to the Earl’s third son, the soldier Charles Howard (1675–1733). Within the first year of their marriage the couple had a son, Henry, however they increasingly lived separate lives and faced constant financial problems, resulting in creditors seizing their property. Seeking to restore their fortune, Charles and Henrietta joined the royal court at Hanover returning to London in 1714 as attendants to the households of King George I and the Prince of Wales respectively.¹⁰

¹⁰ Tracy Borman, *Henrietta Howard: King's Mistress, Queen's Servant* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007)



Charles Jervas, "Henrietta Howard, Countess of Suffolk" (c1724)

Source: English Heritage, Ref. J920090

In 1717, the Prince and Princess of Wales were expelled by George I from St James's Palace, which Henrietta Howard used as an opportunity to assert her independence from her abusive husband. As Charles Howard sought to pressure her to leave her position with the Princess of Wales, she replied:

you neither mention any place that I may go to, nor in what manner you could provide for me if I leave the Princesses service, for you.¹¹

¹¹ British Library, Add Ms Z2627, f26

By this time, Henrietta Howard felt that her marriage was over, yet for the next decade she would face the threat of being forcibly or legally reclaimed by her estranged husband.

As a Woman of the Bedchamber, Henrietta Howard was in regular attendance on Princess Caroline and became confidant and mistress to the Prince of Wales. The correspondence that survives from Howard to the prince and that which was exchanged with her closest friends, suggests her position within the prince's court at Leicester House was extremely vulnerable.¹² The Atlantic connections of Marble Hill need to be understood in the context of Henrietta Howard's search for financial independence in response to the breakdown of her marriage and her increasingly marginal position within the prince's household. It was not until late 1727 that her fears about being forced to return to her husband were ended when her former lover George II (1683–1760) arranged for Charles Howard to be paid off through an annuity of £1200.

3) Slavery in the family: Scipio Africanus and the Howards

Four days before Christmas in 1720, Scipio Africanus, a black servant for Charles William Howard, 7th Earl of Suffolk, died at the age of 18. The ornately detailed headstone for Africanus at St Mary's Church in Bristol provides more

¹² British Library, Manuscript Collections, Add MSS 22625-29; Lewis Melville, *Lady Suffolk and her circle* (London: Hutchinson, 1924)

information on Howard than his “negro servant”. The footstone to the grave claims that Africanus was “born a pagan and a slave”, which raises the issue of whether he was born in the Americas where slave status was transmissible by birth or in West or Central Africa where such practices were much more fluid and open.¹³ The footstone described how Africanus’s conversion to Christianity was due to “such grace to me my lord on earth has given”. The juxtaposition on the footstone of Africanus’s “lord on earth” and his “lord in heaven” suggests that he may not have been manumitted but had died a slave.¹⁴



Gravestone of Scipio Africanus, 1720, St Mary's Church, Henbury, Bristol.

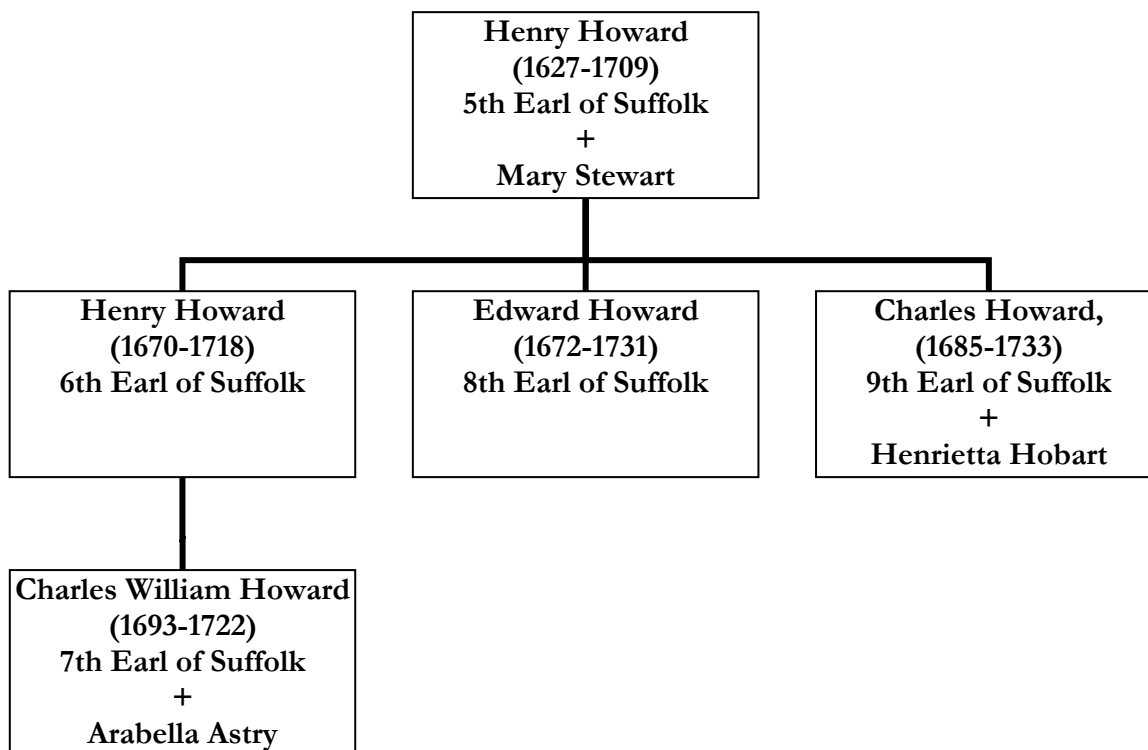
Source English Heritage, Ref: 379142

¹³ Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

¹⁴ Madge Dresser, *Slavery Obscured: The Social History of the Slave Trade in an English Provincial Port* (London: Continuum, 2001) p. 114; For full text of the grave see <http://www.heritage-explorer.org.uk/>

It appears likely that Scipio Africanus received his name upon arrival in Britain as a child, just as the Duchess of Queensberry had renamed Julius Soubise when she had taken possession of him fifty years later. During the early 1700s, Bristol had begun to challenge London as the pre-eminent port for Britain's slave trade which makes it probable that the Howards had received Africanus from local sources. Charles William's father, the 6th Earl of Suffolk, was President of the Board of Trade and Plantations between 1715 and 1718 during which period 260 British ships embarked an estimated 54,000 enslaved Africans for the Americas.¹⁵ Given Scipio's age it is possible that the Howard's received him during this period.

Figure 1: Genealogy of the Earls of Suffolk



¹⁵ <http://www.slavevoyages.org>

One possible means through which Scipio Africanus had been acquired was through the family connections of Charles William Howard's wife, Arabella (d.1722). Arabella Astry had inherited the Henbury estate in 1712 and had married Howard three years later. Her father, Sir Samuel Astry (1632-1704), was a successful barrister whose lucrative post as Clerk of the Crown in the Court of King's Bench enabled him to marry the heiress of Henbury, Elizabeth Morse.¹⁶

Samuel's uncle, John Astry, appears to have died at the end of 1630 visiting a plantation that he owned in St Christopher (now St Kitts), leaving to his younger brother,

all my goods and chattels, and the rights or title that I have unto any servants in the Island of St Christophers's or elsewhere, with their indentures and terms of years.¹⁷

St Kitts had been claimed by the English and French in 1624, and it formed one of the first centres for European settlement in the Eastern Caribbean with the profitability of tobacco farming quickly resulted in a population of 3,000 white settlers by 1629.¹⁸ Conditions for the large numbers of indentured English and Irish servants on the island were often extremely harsh, and it was not until the mid-seventeenth century that the rise of sugar production fueled the

¹⁶ Robert E.C. Waters, *Genealogical Memoirs of the Families of Chester of Bristol, Barton Regis, London, and Almondsbury: Descended from Henry Chester, Sheriff of Bristol 1470; and also of the Families of Astry of London, Kent, Beds, Hunts, Oxon, and Gloucestershire, Descended from Sir Ralph Astry, kt., Lord Mayor of London, 1493* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1881), pp. 88-89.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 84

¹⁸ David Watts, *The West Indies: Patterns of Development, Culture and Environmental Change since 1492* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 151 & 157.

transformation of the island's population with the importation of enslaved Africans.¹⁹

The website Discovering Bristol provides an image by Gilbert Jackson which it identifies as a portrait of Arabella Astry and her black servant. Further research by the Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery has shown this to be a painting produced around 1640 of Florence Smyth of Ashton Court.²⁰ The Smyths were subsequently linked to the Astrys by the marriage in 1698 of Arabella's sister Elizabeth Astry (1670-1715) to Sir John Smyth (1660-1726). This may explain the mistaken identification of the portrait's sitter. The painting is particularly striking because it pre-dates the mass importation of enslaved Africans into Britain's colonies in the Americas and the increasing visibility of black servants in English portraiture during the second half of the eighteenth century.²¹

By the period 1728-32, Bristol surpassed the capital outfitting forty-eight slaving vessels to the forty slave ships that departed London.²² Merchants in Bristol played a significant role in expanding the trans-Atlantic slave trade to

¹⁹ Hilary McD. Beckles, "Plantation Production and White "Proto-Slavery": White Indentured Servants and the Colonisation of the English West Indies, 1624-1645", *The Americas*, 41: 3 (1985), pp. 21-45.

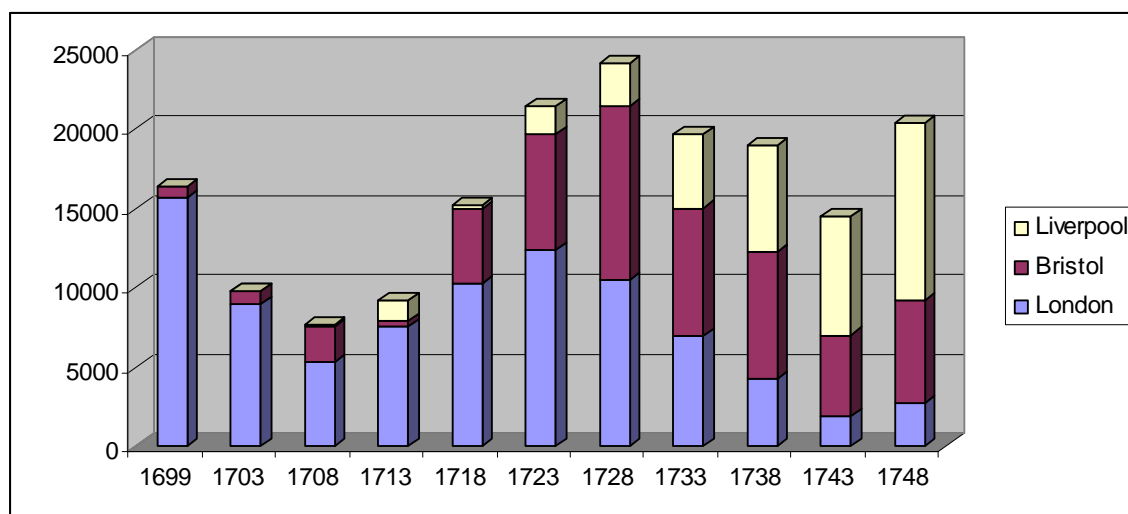
²⁰ Personal communication with Sheena Stoddard, Curator of Fine Art, Bristol's Museums, Galleries & Archives, 22 March 2010.

²¹ Susan Dwyer Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society, 1640-1700* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007)

²² Kenneth Morgan, "Bristol and the Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century", *English Historical Review*, 107: 424 (1992), p. 639; Between 1698 and 1707, it is estimated that Bristol ships carried at least 7,000 slaves across the Middle Passage - James A. Rawley and Stephen D. Behrendt, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), p. 154

Bight of Biafra which became the second leading regional source of slaves during the second half of the eighteenth century. During the period 1713 to 1719, Bristol received 137 ships from the Americas of which 38% were from the Eastern Caribbean, 23% from Jamaica and 24% from the southern colonies of the British American mainland.²³ For earlier years of the 1700s, it seems that Jamaica and Barbados had an even greater share of Bristol's shipping. Therefore despite being named after a Roman general to evoke Africa, as a child slave Africanus's most probable origins based on Bristol's shipping networks lay in the Caribbean.

Table 1: Estimated annual average of slaves delivered to the Americas by ships from London, Bristol and Liverpool, 1699–1752



Source: Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic trade in the eighteenth century* (1993), p. 133.

²³ Morgan, "Bristol and the Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century", p. 629.

Two years before the death of Africanus, Charles William Howard was named as Lord Lieutenant of Essex. Henrietta Howard's position in the prince's court made her a key supporter in the Earl's preferment.²⁴ In his will three years later, Charles William Howard described Henrietta as "my Loving sister".²⁵ Therefore given their closeness and the elaborateness of the grave for Scipio Africanus it appears unlikely that Henrietta Howard would not have known of her in-laws' "negro servant".

4) Speculating in slavery: The Earl of Ilay and the *Compagnie des Indes*

Facing a broken marriage and with her fragile position in the prince's court, Henrietta Howard actively invested in joint-stock companies in France and Britain that directly engaged in slave trading as they speculated in profits of the New World. In the autumn of 1719, the Earl of Ilay wrote to Henrietta Howard from Paris that "I have laid out the money you bid me" in the stock issue by the newly created *Compagnie des Indes* (or what was known in England as the Mississippi Company).²⁶ Ilay invested 5,000 *livres* for Howard after meeting with the company's initiator, the Scottish director of the Banque Royale, John Law (d.1729). Ilay wrote that,

²⁴ Bristol Record Office, AC/AS/5/1, Charles Howard to Earl of Suffolk, 1/12/1719

²⁵ Bristol Record Office, AC/A5/5/1, Will of Charles William, Earl of Suffolk, 4/4/1721

²⁶ British Library, Add Mss 22628, f47, Archibald Campbell to Henrietta Howard, September 1719

The subscription was full, but Mr Law was so kind as to allow it me: some of the subscribers have already sold their subscriptions for 230, that is, their own money back again, and 130 per cent profit.²⁷

These spectacular profits in the first month of trading encouraged Ilay to not only praise the stock to Howard but personally invest in it himself.

The Earl of Ilay was probably referring to Law when he wrote to Howard from Paris that,

by what I am informed by him who knows all, and does all here, I am of the opinion that whatever sum you remit here may be turned to great profit.²⁸

Ilay had been a long-standing supporter of Law's financial schemes, resulting in the Earl and his brother acting as witnesses for Law before the Kings Bench when he was tried for murder in 1694. Condemned to death Law fled to the continent, but he briefly returned to Scotland during the debates over the Act of Union where Ilay championed Law's proposals for the economic development of Scotland.²⁹ Such financial speculation also had a personal attraction to Ilay as he had received little inheritance or property and so had relied on military and political office to increase his fortune.³⁰

²⁷ British Library, Add Mss 22628, f47, Archibald Campbell to Henrietta Howard, September 1719

²⁸ British Library, Add Mss 22628, f47, Archibald Campbell to Henrietta Howard, September 1719

²⁹ Gray, *The Memoirs, Life and Character of the Great Mr. Law and his Brother at Paris. Down to this present year 1721, with an Accurate and Particular Account of the Establishment of the Mississippi Company in France, the Rise and Fall of it's Stock, all the Subtle Artifices used to Support the National Credit of that Kingdom, by the Pernicious Project of Paper Credit. Written by a Scots gentleman* (London, 1721), p. 30.

³⁰ Roger L. Emerson, "The scientific interests of Archibald Campbell, 1st Earl of Ilay and 3rd Duke of Argyll (1682-1761)", *Annals of Science* 59 (2002), p. 23.

In France, Law's financial projects were welcomed by a Regency bankrupted by two decades of war and lacking the political power to increase its revenues. Law proposed to convert the large public debt into shares in a monopoly company that would fuel the spread of paper money in France thereby enabling the government to build up large stores of gold and silver.³¹ The twin pillars of Law's "system" were the creation in 1717 and 1718 of a Banque Royale and the *Compagnie d'Occident* as a means of managing the state's debt and generating revenue through share issues and a twenty-five year monopoly on trade with French Louisiana. A Scottish compatriot who worked for Law wrote that,

to support his Bank, he proposes to the Council of Regency a West and East India Company, to trade to the Louisiana on the River Mississippi; and that on the imaginary Trade thither, (more imaginary, if possible, than the English South-Sea) the Bank would be supported.³²

At the time, Louisiana's "imaginary" future trade was envisaged as stretching from the tropical staples of tobacco and rice to silk-worm breeding. Favoured by his royal benefactors, Law was able to lobby to have France's other colonial trading monopolies absorbed within his new financial Leviathan from the slave trade to tax collection. In May 1719, the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, the

³¹ Larry Neal, "How it all began: the monetary and financial architecture of Europe during the first global capital markets, 1648–1815", *Financial History Review* 7 (2000), pp. 129-130.

³² Gray, *The Memoirs, Life and Character of the Great Mr. Law*, p. 31.

Compagnie de la Chine and the *Compagnie de Sénégal* were all taken over by Law creating a new *Compagnie des Indes*.³³

Initial French projects of colonisation on the Mississippi had claimed that the transportation of “whores and rogues” from Europe would provide labour for new settlement.³⁴ Between 1717 and 1721 over a thousand convicts and contract labourers were sent to Louisiana, however by the end of 1721 only 178 of these *engagés* remained.³⁵ From the summer of 1719, an estimated two thousand enslaved Africans were introduced to the colony, of whom only one third remained alive by the census of November 1721.³⁶ The enslaved Africans cleared the land along the Mississippi River, enabling French settlement to move inland from the gulf coast resulting in the establishment of tobacco, indigo and rice plantations between New Orleans and Natchez.³⁷ As the new colony became increasingly dependant on slave labour so in September 1720, the *Compagnie des Indes* received a royal monopoly on trade with West Africa, including the slave trade to the Caribbean and Louisiana.³⁸ This followed four years where the slave trade had been opened up to French merchants, whereas the *Compagnie des Indes* received a subsidy of 30 *livres* per head from the Royal Treasury for each slave imported to the Americas.³⁹

³³ Cécile Vidal, “French Louisiana in the Age of the Companies” in Louis H. Roper and Bertrand van Ruymbeke, eds., *Constructing Early-Modern Empires: Proprietary Ventures in the Atlantic World, 1500-1750* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p. 148

³⁴ Gray, *The Memoirs, Life and Character of the Great Mr. Law*, p. 32

³⁵ Daniel H. Usner, Jr., “From African Captivity to American Slavery: The Introduction of Black Laborers to Colonial Louisiana”, *Louisiana History*, 20: 1 (1979), pp. 25-28

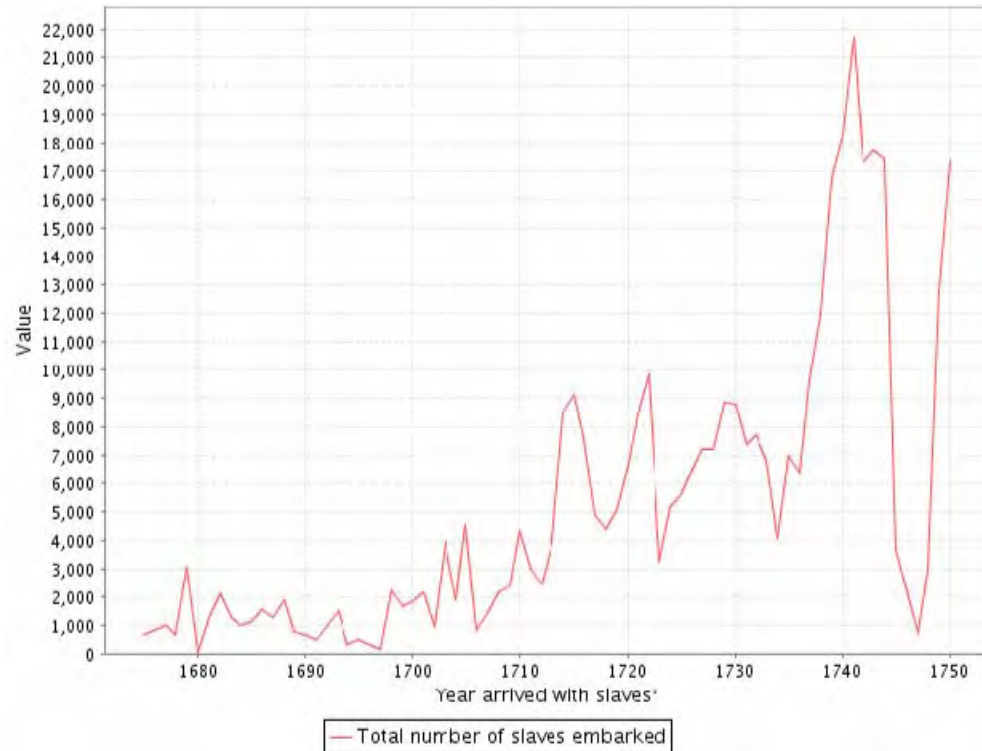
³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

³⁸ William Renwick Riddell, “Le Code Noir”, *Journal of Negro History*, 10: 3 (1925) pp. 326-327.

³⁹ Riddell, p. 327

Figure 2: Enslaved Africans embarked by French ships per year, 1675-1750



Source: www.slavevoyages.org

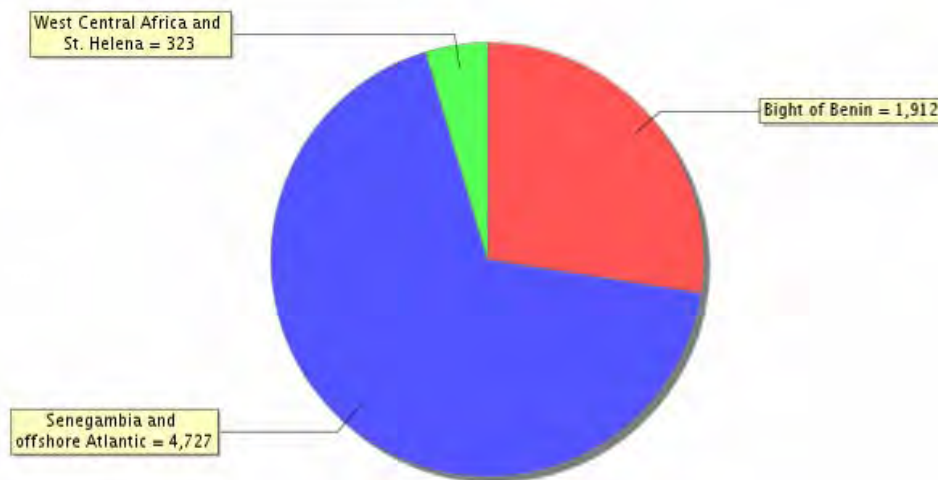
In the sixteen years following the summer of 1719, an estimated seven thousand enslaved Africans were imported into the Mississippi delta. More than half of these slaves were dead by the end of 1735, largely due to the harsh labour regimes of slavery, disease and malnutrition.⁴⁰ Many of these slaves were prisoners of war from conflicts in Senegal, leading French slave traders to use the term “Bambara” as both a description of slave soldiers and as a term for ethnicity.⁴¹ In the decade following 1719, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

⁴⁰ Usner, “From African Captivity to American Slavery”, p 33; Joe Gray Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana Historical Association, 1963)

⁴¹ Usner, “From African Captivity to American Slavery”, p 36.

Database records 23 voyages carrying almost 7,000 slaves to French Louisiana, of whom two-thirds of the slaves were embarked from the Senegambia.⁴²

Figure 3: Embarkation regions for slaves carried on French ships to the Gulf Coast, 1719-1743



Source: www.slavevoyages.org

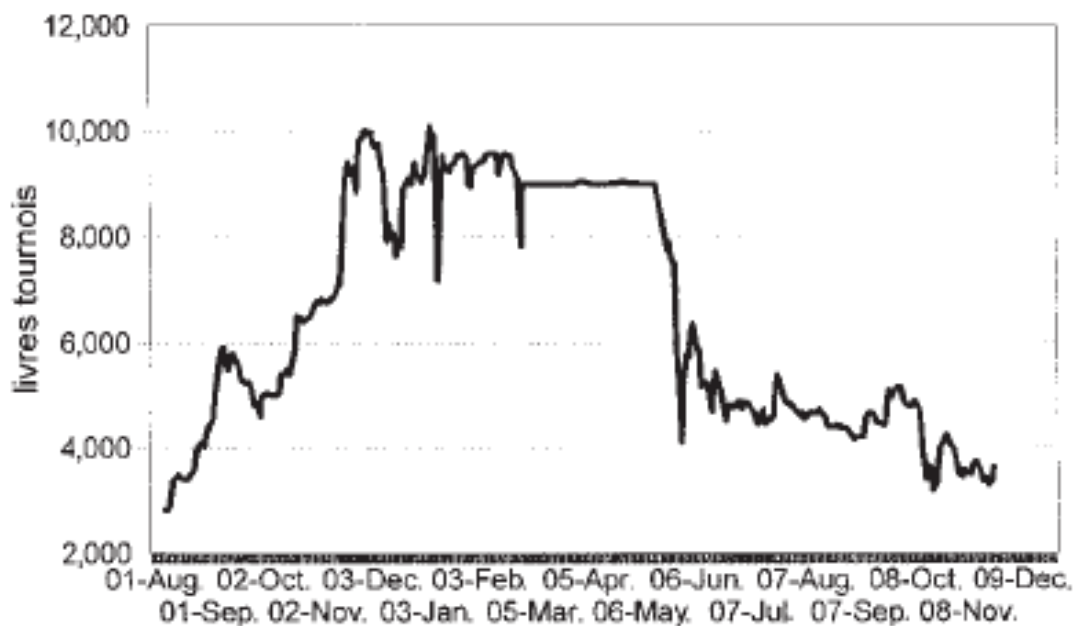
As shown in Figure 4, the shares in the *Compagnie des Indes* that Ilay purchased for Henrietta Howard in September 1719 would have nearly doubled their value two months later. In mid January 1720, the Earl of Ilay wrote again to Howard from Paris noting that “your money matters go very well” despite the recent falls in stock prices.⁴³ Rejecting the rumours in England of the imminent

⁴² Cécile Vidal, “French Louisiana in the Age of the Companies”, p. 154

⁴³ British Library, Add Mss 22628, f49, Archibald Campbell to Henrietta Howard, 16 January 1720

collapse of the Mississippi company, Ilay praised Law for his financial acumen. Yet, at the same time Figure 2 shows how the speculative trading in the *Compagnie des Indes* produced a new peak in the French slave trade during the early 1720s.

Figure 4: Share price of *Compagnie des Indes*, August 1719-December 1720



Source: Neal, "How it all began" (2000), p.131

One of Law's supporters, who was employed in the *Compagnie des Indes* argued that the collapse in the company's shares at the end of May 1720 was due to the intense financial speculation which these projects had inspired. A Mr Gray wrote of Law that,

Such was the Infatuation of the Age, the Money came faster into the Bank than he expected or desir'd.⁴⁴

It has been argued that Henrietta Howard was likely to have lost money in the *Compagnie des Indes*, although the amicable tone of her later correspondence with Law suggests that this was not the case. Another possibility was that she transferred her funds to Britain to participate in the frenzied stock-trading of the South Sea Company.⁴⁵

5) Speculating in slavery: The South Sea Company

By April 1720, Henrietta Howard had invested in stocks in the South Sea Company.⁴⁶ Whereas her connections to the Earl of Ilay had meant that she had invested in the *Compagnie des Indes* before the Prince of Wales, the Prince had been the Governor of the South Sea Company from 1715 until replaced by his father three years later. The South Sea Company had been one of the models for the French *Compagnie des Indes* as it had been created to fund the British government's debt through its trade with South America providing a regular dividend for shareholders.

Under the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), the South Sea Company was granted the *Asiento* to provide 144,000 adult slaves for Spain's American colonies over a thirty year period. As well as the contract's formal terms, access to Spanish

⁴⁴ Gray, *The Memoirs, Life and Character of the Great Mr. Law*, p. 30

⁴⁵ James Lees-Milne, *The Earls of Creation*, (London: Century Hutchinson, 1962), p. 141

⁴⁶ British Library, Add Mss 22628, f48, Letitia Molesworth to Henrietta Howard, 31 April 1720

American ports made possible a significant contraband trade with the booming Iberian colonies.⁴⁷

Initially, the South Sea Company negotiated with the Royal African Company to supply slaves to the former's ships, however the latter had difficulties meeting the annual quota of slaves set by Spain. Between 1715 and 1720, the slaves imported by the South Sea Company represented only half of its quota set under the *Asiento*. Therefore after 1721 the South Sea Company tended to use private contractors or its own agents, while also purchasing more and more slaves within the British colonies of the Caribbean for re-export to Spanish territories.⁴⁸

Equally, the annual ship which the South Sea Company could use under the *Asiento* to legally transfer luxury goods from the Spanish Americas to Britain rarely lived up to the expectations generated by the 1713 treaty. In 1717 the first annual ship reached England carrying goods equivalent to a quarter of a million pounds, however due to wars between Spain and Britain only eight annual voyages were completed during the thirty years of the contract.⁴⁹

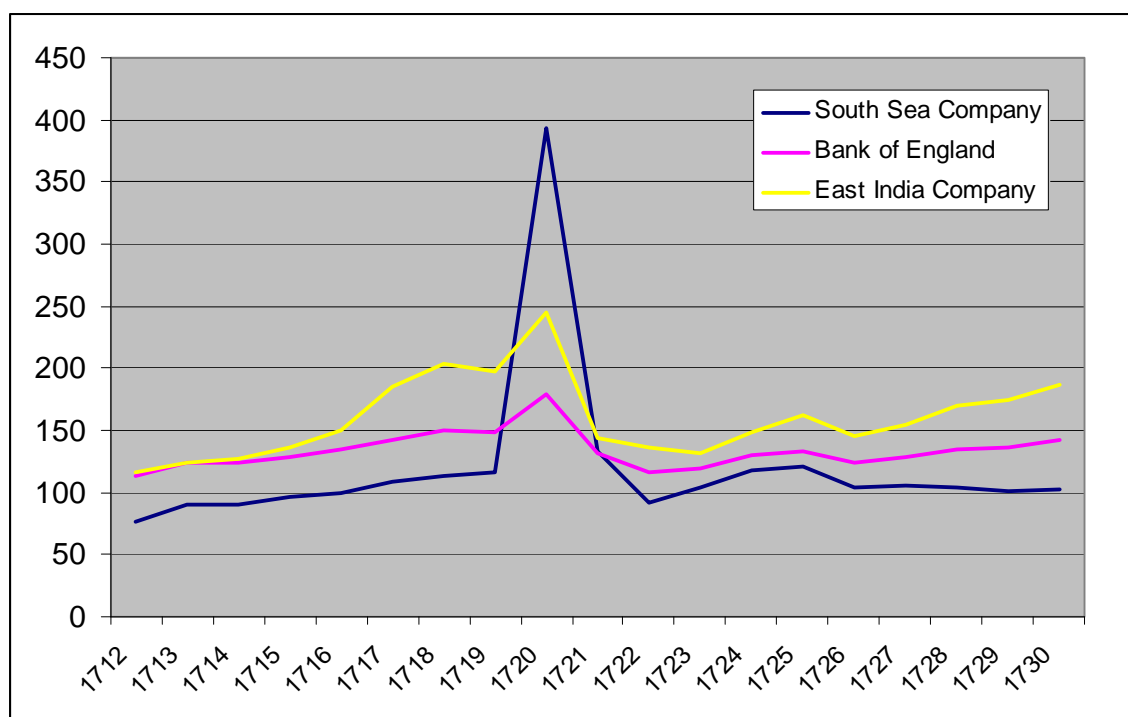
⁴⁷ Rafael Donoso Anes, "Accounting and slavery: The accounts of the English South Sea Company, 1713-22", *European Accounting Review*, 11:2 (2002), pp. 441-452

⁴⁸ Lillian Penson, "The West Indies and the Spanish American Trade, 1713-1748" in *The Cambridge History of the British Empire, Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), pp. 338-339.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

For the *Compagnie des Indes* and the South Sea Company it was the promise of outrageous profits in the New World rather than their reality which fuelled the stock-trading frenzies of 1720. For both companies, the trans-Atlantic slave trade lay at the heart of their trading projects which were expected to be so lucrative that they could fund the national debt.

Figure 5: Annual Share Prices in Pounds of the South Sea Company, the Bank of England and the East India Company, 1712-1730



Source: Mirowski, "The Rise (and Retreat) of a Market" (1981), p. 569.

By February 1720, the Prince of Wales had purchased £20,000 worth of South Sea Company stock while his wife held another £10,000 worth.⁵⁰ The prince's court and Henrietta Howard appear to have benefited from rising stock which tripled its value during the spring of 1720.⁵¹ The bubble of speculative stock-trading burst in August and September as share prices fell by ninety per cent. In early October 1720, Lady Landsdowne was writing to Henrietta from Paris that, "we are told here you are all together by the ears and that there are terrible commotions in Exchange Alley."⁵² At what point Howard sold her shares is unclear from her surviving correspondence - whether it was early in the summer of 1720 for a profit or later for a loss as the speculative stock bubble burst. However her continued contact with Ilay and with John Law suggest that she did not suffer significant losses by these investments.

6) The South Sea Bubble in Richmond

At the end of 1723, the Earl of Ilay began acquiring land in Richmond on behalf of Henrietta Howard. He purchased seven and a half acres from the merchant and politician Thomas Vernon (c1660-1726) in exchange for land elsewhere. This transaction represented almost three-quarters of the initial plot for Marble Hill House.⁵³ Ilay and then Howard would spend the next twenty-six

⁵⁰ Lees-Milne, *The Earls of Creation*, p142

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 144

⁵² British Library, Add Mss 22628, f71 Mary Granville to Henrietta Howard, 9 October 1720

⁵³ Jacques, "Design History at Marble Hill", p. 5; Bryant, *Marble Hill House, Twickenham*, p. 28.

years engaged in a series of land transactions that gradually increased the property through the acquisition of small plots.⁵⁴

Between 1711 and 1715, Vernon was a Director on the South Sea Company.⁵⁵ During the same time, he also served for two years as a Lord Commissioner of Trade and Foreign Plantations. Vernon's brother-in-law after 1713 was John Aislabie (1670–1742) who was Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1718 until he was pressured to resign on 23 January 1721. Responsible for the regulation of the South Sea Company and managing its subscription lists, Aislabie had also held £77,000 worth of its stock which he had sold at double that value.⁵⁶ As a result, the Chancellor was one of the most prominent figures to be blamed for the financial crisis caused by the stock's collapse in 1720.

With Aislabie facing corruption charges before the House of Commons in early May 1721, Vernon attempted to bribe one of his fellow MPs to vote against making his brother-in-laws' property liable to seizure under the Bill to provide financial relief to the shareholders of the South-Sea Company. As a result, Vernon was immediately expelled from Parliament for corruption and Aislabie was imprisoned in the Tower of London.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ These purchases are described in detail by Jacques, "Design History at Marble Hill".

⁵⁵ Pat Rogers, "What's this?: Sir Balaam and an Ass: Pope, Atterbury, and Coningsby", *Review of English Studies* 2004 55(222), p. 713, f20

⁵⁶ W. A. Speck and Matthew Kilburn, 'Promoters of the South Sea Bubble (act. 1720)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oxford University Press, May 2006; Stuart Handley, 'Aislabie, John (1670–1742)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

⁵⁷ *The History and Proceedings of the House of Commons, 1714-1727* (London, Richard Chandler, 1742), p. 245-246; Lewis Saul Benjamin, *The South Sea Bubble* (London: D.



William Hogarth, "Emblematical Print of the South Sea" (1721)

Source: Baker Library, Harvard Business School

Vernon was able to resurrect his political career when he was re-elected to the House of Commons in 1722 for Whitchurch. Having lived at Twickenham Park to the east of Marble Hill since 1702, Vernon was also landlord to Alexander Pope who leased Cross Deep on the banks of the Thames in Twickenham from 1719.⁵⁸ Within a year of having sold Marble Hill to the Earl of Ilay he was blocking the extension of the property to the Thames and to the north.⁵⁹ Given the Vernon family's objections to Howard's extensions of Marble Hill, it was only

O'Connor, 1921). p. 8, f10; Upon his release from the Tower, Aislabie was excluded from politics and retired from public life to focus on creating a classical formal garden at his Studley Royal estate in North Yorkshire.

⁵⁸ Jacques, "Design History at Marble Hill", pp. 3-4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 6.

with the death of Vernon's widow Jane in 1742 that Howard was able to consolidate her land-holdings.⁶⁰

Would the land forming Marble Hill have been available for purchase by Ilay without the South Sea crisis? Given the protracted struggle between Howard and the Vernons over land acquisition, the initial sale of land by the latter seems unlikely without the Vernons' deep political, familial and economic entanglements with the South Sea Bubble. The Bubble took a heavy toll on the Directors of the South Sea Company such as Theodore Janssen, whose neo-Palladian villa in Wimbledon designed by Colen Campbell was abandoned as an empty shell.⁶¹ Many of the accounts of Marble Hill focus on Howard's and Ilay's motives in selecting the site – close to the Royal household in Richmond and overlapping with Ilay's own development of Whitton – but Vernon's decision to sell appears to have been shaped by the financial crisis of the early 1720s.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 9.

⁶¹ Carole Fry, "Spanning the Political Divide: Neo-Palladianism and the early Eighteenth-Century Landscape", *Garden History*, 31: 2 (2003), p. 188

7) Financing the building of Marble Hill

In March 1722, George II had provided for a financial settlement for Henrietta Howard that would enable her independence when she left the Royal Court.⁶² Given the concerns about her husband's attempts to claim both his wife and her wealth, the settlement was to be administered by three trustees led by Archibald Campbell, Earl of Ilay. The settlement included diamond, pearl and ruby jewelry worth over £700 as well fine porcelain and furniture from her rooms with the royal family at Richmond Lodge and at Leicester House. More substantively it also provided for £11,500 of stock, which was divided as follows:

£8,000 capital stock of the South Sea Company

£2,000 capital stock in the Bank of England

£1,500 subscription in the Bank of England

Marie P. G. Draper in *Marble Hill House and its owners* argued that "It is possible that the settlement provided Mrs Howard with some of the money she spent on Marble Hill, which, it was alleged, cost the Prince between £10,000 and £12,000, although the gift included no ready cash".⁶³ How much of the South Sea stock was used to directly fund the construction of Marble Hill is uncertain, but it was this trust of March 1722 that provided the financial security for Mrs Howard to purchase eleven and half acres of land at Marble Hill through the Earl of Ilay. In September 1725 another fourteen acres were added to the north and south of

⁶² Norfolk County Record Office, Z 76 22955, Deed of Settlement in Trust for the Honourable Henrietta Howard, 12 March 1722

⁶³ Draper, *Marble Hill House and its Owners*, p. 12.

the property. At the same time the builder Roger Morris received £700 from Ilay to commence work on the Palladian villa that had been designed by Colen Campbell and Henry Herbert, later 9th Earl of Pembroke.⁶⁴

Given the Earl of Ilay's combined role as trustee and patron of construction of Marble Hill, it seems highly probably that it was the King's settlement that provided the bulk of the funding for the project. Unfortunately, the Duke's own papers have been unavailable to historians. It was not until 1728/9 that Mrs Howard was named in correspondence with Morris, when he received another £1363 to complete the house.⁶⁵

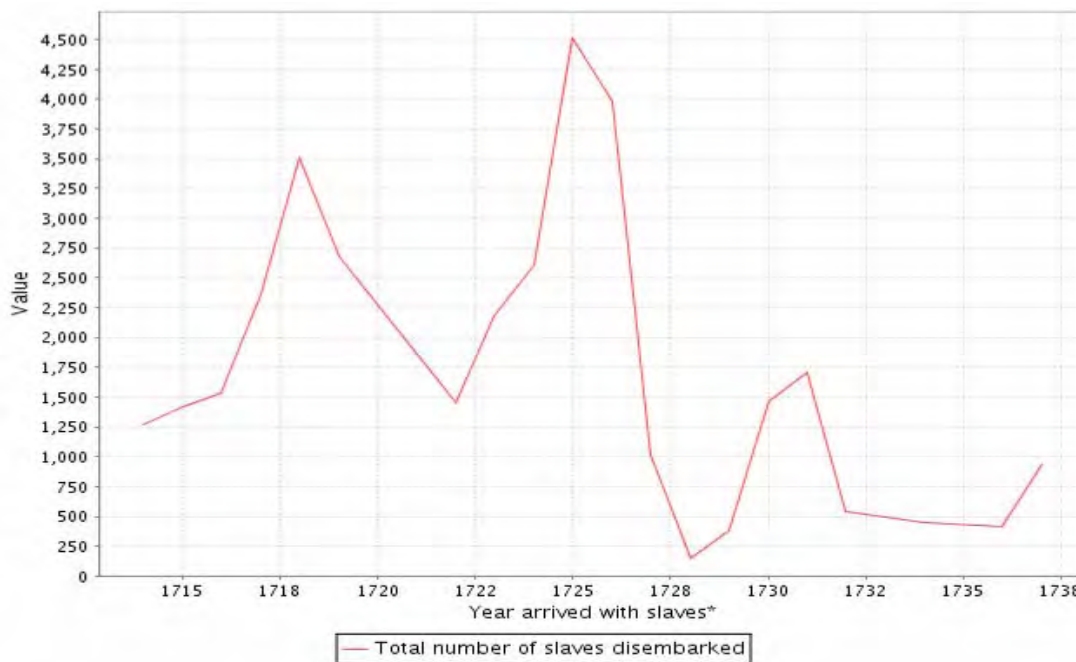
Howard received her stock in the South Sea Company after the crashes of autumn 1720 and spring 1721, and at a time when the company was increasing its participation in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Recent research by Helen Paul emphasizes the significance of the South Sea Company's slaving activities in the wake of the financial crisis caused by the Bubble in 1720.⁶⁶ Building at Marble Hill commenced during this upsurge in the slave trading activities of the South Sea Company.

⁶⁴ Norfolk County Record Office, NRS 8862

⁶⁵ *Ibid*

⁶⁶ Helen Paul, "The South Sea Company's slaving activities" Economic History Society Annual Conference, 2004, www.ehs.org.uk/ehs/conference2004/assets/paul.doc

Figure 6: Slaves exported from Africa by the South Sea Company, 1713-1737



Source: Paul, "The South Sea Company's slaving activities" (2004)

From their creation South Sea Company annuities had been valued as a permanent source of income however after the Bubble they were changed to a variable rate of interest that declined from 5% to 3% per annum. W.R. Scott describes how in the wake of the financial crisis

It was rather from the diminution of income that the loans annuities suffered most as these securities were held for marriage parties and jointures, and therefore the beneficiaries constituted just that class which feels any change of the kind most severely.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ William Robert Scott, *The Constitution and Finance of English, Scottish and Irish Joint-Stock Companies to 1720*, vol 3. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), p. 350.

Post-Bubble returns were to be paid based on trading dividends, which makes the peak in slave trading by the Company during the mid-1720s even more significant. Not only was the South Sea Company escalating its involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade during the construction of Marble Hill, but the dividends it paid to stock-holders were more dependent on profits from the slave trade.

Table 2: Slaving vessels departing for Africa by British Port, 1721-1725

	1721	1722	1723	1724	1725
London	28	38	27	43	87
Bristol	25	21	21	30	63

Source: Rawley, "The Port of London and the eighteenth century slave trade"

(1980), p. 93

That the trust established by George II for Mrs Howard was perceived as a success by herself and the trustees is shown by its use as a model for one detailed in the British Library created in April 1737 in which Howard's second husband, George Berkeley (c.1693–1746) acted as trustee for his sister Lady Elizabeth Germain,. Like the Howard settlement, the Germain trust was intended to provide for the purchase of a house and the long-term financial support of the beneficiary. Totalling almost £55,000, it included £36,000 worth of East India

Company stock, £1,000 worth of South Sea Company stock and another £1,400 of South Sea company annuities.⁶⁸

8) Slavery-related symbolism and design



Pineapple and acanthus leaves on sidetable

Source: John Langdon (2009)

There are three sources of slavery-related imagery and design within Marble Hill House based on the reconstruction of its interior, its invocation of ancient Rome and the ubiquitous use of mahogany throughout the house. Pineapple motifs appear in the house as decorative details on furniture,

⁶⁸ British Library, Ms 22629, George Berkeley to Elisabeth Germaine

symbolising hospitality and the exotic tropics. Tropical ornamentation was placed alongside references to classical Greece, through the juxtaposition of the pineapple and acanthus leaves on the base of the sidetables in the gallery. These tables do not appear to be original to the house but the linking of New World and ancient world in design was replicated in the intellectual debates over slavery during the second half of the eighteenth century.

Crowning the gilded decoration of Marble Hill's Great Room were a series of Roman landscapes by Italian artist Giovanni Paolo Panini, of which the "Landscape with the Arch of Constantine" and "Landscape with the Colosseum" are currently on display. Almost a hundred years after Howard obtained these paintings, the poet Percy Shelley described visiting the Arch of Constantine in 1819 as follows,

It is an admirable work of art. It is built of the finest marble, and the outline of the reliefs is in many parts as perfect as if just finished. Four Corinthian fluted columns support, on each side, a bold entablature, whose *bases are loaded with reliefs of captives in every attitude of humiliation and slavery* [italics added]. The compartments above express in bolder relief the enjoyment of success; the conqueror on his throne, or in his chariot, or nodding over the crushed multitudes, who writhe under his horses' hoofs, as those below express the torture and abjectness of defeat.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Percy Shelley, *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments*, 2nd ed., (London: William Smith, 1845), p. 126.

Shelley was alienated by the “colossal images of the Dacian captives” that towered over the Arch and by the pedestals of kneeling prisoners and enslaved families. These elements are clearly visible in Panini’s painting, yet the Arch is in the background serving to geographically and culturally locate the viewer.



Giovanni Paolo Panini, “Landscape with the Arch of Constantine” (1738)

Source: English Heritage, Ref. J920081

For contemporaries, one of the striking elements of Marble Hill was the early use of mahogany as part of the structural design of the house.⁷⁰ From the carved grand staircase and the long floorboards of the Great Room, it was

⁷⁰ Lees-Milne, *The Earls of Creation*, pp. 70-71; Bryant, *Marble Hill House, Twickenham*, p. 10.

mahogany that gave the house's interior its "delicate, costly and ornamental style".⁷¹ As James Brewer wrote in 1816,

It is traditionally asserted that the mahogany of which the staircase and floors are constructed was nearly proving the cause of some important and disastrous political events. George II, it is said, directed one of his captains, whose course lay near the Bay of Honduras, to land and cut for him a few of the finest trees.⁷²



Great Room, Marble Hill House

Source: English Heritage, Ref. J930489

⁷¹ James Norris Brewer, *London and Middlesex: An Historical, Commercial, and Descriptive Survey of the Metropolis of Great-Britain* (London, W. Wilson, 1810), p. 389

⁷² *Ibid.*

Ten years before construction was to begin at Marble Hill in 1724, British merchants were taking African slaves and indentured white servants from Jamaica to harvest wood from the Bay of Campeache on Mexico's east coast.⁷³ By the early 1720s there was a permanent British settlement at the Bay of Honduras (now Belize) of about three hundred whites and their slaves cutting mahogany and logwood.⁷⁴ Given the amount of travelling through forests necessary to harvest mahogany, it is unlikely that the King's gift to Lady Suffolk could have obtained such quantities of high quality wood without engaging local expertise (which would probably have included slaves).



Mahogany staircase, Marble Hill House

Source: John Langdon (2009)

⁷³ *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 32: 1720-1721* (1933), p. 327

⁷⁴ O. Nigel Bolland, *Colonialism and Resistance in Belize: Essays in Historical Sociology* (Belize: Cubola, 1988) p. 45

9) The gardens at Marble Hill

John Rocque's *Exact Survey* of 1746 provides very little detail of garden design at Marble Hill, emphasising instead the neighbouring Glass House which is now part of Marble Hill Park. Yet, Rocque's map provides a striking visualisation of the range and intensity of landscaping projects across Richmond during this period – many of which had direct connections to the construction of the gardens at Marble Hill. To the west of Marble Hill was the Earl of Ilay's estate at Whitton whose extensive gardens expressed the Earl's scientific and global interests, while further down the Thames was the villa of poet Alexander Pope who from 1719 was energetically engaged in constructing naturalistic gardens that connected to the English landscape of rolling fields, groves, and meadows.⁷⁵

During the summer of 1734, Pope collaborated with the royal gardener Charles Bridgeman to begin creating the garden at Marble Hill. As Julius Bryant argues, Pope's "own conception of liberty" strongly shaped the structure of the new garden,

Taking as a starting point the freedom within natural laws that nature represents, in contrast to the absolutist rule associated with the French style of formal gardens, a 'program' or allusive theme could be sewn into the landscape through a sequence of symbolic temples, urns and vistas.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Peter Martin, *Pursuing Innocent Pleasures: The Gardening World of Alexander Pope* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1984), pp. xxi-xxii.

⁷⁶ Julius Bryant, *Marble Hill: The Design and Use of a Palladian Estate* (Twickenham: Borough of Twickenham Local History Society, 1986) p. 24.

This landscape of natural liberty was therefore composed from English plantings such as groves of horse chestnut trees and flowering shrubs with allusions to the classical past.

Pope's vision of slavery has been explored through the poem *Windsor Forest* that he wrote during his teens and early twenties. In the wake of the *Asiento* under the Treaty of Utrecht, Pope's description of slavery in the Americas significantly focused on the historical enslavement of Indians rather than the contemporary exploitation of Africa. The key passage in *Windsor Forest* reads

Oh stretch thy Reign, fair *Peace!* From Shore to Shore,
Till Conquest cease, and Slav'ry be no more:
Till the freed *Indians* in their native Groves
Reap their own Fruits, and woo their Sable Loves,
Peru once more a Race of Kings behold,
And other *Mexico's* be roof'd with Gold.⁷⁷

Condemning slavery through "sable" Indians was a deliberate choice by the poet, perhaps in an effort to appeal to Whigs critical of the poem's Tory patriotism. As Richardson argues of the above passage, "the half-line voices a conviction and a protest, but so quietly that it can now, and could then, scarcely be heard".⁷⁸

Evoking liberty in his gardens, Pope looked to the classical past rather than engage with contemporary Atlantic slavery.

⁷⁷ Alexander Pope in John Richardson, "Alexander Pope's *Windsor Forest*: Its context and attitudes toward slavery", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 35: 1 (2001), p. 3.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12

The Norfolk Record Office holds a plan of Marble Hill depicting a large “melon ground” to the east of the house. The landscape reconstructions by Draper and Martin suggest such kitchen gardens were possible in this location although on a smaller scale, however this would require confirmation from further evidence.⁷⁹

The “melon ground” may have been intended as a parallel to the “Barbadoes Ground” of Chiswick in Middlesex during the 1680s.⁸⁰ Potentially this could have been the site for such tropical crops as citrus, melons, pineapples and aloe. Pope grew pineapples within his own gardens at Twickenham.⁸¹ This would appear to be the most probable connection between the garden at Marble Hill House and agriculture in the New World, but more evidence is required to establish a definitive presence.

Paralleling the construction of Marble Hill, the Earl of Ilay was involved in his own development of Whitton estate from 1722. A few years after finishing the construction of Howard’s Palladian villa, Roger Morris was engaged by Ilay to construct a similar house at Whitton Park between 1732 and 1735. Five years earlier, Ilay had built an elaborate greenhouse on the property which housed “a fine collection of Exotics; among which are the Coffee Tree, the Banana, the

⁷⁹ Martin, *Pursuing Innocent Pleasures*, p. 155.

⁸⁰ Sally Jeffery, “‘The flower of all the private gentlemens palaces in England’: Sir Stephen Fox’s ‘extraordinarily fine’ garden at Chiswick”, *Garden History* 32: 1 (2004), pp. 14-15

⁸¹ Martin, *Pursuing Innocent Pleasures* p.xxi

Chian Pepper, the Palm Tree...”.⁸² An enthusiastic botanist the Earl received some of this plant material directly from correspondents in Barbados, Jamaica and South Carolina.⁸³ However there seems to have been relatively few exotic species transplanted to Marble Hill to fit into Pope’s combination of naturalistic and formal gardens.

10) Marble Hill after Lady Suffolk

In 1796, Laura Pulteney, who would become countess of Bath, and her husband were renting Marble Hill House from Henrietta Hotham.⁸⁴ A decade later, *The Gentleman’s Magazine* described Marble Hill as “the seat of the Countess of Bath”.⁸⁵ Laura Pulteney was the only child of William Johnstone (1729–1805), who had changed his name to Pulteney after inheriting the fortune of the first earl of Bath, William Pulteney (1684-1764). With extensive investments in land across Britain and the Americas, Laura’s father sought to extend his position as one of the wealthiest men in Britain through purchasing slave plantations in the Ceded Islands of Grenada, Dominica and Tobago that were acquired from France after the Seven Years War.⁸⁶ The construction of plantations in these new British colonies were the focus for intense slave trading

⁸² *A short account of the principal seats and gardens in and about Richmond and Kew* (Brentford: Norbury, c1763), p. 15.

⁸³ Emerson, “The scientific interests of Archibald Campbell”, p. 30.

⁸⁴ Daniel Lysons, *The Environs of London, Volume 4: Counties of Herts, Essex and Kent* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1796), p. 643

⁸⁵ *The Gentleman’s Magazine, and Historical Chronicle*, 76: 2 (1806), p. 780

⁸⁶ London University Library, MS 522/438/1-2; MS 522/345

and financial speculation during the 1770s which are described in more detail in the companion report on the slavery connections of Northington Grange.

The close relationship between father and daughter was expressed with Laura assisting William in the management of family's global investments. As Rowe and McBryde note of the Pulteneys,

His success and his entrepreneurial development of his own Scottish, West Indian, and huge American estates, and her increasingly direct involvement, contributed to her reputation both as the richest heiress in England, and as a cautious and shrewd businesswoman.⁸⁷

In 1805, Laura inherited this extensive property empire from her father, along with an estimated £400,000 personal estate resulting in her making the highest death duty payment recorded at that time. Despite the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, Laura Pulteney maintained the family's slave plantations in the Caribbean. They remained as part of the trust established by her will until the end of slavery in 1834.⁸⁸ One executor of the will was Christopher Bethell-Codrington (1764-1843) of Dodington Park in Gloucestershire whose family had been leading planters in Antigua and Barbados from 1649, including leasing the entire island of Barbuda for two hundred years.

⁸⁷ M. J. Rowe and W. H. McBryde, 'Pulteney, (Henrietta) Laura, suo jure countess of Bath (1766–1808)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/59519>

⁸⁸ Gloucestershire Archives, D5310/1, Examinations and accounts of the personal estate of Henrietta Laura Pulteney, Countess of Bath, Christopher Codrington, executor, 1837

Pulteney was succeeded at Marble Hill House in 1808 by Katharine Lowther, who at this time was also the owner of Lowther's estate in Barbados. She had inherited the property in the southern parish of Christ Church on the death of her brother James Lowther (1736–1802) who had earlier received it from their father Robert Lowther (1681-1745).⁸⁹ For Robert Lowther, the ownership of a Caribbean sugar plantation radically transformed his family's fortunes as in 1704 he faced extreme difficulty in supporting his mother and four sisters based on the indebted family estate at Maulds Meaburn near Penrith in Cumbria. With the death of his father, Robert Lowther was immediately forced to mortgage Maulds Meaburn for £1,500, however in 1709 he married the widow Joan Carleton who owned estates in Penrith and Barbados. Joan's father had been one of the early speculators in land during the emergence of sugar production in Barbados in the mid-seventeenth century. By 1679 her family had established a sugar plantation of 180 acres and 80 slaves in the southern parish of Christ Church.⁹⁰

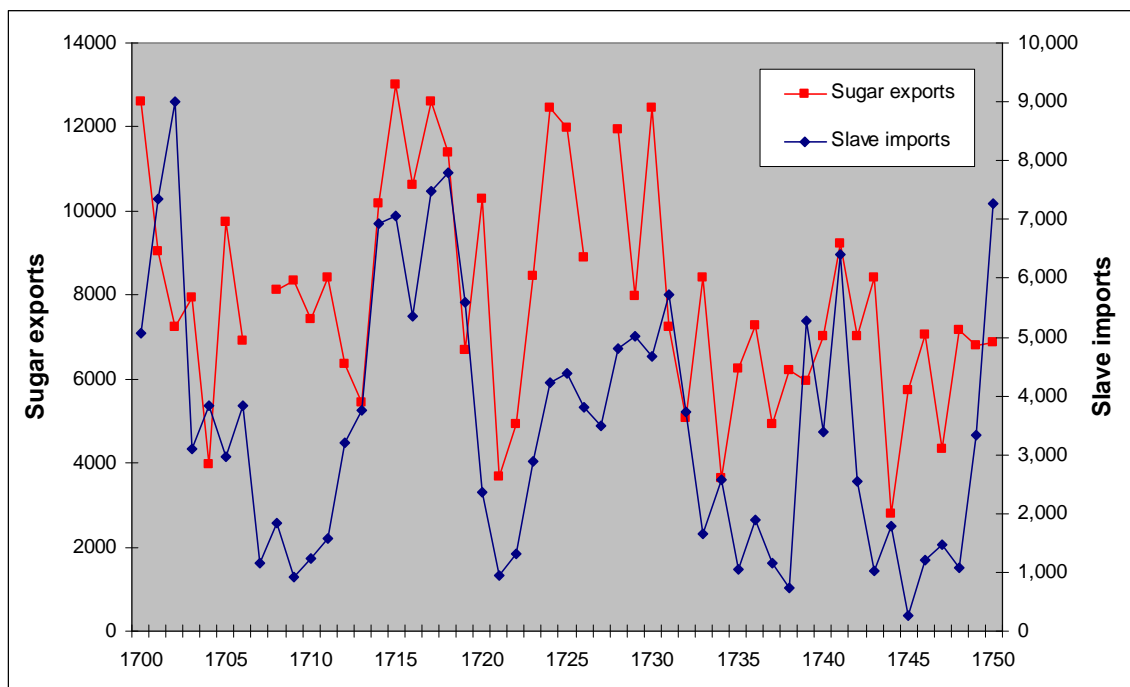
Between 1714 and 1721, the Lowthers received an average annual profit of over £2,000 from their Barbadian sugar estate. As Governor of Barbados from 1711 to 1714 and from 1715 to 1720, Robert Lowther also claimed an annual salary of £2,000. Lowther's governorship occurred during an economic boom in Barbados following the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 with rising sugar exports and

⁸⁹ J.V. Beckett, "Inheritance and fortune in the eighteenth century: the rise of Sir James Lowther, Earl of Lonsdale", *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, 87 (1987), p. 177

⁹⁰ Simon Smith, *Slavery, Family, and Gentry Capitalism in the British Atlantic: The World of the Lascelles, 1648-1834*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 214.

slave imports. The enslaved population of Barbados increased from 42,000 in 1712 to over 55,000 by 1724.⁹¹

Figure 7: Slave imports to Barbados and sugar exports (tons) from Barbados, 1700-1750



Source: Noël Deerr, *The history of sugar, vol 1* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1949), p. 193; www.slavevoyages.org

Historians writing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have tended to focus on the political controversies that marked Robert Lowther's governorship in Barbados as he was accused of corruption, profiteering and dictatorial rule.⁹²

⁹¹ Otis P. Starkey, *The Economic Geography of Barbados: A Study of the Relationships Between Environmental Variations and Economic Development* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), p. 88.

⁹² Smith, *Slavery, Family, and Gentry Capitalism in the British Atlantic*, pp. 62-63 and 67.

Due to these charges, Lowther was briefly recalled to England in 1714 before returning to Barbados in 1715. Such conflicts were the result of local rivalries and shifts in the political landscape in Britain, however it is significant that one of the crucial issues for local opponents of Lowther was the high cost of the governor's salary.

Table 3: Estimates of Sir James Lowther's income from estates in the Caribbean and England, c1758

Property	Income (£)
Barbados	1,000
Yorkshire	4,000
Middlesex	4,000
Westmoreland	16,000
Cumberland	30,000
Total	55,000

Source: Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle, DLons L3/5/142

While Barbados had provided the initial financial stimulus for the Lowther's land acquisition in northern England, by the second half of the eighteenth century, the family received far greater returns from their English estates than from the profits for Caribbean sugar as revealed by the table above. Yet even though her Barbados estate provided only a small proportion of Katharine Lowther's annual income, her family's position and her father's were directly

dependent on Robert Lowther's engagement with Atlantic slavery. His Barbados experience also profoundly marked Robert Lowther's sense of self, for as John Beckett writes, "it left him with the title 'Governor' among his relatives for the rest of his life".⁹³

Seven years after Katharine Lowther's death, the slaves of the Lowther plantation in Barbados were at the forefront of the largest uprising against slavery in the colony. Planter resistance to British efforts to register the enslaved population had fuelled rumours across the colony of the potential abolition of slavery. On the evening of Easter Sunday, 14 April 1816, cane fields in the east of Barbados were set alight with the revolt spreading across half of the islands. Lowther's plantation lay on the main route from the military garrison at Bridgetown to the heartland of the revolt in the parish of St Philip. On the second day of the uprising, the white and black troops who had been sent to put down the revolt were "met with a large body of Negroes, armed and prepared for fighting, in Lowther's Yard, who cheered and called upon them to come on".⁹⁴ The uprising resulted in over a hundred slaves being killed, 144 executed, and a further 170 were deported from the island, some of whom were exiled to Sierra Leone.

⁹³ Beckett, "Inheritance and fortune in the eighteenth century", p. 173.

⁹⁴ *The Report of a Select Committee of the House of Assembly, Appointed to Inquire into the Origin, Causes, and Progress, of the Late Insurrection. Barbados (1816)*, p. 17

11) Recommendations for further research

Further research could explore more fully the Howards' relationships with merchant families in Bristol and the extent to which these were involved in slave trading or trading in slave-produced commodities. One starting point for this would be the will of George Morse of Henbury (1668) which is held by the Gloucestershire Archives. Another potential source is the List of Royal African Company court of assistants (1687/8) held by the Guildhall Library. A further vision of Henbury during this period could be provided by the diary and receipt books of Diana Astry (d. 1716).

Another topic that could be explored would be mapping investment in the South Sea Company amongst Lady Suffolk's neighbours in Richmond. Equally the third Duke of Argyll's library may provide a revealing vision of what writings shaped contemporary understandings of Atlantic slavery, drawing on the research of Roger L. Emerson (University of Western Ontario).

More detail on the Lowther and Pulteney plantations in the Caribbean could be acquired through research at the Barbados Museum and Historical Society, the University of the West Indies in Trinidad and the National Archives in London. The papers of William Pulteney held by the Huntington Library in California (Ref: mssPU 1-2087) also contain material on the Pulteney estates in Tobago.

11.1) Recommended readings for understanding slavery at Marble Hill

Dresser, Madge, *Slavery Obscured: The Social History of the Slave Trade in an English Provincial Port* (London: Continuum, 2001)

Offers the best overview of the social and economic impact of the trans-Atlantic trade on Bristol.

Helen Paul, *The South Sea Bubble* (London: Routledge, forthcoming)

This should be a key reference work for those interested in how the slaving activities of the South Sea Company impacted on the British economy.

James A. Rawley. *London, Metropolis of the Slave Trade* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003)

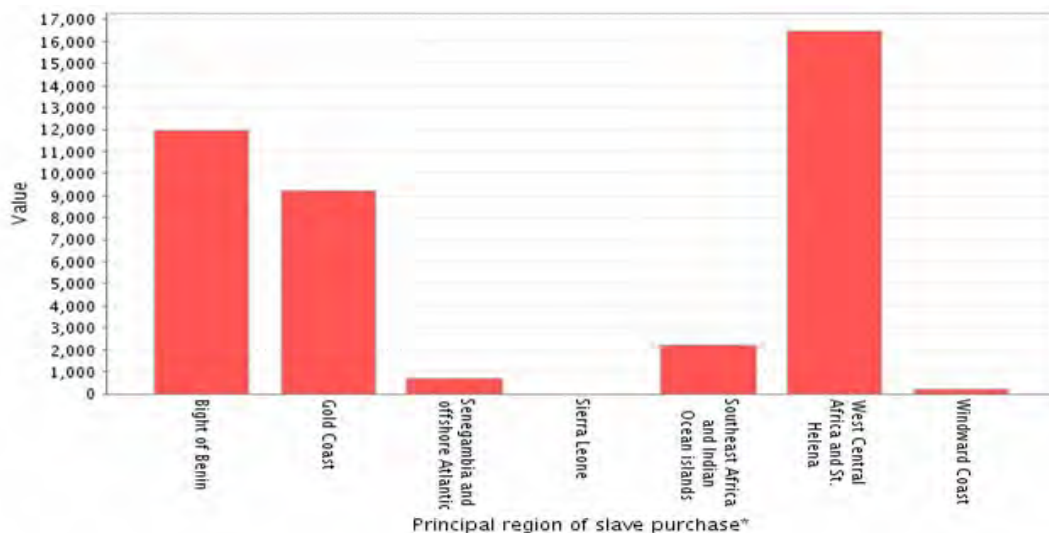
Gives a comprehensive coverage of the historiography of London's role as a slave port during the eighteenth century and provides biographical sketches of some of the leading figures of the slave trade.

Louis H. Roper and Bertrand van Ruymbeke, eds., *Constructing Early-Modern Empires: Proprietary Ventures in the Atlantic World, 1500-1750* (Leiden: Brill, 2007)

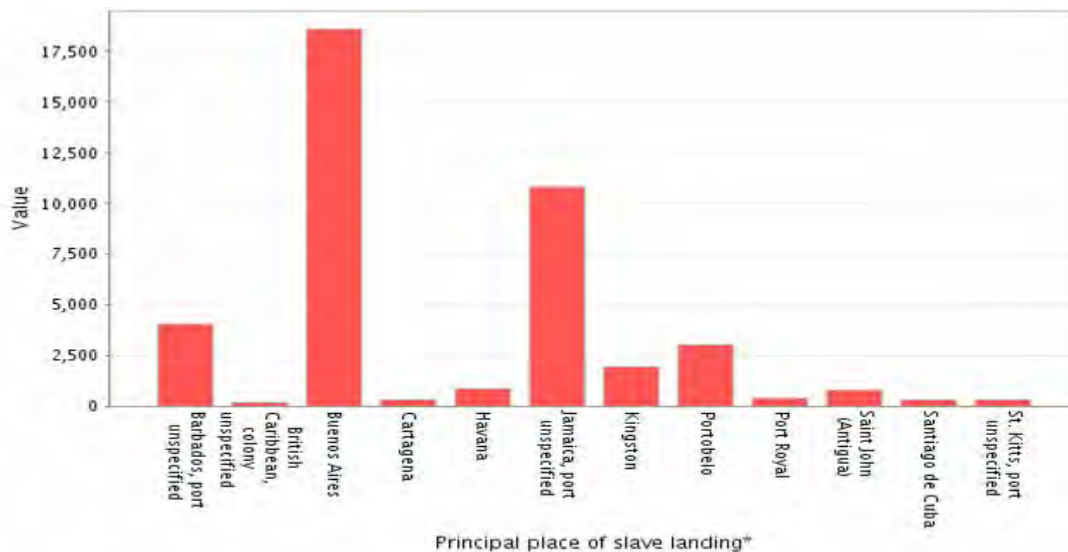
Provides a clear analysis of Law's *Compagnie des Indes* and its projects in French Louisiana.

12) Appendix

African Regions of slave export for the South Sea Company, 1713-1737



Regions of the Americas receiving slave imports by the South Sea Company, 1713-1737



Source: www.slavevoyages.org

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Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle

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D LONS/L3/5/142 Estimate on a card of Sir James Lowther's income from estates, c1758

D LONS/W2/3/20 Robert Lowther in Barbados, 1720

Gloucestershire Archives

D5310, Details of the personal estate of Henrietta Laura Pulteney

London University Library

MS 522, Papers of William Hewitt

National Archives, London

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