Stoneleigh, Sugar and Slavery

- An Investigation

Sheila Woolf 2025

One day, opening a book bought in a charity shop, I was to my surprise confronted with a connection between the small Warwickshire village of Stoneleigh in which I live, and the beginnings of Caribbean sugar plantation and slavery in the seventeenth century. In recent years the subject of slavery and colonial exploitation has quite rightly become widely discussed. Here it was, “on my doorstep”, and could not be ignored.

As I investigated this strand of local history, my research widened, moving from those seventeenth century activities to explore changing attitudes and practice in a relatively small community. What follows is the result.

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Stoneleigh 2025

Slavery has, sadly, always been a feature of human society. From Ancient Egypt to Imperial Rome, we see the exploitation of "other" races and so-called inferior social classes. Even the Bible reveals evidence of this. A thousand years ago, when the Domesday Book was compiled, the entry for Stoneleigh reads:

Warwickshire: Stanlei (today: Stoneleigh)

Land of the King

The King holds STANLEI. King Edward held it. There are 6 hides. In lordship 5 ploughs, 1 male slave and 1 female slave. 68 villagers and 4 smallholders with 2 priests have 30 ploughs. There are 2 mills at 35 shillings and 4 pence, and 20 acres of meadow. Woodland 4 leagues long and 2 leagues wide. Pasture for 2000 pigs.

The inclusion of "one male slave and 1 female slave" is worth noting. So, perhaps slavery has always been with us, even in our small Warwickshire community.

But, moving forward through the centuries, what might be its apparently unlikely connection with the notorious sugar plantations in the Caribbean?

The story begins in the church porch. Stoneleigh's church, dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, has a long history dating from the twelfth century, its list of incumbents clearly displayed there, the first known and named being John de Wormleighton, in 1307.

Part of the church board at Stoneleigh listing the clergy

And in 1564, the name of William Drax appears. Drax had been born many miles away in Yorkshire, and the family's migration south was followed by William's marriage to one Alice Quarles and his becoming vicar of Stoneleigh between 1564 and 1598 - a lengthy tenure. Unfortunately, Stoneleigh's parish registers begin in 1633 – or at least, we have none surviving from before that date – and so we have little documentary evidence of his incumbency. We know, however, that a son called Thomas was born in Stoneleigh in

1559, and so the family must have been here before William became vicar. Thomas is someone about whom a great deal can be discovered, as he lived to be "a pious man and an excellent preacher as by some of his printed sermons doth appear," according to Fuller's *Worthies of Warwickshire*, published in 1662. It goes on "He translated all the works of Master Perkins his countryman into Latin, which were printed at Geneva. The Bishop of London removed him from his native country and bestowed a benefice on him nigh Harwich in Essex…" Both father and son, then, had entered the clergy.

Fuller goes on "…the name hath recovered and encreased its Lustre in Sir James Drax a direct descendant who by God's blessing on his Industry and Ingenuity hath merited much of the English Nation in bringing sugars and other Commodities of the Barbadoes to their present perfection." A century after William Drax took up the incumbency of Stoneleigh, the family name had "lustre" via a trade which today would be regarded as anything but lustrous.

Fuller, writer of Worthies of Warwickshire

Thomas in turn had had a son whom he named William, born in 1580 in Finham, then a satellite hamlet of Stoneleigh. Young William became, like his grandfather and father, a vicar, and died in Stoneleigh in 1632. The Drax "dynasty" here had spanned the Elizabethan age and lasted well into the Stuart one.

However, as Fuller noted, subsequent generations of the Drax family were to make their mark far from ecclesiastical boundaries. Their descendants in the twenty-first century have an estimated worth of at least £150 million. How has this come about? According to historian David Olusoga "The Drax family are one of the few who were pioneers in the early stages of the British slave economy back in the 17th century and, generations later, still owned plantations and enslaved people at the end of British slavery in the 1830s… the Drax dynasty were able to generate extraordinary wealth through the cultivation of sugar by enslaved Africans." Fuller's words of approval now have a very different resonance.

To return, then, to Reverend William Drax, grandson of the first William. He had a large family of two sons and three daughters. Especially of note for our purposes are William, born in 1607 and James, born in 1609. It is likely that the family were all born in Stoneleigh, though only one baptism can be found, that of William.

Just when and why the Draxes decided to set off to make their fortune remains unknown, but one presumes that they simply saw the opportunities for wealth being rumoured at the time. In the late 1620s, certainly before 1627 when he was still in his late teens (a fact remarkable in itself) James Drax became one of the earliest English migrants to the island

of Barbados: he and his companions arrived and lived for a time in a cave, hunting for provisions, and clearing land for the planting of tobacco, which soon became the staple crop of the island. Drax later claimed that he had arrived with a stock of no more than £300, and that he intended to stay on the island until he had turned that initial investment into a landed fortune worth £10,000 a year back home. A man with big ideas, then.

Around ten years later James had in fact accumulated a large amount of land on Barbados, and was doing well until there was a slump in tobacco prices. It was not long before he, and other colonialists, began to turn to other crops.

It was with the rise of sugar cultivation that the first exploitation of slave labour really began. Drax was a pioneer in changing his workforce from indentured servitude to African slaves. Perhaps little known is the fact that, prior to the 1640s, the primary source of labour was European indentured servants who were brought across to the Caribbean along with their employers. There *had* been some African slaves before this point, but it appears that Drax was deeply involved in the move from Europeans to Africans, acquiring 22 African slaves in early 1642, just as he was getting involved in sugar. In 1644, he purchased another 34 slaves. By the early 1650s, his estate was manned by some 200 slaves of African descent, according to Matthew Parker in his book *The Sugar Barons*.

Drax was not just a planter but participated in what we might call the politics or at least the social organisation of the island. In 1632 he became Commissioner for Roads and captain of Militia in Barbados. In themselves these roles are not surprising: his business would require good transport infrastructure and a guard against social unrest. Interestingly the English Civil War spread to the Caribbean Islands and James was a leading Roundhead, described as “a devout zealot” – to modern eyes an unlikely characteristic given his profession. Though his wealth steadily increased – he bought out 700 acres of his brother William’s part of the plantation in 1647 for £5,000 – he was arrested three years later by Royalists on the island, fined £80,000 worth of sugar, and left with his family for England. Was this an own goal by the Royalists? Was politics subsidiary to economics here? Possibly so, as it was presumably his knowledge of the plantation business which allowed him to return to Barbados a year later – with a naval escort – to trade English goods and bring much needed sugar back to England. In the early 1650s, promoted to being Colonel Drax, he built Drax Hall, which still stands, the oldest surviving Jacobean mansion in the Americas.

Drax Hall

By 1654 he had become the richest planter in Barbados, if not all the West Indies, and owned over 200 slaves. Nevertheless, he left the island that year, never to return, and it is difficult to know precisely why. His wife had died the previous year, and in England he remarried and began to buy land throughout the country. He seems to have been a man who knew how to stay on the right side of the times, since he was knighted by Cromwell in 1658 but created a baronet by King Charles II in 1661!

In his final years he became involved in merchant trading, particularly brandy, and bought land: several properties in Coventry, a town which he had no doubt known well in his youth, and in Boston, Kent, and Yorkshire. James Drax had certainly come a long way from his relatively humble Warwickshire beginnings. In his will he not only bequeathed large sums to his family, as would be expected, but also left £150 to buy cows for the poor of Coventry. This seems to suggest that he had retained some connection with his native county. His name had "encreased its lustre" according to Fuller, who considered him a "Worthy of Warwickshire" though we today will regard that "lustre" very differently. He died in London in 1661.

And what of James' brother William? Sometime early in the 1630s, possibly after his father's death in 1632, he and his unmarried sister Frances had travelled to join their brother James in Barbados. William married, and later James married his sister-in-law's sister, going on to produce a large family. Initially, as we have seen, the brothers went into partnership but, James bought William's part of the plantation in 1647 for five thousand pounds, meaning that he now became the sole owner of some 700 acres. Interestingly, as we read so often in stories of civil wars, William opposed his brother's politics and was a firm Royalist. After a few years, William had acquired his own estate whose profit was £8000 - 9000 per year. By 1669, he had moved from his brother's Barbados estate and established himself at St Ann Parish in Jamaica. Perhaps money trumped politics in the

brothers' case. Another Drax Hall was established, and the estate passed down to William's son Charles.

The family's wealth has continued to increase. The Drax family have owned the Drax Hall Plantation in Barbados, along with the accompanying 621 acres of land since the 17th Century. It is currently the property of Richard Drax, until recently Member of Parliament for South Dorset. He also owns Charborough House, a Grade 1 listed manor house in rural Dorset. In addition, he owns the greatest acreage of land in the county of Dorset, approximately 13,870 acres. He and his family are worth at least £150m and together own 23.5 square miles in Dorset, and an estate and grouse moor in Yorkshire. The family also own 125 Dorset properties personally or through family trusts and a £4.5m holiday villa on nearby Sandbanks.

Historian David Olusoga says: "The Drax family are one of the few who were pioneers in the early stages of the British slave economy back in the 17th century and, generations later, still owned plantations and enslaved people at the end of British slavery in the 1830s… the Drax dynasty were able to generate extraordinary wealth through the cultivation of sugar by enslaved Africans."

A long way from the ecclesiastical background of their ancestors in a tiny Warwickshire village.

Of course, one might assume that after slavery was abolished in the British Empire, that would be the end of the Drax family's – and others' profits. Not a bit of it. In fact, the Drax family received, in 1836, £4,293 12s 6d, in compensation for freeing 189 enslaved people. This extraordinary policy, effectively rewarding British slave owners twice over – first, through being enriched via the labours of the enslaved and second, through compensation for the loss of this labour – had its own impact on Warwickshire, as indeed on every county in the land.

Before turning to this, however, there are other aspects of Stoneleigh's relationship to slavery which tell a very different story.

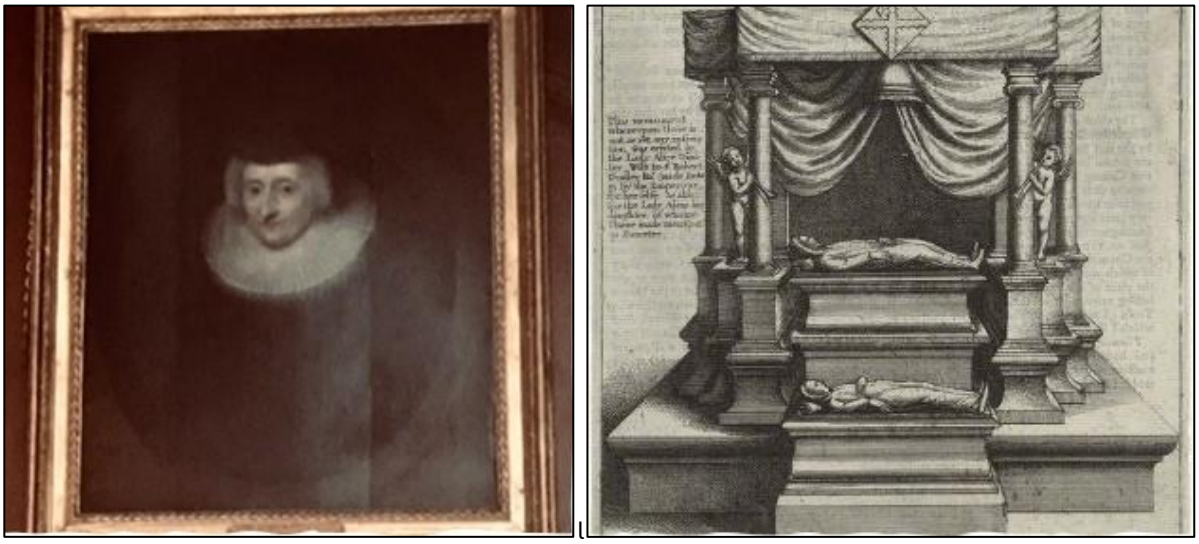
The Drax family story, as stated, proceeds from humble beginnings. That of the Leigh family of Stoneleigh – from the sixteenth century a hugely wealthy one - presents a remarkable contrast. One might expect that the ownership of slaves might feature in their acquisition of wealth, but this proves to be far from the case.

Following the Dissolution of the monasteries, the Leigh family, originating from Cheshire, had set themselves up in Warwickshire. Sir Thomas Leigh, a wealthy merchant of the staple and a former Lord Mayor of London, purchased the estate of Stoneleigh Abbey and built a grand country house there.

Stoneleigh Abbey

His property portfolio extended to multiple counties in England and Wales, but from the turn of the seventeenth century – at more or less the same time as the young Draxes were setting off to make their fortunes in the West Indies – their principal residences were in Warwickshire and Gloucestershire. Sir Thomas' son, another Thomas, was created a baronet in 1611 and as time passed the family made connections with many other important county families, such as the Spencers and Dudleys. In 1642 King Charles I created a barony for a further Thomas, who gave him shelter when the king and his army were refused entry to Parliamentarian Coventry at the outset of the Civil War.

While limited evidence suggests Thomas, 1st Baron Leigh, opposed slavery, his aunt Alice Leigh, Duchess Dudley (1578–1669), played a more significant role in such efforts. Having married the son of Robert Dudley, Queen Elizabeth's favourite, Alice had become wealthy by inheriting land not just from that family but her own. By the time of her death in 1669 she was able to enrich multiple villages both in Warwickshire and elsewhere, through endowments which are still in place to this day. In addition, she took care to assist those whose lives had been affected by slavery.



Alice, Duchess Alice Dudley, and her tomb

Who were these people? Not the African slaves in the Caribbean, but those who had fallen prey to capture by pirates. It is a far less-well-known feature of the subject of slavery, that during the seventeenth century, individuals – indeed, sometimes communities – in Western European nations were seized by pirates trading with North

African countries. Raiders from the ~~N~~North African coast, known as Barbary Corsairs, would seize European ships and raid coastal settlements. Between 1609 and 1625, for example, 493 British vessels were seized and from 1677 to 1680 160 were captured, taking around 8000 people into slavery. Similar numbers were taken along the western European coastline, including Iceland.

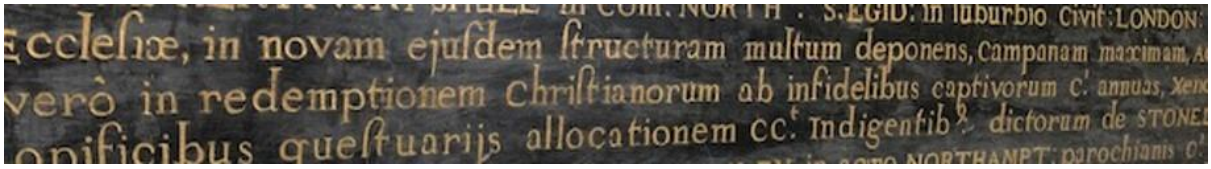
A particular example relates to the coastal village of Baltimore, Ireland in 1631. Eighty-nine women and children and twenty men were taken to Algiers and sold. A fisherman called John Hackett had himself been captured by pirates, and in fear of his life had struck a deal with his captors. He guided them to the village, and the captures were made under cover of darkness. Men became galley slaves, women concubines, or seamstresses.

Pirates algériens attendant un navire.
Algeriſche Kaperen Lauren auf ein Schiff.

Such stories not only fuelled fear but precipitated calls for some means of rescue. Many wealthy individuals saw it as a duty to help, and Alice was one of them. It might seem surprising that a woman from a land-locked county should concern herself with such matters, but Alice lived in London for many years and will no doubt have heard news emanating from her acquaintances there.

Christian slaves from Europe, on sale in a slave market in Algiers.

When Alice died, we have a clear indication of her intentions from her will. Among her many generous benefactions can be read, in the inscriptions on her magnificent tomb in Stoneleigh Church, “In redemptionem christianorum ab infidelibus captivorum” or “To redeem Christian slaves/prisoners from the infidels”.



The choice of language is noteworthy: those who purchased people from the pirates were often referred to as “Moors” or “Turks” but frequently as “infidels” – clearly signalling their barbarity as non-Christians. Alice’s charity continued: as late as 1778 the Leigh family agent received a request for £400 for the “redemption of Christian slaves in Barbary” and in 1811 the charity’s trustees considered a similar case. They had “knowledge of a ship’s crew in captivity who may probably be thought to be within the meaning of the charity.” In Ashow Church, the tiny church where Alice had married in 1596, there is a “benefaction board” which reveals that in 1827 a portion of her charity amounting to £10 a year was ordered to be paid by the Court of Chancery.

In contrast to the Drax story, then, at least one member of the gentry in the same location had vastly different ideas! One wonders whether the Leigh family of the mid-seventeenth century knew about the activities of their contemporaries and erstwhile near neighbours, the Draxes.

What about the rest of the Leigh family? As with so many country house narratives, it has become an important twenty-first century consideration to examine any historical relationship with the thorny subject of slavery. Where did the wealth of such families originate and increase? Is the splendour of their properties based on slave labour in the past?

Happily, it seems that this is far from the case at Stoneleigh. We move on to the late eighteenth century, a period when the abolition of slavery in the British Empire was emerging as a hot political topic. Lord Mansfield, the Lord Chief Justice of England from 1756-88 had played a key role in ending slavery in England. In 1783 he ruled on a landmark court case that dealt with its legality. From then on, even though no laws had yet been changed, it was widely believed that Mansfield's decisions were the catalyst to abolition of the trade.

Lord Mansfield

There was what might be thought a slight a connection between Lord Mansfield and the Leighs. Lord Mansfield lived at Kenwood House in Hampstead. The grounds were landscaped in 1793 by Humphry Repton, who had also been employed at Adlestrop in Gloucestershire by the Reverend Thomas Leigh, the Rector of the village and the guardian of his nephew James, who was destined to become the owner of the Warwickshire estates centred on Stoneleigh as well as the family's estates elsewhere. In 1806 the Reverend inherited these on his nephew's behalf, as a life interest. Upon taking up the reins at Stoneleigh Abbey, he instructed Repton to landscape the grounds there.

The Reverend Thomas Leigh

This may seem like an insignificant point in our story. It reveals nevertheless a link between two great houses – Stoneleigh and Kenwood – and one imagines that Mansfield's activities relating to abolition would not have been unknown to the Reverend Thomas Leigh.

This is underlined by another connection. When the Reverend took over Stoneleigh it was following the death of the Honourable Mary Leigh - its last resident of the Warwickshire line - in 1806. Mary had divided her time between Stoneleigh and her London residence –

Grove House in Kensington. The house no longer exists but used to occupy land on which the Royal Albert Hall now stands. Following her death her successor had, naturally, to deal with her will and her various properties. Family papers from this time reveal the Reverend receiving a letter from his lawyer, giving details of the person purchasing the Kensington property – none other than William Wilberforce, the leading English abolitionist. Wilberforce lived until 1826 at the house in Kensington, where it became a meeting-place for many like-minded friends.

He had headed the parliamentary campaign against the British slave trade for 20 years until the passage of the Slave Trade Act 1807. In later years, Wilberforce supported the campaign for the complete abolition of slavery and continued his involvement after 1826, when he resigned from Parliament because of his failing health. That campaign led to the Slavery Abolition Act 1833, which abolished slavery in most of the British Empire. Wilberforce died just three days after hearing that the passage of the act through Parliament.

William Wilberforce, abolitionist. Purchaser of Mary Leigh's Kensington house

Both Lord Mansfield and William Wilberforce, leading exponents of abolition, had links, if tenuous, with Stoneleigh, then. It is time to introduce another national figure, however:

Jane Austen

Jane Austen

Austen's family was related to the Leighs – her mother's maiden name was Leigh and Mrs Austen's brother, James Leigh-Perrot, had contested the acquisition of Stoneleigh by the Reverend Thomas Leigh, their cousin. That is a separate story. In 1806, however, when the Reverend took over Stoneleigh, he hosted the Austen ladies – Mrs Austen and her two daughters Cassandra and Jane, at the abbey for more than a week. During that stay, and in tandem with a long-standing knowledge of the Leighs' inheritance battles and family vicissitudes, Jane may have been given the germs of narratives and characterisations which permeate the later novels. In particular, *Mansfield Park*, written in 1814, is considered to have echoes of Stoneleigh in both its descriptions and its themes.

Recent academic studies agree that the novel's title is no accident. Certainly, Austen seems to be signalling an interest in the whole slavery argument by naming her novel after Lord Mansfield. She may also have been aware of the young black girl Dido Belle, brought up at Kenwood, and rumoured to be an illegitimate great-niece of Mansfield, probably born to an enslaved mother. Abolition – or not - was a key topic for discussion throughout the country.

Slavery was not a foreign subject to the Austens. It is easy to forget how many middle-class "ordinary" families had a financial interest in it. This surprises us – even shocks us – today but was not unusual then.

Jane's uncle James (the afore-mentioned James Leigh-Perrot) married an heiress to a Barbados estate; her brother Charles married the daughter of an attorney general of Bermuda; her father became a trustee of an Antigua plantation in 1760; the owner was godfather to Jane's brother James. Some of her father's nephews settled in the West Indies. Her brother Francis was sanctioned to enforce the eventual 1807 Abolition Act in his role as naval commander in the Caribbean.

Jane Austen was very close to her “uncle” the Reverend Thomas Leigh, her mother’s cousin. Jane’s interest in the subject of the abolition of slavery perhaps came via him, and perhaps, also, she was aware of Wilberforce going to live in Mary Leigh’s house. During her stay at Stoneleigh, she met the Leighs’ lawyer, Joseph Hill, who had negotiated the sale. He may have been of particular interest to her, as he had been the subject of a poem by one of her favourite poets, Cowper - who also happened to be an abolitionist. Was the topic of slavery discussed at the dinner table?

The story of *Mansfield Park* centres on a family with slave plantations in Antigua, though the subject is for the most part carefully avoided by the fictional characters, whose wealth depends on the trade. Austen may well have been attempting to trigger a response in her readership: do, you, dear reader, have connections to the dreadful trade, but are unwilling to acknowledge it? Literary critics continue to discuss this today.

Moving back to the story of the Drax dynasty, we recall that in 1836, the family - who had been a leading proponent of enslaved African labour - had received £4,293 12s 6d, in compensation for freeing 189 of their enslaved people. With inflation it is difficult to create a modern equivalent sum, but it probably approximates to three-quarters of a million pounds. Thus, no longer owning this “property”, they were gifted a hefty sum in compensation.

Families throughout the land received similar bonuses after abolition. The Office for the Registry of Colonial Slaves, drawn up in 1828, records the sums paid to all who had made a claim for reparation. Sometimes a single former slave had been “owned” by a British subject, and a small sum was paid to, let’s say, a genteel lady living in Leamington. In other cases, huge amounts are recorded. In Warwickshire, as elsewhere, people who held civic roles or who were responsible for building some of the key buildings which grace our towns and cities today, became even more wealthy than they had been before. It is a sobering thought to realise that many of our most beautiful townscapes result from these payments.

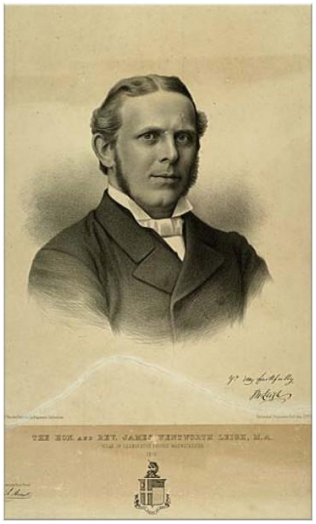
As an example, a man called Owen Pell owned seventeen sugar plantations on the island of Antigua and owned 108 slaves. When abolition was mooted Pell argued for compensation. The British government paid out a total of £20 million (equivalent to at least £2.5 billion today) to former owners like Pell, whilst those formerly enslaved received nothing. Pell moved from Antigua to Leamington in Warwickshire where he became a magistrate and was appointed High Sherriff of the county. His wife was to leave a fortune of over £131,000 when she died in 1887, equivalent to over £14 million today.

Of course, the abolition of slavery in the British Empire occurred long before the same happened in America. Once again, we can find echoes of slavery stories in connection with the small village of Stoneleigh and wider Warwickshire. Andrew Low, another Leamington man, whose wealth derived from cotton in Savannah Georgia, and who had

property both at Beauchamp Hall and Clarendon Square, left the equivalent of £40 million in today's money. His son Willie was related by marriage to the Leighs; his sister-in-law and her husband Rowland Leigh being buried in the churchyard in Ashow.

Andrew Low's mansion in Savannah, Georgia and his house in Clarendon Square, Leamington

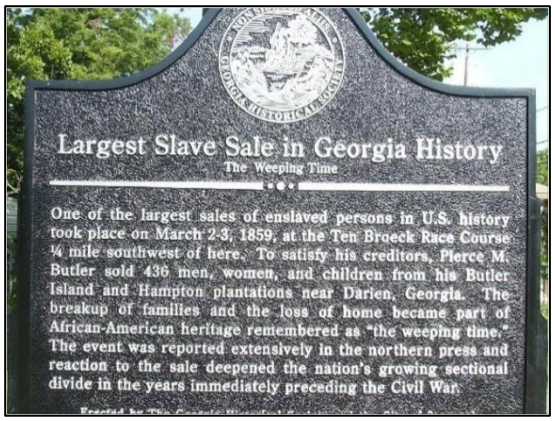
By the time we reach the era of men like Low in the mid-nineteenth century, the economy of Warwickshire had taken a dreadful hit: tariffs which had been imposed on the import of French ribbons were lifted. The weaving of decorative ribbons was a key trade in the county, and suddenly the influx of cheaper ribbons from abroad made the local ribbons unaffordable. Forty per cent of the labour force in the county was engaged in some form of the trade, and destitution was inevitable. Soup kitchens were set up in the Guildhall in Coventry, and politicians knew that something must be done. Lord Leigh of Stoneleigh saw the need, and raised large sums with other philanthropists' help to assist the poor and starving. These destitute people had a skill, and a mill was set up – to be called Leigh Mills – utilising the skills in a related occupation – weaving worsted materials. Raw material was necessary of course, and much of this had to be sourced from America. Lord Leigh despatched his youngest brother James – who would later become the vicar of Stoneleigh – to liaise with cotton merchants in the Deep South.



In the popular imagination – and also in fact -the Deep South is inevitably associated with some of the most terrible instances of slave ownership and cruelty. James was to encounter an extraordinary situation on his travels.

In 1867 he travelled to the US and met, in New York, a young woman who instantly interested him. She was Frances Butler, daughter of one of the most notorious slave-owners of his era. Her father, Pierce Butler, owned plantations on islands near Darien, Georgia. He was responsible for some of the most cruel treatment of slaves at the time, and even today there are commemorations of "The Weeping Time" when he, to settle gambling debts, sold 439 men, omen, and children on a racecourse in Savannah. His

wife, the actress Fanny Kemble, had divorced him and written of her experiences on the plantations, and her daughter Sarah agreed with her mother's stance.



In contrast to her sister, Frances Butler had taken her father's side and had assisted him with the management of his property on St. Simon's Island and Butler's Island until his death in 1867, at which time she became sole proprietor of the plantations. After the Civil War and the emancipation of slaves she continued with the property, utilising the labour of these erstwhile slaves as employees. The Reverend James Wentworth Leigh was impressed by her endeavours and they married in 1871, continuing to live on her St. Simon's Island plantation.

Opinions differ as to Frances' attitude to her "employees". Her book, *Ten Years on a Georgia Plantation Since the War* certainly reveals patronising if not actually racist comments about them. Nevertheless, she and her husband looked after the estates well, and built a thriving church for their spiritual needs. For several years they travelled frequently between the US and England, as they attempted both to look after the plantations and to fulfil the role of vicar and vicar's wife in Stoneleigh. It required astonishing energy to do so, and ultimately the plantations were given up, James concentrating on his vocation in the church. Although he ultimately became Dean of Hereford Cathedral, he, his wife, and children are buried in the churchyard at Stoneleigh, where those tending to neighbouring graves might be surprised to learn of their connection to the world of slavery.

The grave of Reverend James Wentworth Leigh and his wife Frances nee Butler of Savannah, Georgia

Looking back over my research, the chance discovery of the link between Stoneleigh and the Drax family's wealth through slavery has led me to a variety of stories, both positive and negative, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. Changing attitudes and opposing stances through the years have been illustrated in the lives of those who inhabited this corner of Warwickshire, echoing the social and economic layers which make up the history of our country.

There are surprises in every corner.

The Sugar Barons by Matthew Parker was the catalyst for this research, as were a variety of TV programmes by historian David Olusoga

Leamington Art Gallery's 2024 exhibition *Built with malice aforethought: Leamington Spa and the Black Atlantic* contributed to my understanding of the impact of slave ownership on towns such as Leamington.

Ten Years on a Georgia Plantation Since the War by Frances Leigh nee Butler, and *A Residence on a Georgian Plantation* by Frances Ann Kemble were useful for illustrating the American experience.

Many years' delving into the history of Jane Austen's family and the Leigh family of Stoneleigh Abbey has enabled me to draw together various strands of this story.

Thanks:

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Stoneleigh History Society