The Cambridgeshire family of abolitionist Olaudah Equiano (or Gustavus Vassa, the African): New biographical light on Susannah Cullen, his wife, and their daughters, Anna Maria and Joanna Vassa (1762–1857)

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Abstract

Based on rigorous analysis and interrogation of a mass of new primary source data, including unpublished archival material and contemporaneous newspaper articles, this article reconstructs the biographies of Ely-born Susannah Cullen, and Soham-born Anna Maria and Joanna Vassa, respectively the white wife and mixed-race daughters of Black abolitionist Olaudah Equiano, also known as Gustavus Vassa, the African. It amplifies and corrects what has previously been published about the lives of these women, presenting fascinating new research that illuminates the history of Black and mixed-heritage families, and the variability of black women's lives and experiences, in late eighteenth- and early-to-mid nineteenth-century Britain. It critically engages with the wider body of existing scholarship on black British history and British women's history, the development of anti-slavery campaigns and abolitionist activism, local cultures of dissent and political radicalism, the history of racism and shifting attitudes to 'race' and inter-racial marriage in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain, especially in rural English localities. It opens up avenues for further research into Equiano's family and private life, advocating for a more diverse and inclusive history of Britain and its regions.

Keywords

Olaudah Equiano, Susannah Cullen, Anna Maria Vassa, Joanna Vassa, mixed-heritage families, inter-racial marriage, Abolition, slave trade, racism, Dissenters, activism, British women's history

[INSERT FIG. 1 HERE]

Introduction

> If the mind of a black man conceives the passion of love for a fair female, he is to pine, languish, and even die, sooner than an intermarriage be allowed, merely because the complexion of the offspring should not be tawney — A more foolish prejudice than this never warped a cultivated mind … God looks with equal good-will on all his creatures, whether black or white — let neither, therefore, arrogantly condemn the other. … why not establish intermarriages at home, and in our Colonies? and encourage open, free, and generous love … subservient only to moral rectitude, without distinction of colour of a skin? … Away then with your narrow impolitic notion of preventing by law what will be a national honour, national strength, and productive of national virtue — Intermarriages! (Olaudah Equiano / Gustavus Vassa, 28 January 1788)[1]

In early 2022, British-Nigerian artist and visual storyteller Joy Labinjo (b. 1994) created a body of paintings called *Ode to Olaudah Equiano* in which she employed the notion of critical fabulation to reimagine and materialise in paint the lives of several known and fictitious Black Georgians, and their communities.[2] Her series was dedicated to and centred on the life of Olaudah Equiano (Isseke, Igboland, or South Carolina, c.1745–Westminster, 31 March 1797), also known as Gustavus Vassa the African, whom we refer to here as Olaudah.[3]

Olaudah was arguably the most influential Black abolitionist in British history. His 1789 autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative*, and associated public talks promoted the abolition of Britain's slave trade (made illegal in 1807 through the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act) and, implicitly, of the institution of slavery itself, which Britain ended in its colonies through the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act.[4] Labinjo created two portraits specifically of Olaudah within this series. The first, *Olaudah Equiano*, boldly reworked and transformed the small, monochrome, engraved portrait by Daniel Orme (after a lost portrait miniature by William Denton) that Olaudah commissioned and included as his autobiography's frontispiece. Labinjo's 2-metre-high bust-length 'swagger' portrait re-presents Olaudah in his public-facing role of charismatic lobbyist and abolitionist frontliner, capturing both his likeness and his greatness.

The second, *An Eighteenth-Century Family* (**fig. 1**), shows Olaudah within the context of a multi-figure group portrait. While its non-specific title deliberately normalises intermarriage in Georgian Britain, its subjects are specific and identifiable as Olaudah, his wife Susannah Cullen (Ely, baptised 24 May 1762–Soham, 16 February 1796) and their two daughters, Anna Maria (Soham, 16 October 1793–Chesterton, 21 July 1797) in yellow, and Joanna (Soham, 11 April 1795–Hackney, 10 March 1857) in blue. Labinjo chooses to celebrate and commemorate Olaudah's private life. She imagines him relaxing in the informal setting of his home, as a well-to-do and contented *pater familias*. Here, Olaudah has finally ended his demanding schedule of book tours across England, Scotland and Ireland, undertaken from mid-1789 to late 1795 to promote sales of his autobiography and the abolitionist cause, and settled down with his family to enjoy the fruits of his hard-won labours, which, to quote from his final will: 'I have dearly earned by the Sweat of my Brow in some of the most remote and adverse Corners of the whole world to solace those I leave behind me.'[5] It is a deeply affecting and poignant image: judging from the age of the girls,

Labinjo imagines the young family as they might have been in late 1795 or very early 1796, just before Susannah's untimely death, aged 34, in February 1796.

Part of the power and impact of Labinjo's painting lies in its vibrant colours and large scale, which places this mixed-heritage Georgian family on an equal footing (psychological and physical) with historic portraits of affluent and aspiring white families. It is a prime example of Labinjo's speculative work re-presenting aspects of Georgian England that are not preserved in the historic visual archive, in this case marriage between Africans and Europeans, and imagining a more equitable past. While the fresh, bold colours and patterns, and broad, painterly surfaces are characteristic of Labinjo's personal style, the arrangement and disposition of the figures and their attire are based on two family portraits by the English painter Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788) in the National Gallery, London: *Portrait of the Artist with his Wife and Daughter* (c.1748) and *The Painter's Daughters chasing a Butterfly* (c.1756).[6] Labinjo reworks Olaudah's facial features and distinctive red costume from the *Portrait of a Man in a Red Suit* (c.1740–80, Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery, Exeter), until recently believed to portray Olaudah.[7] In *An 18th-century Family*, as with Labinjo's wider practice, realism and abstraction grapple, reflective of struggles around representation and the hyphenated character of diasporic identities that have historically been shaped by an unequal interaction of African and European elements.[8] For all these reasons, and the fact that it represents a significant Cambridgeshire family, this group portrait was acquired by the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, in spring 2022, hung in pride of place in its Founder's Galleries in spring 2024, and temporarily relocated to the museum's exhibition galleries in spring 2025 to become the opening work in its second Legacies-themed exhibition, *Rise Up: Resistance, Revolution, Abolition* (21 February–1 June 2025).[9]

The importance of Olaudah to Cambridgeshire and of Cambridgeshire to Olaudah has been publicly acknowledged and celebrated through several recent community-based

projects. In 2022, for example, the high-profile *Equiano Bridge Renaming Project* officially named the bridge linking Cambridge's Riverside to Chesterton, 'Equiano Bridge', to honour Olaudah and to celebrate his family's links with Chesterton, where his oldest daughter, Anna Maria, is buried having died in infancy. As part of local Black History Month celebrations, a plaque renaming the bridge was unveiled on 31 October 2022.[10] Having a key bridge in Cambridge named after Olaudah is apt given that he spent his life building metaphorical bridges to bring Black and white people together. Moreover, in 2024, *The Equiano Family Project* was launched at St Andrew's church, Chesterton, its aim to create a permanent memorial to the Equiano/Vassa-Cullen family.[11]

Despite these important contemporary artworks and community-led projects, published literature on Olaudah Equiano's family life remains scant, probably because he accorded just one half-sentence to it at the end of those editions of his autobiography published after his marriage, remarking: 'I then went to Soham in Cambridgeshire, and was married on the 7th of April to Miss Cullen, daughter of James and Ann Cullen, late of Ely.'[12] He chose not to record the births of either of his daughters in any of the later editions. As a result, most of Olaudah's biographers have paid little attention to his personal life post-marriage, with the two exceptions being Vincent Carretta in 2005 and Donna Martin in 2008.[13] Moreover, only two publications to date have focussed specifically on Joanna, his daughter who survived into adulthood. The first, *Equiano's Daughter: The Life of & Times of Joanna Vassa, Daughter of Olaudah Equiano, Gustavus Vassa, the African*, was written by Angelina Osborne and published in 2007 to coincide with the bicentenary celebrations of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act. Billed as 'the first major attempt at constructing the Equiano story in nineteenth-century Britain', it contains original research that provides an overview of the key events in Joanna's life, especially her time in Clavering, and raises important questions as to her active involvement in abolitionism, the amount of agency she

had, and whether she faced discrimination due to her mixed-race heritage.[14] However, Osborne's narrative also contains much speculation, some unfortunate factual errors, no archival or bibliographic references – and has long been out of print. The second, *Remnant*, is a *bildungsroman* by Katie Sweeting, published in 2024.[15] This historical fiction-novel focusses on the imagined struggles of Olaudah's sister, named Olu by Sweeting, and Olaudah's daughter, Joanna, and in terms of the latter weaves fact with fiction in a way that is hard to untangle. Osborne's publication formed the basis for the commentary on Joanna Vassa included in Pearl Nunn's 2022 doctoral dissertation, 'Visible and Vocal: Black Women in Eighteenth Century Britain, c.1707–1834'.[16] While Nunn's thesis includes no new biographical research, and repeats some of Osborne's factual errors, it is significant in framing Joanna Vassa within the empirical context of other Black and mixed-raced women of African descent living in Britain during the long eighteenth century.

Given renewed interest in the private life of Olaudah Equiano, and a firm curatorial desire for his interracial marriage to be acknowledged as a form of active resistance within the Fitzwilliam Museum's 2025 *Rise Up* exhibition, we undertook extensive new research into his personal and public life, deliberately focussing on the years from 1789 until his death in 1797, in order to explore Equiano's connections to Cambridge and Cambridgeshire. We adopted the 'micro biography' approach of historians such as Carlo Ginzberg, Kathy Chater, Miranda Kaufman and Stephen Bourne to shine new light on the lives of Equiano's wife and two daughters who, like so many other women, 'have been neglected by macro-historians due to their seemingly marginalised significance to society'.[17] Building upon the exemplary Cambridge-focussed research publications of Michael E. Jirik and Matthew Abel,[18] using Sherry J. Katz's methodology of 'researching around' women in broader subject-area sources to find traces of their lives,[19] and reading the inevitably 'male-dominated archives creatively' as advised by Lucy Bland and Katharina Rowold,[20] we were able to track Susannah Cullen

and Joanna Vassa, mostly via the archival trails left by their husbands. Examination of a plethora of under-studied primary source material, ranging from contemporaneous newspaper advertisements and notices to unpublished documentary material in local and national libraries and archives, enabled us to reconstruct key aspects of their biographies – even if not their voices.[21] Our research findings were partially published in the 'Olaudah Equiano and Cambridge' essay in the *Rise Up* catalogue; and a summary overview was disseminated as part of the public events programme.[22] The purpose of the present article is to build on the earlier exhibition essay, expanding on the details of Susannah's life, and narrating as accurately and completely as possible the stories of the brief life of Anna Maria Vassa, which ended abruptly in 1797, and the much lengthier life of Joanna Vassa, which ended in 1857. It aims to replace much previous speculation and oft-repeated misinformation (especially circulating on the internet) with documented fact, although some reasonable conjecture must remain where documentary evidence is lacking.

Inter-racial marriage in late eighteenth-century Britain and Olaudah Equiano's views

The inter-racial marriage of Olaudah Equiano and Susannah Cullen on 7 April 1792 defied prejudice and dominant social conventions, and was an achievement that Olaudah attributed directly to God's mercy and providence.[23] That said, it was not the only high-profile one of the era: bi-racial Dido Elizabeth Belle (1761–1804), for example, married Jean Louis Charles Davinière, a white French valet, on 5 December 1793 at St George's, Hanover Square.[24] Moreover, African abolitionist and author, Ukawsaw Gronniosaw (c.1705–1775) married a white weaver from London named Betty; Dr Samuel Johnson's Jamaican manservant and heir, Francis Barber (1742/3–1801), married Elizabeth Ball, a white Englishwoman; and Black-British mixed-raced Nonconformist and abolitionist Jane Harry (1755–1784) married white Quaker surgeon, Joseph Threscher in 1782.[25] There were surely many more quotidian

ones too, given the 15-20,000 Black people estimated as living in late eighteenth-century Britain, with Gretchen Gerzina observing how, 'The cases of inter-racial marriage are far too common to delineate here, for the high proportion of black men to black women in Britain made it inevitable that some men would look to white women for companionship', and David Olusoga stating, 'Through the biographies of many of the best-known black Georgians we can see that inter-racial marriage was a seemingly unremarkable feature of life.'[26] There was also a class element to the cultural acceptance of these unions. Gerzina noted how, 'Mixed-race marriages tended not to be seen as problematic to the English because they primarily occurred among the lower working classes'. Due to Equiano's self-made wealth and status, his inter-racial marriage to Susannah was a less common middle-class union as their daughter, Joanna's, marriage to Henry Bromley would be twenty-nine years later.[27]

While contemporaneous views on inter-racial marriage diverged, even within the abolitionist movement, Olaudah's own views were unequivocal. Even before the publication of the 1st edition of his *Interesting Narrative* in spring 1789, which has a lot to say on the subject, Olaudah was a vocal supporter of what he termed 'intermarriage', and had disseminated his views in several publications, the most forthright being his review published in *The Public Advertiser* on 28 January 1788 of James Tobin's *Cursory Remarks* (London, 1785) and its sequel, *Short Rejoinder* (London, 1787). Following racial purity arguments, pro-slavery advocate Tobin had railed against racial mixing and inter-racial marriage as degenerate, anti-Christian and wholly unnatural. Claiming Biblical precedent for the enslavement of Black people, Tobin argued that this both justified laws preventing enslaved Black people from formal marriage, and required inter-racial marriage to be banned by law.[28] Tobin's racist views were made in the aftermath of Britain's defeat in the War of American Independence in 1783, when Britain had to fulfil earlier promises to free all enslaved Africans who had fought on the British side. While 3,000 newly emancipated Black

Loyalists, and other free people of colour agreed to settle in Nova Scotia, a remote British colonial province on the eastern coast of Canada, hundreds of others chose to settle in England. Together with the servants of repatriated displaced white British soldiers, these new migrants were coined the 'Poor Blacks' and viewed with enmity and suspicion by the resident white population, especially when formerly enslaved Black men fell in love with white women, married them, and had 'tawney' children. Equiano's 1788 review provided a blistering counterattack that destroyed Tobin's white supremacist arguments. It ended with a great battle cry in favour of inter-racial marriage – an excerpt from which is reproduced at the start of this article – citing biblical justification for such unions and arguing that marriages between Black and white people would strengthen, rather than weaken, the British nation and empire, and should therefore not be considered taboo.[29]

Social and political backdrop to the marriage of Olaudah Equiano and Susannah Cullen

The marriage of Olaudah Equiano and Susannah Cullen was brief, lasting less than four years, terminated abruptly by Susannah's death, aged 34, in mid-February 1796. Their union took place in a decade of radical social and political upheaval, with revolutions and rebellions enacted constantly on the international stage, and riots and 'church and king' mobs rife across Britain. While the abolitionist agenda had made slow but steady progress through the British legal system from the later 1780s, by the early 1790s it was suffering serious setbacks from association with other types of progressive political reforms promoted by liberal Whigs, such as wider representation in Parliament and greater tolerance for religious Dissenters.

Following the shocking beheading of Louis XVI, King of France, in January 1793, and the overthrow of the monarchy by French Revolutionaries, Britain went to war with France, and the government reacted domestically by launching a nationwide crackdown on treasonous behaviour as well as any activity or organizations deemed seditious. This included

abolitionism because it was seen as a type of radical political reform equated with dangerous enemy doctrines of republicanism and Jacobinism.[30]

Olaudah's political activism thereby made him and his family especially vulnerable, and he remained a high-profile target for the pro-slavery lobby, led by the wealthy, powerful and determined London-based West India Committee whose vested interests meant it did everything in its power to perpetuate the Slave Trade. Attacked verbally in the press, Olaudah was also in danger of being physically assaulted on the streets, especially in slaving port cities, where the threat of press-ganging and re-enslavement were ever-present realities. This must have put additional pressure on a marriage that was already compromised by Olaudah's frequent and extended absences, and which was likely under constant social scrutiny due to the colour of his skin. Susannah Cullen must have been a strong-minded and independent woman, who shared her husband's religious beliefs and abolitionist ideals, and who was prepared to support him, physically and psychologically, in his unavoidably peripatetic, socially alienating and stressful work, prioritising this over their marriage.

As for so many other women across history, there are no surviving accounts of Susannah Cullen's daily life. We can only hypothesise about her existence. Susannah must have realised that the abolitionist cause would be an ever-present and dominating factor in their marriage and that her husband – whose work was imperative but also had no guaranteed fixed income – would have to prioritise earning a living over family life.[31] Olaudah presumably returned home when his itinerary allowed, but references to this occur infrequently in his letters, and his home visits appear to have been relatively short with lengthy separations being the norm.[32] As a result, Susannah and Olaudah lived separate lives for most of their short marriage, except for its final months from late 1794 when Olaudah quit his book tours and settled down in Soham, perhaps aware that Susannah was now mortally ill. So, who was Susannah Cullen?

[INSERT FIG. 2 HERE]

Susannah Cullen's parents and forebears

Susannah Cullen was born in Ely to James Cullen and Ann Jones (**fig. 2**). Named after her maternal grandmother, she was baptised by her maternal great-uncle, the Rev'd Thomas Watkins, on 24 May 1762 in the parish church of Holy Trinity, which then occupied the Lady Chapel of Ely Cathedral.[33] Susannah's mother, Ann Jones (born 1728), was a Shropshire lass, the daughter of John Jones and his wife, Susannah (née Watkins, born 1696), who came from a line of prosperous middle-class farmers based at Shotton Hall in Myddle, Shropshire.[34] Nothing is known of Ann Jones's paternal family, but more is recorded for her maternal line due to Richard Gough's (1635–1723) early eighteenth-century books chronicling the families of Myddle, Shropshire, and information provided in the 1773 will of Ann's maternal uncle, the Rev'd Thomas Watkins (born 1698).[35] Watkins, a Cambridge graduate, was a significant figure in the Anglican life of Ely from the 1720s until his death in 1776.[36] By the time of Watkins's 1773 will, Ann's father was dead, as was her brother, John Jones, and her mother remained a widow.[37] As his will reveals, the childless Watkins was a Minor Canon at Ely Cathedral, and was well-off, having acquired a substantial portfolio of freehold, copyhold and leasehold property in the Cambridgeshire area, and in receipt of various clerical stipends, including Curate of Holy Trinity Church, a post he had held since 1736.[38] Watkins lived with his second wife, Mary (1709–April 1792), daughter of the Rev'd John Bringhurst (d. 1735), the previous incumbent of Holy Trinity and Precentor of Ely Cathedral,[39] in a large and gracious house on High Row, Ely (now the upper part of St Mary's Street), filled with books and adorned with fine linen, ornate furniture and silver plates.[40] How his niece, Ann Jones, came to live in Ely is not known but it is possible that, after her father's death (date unknown), she was sent by her widowed mother to spend time or live permanently with her

uncle. Certainly, in his will, Watkins bequeathed his sister an annuity and other immediate financial assistance, suggesting that she was in need of support.[41]

Susannah's father, James Cullen (born 1725) was the son of Jarvis (also spelled 'Jervis', 'Gearvis' or 'Gervais'), a blacksmith and ironmonger, and his wife Elliner ('Ellenor') Pugh, parishioners of St James's, Westminster (**fig. 2**). This is where they married on 5 September 1719, and where their first child, George, was baptised on 1 June 1721.[42] At an unknown date and for reasons unknown, they moved to Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, becoming parishioners of St Peter's, where James 'Cullin' was baptised on 29 September 1725.[43] Before James's third birthday, his family had relocated to Upwell and then to Ely: on 28 July 1728, his newborn brother, Gervais was baptised in St Mary's church, Ely (another parish church close to and administered by the Cathedral).[44] On 31 May 1729, the *London Gazette* listed 'Jarvis Cullen late of Upwell in the Isle [of Ely], Blacksmith' as a debtor in Ely Gaol who had applied for release under the Insolvent Debtors Relief Act of 1728.[45] Although this might sound rather drastic, as Amy Erickson reminds us, 'Many quite respectable tradesmen were imprisoned for debt, took the Act, and recovered their businesses and reputations. Imprisonment for debt was not a conviction, as it was initiated by a creditor.'[46] Following his release, Jarvis Cullen and his family remained in Ely, but moved to the adjacent parish of Holy Trinity. Following Elliner Cullen's death in 1732, Jarvis remarried twice and fathered additional children before his own death in March 1746.[47] Thus, it was that Wisbech-born James Cullen was brought up in Ely by two stepmothers and his father, from whom he learnt his trade as an ironmonger (retailer, wholesaler or distributor of iron goods), whitesmith (craftsman who specialised in making goods from tin, lead, silver, pewter) and brazier (ditto in brass). Given that he appears to have operated in all three trades, and each required substantial capital, he must have been more than solvent. In 1749, James 'Cullon' married a local woman, Mary Walton, with whom he had his first son, James Jr, who

was baptised on 29 August 1750. Sadly, the boy died within his first year and was buried in Holy Trinity graveyard on 20 June 1751, followed by his mother on 26 October 1752, leaving James Cullen a childless widower in his late twenties.[48]

How Ann Jones and James Cullen became acquainted is undocumented, but it was likely through attendance at Holy Trinity, Ely. They must have had something of a whirlwind romance given that they were married on 27 March 1753, only five months after James had buried his first wife, at a service officiated by Ann's uncle.[49] James was now 28 years old and Ann about 25 years old. Their marriage was prolific with Ann giving birth to nine children in the space of eighteen years from 1754 until 1772 (**fig. 2**): James Jr (named after his father); William Watkins (named after his maternal great-grandfather, William Watkins); Anne (named after her mother); Mary (likely named after her maternal great-aunt); Susannah (named after her maternal grandmother); Helen; Mary; Elizabeth (named after her maternal great-grandmother, Elizabeth Watkins) and Thomas (named after his maternal great-uncle). All were baptised in Holy Trinity, Ely, by their great-uncle Thomas Watkins.[50] As Amy Erickson has pointed out, given that baptismal names often reflected those of godparents, it is possible that the Rev'd Watkins was godfather to Thomas, and his wife, godmother to Mary.[51]

Daily life for the Cullen family in Ely (1750s–1770s)

What was the Fenland-girt, market-town of Ely like in the second half of the eighteenth century, when James and Ann Cullen were bringing up their family? The river Great Ouse provided a vital waterway north to King's Lynn and the sea, and south to Cambridge: in 1753, Edmund Carter reported that 'for the conveniency of passengers, and heavy goods to and from Cambridge' a boat left Ely every Tuesday and Friday for Cambridge with the 20-mile river-route taking six hours.[52] Overland, Ely was a designated stop on the London to King's Lynn coach route,[53] and a post-chaise linked Ely to Cambridge thrice weekly on a road that

had been improved as a turnpike in 1769.[54] However, Ely's Fenland topography (an island surrounded by drained marshland, waterways and the dried raised beds of waterways known as roddons) often made road access to surrounding towns difficult, especially during winter months, as Methodist preacher John Wesley discovered in November 1774, when he travelled on the Norwich road to Ely: 'Mr. Dancer met me with a chaise and carried me to Ely. Oh, what want of common sense! Water covered the high road for a mile and a half. I asked, "How must foot-people come to the town?" "Why, they must wade through!"'.[55]

At this time, the predominantly agricultural Isle of Ely was blighted by high unemployment, social hardship and unrest, and the farming crisis and agricultural depression worsened in the 1790s due to the impact of the French Wars (1793–1815). Although poverty was endemic in the surrounding area, the town itself was economically resilient and grew. By 1753, when Susannah's parents married, Ely had population of 3,000 people.[56] James Cullen's business as an ironmonger, brazier and whitesmith was certainly less precarious than many, given the constant demand for new goods crafted from iron, brass, tin, lead, silver and pewter as well as for repairs to old and broken wares. Indeed, from surviving account books and receipts in the archives of Ely Cathedral, we know that Cullen was the 'go to' ironmonger, brazier and whitesmith for the Dean and Chapter of Ely Cathedral, which guaranteed him a steady income.[57] He was paid an annual retainer of £1 6s. 'for regulating the Clock' until his death.[58] The 1765 to 1766 audit of bills paid to him and one Thomas Bonington (presumably a business partner), for example, show that they supplied all manner of bespoke hardware (nails in vast quantities, rivets, hooks, staples, locks, spikes and other security devices, as well as tools and equipment) to the Cathedral and its precinct.[59] They also repaired and altered existing metal items.[60] By the time of the 1768 to 1769 audit of bills, James Cullen was working alone but still supplying similar goods and services.[61] Presumably, he sold the same items and provided the same services to local businesses and individuals in

and around Ely. Indeed, Cullen's business must have flourished given that he took on several apprentices. Surviving registers kept by the Board of Stamps of moneys received in payment of the duty on apprentices' indentures reveal that 'James Cullen of Ely, Whitesmith' took on three lads: Thomas Benn in autumn 1756;[62] Jacob Aynes in late 1774;[63] and Samuel Newborn in spring 1781.[64] This final apprenticeship record is interesting as James Cullen made it jointly with his oldest surviving son, William Watkins, who is recorded as a Master in his own right, and who was presumably trained by his father.

From later business documents pertaining to William Watkins, it can be deduced that James Cullen owned the freehold to a substantial two-storey property on Fore Hill, the main commercial street in Ely that led downhill from the central market square towards the river and dock area off Broad Street, which served as both home and business premises.[65] Although it has not yet been possible to confirm the exact location of the Cullen shop-cum-home on Fore Hill, some idea of the building's appearance and layout when Susannah lived there may be gleaned from a later newspaper advertisement of 1815, when still in the possession of her eldest brother:

> An exceedingly good messuage or tenement, most pleasantly situate in the Fore-Hill, in Ely aforesaid; Consisting of a capital new-fronted Shop, 17 feet by 12 with glass-cases, shelves, and drawers in the same; a good Cellar under the shop, and of the same dimensions; Keeping Parlour, Kitchen, large Back Kitchen, in which is a good soft-water Cistern, spring-water Pump, Pantry, and other conveniences; a Dining Room of the same size as the shop, two good Sleeping Rooms, a large Back Chamber, now used as a warehouse, but which may at a small expense be converted into two sleeping rooms, and three good garretts. Also a convenient Yard, Garden, and newly-erected Work-Shop behind the same.[66]

Other than the births, deaths and marriages of several siblings, no documents have yet emerged to shed light on Susannah's life pre-marriage and so we can only speculate as to how she spent her time. Assuming she remained living with her parents on Fore Hill and was not sent to live elsewhere, religion would have been a dominant and recurring feature, especially with her great-uncle Thomas Watkins being her parish priest. Until his death in January 1776, when she was nearly 14, Susannah would no doubt have attended divine worship at Holy Trinity each Sunday and on other Holy Days. She may also have attended religious services at the Cathedral given that her eldest surviving brother, William Watkins, sang in the choir there: as Ely Cathedral Chapter records reveal, William Watkins was nominated to become a chorister on 25 November 1762, when he was just 6 or 7 years old, officially joining the ranks in spring 1763.[67] He is recorded as a chorister for some ten years, until 1773, quitting when he was about 17 years old.[68] In addition to spending time in church, when old enough, Susannah would no doubt have helped her mother care for her younger siblings and perhaps also her father in the shop on Fore Hill, assuming she possessed the necessary literacy and numeracy skills to do so.[69] And she would presumably have joined her siblings in dutiful visits to their well-off and punctilious great-uncle and great-aunt at home on High Row.

Nothing is known about Susannah's education, but she may have received informal tutoring from her great-uncle, who after all had been Under Master at Ely Cathedral Grammar School (known as the King's School, Ely, from the mid-nineteenth century) from 1725 until 1736. The Rev'd Thomas Watkins certainly appears to have played a part in the education of Susannah's eldest surviving brother: on 5 October 1763, aged 7, William Watkins Cullen was nominated and admitted as a non-fee-paying Scholar at the King's School, Ely.[70] Although his great-uncle was not his nominator, the fact that William Watkins was so young (one of only two 7-year olds in the entire register with most boys admitted between the ages of 9 and 12) suggests that Thomas Watkins used his influence to gain his

eldest Cullen nephew a place in the school. The only evidence we currently have of Susannah being literate is her marriage register and her will, both of which she signed with a competent hand using confident and well-formed letters with elegant flourishes. Such good penmanship makes it likely that she was capable of writing much more than her name. Indeed, it would be a fair assumption that Susannah could read given that she subscribed to two separate editions of Olaudah Equiano's autobiography.[71] Whether she kept diaries or wrote letters is undocumented (no examples are currently known) but, given the peripatetic nature of Olaudah's work throughout their courtship and marriage, and his frequent and prolonged absences from home, it is likely that their relationship was conducted in great part through correspondence, which presupposes Susannah was literate.[72] Olaudah was certainly an avid letter-writer with many examples surviving, though none of his refers to any by his wife.

The deaths of Susannah Cullen's great-uncle (1776) and father (1781)

On 11 August 1773, the Rev'd Watkins wrote his lengthy and meticulous will.[73] While he left a financial bequest of £300 to Susannah's mother, he stipulated that during her 'Coverture' (married life), Ann Cullen was to inherit as a 'feme sole' (i.e. as a husbandless woman) and that none of this bequest was to be used to cover any debts or claims against her husband. Watkins further specified that if Ann were to predecease her husband, the money was to bypass him entirely and be divided among any of their adult children, or, if minors, then used solely for their upbringing.[74] While these stipulations could be interpreted as Watkins disliking and/or distrusting James Cullen, they were more likely an attempt to protect his niece Ann, and her children, from any penalties arising from future business debts should these accrue.[75] Watkins also left specific entailed property bequests to Susannah's mother, which, after her death, were to pass to three of Susannah's siblings: William Watkins, Anne and Mary. One of these was for a 'close of pasture' in Sutton to be given, after the death of

his wife, Mary, to 'Anne the Wife of James Cullen of Ely aforesaid for and during the term of her natural Life and from and after her decease to Mary Cullen Daughter of the said Anne Cullen and her heirs for ever.'[76] This bequest to Susannah's younger sister, Mary, is of particular importance as it is this property that Susannah would lay partial claim to in her own will of 1795, and similarly by Olaudah Equiano in his will of 28 May 1796, as part of the inheritance of their daughters Anna Maria and Joanna.

In his third codicil of 9 May 1775, the Rev'd Thomas Watkins further bequeathed Susannah's 2-year-old brother Thomas a small parcel of land in the Manor of Sutton, which was to pass down his family line. By the time Watkins had completed this last codicil, Helen had died (buried 9 November 1773) meaning that Susannah (just about to turn 13) and her 7-year-old sister Elizabeth were the only surviving Cullen siblings not to be a specifically named beneficiary in their great-uncle's will. Why is uncertain: did Watkins vainly favour relatives named after him and his wife? Or was his apparent favouritism based in part on familiarity, if as suggested above he was godfather to Thomas, and his wife, godmother to Mary? Might Mary have lodged with him and his wife, simply leaving his other great-nieces to be looked after through his bequests to their mother, and potentially other bequests from their own godparents? And was a primary motivation to ensure that his property remained within his direct family line?[77] Whatever the case, the Rev'd Thomas Watkins died eight months later, on 12 January 1776, with no further amendments to his will or existing codicils, and was buried in the Cathedral grounds four days later.[78] He was replaced as minister of Holy Trinity, Ely, by the Rev'd Jeffrey (Geoffrey) Bentham (c.1720–1792), another Cambridge graduate and Minor Canon at Ely Cathedral.[79]

For the next five years, little is known of the Cullen family, until summer 1781 when James Cullen died. They reappear in the records of Holy Trinity on 21 August 1781, when Susannah's father was buried in the parish churchyard, leaving her mother a 53-year-old

widow with six unmarried children.[80] Just four days later, Susannah's mother placed an advertisement in the *Cambridge Chronicle and Journal* thanking 'the gentlemen of the cathedral, and all other friends of her late husband James Cullen, ironmonger and whitesmith, deceased, for the many favours conferred on him', and informing them that she intended 'continuing the business in partnership with her son William Watkins Cullen'.[81] This indicates that while James Cullen had run the business alone during his lifetime, following his death, it was run jointly by his widow and oldest son. Presumably William Watkins focused on the production side of operations while Ann focused on the management and financial side, meaning she must have possessed the necessary literacy and numeracy skills to do so.[82] Ann Cullen also asked that 'all persons who have any demands of the late James Cullen, are desired to send in their accounts, in order that they may be settled'.[83] From this advertisement, we can assume that the Cullens, likely including 19-year-old Susannah, continued to live on Fore Hill, above the shop and forge, with her mother and brother jointly running the family business.

From surviving account books and invoices in the archives of Ely Cathedral, we know that William Watkins Cullen was employed by the Dean and Chapter even more regularly than his father and for a wider range of goods and services.[84] These unpublished records reveal that he took over the maintenance of the Cathedral clock from his father, being paid the same annual retainer fee of £1 6s.[85] He likewise replaced his late father as the principal supplier of Ely Cathedral. He supplied all manner of bespoke new metal hardware items to the Cathedral and its precinct, including the Deanery, Prebendary houses, Brew House, and Grammar School: door and window furniture;[86] hooks, staples, hinges, brackets and stanchions;[87] locks and keys, bolts, chains and other security devices;[88] saws, hammers, chisels, ladders, buckets and other tools and equipment.[89] He also supplied a whole range of new domestic metalware relating to lighting and kitchenalia.[90] And, like his father before

him, he was often asked to repair and clean objects from doors and gates,[91] to tools and domestic items of all kinds.[92]

Following the death of her father, Susannah Cullen's family life appears uninterrupted until 1 September 1785, when her oldest surviving brother, William Watkins, married Elizabeth Gray (c.1760–1799) at Holy Trinity, Ely, making him the first of the Cullen siblings to marry.[93] Whether Elizabeth joined the Cullen household on Fore Hill, or whether William Watkins moved out and set up home elsewhere is unknown, but he certainly continued to run the forge and to maintain his active business dealings with the Dean and Chapter of Ely Cathedral. Other Cathedral records reveal that, on 16 June 1786, after thirteen years away from the choir, William Watkins was readmitted to the Cathedral Foundation as a Lay Clerk.[94] Although fined for 'disobedience and improper conduct to our Precentor' in his first year of admittance,[95] his behaviour must have improved for he remained a Lay Clerk there for over forty years, until his death in 1829, aged 73.[96] The only other recorded change to Cullen family dynamics in this period was when Susannah's younger sister, Elizabeth, died and was buried in Holy Trinity churchyard on 17 November 1786.[97] This left Susannah with four living siblings: William Watkins, Anne, Mary and Thomas.

Susannah Cullen's religious persuasions and move to Soham (between spring 1788 and autumn 1790)

While Susannah and her siblings were raised in the Anglican tradition, with strong ties to both Holy Trinity and Ely Cathedral, they may have been exposed to Nonconformist teaching, especially after their great-uncle's death in early 1776, be it through the sermons of Baptist, Methodist, Independent/Congregationalist or other Protestant Dissenting denomination preachers.[98] Indeed, this may be how Susannah met Olaudah Equiano, given that late eighteenth-century Dissenters were also often fervent Abolitionists, which remained

the case well into the nineteenth century.[99] Although Nonconformity was historically limited in Ely, from the later 1770s, religious change began to impact the town, with influences from the more radical surrounding Fenlands. We have already seen that the Methodist preacher John Wesley had visited Ely in November 1774, and the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion sent itinerant Calvinistic Methodist preachers to do likewise in the early 1780s. They must have met with a receptive audience for, in 1785, one of her chapels was formally established in Ely; its brick building of 1793 is still present on Chapel Street.[100] It is possible that Susannah encountered the Calvinistic doctrines of her future husband through these and similar Nonconformist preachers and became sympathetic to them. While her eldest sister Anne would later marry an ardent Nonconformist,[101] her eldest brother, William Watkins, remained firmly Anglican and committed to Ely Cathedral for the rest of his life, which may, or may not, have led to tensions given that there were plenty of mixed-denomination families in this period.

The final documented change to Susannah Cullen's life in Ely occurred in spring 1788 when her brother, William Watkins, took over as sole proprietor of the family's business. On 9 February 1788, the *Cambridge Chronicle and Journal* advertised that the business partnership of Susannah's mother and brother had been dissolved 'by mutual consent': from now on, the Fore Hill shop and forge were to be managed solely by William Watkins Cullen, with Ann Cullen joining him 'in soliciting the continuance of their friends favours, and the encouragement of the public in general, which he hopes by a strict attention to business to merit'.[102] Why the mother-son partnership was dissolved is unknown, but given that Ann was then 60 years old, she may have retired. It is also possible that further upheaval for the Cullen family occurred in the 1780s, if a much later passing comment made by John Audley in his notes about Olaudah Equiano's estate is true. Likely written around 1815, Audley (who was by then Equiano's sole living executor) claimed that Susannah's sister, Mary, 'was tried for I

think shop lifting, & being found guilty was transported to B[otany] Bay where I suppose she died', and that Susannah, Anne and Thomas had been listed as legal heirs in Mary's will.[103] Although Audley gave no date for Mary's will, which remains unlocated, it must have been written before 12 December 1795, the date of Susannah's will in which it is mentioned. That Mary had felt an urgency to settle her estate legally, before her thirtieth birthday, suggests something serious had happened to her, be that a life-threatening illness or imminent and permanent removal from the British Isles. That Mary's will was drawn up by a solicitor from Cambridge, who also undertook work in Ely, rather suggests that she was caught, tried and convicted in the Cambridgeshire area.[104] Although no firm evidence in support of Audley's claim has been found despite research into relevant local Assize Court records and contemporaneous newspapers, its specificity argues for it to be based on fact.[105]

Whatever the case, after February 1788 and before September 1790, Ann Cullen moved to Soham, together with her unmarried children. This is deduced from the fact that, at various dates throughout the 1790s, Anne, Susannah and Thomas are all recorded as resident in Soham, and it is unlikely that they should have moved there without their widowed mother. With no known family ties to Soham, Widow Cullen's decision to leave Ely – her home of 35 years, and a place where she was clearly well-known and respected – seems somewhat strange. Had the business dissolution been messy? Or might Ann Cullen have become an ardent Nonconformist leading to a rift with her eldest son, William Watkins, whose Lay Clerk role at Ely Cathedral made it tricky for her to remain in the town? Certainly, unlike Ely, Soham had a history of Nonconformism, with long-established Congregational and Baptist chapels.[106] Or had some social embarrassment of another kind happened? If Mary really had been caught shoplifting, convicted and sent to Botany Bay, might this have been the catalyst for Widow Cullen's move to Soham?

[INSERT FIG. 3 HERE]

Lying six miles south of Ely and 20 miles north-east of Cambridge, and surrounded by the sprawling Fens, Soham was a substantial town with some 2,000 inhabitants, and a flourishing hub of local commercial activity, agriculture and professional services, reputedly more affluent than Ely.[107] It had four inns which, along with their usual function as places for male sociability, were also local centres of business dealings, such as property auctions.[108] According to Mac Dowdy, the 1790s was 'a particularly successful period for the merchants and mill owners of the town and is reflected in the number of large houses built at that time' resulting in Soham 'outshining its neighbouring cathedral city in the number of fine gentrified houses'.[109] While some were new builds, mainly genteel townhouses constructed from scratch along the principal streets, others were renovations, the older traditional long houses updated with new windows and doors in the latest Georgian fashion (**fig. 3**).

It is likely that Widow Cullen and her unmarried children lived together under one roof. Precisely where in Soham this was, and whether the property was purchased outright, leased or rented is unknown. However, thanks to various records pertaining to Anne, Susannah and Thomas in the parish registers of St Andrew's church (**fig. 4**), we know that the Cullen family must have resided within the parish bounds: Susannah's eldest sister, Anne, is recorded as a spinster of the parish when she married John Fitches of Fordham, an ardent Nonconformist (likely Baptist) farmer and blacksmith, on 13 October 1790—the date of their wedding providing an incontrovertible *terminus ante quem* for the move.[110] Susannah is similarly recorded as a spinster of the parish when she married Olaudah Equiano on 7 April 1792,[111] and she clearly remained there as this is where both of her children were baptised (Anna Maria on 30 January 1794 and Joanna on 29 April 1795),[112] and where she was buried (21 February 1796).[113] Her younger brother, Thomas, likely also remained in Soham, given that he was buried there on 8 April 1798.[114]

[INSERT FIG. 4 HERE]

That these key rites of passage for Anne, Susannah and Thomas all took place in Soham's Anglican parish church does not necessarily mean that they or their mother were Anglican congregants, only that they lived within the parish bounds. After all, during this period, except for Jewish and Quaker couples, marriages of other faiths had to take place in Anglican churches in order to be legally recognised (see below, for further discussion). Moreover, until the civil registration of births began in 1837, the only means to acquire legal evidence of a child's age, parentage and legitimacy was through baptism in the Anglican Church, recorded in the Baptismal Register. From 1743, Nonconformist births could be registered at Dr Williams's Library, in Red Cross Street, Cripplegate, City of London, in the General Register of Protestant Dissenters. Originally created for those living within 12 miles of London, it was, however, used only by Londoners in the 1780s and 1790s.[115] Nonconformists based outside the capital who wanted to register their child's birth formally, had no choice but to do so at their Anglican parish church. Others who did not agree with infant baptism had to risk not registering their child's birth anywhere at all. Registration at Dr Williams's Library only became more widespread later through the assistance of local Dissenting ministers. In addition, most Nonconformist churches did not possess burial grounds at this time. Until the establishment of town cemeteries from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, Dissenters had to be buried in their local Anglican parish churchyard. Eighteenth-century parish registers of baptisms, marriages and burials therefore record both Anglican and Dissenting Christians, making it difficult to identify Nonconformists with any certainty.

Precisely when the Cullens moved to Soham is also unknown but, as mentioned above, it must have been by autumn 1790 when Anne Jr got married. Given that she would have had to be resident in the parish of St Andrew's Soham for at least three weeks before her wedding, the latest possible date for the Cullens' move to Soham is 22 September 1790.

However, the move may well have occurred much earlier, and closer to the business dissolution of spring 1788, assuming that it was in Soham that Anne Jr first became acquainted with her future husband. Nonconformist farmer-cum-blacksmith John Fitches was then living in the nearby village of Fordham and would, no doubt, have visited Soham for work and to worship at Soham Baptist church, since there was no Nonconformist chapel in Fordham at the time. If Anne had become a Nonconformist in these years, they may well have met through the Soham Baptist church, and its minister, Francis Bland. Whatever the case, Anne Cullen evidently remained in Soham after marrying John Fitches as this is where their first son, William Cullen Fitches, was born on 22 November 1791. It is not known if they lived with the rest of the Cullen family, or if they moved into a new home. However, they must have moved to Fordham by summer 1796, as this is where their second son, John II Fitches, is recorded as having been born on 1 August 1796.[116]

When and how did Susannah Cullen meet Olaudah Equiano?

No records are known that shed light on when and how Susannah first met Olaudah, who was 17 years her senior, nor how long their engagement lasted before they got married. The likelihood is that they met at some point between late July 1789, when Olaudah is first documented as having visited Cambridge, and late October 1790, when the 3rd edition of Olaudah's autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative*, was published with 'Miss Susan Cullen' listed as a subscriber. This date range covers the period when Susannah moved from Ely to Soham, and so she could have been living in either town when she first became acquainted with her future husband.

It has generally been supposed that they met during a book-promotion event in Cambridge. Most commentators suggest that this was during Olaudah's first abolitionist book tour of Cambridge, documented as having taken place in the second half of July 1789, given

that in his vote of thanks to 'the Gentlemen of the University, and the inhabitants of this town', written on 30 July 1789 and published in the *Cambridge Chronicle and Journal* the following day, Olaudah quipped: 'Nor have even the amiable fair-sex refused to countenance the sooty African'.[117] Reading between the lines, Olaudah had clearly received the attentions of one or more local women. Although he went on to publish similar versions of this vote of thanks in local papers after successful visits elsewhere, he never again reprinted this line, hence the suggestion that Susannah Cullen was amongst these women whose heads had been turned.[118] However, it is equally possible that they did not meet until May 1790, when we believe Olaudah made a second undocumented visit to Cambridge.[119] Certainly, Olaudah did not advertise his July 1789 visit in any local paper and so Susannah may not even have been aware of Olaudah's presence in Cambridge. Moreover, although the 2nd edition of Olaudah's autobiography (London, December 1789) contained the names of many new 'town and gown' supporters, it did not include that of Susannah. That she did not subscribe until the 3rd edition (London, October 1790) raises the possibility that she and Olaudah met between the publication of the 2nd and 3rd editions.

While Susannah could feasibly have travelled to Cambridge and met Olaudah there, on either his first or second trip, it is equally possible that Olaudah visited Ely or Soham (perhaps both) on one or both book-tour stops. Visits to towns and villages surrounding Cambridge would have been useful for selling his book, especially in a region known for its Nonconformism. Dissenters in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were often fervent supporters of the abolition of slavery, with similar religious beliefs to Olaudah's own. These religious communities would have had a strong pull for Olaudah, a deeply spiritual man. We know from his writings and his executors' choice of burial place in Whitefield's Tabernacle, Tottenham Court Road, London, that Olaudah was a Calvinistic Methodist, perhaps even a Countess of Huntingdon Methodist, who was inspired by George Whitefield

(1714–1770). Whitefield had been the personal chaplain of Selena Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon (1707–1791), and preached in North America where Olaudah witnessed one of his sermons.[120] Throughout his autobiography, Olaudah describes his religious and spiritual journey and reveals that when living in London he worshipped in Nonconformist congregations, including at Westminster Chapel under the Rev'd Henry Peckwell, which was associated with the Countess of Huntingdon; in his final will (1796), he left money to the missionary organisation founded at the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion Chapel at Spa Fields, should his children not survive into adulthood.[121]

In 2008, Cambridgeshire local historian Donna Martin made an alternative suggestion regarding how Susannah Cullen met Olaudah Equiano: rather than meeting during a book-promotion event, could it have been during a preaching session?[122] The notion that Olaudah was a Nonconformist itinerant preacher who used his book tour to promote both his abolitionist message and his religious convictions is rarely discussed but is worth serious consideration given that *The Cambridge Chronicle and Journal* referred to Olaudah as 'well known in most parts of this kingdom as a preacher' in the notice of his wedding.[123] This designation of 'preacher' may indicate that Olaudah combined his abolitionist talks with Christian preaching, which, after all, became fairly standard practice in the nineteenth century when formerly enslaved Americans would 'teach and preach' while on book-promotional lecture tours in Britain.

Indeed, two overlooked pieces of evidence support Martin's hypothesis that Olaudah preached as well as spoke on abolitionism. The first is a comment published in the *Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury* on 2 January 1847. Reporting on an Anti-Slavery soirée in Newcastle at which the African-American abolitionist, orator and writer Frederick Douglass (1818–1895) spoke, it notes how Quaker abolitionist, Jonathan Priestman (1786–1863), recalled 'his parents entertaining an African slave, named Gustavus Vasa [sic], who was

travelling through the country, endeavouring to instruct, in the truths of religion, the people who had so shamfully [sic] treated him'.[124] The second comes at the end of a long account published by *Sheffield Register* on 28 June 1788, a year and a half before Olaudah's autobiography was published. Summarising the heated debate in the House of Lords in the previous week on the Slave Trade Regulation Bill, and the impassioned arguments made by pro-slavery witnesses, the report ends, 'The Rev. Gustavus Vassa, the African [illegible] was present all the time, taking notes'.[125] While there are no records of Olaudah ever having been officially ordained, the fact that the reporter bothered to preface his name with the clerical title of 'Reverend' indicates that he was known to be a lay preacher. Indeed, Vincent Carretta has argued that Olaudah chose to have himself portrayed as a 'Protestant lay preacher' in the frontispiece of his *Interesting Narrative*.[126] Is it possible then that Olaudah visited the newly founded Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion Chapel in Ely, (who had subscribed to his 1st edition, in July 1789 or May 1790), and this is how he met Susannah?

Susannah could have met Olaudah – be it at a book promotion event or a Dissenting sermon – without an introduction. However, given the rules of polite sociability at the time, they would more likely have been introduced formally. An Anglican priest or a Nonconformist minister seems the most probable intermediary, but the specific identity of this individual depends, of course, on where Susannah was living and her church of worship at the time. Of the former camp, the two key candidates are either the Rev'd Geoffrey Bentham (parish priest of Holy Trinity, Ely, from 1776) or the Rev'd Thomas Wilson (parish priest of St Andrew's, Soham, 1782–97; and the dedicatee of fig. 4).[127] Both were Cambridge graduates (Bentham of St John's and Wilson of Pembroke), so they probably knew theologians and Anglican clergy holding Cambridge College Fellowships, including the Rev'd Dr Peter Peckard (c.1718–1797), who had been appointed Master of Magdalene College in 1781, and Vice Chancellor of the University in 1784. An early outspoken opponent

of the slave trade and advocate of anti-slavery activism at the University from the early 1780s, Peckard's sermons and pamphlets played a key role in the anti-slavery petition sent from the 'Chancellor, Masters and Scholars' of Cambridge to Parliament in late January 1788 and became a vocal supporter of Equiano in the later 1780s.[128]

However, given the close association of the British anti-Slave Trade campaign with Dissent and Nonconformism (Quakers, Baptists, and the various branches of the Independents), Susannah perhaps more likely met Olaudah through Dissenting church circles. If so, the key candidates are Francis Bland (c.1763–1807), Soham's Baptist minister, and Robert Robinson (1735–1790), minister of Stone-Yard Baptist Chapel, Cambridge (otherwise known as St Andrew's Street Baptist Church) from 1759 until his death in June 1790. By the 1780s, this was known as 'one of the most theologically heterodox and politically radical Particular Baptist congregations in England'.[129] A radical and staunch abolitionist, Robinson used his pulpit to preach against slavery. In February 1788, for example, he delivered a sermon on the inconsistency of slavery with Christianity, and authored the abolition petition on behalf of the 'gentry, clergy, freeholders and others of the county of Cambridge', which, approved at a public meeting at the Shire Hall on 1 March, was presented to Parliament on 12 March 1788.[130] Olaudah probably met Robinson during his first visit to Cambridge in 1789, given that Robinson had written the rousing Methodist hymn, 'Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing', an excerpt from which Olaudah quoted in his autobiography,[131] and possibly the 'Mr Robinson' listed as a subscriber to the 1st edition.[132] Indeed, it may well have been through Robinson that Olaudah first met his future friends and co-executors John Audley and Edward Ind.

Given that there were only seven Baptist churches in Cambridgeshire in the late 1780s (Cambridge, Cottenham, Gamlingay, Over, Soham, Sutton and Wisbech) of which only four had ministers, Robinson would certainly have known Francis Bland, his Soham

counterpart.[133] A long-standing member of the Soham Baptist church, Bland had been sent to study in Bristol, one of Britain's main slaving ports, at the Dissenting Academy, from January 1787 until July 1788, when he returned to Soham to become the new minister, a post he retained until 1802.[134] Considering his likely anti-slavery sentiments and presumed connections to Robinson, Bland probably met Olaudah Equiano in July 1789 or May 1790; and if he already knew the Cullens, he could have introduced Susannah. Whatever the case, Bland was clearly firm friends with Susannah and Olaudah by April 1792, when he acted as one of the two witnesses to their marriage together with Susannah's younger brother, Thomas.

Susannah Cullen's betrothal to Olaudah Equiano (c. summer 1791?) and marriage via Common Licence (April 1792)

Given that Olaudah still claimed to be an eligible bachelor actively seeking a wife – 'My hand is ever free, if any female Debonair wishes to obtain it' – in the 4th edition of his biography, we can assume his and Susannah's decision to marry was not made until after its publication on 20 May 1791.[135] How Susannah and Olaudah maintained and deepened their relationship in the months after they met and their betrothal is unknown, and equally between their betrothal and marriage, but it was likely through personal correspondence given Olaudah's documented book-tour schedule from May 1790 until April 1792, which involved extended trips across northern Britain, the Midlands, Ireland and Scotland.

We know that by 27 February 1792 Olaudah must have offered his hand in marriage to Susannah, and had it accepted, and that they must also have fixed on a wedding date because on this day Olaudah wrote to his Nottingham-based friend, mathematician, theologian, Royal Society Fellow and radical Dissenter, the Rev'd George Walker (c.1734–1807) about his forthcoming marriage, inviting him to the wedding:

> Sir, I went to Ireland & was there 8½ months, & sold 1900 Copies of my narrative. I Came here on the 10th Inst [February 1792]—*& I now mean as it seem Pleasing to my Good God! — to Leave London in about 8 – or, 10 Days more, & take me a Wife—(one Miss Cullen—) of Soham in Cambridge shire—& when I have given her about 8 or 10 Days Comfort, I mean Directly to go to Scotland, & sell my 5th Editions*—I Trust that my going about has been of much use to the cause of the abolition of the accu[r]sed Slave Trade—a Gentleman of the Committee [SEAST], The Rev'd Dr. Baker has said that I am of more use to the Cause than half of the People in this Country—I wish to God I Could be so. […] *I will be Glad to see you at my Wed[din]g* [authors' emphasis].[136]

That this important personal news is nearly lost in Olaudah's lengthy work updates is telling: his recent successful book tour in Ireland, his recognition by leading white abolitionists, and his plans to return to Scotland immediately after his wedding to publish and sell his 5th edition. Olaudah's letter to Walker proves that he felt unable to reduce his abolitionist activities either before or after his marriage. Not only was he committed to staying on in London until the second week of March, rather than returning to Cambridgeshire to be with his bride-to-be ahead of their wedding, but he had also predetermined to leave his new wife in Soham no more than ten days after their wedding to embark on his tour of Scotland. Indeed, close reading of the revised text in his 5th edition shows that Olaudah delayed his departure from London even further. Rather than leaving for Soham as planned at some point between 7 and 9 March, he remained there until 4 April, to conduct business and, significantly, attend the debate on William Wilberforce's latest abolition bill, which he followed with avid interest from the House of Commons' public gallery:

> *Soon after I returned* [from Belfast in late January 1792] *to London* [10 February 1792], where I found persons of note from Holland and Germany, who requested

> of me to go there; and I was glad to hear that an edition of my Narrative had been printed in both places. *I remained in London till I heard the debate in the House of Commons on the Slave Trade, April the 2d and 3d. I then went to Soham in Cambridgeshire*, and was married on the 7th of April to Miss Cullen, daughter of James and Ann Cullen, late of Ely. [authors' emphasis]'[137]

Whatever the denomination of the bride and groom, all marriages in Britain at this time (except for Jewish or Quaker weddings) had to be conducted inside a parish church by its resident priest or curate according to Church of England rites. Following Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753, a couple could be legally married only once banns had been read for three successive Sundays in their respective parish churches, or through a licence, which acted as an exemption. To obtain a licence, the groom or bride (normally the former) had to present two documents – an allegation (or affidavit) swearing that there was no legal impediment to the marriage, and a bond of £200 to be paid should the marriage not take place – and pay an administrative fee. A licence might be required for a number of reasons, such as if one of the parties was under the age of 21, or a widow, or if the bride and groom wished to marry in a parish where neither party normally resided. A licence also allowed for a quick wedding and afforded greater privacy due to no banns having to be read. The more common form of licence was a Regular Licence: these were generally and most usually obtained from the bishop of the diocese in which one or both parties lived and in which the marriage was to take place (issued by the bishop's chancellor with the bishop's seal). The alternative type of licence was a Common Licence: this was issued by the Vicar General of the Archbishop of Canterbury or York (the Church of England being divided into a southern and a northern province, respectively overseen by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York). Of the two types of marriage licence, the Common Licence cost more, was considered more prestigious, and was an option, for example, if the bride and groom lived in different dioceses but within the

same province. Common Licences granted by the Vicar General of the Archbishop of Canterbury were issued from the Faculty Office, Knightrider Street, London.[138]

Our discovery of the marriage allegation and marriage bond for Olaudah Equiano and Susannah Cullen, both dated 28 March 1792, in the archives of Lambeth Palace Library proves that, somewhat unusually, they had decided to marry via the Common Licence route, and that Equiano had carved out time ahead of the parliamentary debate to visit the Faculty Office of the Archbishop of Canterbury, situated on Knightrider Street, Doctors' Commons, near St Paul's Cathedral, to acquire it.[139] In the marriage allegation, Olaudah swears 'that the usual Place of Abode of her, the said Susannah Cullen has been in the said Parish of Soham for the Space of four Weeks last past'. This is the first legal documentation we have proving Susannah was a Soham resident. In the marriage bond, Olaudah refers to himself as a 'Gentleman', a designation he had been keen to espouse for years, and which he would repeat in his will.[140] Why they opted for the Common Licence route (rather than obtaining a Regular Licence from the Diocese of Ely, or having banns read) is unclear but it was likely due to a combination of convenience (being easier for Equiano to get to the Faculty Office in London than to the Ely diocesan office given his desire to remain in London) and the additional status such a licence conferred. Amy Erickson has also pointed out that from the wording of Susannah's subsequent will of 1794, she must have had a pre-marital settlement with a separate estate not subject to coverture.[141] This has yet to be located and so we do not know when and where it was drawn up, nor its exact terms.

According to the above-cited text in the 5th edition of his autobiography, Olaudah left London after the Slave Trade debate had ended on 3 April 1792, with its bitter-sweet result: while the House had voted overwhelmingly in favour of Wilberforce's bill to abolish the slave trade, it was with the frustrating amendment by Home Secretary Henry Dundas, for gradual not immediate abolition.[142] Given that it took at least a full day's travel to get from

London to Soham via the Cambridge coach, Equiano presumably left London in haste on 4 April to be present in Soham in time for his marriage three days later.[143] Thanks to the entry in St Andrew's church Marriage Register, we know that Olaudah married Susannah at St Andrew's, Soham on 7 April 1792 (Easter Saturday) with Susannah's younger brother, Thomas, and Soham's Baptist minister Francis Bland as witnesses:

> N.o 220: ~~Gustava~~ Gustavus Vassa (an African) of the Parish of St Martin in the Fields in the C[ount]y of Middlesex, Bachelor, and Susa~~n~~nah Cullen of this Parish, Spin[ste]r, were Married in this Church by Licence from D[octo]rs Commons, this seventh day of April in the Year One Thousand seven Hundred and ninety two By me Charles Hill, Curate. / This Marriage was solemnized between Us: Gustavus Vassa / Susanah Cullen
>
> In the Presence of: Francis Bland / Thomas Cullen [signed in their respective hands] (**fig. 5**).[144]

[INSERT FIG. 5 HERE]

Signing the church's Marriage Register 'Susanah Cullen' must have been a poignant moment for the bride. By the end of the service, Susannah was legally transformed from 'Miss Cullen' into 'Mrs Vassa' and presumably signed herself as such in all correspondence and legal paperwork thereafter, including her final will, the only other formal document we currently have for her. Susannah was now a month shy of her thirtieth birthday, making her some five years older than average (the median age for first marriage for women in this period was their mid-twenties) but two years younger than her sister Anne, who was 32 years old when she first married.[145]

Several local and national papers reported the wedding in the days and weeks following, including the *Cambridge Chronicle and Journal* on 21 April, the *General*

Evening Post in its 19–21 April edition, and the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* on 30 April, when the newly-weds were in Scotland:

> On the 9th [sic] inst. Gustavus Vassa (Equiano Olaudah), the African, well known in England as the champion and advocate for procuring a suppression of the Slave Trade, was married at Soham, in Cambridgeshire to Miss Cullen, daughter of Mr. Cullen of Ely, in the same County, in the presence of a vast number of people assembled on the occasion.[146]

The presence of such a throng of well-wishers, many of whom were likely to have been abolitionists and political radicals, is corroborated by a curious hand-written note inscribed on the titlepage of a 4th-edition copy of Olaudah's autobiography, which further specifies that most of those attending were women: '1792 April 9th [sic] Married Gustavus Vassa at Soham, in Cambridshire [sic] / England / to Miss Cullen, daughter of Mr Cullen of Ely, —In presence of a numerous assembly — particularly Femails' (**fig. 6**). The handwriting is not Olaudah's, but whose it is and the reasons for the inscription remain a mystery.[147] It was surely written by a wedding guest given the comment on the gender balance of attendees, perhaps someone who lived outside England given the addition of that otherwise otiose piece of geographical information.

[INSERT FIG. 6 HERE]

As Vincent Carretta has argued, Olaudah regarded his inter-racial marriage to Susannah as a physical manifestation of that bicultural 'economic intercourse' that he so passionately advocated between Britain and Africa.[148] Little surprise that Olaudah wanted to celebrate his marriage as publicly and as quickly as possible after the event. As mentioned above, he managed to squeeze a few lines about it into the 5th edition of his autobiography, which went to press shortly afterwards (Edinburgh, June 1792). That he inserted a footnote citing four key papers which had reported his marriage speaks volumes: '*See Gentlemen's

Magazine for April 1792, Literary and Biographical Magazine and British Review for May 1792, and the Edinburgh Historical Register or Monthly Intelligencer for April 1792.'[149]

His marriage was the final piece of biographical information that Olaudah included in his autobiography before his conclusion (which remained unaltered from the very first edition), and it was retained in all future editions. Clearly, his inter-racial marriage was a crucial part of his personal life-story that he wanted his readers to know about. Presumably, Susannah felt the same way. Indeed, she cannot have had concerns about 'intermarriage', or she would not have consented to marry Olaudah. Moreover, her younger brother, Thomas, must have approved given that he witnessed the wedding. How the rest of her family felt about her marrying a formerly enslaved Black man is not known but if Mary's will was written after the marriage, we can assume that she also approved, or she would not have left Susannah the testamentary bequest that she did.

'Honey moon' in Scotland

Brief insights into the early married life of Olaudah and Susannah are provided, seven weeks after their wedding, by a letter that Olaudah wrote on 28 May 1792 to his friend Thomas Hardy (1752–1832), Secretary of the radical working-class London Corresponding Society. He tells Hardy that he had arrived in Edinburgh on 18 April,[150] having already been to Glasgow and Paisley to sell copies of his *Interesting Narrative*. Having also attended the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland when it agreed to send an anti-Slave Trade petition to the House of Lords, he was now planning to spend time in the city before going to Dundee, Perth and Aberdeen in June. He further commented on some radical societies in Scotland, giving his approbation of Hardy's London Corresponding Society (which demanded constitutional reform and universal male suffrage). Rather surprisingly, Olaudah only mentions his new status as a married man at the very end, when he tells Hardy that his

attempts to reclaim a debt of £200 had been thwarted shortly after his wedding day by the debtor's death, leaving him seriously out of pocket, and meaning that he is now:

> again obliged to slave on more than before if possible — as I have a Wife. May God ever keep you & me from a tachement [sic] to this evil World, & the things of it — I think I shall be happy when time is no more with me, as I am Resolved ever to Look to Jesus Christ — & submit to his Preordinations.[151]

Olaudah clearly felt the weight of increased responsibility in having to support Susannah, who may have brought only a small dowry to the marriage, despite having a pre-marital settlement.[152] While his negative tone and remarks hardly accord with his earlier desperation to end his bachelor life, Olaudah does ask Hardy in a post-script: 'pray get me the Gentlemens Magazine for April 1792 & take Care of it for me', which proves he was keen to have a personal copy of that particular newspaper report of his wedding.

Two days after Olaudah's letter to Hardy, the London-based *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* published the following notice in its 30 May 1792 issue: 'GUSTAVUS VASA, with his *white* wife, is at Edinburgh, where he has published a letter of thanks to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, for their just and humane interference upon the question of the SLAVE TRADE.'[153] The deliberate inclusion of Susannah's colour, and its further emphasis through the use of italic text, is noteworthy as, in addition to its racist undertones, it proves that intermarriages were considered news-worthy. This report is also significant because it proves that Olaudah's pre-wedding plans, as outlined to George Walker on 27 February 1792 – namely, to exercise his conjugal rights for a week to ten days, before leaving Susannah in Soham and heading to Scotland by himself on an extended book-selling tour – did not materialise. For whatever reason, Olaudah brought Susannah with him, perhaps because he was keen to

be seen in public with her as a way to advertise his intermarriage, and/or because neither wanted to be separated from the other quite so soon, and because Susannah wanted to help Olaudah promote his new edition.

Moreover, the original schedule as outlined to Walker had changed too, being brought forward by several days. Rather than leaving for Scotland alone after he had '*given her about 8 or 10 Days Comfort*' following the wedding (i.e. c.15–17 April), they must have left earlier (likely 11–12 April and certainly no later than 13 April) to have had time to get up to Scotland and make book-selling stops in both Glasgow and Paisley before arriving in Edinburgh on 18 April. This means that Olaudah was back at work three to five days after his wedding, significantly fewer than the eight to ten days' break originally planned. Perhaps the compromise for the earlier departure date was that his new bride was now to travel with him?

Whatever the case, their 'honeymoon' in Scotland, if one can call it that, was always going to be work-orientated and focussed on getting the 5th edition printed and sold. In fact, it ended up being unexpectedly dominated by the need to quell some malicious rumours that were circulating in the press that Olaudah was a fraud, and not the African he claimed to be.[154] Such slander had to be dealt with instantly as his credibility was at stake, and which, if left unanswered, could seriously damage future book sales. Olaudah had no choice but to focus on writing letters vigorously defending his African roots and his authorial probity.[155] This seemingly last-minute, unplanned trip to Scotland and the press attacks whilst there must have been an exciting yet challenging start to married life for Susannah. Unlike Olaudah, who had travelled the world, Susannah had likely never travelled beyond Cambridgeshire; if so, accompanying Olaudah to Scotland would have been a real adventure.[156]

How they were treated publicly as an inter-racial couple is unclear: negative attention and discrimination might have been a contributing factor in the timing of Susannah return's

home. Although Osborne presumed that Susannah remained with Olaudah for the duration of this tour of Scotland and the North, this appears unlikely given that her presence would have significantly increased the travelling and subsistence costs, and nor is she mentioned as being with Equiano in any of his letters or in any further press reports.[157] That said, precisely when Susannah returned home from Scotland is unrecorded: did she leave Olaudah in Edinburgh, or did she accompany him for more of his Scottish book-tour? Whatever the case, she likely spent several months living in Soham without her husband, given that Olaudah appears to only returned south, via Hull, in November 1792.

Married life in Soham, the births of Anna Maria (October 1793) and Joanna (April 1795), and Olaudah Equiano's continuing book tours

The fact that Mr and Mrs Vassa decided to settle in Soham and bring up their family there is interesting.[158] From the research of Vincent Carretta, we know that Olaudah had subleased Plaisterers' Hall from William Rolfe, a goldsmith, at some point after 5 October 1790.[159] Located at 25 Addle Street in the City of London (now 1 London Wall, Moorgate), this was a grandiose building constructed in the late 1660s after designs by Sir Christopher Wren for the Company of Plaisterers. Given that London was the epicentre of the abolitionist movement and the seat of parliament, it would have made perfect sense for Olaudah and Susannah to move into one of the Plaisterers' Hall apartments and forge their married life there. But they did not. From the fact that both of their daughters were born in Soham, and Susannah was buried there, they must have decided to settle in Soham and bring up their family there. Perhaps Susannah was keen to live in close physical proximity to her mother and siblings, knowing that the peripatetic nature of Equiano's work would make him a frequently absent husband. Moreover, despite the ongoing drainage of the Fens (to create agricultural land and better roads less prone to seasonal flooding), Soham was geographically still relatively

isolated.[160] Coupled with its small size and strong links with Nonconformity, Soham was shielded from the dangers of localised 'church and king' mobs and the associated riots and violence, which were on the increase in larger urban centres in the 1790s. All of these factors must have made Olaudah and Susannah consider Soham a safe haven, and a more appropriate place than London to raise their family.

No record survives of where Susannah and Olaudah lived in Soham. They may have started married life living with, or near, Susannah's widowed mother, or indeed her older sister, Anne, if she had moved out following her marriage to John Fitches. How long Ann Cullen and Anne Cullen Fitches remained in Soham is unclear but both are recorded as living in the nearby village of Fordham in 1796, the year of Susannah's death.[161] Thus, even if one or both moved away from Soham during Susannah's marriage, they would still have been close at hand. And Susannah's unmarried brother, Thomas probably lived continuously in Soham, given that he was buried there in 1798.[162] During Susannah's marriage, her oldest brother, William Watkins, remained in Ely with his wife, Elizabeth, working as a whitesmith and ironmonger at the Fore Hill forge and augmenting his earnings through his Lay Clerk stipend. Whether Susannah remained in close contact with him is not known.

Following Olaudah's return from the North in November 1792, the couple would have spent time together in Soham before Olaudah went to London to oversee revisions to the manuscript of his 6th edition, which was published there on 30 December 1792. In addition to spending time with Susannah's family, they would no doubt have socialised with local friends, including people from Soham's religious community. Given shared religious and abolitionist outlooks and their similarities in age, it is reasonable to hypothesise that they would have spent time with Francis Bland, Soham's Baptist minister, and his wife Elizabeth. Olaudah may well have made trips to Cambridge to meet abolitionist allies or invited them to visit him in Soham.

The newly-weds must have discussed each other's personal safety given the highly volatile nature of the times and close-to-home threats: in December 1792, a violent 'church and king' mob had coalesced in Cambridge to target local abolitionists and political radicals. These included Peete Musgrave (1756–1817), who had worked on the town of Cambridge's abolition petition in February 1792 and whose house was attacked by a frenzied royalist mob after he had allegedly spoken 'seditious words';[163] and William Gazzam, whose 'seditious and inflammatory words' landed an indictment against him causing him to flee to America the following year.[164] Religious Dissenters and their places of worship in Cambridge were also victims of the mob's wrath. The newly built Independent Meeting House on Downing Place (where Olaudah's friend and later executor, John Audley, was a member) had 120 window-panes shattered by an angry crowd before magistrates were finally able to disperse it.[165]

Susannah and Olaudah must have spent further time together in early January 1793, as this was when Anna Maria was conceived (assuming Susannah's pregnancy went full-term), but Olaudah's documented travels in 1793 meant that he was absent for much of the pregnancy. Indeed, Olaudah's late summer 1793 schedule included a potentially dangerous trip to the slaving port city of Bristol. What the pregnant Susannah made of this arguably rather foolhardy decision is unrecorded, but Olaudah did, at least, attempt to secure personal protection for himself. On 21 August 1793, he wrote to his long-standing ally, the potter and industrialist Josiah Wedgwood, to inform him of his departure the following week to Bristol 'where I have some of my narrative engaged' and expressed anxiety that he might be 'molested by the press gang […] I am apt to think I must have enemys there—on the account of my Publick spirit to put an end to Slavery—or rather [sic] in being active to have the Slave Trade Abolished.'[166] He reminded Wedgwood of his previous offer to pull strings within the

highest levels of the Admiralty to secure protection. Although Wedgwood did not get the request in time, fortunately nothing untoward befell Olaudah in Bristol.

Whether Olaudah was at home when Susannah gave birth to their first child on 16 October 1793 is unrecorded, but he may well have been absent given that he was recorded in Bath just six days before, when William Langworthy wrote a letter of introduction for him to give to William Hughes in Devizes.[167] Their firstborn was christened 'Ann Mary' (only later was it Italianised), presumably after her maternal grandmother and maternal aunts, at her baptism on 30 January 1794 at St Andrew's, Soham.[168] Because Anglican baptisms historically took place shortly after a child's birth, the three-and-a-half month gap between Anna Maria's birth and baptism has been interpreted as unusual, and likely due to Olaudah's being away on an extended tour and unable to get home.[169] However, by the late 1790s, such gaps between birth and baptism were, in fact, not that unusual, and given that Olaudah and possibly Susanna were Nonconformists, the delay may have been due to the fact that one or both did not agree with infant baptism.[170] That said, unlike his brother-in-law, John Fitches, who had refused to have his firstborn baptised at St Andrew's, Soham, Olaudah did permit his daughter to be baptised there. This was presumably because he wanted her to have the legal security of a documented age, parentage and legitimacy that an Anglican baptism guaranteed, especially given her biracial heritage. It also gave her a 'parish of settlement' should she ever need poor relief.[171]

The potential danger in which Olaudah's high-profile abolitionist activities continually placed him was brought home by the subsequent experiences of one of his closest friends, the aforementioned Thomas Hardy, with whom he had stayed in autumn 1790 and spring 1792, and to whom he had written, post-marriage on 28 May 1792 (discussed above). In May 1794, Hardy was arrested on the capital charge of high treason and suffered a violent attack on his house by a 'church and king' mob during which his heavily pregnant wife,

Lydia, was injured. Although Hardy was eventually acquitted (November 1794), Lydia had in the meantime died in childbirth, with her death widely blamed on the mob attack. This tragic turn of events would have been felt keenly by Olaudah and Susannah, who had only recently become parents to Anna Maria. Significantly, Olaudah's above-mentioned letter to Hardy of 28 May 1792, with its approbation of the radical London Corresponding Society, was found amongst Hardy's papers at the time of his arrest, and this must have led to worries that Olaudah could be next in line for similar treatment.[172]

That said, aware that the fight for abolition had stalled, Olaudah evidently decided to put his personal safety aside to push sales of his 8th edition and to seek subscribers for the 9th, as two surviving letters from mid-June to late September 1794 makes clear: the first, a well-known letter of 20 June to Mr and Mrs Liverseges of Ipswich; the second, a little known letter of 30 September to Thomas Attwood Digges (1742–1821) of Belfast. When read together, these letters show Olaudah, as ever, constantly on the move, soliciting subscriptions, working on new editions, updating supporters through letters and visits, and generally trying to earn a living. Significantly, this final book-selling tour concentrated on East Anglia, presumably to allow more easily for trips home. In his June letter, Olaudah informs the Liverseges about his recent hectic schedule (London: early June; Sudbury: 19 June), his upcoming plans (Colchester: 19–24 June; Kelvedon: c.26 June; Chelmsford: afterwards), and the danger many believed him to be in:

> I make no doubt but you have heard of the false report which the Sons of Belial have raised of Late in saying that the Kings messengers were in quest of me, & my friends here persuaded me to go to London. — so I did & inquired of Gentlemen in Power — my friends — & they went to the Privy Council & were told that there was not any messengers after me. *So I went to Soham to see my family which is well. I left them ten days past* — & are again selling the Last 110

> Copies of my narrative — which I hope to sell against I go from Chelmsford [authors' italics].[173]

This letter reveals that pro-slavery activists were still trying to undermine Olaudah's abolitionist agenda by physical and psychological threats that he took seriously enough to raise with his allies at the highest levels of political power. Indeed, it was only once he had gained sufficient reassurances that he was not, in fact, being actively pursued that he made his visit home to Soham in early June 1794 to see Susannah and eight-month-old Anna Maria, both of whom he was happy to report were well.[174] It was during this particular visit home that Joanna was conceived (assuming that Susannah's pregnancy went full-term) given that she was born some nine months later.

Equiano's late September letter to Digges confirms that he had kept to the schedule as outlined to the Liversege's some three months earlier: having sold out of his 8th edition, he had returned to London on 11 September to prepare the 9th edition, which had been printed in a run of 500 copies on 27 September. He was now planning a trip to Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire to sell these books in Bocking, Manningtree, Chelmsford, Bury, Kings Lynn and Wisbech. As ever preoccupied with work, Equiano made the briefest of mentions to Digges about his private life: 'This with my best respect to you & family –hope you are all well as I am & mine with many thanks to our almighty God for his every favours.'[175]

It was only after the 9th edition had been published, and sufficient copies sold that Olaudah appears finally to have ended his interminable book tours and settle down in Soham with his family. There may have been several reasons for his decision: an accumulation of sufficient wealth and investments to stop work; a desire for a quieter, less stressful life; a longing to spend more time with his pregnant wife and infant daughter; a decline in Susannah's health. No records survive as to how he and Susannah occupied their time from late autumn 1794 until Susannah's death in spring 1796, but we can imagine them spending

time with Anna Maria in the happy expectation of the arrival of their second child. Joanna was safely delivered on 11 April 1795 and, unlike her sister, was baptised shortly after her birth, on 29 April 1795, also at St Andrew's, Soham.[176] The recently expanded Vassa family would no doubt have spent time with local relatives, perhaps especially Susannah's sister Anne and her little boy, William Cullen, who may have provided a playmate for Anna Maria, given the less than two-year age gap between them. And they presumably also socialised with Soham-based friends like the Blands, who also had similarly aged offspring.

Equiano's friendship with John Audley and Edward Ind, his future executors

Olaudah may well have travelled into Cambridge, perhaps sometimes with Susannah, to visit other friends. These must surely have included Independent Churchman John Audley (1750–1827) and his friend, the evangelical Anglican Edward Ind (1751–1808), with whom Olaudah had first become acquainted in July 1789, when in Cambridge to sell 1st edition copies of his autobiography. Both Audley and Ind subscribed to the 2nd edition, published at the end of 1789, and indeed became faithful and loyal supporters of Equiano, subscribing to all subsequent editions of *The Interesting Narrative*, as indeed did Robert Ind, a younger brother of Edward. Their friendship clearly developed and deepened in the 1790s to such an extent that, as we shall see, Equiano named Audley and Ind as joint executors in his final will of 28 May 1796, no doubt impressed by their abolitionist principles, religious persuasions, business acumen, social standing and general savoir-faire.

Equiano's choice of executors was savvy. A partner in the Cambridge firm of Hide and Ind, Edward Ind was an affluent and well-respected businessman-brewer, who, from September 1782, was also an Alderman of Cambridge, and an active political reformer. [177] As the in-depth research of Matthew Abel has shown, through shrewd political alliances with woollen draper and fellow-alderman John Mortlock (1755–1816) – who was also banker to

the University of Cambridge, MP for Cambridge, and thirteen-times mayor of Cambridge – and his own portfolio of profitable malting and brewing properties and public houses in Cambridge and surrounding towns and villages, Ind was a powerful voice in the non-academic circles of Cambridge.[178] He was also a keen amateur poet and a devout evangelical Anglican who worshipped at Holy Trinity, Cambridge, and was actively involved in the life of this church, acting several times as churchwarden and attending vestry meetings.[179] Significantly, Ind's parish priest was Charles Simeon (1759–1836), an abolitionist and Claphamite well-connected with other influential political, social and economic rights activists and abolitionists including Granville Sharp, and Cambridge graduates William Wilberforce and Henry Venn.[180] Ind himself was an active abolitionist: in mid-January 1788, for example, he was the lead of eight Auditors who drafted a petition from the Mayor, Bailiffs and Burgesses of the Borough of Cambridge in support of the suppression of the Slave Trade bill, which was presented to Parliament on 14 February 1788.[181] Moreover, in February 1792, when the town of Cambridge sent a second petition to Parliament in support of Wilberforce's latest abolition bill, Ind is recorded as playing an active part, seconding resolutions including votes of thanks to Wilberforce, Sharp and Clarkson.[182]

John Audley, meanwhile, was a well-to-do wool stapler and philanthropist based in Cambridge and a devout and active Dissenter.[183] He attended the Downing Place Independent (or Congregational) Chapel from the early 1780s until 1819, assisting 'at the meetings of the church for devotional exercises, and of occasionally addressing the children of the Sunday School, on the Sabbath evenings'.[184] According to a memoir of his life, written shortly after his death in 1827, 'he gave up his business as a wool stapler, and finally relinquished commercial pursuits' around 1790, aged 40, to pursue an earlier religious calling. Having 'received the sanction of the church with which he was connected, for exercising his gifts, in the public ministry of the word', he acted as a supply lay preacher on the Independent and

Baptist circuit in Cambridgeshire and surrounding counties. From the later 1790s until 1820 'his engagements were numerous, and the Sabbaths comparatively few, in which he was not officiating for some congregation', and he was instrumental in getting a Dissenting congregation formed in Waterbeach in 1801 and the Sawston Independent chapel built in the early 1810s.[185] Like Ind, Audley was a close friend of the Rev'd Charles Simeon, sharing similar evangelical and Calvinist beliefs despite being of different denominations, and indeed attended Holy Trinity vestry meetings, together with Ind.[186]

In the 1780s and early 1790s, Audley also supported radical political causes such as parliamentary reform and abolitionism.[187] In February 1792, for example, together with Edward Ind and several other prominent townsmen (including Ind's brother, Robert, and the aforementioned local abolitionist, Peete Musgrave), Audley publicly appealed to the Mayor of Cambridge, John Mortlock, to call a meeting of local townspeople 'for the purpose of petitioning Parliament for the Abolition of the Slave Trade'.[188] During his later years, when not preaching, Audley devoted much of his time and capital to charitable and religious causes while also writing and publishing several works of a mostly didactic and pious persuasion.[189]

Both Audley and Ind had close ties to many of the abolitionists, political radicals and Nonconformist leaders in the city and so, through his growing friendship with them, Olaudah could easily have become involved in Cambridge's local abolitionist and radical political scene had he wished to.[190] It is conceivable, for example, that Equiano attended meetings of the Cambridge chapter of the National Constitutional Society (created in 1785 by Audley and Robert Robinson, minister of St Andrew's Street Baptist church),[191] and/or Alderman Ind's Club (so-called after Ind who was its Treasurer), a politically orientated book club whose membership included many local prominent Nonconformists, abolitionists and political reformers, including Robert Hall (1764–1831), who took over as minister of the St Andrew's Street Baptist church after Robinson's death in 1790 until 1806, and Pete Musgrave.[192] And,

like Audley, Olaudah may have offered his services as a preacher to Dissenting congregations in and around Soham.

Susannah Cullen's will (December 1795), death and burial (February 1796)

Unfortunately, this settled time for the Vassa family, as imagined in Joy Labinjo's intimate group portrait (**fig. 1**), was short lived, and cannot have lasted much beyond the birth of Joanna in April 1795. This is because Susannah's death notice of February 1796 recorded how she had died 'after a *long* illness, which she supported with true Christian fortitude [authors' italics]',[193] making it likely that by summer 1795, if not before, Susannah was mortally ill. Perhaps aware that she did not have long to live, Susannah dictated her will on 12 December 1795. It is transcribed in full below, being the only known record of Susannah's voice, in which she clarified her final wishes for herself and her husband:

> In the Name of God Amen I Susanna the wife of Gustavus Vassa of Soham in the County of Cambridge Gentleman by virtue of the Power given by my said Husband and of all other powers enabling me in this behalf and as fully as I may or can by Law or Equity do make this my last will and Testament in manner following that is to say First and principally being sincerely penitent and heartily sorry for my Sins I commit my soul into the Hands of Almighty God in whom and by whose mercy I trust and assuredly believe to be saved and my Body I freely resign to the Earth to be decently Interred by the direction and at the discretion of my said Husband and for the disposal of such Temporal Estate which it hath pleased God to bless me with I give and dispose the same in manner following that is to say - Whereas my said sister Mary Cullen hath some time since made her last will and Testament in writing wherein she devised and Bequeathed to me the said Susanna Vassa all her

Right Title and Interest of and in all that pasture Ground with the appurtenances situate lying and being in Sutton in the Isle of Ely and County of Cambridge after the decease of my Mother Ann Cullen now I do hereby Give Devise and Bequeath all that my Moiety Right Title and Interest of and in the said Pasture Grounds and premises lying and being in Sutton aforesaid after my said Mother[']s decease unto my said Husband Gustavus Vassa his Heirs and assigns absolutely forever. In Witness whereof I have hereunto set my Hand and Seal this Twelfth day of December in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety five: --

Susanna Vassa

Signed sealed published and declared by said Testatrix Susanna Vassa as and for her last will and Testament in the presence of us who have subscribed our Names as witnesses in her presence and in the presence of one another.

John Fitches

Peter Smith

W[illiam] King[194]

Susannah's will shows her to have been a devout woman whose predestinarian beliefs gave her total assurance of future salvation and justified her conviction of a place in heaven. As mentioned earlier, Erickson has pointed out how the wording of her will indicates that Susannah had a pre-marital settlement with a separate estate not subject to coverture, and equally, that her sister Mary's bequest had been given to her in the same way that the Rev'd Thomas Watkins had given his to Ann Cullen – notwithstanding coverture. She specifically chose to leave Olaudah, and his heirs, the two acres of pastureland in Sutton (from her Great Uncle Watkins's estate) that her younger sister, Mary, had already willed to her in the expectation of inheriting it as soon as their elderly mother died. As Carretta observed,

‘Susannah never imagined that her mother would live until 1820, long after Susannah’s own death, and that of her husband.’[195] And she gave Olaudah full discretion over where she was to be buried. Perhaps surprisingly, Susannah made no reference to her infant daughters by name, nor did she leave any specific bequests to them, Olaudah, or any other family member or friend, which may explain why she also did not appoint any executors. But she did call in three local men to witness the document: her brother-in-law, John Fitches; Peter Smith, an Ely attorney brought in to commit Susannah’s final wishes to paper (in the usual legal language and framework of the day); and William King, a Soham resident and family friend, assuming his wife, Elizabeth, is the ‘E. King’ who had acted as a witness at the 1790 wedding of Anne Cullen and John Fitches.[196]

Susannah died just over two months later, on 16 February 1796, aged 34 years old, bringing a tragic and abrupt end to her life and marriage to Olaudah. On 20 February 1796, the *Cambridge Chronicle* announced her death thus: ‘Susannah the wife of Gustavus Vassa of Soham in the County of Cambridge, Gentleman … after a long illness, which she supported with true Christian fortitude’.[197] The last known document we have pertaining to Susannah is the Burial Register of St Andrew’s, Soham, which records her death as follows: ‘Susanna, wife of Gustavus Vassa the African, late Cullen, aged 34. Buried Feb. 21 1796’.[198] This proves that Olaudah chose the parish burial ground of St Andrew’s, Soham, as Susannah’s final resting place, probably as the most convenient option (rather than having her buried with her father and siblings in the graveyard of Holy Trinity, Ely) and perhaps, too, for sentimental reasons in being close to where they had married less than four years earlier. Susannah’s grave at time of burial would likely have been marked by a simple wooden cross. Whether Olaudah subsequently went to the effort and expense of erecting a more permanent memorial for her is unknown, but no carved headstone has ever been recorded or located in the graveyard of St Andrew’s, Soham.[199]

Olaudah Equiano's move to London and his will (spring 1796)

Susannah's death left Olaudah bereft and in the unhappy state of being a 51-year-old widower and single father of two infant girls under the age of two-and-a-half. He must have felt that Soham was no place for him without Susannah because shortly after her passing, he relocated permanently to his apartment in Plaisterers' Hall in the City of London. This move is deduced from his will, which Carretta defined as Olaudah's 'last known piece of writing and […] his last act of verbal self-fashioning' – a legal document that very few eighteenth-century Black Britons needed to draw up, having insufficient worldly goods to justify the expense.[200] Drawn up on 28 May 1796, Olaudah proudly referred to himself as, 'Gustavus Vassa of Addle Street[,] Aldermanbury in the City of London[,] Gentleman'.[201] Moreover, 'The Schedule or Inventory of the principal part of my Estate and Effects which I am possessed of at the Time of making this my Will', compiled on the same day, included 'Sundry Household Goods and Furniture, wearing Apparel and printed Books at present on the Premises at Plaisterers Hall'. The fact that no other personal belongings or effects are mentioned as being in Soham, or elsewhere, proves that Olaudah must have relocated all his worldly goods to his home in London. Furthermore, he must have actioned this quickly, in the three months following Susannah's burial on 21 February, for everything he owned to be with him in London by the time he compiled his inventory on 28 May.

Olaudah's decision to base himself in the centre of London rather than in Soham was understandable given that it had been his home in England for decades and had become the epicentre of abolitionist activities in Britain, meaning he could more easily meet with SEAST and other anti-slavery colleagues, and attend parliamentary sessions as he had done prior to marriage. Moreover, Olaudah may well have wanted a suitably grandiose and gracious home

to reflect his status as a 'gentleman', and Plaisterers' Hall certainly delivered on that front as a subsequent sub-leasing advertisement reveals:

> Very desirable, roomy, convenient, substantial brick-built premises, called Plaisterers Hall, very advantageously situated in Addle-street leading from Aldermanbury to Wood-street, Cheapside, containing numerous convenient apartments, a spacious Hall, upwards of 40 feet in length, with a Music Gallery, a large yard, a store cellar, capable of holding 100 butts, and a fore-court, enclosed with folding gates.[202]

In his will, Olaudah devised that, after his death, 'the produce and profits arising from my estates both real and personal […] dearly earned by the Sweat of my Brow in some of the most remote and adverse Corners of the whole world to solace those I leave behind me' should be spent on 'the Board Maintenance and Education of my two infant Daughters Ann Maria and Johanna Vassa until they shall respectively attain their respective Ages of Twenty one years.'[203] Olaudah's specific instruction that both of his daughters should be formally educated, and that all the money from his estate 'or a sufficient part thereof' be used to do so, is significant and shows how important this was to him, although it was not unusual in that many Dissenters believed strongly in female education.[204] Should one sister die before reaching this age, the other was to inherit his entire estate. Should neither girl reach twenty-one, then his estate was to be split equally between 'the Treasurer and Directors of the Sierra Leona Company for the Use and Benefit of the School established by the said Company at Sierra Leona' and 'the Treasurer and Directors of the Society instituted at the Spa Fields Chapel […] for sending Missionaries to preach the Gospel in Foreign Parts' (the future London Missionary Society). As Carretta has pointed out, 'Equiano's will demonstrates the sincerity of his religious beliefs and his continued interest in Africa. [… he] never wavered in his economic and spiritual commitments to his ancestral homeland.'[205]

Olaudah's codicil outlined his property. In terms of mobile property, he listed furniture, clothes, books and 'sundry Household Goods', which we know from other documentation included clothes that had belonged to Susannah, as well as a silver watch, some silver cutlery and a quilt.[206] In terms of immobile property and wealth, there were the two acres of copyhold pastureland in Sutton (originally bequeathed to his mother-in-law, Ann Cullen, by her uncle, the Rev'd Thomas Watkins), several annuities worth almost two hundred pounds, 'three hundred pounds at present undisposed of', and a further 'three hundred pounds secured to me by an Assignment of the lease of Plasterers Hall'. Regrettably, not all of Olaudah's investments were sound.[207]

The only other testamentary gifts that Olaudah made was 'the Sum of ten Pounds Each' to the above-mentioned John Audley and Edward Ind. Described significantly as 'my friends […] both of Cambridge Esquires', Olaudah appointed them as co-executors and bequeathed his entire estate to them in trust for Anna Maria and Joanna until they came of age. It is perhaps telling that Olaudah left no gifts whatsoever to any of his Cullen in-laws and did not make any of them an executor. It is also remarkable that a man so uniquely well-travelled as Olaudah Equiano should end up selecting two men from Cambridge as his executors. This may well have been because both Anna Maria and Joanna were still resident in Soham, or elsewhere in Cambridgeshire, when Olaudah wrote his will, and being based in London, he needed trustworthy locals to ensure their care, especially considering that Joanna would still have required a wet nurse, and possibly Anna Maria too. Certainly, although neither Audley nor Ind is named or mentioned in his autobiography, Olaudah clearly held these 'friends' in close affection, trusting in their business sense and abolitionist ideals as well as their Christian piety, moral probity and scrupulousness.

The fostering of Anna Maria and Joanna Vassa in Cambridgeshire (from spring 1796)

Olaudah makes no mention in his will or codicil of the whereabouts of Anna Maria (then 2 years, 7 months old) and Joanna (13 months). While he may have taken them with him on his relocation to London in spring 1796 and employed a wetnurse or nursemaid to look after them, it seems more probable that he left them in Cambridgeshire. One possibility is that he placed them in the care of close family members. By May 1796, when Olaudah wrote his will, his brother-in-law, Thomas, was still living in Soham, but as a 24-year-old bachelor he would hardly have been deemed appropriate.[208] Martin suggested that Anna Maria and Joanna 'remained in the care of their grandmother' while Osborne suggested they were placed with 'either their maternal grandmother, Anne Cullen, or their aunt, also called Anne'.[209] Given that Ann Cullen was by then a 68-year-old widow, it seems more likely that they were looked after by Olaudah's sister-in-law Anne and her husband, John Fitches. They may still have been living in Soham in May 1796 when Olaudah wrote his will, but they were definitely living in Fordham by 1 August 1796, as this is the recorded birthplace of their second surviving child, John II Fitches. If Anna Maria and Joanna had been left in the custody of their Aunt Anne, then they may have received additional care from their grandmother, given that she, too, had moved to Fordham by May 1796, when she is recorded as residing there by Olaudah in the inventory of his property. Indeed, she may even have been living with her daughter, Anne.

Another possibility, however, is that prior to moving to London in spring 1796 Olaudah asked his future executors, John Audley and Edward Ind, to find a suitable home for his daughters somewhere in the Cambridge area so that they could keep an eye on them for him, perhaps trusting them more than he did his in-laws, especially knowing how well-connected and respected they were. If so, it is possible that Anna Maria and Joanna were fostered by Edward Ind's younger brother, Thomas, and his wife, Mary, who lived in Chesterton with their two infant sons, similar in age to the Vassa girls. After all, it was with

Chesterton-based Thomas Ind and his family that Anna Maria and Joanna were almost certainly placed after their father's death in spring 1797. Located a mile or so north-east of Cambridge, Chesterton was a thriving village described in the early nineteenth century as 'delightful and healthy', and a place 'noted for the salubrity of the air' (**fig. 7**).[210] As such it would have been deemed an appropriate place to bring up young infants, and easy for both guardians to visit.

[INSERT FIG. 7 HERE]

Certainly, if the text of a long-forgotten article published in the *Cambridge Chronicle and Journal* on 19 November 1853, and dedicated to Anna Maria Vassa and her memorial on the façade of St Andrew's Church, Chesterton, is taken at face value, then it might provide indirect evidence that Equiano's daughters were indeed living in Chesterton in his lifetime, and that he visited them there in the last year of his life. The 1853 article's anonymous author speaks of making enquiries into Olaudah's identity with Chesterton residents:

> We enquired: some of the most elderly in the village recollected Gustavus Vassa, the African, and spoke of his memory with reverence and affection. From their brief accounts, he appears to have been a man of rare merit – and one of those whose intellectual organization rose superior to every persecution.[211]

The most logical explanation for this distinct collective remembrance of Olaudah by several residents is because he visited Chesterton on a not infrequent basis. While this may arguably have been to see the Baptist minister Robert Robinson who lived in Chesterton until his death in June 1790, given that Olaudah's associations with Cambridge (and therefore Chesterton) only began in July 1789, it is more likely that his visits to Chesterton were made for another reason, perhaps to spend time with his daughters from spring 1796 onwards.[212] Whether with

the Cullens or Inds, it is clear that both Vassa girls were raised as free persons of colour within a white family home and with supervision from white male guardians.

Equiano's final year in London and his death (March 1797)

Although Olaudah described himself as 'sound in mind and body and in perfect health' in his late May 1796 will, his health appears to have deteriorated in the months that followed, which likely explains why he subleased Plaisterers' Hall in September 1796.[213] By 22 October 1796, he was living in a smaller house in John Street, off Tottenham Court Road.[214] That said, Olaudah was still well enough to be involved in radical politics and promoting the abolition of the slave trade. A newspaper article published on 5 November 1796, records him attending an animated meeting of the 'Friends of Freedom' (a society which supported political reform) where, during the dinner, he 'proposed a toast relative to the Slave Trade'.[215] Olaudah's health continued to decline and, by the time of his death in late March 1797, he had moved to a house in Paddington Street, where (according to a later account by John Audley) he was nursed by a 'Mrs Edwards'.[216]

The presence of a paid nurse at the end of Olaudah's life perhaps serves as additional evidence in favour of Carretta's conclusion that a letter supposedly written by Equiano on 11 November 1796 to his abolitionist friend Thomas Attwood Digges is most likely a forgery, written by Digges for self-promotional purposes.[217] This letter, discovered in 2003 inside Digges's personal copy of the 9th edition of the *Interesting Narrative*, is of interest in that it mentions a 'Mrs Vassa', nine months after the documented death of Susannah Cullen in February 1796. The relevant part of this intriguing letter is as follows:

> G[ustavus] V[assa] intreats Mr. D[igges] to call on him when convenient, as he longs to introduce to his notice & regard Mrs. Vassa, his wife, a virtuous & good woman, to whom I owe the prolongation of life, (as my health & Strength daily decreases) for I

> know I am going "*to that bourne from which no traveller returns*" not I hope to An *Eternal Sleep*!, as you once jocosely express'd to myself & McCoy on our quarrell about the *colour of the Devil*. But *I* trust to a happy Resurrection!! and whether *black* or *white* I care not.[218]

If genuine, and correctly dated, this letter would be vital in proving that Olaudah had remarried after Susannah's death, that he was a loving and appreciative husband, and that he was aware that he was seriously, if not yet mortally, ill by November 1796. However, the rather illegible address – deciphered by Carretta as 'Limington [?] near London' but which might equally read 'Kennington' – does not match any known address of Olaudah at the time, nor has any record of a second marriage for Olaudah been found. Furthermore, had Olaudah remarried, would he not have mentioned his new wife in his May 1796 will (if the wedding had taken place before then) or added a codicil or written a new will (if the wedding had taken place afterwards)? Certainly, there is no mention of a second Mrs Vassa in any of John Audley's surviving executorial paperwork, which again raises serious doubts as to the authenticity of this letter; and Olaudah's documented presence and, indeed, active participation at the lively 'Friends of Freedom' abolitionist meeting less than a week before the date of the letter which suggests terminal illness sheds further doubts on its authenticity.[219]

Whatever the case, we know for sure that Olaudah was mortally ill by spring 1797, and that he was visited on his deathbed by his longstanding friend, social reformer and abolitionist ally, Granville Sharp, whom he had known from at least May 1780.[220] Sharp later recalled how, '[Olaudah] was a sober, honest man, and I went to see him when he lay upon his deathbed, and had lost his voice so that he could only whisper.'[221] Olaudah died, aged 52, on 31 March 1797, only thirteen months after his wife, and less than a fortnight before his youngest daughter's second birthday. The first paper to announce his death was the *Morning*

Herald on 4 April 1797, reporting, 'Died […] On Friday morning, in Paddington-street, Mr Gustavus Vason [sic], aged fifty-two years', followed four days later by the *Cambridge Intelligencer*, and, on 14 April, by the *Morning Post and Fashionable World*, which published the following brief obituary: 'Died […] A few days ago, Mr. Gustavus Vasa, the African, well known to the public for the interesting narrative of his life, supposed to be written by himself'.[222]

Olaudah had left no testamentary instructions regarding the form his burial was to take, or where he wished to be buried, and so this decision must have fallen to the discretion of his executors, Audley and Ind – unless, of course, he had written privately to them about this or given verbal instructions on his deathbed. Rather than reuniting Olaudah's mortal remains with those of his wife in Soham, they laid him to rest in the church yard of Whitefield Tabernacle on Tottenham Court Road, most likely for reasons of convenience and religion.[223] At the time of Equiano's death, Whitefield Tabernacle was a rare Dissenting church in the heart of London with a dedicated burial plot. In 1780, after the Church of England had refused to consecrate it, the Rev'd Torial Joss took cartloads of consecrated soil from the churchyard of the soon-to-be-demolished St Christopher-le-Stocks on Threadneedle Street to rectify the situation. Despite his efforts, the Whitefield Tabernacle churchyard was not regarded as consecrated in the eyes of the law and, in 1797, when Equiano died, its status for burials was still controversial. Notwithstanding this, Ind and Audley were clearly willing to risk burying Equiano there, no doubt out of respect for his churchmanship, and perhaps in accordance with his own final wishes. In the mid-nineteenth century, when the Whitefield Tabernacle building was sold, its churchyard was not treated with the same legal status and respect as other legally recognised burial sites. Its northern section was sold for development and many graves were desecrated or moved to unknown locations, which explains why it has not been possible to ascertain whether Equiano's body is still buried there or not.[224]

Anna Maria and Joanna Vassa's fostering in Chesterton, Anna Maria's death and burial (July 1797) and Edward Ind's epitaph

As a result of Olaudah Equiano's death, Audley and Ind had to take on their executorial roles far sooner than they might have envisaged or wished, with the first official step being the proving of Olaudah's will, which took place on 8 April 1797.[225] Moreover, they oversaw the resale of Olaudah's sublease on Plaisterers' Hall in January 1798, nine months after his death.[226] A rather bigger challenge for them was, however, the proper care, upbringing and education of Olaudah's daughters: Audley and Ind were now the official wards of two young, biracial, orphans, Anna Maria, aged three-and-a-half, and Joanna who was not yet two years old. Audley and Ind were both unmarried bachelors in their later forties and, as such, were inappropriate people to house and look after infant girls.[227] They would therefore have needed to find someone trustworthy to do so on their behalf, and ideally someone local to Cambridge so that they could easily visit and keep an eye on their juvenile wards.

Whether the Vassa girls had been living in Soham and then Fordham with their aunt Anne and her family following their mother's death and father's relocation to London as hypothesized above is still a matter for conjecture. However, incontrovertible is the fact that by summer 1797, Anna Maria (and likely Joanna, too) was being fostered by someone living in the parish of St Andrew's church, Chesterton, because this is where she was buried in late July 1797. The only plausible explanation for Anna Maria's interment in the graveyard of St Andrew's, Chesterton, is that she was living within the parish bounds at the time of her death. Had she still been living in Soham, she would no doubt have been buried in St Andrew's, Soham, likely in the same grave as her mother; had she been living in Fordham with her maternal aunt and grandmother when she died, she would have surely been buried in Fordham's parish church of St Peter.

Rather inexplicably, Anna Maria's death and interment are not recorded in the relevant Burial Register of St Andrew's, Chesterton – or anywhere else for that matter. The reason for this unusual and irregular administrative lacuna remains a mystery but it may simply be due to clerical oversight given that no other burial at all is listed during the eleven weeks between 20 June and 6 September 1797, when surely one or two parishioners must have died given the size of the parish.[228] What the relevant Burial Register does show is that in late May and the very start of June 1797 three infants died of measles.[229] This is presumably why Martin, Osborne and Abel suggested that Anna Maria's death was the result of a measles epidemic.[230]

However, we know that Anna Maria was definitely buried at St Andrew's, Chesterton, thanks to a quite unique stone epitaph, now attached to the church's exterior north wall (**fig. 8**), which also usefully records her date of death as 21 July 1797. It reads:

Near this Place lies Interred
ANNA MARIA VASSA
Daughter of GUSTAVUS VASSA the AFRICAN.
She died July 21, 1797.
Aged 4 Years [sic].

Should simple village rhymes attract thine eye,
Stranger, as thoughtfully thou passest by,
Know that there lies beside this humble stone,
A child of colour haply not thine own.
Her father born of Afric's Sun-burnt race,
Torn from his native fields, ah, foul disgrace:
Through various toils, at length to Britain came,
Espous'd, so Heaven ordain'd, an English dame.

And follow'd Christ: their hope two infants dear,
But one, a hapless Orphan, slumbers here.
To bury her the village children came,
And dropp'd choice flowers, and lisp'd her early fame:
And some that lov'd her most, as if unblest,
Bedew'd with tears the white wreath on their breast;
But she is gone and dwells in that abode,
Where some of every clime shall joy in God.[231]

[INSERT FIG. 8 HERE]

This poem has been frequently misattributed to the Rev'd Dr Peter Peckard, Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, an active supporter of Olaudah's abolitionist work in the late 1780s and early 1790s, or his wife, Martha, both of whom were published poets.[232] However, two separate sources prove that this moving encomium was, in fact, composed by Olaudah's executor, Edward Ind.[233] First published posthumously in the epithets section of *Scots Magazine* in November 1809, it was credited to 'the late Alderman Ind of Cambridge' who had died the year before.[234] This section of the magazine was devoted to noteworthy epitaphs submitted by readers and Ind's epitaph for Anna Maria is listed in the publication as follows: 'LINES Inscribed on a Tablet placed in Chesterton Church Yard, to The Memory of ANNA MARIA VASSA, Daughter of GUSTAVUS VASSA, the African. July 1797'. This is important as it proves two things: first, that Anna Maria was indeed buried in the churchyard of St Andrew's, Chesterton; and secondly, that the stone memorial was extant and erected in situ by November 1809. The earliest known publication to mention its precise location – 'In the church-yard […] on a tablet inserted in the wall of the north aisle' – was an article by C.N. Cooper of 23 October 1839.[235] The epitaph's lines were subsequently re-published in 1822, in a post-mortem anthology of Ind's poetry.[236]

Commissioning this 'Tablet' would have been an expensive undertaking and a lavish commemorative gesture for anyone, let alone a not-quite-four-year-old girl of mixed heritage.[237] While ostensibly dedicated to Anna Maria, Ind's epitaph was also intended as a permanent celebration and commemoration of her parents' bravery in defying racism and societal norms through their 'Heaven ordain'd' intermarriage that united a man 'born of Afric's Sun-burnt race' and 'an English dame'. Regrettably, the parish accounts of St Andrew's for this period are lost and so there is no record of who paid for the stone memorial and precisely when it was erected, but presumably closer to 21 July 1797 (Anna Maria's death date) than to 1 November 1809 (when the inscription was first published). However, given that its commission was hardly a justifiable expense to extract from Olaudah's estate, its benefactor was most likely Ind himself.

Another curious feature of Anna Maria's epitaph is its placement on the exterior north wall of the church, given that it was standard practice for wall-mounted funerary inscriptions to be placed inside churches. The traditional explanation for this was that Anna Maria had been raised Nonconformist and, as such, a memorial inside the church would have been considered inappropriate. While this may have some truth in it, our serendipitous re-discovery of the footstone of Anna Maria's grave – thanks to information in an unpublished 1977 A-Level History coursework essay by Catherine O'Neill – and its location directly in front of her epitaph and only a couple of feet from it, is surely the real reason (**fig. 9**).[238]

[INSERT FIG. 9 HERE]

Sadly, the simple two-line inscription on the east side of Anna Maria's footstone is now rather weathered making it hard to read, and its illegibility is further increased by its small dimensions and the acute downwards angle at which it now leans. But close examination, from a low viewing point and under strong raking sunlight, reveals the top line to read 'A M

V' (i.e. Anna Maria's initials) and the bottom line '1797' (i.e. her year of death). This is typical of late eighteenth-century footstone inscriptions. The location of Anna Maria's grave so close to her epitaph should not, in fact, come as any surprise given that it states, 'Near this Place lies Interred Anna Maria Vassa' and also 'Know that there lies beside this humble stone, a child of colour'. What is more surprising, perhaps, is that her grave has been hidden in plain sight for so long, despite Catherine O'Neill having located it in 1977.[239] At any rate, we can now conclude that the large and unmissable epitaph was deliberately positioned so as to ensure that passersby did not miss the nearby grave, which might otherwise have been overlooked, especially if marked only by the footstone. This may well have been the case had Audley and Ind considered the epitaph a fitting substitute for a headstone.

So, to return to the unsolved conundrum of foster family, with which Chesterton residents did Audley and Ind place Anna Maria Vassa, and presumably her baby sister, Joanna? Certainly, it cannot have been with any Cullen relatives as none is recorded as resident there, so the Vassa orphans must have been fostered by non-family members. Unpublished archival sources, together with circumstantial evidence, strongly suggest that it was with Edward Ind's younger brother, Thomas (1767–1824) and his wife, Mary Grimditch of Chatteris (1767–1847).[240] Thomas Ind is recorded as living in Chesterton from late 1793, following his marriage to Mary, and we know that they must have lived within the parish bounds of St Andrew's, as this is where both of their children were christened: their first-born, Thomas Edward, on 11 December 1793; their second child, Robert Grimditch, on 14 October 1795.[241] Thomas and Mary Ind would therefore have been considered as ideal candidates: not only would the Ind family ties have given reassurance to Olaudah's executors but their two sons were similar in age to Anna Maria and Joanna. When Anna Maria died in July 1797, Thomas Jr would have been three-and-a-half years old; and Robert nearly two. Could they have been among the 'village children' recorded in Ind's epitaph who 'dropp'd

choice flowers, and lisp'd her early fame', perhaps indeed amongst those 'that lov'd her most, as if unblest, Bedew'd with tears the white wreath on their breast'?

According to later auction advertisements in the *Cambridgeshire Chronicle and Journal* from 1819 and 1820, we know that Thomas Ind and his family lived in a 'capital and very substantial-built house' in Chesterton with two parlours, two kitchens, a spacious drawing room and seven bedrooms spread over three floors (not including the cellar). The property also included stables, a coach-house, dairy, dove-house, a substantial maltings, a large kitchen garden with gardener's house, and a formal garden at the back which included 'an elevated summer-house, from which the University, extending beyond the winding Cam, forms at all times an interesting, but in summer season an enchanting, scene'.[242] This was a home perfectly suited to a gentleman brewer and his family and certainly one with capacity to accommodate the Vassa orphans. In the absence of straightforward documentation, it is tricky to ascertain where in Chesterton Thomas Ind lived and if his house still exists. That said, there is a substantial late eighteenth-century property on Church Street, now known as 'Chesterton House', located within view of St Andrew's Church, which appears to match the 1819 and 1820 property descriptions, making this building a strong candidate.[243]

Joanna Vassa's childhood in Chesterton and education at Mrs Mackenzie's boarding school, Huntingdon (1797–early 1810s)

After Anna Maria's death, Joanna Vassa, aged 2 years and 3 months, was now the only surviving member of the Vassa-Cullen family. Although her personal voice has not come down to us (unlike her mother, she did not write a will), our recent archival discoveries can at least shed new light on many aspects of Joanna's personal biography, including her hitherto unknown childhood, adolescence and education.[244] These unpublished documents also allow

us to track in remarkable detail Joanna's burgeoning relationship with her future husband, Henry Bromley, from its inception in 1813 to formalisation via marriage in 1821. They further prove Pearl Nunn's assertion that 'as Joanna Vassa inherited a comfortable sum of money from her father Olaudah Equiano, she did not need to marry for financial security. It is likely that she married for love and companionship rather than convenience, and it is also plausible that she married because of her husband's shared religious and abolitionist beliefs.'[245]

For eleven years, from March 1797 until March 1808, Audley and Ind divided the executorial responsibilities of Olaudah Equiano's estate between them, including the care of Joanna. Following Ind's death, in March 1808, Audley became Joanna's sole guardian.[246] Legally responsible for her upbringing and education, Audley managed her finances from her late father's estate and became her paternalistic protector until her marriage in 1821, when these duties passed to her husband. From surviving accounts in the Cambridgeshire archives, we know that Ind's death left Audley with some difficulty recovering £498 s.7 6d. of Olaudah's assets previously held and managed by Ind. Indeed, in 1812, Audley was forced to take Thomas Ind, in his capacity as Edward's heir and executor, to the Court of Chancery to retrieve this sum, which cannot have been an easy thing to do, especially if Thomas had previously acted as Joanna's foster father, and the two men were friends.[247]

With whom two-year-old Joanna lived following the death of her sister is undocumented. Osborne posited that Joanna's grandmother Ann may have had a hand in raising her and that she was 'most likely brought up in Soham, Ely or Fordham' under the watchful eye of John Audley.[248] However, if Joanna had been fostered by the same Chesterton-based family as Anna Maria following their father's death (and perhaps even earlier), then it seems more likely that her guardians would have kept her there after her sister's death. We have proposed that this Chesterton-based foster family was likely that of

Thomas Ind and some brief executorial notes made by John Audley between 1810 and 1815 (when Joanna was between 15 and 20 years old) concerning Olaudah's effects and their ultimate fate may act as additional indirect proof. In addition to eight silver teaspoons, a quilt and a silver watch,[249]Audley also notes: 'There was wearing apparel which belonged to Mrs Vassa [i.e. Susannah Cullen], but this was made up from time to time by Mrs Ind for Joanna'.[250] The 'Mrs Ind' referred to can only have been one of two people: either the wife of Robert Ind of Cambridge, or the wife of Thomas Ind of Chesterton, both of whom were sisters-in-law to Edward. This hitherto overlooked passage is significant because it shows the Ind family's extended involvement in raising Joanna – at least long enough for her to outgrow dresses made from her late mother's clothes and to require new, larger replacements to be made – and that she remained close to members of the Ind family even after the death of her guardian, Edward, in 1808.

How long Joanna remained living with Thomas Ind and his family is impossible to determine. What can be determined, however, thanks to new archival evidence is that the maximum possible time that Joanna could have lived in Chesterton was from April or May 1796 (i.e. following her mother's death and her father's move to London) until January 1807, when, as an 11-year-old, she is recorded as attending boarding school full-time (see below). However, given that she was an orphan and could not have received home-education from her mother, it is highly possible that she was sent to boarding school much earlier than 1807. Certainly, girls as young as five are recorded as being sent away to school by their parents or guardians.[251] If so, Joanna would have spent considerably less time as a child in Chesterton, especially if sent away as a year-round boarder.

Thanks to this hitherto overlooked note in Equiano's estate papers for the year 1807, it is certain that Joanna attended boarding school for the entire duration of that particular calendar year:

Paid Mrs Mackenzie's Bill: £18:19.6

D[itt]o for 2 Vacations etc: 6:5.0

£25:4.6 [252]

The mention of 'vacations' alerted us to the fact that this bipartite receipt was connected to Joanna's education, the first and more expensive bill for term-time fees, the second for holiday fees. Moreover, the total amount listed of 25 pounds, 4 shillings and sixpence – equivalent to about £2,000 in 2025 – was compatible with the average annual ladies' boarding school fee for the time and region according to advertisements listed in the *Cambridge Chronicle and Journal*.[253] What these two seemingly inconsequential lines reveal is critical new information about Joanna's early life and education: that Audley and Ind were paying for Joanna to stay at a boarding school run by a 'Mrs Mackenzie' not only for the duration of the three academic terms but also over the two annual school holidays (December–January and June–July). Consequently, Joanna would have spent her twelfth birthday (11 April 1807) with Mrs Mackenzie as well as Easter Day and Christmas Day – and, significantly, 25 March 1807, the day on which the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act was passed by the British Parliament.[254]

Boarding school advertisements in the *Cambridge Chronicle and Journal* for 1807 reveal that a 'Mrs Mackenzie' ran a ladies' boarding school in Huntingdon, a rural East Anglian market town situated 16 miles west of Cambridge. This 'Mrs Mackenzie', born Elizabeth Symonds (1773–1851), came from a Dissenting family of longstanding religious fervour, which included noteworthy surgeons, physicians, Independent ministers, teachers, writers and politicians.[255] Her husband, John Mackenzie (1775–1846), was an author, teacher and Independent lay minister.[256] In the early nineteenth century, the Mackenzies moved from London to Godmanchester (a village near Huntingdon) where Mrs Mackenzie opened a school for ladies in August 1804. By January 1805, she and her family had moved into 'a

very commodious House' in Godmanchester and opened a ladies' boarding school.[257] In January 1807 – the year Joanna is recorded as having attended – Mrs Mackenzie moved her school to nearby Huntingdon, where she remained for several years.[258] Her school in Huntingdon had 'excellent gardens attached to it, and access from thence to an extensive common'.[259] John Audley, who often acted as a supply minister for local Independent and Baptist churches, would no doubt have become acquainted with the Nonconformist, Calvinist Mackenzie family when they moved into the area and this may well be why he selected Mrs Mackenzie's school for Joanna. While we have yet to find information regarding Elizabeth and John Mackenzie's personal stance on abolitionism, members of Elizabeth's extended family are documented as having been directly involved in the movement or closely associated with known abolitionists.[260]

As the education of his daughters was important to Olaudah and noted as the key testamentary responsibility of his executers, it is important to understand what Joanna would have been taught during her time at Mrs Mackenzie's boarding school. Educated girls of the era learned a broader range of what were considered more 'modern' subjects than their male counterparts whose 'Classical' education focused heavily on Latin.[261] This breadth of curricula for girls left their education viewed as 'superficial' compared to that of boys due to the contemporaneous belief that studying too many subjects confused the mind.[262] In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it was believed that girls' education should teach them to be 'useful without teaching them enough to have given them ambition'.[263] 'Useful subjects' such as English grammar, writing, arithmetic, geography and needlework were often taught alongside more specialist subjects such as drawing, piano, dancing, French and Italian.[264] These often came at an extra cost as they required the hiring of 'approved masters'.[265] According to Michèle Cohen, 'The options available for study at any school were determined by the subjects the governess and the teachers she employed could offer, which in

turn depended on her financial means.'[266] Outside of French and drawing (taught by her husband), Mrs Mackenzie's school advertisements did not list the curriculum covered for the young ladies attending her school.[267] It is also not known what specialist subjects Joanna's guardians would have accepted at an additional cost. The subjects Joanna learned would have likely been chosen for the practical purpose of attracting a marriage partner or even possible future employment as a teacher if necessity demanded it.[268]

Karen E. Smith's article on Baptist Eighteenth-Century boarding school teachers, Martha (Smith) Trinder (1736–1790) and Henrietta Neale (1752–1802) observed that, in addition to these traditional studies, Dissenting girls' education would have also focused on cultivating students' religious principles and moral characters.[269] Headmistress Martha Trinder was known to strive '… for the improvement of her scholars in the branches of learning, the cleanliness of their persons and apparel – their advancements in good behaviour, and above all, in the purity of their morals'.[270] Smith's research into Henrietta Neale has revealed that Dissenting education of the era also included 'enculturating children into social norms, as well as what were considered to be the evangelical values of the day.'[271] Thus, Joanna's school days would not only have included the traditional religious components of Biblical scripture studies, prayer and learning the hymns of Isaac Watts (1674–1748) but also understanding the importance of missionary work, both at home and abroad, to her Dissenting faith.

Elizabeth Mackenzie was not herself a trained teacher; in the early nineteenth-century any woman could open a school to teach young ladies.[272] According to Joyce Senders Pederson, 'Ladies who taught in early nineteenth century England had undergone no special course of training for their work. No training institutions existed for such teachers. There were no nationally recognised degrees'.[273] Despite this lack of professional training, Joanna may have been fortunate in her chosen school and headmistress. In the biography of Mrs

Mackenzie's son, the comedic actor Henry Compton (1805–1877), his mother was described as possessing 'great personal and mental attractions'.[274] Moreover, two of her grandchildren by this same son wrote:

> She was at once imaginative and practical, refined and energetic, cultivated and yet a notable housewife; an adept in all the mysteries of the kitchen, but equally at home in society. She possessed to perfection the now almost extinct art of reading aloud, and my father has often said that he never met a better reader in private life. She was a fountain of authority and the active ruler of her family, on all members of which the influence of her character was most marked.[275]

In regards to education, the biographer of her son, the Rev'd John Morell Mackenzie (1806–1843), added 'both parents were well-capable of instructing the intellect of their children'.[276] Compton's biography also indicates the family were avid readers, enjoyed debate and, according to newspaper advertisements from the time, Elizabeth's husband, John Mackenzie, taught French and drawing before he opened his own school for boys in 1810.[277] The biographies of two sons of Elizabeth and John Mackenzie reveal further insights about a carefree life in the Mackenzie household around the time Joanna boarded with them. The Mackenzie children grew up in their parents' Godmanchester and Huntingdon schools, raised around 'frilled and pinafored boys' and 'boarding-school misses', but with gardens and apple trees to read in at Godmanchester, and apple and pear orchards to roam in at Huntingdon, combined with nutting outings in the autumn, creamy syllabubs for dessert and the shenanigans of a pet donkey named Neddy.[278] Might Joanna have also shared in these pleasures as a year-round 'boarding-school miss'?

Regrettably, John Audley's executorship account book (often referred to in his notes connected to Equiano's estate) is not included in his papers in the Cambridgeshire

Archives and is presumed lost. It is therefore not possible to ascertain when Joanna was first sent away to school, nor whether she attended Mrs Mackenzie's establishment as a full-time boarder for the entirety of her education, or was sent to other educational establishments. Nor do we know when Joanna's schooling finished but, given her father's testamentary insistence on the education of his daughters, it seems likely that Joanna would have been tutored for a number of years until at least the age of fifteen (11 April 1810), the normal age that girls of her social standing finished school.[279] That said, given Olaudah's keenness on self-improvement through education and Audley's shared love of learning, it may be that she had a longer than average education.

Regardless of how long Joanna's education or the subjects she learned, social conventions of the time would have hampered public demonstration of her intelligence. Cohen noted how, 'In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when politeness became "feminized and domesticated" and taciturnity had become emblematic of English masculinity and mental strength, women's participation in social conversations underwent a backlash'.[280] Modesty was the pre-eminent feminine virtue of the day with any public displays of intelligence or political debate seen as vulgar vanity; the expression of a woman's education and intellect was restricted to the private sphere of the home.[281]

Joanna Vassa's life in the Harris household of Downing Place, Cambridge, and her courting of Henry Bromley (c.1813–17)

Thanks to our discovery of the personal archive of Joanna's future father-in-law, Nathaniel Warner Bromley, hereafter NWB (1756–1844), in the Bury St Edmund's branch of the Suffolk Archives, we can now reconstruct key aspects of Joanna's life from early 1813, when their paths first crossed, until 1844, when NWB died.[282] Unpublished journals and draft

letters written by NWB provide vital if heavily biased information regarding the acquaintance of Joanna with his youngest son, Henry (1798–1878). Of particular significance for reconstructing Joanna's biography is a lengthy and polemical personal memorandum entitled, 'Thoughts on Son, Henry, 3rd December 1841' which the 85-year-old NWB wrote to himself on his son's 43rd birthday: essentially a rather negative and bitter biographical reflection on his son's life to date and a lament on his choice of wife.[283] It provides an unusually detailed account of how Henry and Joanna had first met some 29 years earlier, how their friendship had developed into one of mutual love, and how they had refused to end their relationship despite repeated petitions and threats from NWB. In addition to new insights into Joanna's hitherto completely obscure teenage years, it reveals the prejudices and racism she faced as an English middle-class woman of colour from her father-in-law and, to a lesser extent, her sister-in-law, Letitia, but equally the support she had from other Bromley family members, especially Henry's brother William and his wife, Catherine.

[INSERT FIG. 10 HERE]

NWB's personal archive also provides new biographical information about himself, his wife Sarah Wright (1759–1808) and their ten children, including Henry (**fig. 10**). NWB's 'Memorial Book', for example, records how Henry had been born on 3 December 1798 in Islington, London, and how his wife, Sarah, had died in 1808 when in her late forties, leaving him to bring up their six surviving children single-handedly.[284] A solicitor by profession at Gray's Inn, NWB was also Lord of the Manor at Badmondisfield Hall, in the small Suffolk village of Wickhambrook. Being a devout Dissenter, NWB also took personal responsibility for the Wickhambrook Independent Meeting House. In 1812 and 1813, during several years when this chapel was without an established minister, he arranged for a number of supply ministers to stay at Badmondisfield Hall to assist with leading services, amongst whom was Joanna's guardian, John Audley.[285] During one of these visits, Audley happened to speak

highly of his good friend, the Rev'd Dr William Harris (1776–1830), minister of the Downing Place Independent Chapel in Cambridge, and mentioned that Harris accepted a small number of student pupils, whom he taught in his home.[286]

In early 1813, following Audley's glowing endorsement, NWB removed Henry, then 'hardly 14', from his boarding school in Hackney and placed him under Dr Harris's tutelage in Cambridge.[287] Initially, NWB records being very pleased with Henry's education and the new set-up, but 'after a time [he] began to feel to regret it'.[288] The cause for his 'regret' was none other than Joanna Vassa:

> Thou' all seem'd apparently going on seriously well there was pretty much dwell[in]g a woman of Colour called Miss Vassa! Dau[ghte]r of Gustava [sic] Vassa an Affrican [sic] Slave, by his Marriage with a Farmers Dau[ghte]r – placed under the care of Mr Audley who in some way left often to the care of Mr and Mrs Harris – This young woman however taking a fancy to my son – Then a mere School Boy – She managed to obtain or Engage his Affect[io]n ~~too~~ – or at any rate to fasten herself on him …[289]

NWB's memorandum indicates that, by early 1813 at the latest, Joanna had left Mrs Mackenzie's boarding school (or potentially another boarding school) and was now residing in central Cambridge with the Rev'd Harris, his wife and their children, in the manse, next door to the Independent Chapel on Downing Place (**fig. 11**). Given Harris's line of work, it is not impossible that Joanna's education may have continued in some informal way while she was living under his roof, especially if she was academically inclined. That said, Audley would likely have been more concerned that Joanna learned household management skills through observing and assisting Mrs Harris with her domestic duties. However Joanna spent her time, it was thanks to these new living

arrangements that she first met Henry Bromley, her future husband, in early 1813: she was nearly eighteen years old, and he had just turned fourteen.[290]

[INSERT FIG. 11 HERE]

NWB's 1841 'Thoughts on Son, Henry' goes on to reveal that having learned of Joanna's amorous relationship with his son, he wrote directly to her asking her to break it off so that Henry could focus on his studies. Joanna did not reply, and neither did Henry who 'seemed to threaten he wo[ul]d not give it up'.[291] Angered and determined not to be thwarted, NWB travelled to Cambridge and confronted Harris directly, begging him to 'interfere & prevent [the relationship], w[hi]ch he promised he wou'd do his best to effect'.[292] However, his efforts were in vain (supposing he did intervene): Henry was not to be separated from Joanna, and their courtship continued apace until Henry was eventually in a position to marry his beloved – namely, once he had reached the age of twenty-one and could legally marry without his father's consent, and also once he had secured himself a paid job, which he did at the age of twenty-two.

In addition to his anger about Henry's relationship with Joanna, NWB also blamed her, as well as Audley and Harris, for pushing Henry into the Christian ministry too early. Despite having wanted Henry to become a minister since his infancy, NWB blamed both Audley and Harris for supporting Henry's 'early engaging in preach[in]g in the Villages etc with a view to the Ministry', describing his son as 'flatter'd & hasten'd by them [and] aided by the brown Lady he chose'.[293] These private confessions stand in stark contrast to the views conveyed in the brief biography of Henry Bromley printed in the *Congregational Magazine* after his death in 1878 and written by an anonymous 'old friend'. According to Henry's biographer:

> It was here [Cambridge] that, *with the full consent of his father*, he [Henry] decided to enter on the work of the ministry, and, as he was deemed too young to be received in a

> dissenting academy, he continued his studies under Dr. Harris [author's italics]. He joined the church at Cambridge, and was by the pastor, Dr. Harris, and the church - young as he was - sent to conduct services on Sabbath evenings at Trampington [sic], Horningseau [sic], Landbeach, Grandchester [sic], and the other places round Cambridge and he always talked with affection of the pleasant memories of those first days of apprenticeship to the work of the ministry.[294]

Joanna Vassa's coming of age and receipt of her paternal inheritance (1816)

On 7 April 1816, Joanna turned twenty-one, came of age and thus legally entitled to receive her inheritance. As is well known, the following day, she met her elderly guardian John Audley, in Cambridge, and signed a receipt from him for £950, the final balance of her late father's estate.[295] This amount converts to varying sums in today's money depending on the monetary inflation calculator used, but according to that of the Bank of England, £950 in 1816 equates to £78,260.50 in 2025.[296] Although this was a significant amount of money to receive, it would only have allowed Joanna a frugal middle-class existence for the remainder of her life, assuming her inheritance was invested wisely and spent astutely. For example, a common investment during the Napoleonic Wars (1803–15) were Bank of England bonds with a 5% return known as 'Navy Fives'. Her capital, invested in this way, would have given her an income of £48 in interest per annum (equivalent to £4,054.17 in 2025).[297] Unfortunately, her inheritance did not include the land in Sutton and Mepal mentioned in both of her parents' wills, and that of her mother's sister Mary, as this was still owned by her long-lived grandmother, Ann Cullen, who was not to pass away until 1820.[298] Whether Joanna inherited this land after her grandmother's death is unclear: Audley's surviving records do not adequately address this.[299]

In addition to the land, Olaudah's inventory included his mother-in-law's bond for one quarter of her estate when she died, which should also have passed to Joanna.[300] In 1810, Audley had recorded never having seen this bond, adding that even if it did exist, he did not 'suppose it worth any thing' as Mrs Cullen, then 82, was 'reduced in her circumstances'.[301] After her death in 1820, Audley noted that anything still owned by Ann Cullen would have gone to her daughter, Anne Fitches, with whom she lived in Fordham, and who 'indeed had more claim than any one else'.[302] Audley's belief that Joanna did not have a strong claim to any of her grandmother's possessions further indicates that it was unlikely she was ever raised by her Cullen family, and that she rarely, if ever, saw them. Certainly, Joanna's first cousin, William Cullen Fitches, was constantly in trouble with the law and, having been in and out of prison (even escaping in August 1817), he was eventually transported to Australia as a British convict in 1820.[303]

Joanna Vassa's and Henry Bromley's continued courtship in Hoxton (1817–21)

In autumn 1816, Henry Bromley, now nearly 18 years old, left Cambridge and the tutelage of the Rev'd Dr Harris and moved to the northern fringes of London to attend Hoxton Academy, a training college for Independent ministers.[304] While his father must have hoped that this would bring a natural end to his relationship with Joanna, fate decided otherwise and intervened on the young couple's behalf. Almost exactly a year later, in September 1817, Harris was unexpectedly offered the position of Resident Theological Tutor at Hoxton Academy. After much deliberation, Harris accepted the post and relocated to Hoxton with his family on 31 December 1817.[305] Meanwhile, an entry from the Minutes of the Downing Place Chapel Elders' Meeting of 2 December 1817 reveals that Joanna had tried, unsuccessfully, to join the Independent Church on Downing Place explicitly under Dr Harris's ministry:

> It appeared that Miss Vassa wished to unite with the Church previous to our Pastor's leaving for which purpose a special Church Meeting would be required & the period of probation would in such case be shortened – It appeared inexpedient to depart from our accustomed plan & therefore the request could not be complied with.[306]

Any disappointment Joanna may have felt from the denial of church membership at Downing Place would have likely been short-lived for, much to her future father-in-law's chagrin, Joanna was then invited to move to Hoxton with the Harris family, thereby giving her and Henry 'more liberty than ever to pursue their Connect[io]n'.[307] It is not known in what capacity Joanna spent time with the Harris family either in Cambridge or Hoxton but, as a middle-class young woman of independent means, she may have helped with the education of the Harris children or been a companion for Harris's wife.

While living with the Harris family in Hoxton, it is possible that Joanna may also have assisted Henry with his studies. Certainly, NWB recorded being horrified to discover that Joanna kept the key to Henry's 'closet study' during his absences from the academy.[308] Once again, he decided to confront Harris about the couple in person, but on arriving at Hoxton Academy, Harris was away. He therefore spoke instead to Mrs Harris who admitted that 'she did not like the going on so as they did there by the D[octo]r[']s allowal', which suggests that not only did Harris disregard NWB's entreaties to break up Henry and Joanna's relationship, but he turned a blind eye to it thereby, in effect, aiding and abetting it .[309]

NWB never forgave Harris for his disloyalty and complicity, but he was more lenient towards John Audley whom he recorded had 'warn'd me of the first engagem[en]t'.[310] NWB recalled how Henry had written begging permission to continue with the relationship having 'impudently' refused to give it up.[311] 'I did my best to remonstrate, but alas it was still carried on' lamented NWB. He also recorded how he believed that his eldest daughter, Letitia

Bromley (1783–1832), had tried in vain to persuade Henry to end the relationship.[312] In this same birthday memorandum of 1841, NWB used racist tropes against Joanna, blaming her entirely for the relationship with his son, quoting the racist and misogynistic words of a local former missionary, 'Mr [William] Lee [1780–1824] of Newmarket', who described women of colour to be of a 'most selfish unamiable disposition & very artful for their own interests'.[313] NWB inferred that the colour of Joanna's skin made her a natural manipulator and seductress, depicted Henry as an innocent youth under the spell of a calculating woman of colour, and refused to admit that his son could have chosen Joanna of his own free will.

NWB's 1841 'Thoughts on Son, Henry' is also informative about Joanna's first visit to the Bromley family home of Badmondisfield Hall, a medieval moated manor house in Wickhambrook, Suffolk. This took place at an unrecorded date, when Joanna was staying with Mrs Sarah Finch (1747–1821), a friend of John Audley, in Sible Hedingham, Essex, and Miss Mary Malleson (1762–1832), a good friend of Mrs Finch, was staying with NWB and his daughter, Letitia, at Badmondisfield Hall.[314] In letters exchanged at this time between Mrs Finch and Miss Malleson, the former asked the latter 'to put in a good word for poor Vassa!'[315] As a result of Miss Malleson's persuasion, NWB finally relented, telling Letitia 'if this Miss Vassa is good for any thing as Mrs F[inch] seems to wish we sho[ul]d think of her in some way, let us ask her for a week or two & see if we can make any thing good of her'.[316] Soon afterwards, NWB and Letitia invited Joanna to stay at Badmondisfield Hall. Despite NWB's claim that they 'gave her fair play as a trial', the visit appears to have been a deeply upsetting experience for Joanna, who spent most of it in tears, according to NWB's account :

> She seemed capable of ^but^ cry[in]g cry[in]g continually & if she had me alone, to get my consent to - marry Henry 'I beg'd hard she wou'd let him alone to pursue his Studies (being little more than a mere School Boy) & was put where he was to study for the Ministry', then she wo[ul]d cry! – (far from

> lovely, most disgusting tears) – that I was glad to send her back in my carr[iage] with my Dau[ghte]r Let[iti]a, who was quite tired of her, & w[he]n she was there at Mrs Finch[']s cryed [sic] so – that Mrs F[inch]: said she w[oul]d have no cry[in]g Girls there! Let[iti]a & I agreed we cou'd not distinguish one single good Quality in the bronze Lady that she had! – her sensibility seem'd to partake of nothing but selfishness & her object to obtain Henry – cry[in]g like a foolish Baby seem'd all she was capable of. H[en]ry how[eve]r was led away to think otherwise & O! to my grief & Vexation married her.[317]

It is important to highlight, in connection with NWB's clear racial prejudices, the fact that Joanna was not his first daughter-in-law who was a woman of colour. Due to his wayward tendencies, NWB's eldest son and Henry's eldest brother, Nathaniel Barrett Bromley (1785–1829), was packed off to Kolkata, India, in 1806 and on 11 November that same year he married Sarah Anne Morgan, the illegitimate daughter of 'Major Thomas Morgan by a Native there'.[318] However, the marriage was not a success and some aspects of it were nothing less than tragic. The couple returned to England in late 1808 with two children and over one thousand pounds in debt. Nathaniel Barrett was immediately thrown into debtors' prison and Sarah was accused by the Bromley family of 'behaving extremely ill' while her husband was locked away. Sarah and her young children found themselves living in desperate poverty with some financial support from her father-in-law during her husband's near three-year incarceration. After Nathaniel Barrett's release in summer 1811, the couple separated and both parties were exiled by the Bromley family, becoming personae non gratae for the rest of their lives. NWB ended up raising and supporting their only living child into adulthood. NWB never forgave his eldest son for this marriage (along with a multitude of other perceived transgressions) and felt little but disdain for his first daughter-in-law, Sarah,

refusing to have any direct contact with her. Thus, NWB's negative bias and racist prejudice against women of colour was already firmly fixed several years before Henry first met Joanna.[319]

Joanna Vassa's marriage to Henry Bromley (August 1821)

In June 1821, some eight years after they had first met, Henry Bromley was finally in a position to marry his longstanding love, Joanna Vassa: he had completed his ministerial training, been ordained, and obtained a fixed and salaried position at the Independent Chapel at Appledore on the North Devon coast.[320] Henry was now 22 years old, so legally able to marry without his father's consent, and Joanna, 26.[321] On 28 August 1821, like his father-in-law before him, Henry visited the Vicar General's Office in London and attained their marriage licence, which included a signed allegation and bond.[322] His bondsman is listed as one 'John Thomas',[323] and the allegation confirms that, at the time of their marriage, Joanna was living in the parish of St James, Clerkenwell.

[INSERT FIG. 12 HERE]

Their longed-for wedding took place the following day, on 29 August 1821, at Joanna's parish church of St James's Church, Clerkenwell. Their marriage registration (**fig. 12**) records that they were married by one Solomon Piggott,[324] and that their two witnesses were John Audley, Joanna's former guardian, and Catherine Bromley – who was not Henry's sister, as has hitherto erroneously been supposed, but rather his sister-in-law, Catherine Taylor (1787–1859), wife of his second eldest brother William (1787–1849; see **fig. 10**).[325] Why Joanna was living in the parish of St James, Clerkenwell, at the time of her marriage and no longer with the Harris family in Hoxton is unknown. Equally unknown is when she moved out of the Harris household and precisely where in Clerkenwell she was living. Osborne hypothesised that Joanna may possibly have been 'living with Catherine Bromley or with

relatives of [John] Audley – his being present at the wedding suggests that he was more involved in her life than just being her father's executor.'[326] Given that by summer 1821 Catherine and William Bromley were living with their five children at 43 Bernard Street in Bloomsbury,[327] and this was not within the parish boundary of St James, Clerkenwell, Joanna cannot have been lodging with them when she got married. But she may have been living in Clerkenwell either with relatives of John Audley, as Osborne hypothesised, or with acquaintances of his. Indeed, if Clerkenwell was the unnamed place in London to where Audley had relocated in early summer 1821, then it is possible that Joanna was staying with him, if social propriety allowed. Certainly, due to reduced circumstances ('a material change in his pecuniary affairs'), the 70-year-old Audley had been forced to let and subsequently sell 'Mount Pleasant', his home in Cambridge, and thereafter 'was, for the most part, either *lodging in London*, or visiting different parts of the country [authors' emphasis].'[328]

Whatever the case, Joanna must have been invited to stay with Catherine and William Bromley immediately prior to her wedding day because NWB later recorded how William had been 'foolish eno[ugh] to ask her [Joanna] to his House ^to be married from thence^ (w[hi]ch he has since acknowledged to have been wrong, & therefore I can be no longer angry ab[ou]t that)'.[329] William's invitation and Catherine's role as a witness provide firm evidence that they were both strongly in favour Henry and Joanna's marriage, and were willing to risk the wrath of the family patriarch to show support for their union. This was significant given their social standing: having taken over NWB's law partnership position at Gray's Inn in 1810, William enjoyed a successful and high profile career with a significant client list, including Charles Grey (1764–1845), 2nd Earl Grey, who would become British Prime Minister in 1830 and preside over the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act.[330] Catherine, meanwhile, came from highly respected lineage: her father was William Taylor and her mother was Catherine Courtauld, a dynasty famous in the nineteenth century for textile

manufacturing, radical politics, anti-slavery beliefs and, later on, for founding the Courtauld Institute of Art.[331]

Significantly, further documentation in NWB's personal papers proves that Henry married Joanna without his father's prior consent or knowledge. According to an entry in NWB's 'Memorial Book', Henry's brothers, William and Joseph, knew that the marriage was taking place but chose not to inform their father, presumably because they were worried that he might try to prevent it from happening. It was only after the wedding had taken place that they updated their father, and then by letter rather than in person, probably because neither could not face his inevitable outrage. On 1 September 1821 NWB recorded how:

> I understand by a Letter rec[eiv]ed this Day from my Sons W[illia]m & Jos[eph]: that Henry (my youngest Son) was married Wednesday the 29th of last month to Miss Joanna Vassa at Clerkenwell Church, he has not yet signified it to me himself; & I cannot think with all his teaching & preaching to others, that he has quite behaved to me in the manner he ought to have done, for reasons it may be as well to omit stating here – I have invariably remonstrated with him against it but he has persisted in it from the begin[nin]g to the End – contrary to my Advice – the Lord grant I may be much mistaken in my apprehensions concern[in]g the Affair but I can not but fear it will prove a miserable match She is a Woman of Colour, the Dau[ghte]r of an Affrican [sic] Slave that was, but afterwards emancipated & coming to this Country acquired some degree of respectability after a great Variety of Adventures as related in a volume printed - The Life of Olauda [sic] Equiano or Gustavus Vassa – [332]

In a later summary of his memorial books, NWB reiterated his displeasure at this union, 'This marriage was without my Sanction; the Lord grant it may prove happier than I expect'.[333]

Early married life for the Rev'd and Mrs Bromley in Appledore, North Devon (1821–25)

Following their nuptials, the newlyweds made the arduous 250-mile coach journey from Clerkenwell to Appledore, so that Henry could continue his pastoral duties as Congregational Minister at the coastal village's Independent Chapel. Little is known about Joanna and Henry's life in Appledore. According to Osborne, the records for the local Independent Church in the Exeter Archives contain scarcely any information about Henry's tenure there and so it is impossible to gain 'a sense of what kind of pastor Bromley was', but she does note 'a record of him taking on a young boy, Joseph Harris, as an apprentice'.[334]

Osborne further points out that while 'there is no information about Joanna' in Appledore, the experiences of Martha Sherman, wife of a Congregationalist minister and ten years Joanna's junior, recorded in *The Pastor's Wife. A Memoir of Mrs. Martha Sherman, of Surrey Chapel, by her Husband* (London, 1850), provide 'the most contemporary insight into what Joanna's day to day life may have been like':

> Mrs. Sherman was very involved in Sunday school teaching, the formation of a Maternal Society, whose objective was to 'by prayer, reading and conversation awaken in the minds of mothers a proper sense of their duties and responsibilities and to inform and direct them in their performance.' Assisting her husband with the congregation, evangelising the population, running various societies would have been crucial. Joanna would have been doing similar work […] entertained pastors from other counties […] She may have raised funds for a new school room. This pattern of activity was expected of women who married ministers; many of them were indispensable to their husbands, yet their lives and contributions were usually recorded in one or two sentences at the end of their husband's obituaries.'[335]

Indeed, as Pearl Nunn remarked, 'It is likely that Joanna Bromley had a lively and active role in her church communities, particularly considering that she did not have any children of her own.' Nunn also pointed out, 'Joanna Bromley married for love and shared values, and […having] married Henry Bromley only two months after he was ordained, it seems suitable that they would have worked together to set up their married life and their church ministry simultaneously.'[336]

In fact, a small nugget of biographical information concerning Joanna's life in Appledore does exist, thanks to the recent discovery of the will of Mrs Sarah Finch of Sible Hedingham, who died on 5 October 1821, not long after Joanna arrived in Appledore. Mrs Finch (with whom Joanna stayed prior to her first visit to Badmondisfield Hall to meet and be 'trialled' by her future father and sister-in-law) clearly stayed in touch with her and must have thought highly of Joanna because she added a codicil to her will on 28 June 1821, two months prior to Joanna's wedding, in which she stipulated: 'It is my desire Miss Vassa may have five pounds five shillings to purchase a ring or any other little things she may chuse [sic] Sarah Finch 28 June 1821.'[337] Equivalent to roughly £500 in 2025, this bequest, which must have arrived while Joanna was living in Appledore, indicates that the friendship between the elderly white widow and the young bi-racial woman had continued over the years.[338]

During their years in Appledore, reports in various evangelical and Congregational periodicals document that, in addition to his ministerial duties, Henry acted as both Secretary for the North Devon Itinerancy of the Home Missionary Society and Secretary for the North Devon Auxiliary Branch of the Missionary Society, also known as the London Missionary Society (LMS).[339] Perhaps significantly, both Joanna's father and her guardian, John Audley, had had documented ties to the LMS. As mentioned above, in his will, Olaudah Equiano had stated that should neither of his

daughters reach maturity, then half of his estate was to go 'to the Treasurer and Directors of the Society instituted at the Spa Fields Chapel on the twenty second day of September One thousand Seven hundred and Ninety five for sending Missionaries to preach the Gospel in foreign Parts.'[340] This event marked the inauguration of the LMS. Moreover, Audley was also present at this inaugural assembly at Spa Fields Chapel in 1795, and was elected as one of its first directors.[341]

The years 1823 and 1824 are noteworthy for Joanna and Henry due to the Demerara Uprising of 1823 and the involvement of the missionary, the Rev'd John Smith (1790–1824), the Independent minister sent to Demerara (then a province of British Guiana) by the LMS.[342] Around 13,000 enslaved men and women rose up on sixty plantations, including the *Success* sugar estate owned by the father of future Prime Minister, William Gladstone, demanding emancipation and recognition of their rights. Although the insurgents did not seek to eliminate Demerara's white slaveholding elite or colonial plantation agriculture, they were suppressed with extreme violence by the British colonial forces. The Demerara Uprising sent shock waves of fear through the British public (thanks in part to inflammatory misinformation printed in the British press), and when the Rev'd John Smith was blamed for inciting it and scapegoated, the LMS was put on a defensive footing.[343] With LMS missionaries now viewed by the British public as 'traitors and troublemakers', many local branches held emergency meetings. The North Devon Auxiliary Missionary Society met on 13 May 1824 to exonerate Smith and give its full support to the parent institution.[344] As Secretary, Henry Bromley attended this meeting and recorded how the North Devon members had unanimously passed five resolutions, including:

> That this Committee deeply lament, in common with all friends of Missions, the late unhappy occurrences in Demerara, which led to the trials and condemnation of the Rev. John Smith. They take this opportunity of stating their firm

> conviction, that the revolt in question, was, in no degree to be attributed to his public instructions, or private conduct [...]. That lively gratitude is due to God for the success with which Mr. Smith's labours were crowned; and especially for the powerful influence of the truths he had inculcated on the minds of the Negroes during the revolt.[345]

Henry sent these resolutions to the Home-Secretary of the LMS in London. They were published a few weeks later, in the July 1824 edition of the *Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle*, undersigned solely by 'H. Bromley, Secretary'.[346] It is not known how Joanna felt about the Demerara Uprising, but she must have discussed it with Henry due to their close affiliation with LMS.

Move to London (1825–27)

The Rev'd and Mrs Bromley's time in Appledore lasted but four years with Henry quitting his post by mid-June 1825.[347] The reasons for this apparently precipitate departure are unclear but the previously known official line was the incommodious lack of geographical proximity to family: much later biographical information published in Henry's 1879 obituary recorded, 'the distance from his family induced him to relinquish this connection in 1825'.[348] However, new light on the matter is shed by unpublished records contained in NWB's papers. On 10 July 1825, NWB wrote in his 'Memorial Book' that, 'My dear Son Henry, in the Ministry, has left Appledore where he was settled & is now here [Badmondisfield Hall, Suffolk] with his Wife'. In this same entry, NWB noted that his son had no children and was 'saved that anxiety as yet'; he also hoped Henry would not be long unemployed.[349] A few weeks later, on 20 July 1825, NWB noted how 'Henry & his wife' had left the day before for Castle Hedingham, at the invitation of the aforementioned Miss Mary Malleson, where Henry preached at the local Independent Chapel during a brief absence of their minister.[350] Further

information about Henry's movements in 1825 is given in NWB's annual summary: having left his ministerial position in Appledore, Henry and Joanna arrived in London at midsummer and, while there, stayed for a short time in NWB's townhouse on 23 East Street (now Dombey Street) in Bloomsbury before proceeding to Badmondisfield Hall, where his father was staying for the summer. After a month's stay, Henry and Joanna returned to London.[351]

It is possible Joanna and Henry moved to London, without a new ministerial position in place, to be nearer family and friends. After all, Henry's brother, Joseph, who was also a lawyer, lived in Bloomsbury with his wife, Amelia, and their young children.[352] Henry's other brother William, his wife Catherine and their ever-expanding family had moved in spring 1824 to Stoke Newington, a village on the northern fringes of the city.[353] Significantly, by late September 1826, Joanna's former guardian, John Audley, was also living there, as was their old Cambridge friend and ally, William Harris, who had been so instrumental in allowing their adolescent relationship to thrive; he had recently become minister of the Stoke Newington Independent Chapel, and this was noted as a key factor in Audley's decision to move there.[354]

What Joanna and Henry did in London, and precisely where they lived from mid-June 1825 until September 1827, when they moved to Essex, is currently unknown. However, it seems likely that they would have visited Stoke Newington frequently to spend time with William and Catherine Bromley and their family and, from autumn 1826, with William Harris and his wife, and especially John Audley, whom it was evident was in the last stages of his life. Harris later poignantly recalled how in late 1826 and early 1827, Audley 'usually spent a few hours with us on the Lord's-day; and his society seemed to transport us to Cambridge, ever dear to our recollections as well as to his.'[355] Audley died, aged 77, on 28 April 1827, shortly after Joanna's thirty-second birthday.[356]

Henry may well have earned an income by acting as an itinerant Independent preacher without a fixed appointment. Whatever the case, London in the 1820s would have been an exhilarating place to live for a young couple in their late twenties/early thirties. It had recently become the largest city in the world, renowned for generating technological and scientific advancements, and was Imperial Britain's beating heart for political, social and religious reform. While the pro-slavery lobby in Westminster continued to resist further reform, and the British government was complicit in delays to enact the Slavery Abolition Act, abolitionist activists were stirring the hearts and minds of the British population through targeted propaganda campaigns and mobilising support for the bill to abolish slavery in the British Empire. The Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery Throughout the British Dominions (also known as the London Anti-Slavery Society) was founded in London in 1823 by prominent abolitionists such as William Wilberforce (1759–1833), Thomas Clarkson (1760–1846), Thomas Fowell Buxton (1786–1845) and Samuel Gurney (1786–1856), only two years before the couple arrived in the metropolis, with the aim of abolishing slavery within the British Empire. Although we have yet to find evidence of an affiliation with this society or other comparable networks, a desire to be more in the thick of abolitionist and social reform activity may have also lured the young couple to London.

Indeed, a new generation of radical female campaigners and activists was emerging, led by Quaker Elizabeth Heyrick, who fought for emancipation as well as rights for women. In 1824, frustrated and angry at the lack of progress by 'gradual abolitionists' whom she deemed overly cautious, Heyrick published her radical tract, *Immediate,* Not *Gradual Abolition, Or An Inquiry Into The Shortest, Safest, And Most Effectual Means Of Getting Rid Of West Indian Slavery*; and the following year, she published an equally radical pamphlet, *No British Slavery, or, An Invitation to the People to Put a Speedy End to it* (Bradford, 1825). Both texts argued for the immediate and total outlawing of colonial slavery, and promoted a

hugely successful national boycott of West Indian sugar, which led to some 400,000 Britons eschewing sugar 'stained with human blood' from enslaved people's labour.[357] Denouncing Wilberforce and Clarkson for being too 'polite' and 'accommodating' of the West India lobby and enslavers in general, Heyrick became a thorn in the side of the London Anti-Slavery Society. The following year, on 8 April 1825, Heyrick and 43 other like-minded female activists in West Bromwich gathered to establish the Ladies' Society for the Relief of Negro Slaves (later, the Female Society for Birmingham), whose aim was the immediate and total abolition of slavery in Britain's colonies, and whose focus was the plight of enslaved women and children.[358] Through a variety of religious (mainly Quakers, Congregationalists and Evangelical Anglican) networks, 73 similar local women's anti-slavery societies were formed across Britain between 1825 and 1833, espousing similar aims and objectives, with members making objects such as workbags and reticules emblazoned with abolitionist images and texts to arouse public sentiment and fundraise for the cause.[359] Although undocumented, Joanna may have joined her local women's anti-slavery society; and she and Henry may also have supported the nationwide West India sugar boycott.

Move to Clavering, Essex (1827–45)

Henry and Joanna's first connection with Clavering – a small agricultural village in the rolling hills of northwest Essex some 40 miles north of London with a thousand-strong population –[360] came on 27 May 1827, when Henry was invited by members of the Independent Church to preach as a supply minister.[361] Asked back in the same capacity on 8 July 1827, he clearly made a favourable impression for he was then invited to return for a two-month probationary period and, on 30 September 1827, before his probation was even over, he was offered the role of pastor. A month later, on 31 October 1827, Henry was officially inducted as the minister of the Independent Church in Clavering (**fig. 13**).[362]

[INSERT FIG. 13 HERE]

This second ministerial appointment was far more successful than his first, lasting for 18 years and, to judge from surviving documentary evidence, fruitful. In autumn 1827, Joanna and Henry moved into a two-storey manse, on what is now Pelham Road, Clavering. Built in 1803, around the same time as the Chapel, their Regency-era home was simple in style and symmetric in design with a small garden at the rear surrounded on three sides by fields.[363] Rather than facing the main road, the front of the manse faced the west end of the Independent Chapel, to which it was linked by a footpath through the fields. The recent discovery in the Chelmsford branch of the Essex Record Office of an unpublished estimate for painting the manse's interior, dated 9 October 1827, gives some idea of the manse's interior decor. The estimate for redecorating the 'inside of Mr[s?] Bromley's house' includes the costs for painting the rooms 'twice over in party colours with papering the surface and an extra coat of paint in small parlour', with 'party colours' presumably meaning varied and vivid hues.[364] Thanks to the 1841 Census, which reveals that Henry and Joanna had a live-in domestic servant called Eliza Houlder, we know that their manse was called 'Mount Pleasant'. It is tempting to think that they may have named their home in remembrance of Joanna's late guardian, John Audley, given that he had for many years owned a house in Cambridge with the same appellation.[365]

Other documents in the Essex Record Office give further insights into the goings on at the Independent Church in Clavering under Bromley's tenure. In 1829, Parliament requested Dissenting churches across the United Kingdom to report the number of members in their congregations. A later 'calendar' (index) of these responses records a 'J. Bromley' reporting a congregation of 450 for the Independent Church at Clavering, 90 for the nearby village of Arkesden, 80 for Elmdon and 20 for Berden.[366] Understandably, it has been assumed by some biographers that this 'J. Bromley' was Joanna, who was submitting the information on behalf

of her husband, and thus taken this return as evidence of her playing a greater part in the day-to-day running of the church than had previously been thought.[367] However, review of the original return submitted on 9 September 1829, reveals that the information was, in fact, submitted by Henry, and that the compiler of the later calendar had simply misread his initial 'H' for a 'J'.[368]

Thanks to Osborne's archival research, which has been verified by our own, we know that the couple were actively involved in the education of local children with both Henry and Joanna supporting the non-conformist Sunday School. Started in 1810, its purpose was 'to instruct poor children of both sexes above six years of age in spelling, reading and the principles of the Christian religion': it originally had 20 boys and 20 girls who were taught by seven ladies and four men of the church, from nine until noon and from one to four-thirty every Sabbath.[369] Joanna is recorded as personally subscribing 10 shillings (about £50 in 2025) every year from 1828 to 1845, in other words for the entire duration of her time in Clavering; it is possible that she also offered her services as one of the teachers.[370]

Moreover, in 1829, two years after Joanna and Henry's arrival, a day school associated with the Clavering Independent Church was established and it is likely that both Henry and Joanna participated, even if they were not its initiators.[371] This day school may not have been a success for, in 1838, another non-conformist day school connected with the Clavering Independent Church but part-funded by the British and Foreign School Society (BFSS) and known as a 'British School' opened in a single-storey addition to the former village workhouse.[372] In both 1840 and 1843, Henry published advertisements in local newspapers and *The Patriot,* a national Dissenting newspaper, looking for, preferably, a husband and wife, or a sister and brother, to act as Master and Mistress for this school.[373] According to Ludgate, the log book of the British School in Clavering for the following years 'records heavy absenteeism, many children absent for weeks, or present only two or three

times a week. Masters despaired of being able to teach enough to satisfy the inspector.[374] Although this British School closed due to insolvency in 1845 (the year Henry and Joanna left Clavering), it must have been deemed an essential part of village life for Dissenters given that it was restarted just six months later.[375]

It is clear from these sustained efforts that Henry and Joanna were heavily invested in the education of children within their community, many of whom were offspring of the 'labouring poor' who lived tough lives on the edge of poverty and crime.[376] As a result, Nunn surmised, 'Looking after the poor farm workers of the area and their families would have been a substantial undertaking, which Henry Bromley would not have done alone. […] As minister and minister's wife, they would have spent a lot of time taking care of disadvantaged people.'[377] Indeed, Eileen Ludgate's in-depth study of Clavering in the years 1783–1883 shows how tough life was for the agricultural labourers and poorer small-holders who made up the majority of villagers, and the social tensions that resulted.[378] In December 1830, shortly after Joanna and Henry's arrival, four men from Clavering were arrested and tried at the assizes for demanding slightly higher daily wages plus beer: two were sentenced to six months in prison, the other two to three months hard labour. Meanwhile in 1834, the Clavering Overseers reported to a Royal Commission advising on a new Poor Law Act that Clavering was one of the poorest places in the whole of Essex, with 313 households being sustained by poor relief and 23 people in the poorhouse mainly comprising the aged, disabled and orphans too young to be put out to work; six had died the year before with the deceased ranging in age between 11 and 82.[379] In the 1841 census, a number of elderly villagers were still receiving poor relief; the poor rate precept for the village in the 1840s was about £800 per annum.[380]

The poor lived in squalid daub-and-thatch cottages, described in 1850, as amongst the worst in the county: 'Great numbers are situated in low and damp situations […] Little or no

light can ever find its way into the wretched little windows, many of which are half stopped up with rags and pieces of paper.'[381] As the population increased by over a third between 1801 and 1851, from 900 to 1220, old cottages were divided and extended and new ones built. While few labourers owned their own cottages, more affluent local tradesmen were often owner-occupiers – the censuses for 1831 and 1841 record carpenters, thatchers, bricklayers, blacksmiths, saddlers, horsedealers, shoemakers, publicans and ratcatchers – and a few very affluent locals boasted multiple properties: miller and shopkeeper, James Pavitt, for example, who was well-known to Henry and Joanna Bromley being a deacon in their congregation, owned no fewer than 17 cottages and houses developed from five inherited from his uncle.[382] Even for the more wealthy, employment opportunities were insufficient, which led to high rates of emigration: one of James Pavitt's daughters emigrated to Ontario in 1843, with her husband, James Archer, who had been Relieving Officer for Clavering in the Saffron Walden Union.[383]

The Congregational Church members included both labouring families and more affluent people from the middling classes. As Ludgate documents, in addition to the above-mentioned James Pavitt, Clavering's biggest shopkeeper and miller, the village's biggest farmer, John Spencer, was a signed-up member. In 1827, the year that Henry started in post, there were 77 signed-up members, of whom 42 were from families of farmers and tradesmen.[384] It is likely with these more educated people that Joanna and Henry would have socialised, and from whose ranks the Sunday School teachers would have been drawn. Osborne noted that Henry was 'recorded as being a regular attending member of the Clavering Reading Society, from 1827 until December 1845. There are no records of Joanna being a member of this society.'[385] This was undoubtedly the Book Society, founded in 1787 by the then Congregational Minister and a few of his flock, whose stated purpose was, 'reading and conversation calculated to enlighten, enlarge and improve the mind,

consequently to bring about that happiness that is true and lasting.' In 1789, ladies were invited to join and so there is no reason why Joanna could not have been a member, but it is also possible that local social attitudes towards women attending these mixed-gender book clubs had changed by the 1820s.[386]

In addition to supporting the Clavering Book Society, both Joanna and Henry continued to support The London Missionary Society while at Clavering: they were active subscribers throughout their lives with Joanna often making independent donations from her own personal funds.[387] Indeed, by 1831, Henry was the secretary for the North-west Essex Auxiliary Branch of the Missionary Society;[388] and in 1834, he made an additional donation to the LMS of one pound and one shilling (around £70 in 2025) specifically for the 'West Indian Missions'.[389] At a special Missionary Society meeting held in Saffron Walden in May 1843, specifically for the Tahitian Missions, Henry moved a resolution 'reprobating the recent French aggressions on the Island of Tahiti, and in employing every practicable and peaceable method for securing to the Queen of that island her just and entire independence, and to the inhabitants generally their civil and religious liberties […]'.[390] This resolution suggests that Henry, and likely, Joanna, too, had a deep-rooted concern for the safety and civil rights of colonised populations across the globe, and not just enslaved or later indentured Africans living under British colonial rule.

During their Clavering ministry, the abolitionist movement was in full swing. While there is currently limited evidence of either Henry's or Joanna's direct involvement in the public arena, they would have certainly supported the cause. Fortunately, they lived in a village of like-minded citizens, for a petition against slavery had already been submitted to Parliament from Clavering in 1824, over three years before Joanna and Henry moved there.[391] On 28 August 1833, Parliament finally passed the Slavery Abolition Act making slavery illegal across the British Empire, except for the Asian territories controlled by the

East India Company. Although this Act received Royal Assent on the same day, it only came into legal effect on 1 August 1834, the date when more than 800,000 formerly enslaved men, women and children were emancipated. While these key legal milestones must have brought great joy to the couple and their congregation, the political battle was not yet over, given that it was replaced by other pernicious systems of exploitation including the loathed apprenticeship system. Any formerly enslaved person over the age of six was forced to become an apprentice, living and working as indentured servants, often for their former enslavers, and under harsh and inhumane conditions akin to those of slavery. In response, a petition from Clavering residents was submitted to Parliament in May 1838 'praying for the total and immediate abolition of negro apprenticeship'.[392] As this petition no longer exists, it cannot be proven that Joanna and Henry were signatories, but they almost certainly did and were perhaps instrumental in its creation and submission to parliament. After successful public protest (including petitions such as that from Clavering) the apprenticeship system was ended early, on 1 August 1838.

After the end of slavery in the British Empire, the abolitionist cause extended its sights to slavery in other parts of the globe with the foundation in 1839 of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (now Anti-Slavery International) under Quaker activist Joseph Sturge (1793–1859). At this point, the plight of enslaved people in the southern United States became a cause of concern for British abolitionists and members of Dissenting congregations across the country. It has hitherto gone unnoticed that Joanna and Henry gave their support to this cause by welcoming Moses Roper (1815–1891), the African-American abolitionist orator and author, to speak at their Chapel.[393] Born into slavery in North Carolina, Roper escaped after indescribable suffering and moved to England in 1835. Just like Joanna's father fifty years earlier, Roper published a best-selling autobiography of his experience of enslavement in the American South: *Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper, from*

American Slavery (London, 1838); and, like Olaudah, tirelessly promoted it, and the abolition of slavery in America, in churches across Britain for over two decades. The exact date of Roper's visit to Clavering is not known but it would have been during his 1840 tour of Hertfordshire, Essex and Suffolk, probably just before or after his talk in nearby Saffron Walden, which took place on 15 October 1840.[394] During his visit to Clavering, Roper would undoubtedly have met Joanna and Henry given her lineage and his role; and he may possibly even stayed with them before proceeding to his next venue.

Despite the current lack of evidence of Henry or Joanna's active involvement in any of the anti-slavery societies, Henry did have family who were more publicly involved with the cause. His older brother, Joseph Warner Bromley (1792–1860), became close friends with the abolitionist Rev'd John Woodwark (1796–1869) who was Joseph's minister at Tonbridge Chapel, London. In the Bromley Family Records in the Suffolk Archives is a small handwritten note from Woodwark to Joseph Bromley dated 11 June 1840. The note asks Joseph to call by the Office of the Anti-Slavery Society on 27 New Broad Street to ascertain from the clerk '<u>at what hour</u> the sittings of the conference commence tomorrow morning.'[395] The conference referred to was the first World Anti-Slavery Convention which began on 12 June 1840, and Woodwark was both a convention delegate and a committee member of the London Anti-Slavery Society.[396] Three years later, Joseph himself became a delegate at the 1843 Anti-Slavery Convention in London representing Tonbridge Chapel and he is also listed as a subscriber to the conference proceedings.[397] During this time, Joanna's brother-in-law would have rubbed shoulders with some of the most prominent abolitionists of the era including the by now venerable Thomas Clarkson, Thomas Fowell Buxton, Joseph Sturge and Samuel Gurney. Paradoxically, Joseph, in his role as a solicitor, is listed in the Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery online database in a compensation case as a 'trustee and agent for other trustees on a complex award on Byde Mill in Barbados'.[398]

Another of Joanna's brothers-in-law, the Rev'd Charles Chantler Dewhirst (1775–1845), husband of Henry's oldest sister, Letitia, and minister of the Independent Chapel on Whiting Street, Bury St Edmunds, was also known for his anti-slavery beliefs.[399] Indeed, Dewhirst was well acquainted with Thomas Clarkson from 1806 until 1816 when they were both active members of the Suffolk Auxiliary Bible Society based in Bury.[400] Several years later, on 31 January 1826, Clarkson returned to Bury St Edmunds to speak at a local meeting organised to support petitioning Parliament for the gradual abolition of slavery. Dewhirst also made a speech at this meeting referencing Clarkson's work and giving his support for gradual abolition. He is recorded as referring to the institution of slavery in the West Indies as 'composed of the bones, the flesh and the hearts, and cemented with the blood of African Negroes bound together with chains of our own forging, which we were almost afraid to touch, from apprehension of the consequences'.[401]

Declining personal relations with Nathaniel Warner Bromley (1830s) and his death (1844)

Further information about Joanna's and Henry's personal life during their Clavering years can be gleaned from NWB's journals and correspondence. In July 1832, for example, following the death of Letitia Bromley, Henry and Joanna made a post-funeral visit to NWB at Badmondisfield Hall, staying for just over two weeks.[402] In the relevant 'Memorial Book' entry, NWB refers to them as 'my Son Henry & his Wife', clearly unable to bring himself to refer to Joanna by name.[403] Almost two years later, on 18 May 1834, NWB wrote that Henry 'has a sick Wife, & it seems my Duty to pity & pray for them render[in]g such assistance to them as I conveniently can'.[404] This is significant as it is the first notice we have of Joanna's ill health, which was to plague her for the rest of her life.

NWB's last written account of seeing Joanna and Henry in person occurred in autumn 1836 when they stayed at Badmondisfield Hall, again for just over two weeks, a visit

evidently timed to coincide with his eightieth birthday.[405] On 16 September 1836, NWB recorded that, 'After a visit of little more than a fortnight, my dear Son Henry with his 'cara-spose', left me this Day'.[406] Although the Italian term *cara sposa* means 'dear wife', it was almost certainly used by NWB in a mocking way. As already noted, Joanna was constantly referred to in his journal*s* as 'Henry's wife' and never by her first name or married title. This prejudiced treatment is in stark contrast to that accorded the wives of Henry's brothers, who were always referred to as 'dear Catherine' and 'dear Amelia' or by their married title.

Although there are no further references to Joanna and Henry in NWB's 'Memorial Books', there are two draft letters written by him which do. The first, dated 22 August 1840, was when the couple were in their forties and still living in Clavering. NWB drafted this letter to Henry asking him to cancel a proposed visit with Joanna to Badmondisfield Hall.[407] By 1840, the 84-year-old NWB was living full-time in London due to his advanced age and failing health. This meant that Badmondsfield Hall was left empty year-round with the exception of occasional visits from family members who invariably had to gain NWB's permission before staying there. It is clear that NWB did not want Henry and Joanna visiting on any account and tried to dissuade them from coming on the excuse that the housekeeper was too ill to look after them. However, this led to him having to defend his recent decision to allow Henry's brother, Joseph, and his large family to stay earlier that same summer, arguing that permission was granted in that case because they needed the fresh country air and had brought two servants with them who had done all the work for their family, thereby making their visit more acceptable. NWB then reminded Henry that he had added an extra five pounds to his last allowance to enable him and Joanna to use the money towards an alternative holiday. This confirms that NWB regularly sent Henry money and was willing to provide additional top-up funds in order to pay them off and keep them away. Closing the letter he wrote 'I must entreat of you and dear Joanna to withdraw y[ou]r request as if not

made'.[408] Interestingly, below this draft, NWB scribbled a furious update that Henry and Joanna had blatantly disregarded his requests and stayed at Badmondisfield Hall for a fortnight, with Joanna shouldering the blame for this disrespectful decision: 'their scheme had got so far settled that they persisted – not then absolutely to forbid, thinking it hard to deny a Son – but alas! a Son who always minds the Wife more than his Father…'.[409]

The second draft letter from NWB to Henry, written over a year later, on 1 December 1841, expands on the trio's increasingly challenging relationship.[410] Herein, NWB finally admitted the crux of his issue with Henry and Joanna staying at Badmondisfield Hall: 'I had my real object[io]ns tho' not fully explained I never meant y[ou]r Wife to go there & be Mistress & guide of B.H. [Badmondisfield Hall] when I or some o[the]r presid[in]g person was not there'.[411] NWB then expressed disbelief at the couple's audacity and impudence recalling how, when staying at Badmondisfield Hall, Henry and Joanna would eat and drink as they pleased and upon departure would take with them whatever they felt like, including, on one occasion, one of NWB's horses.[412] NWB again cited Joanna as the root cause, informing his son: 'a great deal of w[hi]ch [behaviour] I ascribe to the mean disposit[io]n of y[ou]r wife'.[413] When both draft letters are read together, it becomes plain that NWB did not want Henry and Joanna at Badmondsfield Hall because he perceived Joanna as taking on the self-appointed role of 'mistress & guide' of his country estate, and because he resented what he considered to be their scrounging and freeloading. In this too, NWB entirely blamed Joanna, whom he defined as 'mean', which in early nineteenth-century parlance meant 'ungenerous, miserly, cheap or stingy'.[414]

Just two days after drafting this second letter, NWB sat down on Henry's 43rd birthday, and wrote his lengthy memorandum, parts of which have been discussed above.[415] After venting his anger and frustration at the events which led to their marriage, NWB

criticises Henry for his constant refusal to take counsel from his father in matters concerning his wife:

> … but Mr H[enr]y if I dare say a word in remonstrance vindicates himself in such a high stile [sic] (I might say of angry Justificat[io]n that I am led some times to lament, I did not from the very first eject both of them entirely from my House too much of the wish still remains to me) for I have never since found any thing like Humility & condescend[in]g acknowledgem[en]t tow[ar]ds me – However may the Lord pardon us all![416]

This final section highlights a recurring grievance that NWB held against Henry and Joanna: his inability, as family patriarch, to attain their subservience. The fact that Joanna refused to give up Henry despite his personal entreaties to her to do so was clearly seen as an affront by NWB, who as a patriarchal white male expected racial and gender subordination. Henry's refusal to end the relationship and his defence of Joanna in response to his father's remonstrances threatened his father's beliefs in filial obedience and piety.

The dawn of 1844 started ominously for the Bromley family with Henry's brother, William, filing for bankruptcy and later being indicted and convicted of fraud of upwards of £140,000 (around fifteen million pounds in 2025).[417] On 14 January 1844, NWB reacted by adding a drastic codicil to his will that removed William as co-executer and beneficiary, entirely cutting him off.[418] The impending public embarrassment of his second eldest son's upcoming and high profile trial must have proved too much for NWB, who died on 8 April 1844, aged eighty-seven.[419] Three weeks later, on 30 April, his will of 21 August 1841 was proved.[420] Considering the property and assets left to his siblings and their children, Henry's bequest was modest: a £40 annuity and £500 of his father's capital stock of the Bank of England, respectively £4,298.82 and £53,735.20 in 2025.[421] It was Joanna, however, who received the most obvious testamentary slight. While her sisters-in-law, Catherine and

Amelia, each received £40 (£4,298.82 in 2025), Joanna received just ten guineas (£1,100 in 2025).[422] To cut deeper, NWB listed her as 'Joanna the wife of my said Son Henry Bromley' while both Catherine and Amelia were referred to as his 'dear' daughters-in-law.[423]

Departure from Clavering and relocation to London (1845–49)

The year after NWB's death, 1845, brought a close to Joanna and Henry's life in Clavering. The Clavering Church Book from their time there sheds little light on the couple outside of Henry's professional ministerial role, which involved a great deal of chasing up wayward members and ensuring their spiritual and moral welfare. Joanna is mentioned in the book shortly after their arrival in Clavering in an entry dated 25 January 1828 when it was recorded that her church membership had been transferred to Clavering after a letter of dismission had been received from their previous congregation at Appledore.[424] She is not referred to again until an extensive entry from 10 May 1845 detailing the death of one of the Chapel's longstanding deacons, James Pavitt (1780–1845). Henry and Joanna appear to have had a close relationship with this much beloved deacon for the entry records that 'The Pastor & his Lady (who had been almost constantly with him [Pavitt])' were at his bedside during his weeklong final illness and moment of death.'[425]

Joanna is next mentioned in the Clavering Church Book five months later, on 26 October 1845, when Henry formally resigned from his ministerial position at Clavering after 18 years of service.[426] In his resignation letter, recorded therein, Henry gave Joanna's ill-health as the main reason for their departure, writing:

> It is now more than eighteen years since, at your unanimous request, I accepted the pastoral office among you, and my object in at present addressing you is to inform you that I find myself now called upon to resign the further discharge of the duties that office involves. Without entering into further particulars, I may

> state that the main reason which has led me to feel it my duty to take this important step just now, is the full conviction I feel that Mrs Bromley's health is very seriously suffering from the injurious influence of the situation, as connected with the peculiar state of her constitution; and the fear I entertain that passing another winter here would so fix some complaints from which she suffers, as to render their removal afterwards very difficult if not impossible.[427]

This reveals that Joanna was suffering from several health issues, seemingly connected to the local environment and climate, so possibly respiratory in nature. Clearly, winters in Clavering had had a very adverse effect on her constitution, and Henry was unwilling to put her through another one in case it had a deleterious effect on her already seriously compromised health. He further clarified and confirmed that his decision to resign was not in 'consequence of any interruption of that harmony which has ever subsisted' between himself and the congregation.[428] The fact that Henry stayed closely connected to this chapel for the remainder of his life, returned on occasion to assist with services, later authored a history of this church and even wrote a biography about his late friend James Pavitt (see below), indicates that his departure was indeed amicable, and presumably for the reasons stated.[429] It must have been a hard decision for Henry to make, especially as he did not have a fixed post to go to, so it proves that he was a loving and considerate husband who was prepared to put his wife's needs before his career.

Although Joanna's and Henry's movements are unclear from November 1845 (when they left Clavering), newly unearthed documents reveal that by mid-May 1846, they were living in St John's Wood. The *Ninth Annual Report of the Aborigines' Protection Society*, dated 18 May 1846, lists 'Rev. Henry Bromley of 1. Albert Terrace, Queen's Road, Saint John's Wood', as their new Assistant Secretary 'to whom all business communications may be addressed'.[430] This address is corroborated in Henry's entry in the Congregational Board

of 1846: 'Bromley, H. 1846 1, Albert Terrace, St. John's Wood'.[431] These documents reveal that by early summer 1846, Henry was no longer an active Dissenting minister but rather a professional secretary working for the Aborigines' Protection Society (APS). This organisation had been established in 1837 by a former leader of the abolitionist movement, Thomas Fowell Buxton, and the British physician, Dr Thomas Hodgkin (1798–1866) to promote the rights of Aboriginal communities subjugated by colonial powers across the globe. Joanna and Henry had moved from their detached manse in Clavering into a recently built, terraced townhouse on Albert Terrace, Queen's Road (now Queen's Grove), located on the outer edge of a newly developed residential area of London called St John's Wood, the sprawling city's first garden suburb. Their new home was undoubtedly chosen to aid Joanna's health: located close to open fields, woodland and rural countryside, but also an easy coach-ride into the heart of London for access to a range of doctors and medical treatments, it gave Joanna the best of both worlds.[432]

Henry's role with the APS appears to have lasted for just over a year.[433] It allowed him to work closely with prominent abolitionists, thinkers and philanthropists such as Samuel Gurney (president of the society after Buxton's death in 1845) and Dr Thomas Hodgkin (secretary), and support a cause that must have been important to both him and Joanna in light of their support of the London Missionary Society. As mentioned above, three years previously, Henry, as secretary for the Northwest Essex Auxiliary Branch of the Missionary Society, had highlighted his concern for Tahitians and their Queen, Pōmare IV, during their fight against a French protectorate. The plight of Tahitians was also an important political and humanitarian issue for which the APS advocated during this time. On at least two occasions (12 August 1846 and 8 February 1847) Henry, along with a deputation of other APS officials, met with the Principal Secretary of State for the British Colonial Department, Earl Grey (son of the former Prime Minister Earl Grey) to advocate for various suppressed groups including

the Tahitians.[434] At the 8 February 1847 meeting, the deputation presented an address against a charter granted to New Zealand which 'they conceived would be highly injurious to the natives'. They also used their time with Earl Grey to:

> plead with his Lordship against the execution of the project for conveying cargoes of labourers from the coast of Africa to the British plantations on the West Indies. They deplored the measure, as calculated to retard and defer the civilization of Africa, by removing her sons, who might most profitably be employed in the cultivation of her soil and the extension of her commerce. They also deprecated it as fraught with the greatest danger of giving activity and duration to the uniquities of the slave trade, which would be largely carried on by foreign nations when furnished with so fair an opportunity of retorting upon England the impolicy and insincerity of her conduct in relation to it.[435]

As the APS had closed their office in 1844 to save costs, Henry must have worked primarily from home, which had the advantage of giving him more time with Joanna.[436] His role involved dealing with an immense amount of correspondence from all over the globe containing reports of injustices and atrocities committed against indigenous people, and it is not inconceivable that Joanna, health permitting, may have assisted him in some way with this intellectually and emotionally challenging labour.

Along with his APS role, Henry was also busy writing his aforementioned book entitled, *Religious Principle in Daily Practice; as illustrated in the Life and Character of Mr. James Pavitt, of Clavering, Essex; for more than Thirty Years a beloved and honoured officer of the Independent Church in that Village*, in honour of the previously mentioned friend and church deacon who had died just months before they left Clavering.[437] The small book was published in July 1846 and the *Evangelical Magazine* described it as a 'simple and beautiful narrative of one who presented as bright and

pleasing a specimen of Christian excellence and consistency as it is common to witness in the present imperfect state.'[438] Once again, Joanna may have assisted him with this publication especially given how well she had known Pavitt. During this time, their St John's Wood home would have been a constant buzz of writing, editing and replying to correspondence on behalf of the APS, and presumably a refreshing break from nearly two decades of rural parish ministry. Henry was presumably paid by the APS for his work but, due to the Society's very limited budget, it appears that his role was only temporary. Certainly, no Assistant Secretary was listed at the APS's Annual Meeting on 17 May 1847.[439] Although Henry did attend this meeting, and proposed a resolution to thank the chairman, from that date onwards he appears to have left the APS's employ.[440]

What Henry did immediately afterwards is unclear but for a few months at least in the latter part of 1848, Henry took on another professional secretarial position becoming the pro tem Association Secretary for the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews.[441] This temporary role saw him attending meetings in churches and lecture halls across the country speaking about the ongoing efforts of this organisation.[442] However, after January 1849, there is no documented connection between Henry and this society, so it is likely that his role had terminated. Henry and Joanna continued to live in St John's Wood for the rest of the year, and likely for some of 1850 as well, after which they again left London, this time for Stowmarket and then in the Essex port town of Harwich.[443]

Move to Stowmarket and Harwich (c.1850–53)

The reason for Henry and Joanna's move to Stowmarket is not currently known but as Martin opined, 'It is likely that the country air was perceived to be good for her health'.[444] While we do not know the date of their arrival in Stowmarket, they were certainly living there by the time of the 1851 Census.[445] Taken on Sunday 30 March 1851, Joanna is recorded as 'Wife of

Revd. H. Bromley' and living with a 15-year-old servant named Mary Mumford at 4 Tavern Street, Stowmarket.[446] Henry is not recorded there but as a 'visitor' of James Dore, a smith and ironmonger, who lived some 34 miles away in Harwich, at 145 Church Street, with several children.[447] Henry's occupation is listed as 'Minister Providence Chapel' and his marital status is recorded as 'Unmarried'. The fact that Joanna and Henry were not together on the night of the census, and the fact that Henry was recorded as 'Unmarried', has led some authors to conclude that their marriage had failed, and they were living separately on a permanent basis.[448]

However, a much less sinister reason can be found if one looks at the circumstantial evidence, and one takes the 'Unmarried' marital status of Henry to be an administrative error on the part of the census taker. From a local paper report, we know that, on 16 February 1851, Henry was inducted as Minister of Providence Chapel, the newly established Congregational Church in Harwich.[449] Having no physical building of its own, its services were held in a large warehouse; and having no manse, Henry and Joanna needed to find a suitable new home for themselves.[450] Until they did so, they likely remained in Stowmarket, with Henry commuting to Harwich to preach in the Providence Chapel, begging a bed from church members on Sunday nights before returning home on Monday mornings to be with Joanna for the rest of the week. This scenario finds indirect confirmation in the Census when Henry is listed as a 'visitor' to the Dore family home rather than being recorded as their 'lodger'.

In fact, thanks to a newly discovered document, we can now prove that Joanna did not remain living alone in Stowmarket abandoned by her husband but rather moved to Harwich to be with Henry by summer 1851. A hitherto unnoticed entry in the Clavering Church Book, dated 3 August 1851, records that a letter had been sent to 'the Church of Christ at Harwich under the Pastoral care of the Rev'd Henry Bromley' formally transferring Joanna's church

membership from Clavering to Harwich, and warmly recalling Joanna's pastoral work alongside that of her husband:

> We cannot however do this without expressing our high esteem for Mr & Mrs Bromley & our grateful remembrances of the many years of peaceful and useful labour which were spent by Mr & Mrs Bromley in the midst of us.[451]

From the fact that the Annual Assembly of the Congregational Union lists Henry as a delegate from Harwich in May 1853, it can be deduced that he was still the pastor of Providence Chapel that year although this is the last known reference for the couple in Harwich.[452]

Final relocation to London (1853–57)

The reason for Henry's attendance at the 1853 Annual Assembly of the Congregational Union was to present his plan for an insurance policy to assist the widows of Congregational ministers, their young children and unmarried daughters.[453] There is evidence from at least 1850 that Henry had drafted a blueprint for such an insurance society, after which he became dedicated to its implementation.[454] British Congregational clergymen in the nineteenth century were often poorly paid and a minister's death could leave his dependents in poverty.[455] As a Congregational minister's wife, Joanna would have understood the importance of this cause and likely fully supported it. Henry's proposal to the Annual Assembly was successful and, on 13 December 1853, the Congregational Pastors' Assurance Aid Society was established with Henry as Secretary.[456]

Due to his new position, Henry and Joanna left Harwich and moved back to London for the final time: by December 1853, Henry was once again listed as a member of the Congregational Board and as residing at '21, Benyon-terrace, Buckingham-road, De Beauvoir Town'.[457] Henry is recorded as living at this address from 1853 until 1857,[458] and

we know that Joanna lived here with him as this is the address listed on her death certificate of 10 March 1857.[459] Thus it was that the couple lived out their last four years together at 21 Benyon Terrace in De Beauvoir Town, near Dalston, Hackney. De Beauvoir Town was originally designed in the 1820s to be an ornately laid out suburb for the upper and middle classes but by the 1830s the plan had been downgraded and 'more modest homes suitable for clerks in the nearby City' were built, a situation that still pertained when Joanna and Henry lived there in the mid-1850s.[460] Buckingham Road is still lined with modest terraces and semi-detached houses built around the 1840s. Their terraced home would have been recently built in a simple but elegant early Victorian style with an adequately sized garden. In his new secretarial role, Henry would have had a straightforward commute down the Kingsland Road to his office at the Congressional Library on Blomfield Street (now Blomfield Road), Finsbury, adjacent to New Broad Street and the Anti-Slavery Society office. During this time Henry also took on the role as Secretary for the Protestant Union, another insurance policy society but one open to all Protestant ministers.[461]

It is not known how Joanna spent her last few years. She was now approaching sixty and her delicate health may have limited both her energy and mobility. Fortunately, Joanna and Henry's home was in a peaceful location with green and airy streets despite the surrounding areas of Hackney becoming increasingly engulfed in crowded suburban sprawl. Little is currently known of Joanna's social relationships during her life, but there is evidence of a close friendship during her final years with a Mrs Sarah Durrant (1804–1882), who is recorded as with Joanna when she died and who later registered her death.[462] Sarah lived nearby at 3 Prospect Place on Mortimer Road, also in De Beauvoir Town.[463] Significantly, careful examination and cross-referencing of census data and birth and death records reveal that Sarah Durrant and her family knew Henry and Joanna from their time in Harwich. Sarah Durrant (née Burton) was baptised at Bathside Chapel, another Congregational church in

Harwich, on 15 June 1804.[464] In the 1851 census, Sarah was listed as living with her husband, Joseph Durrant, a grocer, and their two adult children, William and Sarah Ann, on Church Street, next door to the Dore family where Henry Bromley was staying at the time.[465] If Sarah Durrant remained a Congregationalist, she may well have attended Providence Chapel when Henry was pastor there in the early 1850s. If so, she may have befriended Joanna, given that they were near the same age. In summer 1853, the Durrant family's shop and home on Church Street was advertised for sale, indicating that this was when the Durrants moved to London – around the same time as Joanna and Henry.[466]

Was it really a coincidence that the Durrants and the Bromleys moved from Harwich to De Beauvoir Town in the same year, remaining close neighbours, or was the double-move thanks to one family encouraging the other to relocate with them, so as to maintain their close friendship? The 1861 census reveals that the Durrant family remained living at 3 Prospect Place after Joanna's death: while Sarah is recorded as having no occupation, her husband is listed as a 'retired butcher', their son, William, as a baker, and their daughter, Sarah Ann, as a dress-maker.[467] According to an 1859 advertisement in the *Shoreditch Observer*, Sarah's son, William, ran a bakery from their home on Prospect Place.[468] Sarah must have been very close to Joanna given that she was present when she died, and it is not unreasonable to think of her keeping Joanna company during her final years, perhaps helping to nurse her, and bringing her edible delicacies from her son's shop.

Joanna Vassa Bromley's death and burial (March 1857)

Joanna Vassa Bromley died at her Buckingham Road home on 10 March 1857, a month shy of her 62nd birthday.[469] No will has yet been found for her which likely means that, unlike her mother, Joanna had no marriage settlement.[470] Joanna's death was reported by Sarah Durrant, its cause recorded as uterine disease and subacute peritonitis, a painful and often

debilitating condition where the lining of the abdominal wall, intestines, uterus or the abdominal organs is enflamed.[471] While Osborne suggested that Joanna's uterine disease 'could have been brought on by fibroids or endometriosis' or 'could have been cancer or complications from a birth', Martin wondered whether 'Joanna's condition may have been caused by repeated unsuccessful pregnancies, or by complications during childbirth.[472] It is not known if Joanna ever fell pregnant but thanks to NWB's meticulously detailed 'Memorial Books' and other records, we can be sure that she never had a pregnancy that led to the birth of a living child or else he would surely have referenced it. While some commentators have taken the fact that Sarah Durrant registered Joanna's death to mean that Henry was not with his wife when she died, this is not necessarily true as anyone present at a death was legally able to register it, and Sarah may have taken on this administrative responsibility to aid a grieving Henry.[473]

A few days after Joanna's death, a notice to this effect was published in several papers. *The Cambridge Chronicle*, *The Bury and Norwich Post* and *The Ipswich Journal* all carried a similarly-worded announcement: 'March 10, at 21, Benyon-terrace, Buckingham-road, London, in the 62nd year of her age, Joanna, the beloved wife of the Rev. Henry Bromley, daughter of Gustavus Vassa, the African, and ward of the late John Audley, Esq.; some years since a well known and highly-respected resident in this town [/of Cambridge].'[474] Death notices for Joanna were also published in four national Nonconformist/ Dissenting newspapers: *The British Banner*, *The British Standard*, *The Nonconformist* and *The Patriot*.[475] Once again, the notices were almost identical: 'BROMLEY. – March 10, in the 62nd year of her age, Joanna, the beloved wife of the Rev. Henry Bromley, Secretary of the Protestant Union, and formerly for many years pastor of the Independent Church, Clavering, Essex.'[476]

On 16 March 1857, Joanna was buried in Abney Park Cemetery, a recently created non-denominational cemetery in Stoke Newington, where many other well-known Nonconformists, missionaries and anti-slavery sympathisers had begun to be buried.[477] At an unknown point after her death, Henry commissioned an elegantly restrained white stone grave monument for her: classicising in style, and accomplished in its carving, it consists of an obelisk crowned by an *all'antica* cinerary urn adorned with a large floral swag and a piece of cascading drapery (**fig. 14**). [478] The front side was carved with a suitably modest inscription, presumably devised by Henry, which reads: 'In memory of Joanna, the beloved wife of the Rev. Henry Bromley, and only surviving child of the late Gustavus Vassa, the African'. It is poignant that Henry later chose to be buried there, together with his second wife.[479]

[INSERT FIG. 14 HERE]

After Henry's death in 1878, his anonymous biographer paid tribute to Joanna, recording how, 'he had married Miss Joanna Vassa, a daughter of the then well-known, and still well-remembered, Gustavus Vassa, the African. This lady retained a high place, not only in Mr Bromley's regards, but in the admiration of his father and family. It was a very happy union.'[480] Although our new research proves how misled the biographer was regarding the esteem in which NWB had held Joanna, it also proves how true his statements were regarding the 'very happy union' of Joanna and Henry. Despite external pressures (including periods of unemployment for Henry and prolonged bouts of ill-health for Joanna, and the permanent ill-feeling and racist attitudes of NWB), they appear to have been devoted to each for the entirety of their acquaintance, which spanned some 44 years, from spring 1813 until spring 1857, and enjoyed a happy and loving marriage.

Conclusion

Like her mother, Susannah Cullen Vassa, the life of Joanna Vassa Bromley was soon forgotten after her death.[481] With the passage of time, the Bromley grave became neglected, the memorial stone toppled over and the inscriptions, worn to near illegibility by the elements, were lost in the cemetery overgrowth. Perhaps Joanna's life would still be unnoticed had it not been for the passion and curiosity of Olaudah Equiano scholar, Professor Vincent Carretta, and his wife, Pat, whose rediscovery of Joanna's memorial in October 2004 sparked a greater public interest in her life story.[482] Shortly after, a Cambridge-based organisation commissioned Joanna's biography to be written by Angelina Osborne, bringing further attention to both Joanna and her father.[483] Due to a massive collective public effort, Joanna's gravestone has now been restored, grade-II listed and her existence remembered.[484]

Unlike the high-profile abolitionist work of her father, who made his radical political and socio-cultural opinions clear through the spoken and written word, Joanna Vassa Bromley, as a middle-class woman of colour, was not permitted to use her voice in the public socio-political sphere of early nineteenth-century Britain. That said, she appears to have adopted a similar kind of low-key radical activism to her mother. Joanna Vassa Bromley was a resilient modern woman, who knew her own mind, defied the prejudices and patriarchal control of her father-in-law to marry the man she loved, and steadfastly assisted him in his work that sought to bring equity to the colonised and dispossessed. As such, she deserves to be written back into Victorian cultural narratives, her life-story and personal experiences of integration and belonging being so divergent from but of equal interest to those hitherto better known ones, for example, Mary Prince (1788–after 1833), Mary Seacole (1805–1881), and Sarah Forbes Bonetta (c.1843–1880).[485] We hope that our archival, biographical and prosopographical research into the 'interesting narratives' of Olaudah's wife and daughters will provide new avenues and impetus for further examination of Olaudah's Cambridgeshire

family and private life, as well as that of other under-researched women in nineteenth-century Britain, interpreted through diverse lenses, including Black history and the history of British multiculturalism, feminist history and socio-cultural history as well as race and gender studies.

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Olaudah Equiano, Bill Richmond and Moses Roper. She holds both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in art history. Email: **davdama7@gmail.com**

Notes to readers

Abbreviations

CA:	Cambridgeshire Archives, Ely
CC:	Cambridgeshire Collection, Cambridge Central Library, Cambridge
CC&J:	*Cambridge Chronicle and Journal*
CCED:	Clergy of the Church of England Database: https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/
CHFHS:	Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire Family History Society
CUL:	Cambridge University Library, Cambridge
ERO:	Essex Record Office, Chelmsford
HA:	Huntingdonshire Archives, Huntingdon
LPL:	Lambeth Palace Library, London
MSRCC:	Moorland Spingarn Research Center Collection, Howard University Library, Washington, D.C.
SA:	Suffolk Archives, Bury St Edmunds
TNA:	The National Archives, Kew
Venn:	University of Cambridge Alumni Database

Dedication and Acknowledgements

This article is dedicated in loving admiration to the Rev'd Eleanor Whalley, Vicar of Soham and Rural Dean for the Ely Deanery, and Dr Carol Brown-Leonardi (Open University, Department of Geography and Global Studies; Founder and Chair of the African Caribbean Research Group, Cambridge; and Legacies of Windrush in Cambridgeshire Project Lead).

We would like to thank many colleagues for their expert help with our research enquiries, especially Elizabeth Stazicker (Archivist, Ely Cathedral and King's School, Ely); Laura Housden (CA); Frank Bowles, Kevin Roberts, Elizabeth Savage and Liam Sims (CUL); Kayleigh Miller (LPL); Christina Vortia (MSRCC); Desmond Crone and Bridget Hanley (SA); Jess Nelson (TNA); and Tomas Brown (PhD candidate, Faculty of History, Cambridge University). We are most grateful to Matthew Abel, Carol Brown-Leonardi, Vincent Carretta, Amy Erickson, Emma Jones, Paul Lovejoy, Clare Midgley, Robert Pope, Elizabeth Stazicker and Helen Weller for their expert input into earlier drafts. We would also like to extend our sincere thanks to June Purvis, Editor, for her encouragement and patience in bringing this article to fruition, and to our anonymous peer-reviewers for their insightful feedback.

Names and spellings

The spellings of names vary between historical documents. We have opted for 'Susannah Cullen' as per her baptismal record (variations include 'Susan', 'Susanna', 'Susanah'; and 'Cullin'), 'Anna Maria Vassa' (variations include 'Anne Mary', 'Anna Mary'; and 'Vasa') and Joanna (also spelled 'Johanna'). We refer to Susannah's mother as 'Ann Jones' (also spelled 'Anne') to distinguish her from Susannah's sister, Anne Cullen. We have opted to call our male protagonist by the African version of his name Olaudah Equiano (see note 3 for reasons).

[1] *The Public Advertiser*, 28 January 1788, 1-2: 'To J. T. [James Tobin] Esq; Author of the BOOKS called CURSORY REMARKS & REJOINDER'. Published in Karlee Anne Sapoznik, ed., *The Letters and Other Writings of Gustavus Vassa (Olaudah Equiano, the African): Documenting the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2013), 96-7.

[2] Labinjo's *Ode to Equiano* series was shown by Chapter Art Gallery, Cardiff (26 March–3 July 2022): https://www.joylabinjo.com/2022/ode-to-olaudah-equiano-2022 (accessed 17 July 2025). For critical fabulation, see Niru Ratnam, 'Kimathi Donkor: rethinking canonical history paintings through critical fabulation' in *Rise up: Resistance, Revolution, Abolition*, ed. Victoria Avery and Wanja Kimani (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2025), 56-9.

[3] By which name, 'Olaudah Equiano' or 'Gustavus Vassa', should our protagonist be called? 'Olaudah' was the Igbo name given to him at birth by his parents; 'Equiano' derives from 'Ikwuano', the four clans with which he was associated, his specific clan being 'Ariam'. 'Gustavus Vas[s]a' is the third and final European name imposed on him by an enslaver, and the one he used during his life in Europe. Having been christened as such, it appears on all legal documents and is the name by which his contemporaries knew him. He used both names in his autobiography: as the caption under his authorised frontispiece portrait and on its titlepage. We have opted to use 'Olaudah Equiano' here to avoid confusion with his earlier Swedish royal namesake, and because (even if historically inaccurate) this is how most people know him today. For recent discussion of his two names, see Paul E. Lovejoy, 'Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa — What's in a Name?', *Atlantic Studies* 9, no. 2 (2024): 165-84. Debate is ongoing as to whether Equiano was born in Igboland, as Equiano claims in his autobiography, or in South Carolina, as a couple of key documents, including his baptismal record, state. See Vincent Carretta, *Equiano, the African. Biography of a Self-Made Man,* rev. ed. (London: University of Georgia Press, 2022) and Paul E. Lovejoy, 'Where was Gustavus Vassa, also Known as Olaudah Equiano, Born? Revisiting an Old Question', *Slavery & Abolition* (October 2024), DOI: 10.1080/0144039X.2024.2408129.

[4] For a recent summary overview of Equiano and his autobiography, see Victoria Avery, 'Introducing Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African' in Avery and Kimani, *Rise up,* 20-29. The most complete and thorough assessment of Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* remains Carretta's 2005 monographic study, reprinted in a revised edition in 2022.

[5] Equiano's final will of 28 May 1796 is housed in TNA, PROB 11/1289/78. It was first published in Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*, ed. Vincent Carretta, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin Publishing Group, 2003), 373-5; see also Sapoznik, *Letters and Other Writings*, 9-14; and digital version in 'Vassa's Documents Database':

https://www.equianosworld.org/documents.php?title=&Category%5B%5D=Wills&from=&to=&view=0&search=0&fullid=162#app_focus; accessed 17 July 2025). The probate version is in CA, 132/B/10.

[6] https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/thomas-gainsborough-portrait-of-the-artist-with-his-wife-and-daughter and https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/thomas-gainsborough-the-painter-s-daughters-chasing-a-butterfly respectively (both accessed 17 July 2025).

[7] https://rammcollections.org.uk/collections/3a0f66f6-b858-35f3-9e52-f7122e08b132/ (accessed 17 July 2025). For recent discussion about the sitter's contested identity, see Victoria Avery and Jake Subryan Richards, 'Who gets remembered and why?' in *Black Atlantic: Power, People, Resistance*, ed. Victoria Avery and Jake Subryan Richards (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2023), 14.

[8] Joy Labinjo states: 'My work is fundamentally about my British-Nigerian heritage and what that experience means. I work in series, working between historical references and my lived experiences as a way of documenting. I am political because my very existence is politicised, by extension the works are too.': www.joylabinjo.com (accessed 17 July 2025).

[9] https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/plan-your-visit/exhibitions/rise-up (accessed 17 July 2025). It was also selected as the front cover for the accompanying exhibition catalogue: Avery and Kimani, *Rise Up*.

[10] This grassroots campaign was led by the Cambridge African Network (CAN) and Cambridge Circles of Change, with support from The Equiano Society, London, Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and the Windrush Foundation: http://equianobridge.org.uk/home/. See Isaac Ayamba, 'Equiano and his account of the transatlantic sea voyage', in Avery and Richards, *Black Atlantic*, 94-7 (esp. 97).

[11] https://standrews-chesterton.org/the-equiano-family-project-at-st-andrews/ (accessed 17 July 2025).

[12] Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, The African, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano… Written by Himself,* 5th ed. (Edinburgh, 1792), 359.

[13] Carretta, *Equiano Biography*, 2005 ed., 347-67 with discussion dispersed intermittently throughout; and Donna Martin, *Soham at the Time of the Abolition, 'Olaudah': The Life Story of Olaudah Equiano*, (Soham, 2008), 40-4.

[14] Angelina Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter: The Life of & Times of Joanna Vassa, Daughter of Olaudah Equiano, Gustavus Vassa, the African* (London: Krik Krak, 2007). Quotation from the book's back cover. It was commissioned by Cambridge-based Momentum Arts, with Heritage Lottery funding, as part of its *Untold Stories Arts and Heritage Project* recording the lives and experiences of Cambridgeshire's Black and Minority Ethnic People.

[15] Katie Sweeting, *Remnant* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2024).

[16] Pearl Nunn, 'Visible and Vocal: Black Women in Eighteenth Century Britain, c. 1707–1834' (PhD diss., University of Newcastle, Australia, School of Humanities and Social Science, 2023), especially 32, 160-2 and 169-74. On p. 172, Nunn commented, 'although little has been written about her, Joanna Vassa deserves more recognition as a significant figure in early nineteenth-century Black British history.'

[17] Nunn, 'Visible and Vocal', 24. For micro biography, see: Carlo Ginzburg, John Tedeschi, Anne C. Tedeschi, 'Microhistory, two or three things that I know about it', *Critical Inquiry*, 20 (1993), 10-35. For examples of micro-biographical analysis, see: Kathleen Chater, *Untold Histories: Black People in England and Wales during the period of the British Slave Trade, c.1660–1807* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); Miranda

Kaufmann, *Black Tudors: The Untold Story* (London: Oneworld, 2017); and Stephen Bourne, *War to Windrush: Black Women in Britain 1939–48* (London: Jacaranda Books, 2018).

[18] Michael E. Jirik, 'Beyond Clarkson: Cambridge, Black Abolitionists, and the British anti-slave trade campaign', *Slavery & Abolition* 41, no. 4 (2020): 748-71; and Matthew Abel, 'Edward Ind (1751–1808): Brewer, Poet, Abolitionist', *Brewery History*, no. 190 (2022): 44-61.

[19] Nupur Chaudhuri, Sherry J. Katz and Mary Elizabeth Perry, eds., *Contesting Archives: Finding Women in the Sources,* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010), esp. xiv-xix.

[20] Lucy Bland and Katharina Rowold, eds., *Reconsidering Women's History: Twenty Years of the Women's History Network*, eds. (London: Routledge, 2015), 10.

[21] Our new research is based on holdings in/content from: Cambridgeshire Archives, Ely [CA]; Cambridgeshire Collection, Cambridge Central Library, Cambridge [CC]; *Cambridge Chronicle and Journal* [*CC&J*]; Clergy of the Church of England Database: https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/ [CCED]; Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire Family History Society [CHFHS]; Cambridge University Library, Cambridge [CUL]; Essex Record Office, Chelmsford [ERO]; Lambeth Palace Library, London [LPL]; London Archives, [LA]; Moorland Spingarn Research Center Collection, Howard University Library, Washington, D.C. [MSRCC]; Suffolk Archives, Bury St Edmunds [SA]; The National Archives, Kew [TNA].

[22] Victoria Avery, 'Olaudah Equiano and Cambridge' in Avery and Kimani, *Rise Up*, 86-107; and our *Rise Up* public programme talk, 'Equiano and his Cambridgeshire Family' co-delivered with Dr Carol Brown-Leonardi on 15 May 2025 at the Fitzwilliam Museum.

[23] On 27 February 1792, Olaudah Equiano wrote of his forthcoming marriage to his friend, George Walker, thus: '& I now mean as it seem Pleasing to my Good God! — to […[take me a Wife […]'. See below, for further discussion.

[24] Dido Belle was the daughter of a British Navy Captain and an enslaved West Indian woman, Maria Belle, who was raised in the London household of her paternal great-uncle, William Murray, 1st Earl of Mansfield. Traditionally believed to have been born in the Caribbean, she was hitherto regarded as perhaps the best known of hundreds of elite mixed-race children born in British colonial territories to elite white British men and enslaved African women or freeborn women of colour and sent to Britain for education, work and marriage. However, according to recently published research, Dido Belle was actually born in England, see Gretchen Gerzina, 'The Georgian Life and Modern Afterlife of Dido Elizabeth Belle', in *Britain's Black Past*, ed., Gretchen Gerzina (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2020), 161-178; and Gretchen Gerzina, *Black England: A Forgotten Georgian History* (London: John Murray, 2022), 103-6. For further discussion of Jamaican-born, mixed-race children, see Daniel Livesay, *Children of Uncertain Fortune: Mixed-Race Jamaicans in Britain and the Atlantic Family, 1733–1833* (University of North Carolina Press: 2018). Anne Sancho (1733–1817), wife of businessman, composer and writer Ignatius Sancho (c.1729–1780), is another example of an eighteenth-century British Black woman of the middling-class. Like Joanna Vassa and Dido Elizabeth Belle, Anne was also born in England but, unlike them, her marriage was not inter-racial as both she and her husband were people of colour. For further discussion of Anne Sancho, see Montaz Marché, '"Diamond in the Dirt": The Experiences of Anne Sancho in Eighteenth-Century London', in *Many Struggles: New Histories of African and Caribbean People in Britain*, ed., Hakim Adi (London: Pluto Press, 2023), 9-25. We are grateful to Amy Erickson for this reference.

[25] For Jane Harry Threscher, see Judith Jennings, 'Threscher and Knowles Speak Out For Liberty in Jamaica and England' in *Free at Last? Reflections on Freedom and the abolition of the British Atlantic Slave Trade*, ed. Cecily Jones and Amar Wahab (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2011); and Nunn, 'Visible and Vocal', 160-8.

[26] For example, Silvia Woodcock (d. 1788), a working-class woman of colour who operated as a market-gardener in Enfield, who married a white labourer called William Woodcock in Cheshunt c.1778, and by whom she was fatally assaulted in 1788: see Nunn, 'Visible and Vocal', 136, 138, 145-55; and Kathleen Chater, 'Job Mobility amongst Black People in England and Wales during the Long Eighteenth Century', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 28 (2010), 113-130. Nunn, 'Visible and Vocal', 156-8 also discusses Amelia Lewsham, a white-skinned woman of colour who married a white man.

[27] Gretchen Gerzina, *Black London: Life before Emancipation* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1995), 22; Gerzina, *Black England*, 22-3, 54-6; David Olusoga, *Black and British: A Forgotten History* (Macmillan 2016; edn. consulted Picador, 2021), 110. Speaking about the propaganda of Edward Long and others on the dangers and immorality of racial mixing, Olusoga further comments that this 'might be taken as evidence that what they really feared was white people who did not share their racism. That they felt the need to complain about the popularity of black men with white women again suggests that there were many people who did not share their views.': Olusoga, *Black and British*, 110.

[28] James Tobin, *Cursory Remarks* (London, 1785), 118.

[29] For further discussion of the Black presence in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Britain, inter-racial marriage and race theory, see the published research of James Walvin, Gretchen Gerzina, Jennifer Germann, Kathy Chater, Cassander Smith, Edward L. Robinson, Simon Newman and Clare Midgley among others. For specific articles, see Bibliography of British & Irish History (accessed 28 July 2025).

[30] Abel, 'Edward Ind', 53-4.

[31] Equiano's income in the late 1780s and 1790s was based mainly on a combination of subscriptions to future editions of his *Interesting Narrative* and on-the-spot sales of existing copies sold by himself or independent book sellers. As Walvin states: 'Thanks to Equiano's energetic promotional efforts the *Narrative* sold well, helping to provide the author with a modest estate.': James Walvin, 'Equiano, Olaudah [Gustavus Vassa]', (c. 1745–1797), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (8 August 2024): https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-5702 (accessed 27 July 2025).

[32] For a useful timeline of Olaudah's activities, including his book tours, see 'Appendix 2: Vassa Chronology' in Sapoznik, *Letters and Other Writings*, 205-17 (esp. 211 onwards, which covers 1789–1857).

[33] 'Ely, Holy Trinity Parish Church, Composite Register 1753–80', under 'Baptisms', n.p., under 24 May 1762, CA, P67/1/5. Consecrated in 1362/7 but not completed until 1359/60, Holy Trinity (originally Holy Cross) moved from a lean-to structure against the Cathedral's north wall into the Lady Chapel in 1566, a location it occupied until 1938; see *The Historic Towns of Cambridgeshire. An Extensive Urban Survey: Ely*, Draft Report (Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Unit, 17 January 2001), 22. For an engraved floorplan of Ely cathedral, incorporating Holy Trinity church and recording the Rev'd Thomas Watkins as Precentor, published in November 1770, when the Cullen family were congregants, see CUL: Views.x.3 54. For a later visual record

of Holy Trinity's interior (south-west view), see Herbert Leo Felton's photograph taken for the National Buildings Record, c.1920–41: Historic England Archive (AA80/05544).

[34] Ann was baptised on 17 December 1728 at the parish church of St Peter's in Myddle, Shropshire. Her baptismal entry reads: 'Anne, d. of John & Susanna Jones, of Shotton'. See *Shropshire Parish Registers, Diocese of Lichfield*, vol. 19 (Shropshire Parish Register Society, 1931), 170. Shotton is the name of the Watkins's family farm known as Shotton Hall where Ann's grandfather, William Watkins, lived at the time of her birth. According to the baptismal entry, it seems that Ann's parents, John and Susannah, lived on the large farm with him and that Ann was born there. For Ann Cullen's death notice, see: 'Fordham Parish Church, Register of Burials, 1813–1845', CA, P71/1/11, 19; and 'Deaths', *CC&J*, 28 January 1820. The latter lists her as 92 years old, which correlates with her baptismal record. For more on Ann Cullen's forebears and Shotton Hall, see Sir Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland*, 4th ed. (London, 1863), 1622; Rhys D. Dyson Whatmore, *A History of Shotton Hall Shropshire* (2008), https://www.myddle.net/muratest/assets/File/A%20History%20of%20Shotton%20Hall%20Shropshire-compressed.pdf (accessed 17 July 2025).

[35] Richard Gough, *Antiquities & Memoirs of the Parish of Myddle* (1701) and *Observations concerning the seats in Myddle Church and the families to which they belong* (1702). Unlike some local families in his books, Gough described the Watkins family as happy and loving and praised William Watkins's proficiencies as a farmer.

[36] Having attended Wem School, Shropshire, Watkins was sent to Cambridge, aged 18, matriculating at Trinity College in 1717. He was awarded the BA degree in 1720/1 and his MA in 1724, in between which he was ordained Deacon in 1722, and priested and appointed a Minor Canon of Ely Cathedral in 1723. Watkins held a string of clerical appointments in the Ely Diocese: Under Master of Ely School (1725–36); Diocesan Registrar (1733–76); Curate of Holy Trinity, Ely (1736–76); and Precentor of Ely Cathedral (1764; see CUL, EDC 2/2A/3, fol. 239 for his election to post). See also, CCED Person ID: 15764; Venn, s.v. 'Thomas Watkins', http://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk (accessed 17 July 2025); Dorothy M. Owen and Dorothea Thurley, eds., *The King's School Ely. A Collection of Documents relating to the History of the School and its Scholars*, Cambridge Antiquarian Records Society, vol. 5 (Cambridge, 1982). Although these appointments sound rather grand, apart from the Registrar role (which was sought after), all were usual for minor canons at Ely Cathedral, who often held several posts simultaneously as they were poorly remunerated. Our thanks to Elizabeth Stazicker for pointing this out.

[37] 'Will of Reverend Thomas Watkins, Clerk of Ely in the Isle of Ely, Cambridgeshire', 22 January 1776, TNA, PROB 11/1015/230. See also *CC&J*, 1 August 1789, 3. Ann Jones is listed herein as the daughter of his sister, Susannah. Watkins bequeathed £100 'to the child or children of my late nephew John Jones who shall be living at the end of ten months after my wife's decease if more than one share and share alike', which proves Ann Jones had a deceased brother.

[38] As Curate of Holy Trinity, Ely, Watkins was paid a quarterly stipend of £7 10s (on 1 January, 5 April, 5 July and 10 October each year) making an annual salary of £30: CUL, EDC 3/1/7 (accounts 1755–1789), n.p. under 'Stipendia Prælectori Theologico & Curatis' as well as an annual 'Augmentation' fee of £10: CUL, EDC 3/1/7 (accounts 1755–1789), n.p. under 'Solutiones certa'.

[39] For Watkins's first marriage to Martha Dowsing, see: 'Boyd's Marriage Index, 1538–1850', transcriptions from the Society of Genealogists, s.v. 'Thomas Watkins and Martha Dowsing'(1723, Ely, Cambridgeshire):

http://www.findmypast.co.uk (accessed 17 July 2025); 'Ely, Holy Trinity Parish Church, Composite Register 1727–53', 'Burials', n.p. ('Martha Watkins', 10 December 1745). For Watkins's second marriage to Mary Bringhurst, see: ibid., 'Marriages', n.p. ('The Revd Thomas Watkins and Mary Bringhurst', 13 January 1746/7), CA, P67/1/4. See also, Shirley Hall, *Holy Trinity Ely 1566–1938: Church and Parish* (2022), 221-2.

[40] For the contents of Watkins's home, see: 'Ely, Haddenham, Witchford, and Wentworth, in the Isle of Ely. To be Sold by Auction', *CC&J*, 29 December 1792. Elizabeth Stazicker has pointed out that 'though not very far from the Cathedral, [Watkins's home] was further away than most minor canons lived, demonstrating a certain level of wealth at least in Ely terms' (private email 31.1.25).

[41] TNA, PROB 11/1015/230.

[42] 'Westminster, London, England, Church of England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1558–1812' *Westminster Collection*, provided in association with the City of Westminster Archives Centre, s.v. 'Jarvis Cullen and Elenr Pugh' (mar. 5 September 1719, St James, Piccadilly); and 'George Cullen', (bap. 1 June 1721, St James, Piccadilly): http://www.findmypast.co.uk (accessed 17 July 2025). Due to the difficulty in deciphering the original record, Eleanor's surname has also been transcribed as 'Pease' and 'Lees' in different marriage sources. It is not clear which transcription is correct.

[43] 'Baptisms', fol. 84, s.v. 'James Cullin [sic]', 29 September 1725, *An Indexed Transcription of the Parish Registers of Wisbech St Peter, 1700–49* (CHFHS, 2008). According to national BMD records, Gervas/Gervis (spelling variants of Jarvis) Cullen was a name only found in the Upton and Newark-on-Trent areas of Nottinghamshire during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries suggesting our Jarvis Cullen was originally from this county.

[44] 'Ely, St Mary's Parish Church, Composite Register 1703–74', 'Baptisms', n.p. ('Gearvis Cullen', 28 July 1728), CA, P68/1/2.

[45] 'The under-mentioned Persons claiming the Benefit of the Act lately passed for the Relief of Insolvent Debtors', *The London Gazette*, no. 6783, 31 May 1729, https://www.thegazette.co.uk (accessed 17 July 2025).

[46] Private correspondence: 27.7.2025. For further discussion, see Alexander Wakelam, *Credit and Debt in Eighteenth-Century England - An Economic History of Debtors' Prisons* (Routledge: 2020); and ibid., 'Coverture and the Debtors' Prison in the long Eighteenth Century', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 44/4 (2021), 343-60.

[47] 'Ely, Holy Trinity Parish Church, Composite Register 1727–53', 'Burials', n.p. ('Ellen wife of Jarvis Cullen', 20 June 1732), CA, P67/1/4; ibid., 'Marriages', n.p. ('Jarvis Cullen and Sarah Pain', 12 February 1732/3), CA, P67/1/4; ibid., 'Marriages', n.p. ('Jarvis Cullen and Elizabeth Dickens', 5 May 1735); ibid., 'Burials', n.p. ('Jarvis Cullen', 6 March 1746/7). For the inventory of Jarvis Cullen of Ely Trinity, 26 May 1747, see CA, VAC 2:70 1747 CA Int.

[48] 'Boyd's Marriage Index, 1538–1850', transcriptions from Society of Genealogists, s.v. 'James Cullon [sic] and Mary Walton' (1749, Ely, Cambridgeshire), http://www.findmypast.co.uk (accessed 17 July 2025); 'Ely, Holy Trinity Parish Church, Composite Register 1727–53', 'Baptisms', n.p. ('James Cullen', 29 August 1750) CA, P67/1/4; ibid., 'Burials', n.p. ('James Cullen Infant of James', 20 June 1751) CA, P67/1/4; ibid., 'Burials', n.p. ('Mary Cullen wife of James', 26 October 1752) CA, P67/1/4.

[49] 'Ely, Holy Trinity Parish Church, Composite Register, 1727–53', 'Marriages', n.p. ('James Cullen and Anne Jones', 27 March 1753) CA, P67/1/4.

[50] 'Ely, Holy Trinity Parish Church, Composite Register, 1753–80', baptisms for nine children of James and Anne Cullen: James (b. 1754), William Watkins (b. 1756), Anne (b. 1758), Mary (b. 1760), Susannah (b. 1762), Helen (b. 1764), Mary (b. 1766), Elizabeth (b. 1768) and Thomas (b. 1772); Burials for three children: James (d. 1758), Mary (d. 1761) and Helen (d. 1773), CA P67/1/5.

[51] Private correspondence: 27.7.2025.

[52] Edmund Carter, *The History of the County of Cambridge, etc.* (Cambridge, 1753), 64.

[53] Ethel M. Hampson and T. D. Atkinson, 'Chapter 2: City of Ely' in Ralph B. Pugh (ed.), *A History of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely* (Oxford, 1953), 27-89 (esp. 32).

[54] Carter, *History of Cambridge*, 64.

[55] A Vision of Britain Through Time, 'Wesley in the Fens', https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/text/chap_page.jsp?t_id=J_Wesley&c_id=17 (accessed 17 July 2025).

[56] *The Historic Towns of Cambridgeshire. An Extensive Urban Survey: Ely*, Draft Report (Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Unit, 17 January 2001), 12.

[57] See especially: [1] CUL, EDC 3/1/7, vol. 1755–1789; [2] CUL, EDC 4/1/21, 'Book of materials and workmanship 1766'; and [3] CUL, EDC 4/2/24, 'Bills paid by F, Knowles from audit 1768 to Jan 1769. Our thanks to Elizabeth Stazicker for her help identifying these unpublished archival sources.

[58] CUL, EDC 3/1/7 n.p. under year and payment category, 'Solutiones certæ'.

[59] CUL, EDC 4/1/21, under date. See entries, for example, under 21 June 1766, 19 July 1766, and 28 August 1766.

[60] CUL, EDC 4/1/21, under date. See entries, for example, under 13 February 1766, 2 April 1766 and 19 September 1766.

[61] CUL, EDC 4/2/24.

[62] Board of Stamps: Apprenticeship Books. Country Registers, 1 August 1754 – 30 April 1757, TNA, IR 1/52, fol. 203, no. 19: this records the date of the articles as 29 September 1756, and 4 October 1756 as the date of payment. This has been digitised by Ancestry. Our thanks to Jess Nelson for her kind help locating this and the following two apprenticeship records.

[63] Board of Stamps: Apprenticeship Books. Country Registers, 1 April 1774 – 30 November 1775, TNA, IR 1/59, fol. 72, no. 11: this records the date of the articles as 29 December 1774, and 21 February 1775 as the date of payment. This has been digitised by Ancestry.

[64] Board of Stamps: Apprenticeship Books. Country Registers, 1 June 1781 – 31 March 1784, TNA, IR 1/62, fol. 7, no. 9: this records the date of the articles as 14 April 1781, and 28 August 1781 as the date of payment. This has been digitised by Ancestry. Given that James Cullen was buried on 21 August 1781, it must have been his oldest son, William Watkins, who made the payment of stamp duty on Samuel Newborn's indentures.

[65] 'To the Creditors and Debtors of William Watkins Cullen, of Ely, Ironmonger', *CC&J*, 7 March 1817. A later visual impression of this thriving commercial street is given in a c.1900 photograph of Fore Hill, Ely, looking uphill towards the market square and Cathedral: Cambridgeshire Collection, Cambridge Central Library (Y.Ely.K0 21632).

[66] 'Valuable Freehold Estate at Ely, Cambridgeshire', *CC&J*, 24 March 1815.

[67] The Chapter record of 25 November 1762 states 'That William Watkins Cullen be chorister at next Quarter day in one of the vacant Places' and his name is recorded in the Chorister admittance register under 1763: CUL, EDC 2/2A/3, fol. 232; and CUL, EDC 2/9/2, n.p., 'Choristæ', under 1763.

[68] Ibid., under 1773.

[69] As Amy Erickson points out, if Susannah Cullen worked in her father's shop, 'This means she would have learned to read, write, and cipher (calculate with arabic numerals). All these skills were essential to work in a shop to write bills and receipts' (private correspondence: 27.7.2025).

[70] CUL, EDC 2/9/1 (untitled book containing draft oaths for members of the Cathedral foundation and an alphabetical list of boys nominated to the foundation, late seventeenth century until 1812), n.p., under 'C': 'W[illia]m Watkins Cullen Chor[ister] aged 7 — Oct[ober] 5. 1763 — 1[st Prebend, i.e. Henry Heaton]'. See also CUL, EDC 2/22: recorded in an alphabetical list of scholars (under surname) admitted to the King's School, Ely, between 1698 and 1815, compiled by James Bentham, and written at the back of stray memoranda about cathedral finances. Published in Owen and Thurley, *The King's School Ely*, 77-100 (Cullen entry on p. 82).

[71] Susannah subscribed to the 3rd and 4th editions, being listed as 'Miss Susan Cullen' in both.

[72] It has been estimated that in late eighteenth-century England, only 40% of women could sign their own name (taken as an indicator of literacy), and this percentage was often much lower in rural areas: Roger Chartier, 'The Practical Impact of Writing' in *The Book History Reader*, ed. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 118-42.

[73] Watkins's will is dated 11 August 1773; his first codicil (10 September 1773); his second codicil (26 July 1774); his third and final codicil (9 May 1775). Having died on 12 January 1776, his will was proved ten days later (22 January 1776).

[74] TNA, PROB 11/1015/230.

[75] As Elizabeth Stazicker observed: 'it could simply reflect the fact that he wished to ensure that Ann and her children were secure from any business debts of James, in a period when business was not secure, and when a businessman struck down to major injury or death whilst still in business might, in course of business, be substantially indebted to a supplier.' Private correspondence (31.1.25). As Stazicker further commented, Watkins ensured in one of his codicils that one William Johnson's clothes allowance was not subject to any vagaries of the income of his mother, Sarah, and there is no sign that he mistrusted Sarah Johnson (another beneficiary of his will). Indeed, Watkins's provisions were pretty standard, as seen, for example, in Amy Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (Routledge, 1993), 124.

[76] TNA, PROB 11/1015/230.

[77] Watkins's will reveals that, having been offended by Thomas Jones, he had to find an alternative legatee, and he may have felt that his youngest Cullen great-nephew, Thomas, was the best bet given that his great-nieces were likely to marry thereby dispersing his property among different families. We are grateful to Elizabeth Stazicker for these alternative interpretations (private correspondence: 31.1.25).

[78] 'Ely, Holy Trinity Parish Church, Composite Register 1753-80', 'Burials', n.p. ('Revd Thomas Watkins', 16 January 1776) CA, P67/1/5.

[79] Bentham was a graduate of St John's College, Cambridge, who served at Holy Trinity from 1776 until his death in 1792. CCED, ID 4868; Venn, ID BNTN738G.

[80] 'Ely Holy Trinity Parish Church, Composite Register', 1781–99, 'Burials', n.p. ('James Cullen', 21 August 1781) CA, P67/1/6.

[81] 'Ann Cullen returns her most grateful thanks…', *CC&J*, 25 August 1781, 2.

[82] See Amy Louise Erickson, 'Wealthy businesswomen, marriage and succession in eighteenth-century London', *Business History* 66/1, 2024, 29-58; and https://citywomen.hist.cam.ac.uk/ (accessed 28 July 2025).

[83] 'Ann Cullen returns her most grateful thanks…', *CC&J*, 25 August 1781, 2.

[84] See especially: [1] 'Clark [sic] of the Works Accounts from Audit 1782 to Audit 1797', CUL, EDC 4/1/25; [2] 'Clerk of the Work: June 1798 ending Audit 1807,' CUL, EDC 4/1/26; [3] Vouchers 1558–1936, CUL, EDC 3/21; [4] vol. 1755–1789, CUL EDC 3/1/7; and [5] 'The Reverend The Dean and Chapter of Ely Church Account Beginning 1789 Ending 1818', CUL EDC 3/1/8. Our thanks to Elizabeth Stazicker for her help identifying these unpublished archival sources.

[85] See CUL, EDC 3/1/7: vol. 1755–89 n.p. and CUL, EDC 3/1/8: vol. 1789–1818 n.p. under 'Solutiones certæ'. Interestingly, the accounts still name his late father as being paid for this work in 1782 and 1783 even though James had died in August 1781. This *lapsus calami* is corrected in the 1784 accounts, when William Watkins Cullen's name first appears in connection with 'regulating the clock'. Specific payments for work on the clock are also noted in the Clerk of Work account books: CUL, EDC 4/1/25: for example, see entries under 7 December 1782, 30 December 1782, 1 June 1783, 15 July 1783, and 1 July 1787.

[86] See, for example, CUL, EDC 4/1/25, entries under 21 May 1783, under 16 May 1797 and under 22 May 1797.

[87] For example, CUL, EDC 4/1/25, entries under 23 March 1783 and 1 April 1797.

[88] For example, CUL, EDC 4/1/25, entries under 25 November 1782, 18 January 1783, 27 January 1783, 12 May 1783, 1 August 1787, 8 August 1787 and 29 September 1787.

[89] For example, CUL, EDC 4/1/25: entries under 14 July 1797 and 17 July 1797.

[90] For example, CUL, EDC 4/1/25: entries under 25 November 1782, 6 June 1787 and 6 December 1796.

[91] For example, CUL, EDC 4/1/25: entries under 20 April 1797 and 18 July 1797.

[92] For example, CUL, EDC 4/1/25: entries under 8 April 1783, 1-2 May 1783, 30 May 1783, 20 June 1783, 30 June 1783, 22 November 1796, 10 March 1797, 6 May 1797 and 2 August 1797.

[93] 'Ely Holy Trinity Parish Church, Composite Register, 1781–99', 'Marriages', n.p. ('William Watkins Cullen and Elisabeth Gray', 1 September 1785) CA, P67/1/6. This was published under 'Marriages', *CC&J*, 3 September 1785.

[94] 'Clerici Laici', n.p., under 16 June 1786, CUL, EDC 2/9/2. From 1786, William Watkins Cullen's name appears in the Cathedral's annual accounts under 'Organistae, Clericis Laicis & Choristis': CUL, EDC 3/1/7 (1755–1789), n.p. (under year), and CUL EDC 3/1/8: (1789–1818), n.p. (under year); and under 'Organistæ, Clericis Laicis & Choristis'. He was paid £2. 10s. quarterly (1 January, 5 April, 5 July and 10 October) making an annual stipend of £10. Income from the estates given to lay clerks is recorded in CUL, EDC 10/3A/1 (1778–1829). Calculations provided by Elizabeth Statzicker (private correspondence: 31.1.25). See also Nicholas Thistlethwaite, 'Music and liturgy 1660–1836' in *A History of Ely Cathedral*, ed. Peter Meadows and Nigel Ramsay (Suffolk and Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2003), 253.

[95] Thistlethwaite, 'Music and liturgy', 254.

[96] This exceptional length of service was recognised in his obituary: *Bury and Norwich Post,* 14 January 1829: 'Same day, at Ely Mr. William Cullen, the father of the Cathedral, having been upwards of forty years one of its Lay-Clerks'. See also 'Ely Cathedral', *CC&J*, 1 May 1829.

[97] 'Ely Holy Trinity Parish Church, Composite Register, 1781–99', 'Burials', n.p. ('Elizabeth Cullen', 17 November 1786), CA, P67/1/6.

[98] The British Independent Church (also known in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as the Congregational Church) was a Calvinist branch of Protestant Christianity associated with the theological beliefs held by the Puritans. In the mid-twentieth century, they were renamed the United Reformed Church. They were a Nonconformist/Dissenting denomination whose separation from the Church of England was rooted in the late sixteenth century. Here, the terms 'Independent' and 'Congregational' will often be used interchangeably but refer to the same denomination.

[99] For Nonconformism and its links to anti-slavery and abolition movements, see: Richard J. Helmstadter, 'The Nonconformist Conscience' in *The Conscience of the Victorian State*, ed. Peter Marsh (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1979), 135–72; David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 2003); and Alison Twells, '"We Ought to Obey God rather than Man": Women, Anti-Slavery, and Nonconformist Religious Cultures'; Julie Roy Jeffrey, 'Women Abolitionists and the Dissenting Tradition', both in *Women, Dissent, and Anti-Slavery in Britain and America, 1790–1865*, ed. Elizabeth J. Clapp and Julie Roy Jeffrey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); and Brycchan Carey and Geoffrey Plank, eds., *Quakers and Abolition*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2014).

[100] *The London Christian instructor or Congregational Magazine* 2, no. 20 (1819): 502; *The Historic Towns of Cambridgeshire. An Extensive Urban Survey: Ely*, Draft Report (Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Unit, 17 January 2001), 40-1.

[101] Donna Martin's claim that, 'The Cullen family were clearly non-conformists as they were the chief benefactors of Soham Methodist Chapel erected in the nineteenth century (their names are still visible on the foundation stones)' [Martin, *Olaudah*, 41], is, however, erroneous as these were erected by an unrelated family.

[102] 'Partnership Dissolved', *CC&J*, 9 February 1788.

[103] For this claim, see John Audley, 'Notes on Codicil of Gustavus Vassa's Will': CA, 132/B16 [hereafter: Audley, 'Notes on Codicil']. Found in Audley's personal papers, these notes appear to have been written circa 1815. For Mary's will, see 'Will of Susanna, wife of Vassa, of Soham (nee Cullen). 12 December 1795', CA, 132/B4.

[104] According to John Audley, 'Mr. Vitty' held Mary Cullen's will. See Audley, 'Notes on Codicil'. Given that Vitty is an unusual surname, he is likely to be the 'Mr Vitty' recorded in contemporaneous articles in the *CC&J*, who was a Cambridge-based solicitor who often worked for clients in the Ely area. That Mary's will was almost certainly drawn up in Cambridge or environs, makes it likely that this was also where any felonies were committed. In turn, this renders her unlikely to be the 'Mary Cullen' listed in the 1791 Middlesex gaol delivery papers: https://www.londonlives.org/browse.jsp?id=LMSMPS50869_n447-1&div=LMSMPS50869PS508690029#highlight. Mary Cullen was, after all, a common name at the time, particularly in London. Unfortunately, the whereabouts of Mary Cullen's will remains elusive.

[105] Martin, *Olaudah*, 42 suggested that since the name 'Cullen' or variations do not appear in the Criminal Register Indexes, Mary's criminal record must have been under a different name.

[106] A.F. Wareham and A.P.M. Wright, 'Soham: Nonconformity', in *A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely: Vol. 10, Cheveley, Flendish, Staine and Staploe Hundreds (North-Eastern Cambridgeshire)*, (London, 2002), 542-5. *British History Online* https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/cambs/vol10/pp542-545 (accessed 17 July 2025).

[107] Mac Dowdy, *'An Improving Town': The Buildings of Soham 1792–1807* (St Neots: Soham Action 4 Youth, 2007), 2 (statistics), 18. A.F. Wareham and A. P. M. Wright, 'Soham: Economic history', in *A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely: Volume 10, Cheveley, Flendish, Staine and Staploe Hundreds* (North-Eastern Cambridgeshire), (London, 2002), British History Online, https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/cambs/vol10/ (accessed 21 March 2025), 507-29. By c.1825, when volume 3 of *Marshall's Select Views in Great Britain &c.*, was published, Soham was recorded as having 2856 inhabitants and 'a well-frequented weekly market on Saturday' (vol. III, 132).

[108] Wareham and Wright, 'Soham: Economic history', 489-99.

[109] Dowdy, *Improving Town,* 18.

[110] 'Soham, St Andrew's Parish Church, Marriages Register, 1777–1812', fol. 64, entry no. 191, CA, P142/1/11.

[111] 'Soham, St Andrew's Parish Church, Marriages Register, 1777–1812', fol. 74, entry no. 220, CA, P142/1/11.

[112] 'Soham, St Andrew's Parish Church, Composite Register, 1788–1812', 'Baptisms', fol. 25, entry no. 61 (under 30 January 1794) and fol. 33, entry no. 6 (under 29 April 1795), CA, P142/1/5.

[113] 'Soham, St Andrew's Parish Church, Composite Register, 1788–1812', 'Burials', fol. 25, entry no. 54 (under 21 February 1796), CA, P142/1/5.

[114] 'Soham, St Andrew's Parish Church, Composite Register, 1788-1812', 'Burials', fol. 31, entry no. 3 (under 8 April 1798), CA, P142/1/5.

[115] Dr Williams's Library, https://dwl.ac.uk/index.php, (accessed 17 July 2025).

[116] John and Anne Fitches chose not to register the birth of either of their sons in the respective parish registers of Soham and Fordham, but rather in the General Register of Protestant Dissenters in Dr Williams's Library, and indeed had to wait until 1816 to do so. See Dr Williams's Library Registry; Registers of certificates, London, Denomination: Various: 1-4365, 1812–17, TNA, RG4/4662, nos. 3722 and 3723. These records give their respective place of birth as Soham and Fordham. Digital version in 'England & Wales, Non-Conformist and Non-Parochial Registers, 1567–1936', https://www.ancestry.co.uk (accessed 17 July 2025).

[117] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 7; Jirik, 'Beyond Clarkson', 762; Abel, 'Edward Ind', 51. Olaudah addressed his letter of thanks to Francis Hodson, the newspaper's proprietor, printer and publisher: *Cambridge Chronicle*, 1 August 1789, p. 3. For a reproduction of the letter, see Avery, 'Equiano and Cambridge', 95, fig. 62.

[118] John Bugg, 'The Other Interesting Narrative: Olaudah Equiano's Public Book Tour', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 121, no. 5 (2006): 1424-42 (esp. 1436). See also Carretta, *Equiano Biography*, 347; and Sapoznik, *Letters and Other Writings*, 212.

[119] Avery, 'Equiano and Cambridge', 95-6.

[120] Equiano *Narrative*, 1st ed. (1789), vol. II, 4-5.

[121] Aaron Crossley Hobart Seymour*, The Life and Times of Selina Countess of Huntingdon*, vol. II (1844), 295-6; Equiano *Narrative*, 9th ed. (1794), 278-89. Westminster Chapel, a former Presbyterian church, was acquired, enlarged and updated in 1773 through donations by Selena Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon, and other members of her Connexion for the Rev'd Peckwell. He was the minister for the chapel during the 1770s when

Equiano attended. Westminster Chapel was located on Princes Street (now Storey's Gate) in Westminster. In chapter 10 of his autobiography, Equiano also mentioned listening to the Rev'd William Romaine preach at Blackfriars. Like Peckwell, Romaine was also one of the Countess of Huntingdon's chaplains during this same period. The Countess of Huntingdon lived next to the Spa Fields Chapel (this is where she died in 1791), which she originally founded as one of her private chapels before her split from the Anglican Church when it became a Dissenting chapel under her name.

[122] Martin, *Olaudah*, 40-41. This may be something of a false distinction in that it was probably often difficult to distinguish between an anti-slavery talk and a Dissenting sermon. Equally passionate about both causes, Equiano could have been promoting sales of his autobiography while also preaching.

[123] 'Cambridge, April 20', *CC&J*, 21 April 1792; Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 7.

[124] 'Anti-slavery Soiree', *Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury*, 2 January 1847. Jonathan Priestman was a Quaker born in Malton, Yorkshire, son of David Priestman, who subscribed to Equiano's 7th edition.

[125] 'House of Lords, June 21', *Sheffield Register*, 28 June 1788.

[126] Carretta and Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, 2nd ed., 292.

[127] See CCED, https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/, 80651; and Venn, http://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk, WL762T (death date given as 1842).

[128] John Walsh and Ronald Hyam, 'Peter Peckard: Liberal Churchman and Anti-Slave Trade Campaigner', *Magdalene College Occasional Paper No. 16* (Cambridge: Magdalene College Publishing, 1998); Ronald Hyam, 'Magdalene, Anti-Slavery and the Early Human Rights Movement from the 1780s to the 1830s', *Magdalene College Occasional Paper No. 35* (Cambridge: Magdalene College Publishing, 2007); Jirik, 'Beyond Clarkson', passim; Abel, 'Edward Ind', 48-49; Avery, *Equiano and Cambridge*, 93 and 95; and Sabine F. Cadeau, 'Dark finance: the intertwined history of slavery and abolition at the University of Cambridge' in Avery and Kimani, *Rise Up*, 12-19. Peckard has frequently been posited as a possible 'go-between', for example, Paul Edwards, *Equiano's Travels* (London, 1967), xiv; https://equianosworld.org/associates-family.php?id=2#content; and Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 7, but without explaining how he could have known Susannah Cullen.

[129] Timothy Whelan, 'Coleridge and Robert Hall of Cambridge', *The Wordsworth Circle* 31, no. 1 (2000): 38. See also James E. Bradley, 'Religion and Reform at the Polls: Nonconformity in Cambridge Politics, 1774–1784', *Journal of British Studies* 23, no. 2 (Spring 1984), 55-78 (esp. 59-61).

[130] George Dyer, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Robert Robinson, Late Minister of the Dissenting Congregation, in Saint Andrew's Parish, Cambridge* (London, 1796), pp. 194-6, 259; and Abel, 'Edward Ind', 50-51 and 60, note 63.

[131] Equiano, *Narrative*, 1st ed., vol. II, 132.

[132] He would go on to subscribe to the next two editions.

[133] Bland is recorded as Baptist Minister in Soham from 1790 until 1801: see John Rippon's *The Baptist Annual Register,* for 1790, 1791, 1792, and part of 1793, 4; and the editions covering the years 'for 1798' until 'part of 1801'.

[134] Timothy D. Whelan, *Baptist Autographs in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester 1741–1845* (Macon, GA, 2009), 357. See also G.A. Catherall, 'Bristol College and the Jamaican Mission: A Caribbean

Contribution', *Baptist Quarterly* 35, no. 6 (April 1994): 294–302; and Timothy Whelan, 'Robert Hall and the Bristol Slave-Trade Debate of 1787–1788', *Baptist Quarterly* 38, no. 5 (January 2000): 212-24.

[135] Equiano proclaimed his availability for marriage in the first four editions of his autobiography: 1st edition (London, late March 1789), 237-8; 2nd edition (London, 24 December 1789), 240; 3rd edition (London, 30 October 1790), 341; and 4th edition (Dublin, 20 May 1791), 341. Equiano only expunged this sentence in the 5th edition (Edinburgh, June 1792), 342, by which point the marriage had taken place.

[136] Sapoznik*, Letters and Other Writings*, 32-4. Quoted in part by Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 7.

[137] Equiano, *Narrative*, 5th ed., 359.

[138] For a useful overview of marriage allegations, bonds and licences, see: https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Marriage_Allegations,_Bonds_and_Licences_in_England_and_Wales (accessed 17 July 2025).

[139] Marriage allegation for Gustavus Vassa and Susannah Cullen, dated 28 March 1792: LPL, FM I/130; Marriage bond for Gustavus Vassa and Susannah Cullen, dated 28 March 1792: LPL, FM II/183. We are grateful to Kayleigh Miller for help locating both unpublished documents.

[140] For the motivations of Equiano wishing to be regarded as a British gentleman, see Carretta*, Equiano Biography*, 320-25.

[141] See Amy Erickson, *Women and Property*, esp. Chapter 5, Part 3 'Wives'.

[142] As Abel explains, 'Wilberforce's first bill had been defeated in 1791, but the abolitionists had since redoubled their efforts and tried again. Parliament was inundated with 519 new petitions containing 390,000 signatures, around five times the number presented in 1788.': Abel, 'Edward Ind', 51-3 and 60, notes 71-74.

[143] For journey times, see travelintimes.org (accessed 27.7.2025), a historic online journey planner, created by the University of Cambridge, which allows users to plan journeys around England and Wales at three dates in time, c.1680, c.1830 and in 1911.

[144] 'Soham, St Andrew's Parish Church, Marriages Register, 1777–1812', fol. 74, entry no. 220, CA, P142/1/11. Pace Martin, *Olaudah*, 41, who mistranscribed the marriage certificate, stating it read, 'married in this Church by Licence from the House of Commons'. Prior to our research, the identity of Francis Bland was unknown.

[145] For further details, see Alice Reid's blog: https://www.campop.geog.cam.ac.uk/blog/2024/07/11/what-age-did-people-marry/. Their mother, Ann, had married when she was 25. We are grateful to Amy Erickson for pointing this out to us.

[146] *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 30 April 1792, 1.

[147] An image of the frontispiece and title-page spread of this 4th-edition copy with inscription about Equiano's 1792 marriage to Susannah Cullen was first published in Thomas C. Battle and Donna M. Wells (eds), *Legacy: Treasures of Black History: Moorland-Spingarn Research Center* (National Geographic Society, 2006), 43, but has been gone unremarked ever since. Battle and Wells talk of this 'fourth edition containing Equiano's notation of his marriage in 1792', but we do not believe the inscription to be written by Equiano as the handwriting differs from that in authenticated extant autograph letters from Equiano.

[148] Carretta*, Equiano Biography*, 329, 367.

[149] Equiano, *Narrative*, 5th ed., 359.

[150] Pace Carretta*, Equiano Biography*, 349, Sapoznik, *Letters and Other Writings*, 36, and the transcript of the letter available on the Equiano's World website, all of which misread the date of Equiano's arrival in Edinburgh

as 10 April 1792. It would have been impossible to reach Edinburgh by this date and to have visited both Glasgow and Paisley beforehand, given that he was in Soham for his marriage on 7 April.

[151] Sapoznik*, Letters and Other Writings*, 35-40 (p. 40 for quotation). The original is in TNA, TS 24/12/2.

[152] Walvin, 'Equiano, Olaudah' thinks otherwise, claiming that Equiano's 'modest estate […] was also helped by his marriage on 7 April 1792 to Susanna Cullen' but without providing any evidence for her supposed dowry.

[153] Published Sapoznik*, Letters and Other Writings*, 140.

[154] Carretta*, Equiano Biography*, 350-1.

[155] Carretta*, Equiano Biography,* 352-3.

[156] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 7-8, makes the unsubstantiated claim that Susannah 'had never been outside of Cambridge'.

[157] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 8.

[158] 'Evidence to suggest that the couple took up residence in Soham comes from the fact that both of their children were born here.': Martin, *Olaudah*, 41.

[159] The Plasterers' Company, one of the City of London livery companies, used its hall 'as a source of rental income, leasing it to others, who in turn subleased its rooms to various occupants. Equiano must have subleased the hall from William Rolfe, a goldsmith who had signed a twenty-one-year lease for the hall and several nearby houses on 5 October 1790. Equiano in turn subleased the hall to someone else.' Carretta, *Equiano Biography,* 365.

[160] Nathaniel Kane, 'Twelve Honest and Lawful Men in the Land of Mist and Malaria: Jury Regulation of Common Rights in the English Fens in the Time of Enclosure', *NYU Environmental Law Journal* 19, (2013): 559.

[161] In Equiano's estate inventory of May 1796, he refers to his mother-in-law, as living in Fordham ('Copy of Will and Property Schedule for Gustavus Vassa', CA, 132/B11). Susannah's sister, Anne Fitches gave birth to her second child, John, on 1 August 1796. His birth registration with Dr William's Library lists his birthplace as Fordham.

[162] Audley, 'Notes on Codicil'. In 1815, Equiano's executor, John Audley, recorded in notes about Equiano's estate that while Thomas was still alive and living in Ely, William had died insane. Audley had clearly muddled the names of Susannah's two brothers, but whether Thomas had 'died insane' has proven impossible to corroborate as no further information regarding him has yet come to light.

[163] Abel, 'Edward Ind', 52 and 53.

[164] 'Cambridge, Dec. 21', *CC&J*, 22 December 1792.

[165] 'Cambridge, Dec. 21', *CC&J*, 22 December 1792; Abel, 'Edward Ind', 53; 'Cambridge, Jan. 18', *CC&J*, 19 January 1793. See also Luke Tame, *Cambridge as a Case Study of Local Abolitionism: 1781–1803* (2021), 31, https://studenttheses.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A3250665/view (accessed 17 July 2025); 'Cambridge, December 21', *The Cambridge Intelligencer*, 21 December 1793.

[166] Sapoznik, *Letters and Other Writings*, 41-2.

[167] Sapoznik, *Letters and Other Writings*, 64.

[168] 'Soham, St Andrew's Parish Church, Composite Register, 1788–1812', under 'Baptisms', fol. 25, entry no. 61 (under 30 January 1794), CA P142/1/5.

[169] Pace Avery, 'Equiano and Cambridge', 101.

[170] For evidence about birth and baptismal dates in late eighteenth-century England, see B.M. Berry and R.S. Schofield, 'Age at baptism in pre-industrial England', *Population Studies*, 25 (1971), 453–63. We are grateful to Amy Erickson for this reference.

[171] For more on Poor Law legislation, see Keith D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700–1950* (Cambridge, 2006) and https://www.londonlives.org/static/Settlement.jsp (accessed 27 July 2025).

[172] Carretta, *Equiano Biography*, 362; Chris Day, 'The 1794 Trial of Thomas Hardy: 'New-Fangled Treasons'', *The National Archives,* 21 March 2023: https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/the-1794-trial-of-thomashardy-%20new-fangled-treasons (accessed 17 July 2025).

[173] Letter to Mr & Mrs Liversege from Gustavus Vassa 'The African' [Olaudah Equiano], Wellcome Library, London: MS.7151/10; Sapoznik, *Letters and Other Writings*, 43-5.

[174] This letter, and others, disproves Angelina Osborne's assumption that Susannah accompanied her husband on his book tours, even after the birth of their two daughters: Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 8.

[175] This letter is located in the Moorland Spingarn Research Center Collection, Howard University Library, Washington DC (General Museum Collection). An image of it was first published in Battle and Wells, *Legacy: Treasures of Black History*, 42, but without any comment and, as a result, went unremarked until 2025, when it was reproduced again and now fully transcribed, analysed and contextualized in Avery, *Equiano and Cambridge*, 102-4, fig. 64.

[176] 'Soham, St Andrew's Parish Church, Composite Register, 1788–1812', under 'Baptisms', fol. 33, entry no. 6 (under 29 April 1795), CA P142/1/5.

[177] For further biographical details of Edward Ind, see the brief 'biographical sketch' published by Cambridge solicitor Thomas Mott, 14 years after Ind's death, in 1822. Thomas Mott (ed.), *The Posthumous Poetical Works of the late Edward Ind, Esq. of Cambridge; with a biographical sketch of his life* (Cambridge: J. Smith, 1822); and crucially Abel, 'Edward Ind', 44-61.

[178] Abel, 'Edward Ind', 47-48 and 53.

[179] Parish of Holy Trinity, Cambridge, vestry minutes, 1788–1883 (CA, P22/8/1). Interestingly, Ind's parents and grandparents had been Independents: Abel, 'Edward Ind', 49.

[180] Abel, 'Edward Ind', 49.

[181] On 21 January 1788, 'Mr Alderman Ind made a motion that Mr Mayor be requested to present the petition for the Abolition of the Slave Trade this day Sealed to the House of Commons': Borough of Cambridge, Common Day Book, 29 Nov 1787, 17 Jan 1788, 21 Jan 1788 (CA, City/PB Vol. 14): taken from Abel, 'Edward Ind', 50-51.

[182] *CC&J*, 18 February 1792, p. 3; Abel, 'Edward Ind', 52.

[183] Wool staplers were middlemen who purchased wool from sheep farmers, quality-graded it, and the sold it on to cloth manufacturers. Many sources claim that Audley was a solicitor, but we have found no evidence for this. Contemporaneous Cambridge trade directories and local newspaper articles as well as his own papers (now held in the Cambridgeshire Archives) and 1827 obituary only record him as a wool stapler and lay minister. For further biographical details of John Audley, see primarily his obituary: 'Memoir of Mr. John Audley, Formerly of Cambridge', *The Congregational Magazine, for the Year 1827* 3, (London, 1827), 401-09 [hereafter: 'Memoir of Mr. John Audley']. See also Timothy D. Whelan, ed., *Politics, Religion, and Romance: The Letters of*

Benjamin Flower and Eliza Gould Flower, 1794-1808, (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 2008), 242-43, note 70; and Abel, 'Edward Ind', 49, 51, 53, 54.

[184] John Audley was baptised at the Independent Chapel, St Ives, on 2 January 1751: St Ives, Huntingdonshire, Denomination: Independent, formerly Presbyterian: Births & Baptisms, 1748–1771, n.p. (John Audley, 2 Jan 1750/51), TNA, RG 4/8. He was raised in a Dissenting family, but lost everyone to death by the time he was 35 years old: his sister, Elizabeth, died in 1773 (see 'Elegy to the memory of Miss Audley', *CC&J*, 19 June 1773); his father, John, in 1779; his brother, Richard, in 1783 ('Proceedings of the Church Meetings Commencing 1720', Emmanuel United Reformed Church records, entry under September 1783, CA, R97/049); his mother, Elizabeth, in 1784; and his sister, Sarah, in 1785 (see 'Monody on the Death of the truly amiable Mrs. Sarah Housman.', *CC&J*, 19 November 1785). In January 1786, shortly after this final family death, Audley was 'reaffirmed' as an official member of the Congregational Chapel on Downing Place ('Proceedings of the Church Meetings Commencing 1720', entry 18 Dec 1785, in Emmanuel United Reformed Church records, CA, R97/149), and from then until 1819, he is documented as an active congregant, often delegated to speak with wayward members and investigate issues related to this church (see 'Proceedings of the Church Meetings Commencing 1720', Emmanuel United Reformed Church records, entries under 18 Aug 1785, 3 Jan 1787 and 2 Aug 1787, CA, R97/049; 'Proceedings of the Church Meetings Commencing 1806', Emmanuel United Reformed Church records, entries under 30 July 1807, 1 Sept 1808, 19 Sept 1809, 18 Dec 1809, 1 Jan 1810, 1 Jan 1811, 3 and 29 May 1811, 3 Oct 1811, 30 July 1812, 29 Feb 1816, 3 Sept 1816, 13 April 1817, 28 July 1817, 30 Oct 1817, 1 Jan 1818, and 7 Sept 1819, CA, R97/049; 'The Elders' Book Downing Street Meeting House, Cambridge Feb 1812–1830', Emmanuel United Reformed Church records, entries under Elders' Meetings 1 Dec 1812, 17 Sept 1814 and 19 Aug 1815, CA, R97/049). Audley moved from the centre of Cambridge to the nearby village of Impington in 1796 ('Cambridge. To be Sold by Private Contract', *CC&J*, 7 May 1796); before moving to Mount Pleasant at an unknown date in the 1810s. He moved away to London in 1821 and led a rather peripatetic existence until settling in Stoke Newington by autumn 1826, where he died the following year (see below, under '*Move to London (1825–27)*').

[185] 'Memoir of Mr. John Audley', 404. John Audley, along with political radical and *Cambridge Intelligencer* editor, Benjamin Flower (1755–1829), and a gentleman named Thomas Jennings, orchestrated the formation of a congregation of Dissenters in the Cambridgeshire village of Waterbeach in 1801 and facilitated the building of a chapel for them in 1803, see Whelan, *Politics, Religion, and Romance*, 242-43, note 70.

[186] Audley and Simeon were well acquainted and had a family connection; Audley's brother-in-law, the Rev'd Robert Housman (1759–1838), who married Audley's sister, Sarah (17??–1785), was a close friend of Simeon. In fact, it was Simeon who first introduced Housman to the 'highly respectable' Audley family. For further details about the connection between Simeon, Housman and Audley, see Robert Fletcher Housman, *The Life and Remains of Rev. Robert Housman, A.B.*, (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1841), 16-18; and Julian Hunt, 'The Will of the Reverend Robert Housman, 1837' in *The Housman Society Journal* 37, (2011): 82-7; Timothy Whelan, gen. ed., *Nonconformist Women Writers, 1720–1840*, 8 vols. (London: Pickering &Chatto, 2011), 7: 22-28, 327-37. For Audley's attending vestry meetings at Holy Trinity, Cambridge: see Abel, 'Edward Ind', 50 and 59, note 56.

[187] In 1780 and 1782 Audley supported petitions for parliamentary reform, see *The Remembrancer, or Impartial Repository of Public Events* 9, (London: J. Almon, 1780), 255-56; 'Having received the following requisition',

CC&J, 25 May 1782; 'Cambridge, May 31', *CC&J*, 1 June 1782. He was also secretary for the Cambridgeshire Constitutional Society, see 'Cambridgeshire Constitutional Society', *CC&J*, 15 January 1785; 'Cambridgeshire Constitutional Society, annual meeting', *CC&J*, 20 June 1789.

[188] 'To John Mortlock, Esq; Mayor of the town of Cambridge', *CC&J*, 11 February 1792.

[189] Both Audley and Ind regularly subscribed to relief for the local poor and were committee members of the Cambridgeshire Benevolent Society, see 'Relief of the Poor', *Cambridge Intelligencer,* 24 January 1795; 'Benevolent Society', *CC&J*, 28 June 1806. For information regarding Audley's finances, see 'To my Executors Mr Randall & Mr R. Foster, Junr.', CA, 132/B67 and 'Inventory of Estate and Effects of Audley', CA, 132/B70. For a list of his published works, see 'Memoir of Mr. John Audley', 409.

[190] Abel, 'Edward Ind', 48-54.

[191] Abel, 'Edward Ind', 53 and 60, note 80.

[192] Abel, 'Edward Ind', 53, 56 and 60, notes 75-9.

[193] 'Cambridge, Feb. 19', *CC&J*, 20 February 1796, 3.

[194] 'Will of Susanna, wife of Vassa, of Soham (nee Cullen). 12 December 1795', CA, 132/B4.

[195] Carretta and Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, 2nd ed., 364.

[196] Birth, Marriage, Death & Parish Records from the International Genealogical Index (IGI), s.v. 'William King and Elizabeth Averly' (1784, Soham) http://www.findmypast.co.uk (accessed 17 July 2025); Audley, 'Notes on Codicil' .

[197] 'Cambridge, Feb. 19', *CC&J*, 20 February 1796, 3; Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 8.

[198] 'Soham, St Andrew's Parish Church, Composite Register 1788–1831', under 'Burials', fol. 25, entry no. 54 (under 21 February 1796), CA, P142/1/5.

[199] Claims made on the Saffron Walden History website that a gravestone inscribed 'Susanna Vassa, Wife of Gustavus the African, aged 34 years' is to be found within the Fordham Road Cemetery, Soham, appear to be erroneous and without foundation: https://saffronwaldenhistory.org.uk/east-anglia-and-the-abolition-of-the-slave-trade/ (accessed 25 July 2025).

[200] Carretta, *Equiano Biography*, 364, and note 35 on 392. Indeed, Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 4, went so far as to claim that 'Each edition got more subscribers, and this made Equiano a wealthy man. […] Acting as his own publisher and distributor meant he kept much of the profit, transforming him into the wealthiest African Briton of his day.'

[201] The original copy of Equiano's will is in TNA, PROB 11/1289/78. The probate version is in CA, K132/B/10.

[202] *The Times*, 1 September 1796. Quoted in Martin, *Olaudah*, 42.

[203] Quoted in part by Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 8.

[204] For the education of girls from Dissenting families, see: Karen E. Smith, 'Female Education among Baptists in the Eighteenth Century: Martha (Smith) Trinder (1736–1790) and Henrietta Neale (1752–1802)', *Baptist Quarterly* 48:4 (2017), 168-80. For girls schooling and general education see: Susan Skedd, 'Women teachers and the expansion of girls' schooling, c. 1760-1820 in Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities, ed. Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (London: Routledge, 1997), 101-125. We are grateful to Amy Erickson for these references.

[205] Carretta, *Equiano Biography*, 365-6.

[206] For further discussion of Susannah Cullen's clothes being passed to and repurposed for Joanna, and Equiano's personal effects being handed to Joanna, see under '*Joanna Vassa's childhood in Chesterton*'.

[207] Carretta, *Equiano Biography*, note 36 on 392. In terms of the economic value of Equiano's wealth, see Robert D. Hume, 'The Value of Money in Eighteenth-Century England: Incomes, Prices, Buying Power— and Some Problems in Cultural Economics', in *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 77 (2015), 373-416.

[208] Thomas Cullen remained in Soham until his death, aged 26, in 1798.

[209] Martin, *Olaudah*, 42; Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 8.

[210] 'Chesterton, near Cambridge. To be let, furnished or unfurnished…', *CC&J*, 9 November 1821; 'Sales by auction. Chesterton near Cambridge. Genteel residence, copyhold', *CC&J*, 12 December 1817.

[211] Anon, 'CHESTERTON.—Anna Maria Vassa.', *CC&J*, 19 November 1853.

[212] If so, this would mean that Olaudah saw more of Anna Maria and Joanna in the final year of his life than has hitherto been supposed: for example, Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 8.

[213] Equiano advertised the sublease on 1, 3, 8 and 22 September 1796. He maintained his lease on the Plaisterers' Hall until he died: more than 9 months after Equiano's death, his executors advertised the resale of the lease (*The Times*: 2, 11 and 17 January 1798). See Carretta, *Equiano Biography*, 365 and note 38 on 392.

[214] Carretta, *Equiano Biography*, 365 and note 39 on 392.

[215] 'Meeting of the Friends of Freedom', *Chester Chronicle*, 11 November 1796. For a more detailed account of the dinner see 'Trial by Jury', *The Telegraph*, 7 November 1796: https://equianosworld.org/browse.php?section=Documents_Db_Category&cv=Letters/Documents%20written%20about%20Vassa (accessed 18 September 2025).

[216] Equiano's nurse is identified in Audley's executorial notes on Equiano's will (John Audley Papers, CA, 132B/16).

[217] Vincent Carretta, 'A New Letter by Gustavus Vassa/Olaudah Equiano?', *Early American Literature* 39, no. 2 (2004): 355-61.

[218] Digges's copy of Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*, 9th ed. (London, 1794), Library Division of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, USA. First published by Carretta, 'New Letter', 359.

[219] For further reasons to doubt the authenticity of the letter, see the concluding paragraph of Carretta's article: Carretta, 'New Letter', 361.

[220] For Equiano's first known letter to Sharp, dated 6 May 1780, see Sapoznik, *Letters and Other Writings*, 20-2.

[221] For Sharp's letter to his niece Jemima, dated 27 February 1811, see Carretta, *Equiano Biography*, 366 and note 40 on 392; Martin, *Olaudah*, 42; and Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 9.

[222] Taken from Carretta, *Equiano Biography*, note 40 on 392, which includes other reports of Equiano's death in the British and American press.

[223] For Equiano's burial place, see the Equiano's World website, https://equianosworld.org/context.php?id=6 (accessed 17 July 2025). This information was not available in 2008: when Osborne and Martin published their books, Equiano's burial place was still unknown: Martin, *Olaudah*, 43; Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 9.

[224] For more information on the Whitefield Tabernacle burial ground, see journalist, Paul Slade's, article entitled 'Unquiet Ground: Whitefield's Soul Trap', https://www.planetslade.com/whitefields-tabernacle.html (accessed 17 July 2025).

[225] Probate of will and codicil of Olaudah Equiano, CA, K132/B/10.

[226] On 2, 11, 17 and 23 January 1798, they placed advertisements in *The Times*, under 'Sales by Auction'. That of 23 January 1798 was entitled, 'Plasterers Hall. By Messrs. Spurrier and Phipps, At Garraway's, This Day, the 23rd inst [January 1798] at 12 o'clock, by Order of the Executors of Mr. Gustavus Vassa' (*The Times*, 23 January 1798).

[227] Ind lived with his mother, Ann, until her death in 1807, just a year before his own passing, see Abel, 'Edward Ind', 56 and 60, notes 98-101. Audley had lost his parents and all his siblings by the end of 1785 and appears to have lived alone for the remainder of his life. According to his obituary, Audley 'had many peculiarities in his personal habits' which were 'attributed to the almost uniformly unfavourable influence of a single life', see 'Memoir of Mr. John Audley', 407. However, as a young man, around 1785, he had been briefly engaged to the poet and writer, Elizabeth Coltman (1761–1838) of Leicester – not to be confused with her friend, the abolitionist and writer, Elizabeth Coltman Heyrick (1769–1831), who was also from the same town. However, she soon ended the engagement and both parties never married. Coltman was a friend of Audley's sister, Sarah, and his brother-in-law, the Rev'd Robert Housman. She was also an abolitionist and, as part of Elizabeth Heyrick's coterie, boycotted West Indian sugar and used work-bags embellished with mottos denouncing slavery, see Florence E. Skillington, 'The Coltmans of the Newarke at Leicester', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society* 18 (1934–35), 11, 23. For more information on Coltman's life and works, see Timothy Whelan, gen. ed., *Nonconformist Women Writers, 1720–1840,* 8 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), 3: 383-88; 4: 215-34; 7: 275-326 and Timothy Whelan, 'Elizabeth Coltman (1761-1838)', in *Other British Voices: Women, Poetry, and Religion, 1766–1840*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 155-197.

[228] The (unpaginated) St Andrew's Chesterton Burial Register for summer 1797 records three burials in June, the last being '20 [June 1797:] Anne, Daughter of William & Anne Pratt, Labourer. Infant'. There is then a two-and-a-half-month gap with no burials recorded, until 'Sept 6 [1797:] Eleanor, Daughter of Jane thrift. A Bastard.' 'Chesterton, St Andrew Parish Church, Composite Register 1793–1811', under Burials for 1797', CA, P4O/1/3.

[229] '[May] 26 [1797:] John, Son of John & Sarah Segus Thatcher. Infant Died of the measles'; 'June 1st [1797:] William, son of W[illia]m & Anne Frog (or Frohock). An Infant. Measles.' The following entry, '[June] 5 [1797:] Mary, Daughter of Joseph and Hannah Watts. Infant Measles.' 'Chesterton, St Andrew Parish Church, Composite Register 1793–1811', under Burials for 1797', CA, P4O/1/3.

[230] Martin, *Olaudah*, 43; Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 11; Abel, 'Edward Ind', 54.

[231] R. Coates, 'An African in Cambridgeshire in the 1790s', *Cambridgeshire Local History Council Bulletin*, no. 33 (1978), 19-21. The epitaph text was published in full by Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 11; and Abel, 'Edward Ind', 54.

[232] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 12, attributed the poem to Martha Peckard on the grounds that 'the poem on the plaque is similar in style to the poem that she wrote on the occasion of her husband's death, and she had been known in her day as a minor poet.'

[233] It was the Rev'd Nick Moir, formerly Vicar of St Andrew's, Chesterton, who first correctly identified Edward Ind as author of Anna Maria Vassa's epitaph in his July 2021 online blog: N. Moir, 'News and Messages: Anna Maria Vassa', *Chesterton Chimes*, no. 11 (July 2021), 4: https://tinyurl.com/2c8za9zw (accessed 17 July 2025). For further discussion see Abel, 'Edward Ind', 54.

[234] Epitaphs, *The Scots Magazine and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany*, 1 November 1809, 812. See also Abel, 'Edward Ind', 54 and 60, note 88.

[235] C.N. Cooper, 'Environs of Cambridge […] No. 1 Chesterton', *Cambridge General Advertiser*, 23 October 1839, 54, col. 2.

[236] Thomas Mott, ed., *The Posthumous Poetical Works of the Late Edward Ind, Esq. of Cambridge; with a Biographical Sketch of his Life by the editor Thomas Mott* (Cambridge, 1822), 49.

[237] Ind was incorrect when he stated that Anna Maria was 4 years old when she died: she was born on 16 October 1793, and so was three years and nine months old when she died on 21 July 1797.

[238] Our re-discovery of Anna Maria's grave was due to a passing reference, photograph and later marginalia comment in a long-forgotten and unpublished essay by Catherine O'Neill, 'The Early Cambridge Campaign against Slavery (1780–1790)', submitted to the Schools Local History Competition of the Cambridgeshire Local History Council, 1977, a copy of which is held within the Peter Peckard papers in Magdalene College Library, Cambridge. In her 'Appendix 2b. Equiano's children', O'Neill briefly discusses and dismisses Henri Grégoire's 1808 claim that Equiano had a son, and then, on p. 37, remarks: 'However, there is a valuable piece of local evidence that raises the possibility of other children. On the North wall of St. Andrew's church, Chesterton, there is a stone plaque (opposite). This mentions 'two infants dear' and the girl who was 'a hapless orphan'. There is no more evidence elsewhere, as far as I know, of these two children but this gravestone seems to confirm that they did exist.' O'Neill's type-written text was accompanied by two photos: the first of Anna Maria's stone epitaph, captioned as 'The plaque in Chesterton churchyard of Equiano's daughter'; the second of a small tomb marker with a barely legible two-line inscription, captioned 'Her gravestone nearby'. Although O'Neill's text offered no further explanations, someone else subsequently added the following pencil marginalia: 'Tombstone now removed; it is directly beneath tablet & is illegible. Probably inscribed 'ANNA 1797.' (With thanks to Catherine O'Neill for confirming that the pencil note is not her own hand). When this additional information was added, and by whom, is unknown, but it clearly postdates 1977. Armed with these intriguing and enigmatic visual and textual clues, we reviewed similar-looking tombstones in the proximity of the large stone epitaph and were able to find the one illustrated in O'Neill's essay and ascertain that its inscription, in fact, reads 'AMV 1797'. The combination of initials and date indicate that this was categorically made for Anna Maria Vassa. There is no evidence that this footstone has ever been moved, so assuming it is still in its original location, we now know for certain where Anna Maria is buried, thereby solving an historic conundrum. We would like to thank the Rev'd Dr Philip Lockley, Vicar of St Andrew's, Chesterton, and Catherine O'Neill, for their kind and timely assistance.

[239] For example, Martin, *Olaudah*, 43 stated that Anna Maria was buried at St Andrew's 'in an unknown grave.'

[240] This possibility was first raised by the Rev'd Nick Moir, when parish priest of St Andrew's, Chesterton, in his blog, 'News and Messages: Anna Maria Vassa', *Chesterton Chimes*, 11 (July 2021): https://www.standrews-chesterton.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/July-2021.pdf (accessed 17 July 2025). See also Abel, 'Edward Ind', 54; and Avery, 'Equiano and Cambridge', 106.

[241] 'Chesterton, St Andrew Parish Church, Composite Register 1793–1811', under 'Baptisms', fol. 2 (under 11 December 1793) and fol. 4 (under 14 October 1795), CA, P4O/1/3. See also 'England Births & Baptisms 1538–1975', s.v. 'Thomas Ind' (bap. 11 December 1793), http://www.findmypast.co.uk (accessed 17 July 2025) and 'England Births & Baptisms 1538-1975', s.v. 'Robert Grimditch Ind' (bap. 14 October 1795), http://www.findmypast.co.uk (accessed 17 July 2025).

[242] 'Excellent House, Large Gardens, and Capital Maltings', *CC&J*, 14 July 1820; 'Excellent House, good Garden, and capital Maltings, Chesterton, near Cambridge', *CC&J,* 5 November 1819.

[243] In the 1810s, due to financial difficulties, Thomas Ind had sold his share of the brewery business, which he had inherited from his older brother, Edward Ind, in 1808. By 1819 he had been forced to sell his Chesterton home and maltings as well. It appears the firm T. Nash and Co's Brewery bought the property along with many other public houses and breweries previously owned by Ind. After Thomas Ind's death in 1824, his son and heir, Robert, brought an unsuccessful lawsuit against Nash & Co. in an attempt to recover copyhold property: see 'Doe on demise of Ind v. Nash and other (Special Jury)', *CC&J*, 6 August 1824. The Chesterton Tithe Map and Apportionment from 1839 (CA, R60/24/4/2) confirms that T. Nash and Co still owned the home, garden and maltings (number 256 on the map) in that year. The tithe map shows the location of this property as being where 'Chesterton House' now stands, sans maltings which have long been demolished. For more information on Thomas Ind's financial challenges after the death of Edward Ind, see Abel, 'Edward Ind', 56-7.

[244] In 2008, Donna Martin stated 'Nothing is known of Joanna until 1816' when she received her inheritance: Martin, *Olaudah*, 43.

[245] Nunn, 'Visible and Vocal', 171.

[246] For Ind's death, see 'Cambridge, Friday, March 11', *CC&J*, 12 March 1808.

[247] Chancery statement of John Audley, 12 November 1812 (CA, 132/B66). Noted by Abel, 'Edward Ind', 56.

[248] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 15.

[249] Carretta, *Equiano Biography*, 366 suggests that this was probably her father's, 'perhaps one of those inscribed "for strict attention to duty with H.M.S. Racehorse. North Pole Expedition" that had been given to the members of the crews serving under Phipps in 1773'.

[250] 'Extract of the will of Gustavus Vassa, with schedule of property', in Papers of John Audley, CA, 132/B11; Audley, 'Notes on Codicil'. Osborne noted this bequest in her book but without the intriguing reference to Mrs Ind: see Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 12.

[251] A case in point is Joanna Vassa's own sister-in-law, Sarah Anne Morgan (born at an unrecorded date between 1788 and 1791), who was sent from India to Britain to be educated at a very young age. Sarah is listed as sailing with her five-year-old brother, Richard Maurice Morgan, from Kolkata to England on the East Indiaman, Busbridge, in February 1795: 'On the Busbridge', *Calcutta Gazette*, 12 February 1795. Her father-in-law, Nathaniel Warner Bromley, later recorded her return journey from England to Kolkata after the completion of her education in 1806 (when she would have been between the ages of fifteen and eighteen), see Nathaniel Warner Bromley, 'Volume of manuscript selections from the 'memorial books' of Nathaniel Warner Bromley, senior', 1813–1839, SA, HA538/1/4, 106 [hereafter: Bromley, 'Selections from memorial books']. For further discussion of Morgan, see below. Susan Skedd noted that girls' boarding schools of the era are recorded as having pupils who ranged in age from five to eighteen years old. See Skedd, 'Women Teachers', 119.

[252] 'Chancery Statement of John Audley, 12 November, 1812', in Papers of John Audley, CA, 132/B66.

[253] Bank of England Inflation Calculator, https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator (accessed 17 July 2025). For examples of tuition fees for ladies' boarding schools in Cambridgeshire in the first decade of the nineteenth century, see school advertisements in the *CC&J*, for example, 'Boarding-School, Peterborough', 2 January 1808 and 'Mill-Hill, Newmarket, June 27th 1808. The Miss Harwoods…' and

'Ladies' Boarding-School, Godmanchester', 2 July 1808, 3. Fees range between 15 to 25 guineas per annum in 1808.

[254] Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery* (London, 2006), 301-8.

[255] John Addington Symonds, *On the English Family Symonds* (Oxford, 1894), 11-12; Charles Compton and Edward Compton, eds., *Memoir of Henry Compton* (London, 1879), 4; *Remains of the Late Rev. John Morell Mackenzie, AM with a selection from His Correspondence, and A Memoir of his Life* (Edinburgh,1845), iv.

[256] R. Scott Stevenson, *Morell Mackenzie* (London: William Heinemann Medical Books, 1946), 25; 'John Mackenzie Meeting House Petition, Huntingdon, 28 Oct 1809', HA, AH31/57; 'John Mackenzie Meeting House Petition, Godmanchester, 13 Feb 1817', HA, AH31/124; John Mackenzie, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of John Calvin: Compiled from the Narrative of Theodore Beza, and Other Authentic Documents* (London: Williams and Smith, 1809).

[257] 'Ladies School at Godmanchester', *CC&J,* 11 Aug 1804; 'Godmanchester Boarding-School', *CC&J*, 26 Jan 1805.

[258] 'Mrs Mackenzie', *CC&J*, 3 Jan 1807.

[259] 'Mrs Mackenzie'*, CC&J*, 13 December 1806. Mrs Mackenzie's frequent relocations to larger premises were a common part of running a successful boarding school during this era, see Skedd, 'Women Teachers', 106, 110-111.

[260] Elizabeth's uncle, the Rev'd Joshua Symonds (1739–1788), a Dissenting minister in Bedford, corresponded with both William Wilberforce and the slaving ship captain turned abolitionist and hymnist, the Rev'd John Newton (1725–1807). Elizabeth's first cousin once removed, Matthew Davenport Hill (1792–1872), was an M.P. who supported immediate not gradual emancipation and in 1833 gave a speech in parliament mocking and shaming the House for not compensating the enslaved: Symonds, *Family of Symonds*, 1894, 11-12; Rosamond Davenport-Hill and Florence Davenport-Hill, *The Recorder of Birmingham: A Memoir of Matthew Davenport Hill; with Selections from his Correspondence* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1878), 126.

[261] Michèle Cohen, *Changing Pedagogies for Children in Eighteenth-Century England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2023), 53-4.

[262] Cohen, *Changing Pedagogies*, 53-4.

[263] Kristen Olsen, *Daily Life of Eighteenth Century England* (London: Greenwood, 1999), 228.

[264] Joyce Senders Pederson, 'Schoolmistresses and Headmistresses: Elites and Education in Nineteenth-Century England, *Journal of British Studies* 15, no. 1, (Autumn, 1975): 143-4; Cohen, *Changing Pedagogies*, 39, 45; Skedd, 'Women Teachers', 101, 118-121.

[265] 'Ladies' Boarding School. Miss Lodge…', *CC&J*, 13 July 1805; Skedd, 'Women Teachers', 120.

[266] Cohen, *Changing Pedagogies*, 44-45.

[267] Susan Skedd observed that 'it was not unknown for a husband to assist his wife in her girls' school'. See Skedd, 'Women Teachers', 118.

[268] Cohen, *Changing Pedagogies*, 38-9. Joanna's comprehensive education may have resembled that of her mixed-race contemporary, Helen Inglis, the illegitimate child of Baillie George Inglis of Kingsmills (1764–1846), an influential and prosperous Inverness merchant and plantation-owner and enslaver in the Dutch colony of Demerara, and Susanne Kerr, a free woman of colour and enslaver from St Vincent who had moved to Demerara. Helen was sent to Scotland to be educated at the Inverness Royal Academy, an elite boarding school

where many Scottish planters sent their illegitimate mixed-raced offspring, often referred to as the 'products of empire'. Between 1804 and 1807, Helen is recorded as having attended grammar lessons, 'Scots lessons' (Highland Gaelic), writing, arithmetic, and book-keeping, which Nunn describes as 'educational tools to aid her navigation in this new world', so different from her native Caribbean home. For further discussion of Inglis and her education, see Nunn, ''Visible and Vocal', 184-93.

[269] Smith, 'Female Education', 168.

[270] Smith, 'Female Education', 173.

[271] Smith, 'Female Education', 179.

[272] Cohen, *Changing Pedagogies*, 38-9.

[273] Pederson, 'Schoolmistresses and Headmistresses', 140.

[274] Compton and Compton, *Memoir of Henry Compton*, 3; 'Henry Compton', *St Andrews Gazette and Fifeshire News*, 16 August 1879.

[275] Compton and Compton, *Memoir of Henry Compton,* 4.

[276] Anon., *John Morell Mackenzie*, iv.

[277] Compton and Compton, *Memoir of Henry Compton*, 3; 'Mrs. Mackenzie', *CC&J*, 3 January 1807; 'Mr. Mackenzie', *CC&J*, 10 August 1810.

[278] Anon., *John Morell Mackenzie*, vii-viii; Compton and Compton, *Memoir of Henry Compton*, 12-15.

[279] Fiona Bengtsen, 'Establishments for Young Ladies: Private Boarding School for Females c. 1791–1861 with emphasis on Saffron Walden Ladies' Schools', *Saffron Walden Historical Journal*, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 2. https://saffronwaldenhistory.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/private-boarding-schools-for-females.pdf (accessed 17 July 2025). According to Bengtsen, girls in the early nineteenth century generally attended boarding school from 11 to 15 years old.

[280] Cohen, *Changing Pedagogies*, 59.

[281] Cohen, *Changing Pedagogies*, 56-60.

[282] 'Papers of Warner and Bromley Families of Badmondisfield Hall 1668–1933', SA, HA538.

[283] SA, HA538/5/1/4 [hereafter: Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son'].

[284] Nathaniel Warner Bromley, 'Memorial Book, 1796–1801', 12-16, SA, HA538/5/26 [hereafter: Bromley, 'Memorial 1796–1801'].

[285] Nathaniel Warner Bromley, 'Memorial Book, 1810–1821', 43, SA, HA538/5/28 [hereafter: Bromley, 'Memorial 1810–1821']; Nathaniel Warner Bromley, 'Account of The Change made in the Affairs of Wickhambrook Meeting between the Years 1810 & after wards', 7-11, SA, HA538/5/34. Immediately after Audley's last engagement at the Meeting House at Wickhambrook, Audley 'regularly officiat[ed…] for the congregation worshipping in Green Street Meeting-house' in Cambridge, following the death of their pastor, Mr Stittle, from July 1813 until August 1814': 'Memoir of Mr. John Audley', 404.

[286] Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son'; Bromley, 'Memorial 1810–1821', 27, 35; *The Congregational Year Book for 1879* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1879), 303. Audley stood in for Harris as minister from November 1809 until late February 1810: 'Memoir of Mr. John Audley', 404.

[287] Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son'; Bromley, 'Memorial 1810–1821', 27, 35; *The Congregational Year Book 1879* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1879), 303 [hereafter: *Congregational Year Book 1879*]; 'Memoir of Mr. John Audley', 404, 406-7. Pace Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 16, who correctly claimed Henry was educated under

Dr William Harris at Cambridge but erroneously assumed this education took place at the University of Cambridge. Dissenters like Bromley and Harris were not permitted to take degrees at the University of Cambridge because they were not members of the Church of England. This rendered them ineligible to swear the Oath of Supremacy (in which an individual declared himself to be a 'bona fide member of the Church of England as by law established'), which was a legal requirement prior to graduation. See Jirik, 'Beyond Clarkson', 751.

[288] Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son'.

[289] Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son'. NWB refers only to Equiano's former enslavement and did not mention his life as a sailor, writer or man of business. He also incorrectly refers to Joanna's mother, Susannah, as a farmer's daughter rather than the daughter of a whitesmith, ironmonger and brazier.

[290] Pace Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 16, who suggested that they first met at a service conducted by Henry Bromley in a non-conformist Congregationalist church in Cambridgeshire while he was still a student of the Rev'd William Harris.

[291] Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son'.

[292] Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son'.

[293] Bromley, 'Memorial 1796–1801', 12-16; Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son'.

[294] *Congregational Year Book 1879*, 303-4; his preaching in Trumpington, Horningsea, Landbeach and Grantchester was also noted in Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 16. For more information regarding Henry Bromley's membership at Downing Place Congregational Chapel, Cambridge, and his decision to attend Hoxton Academy, see: 'Proceedings of the Church Meetings Commencing 1806', Emmanuel United Reformed Church records, entries under 31 March 1814, 20 April 1814, 1 June 1815, 22 June 1815 and 30 March 1821, CA, R97/049; 'The Elders' Book Downing Street Meeting House, Cambridge Feb 1812–1830', Emmanuel United Reformed Church records, entries under Elders' Meetings 2 May 2 1815, 4 May 1815 and 30 May 1815, CA, R97/049.

[295] 'Joanna Vassa's receipt of £950, 8 April 1816', in Papers of John Audley CA, 132/B17. This was noted in Carretta, *Equiano Biography*, 364; Martin, *Olaudah*, 43; and Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 12.

[296] Bank of England Inflation Calculator, https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator (accessed 17 July 2025). Osborne must have used a different conversion rate claiming that £950 in 2008 was around £160,000: Osbourne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 12.

[297] According to Vincent Carretta, 'During the eighteenth century an annual income of forty pounds was sufficient to support a family of four modestly in London, and a gentleman could live well on three hundred pounds per annum.' Carretta, *Equiano Biography*, 364. It would have been likely that Joanna's inheritance was invested by Audley. A popular investment option during this era were government bonds that would give a reliable annual interest payment. The most popular of these during the Napoleonic era were the 'Navy Fives'. These securities were issued by the Bank of England during the Napoleonic Wars and named in honour of the annual five percent interest they incurred. For more information see John Avery Jones, 'Jane Austen's income: insights from the Bank of England Archives', https://bankunderground.co.uk/2019/08/02/jane-austens-income-insights-from-the-bank-of-england-archives/#more-5221 (accessed 29 July 2025). For money conversions see Bank of England Inflation Calculator, https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator (accessed 29 July 2025).

[298] 'Probate of will and codicil of Olaudah Equiano', CA, K132/B/10; 'Will of Susanna, wife of Vassa, of Soham (nee Cullen). 12 December 1795', CA, 132/B4. 'Died', *Bury and Norwich Post*, 2 February 1820; Cambridgeshire Burials. s.v. 'Ann Cullen' (bur. 30 Jan 1820), http://www.findmypast.co.uk (accessed 17 July 2025).

[299] Audley, 'Notes on Codicil'; and Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 12.

[300] Audley, 'Notes on Codicil'.

[301] Audley, 'Notes on Codicil'.

[302] Audley, 'Notes on Codicil'.

[303] For further details, see Jeff Atkinson, *Mary Proctor: Convict, Pioneer and Settler* (New South Wales: Rosenburg Publishing, 2005). Mary Proctor was the wife of William Cullen Fitches, a fellow convict whom he met in Australia.

[304] B.B. Edwards, ed., *The Quarterly Register and Journal of the American Education Society* 9, (November 1836): 132.

[305] 'The Elders' Book Downing Street Meeting House, Feb 1812-1830', entry September 30, 1817, in Emmanuel United Reformed Church records, CA, R97/049; 'Proceedings of the Church Meetings Commencing 1806', entry January 1, 1818, in Emmanuel United Reformed Church records, CA, R97/049. In addition, Henry became a member of Downing Place Chapel in April 1814 at the age of fifteen; for further information please see entries for March 31, 1814 and April 20, 1814 in CA, R97/049.

[306] 'The Elders' Book Downing Street Meeting House, Cambridge Feb 1812-1830', entry December 2, 1817, Emmanuel United Reformed Church records, CA, R97/049.

[307] Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son'.

[308] Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son'

[309] Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son'

[310] Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son'

[311] Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son'

[312] Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son'

[313] Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son'; H. Lacey, *Memoirs of the Late Rev. William Lee, Several Years Missionary in the East Indies, Afterwards Pastor of the Independent Church at Newmarket*, (London, 1825); 'Died', *English Chronicle and Whitehall Evening Post*, 31 July 1824. Both Henry Bromley and his older brother, Joseph, are listed as subscribers to the memoir of the Rev'd William Lee.

[314] Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son'; 'Inventory of Estate and Effects of Audley', CA, 132/B70, 13; *CC&J*, 12 October 1821, 3; Andrew Malleson, *Discovering the Family of Miles Malleson 1888–1969* (2012), 16-17.

[315] Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son'.

[316] Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son'.

[317] Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son'.

[318] Bromley, 'Selections from memorial books', 106. The 1814 will of Sarah's father, Major Thomas Morgan, lists her other 'natural' born siblings, Richard Maurice Morgan and Jane Morgan, but Sarah, who was married and separated from her husband by this point, is not listed. See: British India Office Wills & Probate, Bengal: L-AG-34-29-26, fol. 413, http://www.findmypast.co.uk (accessed 30 September 2025). For two historical studies of relationships between British men and Indian women at this period, both in India and in Britain, see: Durba

Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and Michael H. Fisher, *Counterflows to Colonialism. Indian Travellers and Settlers in Britain 1600–1857* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), especially 180-213. We are grateful to Clare Midgley for these references.

[319] Bromley, 'Selections from memorial books', 106-8.

[320] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 16.

[321] Pace Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 17, who erroneously stated that Henry was 24 years old when he married.

[322] 'Marriage allegation for Henry Bromley and Joanna Vassa', dated 28 August 1821, LPL, VM I/209; 'Marriage bond for Henry Bromley and Joanna Vassa', dated 28 August 1821, LPL, VM II/258. We are grateful to Kayleigh Miller for help locating both documents, and Jonny Davies for new photography of both.

[323] This may well have been a made-up name, like 'John Doe' for Equiano's marriage licence, and possibly chosen in jest if this name was already in use as a slang term for penis.

[324] This is surely Oxford graduate Solomon Piggott [or Pigott] who was priested in London in December 1803, and who held various clerical appointments, including Perpetual Curate of the parish church of St James, Latchford in the Chester Diocese (July 1809–January 1825), Domestic Chaplain to both William Monckton-Arundell, 5th Viscount Galway (from August 1812) and Hugh Carleton, 1st Viscount Carleton (from June 1815), and Lecturer at St Antholin with St John the Baptist upon Walbrook in Watling Street in the City of London (from March 1818 until August 1829). For further details, see CCED Person ID: 93547.

[325] Pace Martin, *Olaudah,* 43. The marriage registration was first reproduced in Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 17.

[326] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 17.

[327] 'Bromley, 'Selections from memorial books', 111-36; 'Deaths', *Champion (London)*, 7 July 1821; The baptism record of William and Catherine's daughter, Ellen Bromley, lists their address as 43 Bernard Street in 1822, see Dr Williams' Library Registry; Registers of certificates, London, Denomination: Various: 1-5089, 1820–1824, no 3145, TNA, RG 4/4664. For digital version: 'England &Wales, Non-conformist and Non-Parochial Registers, 1567-19336', http://www.ancestry.co.uk (accessed 17 July 2025).

[328] 'Memoir of Mr. John Audley', 405.

[329] See Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son' 1841. Whether William's later expression of regret to NWB was from genuine personal remorse or from paternal duress is not known.

[330] William Bromley took over from his father in 1810. See Bromley, 'Memorial 1810–1821', 12. His career ended in a massive corruption scandal in 1844: 'Law Intelligence', *Sun (London)*, 16 July 1844; 'Extraordinary Frauds', *John Bull*, 20 July 1844.

[331] Peter Alfred Taylor, ed., *Some Account of the Family of Taylor (formerly Taylard)* (London, 1875). For more information on Catherine Taylor, William Bromley and their children, see: Peter G. Winnington, *Harriet Martineau, Miss J, and Ellen McKee* (Switzerland: The Letterworth Press, 2019), 44; A.M.W. Stirling, *The Merry Wives of Battersea and Gossip of Three Centuries* (London: Robert Hale Limited, 1956), 115-27. As Clare Midgley has pointed out, the Taylor and Courtauld families are among the key families discussed in the seminal class and gender history study by Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

[332] Bromley, 'Memorial 1810–1821', 147.

[333] Nathaniel Warner Bromley, 'Selections from memorial books', 137.

[334] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 17. Nothing is known about the identity of this Joseph Harris. Although tempting to speculate a relationship to the Rev'd Dr William Harris, it cannot have been filial as Harris had no son called Joseph. While the apprentice may have been a more distant relative, his name is common, and he could simply have been a local boy.

[335] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 19-20.

[336] Nunn, 'Visible and Vocal', 171.

[337] 'Will of Sarah Finch, Widow of Sible Hedingham, Essex', 25 October 1821, TNA, PROB 11/1648/439.

[338] Bank of England Inflation Calculator, https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator (accessed 17 July 2025).

[339] *The London Christian Instructor or Congregational Magazine* 6 (1823): 390-1; *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* 2 *(*1824): 507-8.

[340] 'Will of Gustavus Vassa or Olaudah Equiano, Gentleman of Addle Street Aldermanbury, City...', 8 April 1797, TNA, PROB 11/1289/78.

[341] *The Evangelical Magazine* 3, (1795), 425-6, 468.

[342] For the Demerara Uprising, see Thomas Harding, *White Debt: The Demerara Uprising and Britain's Legacy of Slavery* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2022); and also Taylor, Michael, *The Interest* (London: Penguin Random House UK, 2020), 1-14.

[343] Harding, *White Debt*, 180-1.

[344] Harding, *White Debt*, 185.

[345] 'Demerara', *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* 2 (1824): 329-30.

[346] 'Demerara', *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* 2 (1824): 330.

[347] Pace Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 17, who claims that 'Henry and Joanna Bromley lived in Appledore, Devon until 1826 or 1827'; and p. 20 'After spending five years or so in Devon, the couple moved to Clavering in Essex.'

[348] *Congregational Year Book 1879*, 304.

[349] Nathaniel Warner Bromley, 'Memorial Book, 1822-1834', SA, HA538/5/29, 58 [hereafter: Bromley, 'Memorial 1822-1834'].

[350] Bromley, 'Memorial 1822-1834', 59.

[351] Bromley, 'Selections from memorial books', 145.

[352] 'Births', *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, 20 October 1824.

[353] 'Births', *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, 27 April 1824.

[354] 'Memoir of Mr. John Audley', 406. Harris became the minister at the Independent Chapel in Stoke Newington in 1825, see 'Proceedings of the Church Meetings Commencing 1806', Emmanuel United Reformed Church records, entry under 5 December 1825, CA, R97/049.

[355] 'Memoir of Mr. John Audley', 406.

[356] 'Memoir of Mr. John Audley', 407.

[357] Elizabeth Heyrick, *No British Slavery, or, An Invitation to the People to Put a Speedy End to it* (Bradford, 1825), 8.

[358] The society was committed to the 'Amelioration of the Condition of the Unhappy Children of Africa, and especially of Female Negro Slaves'; for further discussion, see Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780–1870* (London: Routledge, 1992), esp. 43-4.

[359] Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, 46; see also Karen I. Halbersleben, *Women's Participation in the British Anti-Slavery Movement: 1824–1825* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993); and Avery and Kimani, *Rise Up*, 154-9.

[360] 'Album of miscellaneous cuttings of Essex, 1736-1862', ERO, D/DU 23/140, 70. At the first official census taken in 1801, Clavering's population was 900, with the average household occupancy being seven persons: Eileen M. Ludgate, *Clavering and Langley: The First Thousand Years* (Bishop's Stortford, 1996), 78.

[361] Henry Bromley, *A Brief History of the Congregational Church, Clavering, Essex* (London: John Snow & Co., 1873), 26 [hereafter: Bromley, 'Clavering Congregational Church'].

[362] Bromley, 'Clavering Congregational Church', 26; 'Acknowledgements and Minor Correspondence', *The Congregational Magazine*, *For the Year 1827* (London: B.J. Holdsworth, 1827), 680; 'Proceedings of the Church Meeting, 1827-1874', ERO, D/NC 35/3, 14-15.

[363] 'Two Hundred Years in the Life of a Village Congregational Church', *The Nonconformist and Independent*, 27 July 1882.

[364] 'Estimate for redecorating Mr Bromley's house [Manse], 1827', ERO, D/NC 35/13.

[365] '1841 census return for Mount Pleasant, Clavering, Saffron Walden subdistrict, Essex', s.v. 'Joanna Bromley', PRO HO107/327, folio 5, p. 4, http://www.findmypast.co.uk. This was discussed by Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 20, and reproduced on p. 21. For Audley's house in Cambridge being called Mount Pleasant, see 'Memoir of Mr. John Audley', 405.

[366] 'Parliamentary Returns – Nonconformist Congregations', ERO, Q/CR 3/2/1 – 135A, calendar; discussed by Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 20-1, and the relevant page reproduced on p. 21.

[367] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 20-1; Nunn, 'Visible and Vocal', 171.

[368] 'Parliamentary Returns – Nonconformist Congregations', ERO, Q/CR 3/2/27, original.

[369] Eileen M. Ludgate, *Clavering and Langley 1783–1983* (Bishop's Stortford, 1984), 49.

[370] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 20; 'Clavering Sunday School Book', ERO, D/NC 35/42; https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/ (accessed 2 June 2025).

[371] House of Commons, 'Education Enquiry. Abstract of the Answers and Returns Made Pursuant to An Address of the House of Commons', 24 May 1833, vol. 1 (1835), 270.

[372] Ludgate, *Clavering 1783*, 49. The British and Foreign School Society was an organisation founded in 1803 to support the foundation of free and non-denominational schools in the United Kingdom, particularly in economically deprived communities. This society also supported teacher training.

[373] 'Wanted, by September next, a man and wife…', *Hertford Mercury and Reformer*, 11 April 1840; 'Wanted, a man and wife, or brother and sister…', *The Patriot*, 21 August 1843.

[374] Ludgate, *Clavering 1783*, 51.

[375] Ludgate, *Clavering 1783*, 49, 50, 51.

[376] Nunn, 'Visible and Vocal', 172, talks of Clavering (mistakenly referred to as Claverling) as an 'impoverished area' which later became known as 'the murder capital of Essex' and 'notorious for its incendiary fires' with a higher-than-average crime rate.

[377] Nunn, 'Visible and Vocal', 172.

[378] Ludgate, *Clavering 1783*, esp. 31-51 (with its discussion focussing on 1783–1883).

[379] Ludgate, *Clavering 1783*, 33.

[380] Ludgate, *Clavering 1783*, 34.

[381] From a report published in the *Essex Standard* in 1850; taken from Ludgate, *Clavering 1783*, 35.

[382] Ludgate, *Clavering 1783*, 36.

[383] Ludgate, *Clavering 1783*, 41.

[384] Ludgate, *Clavering 1783*, 46.

[385] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 20, without citing the archival reference.

[386] Ludgate, *Clavering 1783*, 46; Daisy Sanders, 'The Chronicles of a Book Society Connected with the Congregational Church, Clavering, 1787–1933', in *Transactions of Congregational Historical Society*, ed. Albert Peel (1936) 12.4: 164-71.

[387] *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle, 1828,* n.s. vol. 6 (London: Frederick Westley and A.H. Davis, 1828), 372, 463; 'Country Subscriptions and Donations', *The Report of the Directors to The Forty-Sixth General Meeting of the Missionary Society, Usually Called The London Missionary Society, on Thursday, May 14th, 1840 with Lists of Contributors* (London: William Tyler, 1840), 177. For a comprehensive study of LMS activities in England, see Susan Thorne*, Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-Century England* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1999). We are grateful to Clare Midgley for this reference.

[388] *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle, 1831* n.s. vol. 9 (London: Frederick Westley and A.H. Davis, 1831), 329.

[389] *The Report of the Directors to the Fortieth General Meeting of the Missionary Society, usually called The London Missionary Society* (London, 1834), xxvii.

[390] 'Tahitian Missions', *The Patriot*, 8 May 1843.

[391] 'House of Commons. – Friday', *Morning Herald*, 20 March 1824.

[392] 'Negro Apprenticeship', *The Patriot*, 24 May 1838, 2.

[393] Moses Roper, *Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper from American Slavery: with an appendix, containing a list of places visited by the author in Great Britain and Ireland and the British isles, and other matter* (Berwick-upon-Tweed: Warder Office, 1848), 65.

[394] 'Saffron Walden', *Essex, Herts, and Kent Mercury*, 20 October 1840.

[395] 'Letter to Joseph Warner Bromley from J Woodwark', *Warner and Bromley Families of Badmondisfield Hall 1668-1933*, Ref. HA538/4/26/1, SA.

[396] *Proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention, called by the Committee of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and Held in London, from Friday June 12th, to Tuesday, June 23rd, 1840* (London: British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1841), 462, 543, 551, 570, 584. The Rev'd Woodwark was the last person to speak at the Convention, closing it with a prayer. He is included amongst the sitters in Bejamin Robert Haydon's massive oil on canvas painting of *The Anti-Slavery Society Convention, 1840*, painted the following year, and now owned by the National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG 599). He is identified as sitter no. 110 in John Alfred Vinter's c.1846–64 lithograph of Haydon's 1841 painting (NPG D23546). NB his surname is misspelled as 'Woodmark'.

[397] J.F. Johnson, (short-hand writer), *Proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention* (London: John Snow, 1843), 342.

[398] University College London, Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery database, Summary of Individual | Legacies of British Slavery https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/41212 (accessed 17 July 2025).

[399] Alan Argent, 'Congregationalists and the Abolition of the Slave Trade', *The Congregational History Society Magazine* 5, no. 3 (Spring 2007), 163.

[400] *The Second Report of the Suffolk Auxiliary Bible Society with an Appendix, and a List of Subscribers and Benefactors* (Ipswich: John King, County Press, 1813), vi; *The Third Report of the Suffolk Auxiliary Bible Society with an Appendix, and a List of Subscribers and Benefactors* (Ipswich: John King, County Press, 1814), vi. At this meeting the Rev'd Charles Dewhirst proposed a motion that was seconded by Thomas Clarkson.

[401] 'Abolition of Slavery', *Bury and Norwich Post*, 8 February 1826.

[402] Bromley, 'Memorial 1822-1834', 210; Bromley, 'Selections from memorial books', 165.

[403] Bromley, 'Memorial 1822-1834', 210.

[404] Bromley, 'Memorial 1822-1834', 264.

[405] Nathaniel Warner Bromley, 'Memorial Book, 1834 continued', SA, HA538/5/30, 61-2; Bromley, 'Selections from memorial books', 184.

[406] Bromley, 'Memorial 1834 Cont'd', 61.

[407] Nathaniel Warner Bromley, 'Draft Letter to his son Henry Bromley, 22 August 1840', SA, HA538/4/18/2 [hereafter: Bromley, 'Draft letter to Henry, 1840'].

[408] Bromley, 'Draft letter to Henry, 1840'.

[409] Bromley, 'Draft letter to Henry, 1840'.

[410] Nathaniel Warner Bromley, 'Part of a draft letter to Henry Bromley, his son, 1 December 1841', SA, HA538/4/18/1 [hereafter: Bromley, 'Draft letter to Henry, 1841'].

[411] Bromley, 'Draft letter to Henry, 1841'.

[412] NWB wrote, 'You never the less w[oul]d go & after stay[in]g to eat & drink & do as you both pleased, to carry away with you w[ha]t you pleased also gain[in]g a Shinner with y[ou]r load[in]g & taking my Horse (as I believe & as I know y[ou]r disposition to borrow Horses wher[eve]r you can get them) instead of keep[in]g one, w[hi]ch I hoped & intended you sh[oul]d do in allow[in]g you what I did and a great deal of w[hi]ch I ascribe to the mean disposit[io]n of y[ou]r wife'. See Bromley, 'Draft letter to Henry, 1841'. A 'Shinner' was a horse bred by Thomas Shinner, a Devonshire horse breeder who was known in the 1830s for his fast-trotting horse, 'Cottager'. See 'Opportunity to Breeders', *Western Times*, 16 March 1839.

[413] Bromley, 'Draft letter to Henry, 1841'.

[414] Merriam-Webster, 'Why Does "Mean" Mean Cruel? The Meanings of "Mean"' https://www.merriam-webster.com (accessed 17 July 2025).

[415] Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son'.

[416] Bromley, 'Thoughts on Son'.

[417] 'Bankrupts', *London Evening Standard*, 17 January 1844; 'Court of Bankruptcy, Feb. 29', *Morning Herald (London)*, 1 March 1844; 'Bankruptcy Court, April 18', *Morning Herald (London)*, 19 April 1844; 'Extraordinary Frauds', *John Bull*, 20 July 1844.

[418] 'Will of Nathaniel Warner Bromley of Bloomsbury, Middlesex', 30 April 1844, TNA, PROB 11/1996/237 [hereafter: 'Will of Nathaniel Warner Bromley'].

[419] 'Died', *Weekly Chronicle (London)*, 14 April 1844.

[420] 'Will of Nathaniel Warner Bromley'.

[421] 'Will of Nathaniel Warner Bromley' ; Bank of England Inflation Calculator, https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator (accessed 17 July 2025).

[422] Bank of England Inflation Calculator, https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator (accessed 17 July 2025). In a codicil added after the bankruptcy and professional ruin of his son William, NWB raised Catherine's inheritance from £40 to £100 for own sole use and not to be subject to her husband's debts, see 'Will of Nathaniel Warner Bromley'.

[423] 'Will of Nathaniel Warner Bromley'.

[424] 'Proceedings of the Church Meeting, 1827-1874', ERO, D/NC 35/3, 17 [hereafter: 'Proceedings of Church Meeting'].

[425] 'Proceedings of the Church Meeting', 98.

[426] 'Proceedings of the Church Meeting', 101.

[427] 'Letter of resignation of Revd. Henry Bromley as minister', ERO, D/NC 35/16. Published in part by Martin, *Olaudah*, 43; and by Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 23.

[428] 'Letter of resignation of Revd. Henry Bromley as minister', ERO, D/NC 35/16; Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 24.

[429] 'Two Hundred Years in the Life of a Village Congregational Church', *Nonconformist and Independent*, 27 July 1882; Bromley, *Clavering Congregational Church,* 26-30; 'Proceedings of the Church Meeting', 140-1, 143. This makes Osborne's suggestion of a conspiratorial cover-up most unlikely: 'The careful wording of both Bromley's letter and church records gives the impression that something was being suppressed, that something had happened, and great pains were being taken not to go into detail about why, after over 18 years the Bromleys had decided to leave Clavering.': Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 25.

[430] Aborigines' Protection Society [hereafter APS], *Ninth Annual Report of the Aborigines' Protection Society*, (London: William Watts, 1846), A2.

[431] *The Baptist Magazine* 38, (London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1846), 813-14.

[432] 'Albert Terrace' was the name of a row of terraced houses on Queen's Road (now Queen's Grove) in St John's Wood. In the 1840s, when Joanna and Henry lived there, this road was on the very northern edge of this new suburban development. According to newspaper advertisements of the era, by the 1850s, the 'Albert Terrace' part of the Queen's Road address was dropped due to another road in St John's Wood also being christened 'Albert Terrace' (this one near Primrose Hill and Regent's Park). The dropping of the terrace name on Queen's Road was almost certainly done to avoid confusion with this new road.

[433] APS 1847, 7-8; 'Aborigines Protection Society', *Morning Advertiser*, 20 May 1847.

[434] 'A deputation of the Aborigines Protection Society', *London Evening Standard*, 13 August 1846; 'A deputation of the Aborigines Protection Society', *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*, 9 February 1847.

[435] APS 1847, 12.

[436] *Seventh Annual Report of the Aborigines' Protection Society, presented at the Meeting in Crosby Hall, May 20, 1844. With Lists of Officers, Honorary and Corresponding Members, Subscribers, and Benefactors* (London,

1844) 6. During the 1844 annual meeting it was recorded that, to reduce expenses, the Society had abandoned their offices and moved their meetings to the residence of one of their members.

[437] Henry Bromley, *Religious Principle in Daily Practice; as illustrated in the Life and Character of Mr. James Pavitt, of Clavering, Essex; for more than Thirty Years a beloved and honoured officer of the Independent Church in that Village* (London: Jackson and Walford, 1846).

[438] *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* 24 (July - Dec 1846), 363-4.

[439] APS 1847, 7-8.

[440] APS 1847, 7-8; 'Aborigines Protection Society', *Morning Advertiser*, 20 May 1847.

[441] *Jewish Herald* 3-4, (November 1848) (London: Aylott & Hones, 1849), 267.

[442] *Jewish Herald* 3-4, (December 1848) (London: Aylott & Hones, 1849), 291; *Jewish Herald* 3-4, (January 1849) (London: Aylott & Hones, 1849), 20; *Jewish Herald* 3-4, (February 1849) (London: Aylott & Hones, 1849), 45.

[443] *Baptist Magazine* 38, (1846): 813-14; *Baptist Magazine* 39, (1847): 820-1; *Baptist Magazine* 40, (1848): 780-1; *Baptist Magazine* 41, (1849): 805-6; *The Post Office London Directory*, (London: W. Kelly & Co., 1847), 102; *The Small Edition of the Post Office London Directory, 1848* (London: W. Kelly & Co., 1848), 1694; *The Royal Blue Book : fashionable directory and Parliamentary Guide, 1848, containing the town and country residences of the nobility and gentry* (London: B.W. Gardiner, 1848), 57.

[444] Martin, *Olaudah*, 43; Pace Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 27, who proposed 'Since Bromley's father had an estate in Suffolk, it may have been decided that Joanna be near his family, given the delicate state of her health'. Our research into the poor relationship they had had with NWB and the fact that he was dead by 1851 disproves this suggestion.

[445] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 27.

[446] '1851 Census return for Tavern Street, Stowmarket, Stow subdistrict, Suffolk', s.v. 'Joanna Bromley', PRO HO107/1794, folio 621, p. 2, http://www.findmypast.co.uk (accessed 17 July 2025); discussed by Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 27, and census return reproduced on p. 28.

[447] '1851 Census return for Church Street, Harwich, Tendring subdistrict, Essex', s.v. 'Rev. H. Bromly [sic]', PRO HO107/1780, folio 44, p. 32, http://www.findmypast.co.uk (accessed 17 July 2025); Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 27, who mistranscribes 'Dore' as 'Dere'. James Dore was listed in the 1851 census as a widower living with his daughter, Mary, and son, William.

[448] Pace Martin, *Olaudah*, 43, who concludes from the separate census addresses that 'Joanna was no longer with him [Henry].' And ditto Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 27, when she suggests, 'The strains that she [Joanna] experienced in Clavering may have led Bromley to decide that she should not accompany him to Harwich.'

[449] 'Harwich', *The Patriot*, 24 February 1851.

[450] 'Place of worship: Providence Chapel. Parish or place: Harwich St Nicholas', 1851, folio 34, TNA, HO 129/203/34.

[451] 'Proceedings of the Church Meeting', 1827-1874', ERO, D/NC 35/3, 115-16.

[452] 'Assembly of the Congregational Union', *Congregational Year Book for 1854 Containing the Proceedings of The Congregational Union for 1853; and General Statistics for the Denomination* (London: Jackson and Walford, 1854), 2.

[453] 'Pastoral Incomes', *Congregational Year Book for 1854 Containing the Proceedings of The Congregational Union for 1853; and General Statistics for the Denomination* (London: Jackson and Walford, 1854), 39-42; 'Pastoral Incomes', *The Patriot*, 16 May 1853.

[454] 'Life Assurance by Rev. Henry Bromley', *Christian Witness and Congregational Magazine 1850* 7 (London: John Snow, 1850), 77-79; 'Ministerial Life Insurance', *The Patriot*, 11 November 1852; 'Ministerial Support, &c. – The Rev. H. Bromley's proposal', *The Patriot*, 17 January 1853.

[455] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 27.

[456] 'Ministerial Life Insurance', *The Patriot*, 11 November 1852; 'Ministerial Support, &c. – The Rev. H. Bromley's proposal', *The Patriot*, 17 January 1853; 'Assembly of the Congregational Union', *Congregational Year Book for 1854 Containing the Proceedings of The Congregational Union for 1853; and General Statistics for the Denomination*, (London: Jackson and Walford, 1854) 2; *Congregational Year Book for 1854*, 41, 305; Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 27.

[457] *Congregational Year Book for 1854,* 127. Pace Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 27, who states 'Some time in the 1850s, Joanna moved back to London – there is no record of Henry moving back with her. Perhaps he remained in Harwich and visited her regularly.

[458] *The Baptist Magazine for 1854*, 46, (1854), 801-2; 'Board of Congregational Ministers', *The Congregational Year Book for 1855 Containing the Proceedings of the Congregational Union for 1854; And General Statistics of the Denomination*, (London: Jackson and Walford, 1855), 103; *The Baptist Magazine for 1855* 47, (1855), 790; *The Baptist Magazine for 1856* 48, (1856), 797; and *The Baptist Magazine for 1857* 49, (1857), 833.

[459] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter,* 29.

[460] *De Beauvoir Association, History of De Beauvoir Town*, https://www.debeauvoir.org.uk/ (accessed 17 July 2025).

[461] *The Baptist Magazine for 1857*, Vol. XLIX (49), (London: Pewtress & Co.), 818.

[462] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 29.

[463] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 29.

[464] Harwich, Bathside Chapel, Essex, Denomination: Independent Congregational: Births and Baptisms, 1783–1826, n.p. (Sarah Burton, 15 June 1804), TNA, RG 4/53.

[465] '1851 Census return for Church Street, Harwich, Tendring subdistrict, Essex', s.v. 'Sarah Durrant', PRO HO107/1780, folio 44, p. 32, http://www.findmypast.co.uk (accessed 17 July 2025).

[466] 'Valuable freehold property in Harwich and Ramsey, Essex', *The Ipswich Journal*, 9 September 1853, 2.

[467] '1861 Census return for Prospect Place, Hackney, London & Middlesex', s.v. 'Sarah Durrant', PRO H0107/155, folio 161, p. 37, http://www.findmypast.co.uk (accessed 17 July 2025).

[468] 'William Durrant, bread and biscuit maker', *Shoreditch Observer*, 23 April 1859.

[469] A certified copy of Joanna's death certificate was reproduced by Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 29.

[470] As Amy Erickson pointed out, 'Married women could not make wills except under a marriage settlement or if they had received separate property during marriage (as Joanna's mother had)' (private correspondence: 27.7.2025).

[471] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 29.

[472] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 27-8; Martin, *Olaudah*, 43-4.

[473] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, 28.

[474] 'Deaths', *CC&J*, 14 March 1857; 'Cambridge. Died', *The Bury and Norwich Post*, 17 March 1857; 'Died', *The Ipswich Journal*, 21 March 1857. Pace Nunn, 'Visible and Vocal', 170, who erroneously claimed that the 'well known and highly-respected resident in Cambridge' referred to Joanna rather than to John Audley.

[475] 'Deaths', *The British Banner*, 19 March 1857; 'Deaths', *The British Standard*, 13 March 1857; 'Deaths', *The Patriot*, 13 March 1857; 'Deaths', *The Nonconformist*, 18 March 1857.

[476] 'Deaths', *British Standard*, 13 March 1857.

[477] Abney Park Cemetery Index 2005, https://www.devsys.co.uk/ap/Homepage.asp (accessed 17 July 2025). National Heritage List for England, Monument to Joanna Vassa in Abney Park Cemetery, Official List Entry: http://historicengland.org.uk (accessed 17 July 2025).

[478] National Heritage List for England, Monument to Joanna Vassa in Abney Park Cemetery, Official List Entry. Available at http://historicengland.org.uk (accessed 17 July 2025).

[479] 'Copy of the will of Rev Henry Bromley', 1878, *Warner and Bromley Families of Badmondisfield Hall 1668-1933*, SA, HA538/2/5/5; 'Hackney in the Olden Time', *Hackney and Kingsland Gazette*, 8 August 1892.

[480] *Congregational Year Book 1879*, 304. A slightly different version was published by Martin, *Olaudah*, 44.

[481] 'Hackney in the Olden Time', *Hackney and Kingsland Gazette*, 8 August 1892. The anonymous Victorian writer of this piece stumbles upon Joanna's grave, and intrigued by the inscription writes: 'We know not the story, but we can imagine that she was amongst those whose souls were lighted by the missionary amid "Afric's [sic] sunny fountains," and brought to learn "Messiah's name," and became the tutor's wife to bless his household.'

[482] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, vi, 27-8.

[483] Osborne, *Equiano's Daughter*, vi, 27-8.

[484] 'Monument to Joanna Vassa in Abney Park Cemetery', List Entry Number: 1392851, Date first listed: 22 August 2008. Available at https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1392851 (accessed 17 July 2025).

[485] For Prince, see Rachel Banner, 'Surface and Stasis: Re-reading Slave Narrative via "The History of Mary Prince"', *Callaloo* 36, no. 2 (2013): 298-311; Nicole N. Alijoe, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Prince* (Cambridge, 2025). For Seacole, see most recently, Helen Rappaport, *In Search of Mary Seacole: The making of a cultural icon* (Simon and Schuster, 2022). For Forbes Bonetta, see most recently, Henry B. Lovejoy, 'Queen Victoria's "Liberated African": Sarah "Sally" Forbes Bonetta and Her Extraordinary Apprenticeship by the British Royal Family, 1850–1862', *Slavery & Abolition* 45/4 (2024), 911-34.

List of Image Captions and Credit Lines

Fig. 1
Joy Labinjo (born 1994), *An Eighteenth-Century Family*, 2022. Oil on canvas.
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge: PD.74-2022. Bought with the Simms Fund. © Joy Labinjo. Courtesy of the Artist and Tiwani Contemporary.
Image Credit: Photo © The Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge

Fig. 2
Family Tree for Susannah Cullen (1762–1796), wife of Olaudah Equiano, aka Gustavus Vassa, The African.
Image Credit: © Dawnanna Kreeger, 2025

Fig. 3
William John Cooke (1797–1865; designer and engraver), *The Town of Soham, Cambridgeshire*, c.1825–30. Engraving.
Published in *Marshall's Select Views in Great Britain &c.*, Vol. III (London: W. Marshall, n.d., c. 1825–30), Book XXXIV, inserted between pp.136 and 137, following printed description of Soham, pp.131-2.
Cambridge University Library: Views.x.4 78.
Image Credit: Cambridge University Library / Scott Maloney

Fig. 4
Alexander Poole Moore (1777/8–1806; engraver and publisher) and John Raffield (aquatinter), *View of St Andrew's Parish Church, Soham*, published 18 February 1797 (after the original was exhibited at the Royal Academy 1796 exhibition, no. 393). Hand-tinted etching and aquatint.
Lettered below image with dedicatory inscription: 'To the Rev'd Thomas Wilson, A.M. Vicar of Soham, Cambridgeshire, this Print of Soham Church, is with his Permission most respectfully inscribed, by His obedient servant, A.P. Moore'.
Cambridge University Library: Views.x.4 77.
Image Credit: Cambridge University Library / Scott Maloney

Fig. 5
Marriage registration of Gustavus Vassa (aka Olaudah Equiano) and Susannah Cullen at St Andrew's Parish Church, Soham, 7 April 1792.
Cambridgeshire Archives, Ely: P142/1/11, 'Soham Register for Marriages MDCCLXXVII', fol. 74, entry no. 220.
Image Credit: Cambridgeshire Archives, Ely / Sue Martin

Fig. 6
Frontispiece and titlepage of a 4th-edition copy of Olaudah Equiano's Interesting Narrative *(Dublin, 1791) with an unidentified and undated hand-written inscription below recording Equiano's marriage in Soham.*
The Moorland Spingarn Research Center Collection, Howard University Library, Washington D.C., USA: add accession number
Image Credit: The Moorland Spingarn Research Center Collection, Howard University Library, Washington D.C., USA

Fig. 7
Peter Spendelowe Lamborn (1722–1774; designer and engraver), *Part of Chesterton, near Cambridge*, mid-18th century. Etching. Lettered below image with title and production details: 'P.S. Lamborn del. & sculp.'.
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Image Credit: Cambridge University Library / Scott Maloney

Fig. 8
Unrecorded monumental mason, *Epitaph to Anna Maria Vassa (1793–1797) with words composed by Edward Ind, 1797*. Marble or white stone.
St Andrew's Parish Church, Chesterton, exterior north wall.
Image Credit: St Andrew's, Chesterton / Rev'd Dr Philip Lockley

Fig. 9
Unrecorded monumental mason, *Footstone of Anna Maria Vassa's grave, inscribed 'A M V / 1797'*. Marble or white stone.
St Andrew's Parish Churchyard, Chesterton, directly in front of Anna Maria Vassa's epitaph.
Image Credit: Victoria Avery

Fig. 10
Family Tree for Nathaniel Warner Bromley (1798–1878), father-in-law of Joanna Vassa.
Image Credit: © Dawnanna Kreeger, 2025

Fig. 11
Unrecorded photographer, *View of the Manse (left) and Independent Chapel (right), Downing Place, Cambridge, c. 1870*.
Cambridge Central Library, The Cambridgeshire Collection: B.DOWN.J74 61.
Image Credit: Reproduced by kind permission of The Cambridgeshire Collection, Cambridge Central Library

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Marriage registration of the Rev'd Henry Bromley and Joanna Vassa at St James's Parish Church, Clerkenwell, 29 August 1821.
The London Archives, City of London: P76/JS1/038, 'Register of Marriages for St James, Clerkenwell (January 1818–February 1822)', fol. 264, entry no. 792.
Image Credit: The London Archives and St James, Clerkenwell

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George Potts of Stansted, Essex (c.1817–1890), *View of the former Independent Chapel, Clavering, Essex, c. 1870 or earlier*.
Essex Record Office, Chelmsford: I/Mb 88/1/5.
Image Credit: Reproduced by kind permission of the Essex Record Office

Fig. 14
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Abney Park Cemetery, Stoke Newington High Street, London. Grade II List Entry Number: 101392851; added as part of the bicentenary commemorations of the 1807 Abolition Act.