

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Slavery and Abolition* in 2014, available online: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0144039X.2014.944031>

It was part funded by the AHRC (Grant Ref. AH/I027290/1)

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**Plantations and Homes: The Material Culture of the Early Nineteenth-Century
Jamaican Elite**

Abstract:

This article is about the wealth and material culture of the Jamaican elite during the age of abolition. The planter class had a huge material investment in plantation slavery, and wealth derived from this allowed it to live ostentatiously and to consume conspicuously. Those who did not migrate away from Jamaica were drawn towards colonial towns, many of them taking up residence in, or at the edges of, urban centres. Lists of personal property found in probate inventories show how planters cultivated separate spheres of activity on the plantations and at their peri-urban homes, putting physical and cultural distance between themselves and the sources of their wealth.

At Lyssons in eastern Jamaica it is still possible to find the broken remains of the grave of one of the wealthiest men to have lived in the British West Indies, or indeed in the whole of the British Empire. A marble plaque declares:

Here lie the remains of the Honourable Simon Taylor, a loyal subject, a firm friend, and an honest man, who after an active life – during which he faithfully and ably filled the highest offices of civil and military duty in this island – died April 14th, 1813, aged 73.

This epitaph was once part of a large and ornate monument, which stood on Taylor's Lyssons sugar estate and was arranged and paid for in 1814 by Sir Simon Richard Brissett Taylor, the British-based nephew of the deceased and the principal heir to his uncle's huge West India fortune.¹ At around the same time, at the opposite end of Jamaica, the heirs to another plantation fortune were burying their father, John Cunningham. They also saw fit to create an epitaph, on a mural tablet in the parish church at the port town of Montego Bay.

Cunningham's three surviving sons proclaimed that the 'Hon. John Cunningham' had 'lived in the greatest domestic happiness' and attained huge wealth along with 'exalted stations' of high office in Jamaican public life. Cunningham had died on 27 September 1812, aged 74.²

These monumental inscriptions offer telling, if heavily biased, impressions of the parallel lives and public stature of two of the most economically successful sugar magnates of their generation. The deaths of these two men also generated other sources, which offer further insights into their personal wealth and the material worlds that they had created and inhabited during the course of their lives. While preparations for interment and memorialisation went ahead, the executors appointed by their wills set about the task of putting the full extent and cash value of their personal property down on paper in two lengthy probate inventories. This article uses these documents to examine the extent, value and composition of the estates that Taylor and Cunningham left behind. Using other sources, including letters from the large surviving collection of Taylor's correspondence, it explores

aspects of the material culture of a slaveholding society, examining some of the practices and attitudes that sustained and defined the Jamaican ‘world of Atlantic slavery’.³

We still know surprisingly little about planter material culture in the Caribbean. To be as ‘wealthy as a West Indian’ was a proverbial saying by the end of the eighteenth century.⁴ The material gains that allowed for the ‘lavish personal consumption’ of slaveholders and merchants were the ultimate *raison d’être* for British West Indian slavery, but our detailed understanding of white colonial wealth has tended to focus more on the methods of its creation than the modes of its consumption.⁵ This article looks at elements of both but with emphasis on the latter, seeking to build on the existing literature about social and economic life in Jamaican slave society, particularly a previous study by Richard Sheridan on Taylor’s inventory and work by B.W. Higman on the social and economic geographies of plantation Jamaica.⁶ Through its focus on the ways that planters invested and consumed their wealth, it examines how this group made, used, inhabited and understood different colonial spaces. As such, the article contributes to a growing body of scholarship about the social milieu of British-Caribbean slaveholders.⁷ Finally, it aims to highlight some of the interchangeable methodologies of historians and archaeologists.⁸ The two probate inventories can be viewed not only as documentary statements about the personal wealth of these two men but also as types of written artefact assemblages. It is, however, necessary to note that these lists are not limited to tangible objects. They also include financial assets and livestock, as well as enslaved people, defined in these documents as ‘property’. Probate inventories can therefore show how written sources provide rich evidence not only about colonial material culture but also about the wider slaveholding culture of which they were a product.

Measuring ‘portions of affluence’

Born within a few months of one another, John Cunningham and Simon Taylor each built large plantation fortunes in Jamaica. During their lifetimes, Jamaica was the most strategically and commercially significant colony in Britain's Atlantic empire, a status that rested on the lucrative sugar economy of the island. The hundreds of large slave-run sugar plantations, generally known as 'estates', produced the mainstay of Jamaican exports, most of which went to Britain. Taylor and Cunningham took advantage of this colonial economy based on sugar and slavery, moving from mercantile activities into sugar planting to create their vast fortunes. Both died in Jamaica, leaving behind them several plantations and huge holdings of enslaved people. Cunningham's inventory listed the names of over 1,300 enslaved people, Taylor's of over 2,200.⁹ As leading slaveholders and extremely wealthy planters, whose income and social stature put them at the apex of Jamaican colonial society, both men performed public duties that were the exclusive preserve of the colonial elite: the 'highest offices of civil and military duty', alluded to on Taylor's epitaph. Taylor had served as an elected member of the powerful local legislature over many years. Both men had risen to high ranks in the militia and served as custodes (chief magistrates) of their respective parishes, a role that permitted them to use the prefix 'Honourable' before their names.¹⁰

Taylor inherited a substantial fortune from his Scottish father, who had been a merchant based in Kingston, the largest town in Jamaica and the main port of the island. He went to England for his education, attending Eton College, and returned to Jamaica in 1760. He began to buy plantations, first acquiring Lyssons, a sugar estate in the parish of St. Thomas in the East, which he owned in common with his absent brother, and then Llanrumney, in the parish of St. Mary. He also made money by managing the sugar estates of absentee proprietors, which Taylor admitted was a 'profitable' business, 'tho troublesome', and he also continued to operate his deceased father's merchant business until the early 1770s.¹¹ In 1774, he told his brother in England that Lyssons, with two new sets of works

buildings for the processing of sugar, had ‘cost an inconceivable amount of money’ to improve but was now ready to produce an annual crop of about 500 hogsheads of sugar: a large output for any West Indian plantation.¹² He also borrowed extensively to buy Holland estate, which lay in at the richly fertile easternmost tip of the island. Holland cost Taylor about £100,000, leaving him with a ‘very large’ financial burden. He was tempted to take on the ‘uneasiness and anxiety’ of such a huge commitment because he aimed to make Holland ‘the best estate in the West Indies for its size’. Holland became Taylor’s most prized plantation, and by the time he made his final payment on the property, in 1785, he was firmly established as a member of the Jamaican sugar-planting elite.¹³ Shortly afterwards, he purchased Prospect Pen, which became his main residence, described by Taylor as his house ‘in the country about three miles and a half from Kingston’.¹⁴

The precise course of Cunningham’s career is less clear. He migrated to Jamaica from Scotland in 1761.¹⁵ Like Taylor, he appears to have been a merchant who branched out into sugar planting. A list of the white residents of St. James parish in the early 1770s includes the name ‘Jno Cunningham’, a ‘merchant’.¹⁶ Cunningham acted as a factor at Montego Bay for slave traders during the 1790s, by which time he had probably also diverged towards sugar planting, as one of the stones at the entrance to the old cattle mill on his Bellfield estate still bears the inscription ‘built by Jno Cunningham Janry 1st 1794’.¹⁷ Cunningham acquired Bellfield and several other sugar plantations situated in the parishes of St. James and Trelawny, two of the most promising regions of Jamaica for ambitious planters. Between 1768 and 1808, the sugar economy of the two parishes doubled in size.¹⁸ In 1774, Cunningham married Elizabeth Westland. The couple went on to have several children, and it is clear that Cunningham’s expanding investment in slavery and plantation agriculture was something of a family affair.¹⁹ In his will, Cunningham bequeathed one of his St. James sugar estates to his son James, as a mark of ‘high approbation’ of his son’s ‘great attention to that

property'. Cunningham also praised his son's 'attention to and good management of my other estates and concerns'.²⁰ Towards the end of his life, Cunningham lived with his family in a large house, described in his inventory as the 'Hill House', on the outskirts of Montego Bay.²¹

During the early nineteenth century, Cunningham and Taylor were two of the richest men in Britain's most valuable Caribbean colony, and the probate inventories of their personal estates help to put their wealth at death into context. In general, probate inventories offer some of the best material available to historians engaged in measuring levels of wealth in colonial societies. They have their shortcomings, covering only the free section of Jamaican society and being limited to an account of personal property. They therefore contain little direct evidence about real estate or debts owed by the deceased. Inventories were not made for the estates of children or married women, and it seems likely that some heirs and executors evaded or neglected what could be an expensive and bureaucratic process. Nevertheless, contemporaries trusted these documents to give accurate and sworn records of individual personal wealth.²² Trevor Burnard's systematic study of Jamaican inventories has outlined the 'prodigious riches' of free society in the colony, where white inhabitants were, on average, materially better off than their counterparts in any other part of the British Atlantic world.²³ The mean average personal estate left by free whites in early nineteenth-century Jamaica was a little over £5,000; and the median was closer to £870.²⁴ Sugar planters lived in particular comfort, their material wealth far exceeding that of other colonists. For instance, Philip Redwood, a sugar planter and speaker of the Jamaica Assembly, died in 1810 owning nearly 250 slaves and with a personal estate of about £30,000.²⁵ The absentee planter and well-known proslavery writer, Bryan Edwards, died in 1800, owning several Jamaican properties, over 600 slaves and with personal property in Jamaica valued at £73,328.²⁶

Cunningham's personal property was worth nearly twice as much as Edwards's. His inventory recorded his personal wealth at £140,060. Taylor's wealth eclipsed even that huge

sum. His inventory recorded his personal wealth at £806,337.²⁷ Between 1809 and 1819, only 214 people died in the British Isles with personal estates valued at over £100,000 sterling; just nine died with estates valued at £500,000 or over.²⁸ Cunningham and Taylor were therefore among the very wealthiest Britons of their age. The main difference between their personal estates was the high value of Taylor's financial assets, including stocks, bonds, cash, and debts due to him, valued at over half a million sterling. Cunningham's financial assets listed in his inventory came to about £18,500. In terms of the other property that they owned in Jamaica, the estates of the two men were very similar. The valuation of slaves, livestock, plantation equipment, furniture and other household effects in Taylor's inventory came to about £150,000 and in Cunningham's to about £121,500.

It is likely that Cunningham's sugar properties made annual returns of up to £20,000 in the two decades before his death and that Taylor's three estates brought him an income of up to £24,000 during the same period.²⁹ Richard Sheridan used information from the Taylor inventory to estimate Taylor's annual income at £47,000, which included his earnings derived from acting as a proxy manager for absentee planters and dividends from financial investments.³⁰ Regardless of the precise amounts, it is certain that both of these two colonial grandees reaped huge financial rewards from their personal plantation empires. Among the Jamaican planters of their generation, probably only John Tharp (1744-1804) and William Beckford (1760-1844) could match or surpass Taylor's annual income, and Taylor and Cunningham each appear to have received returns on their capital far greater than those enjoyed by the English gentry and equalled only by the very wealthiest of the principal landlords at 'home' in the mother country.³¹

The epitaph to Cunningham at the parish church in Montego Bay, recorded that he had 'attained that portion of affluence which rarely falls to the lot of man'.³² Certainly, this was no exaggeration. There is no evidence in Cunningham's will to suggest that his estate was

heavily encumbered by debt. On the contrary, his inventory shows that he was a frequent creditor to other planters. Towards the end of his life, Taylor had achieved his ambition of creating 'a clear fortune in debt to no one'. He also advanced credit to other planters, to the degree that in 1806 George Nugent, the governor of Jamaica, complained that some members of the Jamaican legislative assembly were so financially 'dependent' upon Taylor that it helped him wielded a worrying degree of influence there. Nugent opined that Taylor was 'by much the richest proprietor in the island, & in the habit of accumulating money so as to make his nephew & heir...one of the most wealthy subjects of His Majesty'.³³ As Richard Sheridan has shown, Taylor was a 'sugar tycoon' with a 'princely income'. The sheer magnitude of his wealth helped him to exercise 'greater influence in Jamaica, and for a longer period, than any other individual'.³⁴

Plantation empires

Probate inventories contain ample information about the arrangement and distribution of personal property and offer 'a basis for reconstructing the spatial contexts and functional dimensions of colonial American material culture'.³⁵ In colonial Jamaica, appraisers often found all the effects they were looking for in one small space, often within a single room in the case of landless plantation employees, who were among the least wealthy people to have their personal effects enumerated in this way. By contrast, Taylor and Cunningham offer exceptional examples of planters with extensive and multiple landholdings. The probate inventories of their property are exceptionally long and detailed documents. These documents reveal vast assemblages of people, animals and things, all parts of complex and far-flung operations. Caribbean plantations were part of 'an organic system of exploitation' geared towards making sugar for transatlantic export and annual profit.³⁶ The inventory records

therefore represent attempts to capture, at a single moment, aggregations that were in continual motion across a wide geographical area.

Cunningham's inventory lists property at his Bellfield and Retrieve sugar estates in the parish of St. James and at Roslin Castle, Hopewell and Biddeford estates in the neighbouring parish of Trelawny. Cunningham also had a one-third share in Greenside estate, which he appears to have owned jointly with one of his sons.³⁷ There were between 152 and 226 enslaved people living and working at each plantation. In addition, Cunningham owned other rural properties described as 'pens', the local term used to denote either a livestock-rearing farm or a rural residential property. The primary function of those belonging to Cunningham appears to have been to raise stock for use as animate labour on his sugar estates and for sale on the local market. As well as this rural property, Cunningham left behind many personal effects at his large home 'adjoining the town of Montego Bay' as well as goods located at a wharf in the town.³⁸

Taylor owned fewer properties spread over a wider geographical area. It is probable that his three sugar estates surpassed the combined size and output of those owned by Cunningham. They were huge concerns. His inventory listed more than 600 enslaved people living and working on his Holland estate, which was the largest property in St. Thomas in the East, and there were over 340 on Lyssons, his other sugar estate in the parish. Taylor's Llanrumney estate was the largest in the parish of St. Mary and had an enslaved workforce of over 450 people.³⁹ In addition, Taylor's inventory lists the hundreds of enslaved people settled on his livestock pens in St. Mary and St. Thomas in the East, as well as at Haughton Grove estate in the western parish of Hanover, a property belonging to the estate of his deceased brother. Taylor also had property at his main place of residence near to the outskirts of Kingston, and his inventory lists goods belonging to him left at a Kingston wharf.

As noted by one contemporary observer of Jamaican affairs, those men charged with creating probate inventories were required to list and evaluate enslaved people just ‘like other chattels’.⁴⁰ The reinscription of the idea that defined West Indian slave society – that people could be held by others as property – was therefore a central component of these important legal documents, which facilitated the transition of property to ‘rightful’ heirs or creditors following a death.⁴¹ During the early nineteenth century, nearly two-thirds of all probated white colonists were slaveholders, and enslaved people comprised about half of the ‘property’ assessed.⁴² The 2,248 enslaved people named in Taylor’s inventory were valued, collectively, at £128,550. The 1,309 enslaved people in Cunningham’s at £104,543. The valuation attributed to enslaved people represented about three-quarters of all the personal property evaluated in Cunningham’s inventory. In Taylor’s inventory, only his hefty financial investments in British stocks and shares outweighed the total valuation ascribed to enslaved people.

About 97 per cent of all of the enslaved people named in the Taylor inventory were located on rural properties, most of them on sugar plantations. Nearly 95 per cent of all the enslaved people named in the Cunningham inventory lived and worked on his family’s six sugar estates or at connected livestock pens. Livestock and equipment also represented considerable investments on all of these rural properties, but enslaved people were valued more highly. For example, on Cunningham’s Bellfield estate, the mules and cattle so essential to the running of any Caribbean sugar estate numbered 357 and were valued at about £5,500. The moveable plantation equipment on the property was worth more than £500. The enslaved workforce of 210 people was ascribed a total value of over £18,700, adding further empirical weight to the observation that enslaved people were the most essential element within ‘the sinews of a plantation’ and the most serious capital outlay for any West Indian planter.⁴³

The location and distribution of tangible objects, as distinct from people, animals and financial investments, also demonstrates the extent of Taylor's and Cunningham's investments in the plantation economy. In Taylor's inventory, tangible objects were valued all together at £11,137. These included household furniture and utensils, linen, silverware, tools and equipment, as well as stores of food and lumber. A little over 70 per cent of all this property was located on Taylor's rural sugar plantations and pens. Such items were valued at £15,348 in Cunningham's inventory, with £10,609, a little under 70 per cent, on plantations or pens. Moreover, most of the value ascribed to tangible objects on rural properties was accounted for by plantation equipment and stores. For instance, at Taylor's Holland estate the various stores – including tools for blacksmiths, masons and carpenters; mill equipment; boiling and still house utensils; lumber and medicine – were worth more than 10 times as much as items found in the main residential house on the property. In various ways, therefore, sugar plantations represented the most valuable assets of sugar planters, and enslaved people, livestock, plantation equipment and stores represented significant investments that far outstripped the value ascribed to their residential houses and items of conspicuous consumption.

Plantation houses

The material culture of the planter class rested on its heavy economic investment in sugar production. Most planters' capital was mainly tied up in plantations, but proprietors were nevertheless able to spend the large incomes they derived from slave-produced sugar on ostentatious living. Items listed in the inventories provide us with a detailed record of this while providing significant hints about how planters lived and where they spent most of their time. Predictably, both Taylor and Cunningham were able to exist in comfort. It is also apparent that both of them chose to live away from their plantations, spending most of their

time at large homes on the outskirts of Jamaican port towns: Taylor at Prospect Pen in the countryside near Kingston and Cunningham at his Hill House in the suburbs of Montego Bay. Houses which were located on their sugar plantations could provide white occupants with a high standard of living but were not permanent places of residence for these two elite planters. In fact, the inventories illustrate the utilitarian functions of many West Indian plantation houses by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Many white colonists, but particularly those with considerable means, had removed themselves from daily life in rural Jamaica in favour of residences closer to urban centres.

The largest dwelling place on a rural property, colloquially referred to as the 'great house', served as home for the plantation overseer and often for other members of the white managerial staff. These were also places for the proprietor and his guests to stay while visiting the property. Furniture and other household effects at Cunningham's Bellfield estate in the parish of St. James were valued at £193 and included seven 'bedsteads with mattresses &c', worth £150, an 'eight day clock', a liquor case and two dressing tables. Things were even more comfortable at Greenside great house, near to the town of Falmouth in neighbouring Trelawny. Household effects there were worth about £440 and included seven beds, £20 currency of table linen, £38 currency of silverware, two mirrors and a sofa – all indications of a large and expensively furnished house.

The house at Taylor's Lyssons estate was also especially well equipped. Its furniture and other household effects, which were valued at about £300, included seven mahogany bedsteads, two mahogany tables and two dozen chairs. Other furniture included two large mirrors, a mahogany escritoire 'with a book case on top', four liquor cases and a sofa. The silverware was worth over £70 and the china crockery about £10. Like the house at Greenside, this property was prepared for comfortable living and impressive entertaining. Maria Nugent spent a comfortable night at Lyssons in 1802, while accompanying her husband on a

gubernatorial tour of the island.⁴⁴ It is probable that Taylor made frequent visits to this property. Lyssons was about four miles distant from the parish town of Morant Bay, the site for the various court days and meetings of the local vestry that he needed to attend in his role as custos of the parish of St. Thomas in the East.

The Greenside and Lyssons great houses were two of a declining number of richly fitted-out residential properties to be found on Jamaican sugar estates. On her travels, Nugent remarked that Bryan Hall, the former home of Bryan Edwards, was ‘a beautiful place’ with a ‘good’ and ‘tolerably well furnished’ house. The imposingly huge and infamous great house at Rose Hall in St. James offered another, often-cited, though unusual, example of plantation grand living. However, as Douglas Armstrong suggests, dwelling houses for whites on Jamaican sugar plantations during the era of slavery often bore the austere hallmarks of frontier institutions, and the modest house that Nugent saw on Fort George estate, which was ‘merely fitted up for the overseer’, was an increasingly common type of rural house for white residents by the turn of the nineteenth century.⁴⁵ The shift towards this sort of plantation house was linked to the rise of absenteeism, as increasing numbers of plantation proprietors left their estates in Jamaica to live elsewhere, and was part of a wider set of transformations that witnessed the application of new, rationalised, techniques to matters of plantation management. Plantation management was, increasingly, the responsibility of professional planters in the form of proxy managers (known locally as ‘attorneys’), who were often plantation owners in their own right. These men tended to make occasional visits to estates in their charge while leaving day-to-day management in the hands of white plantation overseers.⁴⁶

These transformations were reflected in the vision of plantation work and life articulated in 1823 by Thomas Roughley in his guide for absentee planters. In this schema, the main house for whites on a plantation was to be a functional dwelling place, ‘compact and

convenient' and with space beneath 'to keep all the plantation stores and supplies', in sight of the works and with small bedrooms for the white managerial staff.⁴⁷ The situation on Taylor's Llanrumney estate bore close comparison with Roughley's plan. There was a house for the overseer, one bedroom of which was described in the inventory as 'Mr Taylor's', presumably set aside for the proprietor to use on visits. There was a separate building for other white employees, commonly known in Jamaica as 'bookkeepers' and whose work included attending to all aspects of plantation management under the guidance of the overseer. Furniture and household effects in the overseer's house at Llanrumney were worth about £200 and included a covered sofa, 'a mahogany table', six 'mahogany arm chairs', some silver cutlery and a 'new bedstead' in the overseer's bedroom. The bookkeeper quarters were more austere, fitted out with low-value furniture. Plantation stores – including food provisions, paint, mule harnesses, tools and '21 steel rat traps' – were kept in areas underneath these two buildings. These houses performed a pragmatic role, positioned at the working centre of the property, providing a comfortable dwelling place for the overseer, accommodation for bookkeepers and storage space for equipment and supplies. Though planters like Taylor were justifiably renowned for their ostentatious living at their homes, they were pragmatically opposed to 'superfluities' in functional buildings on their sugar estates. 'If a man is to build a house to inhabit, let it be elegant', opined Taylor, 'but no one in his senses would build a palace for a barn'.⁴⁸

Whatever the quality of their lodgings, whites on Jamaican plantations lived in material comfort hugely superior to that of the enslaved workers. But life on rural plantations could be uncomfortable for them in other ways. It was strictly regimented around the routines of production and an often-anxious existence. Across Jamaica as a whole, enslaved people outnumbered whites by a ratio of about 13 to one. In some rural parishes, including St. Thomas in the East and St. Mary, the ratio was about 30 to one.⁴⁹ On the sugar estates the

disparity was starker still. For example, there were six white managers at Taylor's remote Holland estate: one to every 100 enslaved people on the property.⁵⁰ It was perhaps to be expected, therefore, that the threat of a violent uprising by enslaved people felt most real in rural parts and that these locations were where whites were most fearful. In 1765, Taylor's overseer at Llanrumney was killed by enslaved rebels, and in 1807 the overseer of the property contacted Taylor worried that enslaved people in the district might be plotting another uprising.⁵¹ The inventory for Llanrumney included '5 stand of arms & accoutrements' which were 'distributed amongst the white people on the estate'. At Holland there were 'arms and gunpowder' worth £31 currency.

Anyone who had been to 'country parts of Jamaica', one visitor wrote, could 'recollect the sensation of extreme loneliness which is there felt'. Plantation houses were 'oftentimes far from any other mansion; no other dwelling is probably in sight; and nothing but silent nature is seen around'.⁵² James Delle has noted that coffee planters in some of the remotest parts of the Jamaican interior went to great lengths to build dwelling houses on their properties within sight of their nearest neighbours, in order to moderate this isolation.⁵³ Even so, it was impossible to overcome the problem. Taylor commented that there were 'no billiard tables or taverns' in the neighbourhood of Holland.⁵⁴ He was pleased that there was so little to tempt his white staff into idle ways, but the common complaint of whites arriving in Jamaica, that there was 'no society or rational amusement like Old England', was surely amplified at a place like this, which perhaps explains why a newly arrived plantation employee could express the urge to swap the 'bookkeeper's life' for 'a situation in an office in town'.⁵⁵ There were plenty of reasons for white colonists to want to live elsewhere than on sugar plantations, and by the early nineteenth century the flight from the estates by those planters affluent enough to be able to leave was in full swing.

Homes and families

Houses for whites on sugar estates were comfortable and, in many cases, luxurious, but Cunningham and Taylor spent most of their time at other locations. This was a typical part of a wider pattern whereby much of the conspicuous consumption that sugar estates made possible occurred in other places, far from the plantations themselves. Some of the very grandest houses bought, built or supplied by wealth generated from Caribbean slavery were those of absentee proprietors in Britain. However, the proceeds of the plantations also funded the lifestyles of the local elite. As well as sustaining it economically, slavery was an ever present feature of this. For example, 70 enslaved people lived and laboured at Taylor's home at Prospect Pen, 27 at Cunningham's Hill House. These people engaged in work focused on serving the proprietor, his family and guests, either as cooks or domestic servants or in tending gardens, parkland or pastures. Here, as elsewhere in the wider world of Atlantic slavery, a culture of leisurely consumption revolving around notions of gentility and taste rested on the work and suffering of 'repressed others'.⁵⁶

Cunningham's home lay near to the thriving port and the parish town of Montego Bay. When Maria Nugent stayed there, she commented that the house was 'as comfortable as possible', that the rooms were 'good, and well furnished' and the situation 'delightful'. It was one of the largest and most lavishly equipped homes in colonial Jamaica. Taken together, the household effects appraised at the property came to over £3,300. The silverware alone was worth £574. The wealth on display here certainly surpassed, by a very long way, that at any of the Cunningham or Taylor plantation great houses. There were 10 complete bedsteads, along with seven tables for the bedrooms, indicating that this was a large house with ample accommodation for a large family and its guests. Indeed, during their stay, Nugent and her husband occupied the building's 'state apartments'.⁵⁷ The property contained four mahogany side boards, 10 mahogany tables, 44 'assorted' chairs and four 'sofas with covers'. There was

a clock valued at over £20 currency and two chandeliers valued at £140 currency, along with a 'large Turkey carpet', all rare items of luxury. The list of inventoried 'liquors' at the property included two butts and a pipe of old Madeira wine worth £620 currency, as well as quantities of porter and old rum. The Cunningham family were also able to entertain themselves and their guests with an organ and an 'old harpsichord'; and their home was decorated with 15 prints and four large portraits. Moreover, they were able to travel in style. The inventory listed two 'close carriages', together worth £600 currency, as well as two chaises and 'sadlery'. This grand assemblage of opulent possessions indicates that the Cunningham Hill House was supremely well equipped both to dispense the lavish hospitality for which the planter class of Jamaica was famed as well as to provide a standard of living for its owner that was unsurpassed in the colony.

Only other members of the planter elite, like Simon Taylor, could match Cunningham's lifestyle. Taylor's home at Prospect Pen was situated on the Liguanea plain, which one traveller described as having the appearance of 'an extensive garden' when viewed from surrounding hills.⁵⁸ The mansion house on the property offered its owner the relaxed enjoyment of this bucolic environment within a short three-mile journey of Kingston. The pen contained 119 acres, including nine acres of parkland and a two-acre garden. The 'capital mansion' contained a ball room, dining room and large drawing room.⁵⁹ The inventory valued household effects there at over £2,800. The silverware was worth £482, and the stores of liquor, comprising mostly Madeira wine, were valued at over £1,000. There are lists of tables, chairs and all the silverware and china necessary for impressive entertaining and dining on a large scale, as well as card tables to keep guests amused. This was also where Taylor kept personal items, such as 'a pair of gold coin of Oliver Cromwell', 'a silver medal of Maria Louisa queen of Spain', 'a gold ring' and a box containing his 'Eton buttons'. Taylor often wrote about the virtues of financial restraint and the benefits of 'sobriety and œconomy', but

the items that furnished and decorated his home tell a different story.⁶⁰ Prospect was as much an ideal venue for displays of excessive hospitality as Cunningham's Hill House. And, like Cunningham, who possessed 'a gold watch and appendages' worth £60 currency, Taylor owned many items that hint at the refined affluence of his daily life: a gold snuff box worth £39 currency, a silver inkstand, a silver 'pocket pistol' and a 'gold mounted' walking stick.

Despite their comparable opulence, there were significant differences between the Taylor and Cunningham households, and the lists of objects in the inventories offer some evidence of the contrast. Cunningham was married and survived by six children: three sons and three daughters. Taylor was an 'old bachelor' who lived with a free coloured mistress and fathered several mixed-race children. At Cunningham's home, Nugent spent time in the company of his wife and noted that his children were 'well managed' and 'not young enough to disturb one with their noise'. Taylor was less open about his family relations, but it is clear that he lived with his free-coloured mistress, Grace Donne, at Prospect for many years, before Donne's death in 1804. At the end of his life, he was living with another woman of colour, Sarah Hunter, and with his mixed race daughter and granddaughter.⁶¹

Contrasting family arrangements provide the key to understanding differences in the material cultures of the Cunningham and Taylor households. Cunningham's household effects at the Hill House were worth about 15 per cent more than Taylor's at Prospect, indicating that, although Taylor was the wealthier of the two men, Cunningham had a somewhat larger and more expensively equipped home.⁶² Observers of early nineteenth-century Jamaican life remarked on the expense of maintaining a white wife and family, noting that '*appearances must be preserved*'. For example, the family of 'a wealthy proprietor' required presentable coaches, carriages and horses with 'their proper attendants'.⁶³ Cunningham's two carriages were reckoned to be worth about seven times the value of Taylor's carriage and 'old chaise'. Moreover, it seems feasible that, as in Georgian Britain, the genteel pursuits expected of a

white wife and female children could prompt the acquisition of musical instruments, such as the harpsichord and organ found in the Cunningham home.⁶⁴ Things were different for a Jamaican ‘bachelor’. Local customs and practices dictated that free-coloured mistresses went ‘under the appellation of housekeepers’, even though they viewed their relationships with white men ‘in the same light as marriage’. White men often bought them gifts but were under no strict customary obligations to maintain their mistresses or illegitimate children in a specific style. White Jamaican men claimed to be dissuaded from contemplating marriage to a white wife by the ‘expensiveness’ of keeping a home and remarked that alternative domestic arrangements, with women of colour, were advantageous to ‘a prudent man’, who could ‘live as retired, and upon as moderate a scale as he wishes’.⁶⁵ Therefore, while it is apparent that Taylor and others in his household lived in great comfort, Cunningham’s domestic priorities were almost certainly somewhat different, as he worked to keep up the appearances of an elite white family.

Sugar estates and ‘gentlemen’s houses’

Governor Nugent remarked that Taylor lived ‘principally with overseers of estates and masters of merchant vessels’.⁶⁶ This flippant characterisation ignored Taylor’s mixed-race family connections but nonetheless offers a telling representation of a man who lived his life poised between the worlds of plantation management and transoceanic commerce. Taylor certainly did entertain mariners in his home at Prospect Pen.⁶⁷ The house there stood on the rising plain between Kingston to the south and the Blue Mountains to the north. From the lookout at the top of the property, the proprietor and his guests could keep an eye on the comings and goings of ships in the harbour through a telescope, an expensive piece of equipment valued at over £7 currency. Inside the house was a picture depicting a ‘view of Port Royal’, the naval station at the entrance to Kingston harbour. Taylor also kept in regular

contact with his rural Jamaican properties through correspondence with their overseers.⁶⁸

Holland and Lyssons lay to the east, along hilly and difficult roads; Llanrumney, beyond the mountains to the north, was even more difficult to get to from Kingston. But, in spite of the awkwardness of local travel, Taylor made frequent visits to his plantations in order to oversee their management, often in response to disruptions to the normal course of production: diseased crops at Holland, a fire that destroyed his works at Lyssons or rumours of rebellion at Llanrumney.⁶⁹ At his Hill House overlooking Montego Bay, Cunningham occupied a similar sort of position – between port town and plantation hinterland. It was also characteristic of the Jamaican planter elite more generally, as Edward Long revealed in 1774 when enumerating the number of coaches and ‘wheel-carriages of pleasure’ in Jamaica. About two-thirds of all these were located in the vicinity of Kingston and Spanish Town, in the parishes of Kingston, St. Catherine and St. Andrew, because some Jamaican proprietors of rural estates lived ‘more commonly in town’.⁷⁰

There were many things that attracted whites to Jamaican towns. Kingston was the ‘leading metropolis’ in the British West Indies, the main hub for Jamaica’s overseas trade, and had grown by the early nineteenth century into an extremely wealthy regional urban centre.⁷¹ The white population of Kingston stood at about 6,500, about a quarter of the population of the town and a stark contrast to the much smaller white minorities in rural parts. A large and growing population of free people of colour further augmented urban free society.⁷² Wealthy whites in Kingston could take advantage of the close proximity of its well-stocked markets to eat a rich and varied diet as well as enjoying opportunities to socialise at taverns, balls, coffee houses or the theatre.⁷³ There was even a ‘tolerably good circulating library’.⁷⁴ Other Jamaican towns offered similar attractions on a more modest scale. Montego Bay, where Cunningham lived, was much smaller than Kingston, but it was the third largest settlement in Jamaica – a flourishing port of about 600 white inhabitants, reckoned by one

visitor to be ‘the prettiest town in Jamaica’.⁷⁵ Such urban concentrations shared Kingston’s demographic characteristics. About half of all Jamaican whites lived in towns, which were ‘centres of white life in the tropics’ – spaces of white community and sociability within the racialised landscape of colonial Jamaica.⁷⁶

Life in or near to towns appealed to the Jamaican planter class. For instance, John Perry, who had once worked alongside Cunningham as a merchant in north-western Jamaica, lived in a grand peri-urban dwelling near to Montego Bay. His Hopewell property consisted of a ‘dwelling house with offices and lands’ and lay some 40 miles away from his sugar plantation in a neighbouring parish.⁷⁷ Many sugar planters had houses in Spanish Town, the administrative capital of the colony, the meeting place of the legislative assembly, and the local stronghold of planter power. Sir Charles Price, a leading planter and Speaker of the Assembly, owned a large and prominent house in Spanish Town.⁷⁸ Another wealthy assemblyman, the planter Samuel Queensborough, owned a very well appointed Spanish Town home in which transatlantic connections remained firmly in view; its decoration included ‘6 copper plate engravings from Shakespeare & a plan of London Docks’. Philip Redwood, a prominent lawyer and Speaker of the Assembly between 1802 and 1809, owned a house in the capital as well as his two sugar plantations and two pens.⁷⁹ Another Speaker, Richard Barrett, a planter with several rural properties in northern and western Jamaica, owned ‘a house situated in Spanish Town’ along with Union Pen on the outskirts.⁸⁰ Chaloner Arcedeckne, Taylor’s longstanding friend and an absentee planter, owned a ‘large house’ in Spanish Town, which he let to the Attorney General of the colony.⁸¹

Many of Jamaica’s grandest mansions were in the vicinity of Kingston, including a famously large house built by the merchant-planter Thomas Hibbert on Duke Street at the edge of the commercial part of the city.⁸² Beyond the city, there were little pens ‘with good houses on them’ and the ‘elegant villas’ of the St. Andrew countryside, which included

Taylor's home at Prospect.⁸³ This peri-urban arrangement was mirrored at Montego Bay, but on a smaller scale. As Nugent remarked, the hillside around the Cunningham mansion on the edge of the town was dotted with 'all the gentlemen's houses' – the homes of the local elite, which were 'interspersed with gardens' and 'palms of all sorts' so that 'from the town, quite up to the top of the hills, you see nothing but villas peeping out from among the foliage'.⁸⁴ Spanish Town was similarly renowned for the 'many splendid edifices in the town and neighbourhood', owned by lawyers, government officials and 'country proprietors'.⁸⁵

Large town houses and the residential pens that surrounded urban settlements were important features of the colonial landscape. These were enclaves of gentility that stood at a marked distance from the brutal realities of plantation production and from the bustle of urban commerce but within easy striking distance of both. Nicholas Draper has noted how West Indian proprietors who moved to Britain sought to cultivate personas as English gentlemen, putting physical and cultural distance between themselves and the sources of their wealth.⁸⁶ Resident proprietors acted similarly. As Higman emphasises, Prospect Pen was not a property designed to be economically productive but 'to create a pastoral setting for the merchant-planter and his guests'.⁸⁷ Like Cunningham's Hill House, it was one of a number of comfortable suburban Jamaican properties, 'furnished with a taste and elegance', with decor that seemed to 'vie with the ordinary arrangements of an English drawing-room'.⁸⁸ These were icons 'of Englishness and money' in the tropical Jamaican landscape and, by the early nineteenth century, such houses, remote from the rural sugar estates, matched or bettered most plantation great houses as imposing sites, expressing the 'symbolic grandness' of the local elite.⁸⁹

Conclusion

The deaths of John Cunningham and Simon Taylor, within a few months of one another, can be seen as marking the end of an era. These two men were among the last of a generation of extremely rich Jamaican planters to live and die in the Caribbean. By the early nineteenth century, increasing numbers of their sugar-planting contemporaries were retiring to Britain, thousands of miles from the sources of their wealth. Indeed Taylor's Jamaican properties passed first to his nephew and then to his niece and her husband, all absentees. The abolition of the slave trade by the British Parliament in 1807 helped curtail the establishment of new large fortunes in Jamaica, and those opportunities for the rapid accumulation of wealth that still existed in the British Caribbean tended to be in recently conquered territories, particularly in British Guiana.⁹⁰ The formal ending of slavery during the 1830s further diminished the material prospects of the next generation of Jamaican planters, who could only lament 'the great deterioration of Jamaican property' that had occurred in their lifetimes, as they left estates, bequests and legacies that would have looked modestly small to the eyes of anyone who had inventoried the personal estate left by an old planter grandee like Taylor or Cunningham.⁹¹

Their economic decline also diminished the lasting marks that the planter class made on the postcolonial landscape. Despite its excessive visibility during the age of slavery, the grand material culture of the planter class has not survived well in Jamaica. The restored or rotting structures of a few token great houses stand amidst long-buried archaeological remains, supplemented by textual traces like those discussed in this article – *disjecta membra* of things that many planters hoped or expected to survive in perpetuity.⁹² Some edifices, including the mansion at Prospect Pen and the great house at Cunningham's Bellfield estate still stand, put to new uses as government buildings, tourist attractions or expensive wedding venues.⁹³

However, few among subsequent generations of Jamaicans, descendants of people who most white colonists viewed as property, have had much incentive to preserve the planters' objects,

buildings and shrines for posterity. In Montego Bay, the name of John Cunningham is forgotten. Meanwhile, at the other end of the island, behind an electricity sub-station on the site of his long-since-vanished plantation, only the marble plaque remains of the once-grand monument that had memorialised the ‘active life’ of Simon Taylor.⁹⁴

Many elements of the vast plantation empires of elite planters like Taylor or Cunningham are no longer immediately apparent, even though they did much to shape the social and physical landscape of Jamaica and the wider Atlantic. The evidence explored in this article has revealed aspects of how planters used enslaved labour to transform the natural environment into lucrative sugar estates and livestock pens as well as into residential homes on the margins between colonial towns and countryside. Jamaican sugar estates were spaces set aside for production, and almost all of the enslaved people who were forced to live on rural properties laboured to make the export staples that shaped the British Atlantic empire and sustained planter luxury. The plantations and livestock pens created and maintained by such planters as Taylor and Cunningham represented huge capital investments that could generate massive annual incomes for their owners, but their remote locations and enslaved majorities prompted many colonial whites to dislike and fear life on these properties. Increasingly, Jamaican planters tended to see these locations not as places to live but simply as sources of wealth. In an era when plantation work regimes became more regimented and productive, plantation owners chose to draw a stronger line between the world of plantation labour and sites associated with the consumption of plantation profits.

Towns and their outskirts represented a very different environment to rural Jamaica in the eyes of white colonists. Trevor Burnard and Emma Hart have argued that our understanding of ‘the plantation world of British America is incomplete insofar as it downplays the urban and nonplantation dimension of life in plantation societies’.⁹⁵ Certainly this is the case in Jamaica, where distinctive urban and rural spheres existed in a multifaceted

but symbiotic relationship. Many planters chose to live in houses positioned near urban social settings, where whites were more numerous than elsewhere in Jamaica and with close strong links into social, commercial and political networks that spanned the wider British Atlantic world. These homes were characterised by a material culture of genteel grandeur and exploited the labour of enslaved people, as household servants and around the grounds. These various trappings of wealth allowed their proprietors to construct a social and cultural distance between their daily existence and the toils of the thousands of impoverished and exploited enslaved men, women and children on their rural plantations. This culture depended on the profits of plantation slavery but existed in deliberate isolation from it. Without leaving the Caribbean, therefore, some rich planters distanced themselves from the sources of their wealth, occupying a social and cultural milieu that was largely divorced from the anxieties and brutalities of rural Jamaica, but where the underpinnings of plantation and domestic slavery were always present.

¹ J.H. Lawrence-Archer, *Monumental Inscriptions of the British West Indies from the Earliest Date* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1875), 297-8.

² Philip Wright, *Monumental Inscriptions of Jamaica* (London: Society of Genealogists, 1966), 219.

³ See Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

⁴ Lowell J. Ragatz, *The Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean, 1763-1833* (New York: Century Company, 1928), vii.

⁵ J.R. Ward, 'The British West Indies in the Age of Abolition, 1748-1815', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. P.J. Marshall (Oxford: Oxford

University Press, 1998), 432. On the extent of white colonial wealth, see Trevor Burnard, “‘Prodigious Riches’: The Wealth of Jamaica Before the American Revolution’, *Economic History Review* 54, no. 3 (2001): 506-24. On plantation management and the creation of ‘West India fortunes’, see Richard Pares, *A West India Fortune* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1950); Simon D. Smith, *Slavery, Family and Gentry Capitalism in the British Atlantic: The World of the Lascelles, 1648-1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); David Beck Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783-1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2009); Justin Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment in the British Atlantic, 1750-1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

⁶ R.B. Sheridan, ‘Simon Taylor, Sugar Tycoon of Jamaica, 1740-1813’, *Agricultural History* 45, no. 4 (1971): 285–96; B.W. Higman, *Jamaica Surveyed: Plantation Maps and Plans of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2001); ‘The Spatial Economy of Jamaican Sugar Plantations: Cartographic Evidence from the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries’, *Journal of Historical Geography* 13, no. 1 (1987): 17–39; ‘The Internal Economy of Jamaican Pens, 1760-1890’, *Social and Economic Studies* 38, no. 1 (1989): 61-86.

⁷ See Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and his Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); David Lambert, *White Creole Culture, Politics and Identity during the Age of Abolition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Christer Petley, *Slaveholders in Jamaica: Colonial Society and Culture in the Era of Abolition* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009); Nicholas Draper, *The Price of Emancipation: Slave-Ownership, Compensation and British Society at the End of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁸ Several previous studies of Jamaican slave society have combined historical and archaeological approaches, often focusing on the material cultures of enslaved people. For examples, see Douglas V. Armstrong, *The Old Village and the Great House: An Archaeological and Historical Examination of Drax Hall Plantation, St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); B.W. Higman, *Montpelier, Jamaica: A Plantation Community in Slavery and Freedom, 1739-1912* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 1998); James A. Delle, *An Archaeology of Social Space: Analyzing Coffee Plantations in Jamaica's Blue Mountains* (New York: Plenum Press, 1998); Mark Hauser, *An Archaeology of Black Markets: Local Ceramics and Economies in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008).

⁹ Jamaica Archives, Spanish Town, Jamaica (JA), 1B/11/3, Inventories, vol. 121 (1812-13), John Cunningham, f. 57; vol. 123 (1813-14), Simon Taylor, f. 216. Subsequent references in the text to the Cunningham and Taylor inventories relate to these documents.

¹⁰ See Christer Petley, 'Taylor, Simon (1739–1813)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/104876>, accessed 14 Aug 2013]; B.W. Higman, *Plantation Jamaica, 1750-1850: Capital and Control in a Colonial Economy* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2005), 138. Wright, *Monumental Inscriptions*, 219.

¹¹ See Higman, *Plantation Jamaica*, 139-40, 147; Petley, 'Taylor, Simon'; Institute of Commonwealth Studies Library, Taylor Family Papers (ICS), I/A/52, Simon Taylor to Robert Graham, Kingston, 15 July 1785.

¹² ICS, II/A/12, Simon Taylor to John Taylor, Spanish Town, 9 December 1774.

¹³ ICS, II/A/6, Simon Taylor to John Taylor, Kingston, 14 September 1772; ICS, II/A/9, Simon Taylor to John Taylor, Kingston, 7 June 1774. It is plausible that Edward Long alluded

to Taylor's purchase of Holland when he noted that a recently formed estate near Point Morant 'was lately sold for 105,000*l.* and is thought to be well worth the money'. Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica*, 3 vols (London: T. Lowndes, 1774), 2:159.

¹⁴ ICS, I/C/10, Simon Taylor to George Hill, Kingston, 15 June 1799.

¹⁵ Vere Langford Oliver, *Caribbeana* (London: Mitchell, Hughes and Clarke, 1912), vol. 2, 18; Wright, *Monumental Inscriptions*, 219.

¹⁶ British Library, Add. MSS 12435, Long Manuscript, Papers on the Statistics of Jamaica.

¹⁷ Brown, *Reaper's Garden*, 46; David Richardson, ed., *Bristol, Africa and the Eighteenth-Century Slave Trade to America, Volume 4: The Final Years* (Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 1996), 176, 178, 203.

¹⁸ Long, *History*, 2: 212-23; *Jamaica Almanac*, 1808, 142, 144.

¹⁹ London Family History Centre, Microfilm 1224328, St James Copy Register of Baptisms Marriages Burials, marriages, 216; Wright, *Monumental Inscriptions*, 219.

²⁰ Island Record Office, Twickenham Park, Jamaica (IRO), Will of John Cunningham, 20 April 1811, Wills (old series), vol. 86, f. 113.

²¹ See also Philip Wright, ed., *Lady Nugent's Journal of her Residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2002), 88.

²² As Alice Hanson Jones has argued in her study of mainland American colonies, no source 'except the probate inventories give detailed, sworn wealth appraisals, person by person', making these rich and valuable documents in spite of their drawbacks. Alice Hanson Jones, *Wealth of a Nation To Be: The American Colonies on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 3.

²³ Burnard, 'Prodigious Riches'.

²⁴ JA, 1B/11/3, Inventories, vols 108-50. These tentative estimates derive from a sample of over 200 Jamaican inventories from 1807 to 1834. All values derived from probate inventories are sterling values unless otherwise stated. Appraisals in these documents were originally in local currency, and £1.4 currency was worth £1 sterling.

²⁵ JA, 1B/11/3, Inventories, vol. 117 (1811), Philip Redwood, f. 132.

²⁶ JA, 1B/11/3, Inventories, vol. 95 (1800-01), Bryan Edwards, f. 176; vol. 97 (1802), Bryan Edwards, f. 45.

²⁷ Taylor's inventory comprised four documents that appraised his property in the parishes of St. Mary, St. Thomas in the East, Hanover and St. Andrew. The individual totals are £61,325 (St. Mary), £98,071 (St. Thomas), £16,965 (Hanover), £629,976 (St. Andrew). In his will, Taylor cancelled £46,000 of debt owed to him by the estate of his deceased brother, and of other debts owed to him those 'considered doubtful and bad' came to £3,738. Subtracting those figures, Taylor's personal estate at death stood at £756,599. This calculation differs from Sheridan's figure of £739,207. See Sheridan, 'Simon Taylor', 290.

²⁸ William Rubenstein, *Who Were The Rich? A Biographical Directory of British Wealth Holders, Volume 1, 1809-1839* (London: Social Affairs Unit, 2009), 12-13.

²⁹ These rough estimates are for sugar properties only, excluding pens, and are based on the numbers of enslaved people on the Cunningham and Taylor sugar estates, as revealed by the inventories, and the models provided by J.R. Ward in 'Profitability of Sugar Planting', 203, 204.

³⁰ Sheridan, *Simon Taylor*, 295.

³¹ In 1792, the *Glasgow Courier* reported the 'pecuniary produce' of the 'principal Jamaican Estates last year', including 'Mr. Beckford's, near £70,000', 'Mr. Tharp's, above £60,000 and 'Mr. Simon Taylor's, £56,000'. *The Glasgow Courier*, 19 January 1792, 2. I am grateful to

David Beck Ryden for sharing his research notes with me. On gentry incomes, see G.E. Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century*, new ed. (1963; London: Routledge, 2007), 20-23, 26.

³² Wright, *Monumental Inscriptions*, 219.

³³ ICS, II/A/34, Simon Taylor to John Taylor, Kingston, 6 March 1779; National Library of Jamaica, Kingston, Jamaica (NLJ), MS72, Nugent Papers, Box 3, 807N, 'Sketch of the Characters of the Principal Persons in Office in Jamaica'.

³⁴ Sheridan, 'Simon Taylor', 286, 295.

³⁵ Marley R. Brown, 'The Behavioral Context of Probate Inventories: An Example from Plymouth Colony', in *Documentary Archaeology in the New World*, ed. Mary C. Beaudry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 79.

³⁶ Justin Roberts, 'Working Between the Lines: Labour and Agriculture on Two Barbadian Sugar Plantations, 1796-97', *William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (2006): 585.

³⁷ A list of landowners from the 1811 *Jamaica Almanac* lists Greenside as the property of John and James Cunningham. *Jamaica Almanac*, 1811, 184.

³⁸ IRO, Will of John Cunningham.

³⁹ Figures from the *Jamaica Almanac* allow for comparisons between the size of the enslaved workforce at the Taylor properties and other estates. *Jamaica Almanac*, 1816, 8-12, 31-35.

⁴⁰ Bryan Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, 2 vols (London: John Stockdale, 1793), 1:222.

⁴¹ The process of probate was fraught with unease, anxiety or terror for enslaved people, subject to 'appraisal' along with livestock and liable to be sold to pay the debts of the deceased. It highlighted, therefore, not only material investments in slavery but also the objectifications and uncertainties that characterised the experience of enslavement.

⁴² See Petley, *Slaveholders in Jamaica*, 22-23. Enslaved people made up nearly two-thirds of the value of planter inventories.

⁴³ Philip D. Morgan, 'Slaves and Livestock in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica: Vineyard Pen, 1750-1751', *William and Mary Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (1995): 47; J.R. Ward, 'The Profitability of Sugar Planting in the British West Indies, 1650-1834', *The Economic History Review* 31, no. 2 (1978): 203. Contemporaries agreed that the enslaved workforce accounted for about 40 per cent of the capital investment required for a sugar plantation, more than either the land or buildings. See Long, *History*, 1:461-2; Edwards, *History*, 2:252-5.

⁴⁴ Wright, *Lady Nugent's Journal*, 66.

⁴⁵ Armstrong, *Old Village and the Great House*, 257-9; Wright, *Lady Nugent's Journal*, 77, 83. No other Jamaican plantation great house rivalled the sheer size of the main residence at Rose Hall, built at a cost of £30,000. In the 1820s, it was 'justly considered' as 'the best' house on the island, but a decade later stood abandoned and 'unoccupied save by rats, bats, and owls'. James Hakewill, *A Picturesque Tour of the Island of Jamaica from Drawings made in the years 1820 and 1821* (London: Hurst and Robinson, 1825); Hope Masterton Waddell, *Twenty-Nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa: A Review of Missionary Work and Adventure, 1829-1858* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1863), 42.

⁴⁶ See Trevor Burnard, 'Passengers Only: The Extent and Significance of Absenteeism in Eighteenth Century Jamaica', *Atlantic Studies* 1, no. 2 (2004): 178-95; Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment*; Higman, *Plantation Jamaica*.

⁴⁷ Thomas Roughley, *The Jamaica Planter's Guide; or, A System for Planting and Managing a Sugar Estate, or Other Plantations in that Island, and Throughout the British West Indies in General* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1823), 184.

⁴⁸ ICS, I/A/28, Simon Taylor to John Taylor, Kingston, 30 March 1783.

⁴⁹ National Archives, Kew, UK (NA), CO137, Jamaica Governors' Correspondence, vol. 87, f. 173, 'Return of the Number of White Inhabitants, Free People of Colour and Slaves in the Island of Jamaica' (enclosure in Clarke to Sydney, Jamaica, 20 November 1788).

⁵⁰ ICS, I/D/14, Simon Taylor to George Hill, Kingston, 16 May 1800.

⁵¹ Cambridge University Library, Vanneck-Arcedeckne Papers, 3A/1765/18, Simon Taylor to Chaloner Arcedeckne, Kingston, 9 December 1765; ICS I/I/43, Simon Taylor to George Hibbert, Kingston, 31 October 1807.

⁵² Theodore Foulks, *Eighteen Months in Jamaica: With Recollections of the Late Rebellion* (London: Whittaker, Treacher and Arnott, 1833), 41.

⁵³ James A. Delle, 'The Habitus of Jamaican Plantation Landscapes', in *Out of Many, One People: The Historical Archaeology of Colonial Jamaica*, ed. James A. Delle, Mark W. Hauser, and Douglas V. Armstrong (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011), 132-4.

⁵⁴ ICS, I/D/14, Simon Taylor to George Hill, Kingston, 16 May 1800.

⁵⁵ University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, Special Collections, Transcripts of William Jowett Titford's Correspondence from Spanish Town between 1802 and 1807, Letter 4, Spanish Town, 15 January 1803; JA, 1B/5/83, Attorney's Letter Book, vol. 2, John Gale Vidal to John Mitchell, Spanish Town, 23 March 1833.

⁵⁶ Simon Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 26.

⁵⁷ Wright, *Lady Nugent's Journal*, 88.

⁵⁸ Cynric Williams, *A Tour through the Island of Jamaica, from the Western to the Eastern End, in the year 1823* (London: Hunt and Clarke, 1826), 282. Taylor addressed almost all of his letters from Kingston, further underlining that this was where he spent most of his time.

⁵⁹ Higman, *Jamaica Surveyed*, 228; Enid Shields, *Vale Royal the House and the People* (Kingston: Jamaican Historical Society, 1983), 16.

⁶⁰ ICS, I/A/10, Simon Taylor to John Taylor, Kingston, 15 September 1780.

⁶¹ IRO, Will of John Cunningham; Wright, *Lady Nugent's Journal*, 68, 88; Christer Petley, "'Home' and 'this country': Britishness and Creole Identity in the Letters of a Transatlantic Slaveholder", *Atlantic Studies* 6, no. 1 (2009): 49-50.

⁶² The inventories list 10 beds at the Hill House and seven at Prospect, suggesting that the former was larger. There were six bedrooms upstairs in the house when Taylor bought Prospect. Shields, *Vale Royal*, 16.

⁶³ *The Columbian Magazine; or Monthly Miscellany*, vol. 1, August 1796, 162; J. Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of the Island of Jamaica: With Remarks on the Moral and Physical Condition of the Slaves, and on the Abolition of Slavery in the Colonies* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1823), 210.

⁶⁴ 'Wedding bells', notes Amanda Vickery, 'announced the coming of the harpsichord' in the genteel households of Georgian Britain. *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 16.

⁶⁵ Matthew Gregory Lewis, *Journal of a West India Proprietor, Kept During a Residence in the Island of Jamaica* (London: John Murray, 1834), 169-70; Long, *History*, 2:37; *Columbian Magazine*, 163. On changes to these sorts of household arrangements in the early nineteenth century, see Daniel Livesay, 'The Decline of Jamaica's Interracial Households and the Fall of the Planter Class, 1733-1823', *Atlantic Studies* 9. no. 1 (2012): 107-23.

⁶⁶ NLJ, 'Sketch of the Characters of the Principal Persons in Office in Jamaica'.

⁶⁷ For example, a letter to Taylor at Prospect from his cousin in Kingston informed him that ‘two Captns of the Guinea ships are to dine with you today’. ICS, XIV/A/57, John Taylor to Simon Taylor, 27 June 1790.

⁶⁸ Taylor heard ‘at least once a week’ from his overseer at Holland. ICS, I/D/14, Simon Taylor to George Hill, Kingston, 16 May 1800.

⁶⁹ ICS, II/A/5, Simon Taylor to John Taylor, Kingston, July 1773; I/A/36, Simon Taylor to John Taylor, Kingston, 13 April 1784; I/I/43, Simon Taylor to George Hibbert, Kingston, 31 October 1807.

⁷⁰ Long, *History*, 2:230-1.

⁷¹ Trevor Burnard, “‘The Grand Mart of the Island’: The Economic Function of Kingston, Jamaica in the Mid-Eighteenth Century’, in *Jamaica in Slavery and Freedom: History, Heritage and Culture*, ed. Kathleen E.A. Monteith and Glen Richards (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2002), 225.

⁷² NA, ‘Return of the Number of White Inhabitants, Free People of Colour and Slaves in the Island of Jamaica’.

⁷³ See Long, *History*, 2:105, 117-18, 121; Lewis, *Journal*, 363; Bernard Martin Senior, *Jamaica as it Was, as it is, and as it May be* (London: T. Hurst, 1835), 127.

⁷⁴ Stewart, *View of Jamaica*, 205.

⁷⁵ Edwards, *History*, 1:213-14; Lewis, *Journal*, 379.

⁷⁶ B.W. Higman, *Slave Population and Economy in Jamaica, 1807-1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 16, 144; Trevor Burnard and Emma Hart, ‘Kingston, Jamaica, and Charleston, South Carolina: A New Look at Comparative Urbanization in Plantation Colonial British America’, *Journal of Urban History* 39, no. 2 (2012): 216.

⁷⁷ JA, 1B/11/3, Inventories, vol. 115 (1810), John Perry, f. 163; IRO, Will of John Perry, 19 October 1806, Wills (old series), vol. 81, f. 114; James Robertson, *Map of the County of Cornwall in the Island of Jamaica, Constructed from Actual Surveys* (London: James Robertson, 1804). The furniture, linen, plate, liquor and other household objects at Hopewell were worth over £1,450. On Perry's activities as a merchant, see Richardson, *Bristol, Africa and the Slave Trade*, 109, 117, 178, 203.

⁷⁸ James Robertson, *Gone is the Ancient Glory: Spanish Town, Jamaica, 1534-2000* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2005), 117.

⁷⁹ JA, 1B/11/3, Inventories, vol. 128 (1816-17), Samuel Queensborough, f. 73; vol. 117 (1811), Philip Redwood, f. 132; John Roby, *Members of the Assembly of Jamaica, from the Institution of that Branch of the Legislature to the Present Time, Arranged in Parochial Lists* (Montego-Bay: Alex Holmes, 1831); NLJ, Feurtado Manuscript.

⁸⁰ JA, 1B/11/3, Inventories, vol. 154 (1839-41), Richard Barrett, f. 133; IRO, Will of Richard Barrett, 11 October 1836, Wills (old series), vol. 119, f. 126.

⁸¹ *Royal Gazette*, 19 June 1813, 13.

⁸² See David Howard, *Kingston: A Cultural and Literary History* (Oxford: Signal, 2005), 69; Katie Donington, 'The Benevolent Merchant? George Hibbert (1757-1837) and the Representation of West Indian Mercantile Identity' (PhD diss., University College London, 2013), 53-4.

⁸³ Long, *History*, 2:124.

⁸⁴ Wright, *Lady Nugent's Journal*, 88.

⁸⁵ Senior, *Jamaica*, 17.

⁸⁶ See Draper, *Price of Emancipation*, 17, 181.

⁸⁷ Higman, *Jamaica Surveyed*, 228.

⁸⁸ Foulks, *Eighteen Months in Jamaica*, 28.

⁸⁹ Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, 116. As Katie Donington notes, ‘wealth generated through the slavery business could be remade’ by merchants and planters ‘into the symbols of civilisation’, including houses, gardens and libraries. Donington, ‘Benevolent Merchant’, 195.

⁹⁰ See Nicholas Draper, ‘The Rise of a New Planter Class: Some Countercurrents from British Guiana and Trinidad, 1807–33’, *Atlantic Studies* 9, no. 1 (2012): 65-83.

⁹¹ IRO, Will of Hamilton Brown, 4 February 1842, Wills (old series), vol. 124, f. 100.

⁹² ‘*Disjecta membra*’ is Derek Walcott’s phrase, from his poem ‘Ruins of a Great House’, in E.A. Markham, *Hinterland: Caribbean Poetry from the West Indies and Britain* (London: Bloodaxe, 1989), 95.

⁹³ Prospect Pen, renamed Vale Royal, is now the official residence of the Jamaican Prime Minister; Bellfield great house is a tourist attraction and wedding venue. It is possible that Richmond Hill House, now a hotel on the outskirts of Montego Bay, was once Cunningham’s Hill House. See Philip Wright and Paul F. White, *Exploring Jamaica* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1969), 196-7.

⁹⁴ Taylor died at Port Royal waiting for a ship to take him to England. He was buried at Prospect Pen but then disinterred when his executors discovered from his will that the property was to be sold: a grand residential home like Prospect was of no use to Taylor’s absentee heirs. He was reinterred at Lyssons, which means that his remains formed part of a location that he had never treated as home.

⁹⁵ Burnard and Hart, ‘Kingston and Charleston’, 215.