

STATES OF JERSEY



JERSEY AND THE SLAVE TRADE

**Lodged au Greffe on 12th June 2020
by Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade**

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

- (a) to request the Minister for Treasury and Resources, as shareholder representative, to request the States of Jersey Development Company to rename Trenton Square as Benin Square;
- (b) to request the Chief Minister to commission a report into establishing a permanent memorial which acknowledges Jersey's part in the Slave Trade, to be presented to the States no later than 23rd August 2021;
- (c) to request the Chief Minister to commission, in conjunction with Jersey Heritage, the Jersey Community Relations Trust, Black Lives Matter Jersey and other potential stakeholders, an audit of all place names and memorials relating to former slave traders in Jersey, in order to inform work on understanding and explaining the full contribution of the slave trade to Jersey's history, with the outcome of the audit to be presented to the States no later than 23rd August 2021.

DEPUTY M. TADIER OF ST. BRELADE

REPORT

“... enslaved people were not treated as people, but they were treated very much as cargo, packed into the bottom of the ship ...”

– Rebecca Nelson, assistant curator of projects at Wilberforce House Museum

Benin is a country almost 3000 miles from Jersey. So, what is the link?

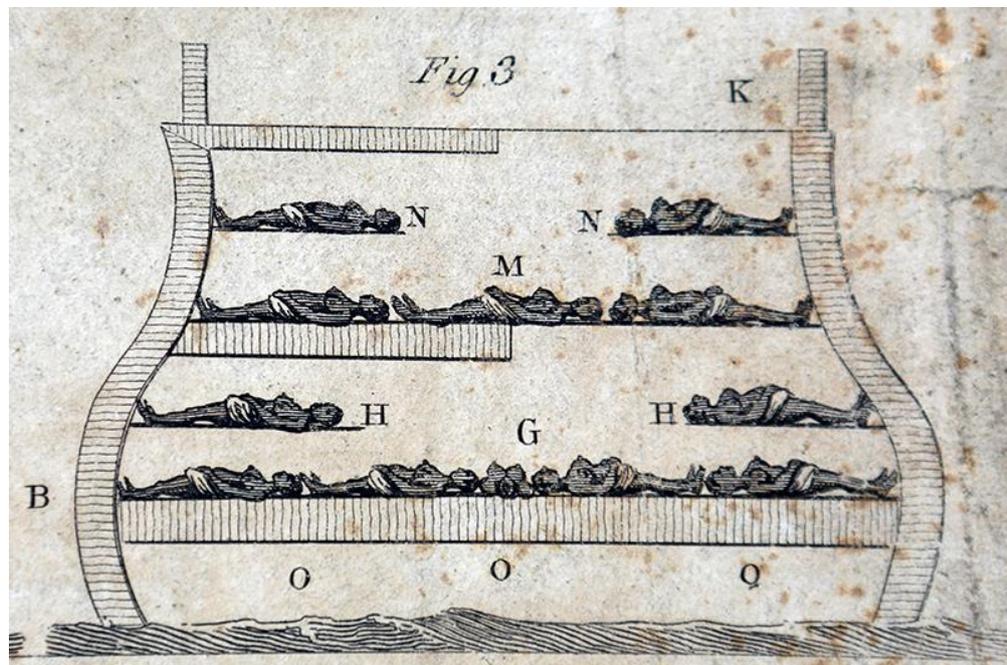
The link is Former Bailiff George Carteret and his contribution to the Slave Trade. It is also what intrinsically links us to New Jersey, and the land that was stolen off the Native Americans, including the [Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape people](#). Some of this land was ‘gifted’ to our former Bailiff, George Carteret as a reward by King Charles II.

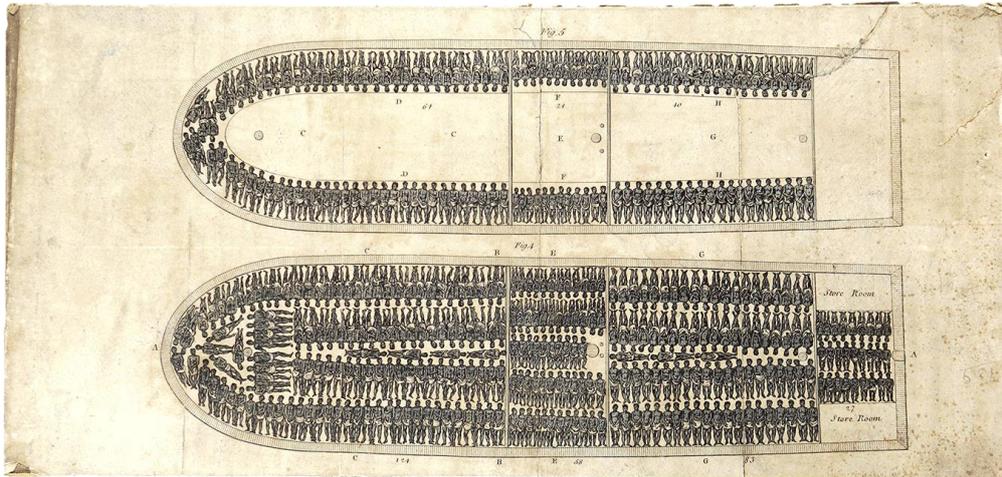
This official narrative, repeated here by the [JEP](#) in 2014 goes that ‘Staunch Royalist Sir George Carteret was rewarded by the King with the gift of land in the New World which he named New Jersey’.

There is not even a reference in the report to the stolen land or the fact that George Carteret was a founding member of The Company of Royal Adventurers into Africa, which was set up to trade in ivory, gold and slaves.

The impact of the slave trade

From 1514 to 1866, more than 12.5 million African captives were forced onto about 40,000 European ships, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database estimates.*





One of these 40, 000 ships was *The Speedwell*. Local historian, Doug Ford writes, “*The Speedwell, commanded by James Carteret, Sir George’s son, undertook one of the early voyages of the company. Leaving London in January 1663, he picked up 302 slaves in the port of Offra in the Bight of Benin and transported them to the West Indies — twenty died on the passage†. In February 1664 he sold some of his “cargo” in Barbados and then the following month he sold the rest of the slaves in St Kitts. By the time he left in March 1664, Carteret had sold ‘155 men, 105 women and 22 boys to the eager planters.’ The company enjoyed a monopoly until 1698 and dealt in slaves up until 1731.*” †My emphasis.

Rather than naming one of our public areas after a town in the stolen lands of New Jersey (which itself is named after a slave trader), it would be a fitting tribute to name it after the country from which these 302 slaves were stolen.

Remembrance and reconciliation

Jersey does a very good job in remembering the forced slave workers of the Occupation. It also does a very good job of marking the holocaust and the victims of it, global and local.

The twinning of St. Helier and Badwurzach and St. Helier has been truly important in the process or reconciliation, even now, 75 years after the end of The War.

It is, arguably, easier to be remember the Slave workers when we were on the right side of history. After all, *we* were the ones hiding them, feeding them secretly, risking our own lives. To be fair, the stories are also told about neighbours who denounced their neighbours to the Nazis for hiding persons of interest to the regime. We tell the occupation story well.

But when it comes to *mea culpas*, it is perhaps not so easy.

In 2014, a time when other maritime towns around the world had long been having the difficult conversations about their monuments and even removing them, or at least updating the narratives of their heroes-cum-villains, someone in Jersey was putting up a statue to a former slave trader.

How does would this make you feel if you were a black islander or visitor?

At the time of writing this report, Biko Bangs, who is a store manager in Jersey and a local DJ has told the media –

“When I look at what that statue represents, I find it very disheartening and abhorrent. It completely winds me up to say that it happened many hundred years ago and we should be looking at things now... but that statue was put up in 2014. For me as a black guy, it’s everyone paying homage to something that was wrong.” JEP, 12th June 2020.

Whilst the established media may not have questioned the merit of the statue at the time, local bloggers certainly did: On 15th September 2014, Tony Bellow’s Published on his blog an article entitled [Sir George Carteret and the Byways of History](#), which compared the different versions of history surrounding the subject; and in 2017, writing for Nine by Five Media, Ollie Taylor published his article, [Jersey’s Links to the Slave Trade](#).

Both of these articles are balanced and worth a read before this debate. They challenge the contention (in the words of the Former Constable of St. Peter, John Refault) that Carteret was a “*role model for youngsters*”, *but in fact was a key player in the promotion and continuing of enslavement for profit.*

Rewriting history vs Re-righting history

There are those who say that you should not rewrite history, but in this case, the narrative we have allowed to be told is exactly that re-written history. *Whitewashed* version, if you like.

The Carteret statue, in St. Peter, is a good example of this. It was put up in 2014. It is not a historically valuable relic. It was not requested publicly and the interpretation on the plaque is ‘gushing’ in its praise. It, obviously, makes no reference to (De) Carteret’s personal profit from buying, selling and enslaving other human beings.

In a sense, it is logical that the plaque contains no balance in this regard. We put up statues to heroes (traditionally). Any mention of his negative past would have shown he was not a hero, but a villain to many and would have made such an erection unlikely in the first place.

Part 3 of this proposition, therefore, is not about rewriting history or even asking for place-names to be changed. It is about understanding that there are *histories* (plural) and that those histories change depending on who is narrating them. It recognises, too that history is a living thing and that history is being created now.

Acknowledgements to Ollie Taylor, Doug Ford and * [Graphic Reuters](#)

Financial and manpower implications

There will be a cost associated with the review and the audit, although in both cases there may be scope to work with other organisations and civic society to complete some work using their budgets and/or on a voluntary basis. The overall cost to the States is likely to be modest and capable of being funded from existing budgets.