

Bank of England

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Michael Anson⁽¹⁾ and Michael D. Bennett⁽²⁾

Abstract

On 28 August 1833 Parliament passed legislation that abolished slavery within the British Empire, emancipating more than 800,000 enslaved Africans. As part of the compromise that helped to secure abolition, the British government agreed a generous compensation package of £20 million to slave-owners for the loss of their ‘property’. The Bank of England administered the payment of slavery compensation on behalf of the British government. Using records held in the Bank’s Archive, a dataset of 13,500 unique transactions has been produced which details the collection of £3.4 million of compensation awarded in the form of government stock (3.5% Reduced Annuities). We shed new light on the compensation process by deploying this dataset to analyse who actually held the Reduced Annuities in the books of the Bank of England, and for how long the stock was kept. While slave-owners were the main beneficiaries of the compensation process, our analysis shows that there were also other groups who gained through their roles as intermediaries. These agents sought to profit from the business opportunity presented by the moment of compensation in the mid-1830s by facilitating the collection of compensation awards on behalf of slave-owners and charging commission fees for their services. The results show that just 10 individual account names had over 8,000 transactions totalling £2.2 million. The largest agents were partners in London banks and merchant firms that had pre-existing commercial ties to the colonies that received compensation in Reduced Annuities (Cape of Good Hope, Mauritius, and the Virgin Islands). Our analysis also shows that this stock was quickly sold, meaning that compensation awards made in Reduced Annuities were converted into cash. By 1844, almost none of the £3.4 million in compensation was still held as Reduced Annuities by those to whom it had been awarded, or by those who had collected it. All of this provides further evidence for the strong links between financial institutions in the City of London, the capital generated through the transatlantic slavery economy, and the compensation process during the 1830s.

Key words: Business history, financial history, colonialism, slavery.

JEL classification: F54, N23, N83.

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1. Introduction

On 28 August 1833 Parliament passed legislation that abolished slavery within the British Empire, emancipating more than 800,000 enslaved Africans. As part of the compromise that helped to secure abolition, the British government agreed a generous compensation package for slave-owners. A sum of £20 million (approximately £1,958 million in August 2022 prices) was allocated and payments were made to slave-owners for the loss of their 'property'.¹ Slave-owners were also allowed to benefit from an exploitative system of apprenticeship, which saw newly freed men, women, and children continue to labour for their former masters without pay for up to a further six years.²

The arbitration of compensation claims was an intensely bureaucratic process by the standards of the day, and as such it has produced a substantial body of archival material for historians. Nicholas Draper and other members of the Legacies of British Slave-Ownership project (LBS) at University College London have used the 1838 Parliamentary Return and the richly detailed records of the Slave Compensation Commission to carry out an analysis of British slave-ownership in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.³ The empirical work completed by LBS has shed important light on the social depths of slave-ownership, the widespread geographical distribution of slave-owners

¹ Calculated using Bank of England Inflation Calculator: <http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/education/Pages/resources/inflationtools/calculator/default.aspx> (Accessed 14/11/2022).

² For the legislation that abolished slavery in the British Empire, see: The National Archives, UK (hereafter TNA), NDO 4/32, pp. 913-939, 'An Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the *British* Colonies; for promoting the Industry of the manumitted Slaves; and for compensating the Persons hitherto entitled to the Services of such Slaves', 28 August 1833.

³ Nicholas Draper, *The Price of Emancipation: Slave-Ownership, Compensation and British Society at the End of Slavery* (Cambridge, 2010); Catherine Hall et. al., *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain* (Cambridge, 2014); <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/> (Accessed 01/03/2022).

across Britain, and the various outlets in which compensation money was reinvested.⁴ Their collective efforts have had a tangible impact in raising the profile of the history of British involvement in transatlantic slavery among the general public, and have also helped to inspire more recent scholarship on the comparative history of slavery compensation across different European empires.⁵ However, despite new research carried out on the topic in recent years, there is still much to learn about the compensation process within the British Empire. Archival material pertaining to the payment and collection of slavery compensation – previously unused by slavery scholars – survives in the Bank of England Archive. In the nineteenth century the Bank of England (hereafter the Bank) was often called upon to help administer large-scale financial transactions involving the British government, including the payment of slavery compensation.⁶

The award and distribution of slavery compensation was dependent on complex layers of bureaucracy in both the colonies and the metropole.⁷ The Bank was an integral part of the administrative process that underpinned the compensation scheme. The procedure that led to an award began with the Slave Compensation Commission in Whitehall, a body tasked with the time-consuming process of arbitrating compensation claims lodged by claimants living in Britain and overseas. After the Slave Compensation Commission had determined the ultimate beneficiaries of a

⁴ LBS's work builds upon the research of other historians who have either studied the compensation process or drawn upon the archival records relating to slavery compensation. For examples, see: R. E. P. Wastell, 'The History of Slave Compensation 1833 to 1845' (MA thesis, University of London, 1933); Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, 1944); R. A. Lobdell, 'The Price of Freedom: Financial Aspects of British Slave Emancipation 1833-38', unpublished paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Social Sciences History Association, Pittsburgh (October 2000); Kathleen Mary Butler, *The Economics of Emancipation: Jamaica and Barbados, 1823-1843* (Chapel Hill, 1995).

⁵ For the more recent scholarship that LBS has helped to inspire, see: Frédérique Beauvois, *Between Blood and Gold: The Debates Over Compensation for Slavery in the Americas* (New York, 2016); Kris Manjapra, 'The Scandal of the British Slavery Abolition Act Loan', *Social and Economic Studies* 68:3&4 (2019): 165-184.

⁶ Sir John Clapham, *The Bank of England: A History. Vol. II 1797-1914* (Cambridge, 1944), pp. 88-89, 148-149.

⁷ A detailed analysis of this administrative process can be found in Draper, *Price of Emancipation*, pp. 114-137.

particular compensation award, they would issue a certificate of award that, once validated by the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, would be forwarded to the Commissioners of the Treasury. The Treasury Commissioners then drew up a treasury warrant which was sent to the National Debt Office (NDO), and authorised the Commissioners for the Reduction of the National Debt (CRND) to finalise the process of paying compensation to awardees.⁸

The NDO, located at 19 Old Jewry in the City of London, was a government department concerned with the reduction of Britain's national debt. Some of the most important figures in government finance, including the Governor and Deputy Governor of the Bank, served as CRND and met at the NDO.⁹ They were handed special powers by the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act to facilitate efficient payment of compensation.¹⁰ However, the NDO was not a financial institution; it lacked the ability to raise and distribute funds itself. The CRND therefore held cash and stock accounts at the Bank, enabling them to draw funds for the payment of compensation. To collect a compensation award, slave-owners or their agents attended the NDO to pick up a compensation certificate issued by the CRND that authorised payment upon delivery at the Bank. They then took a short walk to the Bank, where they presented their certificate and received payment.¹¹ The ledgers and accounts in the Archive which underpin this study were created because all compensation payments had to pass through the books of the Bank.

⁸ TNA, NDO 4/32, pp. 913-939, 'An Act for the Abolition of Slavery...', 28 August 1833, especially section LX.

⁹ The Commissioners for the Reduction of the National Debt were established in 1786. The six individuals who served on the body in the 1830s were the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Master of the Rolls, the Accountant General of the Court of Chancery, the Governor and Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, and the Chief Baron of the Court of Exchequer. <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C213> (Accessed 01/03/2022). The NDO was located close to the Bank's main headquarters on Threadneedle Street.

¹⁰ TNA, NDO 4/32, pp. 913-939, 'An Act for the Abolition of Slavery...', 28 August 1833.

¹¹ The final part of the compensation award process is described in: TNA, NDO 4/32, pp. 341-348, 'An Act to carry into further Execution the Provisions of an Act passed in the Third and Fourth Years of His present Majesty, for compensating Owners of Slaves upon the Abolition of Slavery', 31 August 1835, especially sections II – IV.

The Bank supported the British government in its effort to administer and distribute the payment of £20 million in compensation to slave-owners between 1835 and 1843. This was an unprecedented sum to add to the national debt outside of wartime.¹² Out of a total of £20 million paid in compensation to slave-owners, the government raised £15 million of this sum through a public loan contracted with a syndicate of City financiers led by Nathan Mayer Rothschild and Moses Montefiore, while the remaining £5 million was found by creating an equivalent value in an existing government stock of £3:10s Reduced Annuities (hereafter 3.5% Reduced Annuities). As soon as the scheme began paying out in August 1835 slave-owners in major Caribbean colonies such as Jamaica and British Guiana began receiving compensation in cash out of the £15 million raised through the Rothschild and Montefiore syndicate's loan. These funds were processed by clerks in the Bank's Cashier's Department and could be collected at the Cashier's Office. However, some other colonies were on a slower timetable for compensation. This was because of delays in the ratification of the 1833 Abolition Act by the colonial legislatures in Barbados and the Virgin Islands and the government's decision to postpone when the provisions of the Act would come into force in Mauritius and the Cape of Good Hope.¹³ Awards for slave-owners in these colonies were thus mediated by the Slave Compensation Commission slightly later in 1836-7 and paid out using the £5 million created in 3.5% Reduced Annuities. These compensation awards could also be collected by attending the Bank but, unlike awards made in cash, were processed by clerks in the Bank's Stock

¹² Gregory Clark, 'Debt, Deficits, and Crowding out: England, 1727-1840', *European Review of Economic History*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (2001): 403-36.

¹³ These are the reasons given in the slavery compensation legislation. For Barbados and the Virgin Islands, see: TNA, NDO 4/32, p. 344 & 879. For Mauritius and the Cape of Good Hope, see: TNA, NDO 4/32, p. 939. The decision to postpone the implementation of the abolition act in the Cape by four months and Mauritius by six months was probably because of the difficulties in communicating information about the compensation scheme in a timely fashion to slave-owners in these colonies due to their greater distance from London.

Office (a separate department of the Bank) and were paid through the transfer of a proportional sum of 3.5% Reduced Annuities to individual stock accounts in the names of the awardees.

The focus of this paper is the ‘Slave Compensation Account’ held by the CRND at the Bank.¹⁴ The Account is first mentioned in new legislation passed on 17 August 1836 to enable the payment of compensation to owners of enslaved Africans in the colonies of Mauritius, the Cape of Good Hope, and the Virgin Islands.¹⁵ The legislation detailed how a new ‘Slave Compensation Account’ was to be created at the Bank with £3,437,270 11s 10d in 3.5% Reduced Annuities (approximately £302 million in August 2022 prices) for distribution to slave-owners in the aforementioned colonies.¹⁶ According to the ‘inter-colonial apportionment’ drawn up by the Commissioners of Compensation in July 1835, approximately £2,112,632 of this sum was allocated to Mauritius in compensation for 68,613 enslaved, £1,247,401 to the Cape of Good Hope for 38,427 enslaved, and £165,143 to the Virgin Islands for 5,192 enslaved.¹⁷ A separate account for the colony of Barbados was directed in an earlier piece of legislation passed on 31 August 1835, with a total of £1,734,353 in the same stock in compensation for 82,807 enslaved.¹⁸ The Slave Compensation Account opens in the books of the Bank on 11 October 1836 with a credit payment matching the sum specified in the legislation exactly, and three days later debits begin flowing out of the Account as compensation payments.¹⁹

¹⁴ Bank of England Archive (hereafter BoE Archive), AC27/7306, ff. 4213-4292 and AC27/7307, ff. 4293-4371. The full title of the Account is: ‘The Commissioners for the Reduction of the National Debt “The Slave Compensation Account” Pursuant to Act 6 & 7 William 4 Cap 82’.

¹⁵ For the role of Mauritius in debates over abolition and compensation, see: Anthony J. Barker, *Slavery and Antislavery in Mauritius, 1810-33: The Conflict between Economic Expansion and Humanitarian Reform under British Rule* (London, 1996), pp. 154-162.

¹⁶ TNA, NDO 4/32, pp. 877-883, ‘An Act to carry into further Execution an Act for compensating Owners of Slaves upon the Abolition of Slavery, and for completing the full Payment of such Compensation’, 17 August 1836.

¹⁷ TNA, NDO 4/33, ‘Inter-Colonial Apportionment’ in ‘General Rules, Office of Commissioners of Compensation’, 7 July 1835. The value attributed to individual enslaved people was not constant across colonies and the reasons for this are explained in the results section below.

¹⁸ TNA, NDO 4/32, pp. 341-348, ‘An Act to carry into further Execution...’, 31 August 1835.

¹⁹ BoE Archive, AC27/7306, f. 4213.

While the monetary value in the Account comprises just 17% of the total compensation package of £20 million, it constitutes 69% of the £5 million invested in 3.5% Reduced Annuities and thus offers a useful starting point for exploring several research questions relating to compensation awards that were paid in government securities.

We have transcribed the Slave Compensation Account in its entirety to produce a dataset detailing over 13,500 separate transactions. Analysing these data sheds new light on the compensation process. It brings into focus an understudied group that played an important role as intermediaries in the collection and distribution of slavery compensation: the London agents.²⁰ Because it was necessary for someone to physically collect compensation payments by attending the NDO and the Bank, slave-owners often relied on the services of London-based agents (attorneys in the legislation) to collect their compensation. Slave-owners gave these agents legal authorisation to collect compensation on their behalf: a practice so common that printed pro forma for issuing powers of attorney were widely distributed to make the process more efficient.²¹ It has long been known that London agents played a role in the collection of compensation, but the depth and extent of their involvement has never been studied systematically.²² Our analysis has uncovered the activities of seven major compensation agents who were together involved in around half the total transactions in the Slave Compensation Account, that were worth approximately half of the total value contained within the Account. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of individuals who collected compensation from the Account immediately converted the Reduced Annuities they had received into cash by selling the stock to City jobbers.²³ This was presumably because in the years

²⁰ This group is distinctive from the Bank of England's network of regional agents that was established in the early nineteenth century.

²¹ There are examples of powers of attorney issued for the collection of slavery compensation in TNA, NDO 4/31A.

²² Draper, *Price of Emancipation*, p. 124, 128, 243-44 & Appendix 16, pp. 347-60.

²³ Jobbers acted as market makers on the London Stock Exchange: they bought and sold stock which was held in their own name.

immediately following Emancipation, slave-owners were in urgent need of liquidity rather than long-term investments in government stock.

Overall, our research recovers the important role of London-based agents as intermediaries in the collection and distribution of slavery compensation paid in 3.5% Reduced Annuities. These agents profited from the compensation process via commission, and quickly converted the reduced annuities they had collected into cash. In what follows we will begin by describing the methods underpinning our study, before moving on to discuss the results of our analysis in full. We will also begin the process of studying the lives and business careers of the compensation agents identified through our research.

2. Methods

This study deploys both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyse the Slave Compensation Account and build up a picture of the individuals who performed an agency function in the compensation process. The starting point was two 'supplementary ledgers' for 3.5% Reduced Annuities, totalling 159 folio pages, which detail the transactions of the Slave Compensation Account.²⁴ In November and December 2021, a group of volunteers in the Bank helped to transcribe the Slave Compensation Account. The account was digitised as a high-quality PDF and each volunteer transcribed a 3-5 page extract. They entered data into an Excel spreadsheet with six fields: the folio number in the original ledger; the date of the transaction; the forename of the individual who collected the compensation; their surname; a unique transaction number; and the value of the

²⁴ For the Slave Compensation Account, see: BoE Archive AC27/7306, ff. 4213-4292 and AC27/7307, ff. 4293-4371. The Barbados Account is incomplete in the supplementary ledgers, only containing 13 folios covering the period from 11 June 1836 to 15 March 1843 and with an opening balance of £260,212. For the Barbados Account, see: BoE Archive, AC27/7306, ff. 4197-4209.

compensation in pounds, shillings, and pence. The authors of this paper then carried out a comprehensive data-cleaning process, checking the data transcribed by the volunteers against the originals. The resulting dataset is available separately for other researchers to use and cite.

To continue ‘following the money’ the authors were required to carry out the laborious work of searching for the individual accounts of those who withdrew sums from the Slave Compensation Account in the stock ledgers for 3.5% reduced annuities.²⁵ £76 million of this stock had been created in 1824 as a conversion from 4% stock, and it existed for 20 years after which it was converted into 3.25% Annuities.²⁶ The Bank Archive holds the stock ledgers in two series from 1824-40 and 1840-44.²⁷ Most of the accounts in these stock ledgers (well over 90 per cent by value) belonged to individuals who did not receive slavery compensation: a wide cross section of British society held investments in 3.5% Reduced Annuities. However, once compensation awards started to be drawn from the Slave Compensation Account in October 1836, new accounts were entered in the names of compensation agents collecting awards on behalf of slave-owners. Accounts were opened on the credit side with the descriptor ‘by slave compensation’, and these sums can be cross-referenced with the corresponding transactions on the debit side of the Slave Compensation Account.²⁸ The transfer of 3.5% Reduced Annuities from the Slave Compensation Account to individual accounts in the stock ledgers represents the payment of slavery compensation by the British government to slave-owners (or more commonly their attorneys). The stock ledgers sometimes yield useful data about the individuals collecting compensation that is lacking elsewhere, such as the account holder’s

²⁵ We have been unable to identify 14 out of 470 individuals in the Slave Compensation Account and 14 out of 199 in the Litigated Account. However, these account for less than 1% of both total transactions and total value in the accounts.

²⁶ E.L. Hargreaves, *The National Debt* (London, 1930), pp. 155-6, 161.

²⁷ 1824-40, BoE AC27/7224-AC27/7263; 1840-44, BoE AC27/7264-AC277295. Jobbers’ Accounts can be found in BoE AC27/7296-AC27/7305.

²⁸ All those who collected compensation awards from the Slave Compensation Account have private accounts in the stock ledgers for 3.5% reduced annuities, even if they never owned this stock beforehand.

full name and occasionally their place of residence. The major compensation agents have stock accounts that span multiple pages due to the hundreds of unique transactions they were involved in which appear on the credit side of their accounts: this is striking in its irregularity when compared with others who held 3.5% Reduced Annuities as a long term investment in this period.

When analysing these data there were several factors that influenced the operation of the Slave Compensation Account which were important to consider. For instance, awards that the Slave Compensation Commission in Whitehall had decided were being formally contested by multiple claimants, and 'List E' awards that were subject to pre-existing suits in Chancery and the colonial courts, were both sent to a separate Litigated Slave Compensation Account that appears in the stock ledgers for 3.5% Reduced Annuities in the name of the Accountant General of the Court of Chancery.²⁹ This is because it was thought likely that the process of adjudicating the ultimate beneficiaries would take a long time to resolve, and so Parliamentary legislation pertaining to slavery compensation stipulated that funds associated with these contested claims were to be invested in separate and distinct litigated accounts.³⁰ The Litigated Slave Compensation Account was created on 14 October 1836 and was used to hold in trust compensation that was allocated to owners of enslaved Africans in Mauritius, the Cape of Good Hope, and the Virgin Islands, before eventually paying out once the contested claims had been resolved following judgement issued by either the Slave Compensation Commission or the court system. For the most part it was kept topped up by regular payments out of the Slave Compensation Account, although sometimes it was replenished with Reduced Annuities purchased from jobbers by the broker for the Accountant General. For

²⁹ BoE Archive, AC27/7240, f. 321. The full name of the account is: 'The Accountant General of the Court of Chancery William George Adam Esq his Successors & Assigns. The Litigated West India Compensation Account of the Court of Chancery per Act 6 & 7 Wm. 4 Cap 82 Sec 5 The Slave Compensation Account'.

³⁰ TNA, NDO 4/32, pp. 877-883, 'An Act to carry into further Execution an Act for Compensating Owners of Slaves...', 17 August 1836, especially section V.

completeness, we have also transcribed the Litigated Account. The two accounts were shown as entirely separate in the Bank's books, but for ease of analysis we have undertaken some aggregation in our results.

It is also important to note that while compensation for Mauritius, the Cape of Good Hope, and the Virgin Islands make up the bulk of the transactions in the Slave Compensation Account, we cannot claim that our analysis captures *all* compensation awards paid to slave-owners in these colonies. This is partly because it is known that 457 compensation awards to Mauritian slave-owners worth £120,718 were allocated as cash payments in the months before the Slave Compensation Account was opened in October 1836.³¹ Though even more important is the fact that the Slave Compensation Account underwent a major operational change on 23 December 1837, when new legislation was passed that enabled compensation payments to be withdrawn from the Account to compensate owners of enslaved Africans in *any* colony. This was designed to expedite the completion of the compensation process by removing various restrictions that had been imposed on compensation accounts in the Bank.³² Although it is worth noting that by the end of 1837 the bulk of the value in the Slave Compensation Account – about £2.5 million out of £3.4 million – had already been collected.³³

While the compensation accounts at the Bank contribute much to our knowledge of the compensation process, there are also some major limitations to this source material that it is

³¹ For the legislation, where it is mentioned some awards for Mauritius were allocated in cash, see: TNA, NDO 4/32, pp. 17-19, 'An Act to carry into further Execution the Provisions of an Act for completing the full payment of Compensation to Owners of Slaves upon the Abolition of Slavery', 23 December 1837. For details of the awards made in cash, see: TNA, NDO 4/14, Mauritius Compensation Draft Numbers 1 –457.

³² TNA, NDO 4/32, pp. 17-19, 'An Act to carry into further Execution...', 23 December 1837.

³³ £2.403 million from the Slave Compensation Account and £0.112 from the Litigated Account.

important to disclose from the outset. For example, the enslaved Africans who are at the centre of the history of slavery in the British empire do not appear in our sources as named individuals. It is therefore necessary to remain mindful that behind all the compensation payments discussed in this paper stand individual women, men, and children who suffered enslavement, violence, and oppression. Another limitation of our source material is that it is not easy to link up the compensation payments that agents withdrew from accounts at the Bank with the principals who were the ultimate beneficiaries (the slave-owners). This is because our sources do not name the principals, nor do they contain the unique compensation award number that the LBS project has used to structure their database. However, it is possible to use data from our source material – such as the name of the individual who collected the compensation and the monetary value of the compensation – to cross-reference individual transactions using the ledgers that form part of the National Debt Office records at the British National Archives. The NDO records provide the unique compensation number and the name(s) of the principal slave-owners, enabling us to link up the compensation payments collected from the Slave Compensation Account at the Bank with the LBS database. To demonstrate this is possible, in this working paper a sample of 219 transactions, comprising all the compensation collected for the Virgin Islands, that were not contested in Chancery, has been carried out.

3. Results

The dataset for the Slave Compensation Account has a total of 11,399 transactions totalling £3.4 million. The first payment out was made on 14 October 1836 and the final one was on 28 February 1843. Shortly after this, on 15 March 1843, the account was closed and the remaining sum of £292 13s 6d was cancelled.³⁴ Over a period of more than six years the funds in the account were

³⁴ This was authorised by a Treasury Warrant dated 14 March 1843. For the legislation passed to facilitate the completion of the compensation process, see: TNA, NDO 4/32, pp. 209-216, 'An Act to

transferred to 470 separate accounts in the 3.5% Reduced Annuities stock ledgers. The dataset for the Litigated Account contains 2,189 separate transactions totalling £502,528, representing around 15% of the total sum allocated to Mauritius, the Cape, and the Virgin Islands. This was paid-out between 16 December 1836 and 10 October 1844, when the outstanding balance of £24,038 was converted into 'New 3.5% & 3.25% Annuities'.³⁵ Whereas the Slave Compensation Account has a single credit (the opening balance of £3,437,270), the Litigated Account has 111 credit entries. These credits were largely 'by Chancery' transfers from the main account: 67 transactions totalling £470,816 made between October 1836 and December 1842. There was also an additional £56,000 which came from stock purchased from jobbers on the open market by the broker for the Accountant General. The 3.5% Reduced Annuities paid out of the Litigated Account went to 209 individual account names in the stock ledgers. Unsurprisingly, there is a large degree of crossover between names in the two datasets, and indeed many of the relevant stock accounts display both 'slavery compensation' and 'Chancery' credit entries. However, there are 86 names who only appear in the Litigated Account.

Table 1 and Figure 1 show the profile of the payments and it can be seen that, by value, money was quickly drawn from the Slave Compensation Account. Excluding Chancery, by the end of 1836 over £400,000 had been paid. The cumulative total of £1 million was reached in April 1837, a busy month with over 1,000 transactions, including 432 in a single day (6 April). In August 1837, 50 per cent of the total had been paid out. By 23 December 1837, just before the account was applied to compensation from any colony, a total of £2.31 million had been paid in 8,334 separate transactions. Thereafter, another £420,000 was drawn in 1838 followed by a long tail as the account was run down to the end of 1842. The phasing of payments out of the Litigated Account was different. While

make further Provision for facilitating and completing the Distribution and Payment of Compensation for Slaves upon the Abolition of Slavery', 18 May 1841.

³⁵ BoE AC27/5674, f. 455.

1837 was the busiest year in the standard Slave Compensation Account in terms of number of transactions, the most important year for payments out of the Litigated Account was 1838. This one-year delay almost certainly reflects the extra time it took the Slave Compensation Commission and the Court of Chancery to settle contested cases for litigated claims. Again payments tapered off, but for this account, into 1844.

The average size of an individual transaction was £256 but this hides a wide spread of values, as can be seen in Table 2. Nearly 90 per cent of all transactions were less than £500 and almost half were less than £100. At the other end of the scale there were some very large individual transactions and Table 3 shows the 51 awards over £5,000. On 23 August 1837 Archibald William Blane collected the largest compensation award from the Account (worth £14,466) as the attorney of Charles Millien for the 474 people he enslaved in Mauritius.³⁶ Almost all the individual awards over £5,000 are for compensation awarded to Mauritian slave-owners: there are none relating to the Cape of Good Hope, and just one for the Virgin Islands.³⁷ To a large extent this reflects patterns of slave-ownership in the colonies covered by the Account. While slave-owners in all three colonies were mostly resident and lived overseas, there were still important differences in the structure of slaveholding which helps to explain the trend outlined above. For instance, slave-ownership in the Cape was widespread but small-scale, whereas in Mauritius and the Virgin Islands the general tendency was for the enslaved to be concentrated on larger agricultural units geared towards the production of cash crops, causing a greater frequency of individual compensation awards with a high value. Also important was the decision made by the Commissioners of Compensation to divide the £20 million unequally across the various colonies according to differing local economic conditions. An individual

³⁶ <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/claim/view/2120010000> (Accessed 13/05/2022).

³⁷ The exception is the award collected on 16 December 1836 by the partners in Reid, Irving, and Co. for themselves as principals in compensation for 606 enslaved on their plantations in the Virgin Islands. For the original award, see: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/claim/view/30084> (Accessed 13/05/2022).

enslaved person in the newer and more productive plantation colonies like British Guiana, Trinidad, and Mauritius was thus accorded a higher value when compared to the older colonies such as Barbados and Jamaica where economic productivity was lower due to soil exhaustion. The fact that according to the 'inter-colonial apportionment' an individual enslaved person in Mauritius was valued at £69 14s 3d compared to £31 16s 1¾d in the Virgin Islands meant the largest compensation awards collected from the Account were far more likely to relate to Mauritius than elsewhere.³⁸

In many ways, none of this comes as a surprise. Awardees would have been keen to obtain their money quickly, and as Draper has already shown, there was considerable variation in the size of compensation awards.³⁹ We now advance the analysis of the results to look at who collected the awards at the Bank and thus withdrew 3.5% Reduced Annuities from the Slave Compensation and the Litigated Accounts. Tables 4 and 5 group the individual accounts by number of transactions and summarises the total payments. Perhaps the most striking feature is that there are seven individuals who each had over 500 transactions, and these amounted to £1.876 million, over half of the total money available. The dominance of a small number of agents is reiterated in Table 6 which shows the 21 names with more than 100 transactions. In general terms, these large compensation agents all appear to have been partners (often junior partners) in London banks and merchant houses that had financial and commercial ties with Mauritius, the Cape, or the Virgin Islands. For instance, Robert Barclay Jr., junior partner in his father's Mauritian trading business (but seemingly not directly involved in his second cousin's bank Barclay, Bevan, Tritton & Co.), was the largest individual

³⁸ An individual enslaved person in the Cape of Good Hope was valued at £73 9s 11d. This is larger than Mauritius, suggesting differing patterns of slave-ownership is the key explanation for why there are no awards over £5000 for Cape Colony. For the inter-colonial apportionment, see: TNA, NDO 4/33, 'Inter-Colonial Apportionment' in 'General Rules, Office of Commissioners of Compensation', 7 July 1835. See also Draper, *Price of Emancipation*, p. 104, 147.

³⁹ Draper, *Price of Emancipation*, pp. 147-151.

agent in the Account by value, collecting £516,831. Barclay's name also appears against 15 of the greater than £5,000 entries in Table 3.⁴⁰

It was also common for the largest compensation agents to have pre-existing familial or business connections to slave-ownership, usually in the colonies covered by the Account. John Price Simpson was part of the merchant house Simpson Brothers & Co., which had headquarters in London and the Cape of Good Hope, and he is among the smallest of the seven large compensation agents we have identified, collecting 696 claims worth £137,799. He was also a direct beneficiary of the compensation process as a small-scale awardee for seven enslaved people he owned in Cape colony, and like other wine merchants based in the Cape his firm was a creditor of slave-owners and held several mortgages secured on enslaved people.⁴¹ While Sir John Rae Reid – partner in Reid, Irving & Co. and director (1820-36, 1842-47), deputy governor (1837-9), and governor (1839-41) of the Bank – collected 936 claims from the Account worth £310,633. His firm owned multiple plantations and 1,229 enslaved people in the Virgin Islands for which it received approximately £17,894 in compensation. Reid was also successful in securing compensation for his other slaveholding interests as a mortgagee and owner in Jamaica, St. Kitts, Trinidad, and British Guiana.⁴² Some of the largest compensation agents also had family members or business partners who served on the local compensation commissions in the colonies; administrative bodies tasked with determining the number of enslaved people that slaveholders legally owned. This would have given some firms a

⁴⁰ For Robert Barclay senior, see: <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/barclay-sir-robert-1755-1839> (Accessed 13/05/2022). Robert Barclay senior was Collector of Internal Revenues in Mauritius in the late 1820s. See: Barker, *Slavery and Antislavery in Mauritius*, p. 50.

⁴¹ <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/claim/view/2120017823>; <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146019079> (Accessed 13/05/2022); Lalou Meltzer, 'Emancipation, Commerce & The Role of John Fairbairn's *Advertiser*', in Nigel Worden & Clifton Crais, eds, *Breaking the Chains: Slavery and its Legacy in the Nineteenth-Century Cape Colony* (Johannesburg, 1994), pp. 179-180.

⁴² <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/13860> (Accessed 13/05/2022).

competitive advantage in the compensation agency business, as it provided opportunities to expand their client base by facilitating close and regular contact with the slave-owners submitting compensation claims. For example, James Blyth was a merchant in Mauritius who served on the compensation commission for that colony in the mid-1830s, while his brother and business partner Henry David Blyth – one of the seven largest individuals who collect awards from the Account – was based in London and handled 1,302 compensation awards, worth £336,898.⁴³

A similar pattern prevails with the 13 middle-ranking compensation agents who each collected between 100 and 499 claims. Collectively, they handled 2,549 unique claims and drew £620,912 from the Account. Once again, this cohort consisted mostly of partners in banks and merchant firms that had a commercial presence in London and the colonies covered by the Account, and who had slaveholding interests in the years prior to Emancipation. For instance, David Charles Guthrie collected 376 claims worth £105,472. Alongside his business partner George Cheape, Guthrie ran a commission merchandising firm specialising in the Mauritian sugar trade, and also received compensation for enslaved people in Trinidad and Tobago, both as trustee and principal.⁴⁴ Another middle-ranking agent was Alfred Latham who was involved with 141 transactions, drawing £48,670 from the Account. He benefitted from familial wealth created by his father's financial interests in Caribbean slavery, and in 1833 joined with John Alves Arbuthnot to form the commission merchandising firm Arbuthnot Latham, which specialised in Eastern trade and later became a merchant bank.⁴⁵

⁴³ Augustus Muir, *Blyth, Greene, Jourdain & Company Limited, 1810-1960* (London, 1961), p. 15.

⁴⁴ In 1848 Guthrie gave testimony to a Parliamentary select committee on sugar and coffee planting in which he was highly critical of the impact of the Sugar Duties Act of 1846 on the Mauritian economy. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/44278> (Accessed 13/05/2022).

⁴⁵ David Lascelles, 'Latham, Alfred (1801–1885), banker', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved 26 April 2022, from <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-41292>; <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/44295> (Accessed 13/05/2022).

There were also 218 small compensation agents who each handled between 2 and 99 compensation claims. These small agents were together involved in 2,818 transactions worth £672,225. This cohort includes some major London bankers, merchants, and insurance brokers such as Thomas Baring (29 claims worth £14,324), Bonamy Dobree (2 claims worth £671), Walter Hawkins (42 claims worth £7,881), and Alexander Sinclair (68 claims worth £11,127). However, unlike the large and middle-ranking agents, it is probable these smaller agents were not actively seeking to compete in the compensation agency business by widely advertising their services in handling claims.

A distinctive feature of the cohort of small agents collecting between 2 and 99 claims is that at least 10 women appear. Important research has been completed in recent years on the role of women as absentee slave-owners in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, meaning it was not entirely surprising to discover instances of women attending the Bank to collect slavery compensation.⁴⁶ Take Elizabeth Christina Rowles 'of Cape Town', for example, who in 1837 travelled from southern Africa to London to collect 14 compensation claims worth £4,422 between 25 July and 3 August 1837. She collected a further five claims totalling £958 from the Litigated Account the following year. Rowles was herself a small-scale slave-owner in the Cape of Good Hope and an awardee of compensation for four enslaved people, and thus some of the claims she collected were for herself as principal.⁴⁷ But she also appears in the records in the capacity of compensation agent working on behalf of other people. Like others in this cohort (both men and women) who collected small number of claims from the Account, her clients were probably friends, family, and business associates who took advantage of the fact she was going to be in London by issuing her with a power of attorney to collect compensation awards on their behalf. However, we cannot rule out the

⁴⁶ E.g. Hannah Young, 'Negotiating female property and slave-ownership in the aristocratic world', *The Historical Journal*, 63 (3) 2020, pp. 581-602; Draper, *Price of Emancipation*, pp. 204-230.

⁴⁷ <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/claim/view/2120017920> (Accessed 13/05/2022).

possibility that Rowles and the other women appearing in the Account were acting as professional compensation agents, and using their business acumen to seek profit from the compensation process via commission.

Finally, there are 260 unique individuals who appear fleetingly in the Account because they were involved in just a single transaction. Collectively, they drew £45,658 from the Account. We originally hypothesised these were most likely slave-owners who collected their own compensation as principal. When we cross-referenced the compensation ledgers in the Bank Archive with the NDO records it was therefore interesting to find that, in fact, the majority were performing an agency function on behalf of slave-owning clients. Unlike the compensation agents who handled large numbers of claims, it is evident that the 260 people involved in the collection of just a single compensation award as an attorney were not competing in the compensation agency business and seeking significant profit via commission fees. Instead, they were most likely performing a favour for a family member, friend, or business associate, and perhaps did not even charge commission. This finding modifies the current understanding of the compensation process, which is that it tended to be only the largest slave-owners who used agents as intermediaries for the collection of compensation.⁴⁸ Our analysis shows that when it came to compensation paid in 3.5% Reduced Annuities out of the Slave Compensation Account, pretty much everyone relied on the services of agents to collect their awards from the Bank, regardless of whether they were large or small slave-owners.

Tables 4 and 5 also show how there were withdrawals made from the Slave Compensation Account and the Litigated Account by joint names, the Colonial Bank, and jobbers. That some transactions in

⁴⁸ E.g. Draper, *Price of Emancipation*, p. 128.

the Bank's ledgers were associated with joint names – such as the Cape Town wine merchants Roelof Abraham Zeederberg Jr. and Robert Eagar – reflects the fact that certain agents were working in partnership when collecting compensation claims. In cases where agents worked in partnership, slave-owners would have had to name both partners in the powers of attorney they issued to permit the collection of compensation, meaning the Bank's clerks paid the compensation awards into accounts that were jointly-owned by both agents.

There were also three payments totalling £7,608 made to the Colonial Bank in 1838 and 1840, a joint-stock bank incorporated on 1 June 1836 with capital of £2 million, and the only institution that withdrew Reduced Annuities from the Account. Beginning in 1837, the Colonial Bank opened branches across the Caribbean, and was formed to provide cheap loans to planters in the transitional period following Emancipation to help with plantation running costs. The Colonial Bank does not appear in the LBS database as an awardee of compensation after a slave-owner had assigned their award to the institution in payment for a debt, meaning that in these three transactions a representative of the Colonial Bank must have been acting in an agency capacity.⁴⁹

The City jobbers who appear in our analysis were not acting as compensation agents, but were instead purchasing Reduced Annuities that were deemed surplus to requirements. This explains why the two transactions involving jobbers in the standard account both occur on 28 February 1843 and

⁴⁹ The Colonial Bank features in our analysis only after withdrawals from the Slave Compensation Account were thrown open to any colony following new legislation of December 1837, meaning the three transactions involving the Colonial Bank could have pertained to compensation awarded to slave-owners in any Caribbean island. For the Colonial Bank, see: William A. Green, *British Slave Emancipation: The Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment 1830-1865* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 180-182; Aaron Graham, 'Slavery, Banks and the Ambivalent Legacies of Compensation in South Africa, Mauritius and the Caribbean', *Journal of South African Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (2021), pp. 473-487.

are the final transactions before the Slave Compensation Account is closed in March 1843.⁵⁰ It is noticeable, however, that there are 173 transactions involving 15 different jobbers in the Litigated Account. This is probably because those who managed the Litigated Account dealt more regularly in the buying and selling of Reduced Annuities on the open market. As has already been mentioned, it was not uncommon for the broker for the Accountant General of the Court of Chancery to purchase Reduced Annuities from jobbers to top up the Litigated Account (which appear in the ledger as credits), and it should therefore come as no surprise that he also sold Reduced Annuities to jobbers out of the Litigated Account when circumstances dictated.

Before compensation awarded in 3.5% Reduced Annuities was collected, the stock accumulated interest. The legislation stipulated that interest was to commence from 5 April 1836 and for dividends to be issued at half-yearly intervals.⁵¹ Interest on compensation awards made in government stock could be collected by taking a dividend warrant issued by the NDO to the Cashier's Office at the Bank, where it would be paid in cash drawn on a special account in the Public Drawing Office ledgers.⁵² Dividends were paid separately from the main award, but it was common for both the dividends and main award to be collected by the same agent. For example, the compensation agent Herman Sillem represented the slave-owner Samuel Beel, and collected both the interest payment of 6s 4d due on 10 October 1836 and the principal award of £18 3s 8d on 3 November 1836 in compensation for the one person that Beel had enslaved in the Virgin Islands.⁵³

⁵⁰ On 28 February 1843, £5465 5s 0d of 3.5% Reduced Annuities was sold to Hewitt Bostock and a further £5465 5s 0d to Charles Smith Mortimer. The account was closed shortly thereafter.

⁵¹ TNA, NDO 4/32, pp. 877-883. 'An Act to carry into further Execution an Act for compensating Owners...', 17 August 1836.

⁵² Public Drawing Office, Public Accounts Ledger, 'The Slave Compensation Account' BoE C98/7428, ff. 845-900, 855-79, 837-41. This account was opened on 13 October 1836 with a credit of £60,152; a further sum of £45,780 was credited on 8 April 1837. By September 1837, £66,775 had been paid out in interest.

⁵³ TNA, NDO 4/11, Virgin Islands Compensation No. 40. The relevant award is listed on LBS: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/claim/view/30121> (Accessed 13/05/2022).

Further research is needed to determine whether it was usual practice for these small interest payments to be transferred to the principal (the slave-owner), or alternatively if it was more common for the dividends to be retained by the compensation agent as part of their commission fee for collecting the main award.

Ultimately, when it came to the main compensation awards, very few agents held onto the Reduced Annuities they had collected for long periods of time, nor was it common for them to transfer ownership of the stock to their slave-owning clients. Instead, the most widespread practice was for them to quickly convert the stock into cash by selling it to City jobbers on the open market. A sample for August 1837 – the busiest month in the Slave Compensation Account with 739 individual transactions totalling over £400,000 – reveals that out of 141 unique individuals who collected compensation, only one has a ‘balance carried forward’ showing they held onto the stock past 1840.⁵⁴ Everyone else sold off the stock they received remarkably quickly, with most converting compensation awards made in Reduced Annuities into cash within a couple of days of collection. They sold the stock to prominent jobbers such as John Ellis Barber, Robert Field, John Francis Maubert, William Robert Mitchell, Henry Mortimer, Samuel Frampton Stallard, Edward Thompson, and John Underhill. These were major dealers in Reduced Annuities and specialists in making a market for people looking to buy and sell this stock in the 1830s. The compensation process created £5 million in new Reduced Annuities, which our analysis suggests quickly entered the open market, meaning City jobbers must have been another group that profited from the compensation process through commission. In August 1837 alone £116,162 of new Reduced Annuities that came directly from the Slave Compensation Account passed through John Francis Maubert’s jobbers account, and he would have made money from each transaction via commission fees.

⁵⁴ The sole person who has a balanced carried forward is Elizabeth Christina Rowles.

We do not yet have a clear sense of why compensation agents chose to convert Reduced Annuities into cash so quickly, but it was presumably due to a desire for immediate liquidity, which would have mobilised the capital for reinvestment in other productive outlets with a higher yield. A need for liquidity may have been communicated to compensation agents by slave-owners, who in the crisis years following Emancipation were not looking for long-term investments in a government security, but instead urgently required working capital to keep their plantations in operation through the purchase of indentured labour and the settling of debts with creditors.⁵⁵ For most people their slavery compensation award was a major windfall which they would have wanted to deploy immediately.

Overall, the records reveal two possible models for the collection of Reduced Annuities from the Slave Compensation Account. First, is the 'commission model', whereby slave-owners issued powers of attorney to compensation agents, the agents travelled to the Bank to collect the Reduced Annuities, before immediately converting the stock into cash and posting the cash balance to the slave-owner's account in their own firm's ledgers, minus a commission charge. Second, is the 'discount model'. This involved a bank or merchant house immediately giving a slave-owner cash equal to the value of their compensation award minus a discount (the commission fee), before using the power of attorney to collect the Reduced Annuities at the Bank, convert it into cash by selling to jobbers, and then keep the proceeds of the award for themselves. This method appears to have been deployed by the firm Thomas Blyth, Sons & Co.; a London merchant house specialising in Eastern trade which possessed extensive commercial interests in the Mauritian sugar economy. Amid the rush to secure the business of Mauritian slave-owners in the mid-1830s, the firm's

⁵⁵ For importations of indentured labourers from India to Mauritius, which began in the immediate wake of Abolition in 1834-35, see: Richard B. Allen, *Slaves, Freedmen and Indentured Laborers in Colonial Mauritius* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 16-17.

representative in Mauritius James Blyth wrote to his brother Henry David Blyth in London to provide him with a list of compensation claims and ask him to send hard cash in a fast-sailing vessel in an attempt to secure a competitive advantage in the compensation agency business over other island firms.⁵⁶ Those who followed the 'discount model' were buying up as principals the entitlement to government stock awarded as compensation, meaning that rather than performing a straightforward agency role they were acting as factors and in more of an entrepreneurial fashion than some of their counterparts. They had observed that there was a high transaction cost for resident slave-owners to travel to London to collect their awards made in 3.5% Reduced Annuities, and were therefore looking to profit from the business opportunity arising from the moment of compensation by exploiting their existing connections in London and the asymmetric knowledge between factor and principal about how the London stock market worked.

Further research is needed to determine whether it was the 'commission' or 'discount' model for the collection of slavery compensation that was most significant. Whatever the model used, it is clear the larger compensation agents were motivated by the prospect of making money. The desire to profit can be observed in the competition to secure the business of handling compensation claims. The numerous advertisements posted in colonial newspapers by firms willing to serve as compensation agents stands as testament to the competitive environment they were operating in. For example, in June 1836, shortly before the opening of the Slave Compensation Account in October, there were eight notices posted by different firms in the *Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette* advertising their agency services to prospective slave-owning clients. The wine merchants R. A. Zeederberg Senior and Home, Eagar, & Co. directly addressed 'CLAIMANTS ON COMPENSATION' in their advertisement, detailing how the junior partners in their firms were 'intending shortly to proceed to England' and therefore 'offer[ed] their services to those having Claims for Compensation

⁵⁶ Muir, *Blyth, Greene, Jourdain*, pp. 14-15.

Money, to receive the amounts due to them, and transmit them to the colony'. They also offered to 'make fair advances to any who may require it', signalling to prospective clients that they also offered the discount model for the collection of compensation.⁵⁷ Their advertising efforts were relatively successful. Roelof Abraham Zeederberg Jr. and Robert Eagar appear in our analysis collecting 491 compensation claims as joint partners and drawing £143,097 from the Slave Compensation Account. They also collected significant sums when not working in partnership: Robert Eagar, for instance, is one of our seven largest agents, and was involved in 509 transactions by himself worth £138,585.

In general, commission fees appear to have fallen within the range of 2-5%, and varied depending on the compensation claimant, the firm involved in collection, and the colony.⁵⁸ The largest agents made substantial profits from the compensation agency business due to the large number of transactions they were involved with in aggregate. For instance, Henry David Blyth, one of the seven largest individuals to collect awards from the Account, collected 1,302 compensation claims on behalf of Mauritian planters, which reportedly generated £25,000 for his firm in commission fees.⁵⁹ This sum is far larger than the majority of single compensation awards made to slave-owners, once again demonstrating how there were others besides slave-owners who were major financial beneficiaries of the compensation process.⁶⁰ The question of what the compensation agents did with their profits derived from commission fees deserves further research, but our general impression is that it mirrors the various commercial, cultural, physical, and imperial legacy strands that have

⁵⁷ *Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*, No. 1590, Friday 10 June 1836.

⁵⁸ For commission fees charges by compensation agents operating in the Cape of Good Hope, see: Jacqueline Lalou Meltzer, 'The Growth of Cape Town Commerce and the Role of John Fairbarn's *Advertiser* (1835-1859)' (MA Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1989), pp. 68-69.

⁵⁹ Henry David Blyth collected £336,898 of compensation money, suggesting Thomas Blyth & Sons may have charged as much as 7% in commission fees.

⁶⁰ Muir, *Blyth, Greene, Jourdain*, pp. 14-15. See also: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146011169> (Accessed 01/03/2022).

already been identified by the LBS project for slave-owners who were awarded compensation as principals.⁶¹

A sample of 219 transactions from the Slave Compensation Account – comprising all the awards collected for the Virgin Islands – has been carried out to demonstrate that it is possible to use the NDO records to link up the data contained in the ledgers in the Bank Archive with the LBS database.⁶² This was important because it allowed us to identify the principals and the number of enslaved involved with each transaction. The Virgin Islands was a British colony in the Caribbean that administered an archipelago of more than 50 small islands, including the four main islands of Tortola, Virgin Gorda, Anegada, and Jost Van Dyke. The Virgin Islands archipelago is nestled between the larger islands of the Greater and Lesser Antilles, and was therefore valued by the British for its geostrategic location in the Caribbean Sea and its importance in guarding shipping lanes. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the British developed a small-scale plantation economy based around sugar production in Tortola and some of the other main islands, and by the 1830s there were roughly 5,192 enslaved people living and working in the Virgin Islands.⁶³ It was to collect compensation payments for the emancipation of these enslaved men, women, and children that agents working on behalf of Virgin Islands slave-owners attended the NDO and the Bank in London after the opening of the Slave Compensation Account in October 1836.

⁶¹ Hall et. al., *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership*; <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/> (Accessed 01/03/2022).

⁶² For the Legacies of British Slavery database, see: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/> (Accessed 13/05/2022).

⁶³ The English seized Tortola from the Dutch in 1672, and in subsequent decades gradually began to conquer and settle the other main islands that make up the British Virgin Islands. On the early history of the British Virgin Islands, see: Isaac Dookhan, *A History of the British Virgin Islands, 1672 to 1970* (British Virgin Islands, 1975).

Table 7 shows the 22 individuals who collected compensation for the Virgin Islands, organised by highest to lowest in terms of the value of compensation collected. The significance of Sir John Rae Reid as a compensation agent for the Virgin Islands is unsurprising. As has already been noted, Reid, Irving & Co. was a major plantation-owner and slaveholder in the Virgin Islands. Other partners in the firm, including George Reid and John Irving Jr., also appear in the Account collecting Virgin Islands compensation. Pre-existing ties with the plantation economy in the Virgin Islands meant Reid, Irving & Co. would have been well-connected with the colony's planter elite, who they counted among their clients and business associates. Given the firm's presence in the City of London – where it was necessary to be to collect compensation from the Bank – it makes sense that Reid, Irving & Co. were able to use their commercial networks and existing client base in the Virgin Islands to dominate the compensation agency business for this colony. Other key agents for the Virgin Islands also included those with ties to slave-ownership there. For instance, George Burrow was a partner in the Lancaster-based West India merchant firm Burrows & Nottage and an absentee owner of 378 enslaved people in the Virgin Islands. While William Hastings Shew was a merchant based in Tortola and an awardee of compensation for 52 people he had enslaved in the Virgin Islands.⁶⁴

An interesting feature of the Virgin Islands sample is that just 10 out of 219 claims were collected by a principal in the transaction (the slave-owner). Furthermore, those in this sample who did collect as principal were all individuals who appear elsewhere as important compensation agents for the Virgin Islands, but were also slave-owners themselves and thus collected their own compensation from the Bank: George Reid, George Burrow; and William Hasting Shew. Even more surprising is that every person who was involved in just a single transaction was an agent using a power of attorney to collect compensation on behalf of someone else. One other point to mention is that in a few

⁶⁴ For Burrow, see: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/30073>; For Shew, see: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/30233> (Accessed 13/05/2022).

instances, different agents collected on behalf of the same person, or members of the same family. This is perhaps surprising, but may simply reflect how close-knit the business, familial and societal networks were in certain colonies.

The most striking finding arising from our analysis of the Virgin Islands sample is the degree of specialisation by colony among compensation agents. Of the 22 agents who collected compensation for the Virgin Islands just 3 appear in the Slave Compensation Account collecting awards for another colony.⁶⁵ This is most likely explained by the fact that compensation agents were drawing upon existing familial and commercial networks to develop their client base, and these networks were usually concentrated in specific colonies. A high degree of specialisation among compensation agents is common to all the colonies covered by the Account. In addition to the 19 agents specialising in the Virgin Islands, our analysis of 1,000 NDO drafts each for the Cape and for Mauritius shows 64 agents specialising in the former and 29 in the latter. Taken together, these names cover 10,500 transactions and £2.8 million by value, so can be taken as representative. While there is a small degree of crossover, with four agents collecting compensation for more than one colony, the general trend towards specialisation is clear.⁶⁶

It is interesting to observe that there were far more compensation agents who specialised in the collection of claims for the Cape of Good Hope, even though the level of slave-ownership in that colony was nearly half the size of Mauritius (by the time of Emancipation there were 38,427

⁶⁵ The exceptions are Sir John Rae Reid, George Reid, and John Irving Jr.; all members of Reid, Irving & Co. Their firm also had commercial interests in the Mauritian sugar economy, and so they provided agency services for slave-owners there as well.

⁶⁶ The exceptions are Sir John Rae Reid, who collected for Mauritius and the Virgin Islands; John Irving Jr., who collected for Mauritius and the Virgin Islands; George Reid, who collected for Mauritius and the Virgin Islands; and Duncan Dunbar, who collected for Cape Colony and Mauritius.

enslaved people in the Cape and 68,613 enslaved in Mauritius).⁶⁷ This is most likely reflective of the differing economic and commercial patterns in the two colonies. By the 1830s, Mauritius had developed a large-scale plantation economy oriented towards the export of sugar and other cash crops to Britain. A rapid expansion in the Mauritian sugar industry from 1825-30 was stimulated by new legislation in 1825 that equalised duties on sugar imported into Britain from Mauritius with that of the Caribbean, increasing the competitiveness of Mauritian sugar on the London market. Exports of sugar from Mauritius rose from 426 tons in 1812-14 to 33,784 tons in 1830-34, and by 1833-34 sugar accounted for 85% of the value of Mauritian exports. Consequently, the colony's sugar trade was controlled by a relatively small number of commission merchandising firms, known locally as *bailleurs de fonds*, which had close ties to London merchant houses and performed a variety of commercial and financial services for their Francophone planter clients.⁶⁸ Moreover, the growing dominance of the sugar industry within the island's economy meant that the general tendency in Mauritius was for the enslaved to be concentrated in larger plantation units, rather than spread across multiple small owners. Demographic data from 1826 reveals how there were 43,531 'plantation slaves' and 24,760 'personal slaves' in Mauritius, with 40 percent of 'plantation slaves' living and working on estates with more than 100 enslaved people.⁶⁹ This meant individual compensation claims for Mauritius were far more likely to cover a greater number of enslaved people than was the case in the Cape. The importance of a small number of commission merchandising firms with links to London and the tendency for the enslaved to be concentrated on sizeable agricultural units helps to explain why we see compensation claims for Mauritius accumulating in the hands of a small cluster of agents: four out of seven of the largest compensation agents with more than 500 transactions specialised in awards for Mauritius, and as was mentioned earlier almost all 51 awards over £5,000 pertained to Mauritius.

⁶⁷ TNA, NDO 4/33, 'Inter-Colonial Apportionment' in 'General Rules, Office of Commissioners of Compensation', 7 July 1835.

⁶⁸ Allen, *Slaves, Freedmen and Indentured Laborers*, p. 12, 22-24, 26-28.

⁶⁹ Barker, *Slavery and Antislavery in Mauritius*, pp. 59-60.

The Cape of Good Hope, by contrast, did not have a large-scale plantation economy, but was instead a settler colony with an economy geared towards the widespread use of enslaved workers in commercial wheat farming, wine cultivation, and ranching. Not only did this result in a more diffuse pattern of slave-ownership spread across numerous different small owners, but it also meant that to market these wares Cape Town maintained a large and dynamic merchant community of its own, with maritime trading networks that reached out into the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.⁷⁰ The sizeable merchant community in Cape Town that competed to provide agency services for a large number of small-scale slave-owners in Cape Colony is a likely explanation for why we see a greater number of agents (who often fall into our middle-ranking or small cohorts) specialising in the collection of compensation for the Cape. This ultra-competitive environment also helps to account for the frequency of newspaper advertisements for compensation agency services published in Cape Colony, which was mentioned earlier.

4. Conclusion

Our analysis of the slavery compensation ledgers that survive in the Bank Archive sheds new light on the compensation process by highlighting the importance of the London agents. These agents sought to profit from the business opportunity presented by the moment of compensation in the mid-1830s by facilitating the collection of compensation awards on behalf of slave-owners and charging commission fees for their services. The largest agents were partners in London banks and merchant firms that had pre-existing commercial ties to the colonies covered by the Slave Compensation Account, as this gave them access to an existing client base and thus a competitive

⁷⁰ Nigel Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 1-5, 19-40; Meltzer, 'Emancipation, Commerce & The Role of John Fairbairn's *Advertiser*', pp. 169-199. See also: Kate Ekama & Robert Ross, 'The Emancipation of the Enslaved in the Cape Colony: Historiography and Introduction', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (2021), pp. 405-416.

advantage in the agency business. The compensation agents quickly converted the stock they had collected into cash by selling it to City jobbers who were specialist dealers in 3.5% Reduced Annuities.

While the work carried out by Draper and the LBS project has clearly demonstrated that slave-owners were the main beneficiaries of the compensation process, our analysis shows that there were also other groups who profited through their roles as intermediaries. The financial mechanisms used to distribute slavery compensation paid in Reduced Annuities and convert into cash involved the services of agents and jobbers based in the City of London, which enabled them to skim considerable sums from compensation awards via commission fees. The large numbers of transactions some of the compensation agents and jobbers were involved with in aggregate allowed several individuals and firms to realise substantial profits. This provides further evidence for the strong links between financial institutions in the City of London and capital generated through the slavery compensation process during the 1830s.

Figure 1: Slave Compensation Account and Litigated Slave Compensation Account, monthly payments (£) and cumulative total (£m.)

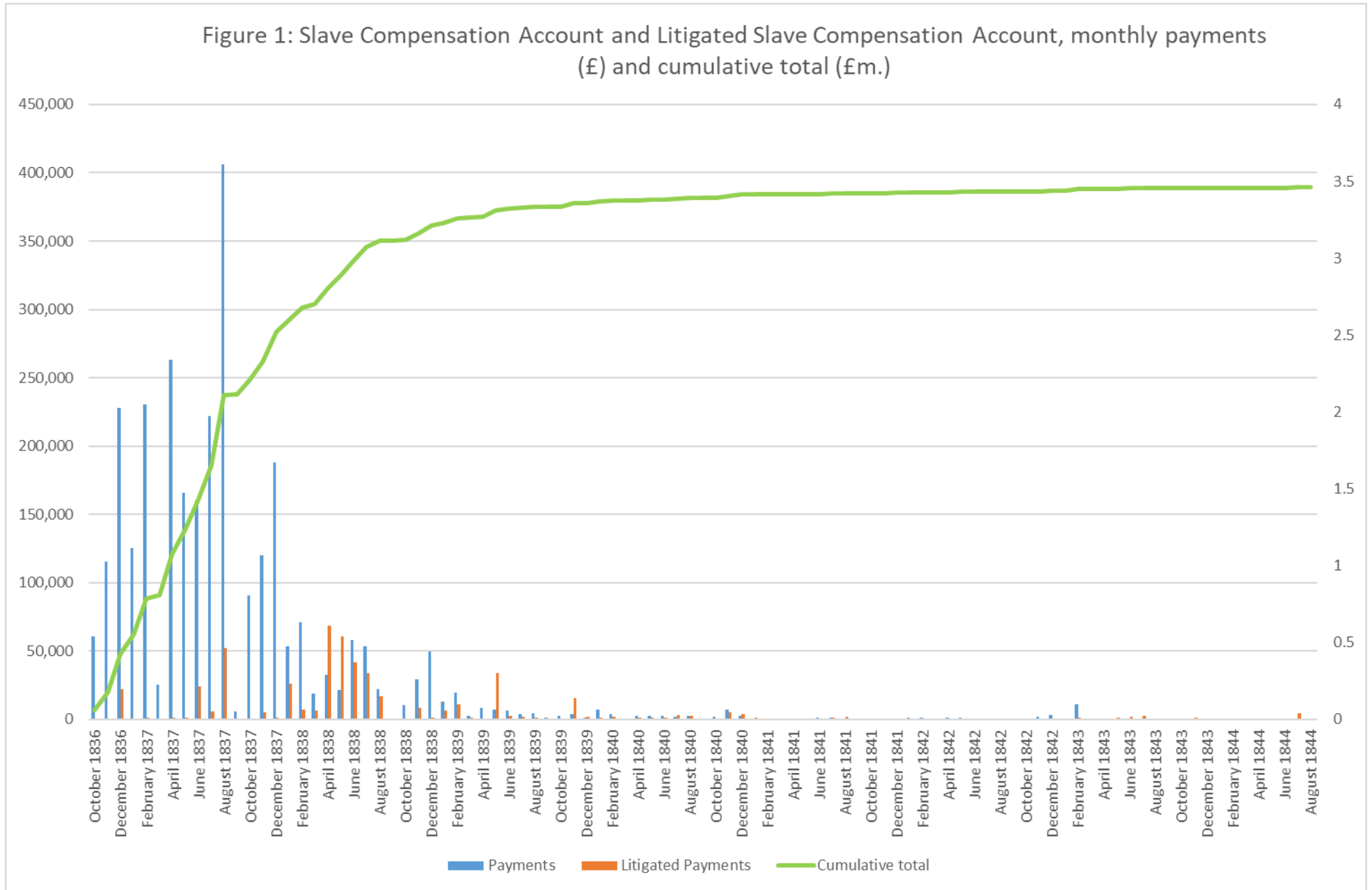


Table 1: Slave Compensation Account and Litigated Slave Compensation Account, transactions by year (excludes Chancery & cancelled)

Transactions by year	Slave Compensation Account		Litigated Account		Aggregate Total	
	Number	Value, £	Number	Value, £	Number	Value, £
1836	1,372	403,491	33	22,027	1,405	425,518
1837	7,137	2,000,128	413	89,979	7,550	2,090,107
1838	1,799	419,770	1,301	269,910	3,100	689,680
1839	518	73,308	213	75,529	731	148,837
1840	310	33,117	104	20,320	414	53,437
1841	80	6,150	41	5,485	121	11,635
1842	113	11,238	9	1,511	122	12,749
1843	2	10,930	59	9,280	61	20,210
1844	0	0	13	5,005	13	5,005
Total	11,331	2,958,132	2,186	499,046	13,517	3,457,178

Table 2: Slave Compensation Account and Litigated Slave Compensation Account, transactions by value, £ (excludes Chancery)

Transactions by size	Slave Compensation Account		Litigated Account		Aggregate Total	
	Number	Value, £	Number	Value, £	Number	Value, £
Over £5,000	45	308,012	6	38,670	52	346,682
£1,000-4,999	438	832,732	74	144,056	510	976,788
500-999	737	512,727	118	82,863	856	595,590
100-499	4,581	1,024,062	832	174,064	5,413	1,198,126
50-99	2,556	179,833	603	42,698	3,159	222,531
1 to 49	2,974	100,766	553	16,695	3,527	117,461
Total	11,331	2,958,132	2,186	499,046	13,517	3,457,178

Table 3: Slave Compensation Account and Litigated Slave Compensation Account, individual transactions over £5,000

Date	Forename	Surname	Value, £
23 August 1837	Archibald William	Blane	14,466
11 August 1837	Robert	Barclay Jr	10,770
28 October 1836	Sir John Rae	Reid	9,850
16 December 1836	John	Irving the Elder, Sir John Rae Reid, George Reid, John Irving the younger & James Milligan	9,271
17 July 1838	Robert	Barclay Jr	8,853
17 July 1838	Gideon	Colquhoun the younger	8,383
9 August 1837	Robert	Barclay Jr	8,355
24 January 1837	Robert	Barclay Jr	8,349
10 December 1836	Thomas	Du Buisson	8,003
19 July 1838	Henry David	Blyth	7,941
25 January 1838	Edward	Harnage	7,937
25 January 1838	Sir John Rae	Reid	7,743
28 February 1837	Sir John Rae	Reid	7,517
31 August 1837	Sir John Rae	Reid	7,468
10 August 1837	Robert	Barclay Jr	7,416
10 August 1837	Robert	Barclay Jr	7,408
8 July 1837	Robert	Barclay Jr	7,180
10 December 1838	Robert	Barclay Jr	6,895
25 November 1836	Gideon	Colquhoun the younger	6,641
4 May 1838	Henry David	Blyth	6,629
1 December 1837	Gideon	Colquhoun the younger	6,537
9 August 1837	John	Irving Jnr the younger	6,433
25 April 1837	Sir John Rae	Reid	6,334
7 August 1837	John	Clifford	6,290

8 August 1837	Thomas	Du Buisson	6,252
8 August 1837	Thomas	Du Buisson	6,245
28 February 1837	Robert	Barclay Jr	6,204
8 August 1837	Thomas	Du Buisson	6,060
9 August 1837	John	Clifford	6,022
27 April 1838	Gregory Seale	Walters	6,002
7 August 1837	John	Clifford	5,988
25 January 1838	Edward	Harnage	5,925
8 February 1839	John Studholme	Brownrigg & John Cockrell, George Gerard de Hochepped Larpent, Horatio Ripley & Frederick Peter Ripley	5,920
10 August 1837	Robert	Barclay Jr	5,911
9 August 1837	Gideon	Colquhoun the younger	5,865
9 August 1837	John	Clifford	5,827
6 April 1837	Robert	Barclay Jr	5,763
6 April 1837	Sir John Rae	Reid	5,747
6 April 1837	Robert	Barclay Jr	5,671
9 August 1837	John	Irving Jnr the younger)	5,638
24 August 1838		Colonial Bank	5,516
28 February 1843	Hewitt	Bostock	5,465
28 February 1843	Charles Smith	Mortimer	5,465
2 May 1839	Robert	Barclay Jr	5,439
27 February 1838	Henry David	Blyth	5,429
9 May 1837	Robert	Barclay Jr	5,418
6 April 1837	Sir John Rae	Reid	5,410
27 April 1838	Duncan	Dunbar	5,409
19 August 1837	Archibald William	Blane	5,210
6 April 1837	Robert	Barclay Jr	5,116
3 February 1837	Archibald William	Blane	5,096

Table 4: Slave Compensation Account and Litigated Slave Compensation Account, analysis of Individual accounts

Slave Compensation Account				Litigated Account		
Number of transactions	Number of individual account names	Number of transactions	Value, £	Number of individual account names	Number of transactions	Value, £
Over 500	6	6,027	1,643,754	0	0	0
100 to 499	11	2,184	547,020	3	660	95,604
50 to 99	15	1,002	296,663	5	322	85,739
25 to 49	16	556	125,667	7	256	62,689
10 to 24	33	497	95,894	14	240	63,984
2 to 9	133	475	86,271	65	262	48,175
1	222	222	32,482	79	79	26,952
Joint names	27	350	111,571	20	205	78,495
Chancery	1	67	470,816	1	3	3,482
Colonial Bank	1	2	6,840	1	1	768
Jobbers	4	16	11,970	14	161	36,640
Cancelled	1	1	229	0	0	0
Total	470	11,399	3,429,142	209	2,189	502,528

Table 5: Slave Compensation Account and Litigated Slave Compensation Account, aggregate analysis of Individual accounts (excluding Chancery & cancelled)

Number of transactions	Number of individual account names	Number of transactions	Value, £
Over 500	7	7,186	1,876,536
100 to 499	13	2,549	620,912
2 to 99	218	2,818	672,225
1	260	260	45,658
Joint names	38	546	185,745
Colonial Bank	1	3	7,608
Jobbers	15	173	48,459
Total	552	13,517	3,457,143

Table 6: Slave Compensation Account and Litigated Slave Compensation Account, largest agents by number of transactions

Forename	Surname	Transactions	Value, £
Charles	Phillips	1,593	245,030
Henry David	Blyth	1,302	336,898
Robert	Barclay Jr	1,264	516,831
Sir John Rae	Reid	936	310,633
Thomas Fletcher	Robinson	868	220,760
John Price	Simpson	696	137,799
Robert	Eagar	509	138,585
Roelof Abraham	Zeederberg & Robert Eagar	491	143,097
David Charles	Guthrie	376	105,472
Isaac	Hayton	346	69,862
Peter	Bell	252	59,972
John Robert	Thomson	225	38,803
John	Irving Jnr (the younger)	208	67,914
Raikes	Currie	204	34,051
George Clerk	Cheape	164	30,205
Thomas	Du Buisson	141	65,685
Alfred	Latham	141	48,670
Henry	Maynard	138	18,987
John Watson	Borradaile	133	28,643
William	Anderson Sr	113	16,198
George	Reid	108	36,450

Table 7: Slave Compensation Account and Litigated Slave Compensation Account, agents collecting in the Virgin Islands

Forename	Surname	Number of transactions	Value, £	Collects in other colonies?
Sir John Rae	Reid	89	13,613	Y
George	Burrow	19	7,608	N
George	Reid	3	4,312	Y
William Hastings	Shew	26	3,125	N
Alexander Purcell	Anderson	1	2,225	N
Herman	Sillem	42	1,416	N
John Hopton	Forbes	1	1,309	N
John	Irving Jnr (the younger)	7	957	Y
Joshua	Brandon	8	588	N
Thomas	Barrow	1	581	N
Benjamin Ephraim	Lindo	5	322	N
Archibald	Paull	1	211	N
Aaron	Robles	4	200	N
Sir Samuel	Scott	3	170	N
Andrew Mortimer	Drummond	1	128	?
Samuel	Gillbee	2	39	N
John Lavicount	Anderdon	1	26	N
James	McChlery	1	26	N
James	Milligan	1	26	N
Alfred Noble	Shew	1	19	N
Walter	Cockburn	1	16	N
Edgar William	Yarrow	1	13	N

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