**The story of the Haynes family of Reading**

In the 1780s, General Robert Haynes, who was born on a sugar plantation in Barbados, wrote a diary in which he described the history of his family, starting with Richard Haynes of Berkshire, near Reading. Robert was proud of his family history and how he could trace it back so far. He saw his family as of *‘high respectability’.*

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| 1500 | Richard Haynes and his wife Thomasine lived in Foxley Grange, near Reading. They had seven children, one daughter and six sons, one of whom worked in the household of Queen Elizabeth I.  |
| 1540s–1635 | Several generations of the Haynes family lived in and around Reading and Hackney in London. Wills and baptisms tell us that they were tradesmen, merchants and fishmongers. There is evidence of some members of the family being well educated. By the 1600s, the family was fairly well-off, and some were perhaps employed in the service of the Queen.  |
| 1635 | According to General Robert Haynes, his ancestor Richard Haynes sailed on *The Expedition* from London to Barbados. He left England during Oliver Cromwell’s rule because he had been a supporter of the King during the English Civil War. He became a planter, originally of tobacco and cotton, using indentured labour from Britain, but this was not profitable enough so planters on Barbados started using enslaved Africans to grow sugar. |
| 1640s | Two men, Robert and William Haynes, possibly father and son, purchased land in Barbados, which was the start of what became the Newcastle Estate. There is a record of someone called William Haynes taking on an indentured servant called Edward Thomas who was from Wales.  |
| 1647 | An epidemic (contagious disease) hit Barbados and thousands of settlers died; it is probable that some of the family was killed but it is not known for sure. |
| 1674 | There is a record of a woman called Elizabeth Haynes owning the property previously owned by William Haynes. It is possible that she was William’s widow. She must have endured extremely difficult circumstances in the 20 years before this, as Barbados experienced a plague of locusts in 1663, the Bridgetown fire and major hurricane in 1667, a drought in 1668 and torrential rain in 1669. Elizabeth’s will showed that she left a significant amount of sugar to her family. It is likely that she died in the hurricane that hit Barbados in 1675, laying waste to most of the island. |
| 1680s–1720s | Generations of the Haynes family in Barbados lived as plantation owners, and over time purchased more land to grow the Newcastle plantation further. Wills and the records of slave purchases show that the family’s fortunes were growing. Family members left ‘slave girls’, among other property, to their relatives in their wills.  |
| 1739 | Captain Robert Haynes inherited the Newcastle plantation when his father died. From the 1730s, all Barbadian freemen had to join the army to fight against France in a long-running war. In 1750, Captain Robert Haynes appears on a list of Barbados’s biggest plantation owners. He died at the young age of 33, possibly of smallpox. |
| 1746 | Richard Downes Haynes was born. He inherited the Newcastle plantation young (his father died when he was six), and he went on to become a Major General (very high rank) in the Barbadian militia (military force that supports the army) and a Representative to the House of Assembly for the Parish of St John. His uncle was also a Representative for a different parish. |
| 1780s | There was growing unhappiness with the fact that a plantation owner could kill an enslaved African without punishment. A law was proposed to the House of Representatives to class this as this murder, but Major General Haynes strongly opposed this and the bill was rejected. It was not until 1805 that the killing of an enslaved African became legally classed as murder.Around this time there was also a devastating hurricane, which did a huge amount of damage to Barbados. The damage done to Haynes property totalled more than £1.3 million.  |
| 1793 | Robert Haynes (the diary-writer) inherited his father’s land, the Newcastle plantation. He recorded that there were 111 slaves on the plantation, and that the total value of all slaves, cattle and horses was £18,000 (over £1.3 million in today’s money). He also owned 37 slaves of his own. However, his father had huge debts that nearly totalled the value of all his property. Robert Haynes was elected to the House of Representatives in his father’s place. Soon afterwards, he was appointed Colonel of the Centre Regiment of Horse. Robert changed the type of sugar grown on the Newcastle plantation, which was much more profitable. By 1804, he had repaid all his father’s debts, upgraded the plantation house and filled it with silver plates and other valuables. Robert spent much of his life expanding the size of the land that he owned and getting richer.  |
| 1806 | Robert Haynes, who fully supported the existence of slavery, opposed the slave trade, and wrote on 16 September, ‘*I sincerely rejoiced at the abolition of the slave trade… I sincerely wish the trade had been abolished 20 years ago.’* There is evidence that Haynes was opposed to abusing the enslaved, but also that he proposed laws in the House of Assembly to stop free people of African descent buying land or property.  |
| 1805 | After three of Robert Haynes’ children died of illness in one year, he decided to send them to Britain to live. On arrival at Liverpool, the nine-year-old George fell overboard, and the enslaved African Hamlet jumped overboard to save him. This brave act does not seem to have been rewarded. |
| 1808–10 | Robert Haynes left Barbados to move to England, leaving the overseer in charge of the Newcastle plantation. He returned two years later and purchased Clifton Hall (and plantation) for £35,350 (over £1.5 million in today’s money). He updated the house and plantation and commented that ‘*negroes [were] under good discipline, but happily, and rapidly increasing’.* In his diary, Haynes wrote of his worries about the end of slavery and the impact that it would have on the family’s wealth. |
| 1812 | Robert Haynes bought the Bath Estate for £37,100 (over £1.6 million in today’s money), including its 212 slaves.  |
| 1816 | The Easter Rebellion happened, led by African-born slave Bussa. Robert Haynes was a general in the Barbadian militia when the rebellion broke out. Slaves set fire to the plantations all over the southern half of the island. The slaves looted (stole from) hardware stores and militia stores. Nearly 40 plantations’ cane fields were set on fire and many plantations saw thousands of pounds of damage. Haynes called the rebellion ‘*hell-broth [brought], which has been long in the making’.* The plantation that suffered the greatest damage was owned by a free person of African descent, Jacob Belgrave. The Barbadian militia helped the First West Indian Regiment to put down the rebellion; several of them were killed. Between 500 and 1,000 slaves were killed in the fighting and 140 slaves were executed afterwards. Haynes received recognition for his importance in putting down the rebellion, and was presented with a sword by officers. |
| 1825 | Robert Haynes was unanimously (by everyone) elected Speaker of the House of Assembly in Barbados. In this role, he opposed the prohibition on flogging female slaves, as they were more disobedient than male slaves and he believed that not whipping them would make them worse. |
| 1830 | Robert Haynes and his attorney, Nathaniel Cave, had become close friends while working together. In 1830, Nathaniel and his wife Isabella named their first-born son Robert Haynes after ‘the island’s most prominent citizen’. |
| 1833 | Haynes was awarded over £6,044 as compensation for loss of property on abolition of the slave trade. This is the equivalent of £409,880 in today’s money. |
| 1835  | Robert Haynes decided to break his ties with Barbados and went about selling his plantations. |
| 1835  | Robert Haynes and his family left Barbados for good to move to Reading |
| By 1851 | Robert Haynes’ wife had died and he remarried, to a woman called Anna. They moved to Reading and settled at 1 Albion Place, Reading, where they show up on the 1851 census. |