

Account of increase/Decrease of slaves on Perrins Estate, Jamaica, 1825

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Royal Mail has a small but illuminating collection of letters and documents sent by estate managers in Jamaica to the owners in Britain in the 1820s and 1830s. These give a real insight into colonial life at the time when slavery was a hot topic of discussion. The slave trade had been a feature of European colonisation of the New World, having developed from the 16th century. More than 10 million Africans were forcibly transported to the Americas before the trade was abolished in the early 19th century. Britain made the trade illegal in 1807 and passed a law to abolish slavery altogether in the British Empire in 1833 (for which taxes had to be raised from the British people to pay £20 million in compensation to estate owners). The letters from Jamaica are not only concerned with slaves, but go into minute detail about running an estate including agricultural problems, getting supplies from Britain and the difficulties of managing the British staff. Extracts from two of the letters are transcribed in the 1750-1900 section. The 1825 account from Perrins Estate shows the number of slaves who died or



were sold or freed ('manumised') during the year, and the increase due to children being born (this section not transcribed). The deaths were amongst children and the elderly. In a letter of 17th June 1826 sent with the account on the mail packet *Plover* the estate manager, Charles Lewsey, says: 'Enclosed is the return of increase and decrease of this estate the decrease of Negroes are well accounted for, the child A was the one died while I was here.'

Transcription (decrease only)

Perrins Estate from 1st January to the 31st December 1825

Decrease

1825

		<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>January 1</i>	<i>By total Number of Slaves on the Estate this day</i>	115	164	276
<i>February 24</i>	<i>By Barbados Cuffee Died of Leprosy Aged 60 Years</i>	1	"	1
<i>March 8</i>	<i>By George _____ Died of Spasms Aged 6 Years</i>	1	"	1
<i>May 3</i>	<i>By Beck _____ Died of Protractd Illness Aged 57 Years</i>	"	1	1
<i>June 8</i>	<i>By Helen Mahon Manumised by Sir Henry Fitzherbert Bart.</i>	"	"	"
		1	1	"
<i>December 5</i>	<i>By Florence A Died of Fever Aged 5 Years</i>	"	1	1
" " "	<i>By Jane (Olive's Child) Died of Fever</i>	"	1	1
" " "	<i>By Thomas Martery Sold to Samuel Silverwood</i>	1	"	1
		112	157	269
	<i>Increase</i>	5	4	9
<i>December 31</i>	<i>To Total Number of Slaves this present day</i>	117	161	278

