

The Pinney Family Servants

Who were they?



David Small and Christine Eickelmann

CONTENTS

Background	3
In the West Indies	4
Hiring and firing	5
Servants' quarters	5
Pay	6
Visiting servants	6
Cooks	7
Kitchenmaids, Housemaids and Laundresses	13
Ladies' Maids, Upper Servants and Housekeepers	16
Seamstresses	24
Laundress	29
Other Female Servants	30
Manservants, Footmen and Butlers	31
Coachmen and Stable Boys	37
Coachmen, Carriages and Stable Boys 1802-1805	42
Gardeners	45
The Georgian House and Mrs Pinney's servants after her husband's death	47
Servant List	48
Sources	50
Acknowledgements	50

The Pinney Family Servants

Who were they?

Background

In 1762 John Pretor inherited land in Dorset and several sugar plantations on the small West Indian island of Nevis from a cousin, on condition that he changed his name to Pinney. Two years later John (Pretor) Pinney landed on Nevis and began the process of restoring his newly inherited plantations to some order and profitability, using the labour of enslaved people he had inherited and those he bought.

He married Jane Weekes, born and raised on Nevis, and together they started a family on the island. In 1783, at the end of the American War of Independence, the family returned to England, and in 1784 they chose to settle in Bristol. Pinney became a sugar merchant, at the same time using managers to run his plantations on Nevis.

To begin with Pinney rented a house in Bristol but later bought the town house in Great George Street which is now the Georgian House Museum. In Bristol Pinney had, by the standards of the day, a reasonably modest household of about six servants. In time the household expanded a little to help in the running of his other houses.

While the Museum has presented interesting information about the work of some types of servant in the house, until now the servants as individuals with backgrounds have remained largely unknown and unresearched.

Over twenty years we have been investigating the enslaved population and historic structures of Mountravers, the main Pinney estate on Nevis. In the course of this we have come across material relating to the family backgrounds and working lives of more than fifty individual servants who worked for the Pinneys, mainly in Bristol and Somerton. This information comes mostly from John Pinney's letters and account books and from research on the enslaved population. ¹

¹ <https://seis.bristol.ac.uk/~emceee/mountraversplantationcommunity.html>

In the West Indies

The Pinneys were used to having servants in their houses. On their plantations on Nevis the house servants were enslaved people. They were mostly creoles - that is people born on the island rather than enslaved Africans off the ships. On the island the Pinneys ran a smallish household compared to those who exhibited their wealth and status in local society by the number of their servants. The work of a house servant was less hard but there was always the threat of being sent to the work gangs in the fields if they stepped out of line. Life in the house, however, was less formal than it was in Britain. There were no servants 'in waiting to announce arrivals; visitors, negroes, dogs, cats, poultry, all walk in and out, and up and down your rooms, without the slightest ceremony' and servants often slept in hallways or in kitchens (Lewis, Mathew Gregory *Journal of a Residence among the Negroes in the West Indies* London 1845 p76).

When the family moved to England in 1783 they brought with them Pinney's enslaved man-servant Pero and Frances (Fanny) Coker, a mixed-race young woman who had been freed. When the Pinneys decided to settle in Bristol from 1784 they needed to establish a household in a rented house on Park Street. Only a little is known about the servants they hired then. In any case all the servants, except Fanny and Pero, were let go when the Pinneys returned to Nevis for a visit in late 1789/early 1790.

Town and country houses in the West Country

Having returned to Bristol in the autumn of 1790 they moved into the newly-built house on Great George Street in March 1791. To begin with they ran the household with about six servants. In December 1793 they were the following people; the wages are for one quarter (three months):

Frances Coker [seamstress] £2-10-0
Sarah Marks [lady's maid] £3-3-0
Mary Chaplin [cook] £3-5-7 ½
Ann Roberts [probably a housemaid] £2-4-7 ½
George Lamb [probably a footman] £5-5-0²

The total wage bill came to £16-8-3 per quarter. Not included in the wages account was Pero who, as an enslaved man, was not paid anything for his work.

Pinney had also inherited a country house called Racedown in Dorset. In 1798 he bought another one at Somerton in Somerset, very much at his wife's prompting and closer to Bristol. As a result the servant workforce expanded to include such people as a housekeeper and a gardener at Somerton, together with a stable boy/carter. From then on many of the servants travelled between Bristol and Somerton as required by the family.

² £1-1-0, or one pound and one shilling, is one guinea - worth about £117 in 2017. So Sarah Marks, paid three guineas, would have been earning (in 2017) about £350 for three months work.

Hiring and firing

Listed here are more than fifty individuals who served the family over thirty years. The information available at this point mostly centres around two periods – the early 1790s and from 1801 to 1804. Further research will, over time, reveal other servants.

Servants could be hired in various ways. Some involved networks of contacts through which information about who was good and available could be shared and references collected. Pinney's wider family in the West Country were important in looking out for servants; Hannah Gawler, for instance, was almost certainly a distant relative.

Another network existed among Pinney's tenant farmers in Dorset and Somerset. Pinney's footman, John Sansom, came from just such a farming family in Bettiscombe in Dorset.

At least five servants came from Nevis and were either enslaved, like Pero, had been freed, like Fanny Coker, or were the children of favoured slaves, like Christianna Jacques. A number of people came from, or went to work for, other planter or merchant families connected to Pinney in Nevis and St Kitts.

In some cases news of a vacancy got round and people arrived at the door with a reference. Another route was the 'Intelligence Office' – effectively an agency where servants and families could advertise. Pinney used this in 1803. Mrs Downing's, said to have been 'the original intelligence office for servants', was established at 1 Nelson Street in 1782 (as advertised in Mathew's *Annual Directory* 1864). It was not the only one in Bristol.

Two groups of servants seem to have come and gone with some regularity. The first cook in the Georgian House, Mary Chaplin, stayed for twelve years but after she left there was a succession of cooks who never stayed for very long. Perhaps Pinney's obsessive accounting put them off.

The other people who came and went were coachmen. Pinney regularly fell out with them and fired several for insolence – some of the trouble probably caused by their consumption of alcohol. Of course we have to be careful with these and other incidents since we are nearly always depending on Pinney's accounts and record of events. Only on the odd occasion do we hear a servant's point of view.

Servants' quarters

The servants worked from the basement, with its kitchen, and the sub-basement. From the ground floor they were generally expected to move around the house on the servants' staircase. This runs to the top floor where some of the servants slept. There are four rooms and one additional small room. How they were divided up is not known.

To begin with, a small staff could have been fairly comfortable with the cook sleeping in what is now known as the housekeeper's room. The coachman and stable boy probably slept over the stables. Occasionally servants lived outside the house elsewhere in Bristol, perhaps at home or in lodgings.

Pinney had several views about the place of servants in his world. In 1790 he ticked off his father-in-law William Burt Weekes for spending money unnecessarily at Racedown:

'As the Atticks are intended for servants, what necessity of their being as good as the chambers, and why lay out so much money on a house that cannot, after all, be made a good one when it might be made comfortable at a moderate expense.'

In common with other employers, he also described servants as part of his 'family', suggesting that he felt some paternal responsibility and personal care for them.

Pay

Little work has been done on wages paid to servants in Bristol so it is difficult to say how the Pinneys compared within the city, but it appears that they were paying about the going rate for servants in London.

In addition, the accounts suggest that Pinney sometimes paid more than the rate first agreed with the servant, particularly with the lower paid housemaids and kitchenmaids. Like other merchants, he also invested money for his senior servants in government bonds, paying interest so that they had a little money, a form of pension, in later life.

Visiting servants

The servant household did not exist in isolation. First of all, the Pinneys' children grew up and had their own households and children. When they came to visit they brought with them coachmen, nursemaids and personal servants. All of them had to be accommodated. In addition, for a time, Elizabeth Pinney (Betsey) and her family lived nearby in Berkeley Square where James Tobin, Pinney's partner and fellow Nevis planter, also had a house.

As a sugar factor and merchant, Pinney acted on behalf of planters in the West Indies. These people, and their servants, often stayed with the Pinneys when they arrived in Bristol or left from the port.

There was also a notable group of black and mixed-race, free women from Nevis who visited Britain either on their own or with the families for whom they worked. They used the opportunity to buy goods to sell at a profit in the islands. Mulatto Polly (the name Pinney commonly used for her), the mother of Christianna Jacques, was one such person. These visitors brought news and kept servants from the islands in touch with their families.

Cooks

The cook in the Georgian House was the highest paid of the female servants – but paid less than the footman. She, for the cook was always a woman, may well have played the role of cook/housekeeper, sharing the role of running the household with, but under, Mrs Pinney. Jane Pinney had plenty of experience running her own household in the West Indies and may well not have wanted to hand over to a housekeeper.

The cook had not only to understand eighteenth-century English cooking with lots of roast meat, pies and rich puddings but had to be versed in the cooking of turtles, and the use of West Indian peppers, preserves and sweetmeats. At one point the Pinneys experimented with a 'professed cook' who would have had training and could competently produce more elaborate dishes

The cooks were regularly required to produce dinner for perhaps eight to ten people plus five or six servants, feed numerous house guests and manage the kitchen and staff. Mary Chaplin, the first cook in the Georgian House, does not seem to have had a kitchenmaid; perhaps the housemaid helped. Her successor appears to have insisted on a kitchenmaid.

When the Pinneys moved into the house in Great George Street they also had a house at Racedown in Dorset which they used occasionally. In 1798 they bought the small country estate at Somerton in Somerset. From then on, there were cooks who worked mostly in Somerton and those who worked mostly in Great George Street but they were both expected to travel between the two houses as necessary. After Mary Chaplin, who stayed with the family for a long time, cooks came and went more frequently which must have been a disruption for everyone.

Mary Chaplin – Cook at the Georgian House

Mary Chaplin, who came from Tiverton in Devon, was the first long-term cook in the Georgian House. She was hired by Mrs Pinney and started on 15 September 1791, about five months after the Pinneys moved in. The day she arrived a new kitchen range was being installed, William Slark's technically advanced 'steam apparatus'. She may have been taken on because she was familiar with this method of cooking.

Her basic wage was 10 guineas a year (equivalent to about £1,200 in 2017), paid quarterly. She was also given an allowance of 1 guinea a year in place of the usual 'perk' of selling 'kitchen stuff': dripping, bones, globs of fat and suet. In addition she had 1 ½ guineas for washing. When staff were in Bristol they had an allowance to pay for having their own washing done. So, in total, Mary Chaplin was paid 12 ½ guineas a year. In the 12 years she worked for the family her wages never increased. Clearly she was prudent with her money and, like other servants working for the Pinneys, she had money invested for her by John Pinney. For example, he bought 51 guineas worth of stock for her in 1797 and a similar amount of 5 per cent stock in 1800.

She was the highest paid woman in the house, but paid a little less than the coachman and almost half what the footman, Charles Thomas, earned in 1801. It seems likely that the household was run by Mrs Pinney, with the help of Mary Chaplin and perhaps Mrs Pinney's 'waiting woman' or 'Upper Servant' Sarah Marks. When the family travelled the cook was left in charge of the house almost alone, for perhaps four weeks at a time, and was paying for items for the house during her mistress's absence. In effect she was the housekeeper.

In an interesting reference to her in a letter from November 1796, Pinney thanked Mrs Nisbet of Nevis for sending a turtle for Mrs Edwin at Clearwell. Mrs Edwin did not have a recipe for dressing the turtle. He apologised to Mrs Nisbet for not sending his cook who knew how to prepare the turtle but, she 'being an invalid, was incapable of undertaking the journey'; so he had sent a recipe instead. Whether or not Mary Chaplin was actually an invalid or simply ill at that time is not known.

It is not yet clear where Mary Chaplin slept in the house but it may have been in the room that is now known as the housekeeper's room. The first mention of a housekeeper in the Georgian House was in 1819, after John Pinney had died. At this point Mrs Pinney travelled frequently, often staying with her children and their families and so a housekeeper was needed then. The room might well have been the cook's room to begin with.

In most households there was a certain amount of leeway in the kitchen over the consumption of food by servants. However, Mr Pinney was very keen on keeping accurate accounts and he fell out with Mary Chaplin over this in 1801. On 25 April he noted that there were six people in his 'family', his wife and five servants:

'This week Mrs P dined out almost every day and had no company – notwithstanding the Cook Mary Chaplin brought in an account of the expenditure of eight loaves of Bread – At Somerton with the same family I only consumed five loaves.'

Five days later he 'examined' the cook and noted 'I was satisfied, what I have for some time suspected, that it was unfairly used and consumed by my own servants – therefore I gave the Cook a warning.'

A year later, on 15 May 1802, Mary Chaplin was sacked. 'Mary Chaplin left my service after living with me near 12 years – she was discharged for highly improper conduct'. The fact that the very next day Elizabeth Morgan was hired as a cook suggests that Mary Chaplin's departure had been planned and she had been given notice beforehand. We do not know where she went afterwards.

Mary Hargest (Hargost) – Cook at Somerton

In August 1798 the Pinneys bought Somerton Erleigh, about 35 miles south of Bristol at Somerton in Somerset. As Pinney wrote to his children 'We walked over the House, Garden and Pleasure Grounds; which pleased your mother so much that she expressed a wish of my becoming the purchaser and hoped I would not stand out for a trifle'. Pinney agreed terms with the owner Mr Howe there and then. 'After some [conversation] respecting the

property without asking the price I told him that if we came to any Agree(men)t it must be done and entered into that day.' It was and they took possession in March 1799.

At that point Mary Hargest either was already working at Somerton, or was hired soon after, as she was paid wages as a cook in October 1799. She may occasionally have travelled to Bristol to assist Mary Chaplin, the cook in Great George Street. Mary remained at Somerton Erleigh for about a year at the most.

Elizabeth Padden – Cook at Somerton and sometimes in Bristol

Elizabeth Padden (Padon) was hired as a cook at Somerton on 5 October 1800. Her basic wage was 10 guineas, the same as Mary Chaplin in Bristol. When she was in Bristol, she was to 'find' her own washing and be paid 1 ½ guineas a year for that. The estate at Somerton presumably had its own washing facilities for the staff.

Her conditions of employment show that the staff could be required to work at both houses when it suited the Pinneys. She was still the cook at Somerton in March 1801 but had moved on or been replaced by May of that year.

Jemima Rees – Cook at Somerton and sometimes in Bristol

Pinney wrote from Somerton that Jemima Rees came into his service on 8 May 1801 'as Cook (in Somerton), wages 10 guineas per Annum, for Kitchen stuff half a guinea,³ washing when in Bristol 1 ½ guineas per Annum. If she should succeed my cook in Bristol she is to be allowed one guinea per Annum'. Clearly he was thinking about the possibility of replacing Mary Chaplin, the cook at Great George Street, after his row over her accounts.

Jemima Rees seems to have been in Bristol alongside Mary Chaplin in June 1801 since she was paid for her washing. It is unlikely that she was there all summer and she may have been back and forth. Certainly in November 1801 she was sent to Somerton, probably for the winter. She travelled the 35 miles from Bristol in the 'gig' with Charles Thomas, the footman.

Jemima Rees was not among the servants listed in June 1802.

Elizabeth Morgan – Cook at the Georgian House and sometimes in Somerton

The day after Mary Chaplin, the cook who had been at Great George Street for nearly 12 years, was sacked, Elizabeth Morgan joined the staff in Bristol. On 16 May 1802 Pinney wrote this account of her terms:

³ Half a guinea, or £0-10-6, or ten shillings and sixpence, would have been worth £58.50

‘This day Elizabeth Morgan came into my service as a professed Cook – to go to market and occasionally to work at her needle, she being a good upholsterer, a kitchen maid to be allowed under her, for wages washing and kitchen stuff (as she’s to have no perquisites whatsoever) fifteen guineas per annum.’

A ‘professed cook’, as opposed to an ordinary cook, had been through an apprenticeship and learned the art of fine cooking. She would have been literate and able to make use of one of the many editions of B Clermont’s *The Professed Cook – or the Modern Art of Cookery, Pastry and Confectionary*, first published in 1776. This included both French and English cooking. Pinney also valued her other skill as an upholsterer. Her total pay as a cook had been increased, from the 12 ½ guineas Mary Chaplin was paid, to 15 guineas, but without any perks of the job.

It seems likely, from the specific allowance of a kitchenmaid under her, that previous cooks like Mary Chaplin had made do without one. A kitchenmaid was employed from the beginning of June 1802, Sarah Murley. She was paid half as much as the cook and the same as the housemaid.

Two weeks after she arrived, Elizabeth Morgan was taken with Mrs Pinney and her lady’s maid Fanny Coker ‘in my chariot’ to work at the Pinney’s country house in Somerton. Charles Thomas, the footman, escorted them on horseback.

She was still working for the Pinneys in October 1802. Sometime in February 1803 the Pinneys were advertising for a cook and on 24 February they paid an ‘Ann Bailey, Cook, in full’. This might suggest that she was a temporary replacement. Another servant ‘Ann Chaple’ was paid half a guinea ‘in full’ the previous day but nothing is known about her. In any case, the longer term replacement was Elizabeth Harris who may have started in the spring or summer.

Ann Bailey – ? temporary Cook

The family advertised for a cook in February 1803 and on the 24th of that month they paid Ann Bailey ‘Cook’ £1-8-0. It seemed that she was being paid off, perhaps as a temporary replacement for Elizabeth Morgan.

Elizabeth Harris – Cook at the Georgian House and sometimes in Somerton

Elizabeth Harris seems to have worked both in Bristol and at the country house in Somerton. Most of the adult children of the Pinneys had by 1803 started, or were starting, their own families with their own town houses. The younger Pinneys, Charles and Mary, were at school in term time.

Mrs Pinney developed a pattern of going to Somerton for the summer, where members of the family also gathered at times, returning to Bristol in November for the winter. John

Pinney was frequently at Somerton, too, but he was still involved in Bristol as a sugar factor and travelled often on business, staying at Bristol and Somerton as suited.

Harris may have started as the cook in Bristol sometime in the spring or summer of 1803, working at Somerton for some of that time until the beginning of winter. She returned to Bristol on 26 November: 'Mrs P with her two female servants Fanny and Harris came to Bristol this day for the winter – in a post chaise all the way'. Shortly after that John Frederick Pinney (the eldest son) and his family arrived at the Georgian House with their maid Reynolds, manservant James and nursemaid Mary Evans.

Harris remained with the family in January 1804, at 16 guineas a year, one guinea a year more than her predecessor Elizabeth Morgan. Sarah Murley was still the kitchenmaid. The cook continued to work for the Pinneys at least until November and perhaps beyond.

Celia Hiscox – Cook or Housekeeper

Celia Hiscox may have been the cook in Bristol from at least 1815 but she may also have acted as housekeeper. John Pinney in Somerton sent a revealing note to his son Charles in Bristol in November 1815 about a piece of sloppy accounting by Charles:

'I believe you have charged three pence too much for the fowl - I understood Celia gave 2/3 for it and you have set it down 2/6 – though these matters are trifling, yet not improper to be noticed.'

Along with John Sansom, the butler, she was a witness to Fanny Coker's will in 1818, suggesting that Fanny trusted her.

Celia Hiscox was still working for the family when John Pinney died and left her and other servants £10 each in his will. The servants may have had an increase in pay after he died because in May 1820 Celia and other servants were being paid by Mrs Pinney at the rate of 10 shillings a week (or £26 a year). Though the house was still a family home for Charles Pinney and thus requiring a cook, Mrs Pinney did not want to live there after the death of her husband. She spent more time with her daughters.

Jane Pinney died in Bath in March 1822. Shortly afterwards, in December 1822 a Celia Hiscox married a John Pickford at St Augustine-the-Less in Bristol, almost the nearest church to the Georgian House and where Elizabeth Pinney was married. It is quite likely that this is the same Celia Hiscox, aged about 36 to 40. Perhaps the younger Pinneys wanted to change or reduce the staff on the death of Mrs Pinney, or the cook saw an opportunity to get married and have her own family life.

Celia and John Pickford had at least three children. James, perhaps the first, was christened at St Michael the Archangel on St Michael's Hill in July 1823 but he must have died; there was a second James christened at St Augustine-the-Less in January 1830. They had a sister, also called Celia, born sometime between 1822 and 1826. The two surviving children were

living with their mother in what seems to have been a tenement or lodging house in Prince Street, next to Queen's Square, when the first census was taken in 1841.

Kitchenmaids, Housemaids and Laundresses

In a larger household the kitchenmaids and housemaids had fairly distinct roles. The kitchenmaid was employed to assist the cook in everything she did by generally helping to prepare meals for the family and servants and cleaning up afterwards. The housemaid had other duties associated with the running of the house: cleaning the floors and the furniture, dusting, opening and closing curtains and shutters, making beds, emptying chamber pots and laying fires.

However, only one named kitchenmaid has been positively identified, so it is likely that the Pinneys, with a smaller household, did not always have a kitchenmaid. This suggests that the cook had a heavier workload than in some households and that the housemaid may have had to double up as a kitchenmaid. Only some of the named women had roles clearly identifiable in the accounts but, even when the household expanded with the employment of a kitchenmaid, there was only one housemaid.

Where John Pinney spelt out the wages and terms on which the servants were hired, it was sometimes less than he really paid both kitchenmaids and housemaids. Usually their wages were made up to total £2-4-7 ½ a quarter or nearly £9 a year, despite the initial agreement. However, they received no increase between 1793 and 1804.

We do not know for certain where any of the maids came from although Pinney had strong connections with country districts in Somerset and Dorset. It was often the pattern in English households for maids to arrive in cities from the country seeking work. Another question is where the maids slept. In at least one case the kitchenmaid was encouraged to live away from the house but it is likely that the housemaids would have slept in one of the servant rooms in the attic of the house; their duties required rising early.

Evidence for what the maidservants' shared room might have looked like comes from a 1795 inventory of such a room in the Pinney house at Racedown in Dorset.

'Maid Servants Chamber Attick:
2 Red Cedar Bed-steads...
Feather Bed and Bolster
3 best Whitby Blankets
1 Old Blanket
1 Mahogany Chair Hair Bottom back broke ...
1 Large Gouty Chair on castors (very good)
1 Yellow Ware Chamber Pot'

Ann Roberts – ? Housemaid

Ann Roberts was employed between at least October 1793 and March 1794. She was paid £2-4-7 ½ per quarter, or about £9 a year (roughly about £1,050 in 2017). It is likely that she was a housemaid since there seems to have been no kitchenmaid to assist the cook, and it is

unlikely that the house was run without a housemaid. She may have been known familiarly as Nancy.

Jane Cole – ? Housemaid or Kitchenmaid

Employed from January to at least 4 July 1801, Jane Cole was paid the usual wage of £2-4-7 ½ per quarter, including the allowance for washing. On 4 July Pinney noted in Bristol that there were '2 in family, Jane Cole went into the country'. This may indicate several things: that she left her employment and went home for good, that she was visiting family in the country for a short while, or went to work in Somerton.

Ann Ross – Housemaid

About 27 December 1801 Ann Ross was paid £0-11-10 for 25 days wages with washing, plus ten shillings for the expenses of her 'journey' and was given a present of £0-2-6. Since maids in Bristol were allowed a sum for washing it seems likely she had come to Bristol from elsewhere. It is possible she was hired as a temporary housemaid for the Christmas period, or was borrowed from a friend or relative. Another temporary housemaid was hired at the beginning of February 1802.

Ann Burge – Housemaid

On 11 Feb 1802 John Pinney wrote 'This evening Ann Burge – housemaid – came into my service at sixpence per diem until I can furnish myself with a good servant in that capacity'. Six pence per day was carefully calculated to equate to the wage of a permanent housemaid – but only if she worked every day. By October 1802 she had been placed on a regular quarterly wage (with washing) of £2-4-7 ½. She was still employed in January 1803.

Sarah Murley – Kitchenmaid at the Georgian House and perhaps at Somerton

Sarah Murley joined the household on 7 June 1802 'as Kitchenmaid – wages 5 guineas a year but if she lives out the year and behaves well another guinea intended to give her but not promised, when in Bristol at the rate of ½ guinea per annum for washing to be allowed.'

It is not clear where she came from but there was a Murley family in West Chinnock, about 10 miles south of Somerton. If they were connected, it is likely that she started at Somerton Erleigh but also worked in Bristol, particularly in the winter.

The statement that she was being encouraged to 'live out' suggests that at least one servant was living in lodgings in Bristol, thus easing a little the pressure on the servants' quarters in the attic. But it is tinged with a certain anxiety that she might go off the rails. The extra guinea promised was paid to her in small sums over the year as an addition to her wages.

Because of the timing she was undoubtedly taken on as a result of the Pinneys hiring the 'professed cook' Elizabeth Morgan in May 1802. It was part of the cook's terms that a kitchenmaid was 'to be allowed under her'. Although Sarah's wages should have equated to £1-13-1 per quarter, in practice she was paid £2-4-7 ½ by January 1804 when she was working for the cook Elizabeth Harris.

Ann Chaple – ? Housemaid

Ann Chaple was paid 'in full' half a guinea on 23 February 1803. She may have been a temporary housemaid.

Sarah Lucy – Housemaid

On 27 June 1803 'Sarah Lucy came into my service as Housemaid Monday Evening the 27th June – wages 7 guineas per annum, ½ guinea for washing while in Bristol'. It is possible that the slightly different phrasing of 'while in Bristol' points to Sarah Lucy having been hired in Bristol but still being expected to work, when required, at Somerton.

Like Sarah Murley, the kitchenmaid, she was actually paid £2-4-7 ½ per quarter, more than her terms of employment required. It is possible that the original terms of both the housemaid, to be paid 7 guineas a year, and Sarah Lucy, the kitchenmaid - to be paid 5-6 guineas – may indicate a hierarchy of service, though there may have been other considerations, such as age and experience. Sarah Lucy was still at work in January 1804.

Ladies' Maids, Upper Servants and Housekeepers

It has been an implicit assumption until recently that the Pinneys had a housekeeper in the Bristol house. This may not have been the case – indeed there seems to be no mention of a housekeeper in Bristol until after John Pinney died in 1818. The household may have been supervised by Jane Pinney herself, assisted by those of her personal servants she trusted.

Jane Pinney was a creole, that is someone who was born in the West Indies, and she was brought up there too. She had very little experience, if any, of wealthy merchant society in England when the Pinneys left Nevis in 1783, moving to Bristol in 1784. They had only the two servants Pero and Frances Coker to begin with, brought with them from Nevis. Jane Pinney had no experience of running a household in England and probably little sense of contemporary ways of engaging in polite society. She would have needed some help from friends, relatives and experienced personal servants. Her own immediate companion and 'lady's maid' was Frances Coker, a mixed-race, 16 year old woman who had been freed from slavery in 1778 and who had no experience of England and was employed mostly as a seamstress to begin with.

Kitty Nisbet – Lady's Maid

The Pinneys arrived in England from Nevis in August 1783 and after a brief stay in London set off to visit family connections in Dorset. At some point, to help Mrs Pinney after their arrival, they employed as a lady's maid Catherine (Kitty) Nisbet, a servant of Walter Nisbet, a fellow planters on Nevis.

Kitty Nisbet was the daughter of Nancy Wallwin, a mixed-race, enslaved woman on Nisbet's estate, and of Walter Nisbet. She was christened Catherine and soon after her birth she was freed by him, the manumission being recorded on 25 August 1762. Nisbet got married in 1775 and, with his new wife Anne, went to Nevis for about 18 months in 1777. There is some uncertainty whether Kitty began working for Anne as a lady's maid on Nevis, or went out with them or started to work for them when they returned in 1778. With her fellow servants she was certainly aware of the comings and goings of Anne Nisbet in her affair with Captain Totty R.N. and gave evidence, along with other servants, in the much publicised divorce trial in 1783.

After the breakup of the Nisbet marriage Kitty went to work as lady's maid for Jane Pinney, sometime between August and December 1783. The Pinneys bought linen from her for Fanny Coker; part of her duties may also have been to guide Fanny, her fellow, mixed-race, servant from Nevis. She also kept in touch with contacts on the island. Two days after Christmas Pinney wrote that 'Mrs Pinney's woman whose name is Nisbet has informed me...(she) has sent a caravan box to Mr. Thomas with the name Catherine Nisbet on it'.

Unfortunately for Jane Pinney, Walter Nisbet quickly got over his divorce, married again and planned to return to Nevis. In March 1784, shortly before the marriage, he was enquiring about Kitty. In reply Pinney wrote about his wife's sorrow at the prospect of losing her:

‘Kitty has behaved exceeding well and Mrs P- is so much satisfied with her conduct, that she will be extremely sorry to part from her, and I believe Kitty will be equally as concerned to leave her, but notwithstanding, she is willing to waive every consideration to comply with your commands as soon as Mrs P- can provide herself. Mrs P- having a partiality for Kitty wishes to retain her in her service, and you may be certain she will always treat [her] in the kindest manner, and if you have not actually provided a more advantageous employ for her, she hopes you will permit her to remain, but if you have, she will look out for another person to supply her place. Kitty’s employment is only to wait on Mrs P’s person, and I dare say, she will tell you that she lives very happy, and as we shall now soon be settled, she will have the prospect of being still more comfortable, as Mrs P- intends to raise her wages, and consider her in a superior light in her other servants.’

While the Pinneys moved into a rented house on Park Street, it is likely that Kitty returned with the Nisbets to Nevis and perhaps Mount Pleasant where her mother had lived as an enslaved woman. As a free, mixed-race woman, working for the wife of the Collector of Customs on Nevis, she had some status in the black community. It is possible she worked as a lady’s maid on the estate until Walter Nisbet’s death in 1797. Two years later Nisbet’s widow and her seven young children left Nevis and returned to England. Kitty either went with her, or had already gone back to England.

In 1800 Catherine Nisbet ‘formerly of Nevis but at present in Great Britain, spinster’ bought three enslaved people from the executors of Walter Nisbet. She paid £200 sterling - the equivalent of about 16 years’ wages for a lady’s maid. She then freed them. They were Fanny Maynard, Nanny Maynard and her child Kitty McIntire and, given the circumstances, they were probably her relatives. Either she had become quite prosperous, or possibly the two women put up the money themselves.

From then on Kitty Nisbet disappears from view. It is possible she continued to work for Mrs Nisbet who moved to Bath with her children and died there in 1819 in somewhat reduced circumstances.

Hannah Gawler – Lady’s Maid

There may have been temporary replacements for Kitty Nisbet in the interim but in early 1785, while the Pinneys were still living in Park Street, Jane Pinney had a lady’s maid called Hannah Gawler with whom she travelled. For instance, at the end of February that year Pinney recorded that he ‘Set off in my own carriage with Mrs P, Miss Polly Pretor and Mrs P’s maid, Hannah G, for Sherborne...’ - probably to see his uncle, Simon Pretor. In the middle of March they returned from Sherborne with other relatives, the Cokers. ‘Mrs Coker, Mrs P and Mr P in carriage, Mr William Young Coker and Hannah Gawler – stage coach’.

There had long been a Pinney family connection to Gawlers from the village of Broadway, not far from Chard where Pinney was born. So Hannah quite possibly was the daughter of one of Pinney’s more distant relatives. We do not know how long she worked for Mrs

Pinney but it would not have been beyond 1789 when Jane Pinney went to Nevis for her health.

Sarah Marks – ‘Maid’, ‘Waiting Woman’, ‘Upper Servant’

Sarah Marks was known at different times in the 1790s as Mrs Pinney’s ‘Maid’, ‘Waiting Woman’ and ‘Upper Servant’. She was probably hired fairly soon after the Pinneys returned from a visit to Nevis in August 1790 or perhaps when they moved into their new house in March 1791. She may then have been about 36 and a woman of some experience.

In September 1793 Betsey Pinney, who was nineteen, wrote to her father from Racedown Lodge, their house in Dorset, that she wanted ‘Nancy’ (perhaps Ann Roberts, the housemaid) to find the keys in Marks’s drawer and look for a petticoat, half-moon gold earrings and a single, worked muslin handkerchief as they were planning a trip to Crewkerne and a local ball afterwards. If her sister Mary (who had turned seven the day before) was coming down Nancy should look for two coloured gowns and petticoat.



Racedown (Dorset Life, February 2014)

In the quarterly accounts of servants’ wages Marks was paid three guineas in December 1793 and again in March 1794. This was a few shillings less than the cook, but 13 shillings more than Frances Coker. So she was clearly a woman of some status among the servants. At various times she accompanied Mrs Pinney on her travels, as did Frances Coker, for instance going to London with the Pinneys for several weeks in May 1797 and returning to Bristol.

In May 1798 she was described as Mrs Pinney’s ‘Upper Servant’, in other words one who did some supervising of other staff and who was seen as more responsible. To that degree she took on some of the tasks of running the household but it would seem that these were done in conjunction with Mrs Pinney herself and the cook. It is not known where she slept, if the cook had what is now known as the housekeeper’s room. It is unlikely that she would have lived out.

As with other senior servants Pinney invested money for her with care. In a letter to his bankers in June 1799 he referred to £136 remitted to them in April. This was ‘the property

of one of my servants, Sarah Marks' which he had 'intended to have laid out in funds as soon as they fall to 52 - but as they have risen considerably since' he wanted to procure a 'Navy Bill' for her. On 10 July Pinney credited Messrs Williams £100 for the cost of an 'Exchequer bill for my servant Sarah Marks'.

She was not mentioned in Pinney's will when he died in 1818, probably because she had left his service by then, but he must have provided her with an annuity when she left. In October 1825 Sarah Marks of the City of Bristol and 'now' of Clifton signed an affidavit concerning an annuity of £20-5-0.

Shortly afterwards, on 23 December 1825, Sarah Marks was buried, aged 70, in a Nonconformist burial ground. The only likely chapel is Hope Chapel of the Congregational Church at Hotwells in Clifton. Membership of a Nonconformist church was something else she had in common with Frances Coker, who was a Baptist.

Frances Coker – Seamstress, Nursemaid and Lady's Maid

Fanny Coker was the Pinneys' longest-serving employee in the household. Born enslaved on 26 August 1767 on Pinney's plantation and freed by him when she was eleven years old, she had already worked for the family before they left Nevis in 1783. She was a trained seamstress but as a 'nursemaid' also looked after several of the Pinneys' young children. In due course she became Mrs Pinney's lady's maid.

Like Mrs Pinney, Fanny Coker was a creole - that is island-born. She was mixed-race. Her mother, Black Polly (as she was called by Pinney), was born in Africa and had endured the Atlantic crossing in a slaving vessel. She worked as a seamstress. Fanny's father almost certainly was William Coker, one of Pinney's plantation managers. Coker's wife was an aunt of Mrs Pinney's and Fanny was, therefore, Mrs Pinney's cousin-by-marriage. This family relationship and the fact that in Nevis she had been schooled with two of the Pinney children may have set her apart from her fellow servants. Being better educated than most, she may have been called upon to read and write letters for them, or pass on what she had read in the newspapers.

Her training as a seamstress stood Fanny Coker in good stead when she worked as Mrs Pinney's lady's maid. The Pinneys valued economy and Fanny could alter Mrs Pinney's garments cheaply by adding fashionable touches. She would also have had to care for Mrs Pinney's accessories and know how to keep a variety of materials in good condition: feathers, leather, silk, lace, pearls, silver and gold. Ladies' maids also washed and ironed their mistresses' delicate items of clothing, assisted them in getting dressed and undressed and styled their hair with feathers and ribbons. They had to know how to curl and cut, and how to mix cosmetics and fragrances from ingredients such as castor oil and dried flowers. Although ladies' maids fulfilled practical functions, an important role was that of companion. Mrs Pinney's and Fanny's shared West Indian background may have outweighed the difference in status and wealth and may have been the basis for their long-lasting relationship.

Mrs Pinney, 14 years Fanny's senior, was a member of Jack's Coffee House on Corn Street, opposite the Exchange, and, as she enjoyed walking, the two women would often have strolled there to meet friends and catch up on news and gossip. Mrs Pinney was also an energetic traveller, and over the years Fanny visited many different places with her mistress. Part of the summer they spent at seaside resorts and at the Pinney's country house, Somerton Erleigh in Somerset. On long trips Fanny took with her the one truly private item all servants possessed: a lockable trunk for personal belongings.

Fanny also travelled to Racedown, the Pinneys' old country residence in Dorset and occasionally was in charge of looking after the house. While having to adjust to quiet rural life, without her mistress she would have enjoyed greater personal freedom. One summer she had the company of a woman called Nancy. When they returned to Bristol, Nancy travelled in the gig with the coachman while Fanny rode on horseback. However, the gig broke down and they had to return to Racedown for repairs. A fortnight later they set off again. This time Fanny sat with the coachman, 'and Nancy on horseback went on tow'. Fanny also travelled alone by public coach, proving that she was an organised, independent woman.

She also demonstrated her independence by joining the Broadmead Baptist church. Having been christened as a young child in Nevis in the Anglican faith, she chose to undergo baptism as an adult in a Nonconformist church whose senior members supported the abolitionist cause.

In the early 1800s Fanny earned £12 a year but as she became more proficient in her job, over time her wages rose to £26 a year. Fanny Coker was able to save money from her wages and possibly also from working on commissions; she was known to have made a cloak and a bonnet for one of Mrs Pinney's aunts for which she was paid £1-16-0. Pinney invested money on her behalf and, in addition, on his death he left her an annuity on condition she remained in Mrs Pinney's service.

Throughout her life Fanny maintained contact with her family by writing letters and sending presents or goods that could be sold at a profit. Her mother, Black Polly, in later years lived semi-free in the island's capital, Charlestown. Black Polly claimed that Fanny's brother Billey Jones was Pinney's son - something Pinney denied. Billey Jones died in 1820, shortly before Fanny Coker.

Fanny had suffered from a 'liver affection' and during the last few months of her life was cared for by a nurse whom Mrs Pinney had hired. Fanny died on 12 April 1820 at the age of 52. Five days later she was buried in the Baptist Burial Ground in Redcross Street. She was survived by her mother, her sisters Hetty and Little Molly and her brother Cubenna and over a dozen nephews and nieces.

She left £80, three trunks of clothes, her watch, silver spoons and other plate to her immediate family in Nevis. Fanny remembered her closest friend Ann Seymour with a personal gift, her 'best tea chest', along with any remaining items. She also bequeathed £5 to the Baptist Missionary Society which was then seeking to convert enslaved people in Jamaica.

A tomb stone had marked Frances Coker's grave but after the Baptist Burial Ground became disused, all human remains were moved in 1926 to a single burial site at Greenbank Cemetery.

Ann Virgin – Housekeeper at Somerton Erleigh

In August 1798 the Pinneys bought from William Howe the smallish country house called Somerton Erleigh, just outside Somerton in Somerset, together with 89 acres. They were initially shown round the house and gardens by a servant. Pinney was put into possession of the estate on 29 March 1799 by Mr Howe 'turning every individual person out of the house, locking the door and presenting the key to me in the presence of Peter Batson of Sherborne (Pinney's solicitor) and my servant Daniel'.

Ann Virgin was either someone they already knew or she was working at the house in the interim – perhaps she was the servant who had shown them round. She was definitely there a few days afterwards because on 1 April Pinney accounted for money that she had paid out for making sheets and towels. Although she would rarely have worked in Bristol, she was a significant person in the wider Pinney household. Since the Pinneys and some of their servants were often back and forth between Bristol and Somerton she was closely involved in the work of the staff.

She was almost certainly a local woman, possibly born in the mid-1740s in one of the two villages of Curry Rivel or Curry Mallett, about 10 miles from Somerton. One of her sisters was born in Curry Mallett.

By March 1799 she would have been about 55 years old, probably with a lot of experience working in, and perhaps running, houses as a housekeeper, possibly Somerton Erleigh itself. Throughout her time with the Pinneys they relied on her to run the household even when they were absent. In January 1802 Pinney was accounting for a balance of £32-7-8 ½ left 'at Somerton in the hands of Ann'. In June 1803 they were asking if she had sent the shirts and cravats with the household linen from Somerton to John Frederick Pinney's house in Wimpole Street in London. In May 1813 Pinney wrote directly to her that he had told Ben, the gardener, to 'send the basket here as usual - unless you should have received contrary from your Mistress'. A basket of produce was being sent regularly from Somerton to Bristol.

Her pay was less than others and less than might be expected in that responsible job. In January 1804 she was paid £2-12-6 per quarter, working out at 10 guineas a year. This was roughly a third of what Charles Thomas, the footman in Bristol, was paid and less than Frances Coker, the lady's maid. However that is not the whole story.

As with other senior servants, Pinney invested money on her behalf. For instance, in May 1808 he sent her a receipt for £15 worth of stock 'purchased in your name'. When he died in 1818, by which time she was 75 or 76, he left her an annuity of £30 (on which she, like others, had to pay tax). By this time she was probably not working at Somerton Erleigh but she may still have been living in the house. She was also a woman of some property, having

her own bank account with Pinney's bankers Williams & Co in London. Her account in 1819 showed that she had £262 worth of stock on which she was paid dividends (worth nearly £19,000 in 2017).

She died a spinster in Somerton on 13 January 1830, aged about 87, and was buried in the town five days later.

In her will, dated 3 December 1821, she noted that she had 'worked hard for and been careful to save' her money which was in the hands of Charles Pinney's family. She left £100 each to her sisters Hester Hawker and Prudence, and small sums to the six children of Hester and five children of Charity Weech. The residue was to be divided equally between her nephew William Hawker (a carpenter in Somerton) and Charity, along with 'my little furniture'. However, Ann Hawker was to get her bed, bedstead, two blankets and two sheets, and her sister Prudence was left her mother's wedding ring 'by my mother's desire'. By 1830 the total estate amounted to very nearly £300.

Members of the extended Hawker and Weech families continued to live in Somerton into the 1840s, some in West Street.

Meanwhile, Somerton Erleigh, where Ann Virgin had been housekeeper, was inherited by Pinney's eldest son John Frederick and in 1845 by his son William Pinney. Soon after William either remodelled the house or rebuilt it, adding a new stable court and continuing the process of adding farms to the estate.



Somerton Erleigh (Country Life, March 2016)

Other Housekeepers – Sarah Hicks and Betty Dally at Racedown

Ann Virgin was not the only housekeeper within the Pinney orbit. Sarah Hicks started at Racedown in Dorset in October 1792. The agreement at the beginning of her employment said she was responsible for supervising the household. While Joseph Gill, Pinney's kinsman and former plantation manager, was living there she was to wash and mend his clothes. In January 1795 she became very ill and died. She was succeeded by Betty Dally.

At the invitation of the younger Pinneys, William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy stayed at Racedown in 1795 and 1796. In July 1795, Pinney wrote that his son had let the house to a friend of his but that he (John Pinney) could not 'conveniently go down...to adjust matters'. On 10 September he was writing anxiously from Sherborne to Gill inquiring

whether 'Betty Dally washed all the linen in time and cleaned the whole house properly, before the arrival of Mr. Wordsworth, and acquaint me whether the gardener has weeded all the hedges...'.

Seamstresses

Another significant group of women connected with the Pinney households were the seamstresses. At a time when clothes were so valuable that they were passed on to favoured servants or bequeathed in wills, seamstresses played an important role. Their main task was to make and alter clothes for the family, particularly the women and children, and perhaps also for the staff - everything from 'baby suits' to men's shirts. In addition they sewed all the household's textiles: the table cloths, napkins, bed linen and draperies. A good seamstress knew how to stitch neat seams, and how to mend, patch and repair different fabrics economically. They were skilled workers.

Seamstresses generally probably possessed more clothes than other servants; Fanny Coker's collection amounted to three trunks. Some of these may have been cast-offs from Mrs Pinney for whom she played an increasingly important role as companion.

Ann Seymour – Seamstress

Ann Seymour was one of those servants from Nevis who did occasional work for the Pinneys but were not employed full-time at any of the Pinneys' houses. It is likely that she was the servant in the family of the Reverend William Jones on Nevis, known by the name Nancy Seymour. The Pinney firm had many dealings with Reverend Jones, in supporting his efforts to become a planter on a smallish estate near Pinney's and in assisting his spendthrift brother in England. Jones died on Nevis in 1800 and his widow returned to England the next year, having sent her servant Nancy on ahead with the baggage.

Mrs Jones probably settled in Bristol at this point and her servant, now known to the Pinneys as Ann, was presumably acting as lady's maid. It is likely that she was a black, or mixed-race, free woman. She would have been known to the community of planter families and their servants in Bristol, and she did occasional work as a seamstress for Pinney's daughters. On 11 September 1802, for instance, she was paid a shilling on Mary Pinney's account. Four days later she and Christianna Jacques, a young mixed-race servant from Nevis, were paid six shillings each for work as seamstresses, possibly for Elizabeth Baillie, Pinney's eldest daughter. At some point before 1810 Ann went to London to work.

In February 1810 John Pinney gave Ann a reference in response to an enquiry from John Taylor of Carshalton Park in Surrey. He was a fellow planter on the nearby Tower Hill plantation and during Pinney's absence from Nevis had acted on his behalf. Taylor's daughter Mary was about to get married and Pinney passed on his wife's positive comments:

'In a few words I send you Mrs Pinney's character of Ann Seymour - she says whilst she resided in this city that she considered her a faithful and good servant, equal to her situation, and she thinks your daughter Mary will find her a valuable servant for a Housekeeper. If she had a daughter in the situation of yours she certainly should take her after enquiring how she conducted herself since she went to London.'

It is quite possible that Ann Seymour did go to work for Mary Taylor who married John Plummer, another West Indian merchant.

Ann Seymour's old employer, Mrs Jones, died in Bristol in 1813. Leaving her 'late servant' Ann Seymour £20, she also left another servant, Sarah Hippisley, the large sum of £200 (roughly £12,400 in 2017) and made Sarah her executrix.

Ann was a close friend of Fanny Coker and seems to have been working for at least one week in Mrs Pinney's household around the time that Fanny died in 1820. Perhaps Fanny had asked for her company when she was ill, although there was also a nurse, or maybe she was helping out Mrs Pinney temporarily. In any event, Fanny Coker left Ann her 'best tea chest and ... all the rest and residue of my Goods Chattels and effects'. It appears that Ann was still alive in 1835 since the Pinney firm recorded a payment to her of £25-11-5 in November of that year.

Christianna Jacques – Seamstress

Christianna Jacques (or Jaques, later Christianna Lewis, also Ellis) was born on 30 June 1780 on Pinney's Mountravers plantation. Her mother was an enslaved mixed-race woman, Mulatto Polly (as Pinney generally referred to her), who, aged about eight, appears to have been given by Pinney to his new wife on their wedding. Mulatto Polly was schooled with Fanny Coker; presumably she was trained as a seamstress and in housewifery but probably also learnt to read and write. In later life she was at times called Mary Weekes and Mary Pinney.

Christianna's father almost certainly was Gwyn Vaughan Jacques, a white man. He was known to have been involved in capturing a runaway slave from the island of Saba, but he was not mentioned again until he turned up in London early in 1784 on his way to the Admiralty, in search of employment.

It is likely that Christianna's mother became the wet nurse for Pinney's son Pretor who was born about six months after Christianna, and the girl would, therefore, have been raised very close to Pretor and the other Pinney children. After working as Pretor's 'nurse', Christianna's mother was allowed to work for her own benefit; from her earnings she only had to pay the relevant parish taxes.

Before the Pinneys sailed to England in 1783, Pinney appraised his enslaved plantation people. He considered Christianna worth the most of all three-year-old girls and her mother the most of all the women and valued them at £18 and £72 respectively.

Mother and daughter went to live on a neighbouring sugar plantation with the widower John Latoysonere Scarborough. In due course Christianna's mother gave birth to Jenetta, John Paul and Betsey, and when the Pinneys visited Nevis in 1790 Scarborough successfully negotiated with Pinney about buying his children – but not Christianna – with a view to freeing them. At the same time the Pinneys agreed to take Christianna with them to

England, probably at her mother's request. On 1 August 1790 this ten-year-old girl sailed from Nevis with the visitors from Bristol.

Christianna Jacques's arrival in England began with having to change lodgings twice because the Pinneys' newly built house in Great George Street was not yet ready. Uprooted, unhappy and unable to deal with the new situation, she became difficult to manage. Exasperated, Pinney informed her mother: '... it is inconceivable how ill she behaves for such a child.' He considered sending her back to Nevis but she settled down and no more was said about her conduct. Presumably Christianna worked for the Pinneys alongside her fellow Nevisians Pero and Fanny Coker and the other servants.

As previously arranged, in 1792 her mother sent £8-8-0 'towards defraying Christianna's expenses.' As early as 1778 Mulatto Polly was known to have kept – and sold – domestic animals and it is likely that she was trading in produce and goods and so could afford such payments. During Pinney's two visits to Nevis she sold him butter, flour, ten turkeys and a turtle and shipped to England sweetmeats the family had ordered: preserved ginger, guava jelly, orange chips, pineapples, and pickled peppers. Pinney supplied her with various goods which included pork and rum. On Mrs Pinney's behalf Mulatto Polly once sold a pair of earrings - no doubt earning a commission.

In 1794, during Pinney's visit to Nevis with his son and Pero, Mulatto Polly gave birth to a girl, and very soon afterwards she hired from the plantation Pero's sister, Nancy Jones. Mulatto Polly paid Pinney the usual hire rate of five shillings a week and employed Nancy Jones until the end of 1795.

After Mrs Pinney's father, William Burt Weekes, died in 1796 she pressed her husband to free Christianna's mother and her two youngest sisters, Peggy and Nancy. The timing could have been a coincidence but it raises the possibility that Weekes may have been Mulatto Polly's father (and that she was, therefore, Jane Pinney's half-sister). Freeing her may have been old Weekes's deathbed wish, or, if he had resisted doing so during his lifetime, Mrs Pinney finally wanted to do the decent thing and free her half-sister.

At the same time as Pinney freed Mulatto Polly with Peggy and Nancy, it was decided to apprentice Christianna. Her mother agreed to pay Pinney £10-3-0 a year over three years. Christianna was still enslaved and Pinney promised to free her if she behaved well but hoped that she would not return to the West Indies. No record of her being freed has yet been found.

It is not clear where she served her apprenticeship. She probably worked as a seamstress and either lived in the house or nearby, perhaps with Betsey Pinney and her husband Peter Baillie in Berkeley Square. She had lunch on Sundays quite regularly alone with the cook in the Georgian House in 1801. In 1802 she received small, irregular payments for work, including six shillings from Pinney's daughter Mary who may have employed Christianna to sew baby clothes and other nursery items. In January 1803 Mary's brother Azariah died and it was Christianna Jacques who, with Nancy Seymour, sewed the mourning clothes for the family.

Later that year, on 20 April, Christianna Jaques got married in St Mary's Church in Portsmouth, Hampshire, where she then appears to have been living. From the Pinneys she received a gift of £5. Her husband, John Lewis, was 21 years old and a joiner. It is possible that he worked on ships. Several years after she got married she was living in Chatham in Kent, which, like Portsmouth, was a naval dockyard.

In the autumn of 1806 Christianna's mother arrived in Bristol, penniless. Mulatto Polly had accompanied old Scarborough's son and his wife to England as their servant but they did not pay her wages, or her fare home, and left her stranded for months. Pinney pressed Scarborough to pay her outstanding wages and advanced her some money. Christianna Lewis used the opportunity to travel to Bristol from Chatham to see her mother. Mulatto Polly came to England at least three more times, sometimes for quite lengthy stays, and on at least one other occasion mother and daughter are known to have met up again. This was in 1810, when Pinney made Christianna Lewis a present of a pound.

On 28 June 1813 Christianna Lewis, now a widow, married again. She may have only moved temporarily to Chatham because she married Eli Ellis in the same church in Portsea where she had married John Lewis. In the registers for both her marriages Christianna signed for herself and spelt her name Jaques. Ellis was a jeweller who later ran a business in Goose Lane in Worcester. He probably was a Methodist; both their children were christened in the Methodist Chapel on Pump Street in Worcester.

Eli Joseph Ellis, born on Christmas Day 1815, was baptised two months later and another, unnamed child was christened in February 1819. The first child died in January 1817. At that time the family were living in Silver Street in the parish of St Martin. Christianna Ellis probably died following the birth of her second child and was buried on 2 December 1818 at the age of 38 in the parish of St Martin. Her child was baptised but no first name is recorded and it is not known what happened to him or her. Apart from her husband and baby in Worcester, Christianna was survived on Nevis by her mother, her sisters Jenetta, Betsey, Margaret Ann and Mary and her brother John Paul.

When slaveholders in the British colonies were required to register their slaves, Christianna's mother – as Mary Weekes rather than 'Mulatto Polly' - registered seven individuals, one of whom was called Christiana. In all, from 1817 to 1834 Christianna's family owned 16 enslaved people. They sold four, of whom two were freed; another five died. When slavery was abolished they received £140 compensation for the remaining seven. In Nevis it was not uncommon for free mixed-race and black people to 'own' slaves.

Christianna's mother fell on hard times and in the 1840s sought help from Pinney's son Charles. Several times he sent money and after 'Old Polly Pinney' died in late 1850 or early 1851 he paid for her funeral.

Martha Board – Seamstress

Martha Board is another seamstress known to have worked for the Pinneys. She came from Somerton and began her employment, presumably in Somerton, on 24 June 1801. She was paid 8 guineas a year, with an extra 1 ½ guineas for washing when in Bristol. She clearly did work in Bristol sometimes because on 6 January 1803, perhaps after helping out in Bristol over Christmas and New Year, she returned to Somerton in the gig with 'Jonathan' - probably Jonathan Young, the stable boy and carter at Somerton.

It is probable that she died very shortly afterwards; a Martha Board was buried in Somerton on 22 July 1803.

Laundress

Sophia Bromhead

The Pinney country house at Somerton seems to have had its own wash-house but washing at the Georgian House was another matter. Although Bullock's Park, which lay opposite Great George Street, was an area where traditionally washing had been laid out to dry, nevertheless there was a lack of space in the house itself. The servants, when in Bristol, were paid extra to have their washing done by a laundress.

Some of Jane Pinney's washing would have been done by the ladies' maids, such as Sarah Marks and Frances Coker. However, the family also employed a professional laundress, either to come in and do washing or to take it away. Between 1797 and 1802 at least, this was done by Sophia Bromhead who, for part of the time, employed her own maid to assist her. At Christmas in 1801 Sophia got a present of five shillings and her maid two shillings.

Sophia seems also to have been paid for short term work; for instance, on 3 October 1801 she was paid one shilling and sixpence for washing. In July of the same year she got £1-12-0 for three weeks' work. She also had annual contracts; for instance in 1797, the year Betsey Pinney got married, she was paid 12 guineas for doing a year's washing for her. It is quite likely she did Mary's washing too. She was paid nearly as much as the cook Mary Chaplin and, if she was doing this for other households, Sophia may have been comparatively quite well off.

She seems to have been replaced. In April 1803 a Thomas Bell was paid two guineas for four weeks washing.

One other laundress is mentioned in 1804, illustrating the sorts of arrangements Pinney was making for visitors. In February 1804 he wrote to a Nevis planter and the late MP for Bedford, William Colhoun at Longford near Derby, that he had sent on a black trunk and a deal box with Colhoun's linen: 'The washerwoman was not punctual or you would have had them sooner'.

Other Female Servants

Hanny

It is unclear who Hanny was, where she came from or what she did but we do know where she went. In July 1799 Pinney wrote to Messrs Pretor, Pew and Whitty, bankers in Sherborne in Dorset:

‘Hanny my late servant hired by Mr. Pew now waits for her (new?) Mistress to order to go to Shaftesbury - Give me what information you can respecting her as my other servant hired in her room, will be here next week.’

The banking firm, which issued its own coins and banknotes, was founded by Simon Pretor, Pinney’s uncle. Pinney used the firm sometimes for domestic matters. It eventually became part of the National Westminster Bank. Richard Pew was a surgeon, who in later life practised in Sherborne but lived at Pensbury House in Shaftesbury in 1803. Like Whitty, he was Simon Pretor’s son-in-law. So Hanny was going to a reasonably wealthy situation where she was still very much connected to the Pinney family - for better or worse.

Mary William – Cleaner for the Counting House

Mary William was paid in the 1790s to clean the business premises, or counting house, of Pinney’s firm, and to that extent she was not a domestic servant in the household. However, the firm was located in 1792 in Park Street close-by and later in the Georgian House itself and probably over the stables also. So Mary William would have been a familiar figure to the family and the other servants.

In April 1792 she was paid 13 shillings for three months cleaning of the counting house and paid exactly the same in September 1798. She was therefore a long-term servant of the firm and presumably trusted not to disrupt the firm’s paperwork.

Manservants, Footmen and Butlers

John Pinney was used to having personal servants both white and black, free and enslaved. When he left for Nevis in 1764 Pinney took with him his young indentured servant Tom Peaden from Thorncombe in Devon, of whom he was very fond.

Closest to Pinney was Pero, his enslaved personal servant from Nevis who had worked for him since he was bought by Pinney on Nevis in 1765. Pero worked for the family until he died in 1798. While Pinney fell out with some of his staff, who then left or were sacked, he remained on good terms with those male servants who were closest to him, and they tended to stay.

Their roles were somewhat fluid. Pero was a personal attendant in addition to carrying out many of the duties of a butler or a footman in a small establishment. When Pero arrived for the first time in England in 1783 he was used to West Indian manners and customs. While the family was living in Park Street, it is quite likely that Pinney employed a footman who knew how things were done in late eighteenth-century Bristol. The family did have male servants at this early stage since Pinney in April 1784 was asking a relative in Somerset to get the cloth he had ordered for his servants' liveries sent to Park Street. The personal servants we know about are mostly from the period after the Pinneys returned from their visit to Nevis and moved into their house in Great George Street in March 1791.

Pero, also known as Pero Jones or William Jones – Personal Servant

Pero, his sisters Nancy and Sheba and an African woman, Harriott, originally belonged to Joanna Jones, a widow who lived in Charlestown, the capital of Nevis. In July 1765 Mrs Jones sold these four to John Pinney for £115. Pero was said to have been 12 years old, Nancy eight, Sheba six and Harriott, who was not the children's mother, 25. Described as creoles (that is, island-born), almost certainly the children were born on Nevis and to black parents. Pero's father may have been called William. He had another sister, Eve.

On Pinney's Mountravers plantation these four became domestic servants; Pero was trained as a manservant and barber. For 16 months he was boarded out to a man to learn 'to Shave and Dress Hair', and in 1776 another man taught him to pull teeth – a task often performed by barbers. Pero himself had a tooth extracted. This is the only known record of any medical treatment and perhaps provides a pointer as to his appearance: he may have had a visible gap between his teeth.

Enslaved people suffered badly from tooth decay caused by sucking sugar cane which was meant to supplement their diet, and pulling teeth may have provided the enterprising Pero with some income. From Pinney he hired an old enslaved woman to work for him, and to Pinney he sold items like dung baskets and a barrow which he may have made himself, as well as a sheep and a goat. He bought and sold items for trade in both Nevis and Bristol and also lent money at interest. As was customary, he would have received tips from visitors to the house.

The Pinneys took Pero and his sister Nancy Jones as servants on their honeymoon to Philadelphia which, with its large Quaker population, was one of the centres of debate about the abolition of slavery. Living in this big city, Pero and Nancy would have been exposed to many new ideas and impressions.

Pero was about 30 years old when he came to England. He was not a free man. Although Judge Mansfield had in 1772 ruled that enslaved people could not be forced to return to the West Indies, they could still be bought and sold and runaways pursued by hunters. A further ruling by Mansfield established that slaves arriving from abroad were not entitled to wages unless they could prove their employers' promise of payment – something that was virtually impossible. Therefore, Pero, like other live-in staff, had free board and lodging plus some perquisites, such as a livery and tea and sugar, but he received no wages; only occasional sums of money.

As Pinney's personal servant Pero would have been on hand at all hours: helping Pinney dress and undress, shaving him in the mornings, cutting his hair and on special occasions powdering and arranging his wig. He would have received visitors, waited at table and performed other duties around the house, such as cleaning and locking up silverware and at night locking up and securing all doors and windows. When Pinney was absent, Pero paid for items and services, such as money owed for hiring a coach. He ran private and business errands, carrying money, messages and letters.

Pero rode a horse; once he took some goods from Bristol to Dorset 'in a Portmanteau behind him'. Another time, having visited Racedown, he was unable to ride his horse because he had scalded his leg and had to stay on until he was recovered. When he travelled with Pinney, he would have taken care of their horses and luggage and generally made sure his master had everything he needed.

Gentlemen rarely went anywhere without their personal attendants, and it is likely that Pero accompanied Pinney on a trip to Paris in 1789, not long after the Bastille had been stormed. He may also have travelled to Germany and certainly visited Nevis twice with Pinney, in 1790 and 1794.

Immediately after returning from his first voyage to the island he and Fanny Coker began shipping various presents, and goods that could be sold - an early form of remittance where West Indians supported their families back home. The exchange of presents and produce was a two-way traffic: on his second visit to Nevis Pero brought back with him gifts from a mother to her daughter who lived in Dorset. Since Pinney's own ships travelled back and forth to Nevis, they not only carried gifts and goods but would also have kept Pero and Fanny supplied with news from their families.

There is some circumstantial evidence that suggests Pero had one, or possibly two, daughters, born after he left Nevis in 1794. This, and the separation from his kin, may explain his subsequent decline. He may have been depressed by his personal circumstances, or angry about the continuing slave trade and the conditions his friends and family in Nevis had to endure.

By the end of May 1798 Pero was ill. Although they doubted his recovery, the Pinneys sent him to 'Ashton for a change of air'. It is likely that he was in Long Ashton, with members of the family visiting 'him three or four times a week'. Pero died at the age of about 45 sometime between May and November 1798, 'after being almost useless, caused by drunkenness and dissipation', as Pinney described it in a letter to a friend.

Bearing in mind Pero's alias of William Jones, it is possible that he was buried in Bristol in the graveyard of St Augustine-the-Less. The burial register notes the burial of a William Jones on 19 June 1798. Nothing suggests that he ever became a free man.

Mrs Pinney sent Pero's belongings to his family on Nevis. She sold his watch and purchased a pair of gold earrings for each of his sisters, Nancy, Eve and Sheba; his clothes were to be divided between his father and Nancy's son, William Fisher. Ten guineas he had by him when he died she sent to his family but since there was nothing among his papers to say to whom he had lent money, that money was lost.

Pero was one of thousands of slave-servants who lived in Britain until the abolition of slavery in the 1830s. The bridge in Bristol's Harbourside, which was named after him, stands as a tribute to them.

George Lamb – ? Footman

It is possible that a footman was employed in the early 1790s to work in the household alongside Pero. A George Lamb was paid five guineas as a servant in December 1793. He is the only male member of staff mentioned in the list of servants' wages for that quarter. The sum was too much for a coachman at that time and more like the wage of a footman. He does not appear in the subsequent quarter.

John Williams – ? Under-footman

In the March and June 1794 quarterly accounts John Williams replaced George Lamb as the only male servant mentioned. On both occasions he was paid £2-19-4, about comparable with what the under-footman John Sandford was paid in 1801. It is unclear how long he stayed.

Charles Thomas – Footman

In July 1798, around the time Pero died, Pinney wrote to a Simon Wayte of Groundwell House near the village of Blunsdon St Andrew, just north of Swindon. He noted that 'A late servant of yours Charles Thomas has offered himself to me as a Footman'. Pinney asked whether he was 'equal to the place of a Footman in a large family and one that you will recommend'. Simon Wayte was a surgeon, reasonably well connected in Wiltshire society, with several small estates in the county.

There was an unsuccessful candidate, a man called O'Brien. In December 1798 Pinney's son, John Frederick wrote to his brother Azariah 'Mr Whitmore's character of Mr O'Brien is in every respect favourable therefore there can be no reason why he should not become my father's servant'.

In the event, Thomas was employed by Pinney as a footman from the end of 1798 or the beginning of 1799 until 1804. In 1801 he was paid £26 a year (worth about £1,900 in 2017) - far more than any of the other servants. This was twice as much as Mary Chaplin, the cook, and Frances Coker and considerably more than the coachman. He wore livery and was in theory obliged to pay for himself the one guinea tax on powder for his hair or wig. However, Pinney paid it for him 'as a gift from me'. As with other senior staff, Pinney invested money for him in stocks.

He may not have had the close personal connection with Pinney that Pero had but many of his duties would have been the same, including waiting at table, polishing the silver, cleaning boots, trimming lamps and answering the door. An additional role was to supervise the work of the under-footman who was employed to assist Mary Pinney. Thomas also ran errands for Pinney, accompanied members of the family when they went out and took members of staff back and forth to the country house at Somerton.

Charles Thomas spent a considerable amount of time travelling back and forth between Bristol and Somerton. On 31 May 1801 Pinney noted

'Mrs Pinney was taken with a violent attack of her old complaint – Gallstones – which prevented her going to Somerton – as she intended, and detained me in Bristol. I sent forward Thomas in my son's gig to countermand my Horses meeting Mrs P at Wells tomorrow, as she is confined to her bed.'

One particular journey stands out. On 17 September 1803 Thomas went to Somerton in the gig; two days later 'Thomas returned to Bristol'. He had walked the last twenty or so miles from Wells.

Pinney clearly liked him but after five years he let him go on 24 March 1804. In a letter to a Dr Currie in Bath, written a month later, he noted that

'Since Charles Thomas left my service, he has lived with a gentleman in yr city...(I) found him honest and sober, always at home, but I must say his memory's very defective, if that had not been the case I should have kept him.'

Although Thomas worked in Bath for a while, in February 1806 Pinney wrote a reference for him for John Jones Junr of Woolley, near Bradford-on-Avon in Wiltshire. Pinney noted that he had already written three different references for him. It seems that Charles Thomas, after a steady period with the Pinneys, found it difficult to find another settled situation.

John Sandford – Under-footman

About 16 April 1801 John Sandford entered service as a liveried footman to Pinney's daughter Mary. She was born in September 1786 and seems to have been a feisty adolescent who may have been somewhat troublesome at school. For instance, in March 1800 Mrs Pinney was suggesting to her husband that he enquire about another school for her in London as 'it will be better to send (her) where Maria Baillie is not as they are both very idly inclined and they had better be separated'. Maria (or Mariah) Baillie was the daughter of Evan Baillie, the slave trader, banker and M.P. for Bristol, and a sister of Peter Baillie who had by then married Pinney's daughter Elizabeth.

In the space of two and a half years her parents considered four different schools for Mary. She was still at school in the autumn of 1802 aged fifteen, a similar age to Maria.

When Mary was at home, Sandford's duties would mostly have been to run errands for her, escort her outside the home and more generally to provide her with some status. He also assisted with the normal work of the footman Charles Thomas around the house. Presumably, when she was away at school, John Sandford was either in Bristol or at Somerton under Thomas's direction. While Thomas was paid £26 a year, the under-footman was paid six guineas a year rising by two guineas each year to a maximum of 14 guineas after four years. In addition, like others he got the occasional present of half a guinea.

Sometime between October 1802 and Christmas John Sandford left.

William Pugh – Footboy

The replacement as Mary Pinney's footman was the 'footboy' William Pugh. He started work just before or just after Christmas 1802. Even as a younger servant he was paid at the same rate as John Sandford, six guineas a year. However, in his first wage he got a present of one shilling. By January 1804 he had been sufficiently well thought of to have a pay rise from six guineas a year to eight.

He travelled with the family when they stayed at Somerton over the summer and returned with them to Bristol for the winter. On 26 November 1803, for instance, 'Mrs P with her two female servants Fanny and Harris came to Bristol this day for the winter – in a post chaise all the way'. After they were joined in Bristol by Pinney's eldest son John Frederick and his family and three servants Under-footman William Pugh arrived on 19 December 1803.

He seems to have been still with the Pinneys in November 1804, and it is quite possible he stayed with Mary Pinney at least until April 1806 - when she married the banker's son Jeremiah Ames - and perhaps beyond.

John Sansom – Footman and later Butler

Having let his footman Charles Thomas go in March 1804, Pinney was searching for a replacement. He had inherited various properties in the Vale of Marshwood in Dorset, including Racedown Lodge and Bettiscombe Manor. As he had done before with finding overseers and managers for his plantations in the West Indies, Pinney looked among his contacts in the area and made an offer to the son of one of the local farmers he knew. By letter in December 1804 he asked a friend to give farmer Sansom half a guinea and

‘tell him that my offer to his son to send him out to the West Indies is only in case he likes it - if he don’t wish for him to go, it will not displease me - and I shall bring him up as a footman in my family’.

James Sansom was a yeoman farmer who owned a house and a small amount of land around Bettiscombe on which Pinney lent him £30. It is likely he was the James Sansom who married Mary Miller of Bettiscombe in the village in November 1788. Assuming John was his son, born soon after, he would have been about fifteen years old when he took up the offer of training as a footman. He was certainly in place by the end of 1805 when he was an innocent bystander to an altercation between Pinney’s ‘insolent’ coachman John Watkins and a Reverend Parsons. Pinney defended his footman as a ‘very quiet civil man’.

It is not clear how much Sansom was paid but Pinney liked him. He was the longest serving member of the household, with the exception of Pero and Frances Coker. He would have been paid at least the £28 a year that Charles Thomas received and probably also had money invested for him.

Sansom witnessed Fanny Coker’s will in 1818. Before that, in September 1817, John Sansom, now described as ‘Butler to John Pinney Esq.’, witnessed a settlement of Pinney’s monies and effects. When Pinney died in 1818 Sansom was left an immediate payment of £10, as were other servants who had been with the family for some time. In addition, Pinney left to his ‘good and faithful servant John Sansom’ the £30 debt owed by his father on the land in Bettiscombe, so writing it off. It is likely that Sansom stayed on with the family for a while after Pinney’s death to look after Mrs Pinney. However, increasingly she found the house at Great George Street too sad to stay in, and it may be at that point Sansom had to find another situation or, perhaps, return to Dorset.

Other servants mentioned in the settlement of Pinney’s affairs

Benjamin Walton – he was left £20 and signed a receipt for it.

John Chilcott – he was left £10 and signed a receipt for it.

Coachmen and Stable Boys

No. 5 Park Street was the house the Pinneys rented in Bristol from about the middle of March 1784 until late 1789. They bought a carriage and horses and, since the house had no stable, they had to rent one nearby. They also employed a coachman, David Williams. Having returned from Nevis in 1790, they moved into the house in Great George Street which had a stable at the bottom of the garden.

Pinney travelled a good deal on business and the family made social visits around the country and to their houses in Dorset and Somerset. For the servants this involved a lot of travel. The Pinneys usually had a carriage and a gig and, as the children grew older, they had their own horses and other means of transport too. To maintain and look after this transport infrastructure Pinney employed a coachman and at least one stable boy.

Relations between Pinney and his coachmen were often difficult.

David Williams – Coachman

When the Pinneys visited Nevis in 1790 David Williams lost his job, like all the servants, except Pero and Fanny Coker. It is possible that Pinney sold the carriage and horses, as he had threatened to do on the grounds of cost, or perhaps they were stabled at Racedown.

Once the family had moved into Great George Street with its stable they engaged a David Williams as coachman, probably the same man. On 3 October 1791

‘David Williams came into my service as coachman - out of doors at the rate of 12s per week, to allow him a suit of livery every eight months - or a suit of livery every eight months and a stable suit every year - whichever I please - also a hat in 12 or 15 months and a guinea per annum in lieu of boots - leather breeches and mending his clothes. Gave him 10/6 his expenses to Racedown to go for my coach horses - set off this morning’.

Williams was still employed a year later and perhaps on through the 1790s. If he was the same Williams who had been employed in the 1780s, by re-engaging he had got a pay rise of 1 shilling and sixpence a week. He would have lived above the stables.

It is possible that Pinney had more than one set of stables. One of these was at the bottom of the garden where the office building is today. An aerial photo of the house suggests only a single block. However, Pinney’s arrangements not long before his death left

‘the said dwelling house, Garden, the *best* coach house and stabling for two horses, the household furniture plate linen china and books for the use of the said Jane Pinney for her life...the *other* coach house with the remaining part of the stable, the counting house [the firm’s office] and cellar underneath to the said Charles Pinney’ [his son].

As to the carriage, in the spring of 1792 it was repaired, varnished and given a new harness and plated furniture by the coachmakers Harper Wolfe.

George Guppy – Stable Boy

Around the same time as David Williams was engaged as coachman, the Pinney family were taking care of George Guppy, a stable boy. Pinney wrote in November 1791 to his father-in-law, William Burt Weekes, that Guppy had smallpox, and that he would have had him inoculated if he had known that Guppy had not had it before. The Pinneys were going to keep him at the house and have a medical man attend to him as there was no-one else to look after him. A month later he was 'quite recovered'.

Guppy was probably born to John and Juliana Guppy and baptised in March 1777 in the village of Thorncombe, then in Devon but now in Dorset, close to the Pinney house at Racedown.

A John Guppy worked as a gardener for Pinney at Racedown, although in 1793 he was considered to be 'absolutely useless' by one visitor. Pinney had a strong connection with the wider Guppy family in Dorset since a Christopher Guppy was a tenant on his farm at Halstock in Dorset and was sometimes consulted about the purchase of horses. Employing George Guppy as a stable boy fitted the pattern of getting staff through family and farming connections in the West Country.

Guppy only worked for the Pinneys for a short while. In October 1797 Pinney sent a reference for him to William Proctor Thomas of Wellington. Guppy had been seven or eight months in Pinney's stable but had been influenced by 'a number of idle people, who frequent the stable yards in this city'. He had been 'frequently absent and not to be found when wanted' but, away from Bristol, he would probably be better and therefore should be given a try. Whether or not Mr Thomas, who later became Vicar of Wellington, gave George Guppy a second chance is not known.

An example of John Pinney's travels one week in September 1791

[direct quotations in " otherwise a summary]

24th – 'Set off on my daughter's mare for Sherborne and Racedown – when I came to Gurleyslade I found the mare incapable of going forward. At the Bull I hired a horse, which carried me to Racedown this evening. I had the mare blooded and ordered her some hot mashes.'

25th - Dined with Mr Pinney at Blackdown and after dinner went to Wayford church with Mr and Mrs Pinney and Major Weekes.

26th - Went to Chard and conducted some business about money in favour of Tom Peaden.

27th - Expected John Warr at Racedown to settle accounts but he did not turn up. Pinney left Racedown for Dorchester to go to Mr Hayne's at Fordington. He was not at home but Pinney slept there.

28th Went to Weymouth 'to see Miss Jones at Mrs Hepburn's school – found her well and in good spirits with the school – gave her 10/6. Saw the King on the Esplanade. Breakfasted with Mr Protheroe and returned to dinner at Mr Hayne's' (still not there). In the afternoon went to Mr Pretor's at Sherborne. 'Left with Mr Haynes's servant Molly 48 shillings to pay a bill of Mr Weekes's'.

29th Left Sherborne to return to Bristol, stopped at Gurleyslade where he found his mare much better. Paid the bill and 'left the mare at Grass with Parfitt at the Bull at 3/6 per week.' Returned to Bristol on the Weymouth coach. Arrived about 8 pm.

'Expenses on this journey, including horse hire and coach fare £1-19-0. Gave Miss Jones 10/6. Found that Mr Coker had left my house last Sunday for Woodcotts and was to return next Monday with a waggon to carry his Baggage home.'

Daniel Allen – Coachman

On 29 March 1799 Pinney took possession of Somerton Erleigh, from Mr William Howe 'in the presence of Peter Batson of Sherborne and my servant Daniel'. Daniel was almost certainly his coachman Daniel Allen.

From 1799 onwards staff and family constantly moved between Bristol and Somerton, whether by carriage, gig, or on horseback. This may have prompted Mrs Pinney to agitate for a new carriage and enlist the help of her son John Frederick in London in both persuading her husband and in finding a suitable vehicle. John Frederick pointed out to his father in June 1800 that it would be bad economy not to buy another carriage if the old one needed repairs.

The same month Daniel was discharged from Pinney's service, seemingly at Somerton since Pinney paid his expenses to Bristol. Possible reasons may be found in the reference Pinney sent to Sir Henry Cosby at Barnesville near Chepstow in October 1800, concerning

'the character of Daniel Allen my late coachman...He is equal to his situation but not as attentive and careful as he ought. I have every reason to believe him honest and provided he does not get liquor, at the expense of other people, he is sober - But it appeared to me and my family that he could not withstand situations to drink at free cost - he having been found twice intoxicated on his box - In his person he is rather slovenly but on the whole he may be deemed good tempered...'

Sir Henry Cosby was a wealthy Brigadier-General who had returned to England after thirty years' service in the East India Company forces. Around 1797 he bought and improved Barnesville Park (now Sedbury Park) near Chepstow when he sought to employ Daniel Allen.

William Ware – Coachman

Pinney may have been without a coachman for several months when Daniel Allen left. William Ware was hired as coachman from 9 October 1800 and remained until the beginning of 1802. He was paid 12 guineas a year (worth about £970 in 2017), with one guinea for boots and one guinea for breeches. Both the old coach and various gigs were used for journeys to Somerton. On one occasion in June 1801, for instance John Pinney, his wife and their son Charles went to Somerton in the carriage, presumably driven by Ware, and the footman Charles Thomas followed with Fanny Coker in a gig which belonged to one of their other sons.

John Banger – Coachman

William Ware was replaced fairly quickly by another coachman, John Banger. On 25 March 1802

'John Banger came into my service as Coachman, on the same terms as my late Coachman Wm Ware. Wages with Boots and leather breeches 14 guineas per ann. A suit of livery once in eight months, a stable frock and waistcoat and a hat once a year.'

His work and attitude did not please Pinney and he lasted just over a month. John Pinney recounted the occasion of their falling out (probably at Somerton) in a letter to his uncle Simon Pretor on 3 June:

'I am sorry to inform you that I was obliged this day to discharge John Banger who has proved himself a faithless servant – he has been accustomed to waste and profusion in his last place that he thinks it right not to value or take care of his master's property – He littered my horses with hay and at the Rick wasted an inconceivable quantity. On my pointing out to him the impropriety of using hay for litter instead of straw – he seemed inclined to be very impudent: upon which I ordered him to go immediately for a load of straw to Mr Barnard's – he then retired and returned a few minutes after, with an indescribable insolence of countenance, and told me, as he could not please, he would go – I took him at his word and was truly glad to get rid of him. He told one of my work people that my Drawing – room was only fit for a servants' hall, and that his late master, Mr Gordon, lived like a Prince.'

Various members of the wider Gordon clan, whom Pinney knew, lived in and around Bristol and either owned sugar plantations on islands such as Jamaica and St Kitts, or were involved in the slave trade as ship owners.

When Pinney bought Somerton Erleigh, the estate included some 40 acres of land and a farm. Pinney was anxious to make clear, when asking Mr Pretor to look out for a coachman, that 'in the country he must, if wanted, go with cart and assist in making hay etc'. In other words, whether or not he was used to driving for wealthy men in town, if he was to work for Pinney he would have to muck in when needed on a country estate.

Coachmen, Carriages and Stable Boys 1802-1805

In 1802 there was no immediate replacement mentioned for the 'impudent' coachman John Banger but Pinney put aside a notional quarterly wage of four guineas for a coachman.

Meanwhile John Frederick Pinney was still looking for a replacement carriage for his parents. In April 1802 he wrote to his father about two possibilities. For £200 Pinney could have the carriage of a nobleman but it would have that man's coat of arms on it. Alternatively for £85 he could have one recommended by his father-in-law's coachman. In May Pinney accounted for £45 paid to 'Harper Wolfe coachmakers' for varnishing and repair to a carriage, also a new harness and plated furniture. Either Pinney had bought an older carriage and was doing it up, or he was preparing his own for sale. Clearly he was thinking seriously about a replacement. In January 1803 he included a notional allowance for wear and tear 'after the new carriage is paid for'.

In June 1804 he informed the surveyor of taxes that 'I have this day recommenced keeping a four wheel carriage, the duty of which of course I shall pay for next year when a return will be made of it'. He had his own armorial bearings on the carriage on which he also had to pay tax.

In 1811 Pinney's firm sent out to correspondents in the West Indian island of St Croix a phaeton

'with four new Wheels and head - to go with either one or two Horses - and a seat behind, removable at pleasure, for an additional Person - This Carriage we conceive will suit many Persons in your Island - it was purchased (after having ran for a few months) for Mr Pinney by his Son in London; but as Mr Pinney gives preference to his own open Carriage, a Gig, he has desired us to send it to you - to...sell'.

Pinney was not particularly interested in a fashionable show or, perhaps, just not impressed by his son's choices.

George Rowe – Coachman

On 14 April 1803 'George Rowe came into my service as Coachman at 16 guineas a year and suit of livery every 8 months, a stable suit once a year and one hat a year. The Box Coat and Great Coat never to be considered his unless I choose to give it but to go with the Carriage. No livery or stable suit to be considered his until he has been in possession of them one whole year'.

The conditions suggest points of disagreement with Pinney's previous coachmen or his concerns with cost when coachmen were employed for such a short time and each had been provided with livery or stable clothes at some expense. It is unclear how long Rowe held his job.

Jonathan Young – Stable Boy and Carter

Pinney may not have had a coachman for a while after he sacked John Banger but he employed a stable boy. In August 1802 Pinney returned to Bristol from Somerton 'with my serv't Jonathan Young', riding as far as Chewton Mendip on horseback. He may have gone on to Bristol by coach, leaving his horse to be taken back to Somerton by Jonathan.

He was probably the Jonathan Young christened at Somerton on 1 December 1782 whose parents, Abraham Young and Peninnah Davey, were married in Somerton. He would have been 20 years old in August 1802 - hardly fitting the description of 'stable boy' Pinney sometimes used.

Much of the time he spent on the estate at Somerton, doubling up in the stables and working as a carter. But he was also employed in the stables in Bristol and took other members of staff between the houses in the gig. He was paid roughly £15 guineas a year.

He slipped up in May 1804, probably in Bristol. Pinney wrote to his son John Frederick on 13 May:

'Jonathan took it into his head this morning to set off for Somerton, as we suppose, and left me in a very unhandsome manner - he has shamefully neglected the coach horses - and William yesterday found all the horses loose in the stable and Jonathan not to be found - after a strict search for him he was found fast asleep in the hay loft - Conscious, I suppose, of his neglect he set off this morning without saying a word to anyone.'

It is unclear whether he left Pinney's employment or not. Pinney was quite capable in these circumstances of giving his employee a good ticking off and allowing them to continue - if he liked them or thought they were 'deserving'.

Jonathan may have lived on in Somerton. The Jonathan Young born there in 1782, now a labourer, had together with his wife Judith at least five children christened in the town between 1817 and 1824.

John Watkins – Coachman

Sometime either in May 1804 or 1805 Pinney was seeking references for another coachman from George Hulburden near Monmouth. He was writing for 'the character of John Watkins... as coachman' who had lived with Hulburden for nine months. He also wanted to know what he knew of him when he was with Hulburden's neighbour James Hodges for the previous 14 months. Hodges may have been a timber merchant at Trellech, a village just north of Tintern. It was known for its springs of water which were supposed to have healing qualities, and Hodges built a cold bath on a piece of land he owned at Nine Wells overlooking the Wye.

Watkins clearly had moved several times, like many coachmen. It is possible that this was because of his attitude. Pinney took him on, but in December 1805 Pinney received a complaint from Reverend Henry Parsons, the long-term Rector of Goathurst near Bridgwater. Pinney replied that he was sorry that

‘My coachman John Watkins (not Sansom who is a very quiet civil man) behaved so very improper and insolent to you for I should have requested you to have punched him as an example to others. Men-servants are become so very impudent, that they forget their situation....I shall discharge him from my service.’

It seems that occasionally a rough disposition was not confined to coachmen. Pinney probably carried out his promise to sack Watkins.

William Couch – ? Coachman

In January 1811 Pinney gave a reference for a servant to a well-connected gentleman at No. 1 Crescent, Bath. This was the Reverend Dr Packington George Tomkyns whose family had owned Buckenhill Manor in Herefordshire.

The reference was for William Couch:

‘Since my late Wm Couch left me he has lived with Mr John Vaughan at Over to whom I gave a character that he understood his business and was an honest man, but addicted to liquor. - Could he get the better of that propensity he would be a valuable servant.’

The drink problem suggests he might have been a coachman.

Couch’s recent employer, John Vaughan, came from an established Bristol merchant family that had been involved in slave trading; they were also bankers, sugar makers and plantation owners. Vaughan lived at Over Court in Almondsbury, just north of Bristol, for a long time and in the 1820s rented the house in Great George Street from Charles Pinney. However, Vaughan’s firm went into bankruptcy for a large sum in 1831 and Vaughan had to quit Over Court and end his tenancy with the Pinneys in Bristol.

Gardeners

Sam Jones, John Guppy and Ben

The Georgian House had a small garden at the back of the house with stables at the bottom. In 1793 *Sam Jones*, a gardener, was mentioned. He was paid 10 shillings and sixpence a week and it is likely he worked in Bristol. At Racedown, *John Guppy* worked as a gardener also in 1793, although he was considered to be useless by Pinney's kinsman Joseph Gill.

While purchasing Somerton Erleigh Pinney described it for his daughter Elizabeth Baillie noting that the house was 'completely and elegantly furnished and not over large'. It had a garden of one and a quarter acres, a wall 13ft high, some fruit trees, a small hot house with grapes ('nearly ripe') and some 'pines' or pineapples.

From then on Pinney employed a gardener at Somerton. In accounts for 1803 his name was given as *Ben* and labourers were employed to help him, probably most of them on a casual basis. A part of their responsibility was to work in the hothouse where, among other plants, they grew pineapples from pine slips sent from Mountravers, the Pinney sugar plantation on Nevis. Pinney also supplied friends and business acquaintances. John Damer, one of his acquaintances in 1771, complained that the pine slips from Nevis grew but were lacking in flavour. Pinney, rather upset, replied that he would send some of his 'Mountain pines' which required a cooler situation.

Ben was also responsible for the regular dispatch to the family in Bristol of baskets of fruit and vegetables. In 1813 for instance Pinney told Ann Virgin, the housekeeper at Somerton, that he had directed Ben to send the basket to Bristol as usual 'unless you should have received contrary from your Mistress'.

As a skilled man he was held in some esteem. He was paid at least 26 guineas a year - assuming he worked all through the year. This was roughly the same as Charles Thomas, the footman. For comparison, at that time the cook got 16 guineas and Fanny Coker 12 guineas. He was also fed at the house once a week, on Sundays.

Some others who helped keep the Bristol household going

There were many other people who provided services to the households in the Clifton area. A few of them are mentioned at Christmas time as getting 'Christmas Boxes', probably cash. In addition to Christmas money given to people who worked for his firm, in 1801 Pinney gave a guinea to his daughter's coachman and half a guinea to the free mixed-race man George Evans. He was servant to Pinney's partner, James Tobin, who lived round the corner in Berkeley Square. Sophia Bromhead, the laundress, got five shillings and her maid two.

The following also received Christmas gifts:

Watchmen 2s-6d

Scavengers 2s

Blacksmith 1s

Coachmaker's man 1s

Lamplighters 1s

Bellman 1s

Scavengers were the sweepers and early recyclers who kept the streets clean. The 'Bellman' was the local Town Crier.

The Georgian House and Mrs Pinney's servants after her husband's death

After her husband died in 1818 Jane Pinney found it too melancholy to stay at the house and increasingly spent time visiting her children, particularly her daughters Mrs Baillie and Mrs Ames. Pinney left the house to her for her lifetime and she maintained a small establishment. In December 1819 it consisted of the following people, paid quarterly:

Coachman £6-11-3

Footman £4-4-0

Lady's maid £3-5-0

Housekeeper £4-10-0

Housemaid £2-10-0

In May 1820 Celia Hiscox, probably the cook/housekeeper, received £2-10-0 for five weeks. A servant '*M Craddock*' was paid ten shillings for one week, as was Ann Seymour. Fanny Coker was paid two weeks wages until two days before her death on 12 April, and her nurse was paid just over a guinea.

After Jane Pinney's death in March 1822 the house in Great George Street was inherited by Charles Pinney, and he probably lived in it on and off as he took over the running of the firm. In 1828 he went to the West Indies to settle affairs on Nevis and other islands. During this period the house, which needed some redecoration, was let out to John Vaughan of Over Court. It is not known what happened to the remaining Pinney staff.

Although Charles Pinney returned to Bristol from the West Indies in 1830 he was aiming to build his own rather grander house, Camp House (now Engineers' House), on the edge of the Downs in Clifton. The Georgian House was let out to a series of tenants until it was sold in September 1861.

Servant List (dates are indicative only)

Allen, Daniel	coachman 1800
Bailey, Ann	(? temporary) cook 1803
Banger, John	'insolent' coachman, sacked June 1802
Bell, Thomas	launderer by April 1803
Ben	gardener at Somerton 1803 to at least 1813
Board, Martha	seamstress 1801
Bromhead, Sophia	laundress 1797
Burge, Ann	housemaid 1802-1803, started as temporary
Chaple, Ann	(? temporary maid) 1803
Chaplin, Mary	cook hired 1791, sacked May 1802
Chilcott, John	role unknown, was left money in 1818
Cole, Jane	housemaid or kitchenmaid 1801
Coker, Frances	seamstress, nursemaid, lady's maid from Nevis, died 1820
Couch, William	(? coachman), before 1811 left to work for John Vaughan at Over
Craddock, M	role unknown, paid one week's wage 1820
Dally, Betty	housekeeper at Racedown 1795, when Sarah Hicks died
Gawler, Hannah	lady's maid 1785
Guppy, George	stable boy 1791, had smallpox
Guppy, John	gardener at Racedown 1792
Hanny	female servant who went to Richard Pew in 1799
Hargest, Mary	cook 1799
Harris, Elizabeth	cook 1804
Hicks, Sarah	housekeeper at Racedown 1792-1795
Hiscox, Celia	cook or cook/housekeeper from at least 1815
Jones, Sam	gardener (? in Bristol) 1793
Jacques or Jaques, Christianna	seamstress, brought from Nevis as a child in 1790
Lamb, George	(? footman), mentioned once as the only male servant 1793
Lucy, Sarah	housemaid 1804
Marks, Sarah	waiting woman and upper servant 1790s
Morgan, Elizabeth	professed cook 1802, succeeded Mary Chaplin
Murley, Sarah	kitchenmaid 1802
Nisbet, Catherine (Kitty) from Nevis,	lady's maid 1783-1784
O'Brien	considered as a possible man servant 1798
Padden, Elizabeth	cook 1800
Pero	enslaved man servant from Nevis, died 1798
Pugh, William	under-footman 1803
Rees, Jemima	cook 1801
Roberts, Ann	(? housemaid) 1793/4, possibly known as Nancy
Ross, Ann	housemaid 1801
Rowe, George	coachman 1803
Sandford, John	footman for Mary 1801
Sansom, John	footman from 1805, later butler
Seymour, Ann (Nancy)	seamstress from Nevis, may have gone to Taylors at Carshalton in 1810

Thomas, Charles	footman 1798-1804
Virgin, Ann	housekeeper at Somerton from 1799 to at least 1813
Walton, Benjamin	role unknown 1818
Ware, William	coachman 1800
Watkins, John	coachman 1805, probably sacked
William, Mary	cleaner for the Counting House from 1792
Williams, David	coachman 1786 and 1791
Williams, John	(? under-footman) 1794
Young, Jonathan	stable boy and carter at Somerton 1802

Sources

Information about the servants who worked for the Pinneys in Bristol and at their other houses in Somerset and Dorset was drawn from two principal sources:

Letterbooks and accountbooks in the Pinney Papers in the University of Bristol Library Special Collections

Research carried out by Christine Eickelmann on the enslaved population of Mountravers, the Pinney sugar plantation on Nevis, published online as *The Mountravers Plantation Community, 1734-1834*

<https://seis.bristol.ac.uk/~emceee/mountraversplantationcommunity.html>

Comparative calculations of value are drawn from www.measuringworth.com

Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful to the Pinney Family Trust for free and entirely unfettered access to the Pinney Papers over many years and to Hannah Lowery and Michael Richardson of the University of Bristol Library Special Collections for their continuing help.

A copy of this material is available to read at the Georgian House and details of the sources will be placed with the Pinney Papers.

David Small
Research Associate
Department of Archaeology and
Anthropology
University of Bristol

Christine Eickelmann
Research Associate
Department of Archaeology and
Anthropology
University of Bristol

© David Small and Christine Eickelmann, November 2019

