



Research into potential historic connections between Pallant House Gallery and the Slave Trade

*This piece of research has been undertaken by Simon Martin at the request of the Audit and Risk Committee and forms an annexe to the Gallery's Anti-Racism Plan.*

The main source of the information below is the very substantial research conducted by Sibylla Jane Flower, as descendant of the Peckham Family, which was published in 1993 in a book entitled 'Pallant House: Its Architecture, History and Owners'<sup>1</sup>.

Due to the divorce proceedings of Henry and Elizabeth Peckham - who built Pallant House - there is an unusually substantive amount on record about their financial situation as it was recorded in detail at the Court of Chancery in 1716.

As a brief summary, there seems to be no direct links to the transatlantic Slave Trade. There is the possibility of indirect connections through shares in the East India Company, although the nature of these were disputed in court proceedings at the time, and apparently the £2,000 of EIC stocks were not sold until 1721, several years after Pallant House was built. Should we discover any further information in the future, this document will be updated and the Director and Board will agree an appropriate course of action, in consultation with relevant external bodies if necessary.

Henry Peckham's grandfather Sir Henry Peckham MP was Recorder of Chichester, and a Chichester merchant with properties in Chichester and a country house at Boxgrove. He had discussed his son John's future with three directors of the East India Company, Lord Berkely, Sir John Robinson and Nathaniel Herne and that if he decided to go to the East Indies money should be made available, but it looks like this never happened and instead he went into the army, serving in Flanders. John Peckham turned out to be quite dissolute and died intestate and his widow was left destitute with significant debts, which fell to the 16 year-old Henry. His guardian James Vavasor became Mayor of Chichester in 1707 and arranged for Henry to undertake training as an attorney (albeit for only nine months) before he joined the army.

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<sup>1</sup> Published by Pallant House Gallery (ISBN-10: 1869827155 / ISBN-13 : 978-1869827151)

The money to build Pallant House came following his wedding to Elizabeth Albery in 1711. She was the daughter of the vicar of Ferring, and her first husband Rev John Albery was from a well-known Arundel family and been vicar of Hunston a mile from where Peckham's family home was at South Mundham. He had died in 1706.

Elizabeth inherited her substantial wealth from her brother Vincent Cutter who died in 1710, having made her his principal beneficiary. He had risen to the rank of captain in the Royal Navy, and his fortune was largely based on the mercantile activities in which naval officers were at that time allowed to participate; he had holdings of government and East India Company stock, also the lease of a grand London house - 10 Soho Square (in the north west corner and still extant) which was let to the Treasurer of the Navy, Sir Thomas Littleton who was MP for Chichester in 1705.

See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir\\_Thomas\\_Littleton,\\_3rd\\_Baronet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir_Thomas_Littleton,_3rd_Baronet)

For information on the Soho Square property see:

See <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1264682>

Elizabeth Albery found herself in possession of about £10,000 at a time when an income of £50 a year enabled a family to live well and keep a servant. She married Henry Peckham in 1711 (he was 27 years, she was in her early 40s) almost exactly twelve months after Cutter's will was proved.

In the court proceedings Elizabeth complains of Henry's financial dishonesty. In her bill, dated 24 November 1716, she alleges that Henry 'altered disposed & converted' for his own use the greater part of her £10,000, and, 'combineing & confederating himself with the United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies... in a secret and clandestine manner sold disposed & transferred several parts & parcells of the personal Estate aforesaid to & amongst themselves.'

Elizabeth asked the court to direct to make good the articles of the marriage settlement, freeze the £2,000 of East India Company stock, which was still intact, and pay the arrears of her pin money because the separation from Henry had left her destitute.

The court battle went on for four years, and the court was satisfied that Henry had spent £3,000 on Pallant House, but not what Henry had done with the remaining £7,000.

In terms of Henry's own trading income: 'unfortunately no precise information has come to light about Henry's activities as a merchant', although it is believed he was a wine merchant as he was known as 'Lisbon Peckham' and the building has substantial cellars and is recorded in histories of Chichester (by Alexander Hay) as having been built 'for the purpose of a custom house.'

Sybilla Jane Flower states: 'Unfortunately Henry does not explain or justify his dealings with

the East India Company which so distressed Elizabeth. We know of his visits to London: the Chancery Court proceedings refer to them during the building of Pallant House. It is worth recording too, that the church in which Henry and Elizabeth married stood on the corner of Threadneedle Street and Bishopsgate near the Company's headquarters in Leadenhall Street. Henry's involvement with the Company may have stemmed from Sir Henry Peckham's day, but more likely Elizabeth's money was the key. Her brother's stock of £2,000 remained intact until she sold it herself 1721.'

Sybilla continues: 'This amount of stock would have set Henry at a considerable advantage; he would even have been eligible for election as one of the twenty-four directors, and certainly would have had the entrée for trading within the company. The records show that up to a dozen part owners would fit out a ship and offer it to the Company to transport goods at stated rates, but very few of the owners are listed and when they were paid generally only the ship's name is given in the accounts. If money was lost, as Elizabeth's statement implies, there is no trace in the records of how this came about. Any legal action would be recorded in the minutes of the Court of Directors, so the Chancery Court could not have pursued her accusations against the Company.'

It is also possible that the 'Lisbon' association came about through the East India Company, as many of the Company's ships put into Lisbon on their way to and from the East. But Henry may have had more direct dealings. The Portugal trade in his day had been strengthened by commercial treaties, the most famous of which was the Methuen Treaty of 1703 which established favourable terms for the import of English textiles into Portugal, and for Portuguese wines into England. This was negotiated by the British ambassador, John Methuen, with assistance from his son Paul, who succeeded his father at the Lisbon embassy. It was incidentally Elizabeth's brother, Captain Cutter, who transported Paul Methuen from Genoa to Lisbon in 1706 to take up his new appointment, so there could, conceivably, have been some advantageous family link.'

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