

## **JOHN MAIS OF BRISTOL (1747-1798) AND HIS DESCENDANTS: A SUMMARY**

These notes summarise the biographical details collected for John Mais and some of his descendants.

Unless otherwise stated, the sources of information are parish records and indexes, censuses, monumental inscriptions, wills, probates and administrations and death notices.

Two separate sets of notes provide further detail of the wider Mais family from whom John is descended and of the descendants of his brother and our collateral ancestor, Charles (1755-1823). A further set of notes provides details of two other Mais family trees which must but have not yet been linked into these, our main trees.

### **JOHN MAIS AND AMELIA FRANCES <?>**

John married Amelia Frances <?> (born <?>/1759) on <?> in <?>. It is not known where this marriage took place, but by the time they produced the following children they were believed to be in Jamaica:-

- a) John, born <?>/1778 in Spanish Town
- b) Amelia, born <?>/1780 in <?>
- c) Ann Elizabeth, born <?> in <?>

As far as we are aware, John was the first of the Mais brothers to go to Jamaica and the earliest reference we actually have of him there is when in 1779 as a merchant he purchased a parcel of land of five thousand four hundred and fifty feet on Church Street and Mark Lane in Kingston for £450 (see note i).

By 1781 John had been joined by one of his younger brothers, Charles, and they were granted two landholdings each of three hundred acres per landholding near the Blue Mountain Peaks in Saint Thomas in the East parish (see note i). One of each landholding was inaccessible and at the end of the nineteenth century, long after Charles and John had died, were still listed in Jamaican records as being theirs (see note ii). (See separate notes on Charles Mais and his descendants.)

In 1782 John was recorded as a lieutenant of Kingston Militia (see note iii).

In 1783 John and Charles, who are recorded as merchants, purchased land and property in Kingston from William Hall, a sugar refiner, for £80. The indenture records that they already possessed land adjoining this purchase, although the deeds for that purchase do not appear to have survived (see note i).

In 1788/9 John and Charles, who are recorded as merchants purchased Fellowship Hall Plantation (also known as Mountain Plantation), Hall's Delight and Bull Park Penn together with a number of named slaves and livestock from Charles and Alice Dolphin and George Kinghorn, a merchant. These properties were in St Andrew parish and the indenture makes it clear that they were used for the production of sugar and distillation of rum (see note i).

In 1789 John purchased a half share of land and property on a site of thirty feet by sixty-two feet on Port Royal Street, Kingston, from his brother, Charles, for £300. He already owned the other half-share and they had acquired this holding in 1782 (see note i).

Charles appears to have left Jamaica in the early 1790s (and before June 1793) to return to Bristol and began winding down his business interests there but John remained in Jamaica.

On 20/12/1793 John offered a reward for the return of a lost mule to Fellowship Hall and advertised the sale of goats and kids then on 23/5/1794 offered a reward for the return of a cow and calf (see note iv).

Annual accounts for 1793/4 and 1795/6 for Fellowship Hall Plantation in Jamaica, which John and Charles still then jointly owned showed annual turnover figures of £812/4/5 and £1,312/11/2 respectively and that the crops of the plantation were coffee and ginger rather than sugar, as might have reasonably been assumed (see note i).

In 1795 John and Amelia Frances sold two pieces of land to Charles and their sister-in-law, Phoebe. One was a piece of land forty by forty eight feet in Kings Street and Port Royal Street, Kingston, that had become theirs by an agreement of 1789. The other was a half share in a piece of land and store on Port Royal Street (the other part being already owned by them), which had been acquired in 1783. These Charles and Phoebe then sold to another brother, Jeremiah, for 5 shillings each piece and the payment of one peppercorn rent for one year. Charles and Phoebe sold other properties they owned in these places to Jeremiah for £1,000 (see note i).

During his time in Jamaica, John had other property dealings as follows:-

- 1783: purchase from John Nasmyth
- 1786: purchase from George Sieben
- 1791: purchase with Charles of a slave from John Simpson (see note v).

John was buried on 27/7/1798 in St Andrew, Jamaica. In his will, which he made shortly before he died on 23/7/1798, John left to Amelia Frances his home and contents at Richmond Park Pen in Saint Andrew and £500. He left his son, John, £2,000 in certificates to set him up in business with Messrs Steel and Thompson, Merchants of Kingston. His son, John, and father, John, were two of the three Executors charged with utilizing the rest of his estate for his children, John, Amelia and Ann Elizabeth. Each was to receive his or her share on reaching twenty one years of age although if they married earlier, his daughters would receive their shares at marriage (see note vi).

John's daughter Amelia married Thomas Glisson, who she outlived, but details of their marriage and his death have not yet been found.

In 1841 Amelia Frances and Ann Elizabeth Mais, together with Amelia Glisson, were living at 6 Dowry Parade, Clifton, Bristol.

Amelia Frances died on 3/11/1841, aged 82 in Clifton, Bristol.

Amelia Glisson died on 7/9/1844, aged 64, at Dean Street, St Pauls, Bristol. In her will, Amelia left her estate to her cousin, Ann Potter Blake (nee Mais), and her husband John Blake, and to her brother, John, and his six children by his wife, Martha, who were then residing in London. John Mais and John Blake were executors (see note vii).

Ann Elizabeth died on <?>/1845/6/7 and is believed to be buried with her mother and sister in St Andrews, Clifton, Bristol. She left her estate to her brother, John, to pass on to his six children by his wife, Martha, upon his death. John was also one of the executors (see note viii).

## THE HONOURABLE JOHN MAIS

John's son, John, had relationships with Elizabeth Dickson, a free mulatto woman, by whom he had two sons – Francis Dickson, born 1807 and who died in infancy, and Edward, born 1809, and with Susanna Hamilton, by whom he had another four children – Eliza born 1816, John born 1817, Amelia born 1819 and Jeremiah born 1821 and who died in 1861.

John then married Martha Cleland between 18/5/1827 (see reference to 1828 indenture below) and 1828 in <?> and they produced six children – John Leslie born 1830, Amelia Ann born <?>, Matilda born <?>, Winchester born 1833, Earnest Cleland born 1837 in London and Mary born 1840.

At the time of his father's death, John was set up in business, as noted above. From this small beginning he went on to prosper and become a prominent and respected citizen of Jamaica, but not before experiencing the sharper end of business dealings first, as the following extract reveals:-

"The following morning (4 January 1803) Alexandre Lindo left Kingston to take up possession and management of Pleasant Hill estate. Lake, in the meantime, sent a note to the overseer, John Mais, with directions to withhold possession by force if Lindo attempted to enter the property. Mais greeted Lindo on his arrival at Pleasant Hill with a group of slaves, menacingly armed with muskets, and threatened Lindo with utmost violence if he attempted to enter the property. As Lindo stepped forward, several shots were fired. He lost no time in beating a hasty retreat to Kingston, where he filed suit in Jamaica's Court of Chancery." (See note ix.)

In 1804 John, a merchant of Kingston, sold land and property by the name of Bridge Penn in Saint Catherine parish to John Hayes for £8,400-10s (see note i). John Hayes was the cousin of another John Mais (for details of whom, see the separate notes on unconnected Mais family trees).

In 1810 John, a merchant of Kingston and his business partner, John Thompson, were Trustees to the will of their other business partner, Daniel Steel (see note i).

In 1815 John submitted a bill of complaint in London that a shipment of coffee seized by the Crown from some Agents had belonged to him rather than the Agents (see note x). The result of this complaint is, unfortunately, not known.

John also had the following business dealings in the period up to 1830, although it is possible that some of these may be attributable to the other John Mais aforementioned:-

- 1800: purchase
- 1800/1: sale of land
- 1802: purchase
- 1802: purchase
- 1802: lease of land
- 1803: purchase
- 1804: conveyance of land
- 1805: lease of land to Jane Edlyn
- 1805: conveyance of interest
- 1805: conveyance of interest
- 1805: conveyance of slaves to James Brown
- 1806: conveyance of slaves from James
- 1806: mortgage
- 1807: release of equity to John Thompson
- 1807: conveyance of land
- 1809: conveyance to Mary Marshall
- 1810: conveyance of land to Jones Corfs
- 1810: conveyance of land from Chandler
- 1810: deed of trust to the house of David Steel
- 1811: mortgage
- 1811: bounty of indemnity
- 1811: mortgage from Dennis McFarlane
- 1812: conveyance of land to John Cameron
- 1812: conveyance of land and slaves from William Chandler
- 1813: conveyance of land from David Abbott
- 1814: lease to Seproah Isaac
- 1814: conveyance from John Palsan
- 1815: conveyance of land from James Kenneth
- 1817: sale of slave from St Andrew
- 1817: conveyance of land to John Barclay
- 1817: conveyance of land to Lindo
- 1818: conveyance of slaves and land from Reid and Abraham
- 1818: bond to James King

- 1818: conveyance in trust from Ann Burton
- 1818: release to Ballard Nemhard
- 1818: conveyance of land to Francis Whyte
- 1819: confirmation to A Henry
- 1819: sale of land to John Cubbitson
- 1819: conveyance of land from George Stepson
- 1820: conveyance of land from A Henry
- 1820: sale of slave from A Stewart
- 1820: conveyance in trust from James Lamar
- 1821: transfer of mortgage from Richard
- 1821: conveyance of land to William Burge
- 1821: conveyance to Francis Smith
- 1822: conveyance of land and slave from John Peter
- 1822: conveyance from Augustus
- 1822: conveyance of land and slave from Williams Whitehorse
- 1823: conveyance to Robert Cargill
- 1823: conveyance from Samuel Dallas
- 1823: conveyance of land to Richard Darby
- 1823: conveyance of land to Richard Brooks
- 1823: conveyance of slave to Eleonor
- 1825: with Henry conveyance assignment
- 1828: to Charles McGlashan
- 1828: conveyance of land (see note v).

No doubt there were many more similar deals from 1830 until his death.

John owned the following plantations at various stages during his life, with at one point over six hundred slaves:-

1810	St Andrew Port Royal	Montpelier & Richmond Park (92 slaves; 21 stock) Halberstadt (108 slaves; 13 stock)
1824	St Andrew	Montpelier, Mount James & Pen (121 slaves; 44 stock) Tweedside (40 slaves) Green Hall (170 slaves; 8 stock)
1832	Port Royal St Andrew	Halberstadt (156 slaves) Tweedside (86 slaves) Hall Green (145 slaves) Mount James (57 or 87 slaves) Halls Delight (114 slaves; 66 stock) Richmond Pen (9 slaves; 3 stock)
	Port Royal	Halberstadt (172 slaves; ? stock) Westphalia (120 slaves; ? stock)
1837	St George St Andrew	Cherry Hill (29 slaves; 1 stock) Tweedside (72 acres) Halls Delight (89 acres)
	Port Royal	Halberstadt (145 acres) Westphalia (104 acres)
	St George	Mount Pleasant (71 acres)

1840	St Mary	Fontabelle (66 acres)
	St Andrew	Tweedside (369 acres)
		Hall Green (491 acres)
		Mount James (607 acres)
		Halls Delight (656 acres)
		Richmond Park (24 acres)
	Port Royal	Halberstadt (1589 acres)
	St George	Mount Pleasant (300 acres)
	St Mary	Fontabelle (1200 acres) (see note xi).

During these times it was not unusual for slaves to take the name of their "owners". There are records of a slave called simply 'Mais' being purchased by Benjamin Crossley in 1829 (see note xii).

Below is a drawing from 1820/1 showing John Mais' store (see note xiii).

### **COPY & PASTE PICTURE HERE**

*Harbour Street and King Street, crossing each other at right angles, are the principal streets in Kingston. At the corner to the left is the store of Mr. Netlam Tory, and on the right is that of Mr. John Mais, M.A. Further on, on the same side of the way, is Harty's Tavern, the flag indicating a public entertainment. Beyond is the Custom-House, marked by its high roof. The great tree stands in front of Wood's Tavern. The street is terminated, at the distance of about half a mile, by the residence of Edward Codd, Esq.*

John's father, John, and his brother, Charles, had previously acquired property on King Street, as already noted.

At some point, John earned the title "Honourable", presumably in recognition of his activity as a Magistrate/Justice of the Peace. We have come across the following examples of his activities in this and other capacities:-

- **He was President of the Workhouse in 1815 (see note xiv)**
- He became a Member of the House of Assembly (see note xiv)
- In 1839 he was an Assistant Judge in the Supreme Court of Judicature
- In 1839 he was a Vice President of the Chamber of Commerce
- In 1839 he was President of the Bank of Jamaica and also Treasurer, Manager and Trustee of the Kingston Bank for Savings (see note xi)
- In 1840 he was an Assistant Judge/Magistrate for the County of Surrey and Kingston (see note xv).

By the time he was serving as a member of the House of Assembly, he must have reconciled his differences with the Lindo family, as the following extract shows:-

"Before Abraham Lindo left for England (in 1825) he had received a letter from none other than John Mais, the overseer of Pleasant Hill who had fired on his father when he had come to take possession of the plantation. Mais, now a member of the Assembly of Jamaica, informed Lindo that he had written to Huskisson telling him of

Lindo's impending visit to England and recommending that he represent the merchants' cause." (See note ix.)

We also know that John acted as Attorney or Trustee in the business dealings in Jamaica of other Maises in the connected and unconnected family trees as follows:-

- Purchase of a tavern and coffee house by John Mais from Jeremiah Mais in 1809
- The will of John Mais who died in 1819
- Indentures for John's widow, Philippina Mais, and her family in both 1828 and 1829 (see note i).

Although it has been suggested that John was in partnership with Henry Mais of the unconnected Maises family tree, confirmation has not yet been found (see note xiv).

The will of John Caspar Mais (see separate notes on Unconnected Maises) refers to Honourable John Mais as his uncle (see note xvi).

John died on 9/10/1853 and was buried on 16/10/1853 in St Andrew parish, Jamaica. In his will he had left £500 to his sister Ann Elizabeth, who predeceased him. By his death he owned one plantation, Halls Delight, and he left this and all its properties to be disposed of with £11,000 of the proceeds to be invested and shared between his and Martha's children on reaching twenty one years of age. He left the residue to two of the children of his relationship with Susanna Hamilton – Eliza and Jeremiah - and his other son, Edward. (It must therefore be assumed that his other two children by Susanna Hamilton – John and Amelia – were estranged from him or had died.) Edward and his nephew (and son-in-law), Stephen Weise Mais, were among the five Trustees (see note xvii).

Susanna Hamilton died on 9/4/1852 in Kingston but outlived Martha who had died on 15/4/1841 in St Pancras, London (see note xviii).

## **MISCELLANEOUS BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF SOME OF THE DESCENDANTS OF JOHN MAIS**

During the course of our research, we have uncovered biographical details of the following Maises who are descendants of this family tree:-

**John Leslie Mais** (above mentioned)

John was educated at City Road Grammar School, London, and Caius College, Cambridge, and went into the clergy, holding a variety of appointments in Jamaica, including chaplain to the House of Assembly and curate at St Matthews, Claremont, St Ann in 1878 (see note xi). He was the proprietor of Rose Hall Pen in 1878 (see note xi) and also founder and headmaster of Walton Free School, near Moneague, which subsequently became Jamaica College, from 1861 to 1883 (see note xix).

**Winchester Mais** (above mentioned)

Winchester is thought to have been a ship's master, who captained the "Hero" on its voyage between Otago, New Zealand, and Melbourne in 1865 (see note xx). In any event, Winchester had last been heard of in Dunedin, Otago, New Zealand when a firm of Bristol solicitors placed an advertisement seeking information on his whereabouts in 1877 to learn something "greatly to his advantage" (see note xx). Winchester spent the last years of his life in Fremantle and Claremont Asylums in Western Australia, to which he was admitted in 1905 and 1906. He died in the latter in 1914 (see note xxi).

**Eliza Mais** (above mentioned)

Eliza married Stephen Weise Mais, a member of the unconnected Mais family trees (see separate notes), although as noted above, in his will the Honourable John referred to him as his nephew.

**Charles Leslie Stuart Mais** (a son of John Leslie Mais)

Charles Leslie Stuart became a civil engineer, founded the firm of 'Mais and Sant' and was responsible for the rebuilding of many of the Government buildings and others in Kingston following the great earthquake of 1907 (see note xxii).

**Herbert Awdry Mais** (a son of John Leslie Mais)

Herbert Awdry was educated at Caius College, Cambridge, like his father, and followed him into the clergy holding a variety of appointments in Wiltshire, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Sussex and Surrey including Egdean (1901) and Burpham (1904) (see note xviii). There is a tablet to his memory on the south wall of Mortlake parish church (see note xxiii).

**Ernest Moray Mais** (a son of John Leslie Mais)

Ernest Moray was the joint lessee of a banana or cocoa plantation of at least fifty acres at Spring Valley in St Mary, Jamaica in 1898/9 (see note xi). In 1900 he was a Justice for St Mary parish, Jamaica (Retreat) (see note xi).

**Herbert Roxburgh Mais** (a grandson of John Leslie Mais)

Herbert Roxburgh ("Barne") served as a Lieutenant in the Royal Engineers in World War I and died in 1917 of wounds sustained in action in Fins and Sorel in France. He is commemorated in Fins New British Cemetery, Sorel-le-Grand, Somme, France (see note xxiv).

**Donald Cameron Mais** (a grandson of Edward Mais)

Donald Cameron served as a private in the British West Indies Regiment in World War I (see note xxv).

Numerous records exist relating to voyages undertaken by the above and other descendants of John Mais (see notes xxvi and xxvii).

More detail of this Mais family tree is available if of interest.

**SOURCES**

- i. Transcripts from Jamaican Archives



- ii. Johnny Mais, Land Surveyor, Kingston
- iii. "Official and Other Personages of Jamaica 1655 to 1790" by W A Feurtado
- iv. Royal Gazette, Jamaica
- v. Report from Jamaica researchers David Bromfield and Wayne Burnside who conducted a search for the period 1780 to 1830 only
- vi. The will of John Mais, made 23/7/1798
- vii. The will of Amelia Glisson, proved in London 28/5/1845
- viii. The will of Ann Elizabeth Mais, made 10/10/1845 and proved 6/8/1847 in London
- ix. "The Lindo Legacy" by Jackie Ranston
- x. [National Archives E133/151/3](#)
- xi. Jamaica Almanacs [Directories and \(Legal\) Handbooks](#) for the years shown
- xii. Barnsley Archive A/1691/F/3/21
- xiii. "A Picturesque Tour of the Island of Jamaica from Drawings Made in the Years 1820 and 1821 – View of Harbour Street, Kingston, Looking Eastward" by James Hakewill (Hurst & Robinson, London, 1825; Shelfmark 1486 gg 11)
- xiv. Members of the unconnected Mais family trees (Sir Hugh Mais (deceased) and Shirley Cohen)
- xv. Jamaica Civil List 1840
- xvi. [The will of John Caspar Mais, proved 20/1/1852 – London Metropolitan Archives X019/041a & DL/C/533/167/1](#)
- xvii. The will of the Honourable John Mais, proved 10/8/1858 in London
- xviii. The Gentlemans Magazine
- xix. Cambridge University Alumni List
- xx. The Times 16/4/1877
- xxi. Fremantle and Claremont Asylum records
- xxii. Descendant (Dr Guy Winch)
- xxiii. Surrey Family History Centre 2414/2/157(1)
- xxiv. Commonwealth War Graves Commission
- xxv. National Archives WO 372/13 and the Jamaica Gleaner newspaper
- xxvi. [Ellis Island website](#)
- xxvii. [UK Outward Passenger Migrations](#)

*© Howard Mais, 1st July 2007, with grateful thanks to Vernon Mais, Robin Mais, John Green, Shirley Cohen and Pat Newton*