

## In search of Dido

The parish register of Tidenham contains the following entry dated 24 November 1805:

Dido, a female negro belonging to Sir George Bolton, was buried

Staff at Gloucestershire Archives tried to find out more about Dido, to see if we could piece together her story, or part of it. We were able to find out quite a lot about Sir George Bolton but, unfortunately very little about Dido. (The main sources we looked at are listed at the end of this document)

- Sir George Bolton was tutor to the daughters of George III and also had an interest in firearms, inventing the gun-lock. He asked the King for a knighthood shortly before leaving for the West Indies, saying that it would help his future endeavours
- In 1794 he married Mrs Catherine Porter. The couple went on to have three children. His wife had a daughter by a previous marriage. Sir George died in 1807 and was survived by his wife.
- He owned the “Diamond estate” in St Vincent , which was a plantation worked by slaves, most probably a sugar plantation. He used London based merchants Doddington and Sharp to sell the produce from his estate. It seems possible that he acquired the estate through his marriage in 1794
- He was obliged, under the terms of a Mr Lawley’s will (possibly his father in law) to maintain at least 53 “negroes” on the estate. Any over and above this number were his, to do with as he pleased
- In 1795 the Diamond estate was badly affected by an insurrection on St Vincent which caused him and his wife to leave for England. It took many years and much money to restore the estate.
- Sir George Bolton bought Tutshill House in Tidenham in 1805. The house was unfinished and he completed it using materials from Westbury Court. It is likely that he never saw it completed because he travelled to the West Indies in 1806 and seems to have died there the following year

None of this information relates directly to Dido. It seems that she came from the plantation he owned in St Vincent. Perhaps she was a favourite slave, maybe one who had worked as a house servant. Maybe she was one of the slaves over and above the required 53, whom Sir George regarded as belonging to him, rather than to the estate.

We contacted the archives at St Vincent in the hope that they might have records about the Diamond estate which might shed more light on Dido and the other slaves, but as yet (April 2007) we have not had a reply.

The main sources we looked at are:

The Victoria County History volume X

Dictionary of National Biography

Country Houses of Gloucestershire by Nicholas Kingsley , volume 2

George Bolton’s will from the National Archives (reference prob 11/1454)