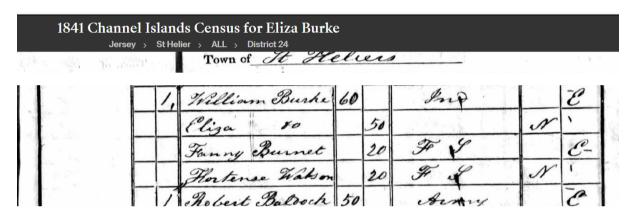


## HORTENSE WATSON

#### 1841 Census

The 1841 census in Jersey shows Hortense Watson, aged 20, as a servant in the residence of **William and Eliza BURKE**. Though it was noted that she was born outside of Jersey, this was sometimes interpreted as not born in England, Scotland, Ireland or "foreign parts", but born in the British Empire.



William and Eliza were planters in Grenada and had recently moved St Helier, Jersey at an address at Windsor Crescent, Trinity Road.





The images above are of the property at Windsor Crescent in 1880 and 2004

Hortense must have been regarded highly by the family as she was bequeathed an annual annuity for life of £15 from William Burke when he died in 1850.

On researching the Slave Register, it seems apparent that she was likely born in Grenada and brought over to Jersey with the Burkes.



# 1821 Slave Register

This Slave Register records a Hortense living on the estate of Eliza's grandmother, (Elizabeth Langaigne) born in 1821.

The register shows that Hortense was born enslaved as the daughter of a Marie Magdelaine (who was 29 at the time), and was described as being black.

						moing to Elizabeth		
Namu	age	Polow	Country	Now arguines	Pompius mark	Makes home Beneal	3-4	£
1 Kertinoc 2 Alpen	4 months	Mach	Budent Some	By Brith		Belphone 16 la	,	/
	100		-			Sommerly Deith	1	1

# 1829 Slave Register

We see Hortense again in the 1829 slave register, age 8, living with her mother Marie Magdeleine (now age 37).

100 Names ag	e Clour	Count	try Conspec	yent Inseph Orgins in the Francisco
	To the top	THE STATE OF THE S		Temales
Nelly	46 years	Hack	africa	Country marks
Catharine	43 .			Country marks
Felicity	45 , 6	Catrefa	Trenada	
Delphine Marier Megdelain	37		**************************************	The state of the s



## 1832 Slave Register

Marie was manumitted in 1832 after Elizabeth LANGAIGNE had died but there are no records showing that Hortense was freed at the same time.

Annual Return of the Increase and Decrease of Ste belonging to the Edute of the late Clizabeth Languing	110
I have to the block at the but the whater stanger	110
pellitting to the Sime of the ante Comothe Xunder	
in the Town of St. George, by the Agent Joseph Bro	iiis
in in Sound of S. Surge, by the Segure Stagne org	
for the year 1832	1
Decreose)	
	2.21
Hames Ace Colour Courty or how dogiosed Constituents Starts Remains	nou
Henry 64 Years Black Anca Manunithe	/
	/
Delplune 40 years batufs Grenada Manualted	1
Marie Magdeloine 40 Jouri Black Grenada Manuntled	1

## 1834 Slave Register

In fact, Hortense was listed enslaved on the estate in 1834, aged 12. This register is significant as it shows the rapid change of ownership. William Burke acquired the estate of the late Elizabeth Langaigne following her death and that her son Louis Felix Langaigne who departed shortly afterwards leaving Eliza Burke as the heir who was William's wife.

A List of Elizabeth Li	Stare	, form	erly belor	rging to the	State of	the late
Sole Deve	we the	late	louis Sell	y Sangang	ne of the	Town
of Sount Ge at Sour of the	said ~	louis M	Elix Sangi	ugne Esecci	sed to si,	July 1834
Hortense N.	P 12 .	2.	<i>J</i> .		Sask	i anni e diffi

Hortense had lived her life enslaved at this point and released sometime between 1834 and 1838 before being taken to Jersey.



#### 1851 Census

The 1851 Census shows that, after William had died, Hortense followed Eliza to live with her daughter, **Elizabeth Sarah BURROW** at her husband's ancestral home at Carleton Hall, Cumberland. She was 30 and employed as the family's laundry maid.

Parith or Sanding Scholastical District of Chapter Sanding							
H	Name of Street, Place, or Road, and Name or	Name and Surname of each Person who abode in the house, on the Night of the 30th March, 185	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age of	Bank, Probados, or Occupation	When Ben
19	butto Hall	Slogal the Sarah Burron	Herek	any	- 28	The second section is a second personal section.	Grunde Protest
		Carling Sink	Perfor	A	63	Annatant	Myddlewn Lander
-		Hotanse Holson	Serv	91	32	Souse Maich	Gunda Budies
		Joseph Walket	Serv	21		book	humber land



CARLETON HALL - 29/08/2000 © Mr Julian Thurgood. Source: Historic England Archive

#### Spa Visit 1854

In 1854, she was reported to have joined Eliza Burke and her daughter Elizabeth Burrow to Middleton One Row which is a village in the borough of Darlington. The village was originally developed as a spa resort in the late 18th century with properties developed on one row, overlooking the banks of the River Tees. I would imagine that they had visited the spa together.

#### DARLINGTON AND STOCKTON TIMES, SEPTEMBER 23, 1854.

VISITORS AT MIDDLETON-ONE Row.—Mrs and Miss Heron, Newcastle-on-Tyne; Mrs Sharp and family, Sunderland; Mr and Mrs James Groves, Hartlepool; George Potts, Esq., North Shields; Henry Wheatley, Esq., North Shields; Mr and Mrs John Fenwick and family, South Shields; Miss Mickle, Tynemouth; Mr and Mrs C. M. Mowbray, Newcastle; Miss B. Donkin, Tynemouth; Mr and Mrs Elston Storey and family, Tynemouth; Mr and Mrs Elston Storey and family, Tynemouth; Mr and Mrs Wilson, Newcastle; Mr and Mrs Walter, Westoe; Mrs Jaques and family, Easby Abbey; Miss Jaques. Tunbridge Wells, Kent; Miss Harrison, Tunbridge Wells, Kent; Misses Crispe, Haughton-le-Skerne; Mrs Burke, Carleton Hall, Cumberland; Miss Hortense Watson, Carleton Hall, Cumberland; Miss Walker, Tynemouth; Mrs



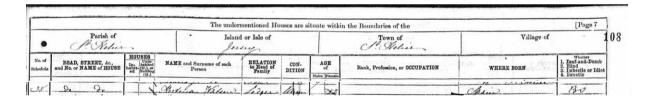
The article in the Darlington and Stockton Times would suggest that the visit was quite an event. For Hortense to be taken to this event also suggests that their relationship was much closer than a typical employer/employee type. Given her history: being freed from enslavement, taken in by the family that had enslaved her, brought to live with them in Jersey, included in William Burke's will and moved with them again up to Cumberland would suggest that they regarded Hortense more like a family member.

It is also interesting to see that she is referred to as "Miss" Hortense Watson so she was not married at this time.

#### 1871 Census

By this time, her employers **Eliza BURKE**, **Elizabeth BURROW** and her husband Edward had all died (1865, 1867 and 1863 respectively). The Burrows had no children and Elizabeth left Carleton Hall to her brother-in-law, the **Reverend Joseph Ashton BURROW** and Henry Edward Manning, Archbishop of Westminster. Although she had been given an annuity from **William BURKE** and possibly was one of the "old servants" referred to in Elizabeth's will, Hortense may have found herself unemployed and left Carleton Hall after Elizabeth had died.

The 1871 census shows a **Hortense WATSON** back in Jersey lodging at Oxford Cottage, Oxford Road, St Helier when she was 52. She is listed as Unmarried. If this was her, this would add an ambiguity to her date of birth (1819) and so identity. The place of birth was given as Spain but I would imagine this could have been a confusion between Grenada and Granada.



The entry in the last column is not any of the options 1-4. It is likely to be a scheduling or clerical annotation unrelated to disability.



#### **Death Record**

There is a record for a Hortense WATSON who died in Kensington in 1880 age 64 which adds another date ambiguity as she would have been born in 1816. It is interesting to note that Elizabeth BURROW had also died in Kensington at 26 Argyll Road in 1867.



The death record copied below is a simple statement. It also states that Hortense was born in 1816 and so conflicts with the census records which consistently indicate a date of birth of 1821.

> Name **Hortense Watson**

Age

Event Type Death

1880 **Event Date** 

**Event Place** 

Kensington,

London, England

Registration District Kensington

Page 63

Volume 1A

Affiliate Line

Number

Registration Quarter Apr-May-Jun

Registration Year

Birth Year

1816 (Estimated)



Another look at the Slave Registers reveals another person that should be considered.

### 1817 Slave Register

A Hortense appeared in the 1817 slave register at the Providence estate which was owned by **William BURKE**. She was described as a mustevo which was a term used for someone with one African great-grandparent, making them predominantly European in appearance and, according to the prevailing standards of the time, often considered "whiter" and of higher social status than individuals with more recent African ancestry.

The term was used to determine social and legal standing, including access to rights, privileges, or, in some cases, freedom. People with lighter skin tones or more European ancestry were more likely to be freed from slavery, enjoy better working conditions, or even gain status as "free people of colour."

1	List of Stanes below	ging to or in the Jacop	u probession of	tilliam Buck	is Cropsister and worked upon Crossdone Estate in the
W	unus	bolow	Country	Supposed Age	Marks -
115	Hortinso	Mustero	pr	17	

## 1834 Slave Register

This Hortense appeared again in the 1834 slave register aged 18 on the same estate. Described here as a mulatress which is the French term for someone with mixed African and European parentage. This showed that she was manumitted in the year leading up to 31<sup>st</sup> July 1834.

A List of	Slave	uttach	and below	ging to Provide	Peter de de
Burke pr	faint	David as	d in the l	de 1800	a lstate in the
	-		- was and and the	last between	Salar Arabana
David (a male)	10	Black	africa	Did of Lever Compla	is M. Marie
Coleste po females Baptiste	2y .	Black	gremada.	of Declining Manumetted by 312.114	4.800
Sortense	10 .			Ø: 9:	

If this was indeed Hortense Watson, she would have been 25 in 1841, not 20 and all the census records in Jersey and England must have been incorrect.



So, the data on Hortense is somewhat ambiguous. Knowledge of her race, either black or mixed race, would answer the question conclusively. There are no known portraits of her or references to her race other than contained in the Slave Registers.

### Jersey Black History Month

<u>Jersey Heritage celebrated their black history in 2020</u> and wrote a mini biography on their Facebook page.

The Jersey Philatelic Bureau later commissioned a set of commemorative stamps with images of black figures who played a part in the island's history. It was amazing to see that **Hortense WATSON** was featured in the collection. Hortense is pictured here in front of the house that she lived in.







Unfortunately, the image they used for Hortense (and possibly the others in the stamp series) was just an imaginative illustration by the artist as there are no known images of her

She is pictured standing in front of Windsor Crescent where she lived in 1841. As they have depicted her as a black woman, and not mixed race, the image should reflect a young woman of 20 years old. It is hard to imagine the woman depicted in their illustration as a fitting likeness.



### **Summary**

The life of Hortense Watson, traced through slave registers, census records, wills, and commemorative gestures, reveals a journey marked by displacement, resilience, and quiet dignity. Born enslaved in Grenada, Hortense's trajectory from plantation life to domestic service in Jersey and Cumberland reflects not only the brutal legacies of empire but also the ambiguous intimacies forged within them. She spent her life in servitude, however, her inclusion in William Burke's will and the spa visit in Cumberland suggests a relationship with the Burke family that transcended conventional hierarchies.

Yet, the archival silences, conflicting birth dates, uncertain racial descriptors, and the absence of authentic imagery underscore how incomplete our understanding remains. Hortense's story is emblematic of many whose lives were shaped by enslavement but rarely recorded with care or clarity. Her presence in Jersey's Black History commemorations is a powerful act of reclamation, even as it raises questions about representation and historical fidelity.

In remembering Hortense Watson, we are invited not only to reconstruct a life but to reflect on the ethics of memory itself how we honour, depict, and make space for those whose histories were submerged. Her legacy, though fragmented, continues to speak to the enduring need for reparative storytelling and historical justice.