

Lovelace Overton: A Bajan's Transatlantic Experience of Freemasonry

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FREEMASONRY DEVELOPED DURING THE ENLIGHTENMENT PERIOD AS A fraternal membership organization offering members 'universal brotherhood, sociability, toleration, and benevolence' within a moral framework.¹ Membership required belief in a supreme being, while offering religious conciliation by bringing together 'persons that must have remained at a perpetual distance.'² To encourage toleration further and to prevent conflict at lodge meetings, the rules forbade the discussion of religion and politics. In addition to the Charges and Regulations set out in the Masonic rule book, the *Book of Constitutions*, by the last quarter of the eighteenth century modes of expected behaviour by members were set out in a catechism designed to encourage 'the relatively radical concept of democratic accountability'.³

¹ J. L. Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of Empire: Freemasonry and British Imperialism, 1717–1927* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 4.

² The first Masonic charge, quoted in R. Berman, *The Foundations of Modern Freemasonry: The Grand Architects. Political Change and the Scientific Enlightenment, 1714–1740* (Eastbourne: Sussex Acad. Press, 2012), Appx 2, 212.

³ Berman, *Foundations*, 216.

In theory the organization welcomed members irrespective of nationality or ethnicity and regardless of religious or political beliefs, provided such individuals adhered to the Masonic laws. As numerous Masonic lodges travelled overseas within military units or were formed overseas during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, members originating from various parts of the British Empire arrived in Britain. Reflecting its inclusive aims, Masonic membership records omit details of members' religious beliefs or ethnic origins and therefore it proves challenging to provide comprehensive details of indigenous members in lodges overseas or individuals from overseas joining lodges in England and Wales. However details are beginning to emerge of individuals born in various parts of the British Empire who joined or who attempted to join Masonic lodges in England and Wales or in colonial outposts. Recent research in local and national archives by Sean Creighton, John D. Ellis, Andy Grant and others has revealed details for several late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Freemasons of black or Asian origin, many of whom undertook one or more transatlantic journeys. Evidence of such encounters enables researchers to consider how Freemasonry aspired to what Harland-Jacobs defines as its 'ideology of cosmopolitan brotherhood.'⁴

In 2006 the Library and Museum of Freemasonry in London received significant funding from the Pilgrim Trust/Esmée Fairbairn Foundation Cataloguing Grants Programme. The resulting 'Free Men and Brothers Project' enabled a project archivist to catalogue over eight hundred individual items of correspondence relating to Masonic administration in colonial America and the West Indies, facilitating access worldwide to these unique resources. The letters, which include documents that illuminate the origins of Prince Hall Masonry in the United States and the development of Masonic lodges and chapters in the Caribbean, were sent to the United Grand Lodge and its predecessors from c.1769 to the 1880s.

Items within the correspondence series provide resources of relevance to social and economic historians, in addition to individuals tracing family or community histories. The resulting detailed catalogue entries provide resources of unanticipated richness, with several items selected for inclusion in an exhibition *Squaring the Triangle: Freemasonry and Anti-Slavery*, commemorating the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the British Atlantic slave trade in 2007.⁵ The exhibition received positive reviews from within the academic community, one noting that 'the extensive archives have the potential to offer interesting – and sometimes unfamiliar – insights into social processes and relationships that shaped the Atlantic world of which slavery and abolitionism were

⁴ Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of Empire*, 5.

⁵ For the exhibition text see <http://www.antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/613>

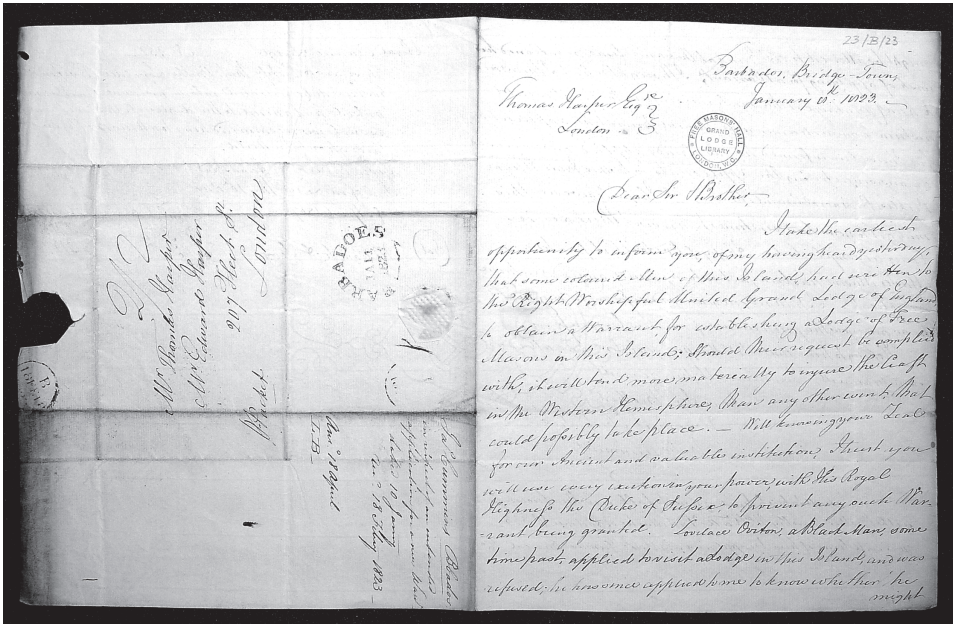


Fig. 1. First page of the letter from James Cummins to Thomas Harper, 8 January 1823.

prominent features.⁶ As cataloguing commenced, interesting narratives about Freemasons caught up in contemporary events in America and the Caribbean began to emerge.

The discovery of one letter in particular prompted the resource discovery trail for this article, which considers the idealism and reality of the Masonic concept of universal brotherhood through the life story of Loveless Overton, a military man and Freemason from Barbados, who undertook several transatlantic journeys.⁷ Written by the Secretary of Albion Lodge, meeting in Bridgetown, Barbados, to Thomas Harper, Deputy Grand Master, on 8 January 1823, James Cummins mentioned that ‘Lovelace Oviton, a Black Man, some time past, applied to visit a Lodge in this Island.’ Cummins included a transcript of a private lodge certificate issued to Oviton [or Overton], signed by the Master and Wardens of Royal Clarence Lodge No. 452, Brighton, on 10 April 1807.⁸ The membership register of the Moderns’ or Premier Grand Lodge includes initiation details for Lovelace Overton, a Trumpeter in the 1st King’s Dragoon Guards, aged 25 of Brighton,

⁶ Review of the exhibition by Dr Geoffrey Cubitt, University of York, with a response by Sean Creighton, see <https://www.history.ac.uk/1807commemorated/exhibitions/museums/squaring.html>

⁷ Transcribed consistently in this article as Loveless Overton, in accordance with Army pension records, alternative spellings in various resources include Lovelace Oviton, Hoviton, Ovitus.

⁸ Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London, ref: GBR 1991 HC 23/B/23.

alongside Bro. Loring, a Lieutenant in the Horse Artillery, Bro. Moss, a surgeon, and Captain G. A. Scudamore, South Gloucestershire Regiment, on 17 April 1806.⁹ Four Lieutenants and Captains serving in the 1st King's Dragoon Guards are included in an annual return with a payment to the Hall Liquidation Fund for seventy-five lodge members sent to Grand Lodge by the Secretary for the period Christmas 1805 to Christmas 1806.¹⁰

The lodge, which met at the Old Ship Inn, King's Road, Brighton, recruited numerous members from the transient military presence stationed at the nearby barracks. The subscription register for this lodge includes details of seven regular payments of fees by Overton, including a note on one occasion that the Trumpeter owed four shillings, until Midsummer 1808 when the regiment left Brighton.¹¹ Tentative enquiries about this bandsman with the regimental museum of the 1st Queen's Dragoon Guards at Cardiff Castle yielded an unanticipated response. The curator confirmed that Overton was included in an artwork depicting the 1st King's Dragoon Guards' Baggage Train, by Henry Perlee Parker, painted outside St Nicholas' Church, Newcastle upon Tyne, in 1824.¹² Among the wagons piled dangerously high with soldiers, spouses, and children gathering at the bases, the commanding presence of Overton, 'six feet in height, black hair, black eyes, black complexion', smiling fondly, draws the eye to the group of individuals in the left foreground.¹³ Dressed in civilian clothes, Overton is identified as the personal servant of the Commanding Officer, Lt Col George Teesdale, whose labelled baggage sits waiting to be loaded at the centre of the artwork.

The 1st Queen's Dragoon Guards Museum, unaware of Overton's Masonic membership, provided a brief introduction to his military career.¹⁴ The army discharge papers of Overton include a certificate signed by Colonel Andrew Dunlop of the Ayrshire Regiment of Fencible Cavalry dated 24 March 1800.¹⁵ This document confirmed Overton

⁹ Moderns' Grand Lodge, 1768–1813, Register of Admissions, Country & Foreign, Vol. II, fol. 575, via Ancestry.co.uk. The famous composer, arranger, and musician, Christian Kramer, described as 'Page to the Prince Regent's Band', was initiated in Royal Clarence Lodge, Brighton, on 25 April 1812. Kramer served as Master of the King's Musick between 1829 and 1834.

¹⁰ Annual return from Royal Clarence Lodge No. 452 (later No. 271), Brighton, Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London, ref: GBR 1991 AR/1148/12.

¹¹ The subscription register and other records relating to Royal Clarence Lodge No. 271, Brighton, are deposited at East Sussex Record Office, ref: MAS 9/3/5.

¹² 1st King's Dragoon Guards, The Baggage Train, Henry Perlee Parker (1795–1873), 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards Heritage Trust, on long-term loan to Firing Line, Cardiff Castle Museum of the Welsh Soldier, Cardiff.

¹³ Description taken from Discharge papers of Loveless Overton, The National Archives, ref: WO 97/103/54.

¹⁴ Notes about Archibald Robertson and Loveless Overton provided by the Curator, Firing Line Cardiff Castle Museum to the author, based on MA dissertation of J. D. Ellis, *The Visual Representation, Role and Origin of Black Soldiers in British Army Regiments during the early 19th century* (University of Nottingham, September 2000); R. G. Hollies-Smith, 'The 1st Dragoon Guards Moving Quarters, Newcastle-On-Tyne', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 51, no. 205, 1973, 1–4. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/44223031 and the Regimental Archive, Maindy Barracks, Whitchurch Road, Cardiff.

¹⁵ The National Archives, Ref: WO 97/103/54.

enlisted as a trumpeter in Major William Crawford's troop, where he served for four years and six months. At his initiation in 1806 Overton stated his age as twenty-five, which implies that he joined the Fencibles at sixteen but only six months of that service was taken into consideration when calculating his army pension. Born in St Thomas, north of Bridgetown, the capital of Barbados, Overton crossed the Atlantic to Britain at an unknown date and appears to have enlisted in this cavalry regiment in Westminster. The Fencibles were raised by Dunlop in 1794 to provide domestic defence troops against the threat of invasion during the French revolutionary wars and the Irish Rebellion.¹⁶ The regiment actively recruited troops in Westminster in 1794, was based at Carlisle the next year, and stationed in Manchester by August 1796, where they acted as the guard for a parade.¹⁷ In 1797 the troops were based on coastal defence duties in Norfolk, as banns were read at St Margaret with St Nicholas Church, King's Lynn, between October and November, for a proposed marriage between Overton and Mary Mullinder. However it appears that the regimental band and its members relocated before Overton's marriage was celebrated.¹⁸

As a free black man Overton decided to join the army on arrival in Britain; the choice of such a career had several benefits for men born in the Caribbean and America. Numerous black sailors served in the navy or on board mercantile vessels, with over one hundred participating in the Battle of Trafalgar with West Indies' birthplaces.¹⁹ Several joined Freemasonry including Daniel Miller, who was initiated in Lodge of Industry No. 186, London, in September 1808, although his free-born status, a Masonic rule book requirement, was questioned by the Antients' Stewards Lodge.²⁰ Thomas Wait, a mari-

¹⁶ Brigadier General Sir Andrew Wallace Dunlop (1756–1804) and his mother, Mrs Dunlop, were regular correspondents of the Freemason and poet, Robert Burns. Dunlop served as a Major in the army during the American Revolutionary War before retiring to run the Scottish family estate, but he raised two troops of the Ayrshire Fencibles in 1794, expanded to six troops a year later.

¹⁷ Location details provided by events concerning the trial of Sarah Penelope Stanley, who joined the Ayrshire Fencibles as a recruit at Westminster in 1794. Dressed in male attire, she served for over a year and was promoted to the rank of corporal. She rode well and had the care of two horses in Major Horsley's Troop, but was discovered at Carlisle to be a woman, after receiving a kick from a horse and was honourably discharged. She returned to London but was convicted later of theft. D. Ó Danochair, ed., *The Newgate Calendar*, Vol. 5, 55. <http://www.exclassics.com/newgate/ng395.htm>; Old Bailey Proceedings Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 28 July 2018), October 1796, trial of SARAH STANLEY (t17961026-16); *The Lady's Magazine; Or, Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex ...* Vol. 30, 428.

¹⁸ Norfolk, King's Lynn, St Margaret with St Nicholas, Register of Banns, 1794–1816, Norfolk Record Office, ref: PD39/118, via Ancestry.co.uk.

¹⁹ K. Chater, *Untold Histories: Black people in England and Wales during the period of the British slave trade, c.1660–1807* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 234–237; fn. 74, 244–245; <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/aboutapps/trafalgarancestors/>

²⁰ Antients' Grand Lodge membership register, Lodge of Industry No. 186, London; Stewards Lodge Minutes, Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London, ref: GBR 1991 ANT 1/2/4–5.

ner, was initiated in the Moderns' Lodge of Morality No. 215, London, meeting at the Hercules' Pillars, opposite Freemasons' Hall on Great Queen Street on 11 August 1808.²¹

As Ellis demonstrates, the army or navy acted as a place of refuge for escaped slaves or men whose freedom was under threat.²² Published in 1772, *A Narrative of the Most remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, an African Prince, As related by himself* reveals the motivation for enlisting and his service in the 28th Regiment of Foot during the Seven Years War.²³ Black bandsmen in particular were highly regarded, earning higher levels of salary than foot soldiers and enjoyed unprecedented camaraderie with colleagues and access to fraternal bonds with opportunities for recreational association. An army career ensured access to a pension, and care in case of illness, and several black ex-soldiers entered Chelsea Hospital.²⁴ Many black soldiers and marines, including Overton, married women they met in England and Wales and raised families.

When the threat of a French invasion had diminished, the Fencibles disbanded and Overton transferred with a colleague and fellow trumpeter, Archibald Robertson, from St George, Grenada, West Indies, to the 1st King's Dragoon Guards in Manchester on 25 March 1800. The regiment remained in that city until early the next year, where Sergeant Richard Hawkins, aged 48 of the 1st King's Dragoon Guards, was initiated in Lodge of Affability No. 317 on 1 January 1801.²⁵ Although members of the 1st King's Dragoon Guards were interested in joining Freemasonry, no attempt was made to resume a dormant travelling warrant granted to the regiment by the Moderns' Grand Lodge in 1780 to meet as Lodge of St George No. 342. A founding member of this travelling lodge was Thomas Dixon, Trumpet Major, and William Russell, Master of the Band, was initiated in 1785. An active Freemason, Thomas Dixon sponsored the formation of Chapter of Prudence, Ipswich, Suffolk in 1784, where he worked the Knights Templar degree in the Chapter. Dixon was appointed Acting Grand Master for the North District of England for the first Grand Conclave of Masonic Knights Templar in 1791. Lodge of St George members participated, with representatives from fourteen Lancashire civilian lodges, in a procession from the Bull's Head to St John's Church and back, when the Provincial

²¹ Annual returns of Lodge of Morality No. 215 [SN 684], London, Moderns' Grand Lodge, Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London, ref: GBR 1991 AR/684.

²² Ellis, *The Visual Representation, Role and Origin of Black Soldiers*.

²³ *A Narrative of the Most remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, an African Prince, As related by himself*, eBook, <http://www.bookrags.com/ebooks/15042/1.html#o&gsc.tab=0>.

²⁴ Chater, *Untold Histories*, fn. 74, 244–245.

²⁵ Library and Museum of Freemasonry; London, England; Freemasonry Membership Registers; Description: Register of Admissions: Country and Foreign, vol II, Fol. 490; Ancestry.com. England, United Grand Lodge of England Freemason Membership Registers, 1751–1921 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.

Grand Lodge of Lancashire took place at Manchester on 29 September 1788, presided over by John Allen, Provincial Grand Master.²⁶

Lodge of St George lapsed after making a last payment in 1792 and was erased in 1813 after the union between the Moderns' and Antients' Grand Lodges to form the United Grand Lodge of England. Troops serving with this regiment did not re-apply for a warrant until a lodge was granted by the Grand Lodge of Ireland in 1923 to Waterloo Lodge No. 571, held in the 1st King's Dragoon Guards, United Services Hall, Cologne, Germany.²⁷

Despite extensive research, details for the Masonic membership of Archibald Robertson, Overton's army colleague, cannot be traced, but at least two other contemporary black army musicians are listed as Freemasons. Ground-breaking research by John Ellis demonstrates that by the early nineteenth century all the Household and Cavalry regiments employed black soldiers, with 41 of 103 infantry regiments recruiting West Indian born soldiers, not including those born elsewhere. Using army pension and other records Ellis has identified over four hundred British army personnel of black origin during the period c.1750 to 1840, and it is likely that further research will identify more as Freemasons.²⁸ The thesis challenged an assumption that the presence of black soldiers in the ranks of British cavalry and infantry regiments was a twentieth-century phenomenon. British army officers employed black servants initially to emphasize rank and to display opulence, emulating civilian elites, but black military musicians were engaged subsequently by high status Household and Cavalry regiments to promote regimental prestige. After 1757, when the British army encouraged the establishment of enlisted musicians, many other regiments, such as the 1st King's Dragoon Guards, began to employ talented black military bandmen.

One black army tambourine player, James Fraser [als. Frazier/Frazer], born in Boston, Massachusetts, enlisted with the 2nd Foot Guards (Coldstream Guards) aged about eighteen in 1788. An exponent of what contemporaries referred to as 'Turkish percussion', introduced in the Guards' regiments in the late 1780s, Fraser wore an elaborate dress uniform including a feather-bedecked turban. Dickens captured the essence of a public spectacle such 'Turkish' music created, writing about his childhood memories in 1847:

Wearing an embroidered Oriental dress, they [the black musicians] played the cymbals in the band of the Guards, gesticulating vivaciously – partly of orchestral necessity, perhaps, but partly, it must be, owing to the excessive enjoyment of his situation ... with his fellow performer, of similar complexion and costume, who plays an

²⁶ N. Rogers, 'Lancashire Military Lodges', *AQC* 76 (1963), 114.

²⁷ S. M. Jenkyns, *History of British and Colonial Regiments and their Military Lodges* (Ottawa, 2000), Vol. 1 part 2, 728–730.

²⁸ Ellis, *Visual Representation, Role and Origin of Black Soldiers*.

instrument that has vanished with its sable professor, a brazen structure, treeshaped, with bells depending from its branches [the Turkish crescent].²⁹

The trio of African-American musicians, comprising a bass drummer, John Johnson, cymbal player, George Smith and Fraser, formed a striking spectacle.³⁰ Between 1812 and 1814 the Turkish Janissary band expanded to include a Jamaican, William Smith, Thomas Rackett from Demerara, who transferred to the Guards from service in the Royal Navy, and Joseph Fergus from St Kitts.³¹ No details of Masonic membership can be traced for Smith, Rackett, or Fergus.

Fraser was initiated in Gothic Lodge (formerly Gothic and Westminster Volunteer Lodge) No. 186, which met at Sutling House, the Foot Guards' canteen at St James's Palace, Whitehall, London, on 11 October 1798.³² A resident of Dartmouth Street, Fraser was lionised in a mezzotint portrait, but died two years later aged thirty. He was buried at St John the Evangelist, Smith Square, Westminster at a ceremony attended by Freemasons.³³ As a member of the Duke of York's band, initiation enabled Fraser to participate in Masonic ceremonies at which musicians were required. Eight army sergeants and musicians were initiated in Gothic Lodge in the last decade of the eighteenth century, providing membership registration addresses in St Ann's Street, Peter Street, Tothill Street, and elsewhere in Westminster, where 'between 1660 and 1812 at least a thousand Black people are recorded as living in or passing through.'³⁴ Westminster attracted a significant number of black soldiers as residents, who arrived in London after fighting for the British patriot cause during the American War of Independence.³⁵ Further research, based on contemporary records located in local and national archives, may result in the identification of other black Freemasons in Gothic Lodge.

Issued by an artist from St Alban's Street and Old Bond Street print shop premises, a popular contemporary print of Fraser included two poetical stanzas:

Oh had I more space and leisure,
To sing the worth of honest Fraser.
Tho his complexion's far from mine,
Yet both from the same hand divine.
Respect him therefore as a brother,
Tho' black his skin he has no other.

²⁹ Quoted in J. Gleeson, *Pomp and Circumstance: A History on the Band of HM Coldstream Guards, 1685–2015* (RHQ, Wellington Barracks, Birdcage Walk, London, 2015), 106.

³⁰ Gleeson, *Pomp and Circumstance*, 40–42.

³¹ Gleeson, *Pomp and Circumstance*, 58.

³² Moderns' Grand Lodge, 1768–1813, Register of Members, London, Vol. I, fol. 306, via Ancestry.co.uk.

³³ Gleeson, *Pomp and Circumstance*, 52–3.

³⁴ Chater, *Untold Histories*, 56.

³⁵ Chater, *Untold Histories*, 58.

Staunch to our good King and Land,
Firm to his noble Prince's cause.
In manners gentle with mind serene,
Sings well and plays the tambourine.
The likeness strong the painting neat,
By Mrs. Ross St. Alban's street.³⁶

Another black American, Joseph Rapier, born in Charleston, was a carpenter who enlisted aged thirty-two in the 2nd Foot Guards (Coldstream Guards) in 1792. Rapier replaced the cymbal player, George Smith, after the latter's transportation after a conviction for larceny at the Old Bailey.³⁷ Rapier married Sarah Wheeler at St Clement Dane's Church, London on 19 July 1785. The couple baptized a son George at St Mary's Church, while living on Church Lane, Whitechapel, on 5 November 1788, a son Charles George on 25 February 1790 and a daughter Sarah at St Luke's Church, Islington on 4 December 1791. Rapier appears in the rate and poll books while residing at 3 St Anne's Court, 8 Meards Court, and later at 24 Dean Street, Soho, London from 1798 to 1820.³⁸ The cymbal player occupied premises worth sixty pounds, for which he paid rent of five guineas, confirming his eligibility to vote in elections, and claimed an army pension after discharge until 1823. Rapier was initiated in Lodge of Morality No. 271, London on 10 October 1795, stating his occupation as a musician. Two other contemporary army musicians were initiated in the Lodge of Morality, Findlay Fraser [als. Frasor] of Peter Street, Westminster in December 1793 and Thomas Foreman of St Ann's Court, Soho in January 1794.³⁹

Meanwhile Loveless Overton continued his army career and was stationed in locations such as Windsor, Croydon, Exeter, the West Midlands, Bristol, Exeter, and Arundel, Sussex. Overton married Elizabeth Tinson by banns at St Martin's church, Birmingham in 1801 and the couple raised a daughter, Charlotte, baptised at St Nicholas's church two years after the arrival of the regiment in Brighton in 1805.⁴⁰ A son, William, died in infancy and was buried at St Peter's church, Brighton on 19 March 1807, the parish register describing Overton as a drummer in the 1st King's Dragoon Guards.⁴¹ After

³⁶ Gleeson, *Pomp and Circumstance*, 38–41.

³⁷ Old Bailey Proceedings Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 29 July 2018), February 1791, trial of GEORGE SMITH alias RICHARD HANNIBALL ANGELICA BAZEN (t17910216–36).

³⁸ London, England, UK and London Poll Books. London, England: London Metropolitan Archives and Guildhall Library. Ancestry.com. UK, Poll Books and Electoral Registers, 1538–1893 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012.

³⁹ Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London, England; Freemasonry Membership Registers; Description: Register of Members, London, vol I, Fol. 290; Ancestry.com. England, United Grand Lodge of England Freemasonry Membership Registers, 1751–1921 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.

⁴⁰ Birmingham St Martin's, marriage register, 1801, via Ancestry.co.uk; baptism of Charlotte Overton, St Nicholas' church, Brighton, 1807, via Ancestry.co.uk.

⁴¹ East Sussex Record Office, burial register, St Peter's church, Brighton, William Hoviton.

the regiment left Brighton, Overton served at Mallow, Co. Cork, Ireland where he ruptured a blood vessel in 1814, resulting in shortness of breath.⁴²

Overton is listed on the 1st King's Dragoon Guards' pay roll with three other trumpeters, John Hart, James Moss, and George Russell, based at Ipswich from the Romford Depôt from 25 April to 24 June 1815, for which he received a total of £4 16s 7d for sixty-one days service. Calculated at one shilling and sixpence per day, the rate recompensed Overton by threepence more than a private, and demonstrates the attraction of serving as an army bandsman.⁴³ Overton earned the same amount from 25 March to 24 May 1816 while based at Northampton from the Romford Depôt, alongside trumpeters John Hart and James Moss, under Colonel David Dundas. He is noted on the Muster Roll for 25 April to 24 May 1816 as part of Captain the Honourable George Lionel Dawson's Troop in the 1st King's Dragoon Guards as Depôt Hospital, Supernumerary.

Trumpeters served a key strategic role as part of the battlefield communication system, accompanying troop commanders and other senior officers, and were responsible for relaying orders such as charge, reform, or retreat during military action. Unlike other soldiers in the 1st King's Dragoon Guards, Overton escaped service overseas with the Waterloo campaign in June 1815 due to the ruptured blood vessel injury sustained in Ireland. Other black soldiers, including George Rose of Jamaica, a Sergeant in the Highland 42nd Foot Regiment, William Wilson from Barbados, serving with the 13th Hussars, and William Affleck of St Kitts in the 10th Hussars, did serve in the campaign and received the Waterloo Medal.⁴⁴

Correspondence in the Colonial Office papers reveals that by February 1817 Overton returned to Barbados on furlough to recover from his injury.⁴⁵ This transatlantic sojourn was not without incident, as a statement dictated by Overton at the 1st King's Dragoon Guards Barracks, Manchester, after his return to England reveals. Unable to read or write, Overton's supporting evidence was dictated to a former army acquaintance and forwarded with a letter from Lt Col George Teesdale, commanding officer of the 1st King's Dragoon Guards, to Sir Henry Torrens, military secretary of HRH Frederick, Duke of York, Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces at Horse Guards, London on 30 June 1817.

⁴² Discharge papers of Loveless Overton, The National Archives, 27 December 1818, ref: WO 97/103/54; Royal Hospital, Chelsea, Disability and Royal Artillery Out Pensions Admissions Book, 18 December 1818, ref: WO 116/28/4, pp.178–179.

⁴³ The National Archives of the UK; Kew, Surrey, England; General Muster Books and Pay Lists; Class: WO 12; Piece: 12969 via Ancestry.co.uk.

⁴⁴ Ellis, *The Visual Representation, Role and Origin of Black Soldiers* and subsequent correspondence with the author.

⁴⁵ The National Archives, Colonial Office papers, ref: CO 28/86.

Teesdale acknowledged the note and forwarded a letter from Captain Elton assuring Torrens that Trumpeter Overton, with seventeen years' service in the regiment, 'has always conducted himself as a good and peaceable soldier.' A response was sent from Horse Guards on 6 August 1817 to Henry Bathurst, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, concerning Overton, who was alleged to have 'conducted himself improperly in Barbados.' Torrens sent Bathurst a report about the incident and referred to Overton's established good character, indicating that the trumpeter was 'most unjustly and illiberally treated by those who have reported upon his conduct.' Overton explains that while visiting his sister, friends, and relatives in Bridgetown he saw a man beating an enslaved man in the street. On hearing the man pleading for mercy, Overton states he forgot he was in Barbados and no longer in England, where the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act had come into effect a decade before these events. Although the legislation prohibited the slave trade throughout the British Empire, it did not abolish slavery which remained legal in many locations until the Slavery Abolition Act was passed in 1833.

Overton claimed that observing this brutal punishment was a new experience, as he had left Barbados twenty four years before. However drummers and trumpeters such as Overton were responsible for imposing discipline in many army units by flogging miscreants. According to John Ellis, this inversion of hierarchy sometimes resulted in the unpopularity of black soldiers.⁴⁶ Overton attempted to reason with the owner of the enslaved person but left after realising the indignation caused by his attempt to assist the beaten man. It was not uncommon for free black individuals to own slaves and it appears that Overton did own two people.⁴⁷ Overton attempted without success to provide a report as soon as possible after the incident to the General of Artillery and then Colonel Edward Codd, Commandant of St Ann's Garrison. Despite his efforts, Overton was taken into custody the following day.

Tensions were high in Barbados after the brutal suppression of Bussa's Rebellion on the island in the previous year. Overton was asked to prove that he was not from St Domingo, where the black general, Toussaint L'Ouverture, led a successful revolution. After L'Ouverture's capture by the French, Henry Christophe, later King Henry I, established the republic of Haiti in 1804. Having persuaded the Bajan magistrates that he was not a rebel soldier from Haiti, Overton provided evidence that he was a free man, but his travelling trunk was searched for incriminating correspondence. The magistrates took

⁴⁶ J. D. Ellis, 'Black Soldiers in British Army Regiments, 1750s to 1840s', text of paper given at *Our Histories Revealed: African Stories in Hull and East Yorkshire*, Wilberforce Institute for the study of Slavery and Emancipation (WISE), 27 High Street, Hull, Saturday 7 October 2017, <https://www.africansinyorkshireproject.com/>

⁴⁷ Slave Registers of former British Colonial Dependencies, 1813–1834, The National Archives, Loveless Oviton, Barbados 1823 Part 1, T 71/529 p.448 f.220. Ancestry.com. Slave Registers of former British Colonial Dependencies, 1813–1834 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2007.

exception to his apparel, which they described as ‘officer’s clothing.’ The officials were unaware that Overton was entitled to wear the full dress of the 1st King’s Dragoon Guard’s Band, incorporating the regimental badge depicting the royal cypher within the garter.

Overton claimed that he was then asked to answer for the perceived insult offered to the white slave owner, who attempted to intercede on the trumpeter’s behalf to no avail. The magistrates insisted on detaining Overton in prison where he remained until early March 1817, when Lieutenant Kell of the 2nd (Queen’s Royal) Foot Regiment, who knew the trumpeter in Mallow, Ireland, took an interest in his case. Kell managed to arrange two bail sureties of one hundred and twenty five pounds, the modern equivalent to over seven thousand pounds, a significant amount of money. The magistrates, unaware of Overton’s military contacts on the island, set the bail deliberately high in an attempt to ensure imprisonment and the trumpeter’s inability to upset the colonial status quo.⁴⁸

Overton remarked that the interest taken in his case by the magistrates after his release on bail ‘caused a great sensation among the slaves,’ and he received warnings that his life was endangered. Having spent a remarkably uneventful army career in England, Overton believed that provided he lived an orderly and peaceful life he would be protected by local governance in accordance with the charges in the Masonic *Book of Constitutions*. However, on his way to spend a few days with friends in the Bajan countryside on horseback, Overton was accosted by three men on the road to Hackett’s Estate, who accused him of attempting to raise a rebellion and objected that ‘his dress was offensive to the whole Island.’⁴⁹ These men spread misinformation in Bridgetown that Overton intended to start an insurrection. In consequence a warrant was issued for Overton’s re-arrest and the trumpeter was ordered back to gaol by Mr Oxley, the magistrate.⁵⁰ No reason for his incarceration was provided by the magistrates and Overton’s sister was imprisoned also for seeking to discover the reason for his arrest.

Overton was returned to England by the magistrates on 27 March 1817 aboard the ship on which he had arrived. It appears that a report alleging Overton’s improper conduct on Barbados was sent to the Earl of Bathurst, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies. After Bathurst made enquiries, Captain William Elton of the 1st King’s Dragoon Guards at Leeds wrote to Lt Col George Teesdale at York in July, assuring the latter that the charges raised against Overton were based on his appearance in dress uniform, the only clothes he had to wear, among the black Bajan community. In his

⁴⁸ A. O. Ramsay, ‘Fighting for Equal Rights/Rites: The Narrative of Loveless Overton’, *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, vol. LVI, December 2010, 16.

⁴⁹ Hackett’s Estate may refer to Adam’s Castle Estate, Christchurch parish, Barbados, adjoining the road from Bridgetown to Oistins Bay, a plantation established by Sir Robert Hackett between 1674 and 1679. Legacies of British Slave Ownership database, accessed 15 July 2018 <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/estates/>

⁵⁰ Mr Oxley may be William Oxley, initiated in Albion Lodge No. 232, Bridgetown, Barbados on 2 July 1817, described as a Master in Chancery.

statement to Teesdale, whom he had known for eighteen years, Overton stated that his apparel was misinterpreted by the enslaved Bajans, who believed mistakenly that the trumpeter was a second Toussaint L'Ouverture, sent to obtain their freedom. Overton assured Teesdale that he did not seek such opinion on the island but was regarded as an object of dislike by the magistrates from his first appearance. Unable to read or write, Overton assured his commanding officer that he was an individual unlikely to stir up a rebellion or engage in seditious correspondence.

While writing to Teesdale Captain Elton stated that Kell, a Lieutenant of the 2nd (Queen's Royal) Foot Regiment, who knew the trumpeter when he served in his troop in Ireland, was 'as capable as judging as any Magistrate or Attorney in the Island of Barbados.' Kell confirmed that Overton was treated 'with severity and injustice' and Elton supported Overton, whom he knew 'to be a good soldier without the desire or abilities to create disturbances in the West Indies.' It is plausible that Elton was the soldier initiated while a young lieutenant a month before the black trumpeter in Royal Clarence Lodge, Brighton.⁵¹ Elton claimed 'His Royal Highness' protection for my man, whom I know to be a good soldier, preserving Overton's good reputation and overruling the negative suggestions of the Bajan magistrates. Torrens, the military secretary, accepted the report from Elton without question. His superior, the Duke of York, a Freemason, had appointed the three black bandsmen in the 2nd Battalion of the Coldstream Guards, including James Fraser and later Joseph Rapier.⁵²

After his good reputation was restored, Overton resumed his duties with the 1st King's Dragoon Guards, but signed his discharge papers after more than nineteen years of army service with a cross at Hamilton, Scotland, on 1 November 1818.⁵³ The trumpeter, who stated his trade as a joiner, continued to experience 'shortness of breath on any exertion' and his name appeared on an examination list of invalid soldiers at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea on Monday 18 December 1818.⁵⁴ Described as an officer's servant in regimental records after his discharge, Overton travelled with the regiment to Ireland and then after landing at Liverpool in 1822 to Manchester, Sheffield, and Nottingham.

⁵¹ Annual return from Royal Clarence Lodge No. 452, Brighton, Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London, ref: GBR 1991 AR/1148/12.

⁵² Prince Frederick, Duke of York and Albany (Frederick Augustus) 1763–1827, was initiated as a Freemason in Britannic Lodge (now No. 33) [SN 101], London on 21 November 1787. He was appointed a Past Grand Master of the Moderns' or Premier Grand Lodge of England on 28 November 1787. He joined Prince of Wales's Lodge (now No. 259) [SN 1097], London on 20 April 1789 and served as Worshipful Master from 1823 to 1827; Gleeson, *Pomp and Circumstance*, 38.

⁵³ Royal Hospital Chelsea: Soldiers Service Documents, Cavalry of the Line: Oln – Ozw, The National Archives, WO 97/103/54.

⁵⁴ Royal Hospital, Chelsea: Disability and Royal Artillery Out-Pensions, Admission Books, The National Archives, Class: WO 116; Piece Number: 28, Ancestry.com. UK, Royal Hospital Chelsea Pensioner Admissions and Discharges, 1715–1925 [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016.

Loveless returned to Barbados in late 1822 rather than accompanying the regiment at Piershill Barracks, Edinburgh and Perth, where the troops were stationed from mid-summer 1823.⁵⁵ Despite his experiences five years before at the hands of the island magistrates, the letter from James Cummins to Grand Lodge indicates that Overton applied to visit a lodge in Barbados in 1817 but was refused permission.⁵⁶ On his return to the island, Overton presented a copy of his private lodge certificate and repeated his request for visitation rights. Overton mentioned that he would apply for a warrant to form a lodge on the Island, indicating the presence of a significant community of free black men with the economic resources to join Freemasonry. Cummins wrote in a panic to Grand Lodge, stating from his viewpoint that if a warrant was granted to ‘coloured men of this Island,’ it will tend more materially to injure the Craft in the Western Hemisphere, than any other event that could possibly take place.⁵⁷ Despite local rivalry between lodges meeting under the English and Irish Constitutions, members of the Irish lodges contacted Dublin to warn the Grand Lodge about a proposed request for a warrant.⁵⁸

Cummins informed the Grand Secretaries that he believed Overton and the other prospective members had received a reply referring the Bajan to the Provincial Grand Master, John Alleyne Beckles.⁵⁹ Cummins suggested that the Grand Secretaries should discuss this matter with Timothy William Wall, Past Master of Albion Lodge, who had returned recently to London.⁶⁰ A response from Edwards Harper, the son of Thomas Harper, informed Cummins that no such communication had been sent. Harper indicated that even if it had, such a request for a warrant would require the assent of the Provincial Grand Master before it could be placed before the Grand Master for assent and ‘of course it is not likely under the circumstances that it should be granted.’ Harper suggested that, if approached, the Provincial Grand Master should express dissent to

⁵⁵ The 1st Dragoon Guards Moving Quarters, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Captain R. G. Hollies-Smith, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 51 No. 205, Spring 1973, 1–4.

⁵⁶ The Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London, letter of James Cummins to Thomas Harper and Edwards Harper, Secretaries of the United Grand Lodge of England, 207 Fleet Street, London, 10 January 1823, ref: GBR 1991 HC 23/B/23; James Cummins was a founder of Union Lodge No. 286 [SN 1273], Bridgetown, Barbados but in 1799 withdrew to join Albion Lodge No. 333 [SN 1190], Bridgetown, Barbados.

⁵⁷ See above ref: GBR 1991 HC 23/B/23.

⁵⁸ A. D. Downes, ‘Freemasonry in Barbados, 1740–1900: Issues of Ethnicity and Class in a Colonial Polity’, *The Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, Vol. LIII November 2007, 61.

⁵⁹ John Alleyne Beckles (1777–1840), served as Provincial Grand Master of Barbados from 1817 until his death. A barrister, he was appointed as Chief Judge of Christchurch in 1822 and other legal roles and served as President of Barbados in the absence of the Governor in 1833. See ‘John Alleyne Beckles’, *Legacies of British Slave-ownership database*, <http://www.depts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/5898> [accessed 30th July 2018].

⁶⁰ Timothy William Wall, an organist, was initiated in Albion Lodge No. 333, Barbados on 5 March 1817 aged 37 and later returned to London.

the measure and that 'no doubt his sentiments will have due weight in deciding with the Grand Master as to the line of conduct necessary to be pursued.'⁶¹

Contemporary events on Barbados in which Overton participated in 1823 provide an insight to the tensions between the free black and mixed-race community and the white, colonial, plantocracy. As one researcher has argued, Overton's 'agitation for change clearly represents one of the ways that free blacks sought more civil liberties in a society that denied them equal rights.'⁶² The 1820s are characterized by 'acceleration in the agitation by the free coloured population for civil rights and admission to certain civic institutions.'⁶³ Despite his Master Mason certificate and proven Masonic credentials, Overton was unable to visit a Lodge, demonstrating a lacuna between the ideology of democratic, equal participation and local social and cultural circumstances.

In the same year that Overton visited Barbados, the Society for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery introduced amelioration proposals, designed to improve the conditions of enslaved persons but delaying the growing pressure for emancipation in the West Indies. Despite proposals by the Colonial Office for slight improvements, they were rejected by members of the Barbados Assembly, who believed that existing laws and regulations already appeased and improved the lives of enslaved people. Tensions escalated by October 1823, when members of a white mob burnt down a chapel in Bridgetown where the reforming Methodist minister, William James Shrewsbury, advocated the abolition of slavery.⁶⁴

As part of a growing pressure to improve civic rights within the free black Bajan community, Overton signed a letter with twenty other inhabitants which was published in a local newspaper on 25 February 1824.⁶⁵ The letter aimed to counter an earlier Loyal Address sent but not approved by the Governor and the Assembly in 1823. The Address was signed by Jacob Belgrave junior, a wealthy free man of mixed race, the owner of two plantations and more than three hundred enslaved individuals. Belgrave sought the removal of certain legal disabilities limiting the progress of members of the free black community in Barbados. However Overton and his friends' letter endorsed a conservative approach suggested by the Governor and Assembly, opposing any radical change such as recommending emancipation.⁶⁶

⁶¹ The Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London, Outgoing Letter Book C, 1822 – 1823, letter to James Cummins Esq, Barbados, from Freemasons' Hall, London, 18 April 1823.

⁶² Ramsay, *Fighting for Equal Rights/Rites*, 17.

⁶³ Downes, 'Freemasonry in Barbados, 1740–1900', 60.

⁶⁴ William James Shrewsbury (1795–1866), a British Methodist minister, missionary, opponent of slavery and ecumenist, who worked in the West Indies and South Africa; H. M. Beckles, *A history of Barbados: from Amerindian settlement to Caribbean single market* 2nd ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 118.

⁶⁵ *The Barbadian*, 25 February 1824, University of the West Indies, Barbados, Library, accessed 10 June 2009.

⁶⁶ Downes, 'Freemasonry in Barbados, 1740–1900', 61–2; J. Handler, *The Unappropriated People: Freedmen in the Slave Society of Barbados* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 90–3.

The unusual step of signing this letter demonstrates changes and contradictions in opinions voiced by Overton. Whereas in 1817 he attempted to stop a white man from beating a slave, six years later he supported the views of members of the Island's free black community in supporting the status quo. Records relating to slave ownership suggest that Overton returned to Barbados in 1817 and 1823 to secure the future of black friends or relatives. On 28 May 1823 a Lovelace Ovitan of St Michael, Barbados, registered as his property a slave named Will Bob, purchased from Joanna Forty, who had omitted to register him in 1817 and 1820. The required permission to do this was granted by the Governor and Council, noting that the return also included an unnamed female slave.⁶⁷ It was not unusual for free black men or women to own slaves, for example Thomas Ellis purchased the Dalby Plantation in St Thomas in 1831, which included twenty-six slaves. Ellis, a wealthy black man by the Slavery Abolition Act, was proposed for membership in Hibernian Lodge No. 622, Barbados, meeting under an Irish warrant, in 1844.⁶⁸

It appears that Overton left Barbados not long after the letter appeared in the local press, returning to England in early 1824 where he re-joined the Regiment as an officer's servant. After leaving Scotland, the 1st King's Dragoon Guards were stationed at Carlisle, Leeds and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where Overton appears centre stage in the baggage train painting.⁶⁹ The baggage train was on route to the Hounslow cavalry barracks in Middlesex, where the Duke of York reviewed the troops on 28 June 1825.⁷⁰ Smiling and laughing with a bonneted woman in the foreground, the commanding figure of Overton reflects his comfortable status within the camaraderie of army colleagues. The woman depicted may be Jane Jones, of 7 Dorset Street, whom Overton married at St Mary's Church, Dublin on 25 April 1825, a ceremony witnessed by Elizabeth Newcomen and James Morrison.⁷¹

At this point the documentary trail for Loveless Overton remains cold and further evidence has yet to be found about his subsequent life. Overton was not granted a legacy in the will of Lt Col George Teesdale, who died at Cheltenham, Gloucestershire in 1840, which suggests that he was not in his employ during the latter's retirement from the army. Charlotte, the daughter born during Overton's first marriage to Elizabeth, continued to live at Brighton, Sussex. She married James Hunter at Preston parish church, near

⁶⁷ Slave Registers of former British Colonial Dependencies, 1813–1834, The National Archives, Loveless Ovitan, Barbados 1823 Part 1, T 71/529 p.448 f.220. Ancestry.com. Slave Registers of former British Colonial Dependencies, 1813–1834 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2007.

⁶⁸ Downes, 'Freemasonry in Barbados, 1740–1900', 63–4.

⁶⁹ See footnote 12.

⁷⁰ The 1st Dragoon Guards Moving Quarters, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Captain R. G. Hollies-Smith, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 51 No. 205, Spring 1973, 1–4.

⁷¹ <http://churchrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/reels/d-277-3-1-060.pdf>.

Brighton, on 1 August 1831.⁷² After Hunter's premature death, Charlotte married Henry Soper at St Nicholas, Brighton on 11 June 1843, with her father listed as Lovis Oviton.⁷³ Charlotte was living with Soper, a tailor, at Carlton Row, Brighton by 1841 but her second husband died three years later.⁷⁴ Charlotte married again in the spring of 1845, taking as her third husband George Marshall, a shoemaker of Spring Street, Brighton, who lived with his young son, William. The death of Charlotte is recorded at Worthing, Sussex in 1856 but her third husband survived her by seven years.⁷⁵ Charlotte's step-son, William Marshall, a tailor living at 21 Princes Street, married in 1859 and lived with his new family at 13 Chapel Row, Kemp Town, Brighton until his premature death aged thirty-four in 1869.⁷⁶

To commemorate the life of Loveless Overton, a remarkable black army musician and Freemason, the T. S. Eliot prize-winning poet, David Harsent, wrote a sonnet as a fitting tribute to his memory after visiting the Archives of the Library and Museum of Freemasonry in 2014:

Lovelace Overton under the all-seeing eye
 Loveless by a slip of the pen or Loveless by design,
 To be found bottom-left and smiling among the trunks,
 The hay-cart, the 'sweethearts', babies, wives, (and one
 Bird-cage) in Henry Perlee Parker's overloaded canvas
 Baggage Wagon of the King's Dragoons; Loveless
 Because lacking love, or else Loveless in truth
 If Loveless was your given name and Lovelace the corruption;
 Loveless '... thirty eight years of age, illiterate, six feet
 In height, hair black, eyes black, complexion black,' a trumpeter.
 His discharge citing 'shortness of breath'; Loveless
 Self-styled, maybe, but never the bitter joke
 Of someone with no love to give; Loveless who kept
 'a tung of good reporte'. Loveless. I think the best of you.
 I pick you out of history and offer you a handclasp.⁷⁷

⁷² Marriage of Charlotte Overton and James Hunter, 1 August 1831, St Peter's Church, Preston, near Brighton.

⁷³ Marriage of Charlotte Hunter and Henry Soper, St Nicholas' Church, Brighton, 11 June 1843.

⁷⁴ 1841 Census return ref: The National Archives, HO 107/112/3 fol.51; death of Henry Soper, 1844 Q1, Brighton 7.236.

⁷⁵ Death of Charlotte Marshall, Worthing Registration District, 1856 Q1, Worthing 2b 168; death of George Marshall, Worthing Registration District, 1863 Q3, Worthing 2b 197.

⁷⁶ Marriage of William Marshall and Lizzy Selina Stewart, 29 May 1859, East Sussex Record Office, ref: PAR 255/1/3/31 entry no. 493. Death of William Marshall, Worthing Registration District, Worthing 2b 188.

⁷⁷ D. Harsent, *Through the door: new poetry from London's Archives, Poet in the City and Archives for London* (Southampton: Indigo Press Limited, 2014), See 'Lovelace Overton under the all-seeing eye', 32. Also see <http://www.poetinthecity.co.uk/resource/> and <https://vimeo.com/204346581>.

Despite rejecting Overton as a visiting member in 1817 and 1823, two decades later Albion Lodge of Bridgetown, Barbados played a pivotal role in petitioning Grand Lodge to alter the membership qualification criteria in the *Book of Constitutions*. After the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833 enabled most enslaved people in the Caribbean to gain emancipation five years later, a significant number sought to become Freemasons, but were unable to join lodges as they were not free-born men. A Past Master of Albion Lodge, supported by lodges in Antigua and St Vincent, wrote to the Grand Secretary on 7 April 1840 explaining that the free-born requirement barred 'reputable coloured gentlemen' from membership.⁷⁸ Additional correspondence seeking guidance on the initiation of former enslaved men was sent to Grand Lodge from Friendly Lodge, Jamaica.⁷⁹ Such requests to change the wording of the membership criteria reveal that the economic status of emancipated individuals enabled payment of the subscription fees. The Masonic authorities prevaricated for some time, no doubt avoiding an issue considered 'political'. However the Quarterly Communications of Grand Lodge authorized a change to the *Book of Constitutions* text from 'free-born' to 'free man' on 1 September 1847. While the social and cultural impact of emancipation took time to affect Masonic membership, the semantic change to the rule book removed ambiguities concerning eligibility.

The experiences of Overton provide an insight into the life of an early nineteenth-century Bajan, who made the Atlantic crossing on five occasions, and how he achieved a measure of equality in the British army and as a Freemason. Although he owned slaves, Overton demonstrated considerable empathy with enslaved persons before emancipation took place. Overton gained sufficient self-confidence while serving as a military trumpeter in Britain to challenge aspects of the colonial status quo on return visits to Barbados. High-ranking military colleagues and Colonial Office authorities challenged disparaging comments made by Bajan officials about Overton, who was denied Masonic visitation rights at a lodge in Bridgetown due to socio-cultural barriers. In conclusion, Overton's 'fight for equal rights within the society and for the right to practise his Masonic rites, regardless of the place, demonstrate the determination of his character in an era where it was highly likely that he would have been able to succeed in the public space or the private realm of English Masonry.'⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Letter of James W. Sinckler, Past Master, Albion Lodge No. 232, Barbados to the Grand Secretary, United Grand Lodge of England, Annual Returns Box C 6, The Library and Museum of Freemasonry; N. G. D. Atwell, *Albion Lodge No. 196 E.R.: The First Two Hundred Years* (Barbados, 1990), 32; *Resume of the History of the District Grand Lodge of Barbados, 1740–1936* (Bridgetown, Barbados, 1937), 7.

⁷⁹ Letter from Friendly Lodge No. 291, Kingston, Jamaica to Grand Lodge, 8 April 1844, Annual Returns Box C 7; Replies to this letter included in the Copy Letter Book M, 1 June 1844, 48–50, The Library and Museum of Freemasonry.

⁸⁰ Ramsay, *Fighting for Equal Rights/Rites*, 24.