



A HISTORY OF CLARKE'S ESTATE, NEVIS

**FROM SUGAR PLANTATION
TO LUXURY FOUR SEASONS RESORT**

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Introduction

The Four Seasons Resort on Nevis, situated picturesquely on the west coast of the island, is sited on land which was worked by enslaved people for at least one hundred and fifty years. Most of the land was given over to growing sugar cane. However, on this sugar estate also stood the homes of these people, as well as the stables, stores, mills and boiling houses associated with sugar production. The transformation of this sort of estate from agriculture to the leisure industry has become a familiar one in the changing economic and social demographics of the Caribbean generally and of Nevis in particular.

Although the use of the land has changed, if one looks closely, all over the Four Seasons Resort one can still find evidence of over 300 years of intensive agriculture and human toil. A wall from the Old Road fort on the beach is mute testimony to Britain's colonial ambitions for expansion and wealth, while the standing remains of the windmill tower on the resort's golf course and the sugar coppers are visible reminders of the industry that once shaped the island's landscape. Even the names of some neighbourhoods with their rental residences evoke the plantations on which sugar was once grown, such as Belmont and Stewart's. Of course, dominating the west coast is Pinney's Beach.

Not evident are the histories of those engaged in producing this wealth along the west coast of Nevis and of the countless people who laboured on lands, once known as Clarke's Estate, which now belong to the Four Seasons Resort.¹

This is an account of how Clarke's Estate developed and of the people who developed it.

The early history

The Four Seasons Resort is situated on what was, in effect, a single estate of about 350 acres.² From around 1640 to 1840 this property was gradually created by putting together many different properties. Since these frequently changed names and owners, the exact details of this process have yet to be clarified. The earliest evidence relates to the southeast corner (or just beyond it) of the present property and comes from claims submitted by planters, following the invasion of Nevis in 1706 by the French.

The French forces torched buildings, destroyed fields, killed cattle and stole enslaved people off the island. Enslaved people were property and, like any other property, could be bought, sold, mortgaged, or bequeathed in wills, and they could be insured. It was, therefore, accepted practice that planters sought recompense for the loss of their property. In this instance planters claimed compensation from the British Government. One such claim was for a plantation called Lady Bawden's (later called Mount Ida, or Wansey's and later still Belmont), just to the southeast of the present resort.³ Lady Bawden's history goes back to at least 1685/6 when its owner, Sir John Bawden, ordered his overseers to experiment with a new method of producing muscovado sugar. Owned jointly by Richard Merriweather and Azariah Pinney in 1706, it consisted of 176 acres with a large area of mountain land. Around one hundred enslaved people were shared between it and another of their plantations.

¹ The Nevis Four Seasons Resort largely occupies the plantation titled 'Clark's, Seymore's and Lyng's' but known as 'Clarke's'. See the plan on p37 believed to date from 1873.

² Without details of the land currently owned by Four Seasons and its offshoots, it is difficult to be precise about how the present-day boundaries overlap with the historical boundaries of each estate. For instance, some of Four Seasons land on the northeast side once belonged to Jessup's plantation.

³ The conjunction of the names Lady Bawden's/Mount Ida/Wansey's comes in an agreement between Azariah Pinney, James Tobin and Revd William Jones dated 28 July 1794. In this Pinney and Tobin stood security for Revd Jones as he purchased Mount Ida, formerly known as Lady Bowden's, since called Wansey's and which formerly belonged to Richard Merriweather – estimated size 178 acres (Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court Records Nevis (ECSCRN), Common Deeds Record Book (CDRB) 1794-1797 f20).

Following the French raid, Pinney and Merriweather claimed re-imbusement for four male and five female workers. They valued young men the most and claimed £50 each for Tony and Scipio (aged 36 and 30) and £40 each for Munday and Will (both aged 40). They also claimed £40 each for Tanwell and Phillis (aged 26 and 24), and £36 each for Husaa and Amnia (aged 38 and 36). Cooba, a woman said to have been 40 years old, was the least valuable at £30.⁴ Pinney and Merriweather also claimed for draught cattle, an animal mill, a large new boiling house 'of good timber', various outbuildings, a pigeon house and a mansion house which they described as 'very large and good timber all boarded and shingled'.⁵

'The famous, if rattle-pated, Mr. Alderman Oliver'

The first clear view of the seaward end of the present Four Seasons Resort emerges from the time when the Oliver family owned some of the land. Wealthy and influential, they also held extensive plantations in Antigua, Montserrat, St Vincent and Virginia. Richard Oliver was Speaker of the House of Assembly in Antigua; his son Rowland was a judge as well as a member of the Leeward Islands' Council. It seems that sometime between 1718 and 1759 Rowland may have bought from the family of Governor Walter Hamilton three parcels of land amounting to 186 acres. Two of these plots, Ling's (59 acres) and Road (70 acres) lie within the present boundaries of the Four Seasons.

Towards the end of 1759 Rowland Oliver left Antigua to live on his estate in Nevis. During his time on Nevis Rowland Oliver manumitted (freed) some enslaved people, among them a boy called Richard. He was 'supposed to be the son of my present overseer Richard Clarke' and the mulatto woman Sarah⁶ and was freed as a reward for his mother's 'good behaviour'. It is not known whether the overseer Richard Clarke had any family link to the Clarke family who later owned the estate.

Sometime after he left Nevis, Rowland Oliver gave advice on planting to William Coker, the newly arrived manager of the Pinney plantation, Mountravers, which lay immediately to the south of Oliver's plantation. Oliver died in 1767 in Bath, England's fashionable spa town, and his estates went to his only surviving son, Richard. Born in St John's, Antigua, probably in 1734, he took over the plantations when he was in his early thirties. He had married his cousin Mary in 1758; they had no children.

Richard Oliver had been sent to work for his uncle (another Richard Oliver) who owned a significant West India merchant house in London. Having become a partner, he stood down from this role to pursue a political career. In July 1770 he was elected an alderman for the district of Billingsgate in London and a few days later a Member of Parliament for the City of London. Not long after the election Richard Oliver defended the rights of a printer who had dared to publish debates in the House of Commons. For this the House of Commons ordered Oliver's committal to the Tower of London. The imprisonment led to a public outcry, and on his release a triumphal procession accompanied him and the Lord Mayor to the Mansion House. Oliver continued on his somewhat radical path; in his speeches in Parliament he defended the American colonists in their revolt against Britain. Briefly a supporter of the progressive MP John Wilkes, he was rather memorably described by the historian Richard Pares as 'the famous, if rattle-pated Mr Alderman Oliver'.⁷ A portrait of the famous alderman is held at the Guildhall Art Gallery in London.⁸

⁴ In today's money, £30 might be worth about £2,500

⁵ Bristol University Library Special Collections (BULSC), Pinney Papers (PP), West Indies Damaged or Fragile Box

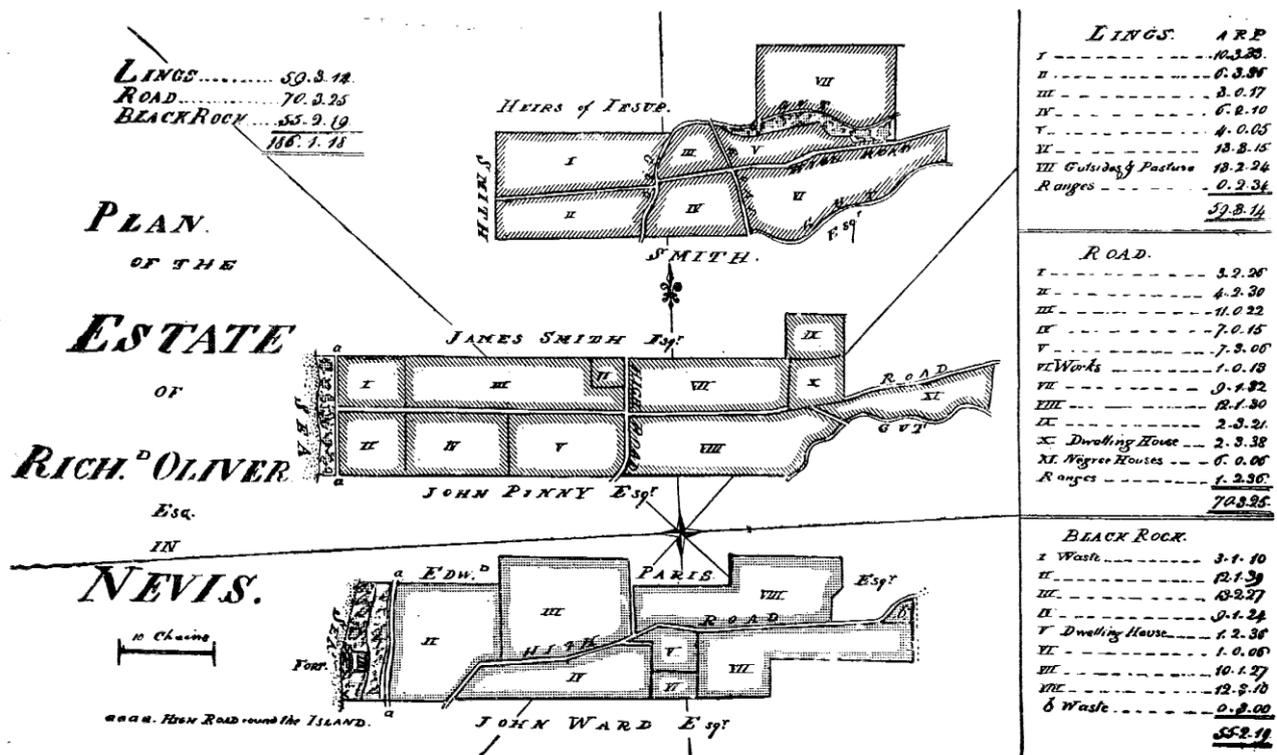
⁶ In the language of the time a mulatto was the child of one black and one white parent.

⁷ R Pares *A West India Fortune* Longmans, 1950 p150

⁸ <https://www.artfund.org/supporting-museums/art-weve-helped-buy/artwork/4395/portrait-of-alderman-richard-oliver>

Oliver's political career was cut short when, in 1778, his overseas plantations required his attention. 'Owing to the precarious state of his property' he resigned as alderman, stood down as an MP at the next election and, after an absence of eleven years, returned to the West Indies.⁹

A plan of Oliver's Estate



Plan of the Estate of Richard Oliver Esq in Nevis, date unknown¹⁰

The plan explains the layout of Oliver's 186-acre estate on Nevis. It consisted of three parts: Black Rock, Ling's and Road. Black Rock was on the edge of Charlestown but the other two are now on Four Seasons land. Ling's and Road were separated by a narrow strip of, perhaps, 15 acres, owned by James Smith. According to his will, Smith seems to have owned other parcels of land to the east of Oliver's that now are also part of Four Seasons land.

Road held the key parts of the plantation infrastructure. Oliver's sugar works would have been based around an animal mill and a boiling house. The plan shows that the works were located along the main road leading around the island, probably where today's industrial remains can be seen. It is also possible to discover some of the cobbles from the plantation road that ran west to east through that part of the estate called Road. The works and the roads are reminders that the very infrastructure of the island was built through the skills and labour of the enslaved population. For almost two centuries they constructed buildings, bridges, public and plantation roads and, of course, the forts that can still be seen today.

The plantation house at Oliver's was situated to the east, and upwind, of the works. An indication as to the state of the house might come from the owner of Mountravers. These were John Pinney's impressions of houses on the island several years after he arrived on Nevis in 1764:

⁹ For the Oliver family see VL Oliver *A History of Antigua* Mitchell and Hughes 1896 vol 2 pp318-42; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; RB Sheridan 'Planters and Merchants: The Oliver Family of Antigua and London 1716-1784' in *Business History* vol 13 1971

¹⁰ VL Oliver *Caribbeana* vol 6 pp24-25

The houses are all built of wood, the kitchen and offices separate, the roof within side are entirely bear, many not even painted. In short they are nothing but shells, therefore you must conceive how odd they appeared to me at first sight. We are pestered in our houses with many disagreeable insects, such as flies, cock rochs scorpions, centipedes etc the two last are venomous.¹¹

The plan also shows the six acres allocated to the 'negroe houses' or slave village (marked xi). The village was very close to and southeast of the plantation house, on marginal ground next to the ghut or ravine. This made it possible to supervise the workforce from the plantation house. It is clear that a path, marked as a public road on other plans, ran from the bottom end of the village south across the ghut to Pinney's Estate.

Very few descriptions of slave housing on Nevis exist. One comes from the pro-slavery campaigner and Nevisian planter James Tobin. In his evidence to Parliament in 1790, which was undoubtedly designed to put the best gloss on such villages, he said:

They are lodged in houses built by themselves, with the assistance of their masters. The most common houses contain at least two rooms, one for the purpose of sleeping in, and the other for their common use; there are many of their houses much larger, consisting of three and four rooms, with small buildings detached, for the use of their cookery. The houses in general are thatched and wattled, and many plastered...The cabins on which they sleep are a kind of raised benches, made of boards, on which they spread their mats and blankets.¹²

It is very unlikely that many of the houses had three or four rooms. In contrast, Tobin's political adversary, the abolitionist James Ramsay, described women having to give birth on St Kitts 'in a dark, damp, smoaky hut, perhaps without a rag...'¹³

'Enemies all around us!'

Oliver's neighbour, John Pinney, captured in his letters some of the notable events. A disastrous hurricane in 1772 caused major damage to the works on Mountravers and destroyed the slave housing, leaving people homeless. It is likely this happened on Oliver's as well. After the hurricane, famine threatened the whole island. In the following year crops were short and an outbreak of smallpox occurred, but the situation got much worse when the American War of Independence (1776-1783) closed the supply routes from North America. This led to starvation among the enslaved workers. The shortage of provisions was a constant theme in Pinney's letters.

In 1777 he described how the fears raised by war led to a joint project with Oliver's:

Enemies all around us! While at breakfast, a few weeks ago, I saw a Brig taken, bound to St Christopher, near my own landing. After the sailing of our last Fleet, we shall be unhappily situated - subject to be pilfered and robed by Pirates in the Night, who may with ease, carry off our Slaves, to the utter ruin of the Planter. ... I have obtained leave to raise a battery of three Guns at the foot of my Estate, where I shall keep all the Winter a nightly watch.¹⁴

Weak though the defences were, they were also meant to help protect Oliver's land, and so the neighbours shared the expenses. Watches remained on guard every night – each man was paid £5 Nevis Currency (Ncr) a month – and some of them were armed. Pinney had bought 'two firelocks, 3 ½ foot barrels with bayonets

¹¹ BULSC, PP Letterbook 3 1761-1775 John Pinney, Nevis, to Mrs Williams, 3 April 1766

¹² S Lambert ed., *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century - Reports and Papers 1790* vol 71 Scholarly Resources Inc. 1975 pp260-87

¹³ J Ramsay *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves...*1784

¹⁴ BULSC, PP Letterbook 4 6 June 1777

and iron ramrods', and he equipped his indentured servant Tom Peaden with 'a light soldier's firelock with a bayonett, of about thirty shillings value'.¹⁵

An investigation in 2000 by a team from Southampton University, as part of the Nevis Heritage Project, confirmed that this fort was built in 1777 and found that it was erected on top of the earlier Mathew's Fort dating from 1705. The remains on Pinney's Beach can be found where the Golden Rock Pavilion used to stand at the bottom of Pinney's Estate on the border with Oliver's.

The team also found the remains of another fort identified as Old Road, or Katherine's, Fort in the centre of the Four Seasons' beachfront. This is comprised of two structures, the first a gun platform offshore which has a preliminary date of 1705. Within it were found five canons *in situ*. The second structure, on shore, was possibly a guardhouse for the platform.¹⁶

'A solemn engagement'

On 16 April 1784 Richard Oliver died at sea off Nevis, on board the packet bound for England. Given that he died childless, one might have expected the extensive property to go to his surviving second wife, Mary. However, by his will of 1779 it all went to a cousin, William Smith. Mary Oliver had to make do with an annuity.¹⁷ One of Richard Oliver's political allies explained: 'Having formed a solemn engagement with a Mr Smith that the longest liver should have all the other died possessed of, he bequeathed to him the whole of his property.'

William Smith was another absentee owner, described as 'of Grenada and Manchester Square, London'. His family originated from the Isle of Wight in England. The Smiths were, like the Olivers, significant planters on Antigua. Including Oliver's, he owned six estates in the West Indies.

Almost immediately Smith had the 'stock' on Oliver's appraised. The appraisers listed 116 enslaved people, 23 cattle, 2 horses and 12 mules and valued the estate at £12,000 sterling. They reckoned that Oliver's would produce 80 hogsheads of sugar a year and a net income of £900. However, this was not the whole story. Many of the estates, Oliver's among them, were heavily mortgaged.

Smith solved his financial difficulties by selling either portions of, or whole, estates. Having inherited 186 acres, he sold 60 acres of Oliver's 15 July 1790 together with 115 enslaved people for £11,000.¹⁸ A schedule named the people sold - 67 men and boys, 37 women and 15 girls - and listed the considerable stock.¹⁹ The buyers were Joseph Clarke, a 'mariner of Nevis',²⁰ and Charles Payne of Essex.

Further research may suggest why the other 126 acres do not appear to have been included in the sale but, as will become clear later, some of the remaining estate of Richard Oliver also came into the possession of the Clarke family.

¹⁵ BULSC, PP Letterbook 4 John Pinney to Nathaniel Martin, 30 July 1775

¹⁶ T Machling 'Colonial Fortifications' in *The Nevis Heritage Project - Interim Report 2000* E Morris, T Machling *et al*; also subsequent contributions in the 2001 and 2002 Interim Reports.

¹⁷ ECSCRN, Book of Wills 1763-1787 ff613-614. Attached to the will is an inventory of 116 enslaved people, stock and their values ff618-620

¹⁸ For a pedigree of Smith and details of his affairs more generally see VL Oliver *Caribbeana* vol 1 pp150-58 and VL Oliver *History of Antigua* vol 2 p327; for the sale see J Titford 'Settlers of the Old Empire - The West Indies: Nevis' in *Family Tree Magazine* November 1999 pp59-61.

¹⁹ ECSCRN, CDRB 1790-92 ff69-81

²⁰ Captain Clarke was a lucky mariner. In 1780 his ship the *Clytus* sank in mid-Atlantic: 'The *Clytus* Capt. Clarke that had all your Plantation Stores Shipped on board him, foundered in Latitude 38 the Capt. & all the People was saved, they were took up by a Dutch Ship bound to the West Indies...' (Stapleton Cotton MSS 16, Charles Hutton on Nevis to Mrs Catherine Stapleton, 24 April 1780, courtesy of Brian Littlewood). In 1792 he was master, and at least part owner, of the *Boddington*.

The Clarke Period, 1790 to 1826

The Clarke family took over the estate during a period that presented ever-greater difficulties for the slave-owning sugar planter. They assumed control just at the point when the campaign to end the transatlantic slave trade was gathering momentum in both the British press and in Parliament, leading to the abolition of the trade in 1807. The 22-year war with France, which broke out in 1793, produced some staggeringly high prices for sugar but gave no stability to the market and increased the cost of plantation supplies. At the end of the war in 1815 the price of sugar crashed. Meanwhile, rebellions in Jamaica, Santo Domingo (Haiti), Barbados and Demerara (Guyana) raised the hopes of all enslaved people and increased the fears of planters. While these events were taking place, the Clarke family were continually trying to improve their economic position by acquiring control of the neighbouring plantations.

It is unclear where the Clarke family originated. Certainly, there is evidence that Clarkes settled on Nevis, and Antigua, from as early as 1684 when Governor Stapleton granted a Joseph Clarke, merchant, 125 acres of land; Clarke became a well-known name on Nevis in the eighteenth century.²¹

Again, it is unclear who this particular Charles Payne was. His will reveals his descendants but it is not known who his parents were. He was probably related to the wider Payne family who owned a number of plantations on Nevis and St Kitts, for instance land which became part of Clifton estate and also Morgan's, which later became part of Hamilton Estate. This wider family included Sir Ralph Payne, the St Kitts-born Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief of the Leeward Islands who at one time seems to have owned Ward's plantation.²²

Whoever Charles Payne was, his daughter Mary married 'the mariner of Nevis', Captain Joseph Clarke. The couple had a daughter, Mary Hannah. In the late 1790s Mary Hannah's mother died and also her grandfather, Charles Payne. Although her father, Joseph Clarke, the seafarer, was still alive²³, Mary Hannah inherited a substantial part of the estate her father and grandfather had jointly purchased. Subsequently she married her cousin John Henry Clarke, and at this point it is appropriate to call the plantation 'Clarke's'.

A plan of Clarke's Estate

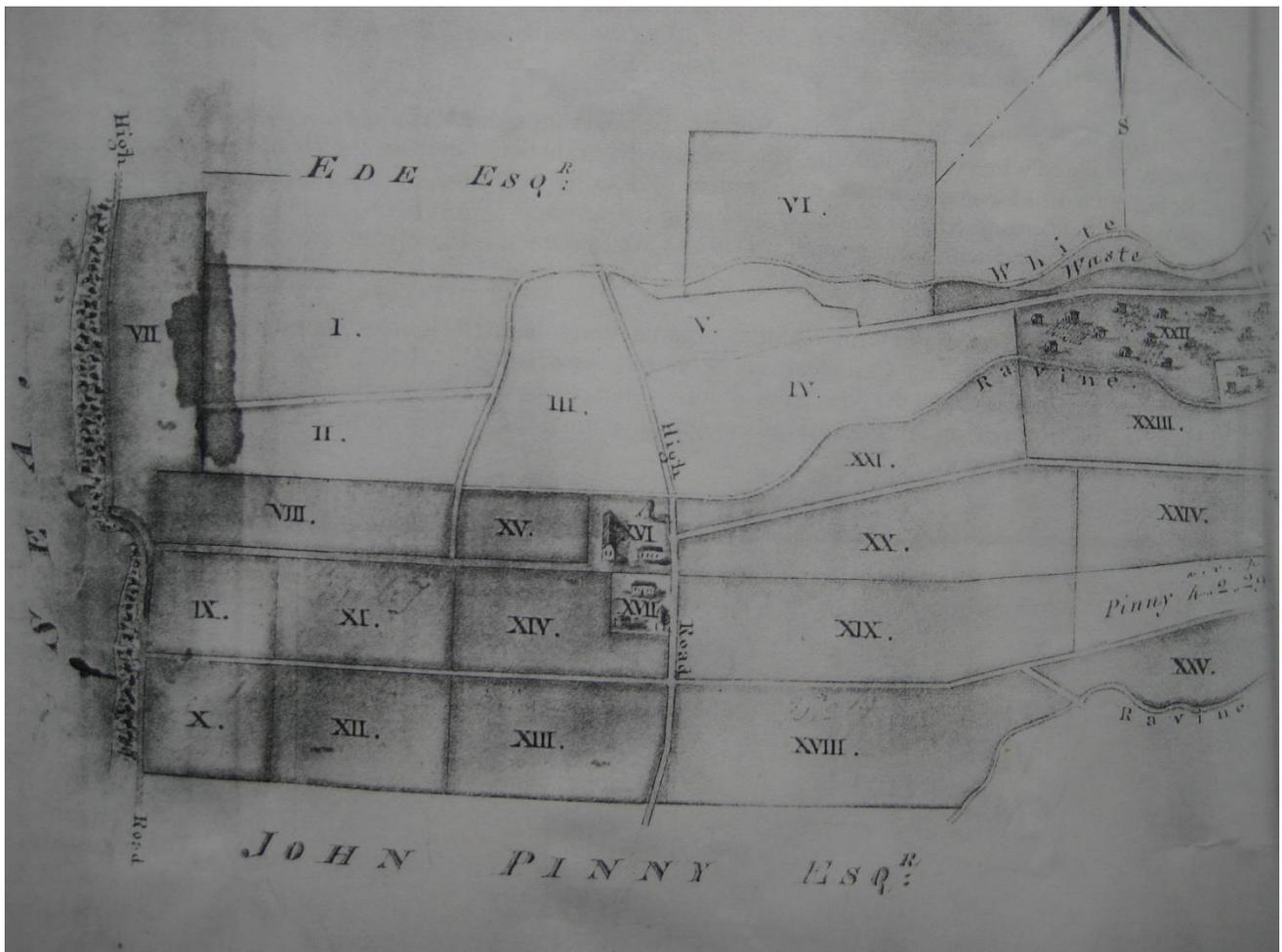
The archive of the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society (NHCS) holds a plan of 'Clarke's' estate. Its date is not known for certain, but it may date to between 1799 and 1808.²⁴ It shows a large plantation of 417 acres. As with all large estates on Nevis, it was an amalgam of many different parts.

²¹ This is not to say necessarily that the Clarkes who owned Clarke's Estate were related to that Joseph Clarke. It is possible that letters suggest a link with the village of Halstock in Dorset and a family connection with the Pinneys.

²² For the wider Payne family see VL Oliver *History of Antigua* vol 3 pp7-13. Charles Payne died in 1799. For his will dated September 1798 and that of his daughter Mary dated May 1798 see ECSCRN, Book of Wills 1787-1805 f316 and f419. It is possible that Payne, too, was a ship's Captain. In his will he left part shares in various vessels to members of his family.

²³ Joseph Clarke died in 1804. His will, made in 1798, was entered in Nevis in 1805; see ECSCRN, Book of Wills 1787-1805 f452 April 1805, also a copy in BULSC, PP Domestic Box 3 item 7: Will of Joseph Clarke dated 30 June 1797. Under the will, Mary Hannah Clarke inherited his share of the estate from her father but, in the event that she died before marriage, that share was to go to her cousin John Henry Clarke. The latter had been the Deputy Provost Marshal on the island in the 1770s and 1780s. However, on the 7/8ths of the estate Mary Hannah inherited from her father and grandfather, John Henry Clarke was in effect a tenant of his wife.

²⁴ The dates of the plan are suggested by the following: Mary Hannah Clarke inherited part of the estate in 1799 and married her cousin John Henry Clarke sometime after September 1798. The plan of the estate shows that the plantation to the south was owned by John Pinn(e)y, but he sold this in early 1808.



Lower part of Clarke's Estate extracted from *Plan of Estates belonging to John Henry Clarke Esqr in the Island of Nevis* (date unknown but ca. 1799-1808), courtesy of the NHCS

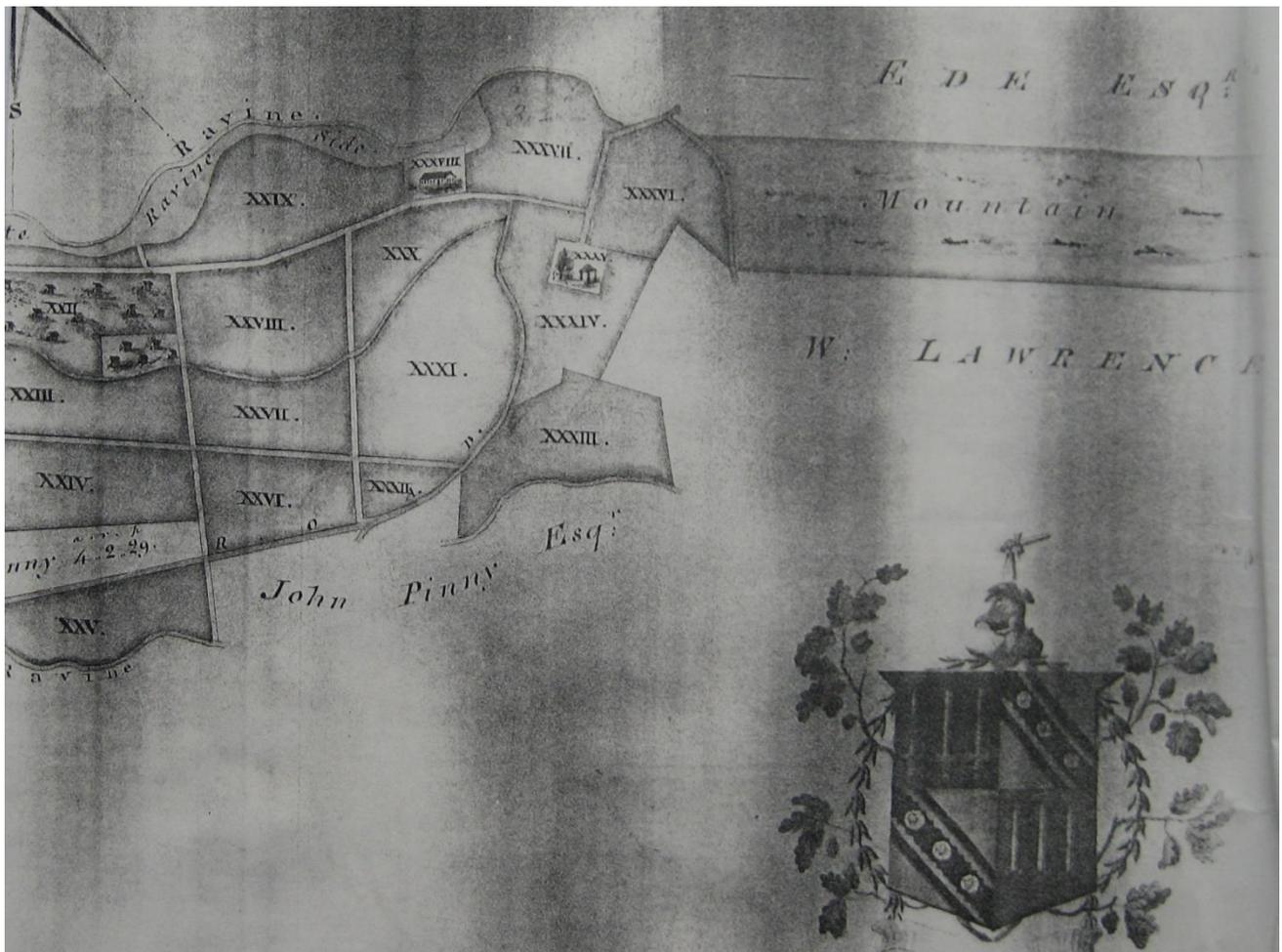
The central core of the old Oliver estate, Road, is seen in plots 9-19 plus 25. Ling's, which was also part of Oliver's, is seen in plots 1-7.

Between them lay the land that had once belonged to James Smith, plots 8, 15, 16, 20 and 21, which had been incorporated into the estate. James Smith had also in 1776 purchased from one Edmund Seymour two plots of land of 50 and 24 acres. These subsequently became part of Oliver's/Clarke's and bordered on the estate known as Wansey's or Belmont.²⁵

Smith was one of the partners in the firm of Smith & Baillies on St Kitts. The Baillie brothers, Alexander, James and Evan of Dochfour near Inverness, together with Smith, acted as agents for slavers, ship owners, factors and planters and sold enslaved people to planters within the Leeward Islands, including to John Pinney on Nevis. They also sold to North American agents, for instance Henry Laurens in South Carolina.²⁶ It is quite likely that some of the people on Clarke's Estate had been traded through the firm.

²⁵ BULSC, DM 792 transaction mentioned in a mortgage release by Pinney to Smith dated 1776. These lands had in 1771 been mortgaged by Seymour to John Pinney, and the deal included 40 named enslaved people. Land called Seymore's appears on the ca. 1873 plan of Clarke's Estate, south and east of the main house at Stewart's.

²⁶ Evan Baillie, when based in Bristol later, was more deeply involved in the trade in enslaved Africans. He was one of the principal owners of the *Emilia*, which ran five slaving voyages, all from Bonny in present-day Nigeria, to various islands in the West Indies. The last voyage in 1786 landed 193 men, 102 women, 49 boys and 35 girls on Grenada and Tortola. Another 89 African captives had died before reaching the West Indies. Partly from the profits of this enterprise Evan Baillie founded a substantial firm of sugar factors in Bristol. He and his sons then extended their activities into banking and he became an MP. See C Eickelmann *The Mountravers Plantation Community 1734-1834* pt 2 ch 4 pp419-20 and p335 <https://seis.bristol.ac.uk/~emceee/mountravers~part2chapter4.pdf>; also D Alston *Slaves and Highlanders* Edinburgh University Press, 2021 pp22-5.



Upper part of Clarke's Estate, including Stewart's and Seymour's,
 extracted from *Plan of Estates belonging to John Henry Clarke Esq in the Island of Nevis*

At some point before the plan was drawn up, Oliver's had been united with land, called Stewart's on the index to the plan, which ran uphill from plot 22 to plot 38. This included James Smith's land in that area (ex-Seymour's). The mountain land above this had once been cultivated, since an old set of works is shown there on a later plan.

In a mortgage of the whole of Clarke's Estate in 1815 to the merchant firm Pinneys & Ames the part called Stewart's was described as 140 acres 'known by the several names of Stewart's or Bloomsberry, Hams, Williams Lime Hill and Hamilton's ... containing together 140 acres now thrown together and making one estate'. Why the whole was called Stewart's is as yet unclear.²⁷

However, this 1815 description suggests that Stewart's consisted of at least four small estates put together, as is often found in the histories of estates on Nevis. The boundaries of Oliver's in the mortgage suggest that the previous owner of the (amalgamated) Stewart's had been James Smith.²⁸

The plan shows that in Clarke's time the dwelling house of the whole estate was at Stewart's (plot 38), well away from the main works down at Oliver's and further away from the new village. The house site has been

²⁷ The Pinneys were distantly related by marriage to a Dr Thomas Stewart who had practiced as a surgeon on Nevis since the 1730s. He owned land bordering on Jessup's estate. He was dead by June 1759. See C Eickelmann *The Mountravers Plantation Community 1734-1834* pt 3 chapter 3 <https://seis.bristol.ac.uk/~emceee/mountravers~part3chapter3.pdf> p1124

²⁸ BULSC, PP Domestic Box T-3 mortgage indenture dated 17 June 1815

restored relatively recently. Just to the south of the house was a secondary set of works (plot 35) which included an animal mill for crushing sugar cane in the upper part of the estate. In 1998 archaeologists from the British TV programme *Time Team* located these with the help of David Rollinson and Charlie Woodley.

The principal works for this larger estate, however, were on an expanded site (plots 16 and 17). They included Oliver's old works (plot 17) and what seems to be a mill situated next to the main island road, where the remains of this industrial site near the windmill can be found today.

The slave village had moved north from where it was in Oliver's time (plot 25) to plot 22, an area of eight acres conveniently sited between two ghuts. In one of his pamphlets James Tobin, the Nevis planter who campaigned against the abolition of the slave trade, suggested that 'the houses of the negroes are commonly placed in regular rows both ways, and situated in the centre of a square of nearly a quarter of an acre of land, planted by them in provisions, fruit trees etc'.²⁹ Certainly this plan of Clarke's does suggest areas round the huts for growing food. A part of the village seems to have been kept separate for a particular group of enslaved people. The layout of the village can be compared to an earlier depiction of a similar village on Jessup's Estate in 1755.³⁰

In 1815 there were 117 named people on Clarke's with Stewart's³¹ so some comparison can be made as to the size of the village relative to numbers. This shows that, at fourteen people per acre, Clarke's village was slightly less densely populated than Oliver's or Jessup's.³²

In August 2002 the authors walked over the landscape using the 1799-1808 plan. Bearing in mind that the village was just over eight acres, measurements suggest that it lay partly at the tee end (east end) of the 15th hole of the golf course and partly in the bush to the south of the tee. Interestingly the west (or bottom) end of the village by measurement lay roughly where, in 2002, the bush ended and an edge of the hole began. The two ghuts on either side were deep, particularly White Ravine, and the site lay on the ridge between them. Unfortunately, during the planning and construction of the Four Seasons Resort it appears that no thought was given to investigating possible archaeological sites such as this.

The plan also shows the same path from the west end of plot 25 (the old slave village site in Oliver's time now apparently cultivated) south across the ravine to a site on Pinney's Estate which may have been the location for a much earlier slave village on that estate.³³ These were routes of communication for enslaved people from one estate to another. The path still existed in the early 2000s.

Food provisions – six pints piled and three herrings

Planters on Nevis generally used their lands to grow sugar rather than food crops; to feed their people they imported provisions from North America and Europe which they doled out once a week from the plantation's 'allowance' house. Tobin claimed in evidence to Parliament in 1790 that every week people were provided with about 'six to nine or ten pints or grain or flour', including children as soon as they were weaned. In addition they received, he stated, 'an allowance of salt provisions, to the amount of six or eight herrings a week, or mackarel, salt fish or shads in proportion'.³⁴

²⁹ J Tobin *Cursory Remarks upon the Reverend Mr Ramsay's Essay* 1785 pp64-6

³⁰ <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/1755-map-of-jessups-estate>

³¹ BULSC, PP Domestic Box T-3 Schedule A attached to a mortgage indenture held by John Pinney on Clarke's Estate. Schedule B is another list of 80 enslaved people attached to Mount Ida/Wansey's.

³² For more details see <https://seis.bristol.ac.uk/~emceee/mountravers~part2chapter6.pdf>

³³ BULSC, PP Letterbook 20 John Pinney to James Tobin, 2 July 1807 in which Pinney describes 'the old negro house piece near to it, adjoining Oliver's negro houses'.

³⁴ S Lambert ed. *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century* vol 71 p277

The only direct evidence of what Clarke's Estate provided comes in a list of each person's allowance from about 1826. This suggests they had to make do with less. Field workers like Judy or Cubenna received six pints 'piled' and three herrings each week; three pregnant women Celinda, Nanno, and Phillis, and those described as 'infirm', had the same allocation. Older children who worked in the 'sheepmeat gang' on lighter duties got three pints and three fish; the infants three pints and no fish. There was, of course, a hierarchy. Although the coopers and the blacksmith were given the same as the rest, Young Quamina, the driver of Number 2 gang, and William Steward, the head boiler, were entitled to more. Better off still were the senior house steward, Frank Fisher, and the driver of Number 1 gang, Jack Smith, who were entitled to double the usual allowance.³⁵ Rations were reduced during crop time when people were allowed to suck juice from the sugar canes.

Nevis has always relied heavily on imported food and, when the American War of Independence interrupted supplies, a large number of enslaved people starved to death in the West Indies. This included 300-400 on Nevis. Before local legislation required slaveholders to provide minimum food allowances for their people, the more cautious planters learnt to pay attention to growing some foodstuffs on their property, in addition to shipping in dry goods and salted staples.

Some planters are sought to grow more edible crops on the island itself. John Pinney, for instance, seems to have set aside land on his estate to plant provision crops such as yams, potatoes, Angola peas, eddoes, corn and cassava. He also encouraged the planting of lemon, lime and breadfruit trees. In addition, 12 acres of land was set aside high up on the hillside for enslaved workers to tend their own 'allotments'. On Jessup's Estate 17 acres was set aside as 'Negro Ground'.³⁶ In effect these allotments 'belonged' to individuals who worked them on Saturday afternoons and Sundays. On them they grew potatoes, yam and cassava and probably some vegetables - some of it for sale in the Sunday market. This trade provided not only an opportunity for everyone to meet unhindered but also to gain a degree of independence by earning money that they could spend freely.

Around their houses were 'gardens' in which people grew vegetables and fruit and also kept hogs, goats and poultry. The Clarke's plan shows these gardens quite clearly but there is no evidence as to whether they had allotments further up the mountain or were given provisions that were produced centrally by the estate.

The evidence suggests that the food available was bare subsistence, given the hard, physical labour the people were doing. In times of war or adverse weather this subsistence tipped over into hunger and starvation.

Clarke's attempted expansion

As stated earlier, the Clarke family started to acquire parts of the estate in 1790, and Mary Hannah Clarke, who married her cousin John Henry Clarke, inherited portions of the estate from both her father, Joseph Clarke, and her grandfather Charles Payne. In 1802 the couple (or John Henry Clarke) wisely declined an offer from the Pinneys to buy their neighbouring plantation, Mountravers, for £30,000. They may well have decided that it was not the right time to expand, given the fluctuations in the wartime price of sugar.³⁷ However, five years later John Henry Clarke could not resist a second opportunity and became enmeshed in a long dispute.

John Pinney had left Nevis for England in 1783 and set up as a sugar merchant in Bristol. He nominally handed over the core of Mountravers plantation, along with the majority of its people, when his eldest son

³⁵ BULSC, PP Domestic Box T3 ii *List of Negroes on Clarke's Estate with their occupations, allowance etc* undated, but probably 1826

³⁶ 'A Plan of the Plantation of Edward Jesup' surveyed 1755, plan drawn 1761, Southampton City Archives, Moberly and Wharton Mss D/MW 35/8a.

³⁷ R Pares *A West India Fortune* p150

came of age. John Frederick Pinney, however, was not interested in being a sugar planter and persuaded his father to sell the estate first in 1802, then again in 1807. Neither of them was on Nevis and they appointed an attorney, their friend and business partner James Tobin, to arrange the sale. In a disastrous complication, father and son were also conducting negotiations in Bristol.³⁸

Two purchasers came to the fore: John Henry Clarke and Edward Huggins senior. Huggins owned other estates on Nevis, mostly in the parish of St George Gingerland. It was alleged that he had shot an enslaved man and thrown his body into a hut, which he then burnt, and that two of his people, worn out by being chained as a punishment, had committed suicide by throwing themselves into a cistern. It was also alleged that Huggins had boasted of five attempts to poison him.³⁹

Whether or not these stories were true, he was known to have been cruel to his workers and Pinney knew it. He wrote to James Tobin about the possibility of selling to another planter:

I wish for this gentleman to have the refusal and Mr JH Clarke ... in case you can contrive it without offence to Mr Edward Huggins, to whom I am under no promise or engagement, but yet I would not wish for him to know that I gave a preference to other persons merely because he bears the character of being cruel to his negroes.⁴⁰

Huggins's reputation for cruelty probably was the reason why Pinney persuaded Clarke to rent (for Clarke's Estate) a small group of 24 skilled and, to some extent, favoured people whom he did not intend to sell along with Mountravers plantation. Clarke agreed to allow them to move their houses onto his land. They were thus protected from the punishing treatment the Huggins family meted out when they acquired Mountravers eventually.

Negotiations for the sale were complicated by the length of time it took to get news across the Atlantic, and as a result on 1 February 1808 Pinney concluded a deal in Bristol to sell the estate to Edward Huggins - despite his earlier reservations - while on Nevis Tobin sold the plantation to Clarke and on 7 March 1808 put him in possession.

This tangled situation set off an increasingly acrimonious dispute between Pinney and Tobin from which their long friendship never fully recovered. It also divided the island between the Clarke/Tobin supporters and those of Pinney/Huggins. Wishing to avoid the expense of the inevitable lawsuits, in August 1809 Clarke gave up possession of Mountravers.⁴¹

Mild and sharp measures

While he was in possession of Mountravers, John Henry Clarke was in charge of its workforce. His attitude to punishment reveals that even slightly more liberal-minded planters used the whip, albeit less so, and his comments give an indication of how the people on Clarke's own estate were likely to have been treated. Tobin wrote that, according to Clarke,

... the Negroes on the Estate, though accustomed from long Indulgence to habits of Idleness, were not difficult to manage by mild measures; and that during his residence of Sixteen Months on the

³⁸ For this debacle see BULSC, PP DM58 Miscellaneous Volumes 13-16 *Case of Clarke and Tobin* and relevant letterbooks

³⁹ UKNA, CO 152/96 Letter James Webbe Tobin to Governor Elliot, 7 September 1810

⁴⁰ BULSC, PP Letterbook 20 John Pinney to James Tobin, 18 February 1807

⁴¹ C Eickelmann *The Mountravers Plantation Community 1734-1834* pt 2 chapter 7
<https://seis.bristol.ac.uk/~emceee/mountravers~part2chapter7.pdf> p783

Estate, he did not believe that the number of One-hundred and sixty Lashes, was inflicted amongst the whole Gang, then amounting to One-hundred and eighty-three.

Meanwhile Tobin was complaining to Pinney about the behaviour of Pinney's group of 24 people⁴² rented to Clarke:

I am concerned to be obliged to inform you, that I have had an uncommon deal of trouble from the refractoriness of such of your Negroes as you chose to keep distinct from the rest. I have reason to think that several in this lot, particularly some of the Mulattoes had puffed themselves up with the hopes of receiving their freedom as you had professed an intention of keeping them separate from the others; they ill brooked therefore their being leased to Mr. Clarke and became impudent and unruly and several of them told him in plain terms that they had not been used to work and never would. However, by mild measures with some of them, and sharp ones with a few others, they seem now to be pretty quiet and reconciled to their situation.

These reports from Clarke and Tobin spelt out how planters could punish almost at will without interference from the law. Minor acts of disobedience or inattention, such as children letting the stock wander, could result in a flogging. Some of Pinney's managers used 'clogs', large wooden blocks chained to the ankle that people had to drag around while Edward Huggins employed iron collars armed with spikes. Runaways were hunted down and brought back; persistent absconders were sold off the island away from their families. Such punishments, designed to crush any form of resistance, underpinned the system of slavery.

Changes

Having failed in his attempt to buy one plantation, and perhaps tempted by a long period of higher wartime prices for sugar, Clarke succeeded in 1812 in expanding the family's estate. He bought Wansey's Estate from William Lawrence for £18,000. This was Lady Bawden's old 190-acre estate, also known as Mount Ida and later still known as Belmont. It lay between Clarke's/Stewart's and Mountravers. Its most important advantage was its workforce which could be utilised on Clarke's.

Although its location uphill of the main estate suggests it might have been an advantageous acquisition, this purchase obscured the fact that the Clarkes were getting ever deeper into debt. Already owing a lot of money elsewhere, in June 1815 they added to their liabilities by taking a mortgage of £8,000 from the firm of Pinneys & Ames.⁴³

The mortgage agreement listed the assets of the combined estates:

- Oliver's, 65 acres
- Stewart's or Bloomsberry's, Hams, William's Lime Hill or Hamilton's, 140 acres
- Mount Ida or Wansey's Plantation 190 acres
- 100 acres of mountain land
- 117 named slaves belonging to both Oliver's and Stewart's
- 80 named slaves belonging to Mount Ida/Wansey's.⁴⁴

Some of the money borrowed was clearly intended for developing the estate since the Clarkes enquired about a 'portable' steam engine. In August 1815 the firm replied that Mr Trevithick was the only

⁴² For further details of these reserved people see <https://seis.bristol.ac.uk/~emceee/mountravers~part2chapter7.pdf>

⁴³ BULSC, PP Domestic Box T-3

⁴⁴ For details of the long and involved correspondence over this mortgage see BULSC, PP Letterbooks 51 and 53 and Domestic Box T-3 which holds a range of documents concerning Clarke's; also ECSCRN CDRB 1814-1817 ff164-90.

manufacturer of portable engines, and they were not working in the West Indies – so ‘we have therefore ordered the ironwork for the windmill’.⁴⁵ This may indicate that the windmill now on the Four Seasons estate was either being built, or repaired, that year.⁴⁶

In May 1817 John Henry Clarke was again involved in a discussion about punishment on Nevis estates. He gave evidence at another trial of Edward Huggins (senr) on a charge of cruelty for a flogging at TJ Cottle’s Round Hill estate. Clarke stated that he did not suppose from their appearance that the flogged men had received one third of the punishment stated (ie that it had not been laid on hard) and also noted revealingly that on his own estate ‘he does not inflict any punishment beyond 39 lashes’.⁴⁷

1817 also brought changes for everyone on the estate. As a means of monitoring which people were held legally, for the first time slaveholders on Nevis were required to register each individual they owned. In June Clarke’s registered 234 people.

Three months later the entire estate was put up for sale even though it was producing good quantities (and quality) of sugar. In the year 1816/17 they recorded 127 hogsheads of sugar earning £3,420 net. William Lawrence claimed in 1822 that Clarke’s sugars were the best on the island, and Mills & Galpine estimated in 1823 that the estate’s annual output could be 150-180 hogsheads - although this was undoubtedly something of an exaggeration. However, the Clarke family’s mounting burden of debt on their mortgage and current accounts, with a number of different claimants (including the Pinneys) had become too great. In addition, sugar prices had collapsed from their wartime high, and the depressed British economy caused reduced sugar consumption. On 1 May 1817 the Clarkes’ total debt amounted to £17,805⁴⁸ but before he could sell the estate, John Henry Clarke died in December 1817.

An inventory of John Henry Clarke’s property

A little while after he died Mary Hannah Clarke applied to the court to have her husband’s personal estate and effects appraised. The inventory of silver and mahogany furniture from each room provides a partial description of the plantation house which, according to the plan, was up at Stewart’s. Because of the symmetry it was likely to have been on two floors. There was a dining room, a breakfast room and a drawing room, presumably on the ground floor with two bedrooms (described as right hand and left hand), separated by the ‘Best Bedroom’, above them. While the two other bedrooms had four-poster beds, the left-hand bedroom had a camp bedstead.

Among his personal property were nine enslaved people, their values appraised in Nevis currency (Ncr): Bob McGill (£150); Caesar (£160); Tom Noland (£40); Nancy Arthurton (£132); Augustus, an infant (£30); Sam (£100); Medley (£33); Eboe Jack (£33) and Tonipant (£120).

Some of these people can be followed through the slave registers. Some may have been personal servants to John Henry Clarke and his family, for instance Nancy Arthurton. Nearly all were creoles, meaning born on the island.

In this group the one exception is Eboe Jack who was presumably an African transported on a slaving vessel from what is now eastern Nigeria. Three Jacks are listed in the official 1817 register; only one was an African

⁴⁵ BULSC, PP Letterbook 51 Pinneys & Ames to John Henry Clarke, 1 August 1815

⁴⁶ In correspondence over the possible sale of Pinney’s Estate in 1802 Pinney noted that his own estate included ‘a most excellent windmill (which will save Clarke the expense of building one)’ (BULSC, PP Letterbook D7 1801-03 John Pinney to John Frederick Pinney, 18 November 1802).

⁴⁷ Parliamentary Papers House of Commons 1818 vol xvii pp1-91, Chadwyck-Healey microfiche mf 19.86: *Papers relating to Rex vs Huggins 1817*. As with Huggins’s previous case in 1810 it was widely reported. Several points were at issue in 1817: whether or not there was a limit of 39 lashes under the existing amelioration legislation of 1798 and, even if there was, whether it constituted cruelty.

⁴⁸ BULSC, PP Domestic Box 1 i/3 Account of John Henry Clarke with Pinneys & Ames, 1816-17

aged 55. He had died by 1822. Of Tonipant there is no record although this name may be a mis-copying of Tousant. The latter was 14 years old, a black, male, creole and worked in the field in 1825. He was alive on Clarke's in 1828 and may have survived through to 1834. Medley could actually have been Madlaine or Medlaine, a woman who was 32 in 1817 and was likely to have been ill or disabled, given the appraisal value. She had died by 1822. Augustus was a two-year-old black child in 1817 who was minding sheep in 1825. Described as 12 years old in 1828, he seems to have survived through to 1834. Two of the creole males were of mixed race, described in the terminology of the time as 'mulatto': Sam was 12 years old in 1817, alive in 1822 and seems to have got through to 1834. Tom Noland, on the other hand, aged 35 in 1817, was dead by 1822.

Nancy Arthurton was a highly valued black creole woman, aged 30 who clearly resisted her enslavement and was noted in the 1817 register as having absconded. However, she had been recaptured and, at some point prior to 1822, was sold off the island to a William HB Francken of St Kitts. He was probably an estate manager rather than an estate owner. Listed as just Nancy, rather than Nancy Arthurton, and given the age of 26, she worked as a washerwoman for Mrs Parker Bennett Francken but by the end of 1821 Mrs Francken had died and Nancy had been sold on again to a Robert Basden on St Kitts.⁴⁹ By 1825, working as a washer and ironer, she had been sold back to William Francken.⁵⁰ She may have been living on Baker's Estate in the parish of Christchurch Nicola Town where he was the manager for that year.⁵¹ It is not known what happened to her after that. Her story illustrates the hazards of absconding on a small island like Nevis and being caught, almost inevitably – to be sold off the island, away from family and friends and then traded from owner to owner.

Both Caesar and Bob McGill were quite highly valued suggesting they were skilled. Caesar, a black creole man, was 24 years old in 1817. He was shown as a blacksmith in a list of occupations and food allowances in 1826.⁵² The blacksmith's shop, valued at £500 Ncr was part of the inventory of John Henry Clarke's personal estate and effects. Apart from working on the estate, Cesar was probably hired out to do work on other estates, which brought income to Clarke. Almost certainly he would have been able to work sometimes on his own account. Caesar was still on the estate in 1828 when his age was given as 32⁵³, and he seems to have made it through to 1834.

In 1817 Bob McGill was listed as a black creole aged 28. On the list of occupations and provisions from about 1826 the only Bob was identified as a foreman with Number 1 Field Gang. In 1828, named Bob again, his age was given as 36.⁵⁴ In the slave registers there is no further news of him so he may have made it to 1834 or even to absolute freedom in 1838.

Trying to keep Mrs Clarke afloat

Shortly after Clarke's death John Pinney died and control of his West India merchant firm in Bristol passed to his sons John Frederick and Charles. For a number of years, the Pinneys then wavered between helping to keep the widowed Mary Hannah Clarke in possession of the estate, foreclosing on her, or persuading her neighbour Peter Thomas Huggins to make an offer for it.

In 1820 Charles Pinney visited Nevis and looked over the property which he pronounced 'certainly a good one'. He noted that Peter Thomas Huggins was interested in buying this valuable estate and that Mrs Clarke might be willing to sell. Pinney thought Huggins a credible buyer:

⁴⁹ Ancestry.co.uk Slave Register St Christopher 1822 from UKNA, T 71/255

⁵⁰ Ancestry.co.uk Slave Register St Christopher 1825 from UKNA, T 71/256

⁵¹ UCL *Legacies of British Slavery* database <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/estate/view/3417>

⁵² BULSC, PP Domestic Box T3 ii *List of Negroes on Clarke's Estate with their occupations, allowance etc* undated but probably 1826

⁵³ Ancestry.co.uk Slave Register Nevis 1828 from UKNA, T 71/367

⁵⁴ Ancestry.co.uk Slave Register Nevis 1828 from UKNA, T 71/367

*I would rather assist Peter Huggins than anyone else from his habits of industry and attention, independent of his expectations from his father, he must hereafter be a wealthy man; the estate he thinks worth about £18 or £20,000.*⁵⁵

On the other hand, Charles Pinney clearly liked Joseph, Mary Hannah Clarke's eldest son, who was the resident manager on the estate: 'He seems a good plodding kind of man and not of expensive habits'.⁵⁶

An absentee owner in England for at least some of the time, Mrs Clarke managed to keep everyone at bay for a while. In 1822 she tried to secure the Clarke family's grip on Wansey's estate. Lying between Clarke's and Mountravers, it was now mostly known as Belmont. It was worked together with Clarke's but was heavily mortgaged including, in effect, to the previous owner, William Lawrence. He explained why Mrs Clarke would want his property: it was well known that Clarke's lower estate could not be worked profitably without the help of Belmont's workers. A while later he recorded sadly that Mrs Clarke had paid him for the estate with 'bills' that could not be honoured, and Belmont had been returned to him in April 1823, 'with no stock, mill, still or boiling house and 67 slaves, owing me upwards of £10,000'.⁵⁷

By the time Belmont reverted to Lawrence, Mrs Clarke⁵⁸ and her son Joseph had died; she in October 1822 (of 'apoplexy'), he in April 1823, just days before the Belmont handover. Managing Clarke's Estate fell from Joseph to his brother, another John Henry, assisted by another brother, Frederick William.

One important footnote should be added to the story of Wansey's/Belmont. The NHCS Archive holds a plan of Belmont Estate. It is undated but may be 1950 and relate to a possible sale. It shows the road which can still be followed exiting Four Seasons land east and diverting along the 'old road' to the large circular stone cistern. At either 1200 ft ASL or 1800 ft ASL lie the remains of the old upper round road and just below them are the 'ruins of Wansays village'. It is not clear whether this was the old village for the enslaved workers on the estate or whether these remains are from a post-emancipation village. It is not known whether these remains have ever been located and investigated archaeologically. However, they are a reminder that Clarke's and Wansey's were essentially two separate estates with their own housing and infrastructure.⁵⁹

'One of the most unfortunate little spots in the world'

During the years 1817 to 1822 almost a quarter of the population on Clarke's Estate perished: 55 out of 234 people. The youngest were babies like Diana, Eleanor and Jane; the oldest was Syphax, an African in his late 70s. Indeed, the death toll was the highest among the young and the old: more than a third of the 30 babies born had died, and those aged under 14 or over 50 accounted for about four out of five deaths.

⁵⁵ BULSC, PP Letterbook 27 Charles Pinney to his brother John Frederick Pinney, 7 October 1820

⁵⁶ BULSC, PP Domestic Box I ii Charles Pinney to J F Pinney, 23 December 1820. Mary Hannah Clarke, the owner, was living at Stratford Grove in Essex, now in London's East End.

⁵⁷ BULSC, PP Letterbook 56 William Lawrence to Pinney, Ames & Co, 23 July 1822 and Letterbook 58 William Lawrence to Pinney, Ames & Co, 28 March 1825. See also the introductory note to the Belmont Slave Register for 1825 in UKNA, T71/366.

⁵⁸ Mary Clarke was buried at St John Figtree on 12 October 1822. An inventory of her silver and furniture at her house on Nevis, taken 17 May 1823, amounted to £419 (ECSCRN, Book of Wills 1819-1830 ff184-186). Another account taken in October 1826, when the estate was handed over to the Pinneys, includes an inventory of items belonging to her sons John and Frederick (BULSC, PP Domestic Box T-3).

⁵⁹ NHCS Archive, D 2.29 undated 'Nevis B.W.I Plan of Belmont Estate'. The 1950 date is suggested by the fact that the notes attached to the survey were written by HC Barber. He owned eleven acres of the bottom southwest corner of Belmont Estate next to Shallow Ghut, and a survey of his land is dated 1950. See online British Library *Endangered Archives Programme* EAP 794 (Nevis) Maps and Plans image 018. Barber was also the owner of the Bath Hotel from about 1947 into the early 1960s. He became notorious on Nevis over his attempt to ban public bathing at the Bath Stream and it became a celebrated political question. See Neal Ferris *Aspirational Heritage* https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Bath-House-Hotel-and-Gardens-1958-NMA-Photo-folio-Bath-Hotel-D1n8_fig15_332530767

At 23.5 % the deaths on Clarke's during the period 1817 to 1822 were among the highest of 25 randomly selected estates on the island.⁶⁰ In terms of population size, Clarke's was one of six estates in Nevis with enslaved populations of over 200 but numbers were not the deciding factor. On three large estates included in the random sample of 25 estates fewer people died over the same period: on Edward Huggins' Golden Rock 25 out of 255 people (9.8 %); on the Tobin's Stoney Grove 29 out of 213 (13.6 %); and on Hamilton's Estate owned by Thomas Latham 38 died out of 221 people (17.2 %).

Nevis was experiencing a period of disastrous weather, sickness and hunger and many people suffered and died. On Clarke's Estate, as on many other Nevis plantations, the problems were compounded by years of under-investment. A hurricane in 1819 had destroyed provisions and caused much distress, another 'gale of wind' followed in 1820 while in March 1822 the Pinneys' correspondents Mills and Galpine complained about the driest weather for 20 years. A month later they wrote again, saying the island was in a deplorable state. They were worried about how to feed everyone in the autumn – 'starvation and discontent will be the result'. The island administration was forced to pass legislation that insisted on planters and their creditors making food allowances the first call on an estate's expenditure. Mills and Galpine reported that before she died, Mrs Clarke had applied to them 'to furnish provisions for the relief of her Negroes who were starving - they had become very clamorous and would not work'. Unrest broke out all over the island.

Other correspondents wrote of frequent robberies and instances of cane breaking. Reports in January 1823 continued the theme, noting that the autumn had been 'most sickly'. They stated that the island was not far short of famine, that one third of the estates were 'not giving their negroes any food' and that they feared a large number of deaths. Just at the wrong time, from April to July, when they were trying to cut the canes and boil the sugar, the heavens opened. In July 1824 Peter Thomas Huggins complained that Nevis was 'one of the most unfortunate little spots in the world', and that he was being driven 'crazy' by the fourth bad year in succession – '(the) whole face of the country burnt up'. The situation finally improved when it rained from September 1825 to January 1826.⁶¹

Foreclosure: the end of the Clarke era

By this time the Pinneys had already begun the process of foreclosing on Mrs Clarke's sons, John Henry and Frederick William. Following their brother Joseph's death, they had inherited the estate – and its debts.

Meanwhile, the Clarke brothers' attorney Finlay Nicholson was counting on the Pinneys for supplies. He sought to avoid 'the distress to which the estate and Negroes would be reduced' and reminded the young Pinneys that their father had hired a group of his own workers to the estate. Nicholson urged them to settle the business. An agreement was signed, finally, on 4 July 1826. It gave the Clarke brothers salaries as manager and overseer, respectively backdated for a year, £500 compensation and alternative employment for Frederick William. The Pinneys were to arrange a 'berth' as a manager for him on the island of St Croix. John Henry intended to go to America.

One additional point stands out from these long and complicated discussions. In 1824 John Henry Clarke (the son) suggested an imaginative scheme under which he would have been prepared to take on the ownership and running of the estate. This scheme, which seems to have emerged from discussions with the enslaved workers, involved freeing groups of 100 people at a time, once each group had raised £5,000 sterling for

⁶⁰ For details of the 25 estates see C Eickelmann *The Mountravers Plantation Community 1734-1834* pt 2 chapter 7 <https://seis.bristol.ac.uk/~emceee/mountravers~part2chapter7.pdf> p846, p848, p850

For births, Saddle Hill with 117 enslaved people (64.1 % females; 35.9 % males) registered the highest increase in the population of 16.24 %; Hamilton's with 221 people (44.8 % females; 55.2 % males) the lowest (3.2 %). In terms of deaths, during the same period, 1817 to 1822, Eden's rate of decrease of 7.2 % was the lowest; Jessup's with 28.8 % the highest.

⁶¹ See Mills and Galpine to Pinney, Ames & Co, 13 October 1822 and letters from other correspondents on Nevis to the Pinney firm in BULSC, PP Letterbooks 56 and 58.

their own purchase. The cash would go to merchants who were owed money and they would keep half the land; the other half would go to the people thus freed. But nothing came of it. The Pinney's wanted a neat foreclosure and a sale of the estate to someone else.⁶²

Not long before the handover, the Pinneys began to learn about the state of the labour force on the estate:

He [John Henry Clarke] tells me that with the present state of his gang he is obliged to cut canes two days to enable him to grind one - and that when he has to dig cane holes he can only find twenty negroes fit for that employment - this from a gang of one hundred and forty people - then the negroes removed by Mr Lawrence 63 in number were the most able people...⁶³

The Pinneys' attorneys on the island disagreed over which overseer they should put in charge of the estate. The man suggested by one attorney was opposed by the other, on the grounds that he 'has a dozen children and a drunken wife who rules him'. Failure to organise the 'berth' for Frederick William dragged the whole business out until 31 October 1826 when possession of the estate with its enslaved people was finally handed over to Charles Pinney.

The work on Clarke's and the enslaved people who did it

A plantation community

Enslaved people living on a sugar plantation were not just field hands involved in sugar production. Larger plantations, particularly, had their own skilled tradesmen: carpenters who made and repaired timber buildings, wooden fittings and furniture; coopers who crafted barrels and other useful vessels; masons who erected houses, windmills, sugar works and, later, built the structures that held the steam engines. There were distillers, fishermen and sailors, blacksmiths, stock keepers, barbers and gardeners. Trusted people delivered messages, money, goods; some worked in the 'Great Houses' as manservants and butlers. Men were employed in the construction and maintenance of public roads, bridges and buildings, and they repaired, loaded and unloaded the ships which carried the sugar away. It must have distressed them that some of the vessels they were refitting were up to 1807 the very ships which had brought enslaved Africans to their shores. Women also worked as domestic servants, as cleaners and laundresses, seamstresses, cooks, nursemaids and child-minders. They were plantation midwives and nurses. Older or infirm people acted as watchmen, minded stock, carried food and water to workers in the fields and were generally expected to make themselves useful. And at any one time there were a number of sick people, and people too frail to work.

In addition to the enslaved people, some plantations imported specialist workers from Britain: managers, overseers or men with particular skills, such as blacksmiths. One such man was George Griffiths who arrived on Nevis on the *St Vincent* in December 1815. His contract was to work on Clarke's Estate for three years from the day of his arrival. His brief was to 'faithfully diligently & skilfully (sic) serve ... in the Trade or Business, of a Blacksmith in all its Branches.' The man was to 'find himself with Wearing Apparel of All sorts both Linen & Woollen & also washing. In consideration of his skilful and faithful Service' he was paid £50 sterling per annum in the first, £65 in the second and £80 in the third year, in half-yearly instalments of equal amounts. Clarke's Estate was also to 'find him in Meat Drink & Lodging and also all kinds of Instruments and Working Tools necessary for the Business of a Blacksmith and pay the Expenses of his passage from Bristol to Nevis supplying him with Bedding,' as was customary for steerage passengers. A

⁶² BULSC, PP Letterbook 58 John Henry Clarke to Pinney, Ames & Co, 11 May 1824

⁶³ BULSC, PP Letterbook 60 J C Mills to Pinney, Ames & Co, 8 October 1826

covenant to the agreement stated that, if Mr Clarke desired it, Griffiths should 'instruct the Negroes in his trade'.⁶⁴

A day's work

An entry in the plantation diary of the neighbouring Mountravers estate gives a feel for the work done on a plantation on a day out of crop time:

Wednesday, 14 November 1798

36, Driver included, cross holing in Copperhole piece at Woodley's

1 Attending them with water

36 small gang, driver included, carrying dung at Woodley's to put into the crosshole

3 Masons walling

4 carpenters repairing and putting up the old watchhouse at Sharloes which was brought from the pond

3 Coopers making casks

17 watches and stock keepers

1 Runaway

2 Hunters [sent after the runaway]

2 With child

1 Lying in

1 with mule carrying bread and molasses up to Woodley's

25 sick

132

Even with some advances in sugar production, working hours on plantations were long. Workers would be called from their huts at 5.00 am, at the latest, to be in the field by daybreak at 6.00 am. Around 8.00 am work stopped for half an hour's breakfast in the field: biscuit with sugar and water, or a 'toddy' of rum on rainy days. The two-hour break at noon was not a rest period; most people then cultivated their own grounds, or they had to pick fodder for the plantation animals. Work finished as it got dark, around 6.00 pm. During crop time they worked, at best, in shifts, feeding the cane crushing mills and labouring in the intense heat of the boiling house often as long as 18 hours.⁶⁵

How work was organized: the gang system

The only direct evidence of who did what kind of work on Clarke's comes from a list of 141 enslaved people, with their occupations, that dates from the period of the handover from the Clarke brothers to Charles Pinney.⁶⁶ As on other plantations in Nevis, the work was performed by three gangs. Membership of the gangs would have been fluid and dependent on the annual cycle of work and the health and fitness of people.

⁶⁴ BULSC, PP Domestic Box T-1

⁶⁵ C Eickelmann *The Mountravers Plantation Community 1734-1834* pt 2 chapter 6
<https://seis.bristol.ac.uk/~emceee/mountravers~part2chapter6.pdf> p690

⁶⁶ BULSC, PP Domestic Box T-3 'List of Negroes on Clarke's Estate with their occupation, allowance etc...'

Number 1 Field Gang

This field gang performed by far the heaviest tasks: holing, planting, cutting cane and loading carts to carry it to the works. One planter described these workers as 'the flower of all the field battalions'. Provided they were supplied with decent hoes, which was not always the case, such a gang was expected on Pinney's plantation to hole two acres in a day, or one and a half on the more difficult upper land.

In 1826 there were nine men and 31 women, three of whom were pregnant, in this gang:

Jack Smith (aged 58 years) driver (waiting on Jack: Kitty); Babs (?) driver & watchman, foreman; Guy (26) Boiler; Edward (30) boiler occasionally; Anne (38), Betty Mucco (36), Celia (26), Celinda (33, pregnant), Charlotte (28), Citty (23), Cubenna (41), Dido (20), Domingo (33), Fanny Frederick (20), Glory (18), Harrianna (22), Jinny [Jenny] Wilkins (32), Judy (28), Juno (21), Kitty (21), Madam (26), Mary Collin (23), Molly Nugent (39), Moses (23), Nanno (20, pregnant), Nelly (46), Oliver (?), Phibba (prob. 38), Phillis (24, pregnant), Polly Bunda/Bundu [Patty Band] (26), Polly Steward (28), Present (18, or 21), Range (22), Ritta (38), Rose (45), Sarey (34), Sarey (23), Sebella (38), Tousant (23), and York (23).

Number 2 Field Gang

This gang of 15 boys and girls performed physically less demanding tasks, such as carrying baskets of dung and cleaning up the fields:

Young Quamina (aged 48 years, driver); Azariah (16), Beef (?), Bell (11, or 14), Bennington (15), Blucher (11), Charles (11), Disey (14), Eliza (13), Fanny (16), George (10), Johnny Williams (12), Kitsey (8), Mary Mason (16), Minner [Minna] (14), and Robert (34).

'Sheepmeat' gang

The third, or 'sheepmeat', gang carried out light chores, such as picking grass for sheep, and weeding. Their work was important and also intended to get them used to labour. This gang consisted of five young boys and two girls:

Eve (48, driver), Cuba (7), John Henry (4), Lazarus (6), Maria (7), Patty (7), Perren (8), and Priscilla [Proscelle] (8).

In addition, 14 children and able-bodied elderly people minded animals, picked fodder for cattle, or attended to field hands as child-minders, cooks and water carriers:

Minding mules: Prince (17)
Minding cattle: James (60) and Bush (?)
Minding calves: Jemmy (49)
Minding sheep: Frances (46) and Augustus (10)
Minding Negroes sheep: Mary Morgan (38)
Minding poultry: Betty Bunn (59), Margaret (16)
Picking 'Cattle meat': Betty (51)
Minding children: Matilda (48)
Watches: Jonny (43), Bowen (?)
Learning to work: Mille (10)

In addition, every plantation had a number of 'elite' slaves - the boilers, tradesmen, and domestics:

First boiler and watchman: William [Billy] Stewart (48)
Boiler & watch: Monday (42)
Stillman and watchman: Abraham (23) and Hazard (26)
Boatswain and watchman: Marlborough (53)
Blacksmith: Caesar (30)
Cooper and carpenter: Thomas (20)
Coopers: Edward (18), Tom Fisher (45, lame) and William Jones (26)
House: Frank Fisher (42, senior domestic), Fanny (10), Fanny Jones (28), Hetty (45), John Fisher (20), Mary Fisher (12), Mary Webbe (23), Phoeba (probably 20), Sally (22)
Midwife: Sarah Fisher (66).

At any one time, there were a number of enslaved people who were considered to be non-productive:

Infants: Alexander (2), Alfred (3), Amis/Amrus (?), Anne (1), Anne (2), Betsey (4), Betty Brown (1), Caesar (1), Charity (4), Christianna (6), Eleanor (1), Grace (1), Henry Williams (1) Joseph [Fisher] (5), Mary Nugent (1), Molly (1), Nancy (4), Phoba/Phebbe (4), Rebecca (1), Sam (5), Simon (1), Walter (5), William [Greathead] (1), William (1), and one unnamed infant.

Infirm: Beck (78), Frankey Vaughan (48, old & lame minding [illegible]), Harriet (64), Josiah [Fisher] (20, lame – previously cooper), Mary Steward (36, Sick & wise?), Matilda (58), Mimba (50), Old Madam (58), Old Quamina (74), Oliver (59?), Present (18, or 21), Sally [Minna] (68), Sophy (48), William [Billy] Clarke (37, leper), Zaid (78).

What the Slave Registers reveal

Most of the information about Clarke's population, such as their ages and colour, comes from another source, the Slave Registers or Triennial Returns. The British government had introduced legislation which required owners to register their enslaved people on a regular basis, recording a range of personal details. In Nevis the registers contained each person's name, gender, country, colour and reputed age. The first registers were completed in 1817, the next in 1822 and then every three years until 1834.⁶⁷ The initial inventory, which in Nevis's case was in 1817, was always a complete list. Later usually only the increase and decrease were logged: the births and purchases, deaths, sales, manumissions and escapes. Sometimes there is a complete list after 1817 when, for instance, an estate was sold. When slavery was abolished in most of the British colonies on 1 August 1834, claims by planters and 'owners' for compensation payments were compared with these inventories.

The Clarke's registers were kept by a succession of owners, managers and attorneys. Inaccuracies and inconsistencies are common, but a close analysis of these documents can reveal much information. In 1817 Clarke's registered a total of 234 people. This included those rented from the Pinneys and about 175 people who had survived since being purchased with Oliver's and Mount Ida/Wansey's plantations, as well as those born since the purchase.

⁶⁷ UKNA, T71/364-369. All these registers, except the one for 1834, can be accessed for free at Ancestry.co.uk <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/1129/>. Choose Nevis as a country and start with the 1817 register. Clarke's Estate's 1817 register begins at f10 https://www.ancestry.co.uk/imageviewer/collections/1129/images/CSUK1812_133716-00008?ssrc=&backlabel=Return

Names: From Andrew to Zaid

In Africa great significance is attached to the naming of children. The chosen names encapsulate the hopes of the ancestors, the status within the family, or natural events occurring at the time of birth. However, on arrival in the Caribbean owners renamed their purchases; only very few Africans appear to have been able to retain their given name. Enslaved people lost part of what distinguished and defined them.

Out of the 27 people identified as Africans on the 1817 list, two, possibly three, have African names. Given the erratic spelling at the time, it is possible that a few were anglicised spellings of African names. Some of the Creoles, the island-born people, also have African names; usually those associated with births falling on particular days of the week (e.g. Cudjoe, a boy born on a Monday). The rest are a mix typical of many Nevis plantations at that time: mostly English first names; names of classical or mythological figures (Caesar, Pompey and Hercules); politicians, or people in public life at the time (Pitt, Nelson and Wellington); or English – rarely Scottish or Irish - place names (Greenwich, London and York).

Most second names were used to distinguish from one another people with the same first name: John Wansey and John Stanley, Ritta Yellow and Ritta Black. Some of the surnames were those of present or previous owners, others indicated the jobs (Cudjoe Cooper, Madam Nurse), or denoted people's origin (Patty America). Some mulattoes, like Nancy Williams and the Fisher brothers Tom and Frank, had their father's family name. On some plantations surnames were not used at all.

Gender: Men, women ... and children

In the early days of slavery, it was said that most plantation owners bought new 'stock' rather than foster conditions in which sufficient births could replenish the slave populations. Males were valued more highly but some more farsighted planters were '... convinced that the Females must be of greater value in the end, on Account of Generation.' With the withdrawal of the British from the African slave trade in 1807, the situation changed. Plantation owners wishing to maintain, or even increase, their population benefitted from a relatively large proportion of women of child-bearing age. At the same time the advantage gained by this resulted in a shortage of men who would do the heavy work.

In 1817, there were 107 males and 127 females on Clarke's Estate, of whom almost half, 62, were of child-bearing age (those aged between 15 to 49 years). As a result, in terms of births, Clarke's had a much better record than the three other properties already mentioned: between 1817 and 1822 30 children were born on Clarke's (representing an increase in the total population of 12.8 %) – almost the same number as on Stoney Grove (31, or 14.6 %) and considerably more than on Golden Rock (18 births, or 7.1 %) and Hamilton (7 births, or 3.2 %). Both Clarke's Estate and Stoney Grove had more females (54.3% and 52.1 %) while on Golden Rock and Hamilton there were fewer females (44.3% and 44.8 %) than males. However, because on Clarke's so many new-born infants died young, the births could not sustain the population. By 1822 the total number of people on Clarke's Estate had fallen from 234 to 207.

Country: Creoles and Africans

Creole was a term used for those who were island-born, not just enslaved people but also white folk of all sections of society, as well as animals. The managers and attorneys who kept the registers were not always familiar with the histories of each individual and unreliable plantation records resulted in some African-born people being recorded as creoles. In 1828, for instance, Sally Minna was listed as a creole.

By 1817 the majority of the slave population on Clarke's was Nevis-born although some other plantations in the island recorded people from, for instance, Curaçao and Antigua.

The 1817 register for Clarke's Estate identified 27 people as Africans. They were mostly in their 50s and 60s. Over a dozen Africans died during the starvation years, others were transferred to Belmont, and by 1828 only Old Quamina, Sally Minna and Zaid were listed. By then they were infirm and not working any more. Old Quamina and Zaid died between 1831 and 1834, and Sally Minna was the only living African-born person on Clarke's Estate who lived until slavery was abolished and replaced by the apprenticeship system.

Colour: Black, Mulatto, or Sambo?

Those completing the slave registers had to decide what 'colour' people were, and it is in this category that most inconsistencies occurred. Descriptions varied between plantations and islands. The only term commonly used between islands and estates was that of 'mulatto', a child born to a black and a white parent.

On Clarke's people were simply described as 'Black', 'Mulatto' and 'Sambo'. The term sambo seems to have been used for anyone who was not obviously black or a mulatto. However, even with these simple gradations, inconsistencies occurred. For example, Edward Fisher was listed in 1817 as black, and in 1828 as a sambo. Presumably, in determining 'colour', the perception of the person doing the recording was a more important factor than an individual's actual descent. This may provide some indication as to Edward Fisher's appearance; although he was known to have been the son of a black woman and a mulatto man,⁶⁸ he may have been relatively dark-skinned.

If one accepts the descriptions in the lists, it appears that on Clarke's Estate the mixed-race population decreased while those described as black increased slightly during the period 1817 to 1834.

'Reputed Age'

It is possible that the enslaved people themselves, or their head people, supplied the data for the slave registers but owners, managers, or attorneys did the actual recording. As in the other columns, mistakes were made. Both Frank Fisher and Tom Fisher, although born two years apart, were said to have been of the same age. The ages of Africans were often estimated in multiples of five.

Some plantations kept detailed records of birth dates but in Clarke's registers the 'reputed age' was in many instances just that. Perhaps, as in the case of 'colour', the supposed age provides evidence of a person's health, condition and appearance: Sally Minna, for example, was thought to have been 55 years old in 1817 and 70 in 1828; Old Quamina, on the other hand, only 'aged' by six years during the same period. Perhaps Sally Minna had become more infirm in this eleven-year period and therefore appeared relatively older.

In 1817 the oldest person was Syphax (reputed age: 75), followed by Old Sue (74). Five men and women were said to have been 70 years old: Beck, Leah, Nancy Saunders, Old Quamina and Zaid. The oldest people registered in 1828 were Beck and Zaid, aged 80.

⁶⁸ A close study of the enslaved population on John Pinney's Mountravers plantation has revealed that Edward Fisher was the son of the black woman Hetty and Frank Fisher, a mulatto.

Three brief biographies: Phillis (Clarke), Tom Fisher and Henrietta Clarke

The slave registers, and the few plantation records that exist for Clarke's, show a slave population made up of individuals of different backgrounds, ages and colours.

Whilst detailed plantation records exist for Pinney's Mountravers plantation, there are no comprehensive records for Clarke's Estate and it is difficult to try and re-construct the biographies of its people. However, drawing on the Pinney documents and additional material, such as the slave registers and parish records, it is possible to add further details that at least shed some light on their lives.

Phillis (Clarke), a field slave

According to the official slave register, in 1817 Phillis was 17 years old and a creole. Her age may well have been estimated, though it is likely that she was born sometime around 1800.

She was a black woman and therefore more likely to have worked in the field rather than to have been trained in domestic duties. Although pregnant, in 1826 she worked in the Number 1 field gang. Phillis probably already had three children: Caesar (about one year old), Betsey (aged 4) and Priscilla who, aged 8, worked in the sheep meat gang.

It is not known whether the child she was pregnant with survived, but she had two more children. Their father was Michael Parris, a black man who was in his late thirties when their son William was born on 12 April 1830. The child was baptised in the Methodist church in Charlestown early in 1831; their daughter Fanny Jane, born on 8 January 1833, was baptised in the same church a few months later.⁶⁹ It is likely that Michael Parris was demoted by way of punishment because, at William's baptism, he was described as a driver but, at Fanny Jane's, as a field hand. Michael Parris was attached to Parris's Estate (which by then was also owned by Peter Thomas Huggins) which explains his family name. In the baptism records Phillis, too, had acquired a surname: Clarke.

Phillis Clarke lived to see the ending of slavery and the transition to apprenticeship, but she died shortly afterwards. Her burial on 11 December 1834 was recorded in the parish register for St Thomas Lowland. She was said to have been 30 years old.⁷⁰

Tom Fisher, a skilled man

Tom Fisher was born on 4 August 1781. John Pinney purchased him with his mother, Sarah Fisher, when he was just over a year old. He had six surviving brothers and sisters, some of whom were, like him, mulattoes. The whole family was 'reserved' by Pinney, not to be sold to Huggins along with Mountravers plantation.

Aged about 17, Tom was apprenticed to a mason, but he also learnt the cooper's trade. It was assumed that mixed race people were less able to withstand the rigours of heavy labour in the field, and many were trained in skilled jobs. When he was rented to Clarke's in 1808, he was described as 'a very good Cooper' and appraised at £100; this rose to £150 two years later. Pinney had bought him for £7.

⁶⁹ NHCS Archive, Methodist Baptismal records 1825-1835

⁷⁰ NHCS Archive, St Thomas Lowland Burials 1827-1857

Skilled in a sought-after trade, Tom Fisher was able to earn money by working on Sundays. Although he was lame, he would have been in demand on small plantations that did not have a resident cooper, or by town dwellers who wanted items made or fixed.

His siblings held a variety of positions. His sister Patty lived in Charlestown with her husband who was also a cooper; his sister Domingo worked in the field while his brother Frank was 'a valuable slave for sick People'; he knew how to bleed people and was skilled at drawing teeth. In the 1820s Frank held a leading position in the house. Their brother Josiah was also a cooper and, like Tom, lame. Their mother worked as a house servant and plantation midwife. She and Tom's half-sister Mary had been offered for sale to Mary's father, Siah Parris. He was a mulatto servant to Mr Parris. Unfortunately for them he died before the sale could be completed. Owing to a mistake by Pinney's attorney, Tom's youngest brother, James, ended up with Huggins and worked on Mountravers. Tom Fisher was an uncle to at least a dozen nephews and nieces.

In June 1817 Tom Fisher's age was given in the slave register as 32 years although he was, by then, almost four years older - demonstrating again that ages were not always accurate. When he was in his early forties, Tom was baptised in St Paul's' church in Charlestown. On 20 June 1824 the resident clergyman, Revd Daniel Gateward Davis, conducted the ceremony. In the parish register Davis recorded Tom's name as Thomas Clarke, following a very inconsistent practice of attaching to enslaved people the name of the plantation on which they worked.

Tom Fisher's baptism followed just a few weeks after Revd Davis had conducted the first service at the 'Cottle' chapel on Round Hill Estate in the parish of St James Windward.⁷¹ He was among the more progressive churchmen and had raised the question whether enslaved people should have the right to marry in church.

Thomas Fisher died at the age of 50. His burial on 22 May 1832 was recorded in the register for St Paul's church, Charlestown. Cholera had reached Nevis from North America early in the 1830s and he may have been among its victims.⁷²

Henrietta (Ritta) Clarke, a freed woman

Henrietta Clarke was almost certainly the negro child Ritta who was among 12 named individuals valued in 1768 among the effects of Samuel Clarke after petition from Joseph Clarke and others. Ritta was valued at £35 (Ncr).⁷³ She was freed sometime before June 1797 when Joseph Clarke made his will. He left her his house and land in Charlestown, as well as an annuity of £50 Ncr to be paid quarterly. Described in his will simply as a 'negro woman', she was probably a former house servant, or Clarke's mistress, or both.⁷⁴

Freed slaves could own property and many acquired slaves themselves - sometimes members of their family. Many of these former slaves freed (manumitted) their acquisitions. The first purchase of slaves Henrietta Clarke was known to have carried out was in 1797. She bought the 'Negro' girl Betsey for £66 Ncr and five years later, almost to the day, she granted Betsey and Betsey's mulatto daughter Henrietta their freedom. She bought three black slaves in 1810 for £260 Ncr: a Creole woman in her early forties called Peg (Pegg), and two children, Pallas (Palace) and Nan. The children were aged eight and eleven, and it is likely that they were a mother and her son and daughter. In 1817 Henrietta Clarke registered all her eight men and boys and

⁷¹ The church on Thomas John Cottle's Round Hill Estate is now a ruin and a tourist attraction.

⁷² For sources and further details on Tom Fisher and his family see <https://seis.bristol.ac.uk/~emceee/mountravers~part2chapter4.pdf>; for Mary (Parris) see <https://seis.bristol.ac.uk/~emceee/mountravers~part2chapter6.pdf>

⁷³ ECSCRN, Book of Wills 1763-1787 ff194-196 and inventory ff199-200, entered 8 April 1768

⁷⁴ ECSCRN, Book of Wills 1787-1805 f452

ten women and girls.⁷⁵ Some would have been her domestic servants, others she would have hired out for money.

Following a devastating hurricane in 1819, many people in Nevis suffered hardship and the Legislature granted rate relief to a number of residents owing to their 'state of lowest pauperism'. Although she owned a considerable number of people, Henrietta Clarke was among those given financial assistance.⁷⁶ One of her problems appears to have been that she was owed part of the annuity from Joseph Clarke's will. With the plantation in debt, Joseph Clarke's bequest had become an added burden. In addition, the administration of his estate would have been chaotic because his executors had either died or left for England. In 1829 she finally received arrears on her annuity of £680 Ncr. Although probably literate - given that she had earlier signed another document - she copied her name shakily over a pencilled outline on the receipt. Perhaps by that time her eyesight was failing and she needed assistance in writing. However, in April 1835, when she applied for her annuity to be paid out in a lump sum, she was described as 'healthy'. She received just over £1,000 Ncr. Apparently later she regretted selling her claim.

Over the years she had registered, as she was required to do, any children who had been born to her people and anyone who had died, been sold, or freed. The births outnumbered the deaths so that in 1834 when slavery was abolished, she had in her possession eight men and boys and 12 women and girls. She received £255 sterling compensation.⁷⁷

The last reference to Henrietta Clarke concerned a property in Charlestown which bordered the former Customs House. It is not known when she died.⁷⁸

Unheard voices

These brief outlines of the lives of Phillis Clarke, Tom Fisher and Henrietta Clarke not only illustrate the diversity of the enslaved, and free, population, but also highlight the difficulties in researching these individuals. They left no known written records, and trying to piece their lives together from official documents leaves many questions unanswered. We do not know what they looked like, felt or thought. Their voices are never heard directly but by gathering and recording what little information there is, we can at least give them their place in the history of Clarke's Estate.

The Pinneys – a brief interlude, 1826 to 1830

John Colhoun Mills, as attorney for the Pinneys, took possession of Clarke's and its 141 people on 31 October 1826. Shortly afterwards he described the deplorable condition many of the enslaved people were in:

There are the greatest number of negroes with sore legs, rose, and elephantitis, and several useless from other infirmities that I ever met with on any estate - from the little I have seen of them I think them well disposed. Mr Clarke was desirous of making out that on his quitting the estate they would all run away - on the contrary they have behaved exceeding well.

⁷⁵ UKNA, T71/364. The purchase and freeing of enslaved people, or in one case a sale to someone else, by Henrietta Clarke can be traced in the relevant ECSCRN, Common Deed Record Books; baptisms and deaths can be found in the parish registers of St Paul's church in Charlestown in the NHCS Archive.

⁷⁶ UKNA, CO 186/12 Nevis Assembly Minutes

⁷⁷ For her claim see UKNA, T 71/1039 No 258

⁷⁸ C Eickelmann *The Mountravers Plantation Community 1734-1834* pt 3 chapter 3 <https://seis.bristol.ac.uk/~emceee/mountravers~part3chapter3.pdf> pp1235-37

Absentee ownership and troubled managership had also affected the physical state of the plantation:

The buildings are all in the most disgraceful state of ruin from neglect, even the house ... The estate is bare of everything ... and the boiling house is so much out of repair [that] I fear it will be necessary to do some repairs before crop is finished.

Mills informed the Pinneys that he had placed a young nephew of his in charge and then sent a long list of requirements, including bread and medicines, hoes, cane-bills, blacksmiths tools, and material for clothing.⁷⁹ Mills also pointed out one feature of the workforce. Women outnumbered men so that many of the jobs usually done by men and boys had to be done by women. They all wanted to become tradespeople.⁸⁰

An inventory was taken, at some point, of equipment on the estate. This only mentions buildings where equipment was being stored but it should be noted that the estate also had a 'sick house'.

'Seymore's works': – including cattlemill etc

'Lower works - Clarke's':

Store – including 'windmill ropes and sales' lent to Parris's, windmill clamps and gudgeons

Rum Cellar – various butts, wooden hoops

Curing Room – 3 puncheons of molasses, tierces of sugar etc

Boiling House – including a 'cattle mill receiver', cattle mill sweeps brake, tar room

Liquor loft – including twenty-one 300-gallon liquor casks and a 'still with 2 worms'

Store on the bay – hoops and staves

3 cattle carts and 1 horse cart

These main works (which presumably included the windmill) were those lower down on and adjacent to the Oliver works and were shown on the 1799-1808 plan (sites 16 and 17). Originally Oliver's estate would have had a cattlemill and that would have been retained for those times when the wind did not blow. The works at Seymore's with the cattlemill (site 35) were located up the hill on the Stewart part of the estate, quite close to the main plantation house (site 38). These upper works were both a backup to the ones lower down and used for fields further up the hill.⁸¹ The siting of the windmill was a source of complaint. The Pinneys' attorney said of Clarke's in 1827 that 'the windmill is badly situated and their chief dependence in grinding canes is in their cattlemill'.⁸²

Almost immediately Peter Thomas Huggins, next door on Mountravers, offered to buy the estate:

*If you are disposed to sell Clarke's estate I should have no objection to enter in some arrangement with you for the purchase of it as I think, with the advantage of my steam engine and the assistance of this estate, I should be able to work out your debt in less time than anyone on this island could.*⁸³

The Pinneys agreed but it took another three years to complete the deal. The delay can be explained by Huggins's reluctance to purchase an incomplete plantation. Pinney only had title to seven eighths of the estate, one eighth being held by a Mr Wayte, a pastry cook and relative of the Clarkes. In time this was resolved.

⁷⁹ BULSC, PP Letterbook 60 J C Mills to Pinney, Ames & Co, 6 November 1826

⁸⁰ BULSC, PP Letterbook 60 J C Mills to Pinney, Ames & Co, 15 March 1827

⁸¹ The inventory is undated but is probably the one mentioned sent by J C Mills to Pinney, Ames & Co, 30 June 1827, BULSC, PP Domestic Box T-3

⁸² BULSC, PP Letterbook 60 John Colhoun Mills to Pinney, Ames & Co, 24 March 1827

⁸³ BULSC, PP Letterbook 60 Peter Thomas Huggins to Pinney, Ames & Co, 11 November 1826

'Unpleasant effects' or resistance

1827 was a dreadful year for everyone on Nevis. In March, after ten months of drought, planters complained that the crop was wretched; one of them noted that it had been the worst year in the 27 he had been a resident planter.

The difficulties faced by the people on Clarke's Estate may explain the destruction of the whole of its works by fire on the night of 18 September 1827. The Pinneys appear to have put this down to arson and suggested that the cause was the youth and inexperience of the manager, Mills's nephew. If the estate had an inexperienced manager 'the negroes may consequently have a dislike to him and might have a tendency to produce unpleasant effects similar to what has lately occurred'. To assist with the labour, the Pinneys instructed Mills to speed up the rebuilding by taking tradesmen from Parris's, Symonds and Stoney Grove; all these were estates they controlled at that time. Mills was also to 'prevent plunderage by the Negroes which we understand frequently happens'.⁸⁴ This was not the only fire on the estate. Another one in 1829, when Charles Pinney was living on the estate, destroyed the store house and liquor lofts. This may, or may not, have been accidental. The structures were rebuilt.⁸⁵

Arson was only one of many forms of resistance to slavery on Nevis, the most dramatic of which was rebellion. A hundred years earlier, in September 1725, plans for a slave revolt on Nevis had been discovered. Two alleged leaders were arrested and burned alive. There were also reports, as yet unconfirmed, of an attempted insurrection on Nevis in 1761.

In other forms of resistance gangs of workers took collective action by refusing to do specific jobs, refusing to work at all, or even running away *en masse*. Generally, on Nevis, this meant going to another, more sympathetic, planter and petitioning him to intercede with their owner. All of these happened on Mountravers when Pinney's gang decamped and marched off to James Tobin's Stoney Grove in protest at their treatment by Edward Huggins and his son Peter Thomas. This action had dire consequences for the protesters.

Individual acts included cane breaking, killing or maiming stock, theft, attempting to poison their owners and running away on their own. As already noted, Nancy Arthurton 'absconded' from Clarke's Estate. Many enslaved people absented themselves. Some went away for a few days only, visiting family and friends on other plantations, or in Charlestown, while others sought to escape off the island. Flight was perhaps the most effective form of resistance against slavery but captured or returned fugitives had to pay a high price for seeking freedom. Escape was punishable by death, but many were sold, usually to other islands, as happened to Nancy Arthurton. However, Quamina⁸⁶ succeeded in getting away from Clarke's Estate. A man in his early thirties, he absconded in 1819. It is not known where he ended up, but other plantations recorded escapes, for instance, to St Vincent, Barbados, or Halifax in Nova Scotia.

Charles Pinney's arrival

A period of some calm followed the arrival in March 1828 of Charles Pinney. Various Nevis planters owed his firm money and he was intent on speeding up the settling of these debts. He decided to live on Clarke's in the main plantation house up the hill at Stewart's.⁸⁷ This he described as a 'ruinous barn' and said that he expected 'during the Hurricane months to be blown into the neighbouring ravine'.

⁸⁴ BULSC, PP Letterbook 62 Pinney, Ames & Co to JC Mills, 21 November and 5 December 1827. In a letter to another firm on 11 December they noted that the buildings were uninsured and rebuilding would cost £2,000-£3,000. No details of the fire have been found in the surviving records.

⁸⁵ BULSC, PP Letterbook 62 Pinney, Ames & Co to Charles Shearman, Solicitors in London, 6 February 1829

⁸⁶ This man was not the same as Young Quomina, driver of the number 2 gang

⁸⁷ Peter Thomas Huggins described it as 'your old dwelling' in a letter to Charles Pinney in 1849

On the estate generally he found 'all the buildings ... in a most dilapidated state a hurricane having blown away all the outbuildings and no exertion [made] to finish the works of the estate'.⁸⁸ Immediately he ordered lumber and stone for rebuilding.

He had taken 'possession' of 141 people on the estate in October 1826; that remained the number registered in February 1828 just before he arrived.⁸⁹ Wishing to encourage the workers but, rather typically, unwilling to spend too much, he placed orders for '12 pairs of cheap shoes of a large size for presents to negroes ... 2 dozen cheap negro hats (the same for each estate) as a present to negroes. [His sister] Mrs Ames will get some handkerchiefs for negroe women'.

These 'presents' were to reward and encourage the workers by supplementing their annual clothing allowance. The list of people drawn up around 1826 reveals that the amount each normally received depended on their status: 'All the adult women 5 yds bamboo & 5 yds Brown each, Men 4 yds each, 2nd gang 4 yds each, the other gangs in proportion; trades people ... 12 yds brown each: drivers, head boiler, boatswain 12 yds brown each, hat & great coat & shirt'.⁹⁰

The sale - a terrible irony

When a sale of Clarke's to Peter Thomas Huggins had first been mooted, John Henry Clarke had written that 'the negroes are very unwilling to belong to him, both those belonging to the estate and Mr C Pinney's'.⁹¹ The reason for this is (and presumably was at the time) clear. After Edward Huggins (senr) had bought Mountravers from the Pinneys, in 1809 he had installed as manager one of his sons, the young Peter Thomas. The methods of the Huggins family were a good deal harsher than those of John Pinney, and Peter Thomas Huggins was a much less experienced manager.

Pinney's people resisted by refusing to work and running away. Edward Huggins responded by flogging 32 men and women in the public market in Charlestown on 23 January 1810. The first person was whipped for 15 minutes. One eyewitness gave evidence that a man received 365 lashes and a woman 291. Three others endured over 200 lashes each. A woman called Fanny died a few months later but Huggins was acquitted on a charge of cruelty by a jury packed with his supporters. The case split the island and was much publicised in Britain, helping to change public opinion about slavery.⁹² It was also only one of a number of incidents involving members of the Huggins family over subsequent years.

The Pinneys had long intended to sell whatever estates they held in the West Indies, including Clarke's and Parris's. The latter was an estate on the southern side of Mountravers which was thought too difficult to be worked on its own and possibly better suited to pasture.⁹³ Both properties had lost the family large sums of money in the period 1825 to 1830: £8,384 in the case of Clarke's and £4,000 on Parris's.⁹⁴ Not long before he sailed back to England in the spring of 1830, Charles Pinney sold both estates to Peter Thomas Huggins.

⁸⁸ BULSC, PP West Indies Box 0-3 Charles Pinney to Mrs Ames, 8 March 1828

⁸⁹ UKNA, T 71/367

⁹⁰ BULSC, PP West Indies Box 0-3 Charles Pinney to R E Case, ca. 28 March 1828

⁹¹ BULSC, PP Letterbook 56 John Henry Clarke to Pinney, Ames & Co, 12 April 1823

⁹² For further details see C Eickelmann *The Mountravers Plantation Community 1734-1834* pt 2 chapter 7

<https://seis.bristol.ac.uk/~emceee/mountravers~part2chapter7.pdf> pp784-96

⁹³ For the background to Parris's Estate, otherwise known as Black Rock, see <https://seis.bristol.ac.uk/~emceee/mountravers~part2chapter7.pdf> and R Pares *A West India Fortune* pp296-300 for instance. James Parris stated that the estate had belonged to his father and grandfather. The land, around 208 acres and 133 enslaved people, passed to the Pinneys when they foreclosed on a mortgage in 1826.

⁹⁴ R Pares *A West India Fortune* p303

Peter Thomas Huggins and his sons, 1830 to 1874

Peter Thomas Huggins paid £12,500 for Clarke's, although £10,500 of this was a mortgage to Charles Pinney. The estate consisted at this point of Oliver's (66 acres) and Stewart's (140 acres) together with 144 people.⁹⁵ Almost immediately Huggins sent to England a plan of the plantation.⁹⁶

Having, by 1825, already bought Scarborough's Estate, Huggins by the end of 1829 had also agreed to buy Parris's Estate from John Frederick Pinney – both of these estates being to the south of his Mountravers plantation. Charles Pinney spelt out the economies of scale that Huggins was trying to achieve. With Clarke's, the enlarged Pinney's Estate/Mountravers and Parris's he would have

*one large, connected estate worked at only a trifling additional expense and together the labour likely to be more advantageously employed – and his steam engine would when necessary take off the whole crop.*⁹⁷

However, Huggins was buying at a difficult time. In 1807 Britain had only abolished the trade in captives from Africa to its colonies, not the state of slavery itself, and 1830 saw a resurgence in the campaign to do away with slavery altogether. Huggins had an apocalyptic view of what would happen if the government did not allow a delay of 20 or 30 years 'to prepare the negroes for the enjoyment of freedom'. In addition, he claimed that 'the negroe will never cultivate the soil... to stop here with the females of my family would be quite impossible'.⁹⁸

Planters were alarmed on a number of fronts. They feared abolition without compensation, and they dreaded rebellion. On Nevis in the spring of 1831 unrest caused some 'excitement and alarm' but this was nothing compared to the 'Baptist War' in Jamaica which broke out at Christmas that year. This revolt was brutally suppressed; the deaths of 14 whites were avenged by killing and executing 500 people. It is not surprising that in this climate of fear Huggins was regretting to the Pinneys his 'imprudence in purchasing Clarke's and Parris's, it will be the Ruin of my Family... the moment Emancipation takes place there will be an end to these Colonies you need not send another ship for Sugar'.⁹⁹

Emancipation?

On Friday, 1 August 1834 the system of slavery was abolished and the Emancipation Act came into force. The first baptism of a free child from Clarke's Estate was that of Fanny Clarke's daughter, Jesse, on 3 August 1834 in St Thomas Lowland church. The parish register declared: 'child free'.¹⁰⁰

The British government set aside £20 million sterling to compensate slaveholders. On Nevis they received £151,006 for their 8,815 people. Huggins was awarded £2,833 for 148 men, women and children on Clarke's; a third of what he had applied for.¹⁰¹ The enslaved people got nothing, not even their freedom. While planters on Antigua freed all their people immediately, on Nevis only children under six years old were freed straight away. Their elder siblings and parents had to undergo a six-year 'apprenticeship'. During this time the so-called apprentice labourers had to work for their previous owner for 40 ½ hours per week in return

⁹⁵ ECSCRN, CDRB 1829-1830 ff206-10, ff211-44, ff246-65 courtesy of Bill Pinney

⁹⁶ This has not been found yet, but may have been a copy of, or derived from, the 1799-1808 plan. There was also mention of a plan of the estate sent home by Henry Ransford, the Pinneys' able manager on Stoney Grove estate, before Charles Pinney arrived in 1828.

⁹⁷ BULSC, PP Domestic Box G2 Bundle 11 Charles Pinney to Mrs J F Pinney, 28 August 1829. For the complex negotiations see Charles Pinney's letters home in BULSC, PP Domestic Boxes C2 Bundles 11 and 13, C3 Bundle 15, li Bundles 10 and 11 and West Indies Box O-3.

⁹⁸ BULSC, PP Letterbook 60 Huggins to Pinney, Ames & Co, 15 December 1830

⁹⁹ BULSC, PP Letterbook 65 Huggins to Pinney & Case, 6 July 1831

¹⁰⁰ NHCS Archive, RG 14.1 St Thomas Baptisms

¹⁰¹ House of Commons Parliamentary Papers 1837-38 (215) vol 48 *Nevis List A Claim No. 133*, Chadwyck-Healey microfiche mf 41.391 and *Legacies of British Slavery* <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/estate/view/3387>

for food, clothing, housing and medical care. They could buy their freedom at an agreed price, but apprentices could still be sold as part of an estate. However, on Nevis no mass work stoppages took place unlike St Kitts, where the authorities declared martial law.

In this new climate Charles Pinney suggested to Huggins some change in attitude:

Those on whom the Negroes can rely will probably be better situated, therefore I do not anticipate you will suffer much inconvenience, but it clearly will no longer be safe for any to endeavour to carry on the cultivation of an Estate without satisfying the people which may I trust be easily done with judgment and prudence and not at more expense than formerly. I shall be anxious to hear how you all go on, and that virulent measures are adopted to restrain the vicious and idle and encourage the industrious.¹⁰²

Something should have changed but it appears that not much did. Relationships certainly should have been different in this new system, but planters kept their land, in some cases still used the whip, and demanded extra work for small transgressions. The law allowed planters to give their apprentices one free day a week in lieu of a food allowance. If plantations had poor bush land, they allocated this to their apprentices for growing foodstuffs.

Labour shortages

Complete emancipation - freedom from the apprenticeship system – came on 1 August 1838, two years earlier than originally planned. The day continues to be celebrated joyously in St Kitts and Nevis.

Many newly emancipated labourers on Nevis simply voted with their feet; they withdrew their labour from the plantations, thereby severely cutting back sugar production. For those who were forced by necessity to work in the cane fields emancipation brought only limited comfort.

Faced with this potential shortage of labour Huggins's response was energetic and looked towards a technological solution. He ordered the first of several steam engines for the lower works at Clarke's. The order was for a steam engine with mill, and an additional pump for a well, from the firm of Thomas Vernon & Company of Liverpool. The total cost was £758 including shipping from Liverpool to Bristol and then from Bristol to Nevis, the latter voyage on the Pinneys' vessel the *Earl of Liverpool*. It arrived in the middle of 1839, presumably in time for the next crop.¹⁰³

Around this time Huggins installed a manager, William Liburd. He remained for at least 35 years on Clarke's and gave the estate some stability.¹⁰⁴

Sugar prices in Britain were affected by duties, by the quantity of sugar admitted from islands like Mauritius, and by the strength of the economy in Britain. Planters struggled to pay adequate wages. Field hands had been offered 1 shilling a day but wages fell as low as 5 pence in 1848 and 4 pence two years later.¹⁰⁵ These wages encouraged emigration to St Kitts, Demerara (Guyana) and Trinidad to such an extent that planters on Nevis petitioned Queen Victoria to allow them to bring in free African labour. Those on St Vincent facing a similar problem sought apprentices from Sierra Leone in West Africa who, according to Charles Pinney, 'were

¹⁰² BULSC, PP Letterbook 29 Charles Pinney to Huggins, 4 July 1838

¹⁰³ See, among other entries, BULSC, PP Letterbook 67 letters from Pinney & Case to Huggins dated 1 January, 1 March and 31 August 1839 and Account Book 77 ff 39 and 71. For a fuller account of the introduction of steam technology to Nevis see D Small *Stationary Steam Engines on Sugar Plantations in the Caribbean: Nevis 1816-1846* <https://seis.bristol.ac.uk/~emceee/steam.pdf>

¹⁰⁴ UKNA, CO 441/11/1

¹⁰⁵ K F Olwig *Global Culture – Island Identity Continuing Change in the Afro-Caribbean Community of Nevis* Harwood Academic Publishers, Chur, Switzerland 1993 p95

answering very well and so pleased with the change of abode that two of their number were to return to Africa to bring out an additional number therefore we conclude all emigration will soon cease with you'.¹⁰⁶

One response by planters on Nevis, as on other islands, was to encourage sharecropping. Starting in the early 1840s, workers were given two acres to cultivate with sugar, receiving one third to one half of the crop in lieu of wages. By 1866 it was reported that 40 out of 80 estates on the island were operating this system. However, in the available documents there is no evidence to suggest that Clarke's was one of them.

Nevis was struck in 1843 by a series of earthquakes. They severely damaged Charlestown and many works around the island, particularly in the south and east, but did not, according to Pinney, seem to have damaged the works at Clarke's and Pinney's.

We have had the deplorable intelligence of the awful earthquake with which it has pleased God to visit many of the West Indian islands, the loss of life and property appears to have been most appalling in the French island of Guadeloupe and altho both in Nevis and St Kitts the public buildings we hear have suffered materially yet - your works have been spared...

They added in the same letter, unsympathetically, that if the sugars made on Clarke had a healthy, yellow colour they might command a more ready sale.

An official account at the time listed the following 'Clarkes and Pinneys – Buildings at works very slightly injured'.¹⁰⁷

Expansion and development

Despite being harassed constantly by the Pinneys to pay off his remaining debt to them, Peter Thomas Huggins ploughed on with some notion of developing Clarke's. The steam engine from Thomas Vernon & Co had proved to be less than satisfactory and towards the end of 1846, at a cost of £650, Huggins ordered from Fawcett & Preston of Liverpool a new 10 horsepower, non-condensing, steam engine for the works at Clarke's. The description in the order book records that it was a 'Beam Engine on Diagonal cast iron framing' and notes 'The first of this kind'. No mill was ordered so they must have been satisfied with the old mill from Thomas Vernon. The engine was delivered in the summer of 1847. The engine itself no longer exists at the Clarke's lower works site where Four Seasons Resort Estates has their office. However, the base plate for the cast iron framing still sits in the engine pit and corresponds to drawings in the Fawcett & Preston company records in Liverpool.¹⁰⁸

In 1846 Huggins also expanded Clarke's Estate to the north. He bought an estate called Old Road, or Ling's, which he had rented for at least 30 years.¹⁰⁹ In addition, an area of 14 acres called Main Piece, to the north of Ling's, was bought by one of Huggins's sons, Charles Pinney Huggins. This was worked as part of Clarke's.

At some point in this process of expansion, before 1849, Huggins acquired Belmont Estate, filling in the gap between his two key estates in St Thomas Lowland, Pinney's Estate (including Mountravers) and Clarke's. He

¹⁰⁶ BULSC, PP Letterbook 67 Pinney & Case to Huggins, 14 May 1842

¹⁰⁷ BULSC, PP Letterbook 68 Pinney & Case to Huggins, 15 March 1843; Parliamentary Papers: Accounts and Papers – Colonies vol 33 (1843) *Further Papers relative to the earthquake in the West Indies* pp6-11 Enclosure 5 in No. 2

¹⁰⁸ National Museum and Galleries on Merseyside (NMGGM) B/FP/5/1/2 Order Book. A list of Fawcett Engineering drawings (NMGGM B/FP/5/2/1-347) shows three possible sets of drawings (112, 113 and 188). 112 is dated 16 June 1847 and headed 'Willm Claxton forwarded p Railway to Bristol for shipment to Nevis' and among other drawings it shows an engine baseplate very similar to the one in place at the lower works at Clarke's extant today. 113 of the same date shows cranks and rods headed 'Willm Claxton forwarded p Railway to Bristol for shipment to Nevis [but adds] for P. Huggins' Estate a Noncondensing Steam Engine of 10 H.P. No. 1601'. To the side is written 'PH C' which probably means 'Peter Huggins Clarke's'. The third set of drawings is also for Nevis but is probably not relevant to Clarke's Estate.

¹⁰⁹ BULSC, PP Account Book 83 f73 13 April 1846; West Sussex Record Office, Maxse Mss. 5

had thereby consolidated his holdings in the parish. In 1854 Huggins gifted Belmont free and clear to his youngest son, Peter Thomas Huggins jnr.¹¹⁰

Jessup's, an independent village

After Emancipation formerly apprenticed workers wanted to free themselves of their past by moving away from their old villages on the estates. On many other islands where there was ample Crown land which they could occupy, they withdrew their labour from the plantations and supported themselves by subsistence farming. On Nevis, however, there was no spare Crown land and, by strictly enforcing the law against trespass, it was possible for planters to attempt to prevent this withdrawal of labour.

This lack of spare land meant that on Nevis independent villages developed only slowly but some did emerge. Just to the north of the Four Seasons Resort is Jessup's village. Before 1857, Peter Thomas Huggins sold some of Ling's Estate land for this to a number of labourers. Surrounding it was a settlement that had grown from small plots of land, sold by Pollard's Estate in 1848. But this transaction was flawed, and 15 years later the villagers appealed to the former owner for justice. The 'mechanics' and labourers explained to George Pollard in England the difficulties they faced: 37 of them had paid £10 each for a half-acre plot, but they had actually received less land than they had paid for. A few had been given leases but the leases neither agreed with the money paid nor with the land in their possession. Pollard's agent had been paid a fee and yet the leases were worthless.

A second letter from the residents warned that 'they threaten to resist any attempt of any person to eject them'. Among the aggrieved were the 'boatman' Daniel Martin and the carpenter John Wallace. They are believed to have been the husbands of Juno and Kitty, both rented as very young girls by Pinney to Clarke's Estate. Many other individuals had surnames associated with Clarke's and Mountravers: Arthurton, Browne, Clerk (presumably Clarke), Huggins, Jessup, Jones, Lawrence, Sanders, Scarborough, Wilkes, and Williams. This illustrates that many people tended to settle quite close to the plantations on which they had previously worked.¹¹¹

Panic in the money markets and a hurricane

1848 and 1849 brought about a major slide in the fortunes of the Huggins family. Panic in the money markets, the failure of the West India Bank, in which Peter Thomas Huggins had invested, and a fall in the price of sugar made it impossible for him to get sufficient credit. Huggins could not pay for the steam engine he had already installed on Clarke's, and, worse still, he was unable to plant a new crop.

On top of this, towards the end of 1848 a major hurricane flattened houses and works on a number of his plantations on both sides of the island, including Clarke's. In May 1849 he wrote to Charles Pinney, pleading for forbearance over his debt:

The Hurricane so entirely destroyed my buildings that it will take me years before I can replace them. I have only just finished Dasent's works, Stewart's your old Dwelling and Belmont I am afraid will never be put up again. It has caused me to incur liabilities for such repairs as were absolutely necessary to carry on the estates at all that will swallow every penny I can obtain.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ ECSCRN, CDRB 1859-1866 ff38-40. This explains why the estate is not mentioned in Huggins's will.

¹¹¹ C Eickelmann *The Mountravers Plantation Community 1734-1834* Postscript <https://seis.bristol.ac.uk/~emceee/mountravers~postscript.pdf> p1257; also UKNA, CO 441/11/1

¹¹² BULSC, PP Domestic Box I ii Huggins to Charles Pinney, 30 May 1849

Not just the Huggins estates were in trouble. Pollard's and Colhoun's, to the north of Clarke's, had been abandoned by their owner, Job Ede. Huggins, who was looking after the Pinney interests in these estates, tried to keep them 'in some sort of cultivation' by organising sharecropping. Given his complaint that they were not being cultivated properly, it is unlikely that he tried the same idea on his own estates.

By the summer of 1852 Huggins's health, and his 'courage', were beginning to fail. He wrote to his friend Charles Pinney:

*I am sorry to say our crop will not bear the expense of labour and contingent expenses and if the Government of Her Majesty do not take our deplorable condition into consideration I see nothing but ruin. One third of the island is now out of cultivation and if they do not afford the relief which alone can save the property of these islands from destruction shortly, all our parochial and public institutions which are essential to civilisation must fall to the ground. The inhabitants are not able to pay their taxes, or even find the means to live. Every day I see things getting worse and worse.*¹¹³

'... this most awful visitation...'

A short period of recovery was followed by a serious outbreak of cholera on Nevis in 1853 and early 1854. It killed at least 800 people, including many on Huggins's estates. It is easy to imagine the panic and social dislocation caused by the speed with which people died. Huggins's distress is evident in his letter to Charles Pinney:

*The mortality was so great that they could not get the dead buried fast enough and they had to put 8 and 10 in one grave ... I have had some of my people die in 4 hours after they were taken quite well in the morning at work and dead by 4 o'clock. We have only to hope that it may please God in his infinite Mercy to stay this most awful visitation and spare us... We are obliged to exert ourselves doubly and at any cost to save their lives. I have been fortunately well supplied with medicine that I have had from England every year and for the last three or four weeks I have been in constant attendance mixing medicine for them, from all quarters they flock to me for we have but two Doctors and they have as much as ever they can do...*¹¹⁴

Burying the dead led to a dispute between the Huggins family and their neighbour, Mrs Bowrin. She owned Paradise Estate on which there used to be a Quaker cemetery, now in the area of Jessup's village, just to the north of the Four Seasons Resort, by the roadside. Mrs Bowrin complained to her lawyers:

*The Quaker Land as you may know from the name is an old burial place of that sect. The Paradise estate has held known possession of it for 70 years... In January 1854 during my suffering and absence (on St. Kitts) and whilst the quarantine laws prevented all communication between the islands – the Vestry composed of Mr Peter Huggins, his 3 sons and Mr Saunders (son-in-law) and 2 coloured subordinates ordered the burial of almost all the cholera dead from their estates to be buried on this land (not one of my own laborers died of cholera) thus making this estate a pestilential graveyard.*¹¹⁵

Although the epidemic was over by June 1854, it affected the estates in various ways. According to Huggins, it killed the 'principal head people' and made the survivors even less disposed to work in the fields, thereby

¹¹³ BULSC, PP Domestic Box I ii Huggins to Charles Pinney, 12 July 1852

¹¹⁴ BULSC, PP Domestic Box I ii 36 Huggins to Charles Pinney, 27 January 1854

¹¹⁵ Wigley and Burt Papers Box 2 Case documents relating to Grace Bowrin vs Smith Morton re Quaker's land on Paradise Estate. The authors were asked by the NHCS to review the state of these papers which were for sale in the UK. It is not known where they are now.

creating a shortage of labour. So many people had died that the labourers could pick and choose for whom to work and what work to do.

Charles Pinney was 'much distressed to hear of the dreadful visitation with which it has pleased God to visit Nevis'. However, rather typically in his Evangelical manner, he thought that there might be a moral in this dreadful event. He wrote that it was a warning to the people to 'more serious reflection' and hoped that it would make the survivors 'better and more useful'.¹¹⁶

Peter Thomas Huggins's death and the end of an era

Exhausted by sickness and the ongoing difficulties, in 1854 Peter Thomas Huggins began to plan the handover of the estates to his sons. He suffered a long and painful illness and, aged 70, died on 4 February 1857. His grave in the cemetery at St Thomas Lowland can be seen today.

Charles Pinney always rated him the best planter on the island and certainly the one most likely to pay off his debts. A complex man, Huggins played a central role in the brutal treatment meted out by his father to the people on Pinney's Estate and yet, later on, he allied with Charles Pinney in building a chapel and school for their estates. Huggins's pronouncements on the question of Emancipation always had an air of hysteria about them but he adjusted to the new situation with more energy than most. The grand house he built at Mountravers after Emancipation shows his determination to develop and expand. With the benefit of hindsight, of course, it also suggests that his judgement and timing were poor.

In his will he left Clarke's to his son Charles Pinney Huggins, via a trust vested in another son, Thomas. The enlarged Mountravers/Pinney's Estate next door was left under the same trust arrangement to his son Edward John Huggins, with some caveats about his daughters and the house.¹¹⁷ The letter sent to Charles Pinney informing him of the death of his old friend ended with a plea from Huggins's sons that they might be allowed to settle their father's debt by paying half the sum due. Charles Pinney replied that he would consent to this, provided the sum agreed was paid that year – a deal speedily completed.¹¹⁸

Auctioned in London as an 'Incumbered Estate'

In the prevailing state of sugar in the West Indies the Huggins family were, however, merely swapping one debt for another when they paid off the Pinneys. Their affairs were further complicated by a series of deaths within the family. Charles Pinney Huggins died in 1859 and by 1861 his brother Thomas, who had succeeded him in Clarke's, was in debt to two firms, Messrs Neilson of London and James Ewing & Co of Glasgow. Clarke's was mortgaged to the Ewings' firm but also the estate was in debt to both firms as consignees and suppliers. Thomas Huggins died in 1869 and his son-in-law Robert Gordon took over managing the plantation. In all, the executors of Thomas Huggins owed at least £4,119 to the Ewings. By October 1872 they owed twice that much to the Neilsons – much of it on current account and unsecured by mortgage.

In February 1872 Messrs Neilson discovered that the Ewings were taking proceedings to sell Clarke's through a court in Nevis. This court, set up by an Act of Parliament under the West Indian Incumbered Estates Commission, was to resolve the affairs of estates heavily burdened by debt.¹¹⁹ It was claimed by supporters

¹¹⁶ BULSC, PP Letterbook 34 Charles Pinney to Huggins, 30 March and 10 June 1854

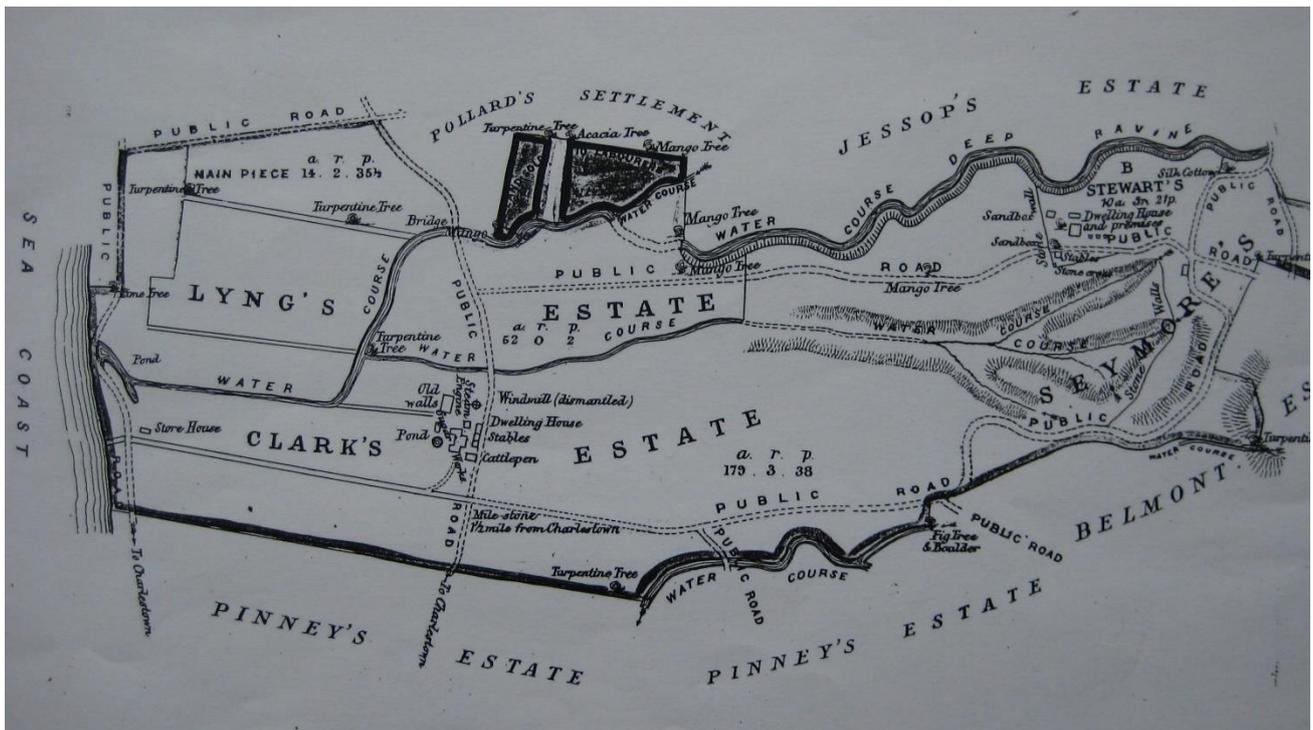
¹¹⁷ Will dated 29 September 1856, ECSCRN, Book of Wills 1837-64 ff431-452 <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP794-1-5-6>

¹¹⁸ BULSC, PP Letterbook 35 Charles Pinney to the Huggins brothers, 31 March 1857

¹¹⁹ For records of the Court of the Commissioners for the Sale of Incumbered Estates 1872-1885 relating to many estates on Nevis see ECSCRN, Other Courts <https://eap.bl.uk/collection/EAP794-1-4/search>; also UKNA, CO 441 and search for Nevis and UKNA, CO 441/3/6

of the process that the debt burden led to inaction and economic stagnation. Others, including Sir Thomas Graham Briggs, thought the process damaged the interests of owners and would only benefit the merchant firms - not the local people.

Messrs Neilson cried 'foul' and prevented themselves from being completely out-manoeuvred by getting the case transferred to London.¹²⁰ It was commented at the time that advertising the sale in the West Indies would be useless - no one was in a position to buy. However, Neilson's also noted in their petition against the sale that the estate was in 'good condition and fully able to meet the petitioners' claim'.



Extract from 'Plan of the Clark's, Seymore's and Lyng's Estates situate in the Parish of St Thomas Lowland in the Island of Nevis, West Indies'

The above plan, found in the UK National Archives in documents related to the sale of the plantation as an incumbered estate, is believed to date from 1873.¹²¹ Pinney's Estate lay to the south, the sea to the west. A narrow portion of land ran east up the mountain from where the public roads met at Stewart's.

The whole estate was valued in 1873 at £6,180 sterling, with the most valuable 45% of the land valued at £20 an acre.¹²² It was stated that 23 acres were planted with sugar for 1874 with another 29 acres of ratoons¹²³ and the estimated crop was 60 hogsheads of sugar – quite a sizable number for a Nevis estate at that time.

¹²⁰ For Clarke's Estate see ECSCRN, Other Courts: Court of the Commissioners for the Sale of Incumbered Estates 1872-1885 ff45-108 <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP794-1-4-7> for 'the 'Estate of Thomas Huggins deceased'; UKNA, CO 441/11/1 West Indian Incumbered Estates Commission: Huggins deceased: Clark's, including the plan on the front cover of this report titled 'Plan of the Clark's, Seymore's and Lyng's Estates situate in the Parish of St Thomas Lowland in the Island of Nevis, West Indies'. It is undated, at a scale of 12 chains to the inch and refers specifically in the title to the Commission. See also some additional material in CO 441/3/6.

¹²¹ UKNA, CO 441/11/1

¹²² ECSCRN Other Courts: Court of the Commissioners for the Sale of Incumbered Estates 1872-1885 f86

¹²³ Ratoons are canes left in the ground to produce a second, usually weaker, crop the next year

The particulars of sale, together with the plan, show that the upper works at Stewart's had been abandoned. Sugar processing had been centralised down the hill at Oliver's/Clarke's, and the windmill dismantled in favour of the steam engine.

In the lower works were:

... a Mill House, Mill, with Steam Engine (in good working order); Boiling House, with a Battery of Taches and a multitubular Boiler, and four Coolers; Curing House, with Molasses Cistern; Still House, with Vats for distilling; Iron Store on the Bay; Overseer's House, Kitchen, Stable and Stock Pens, all requiring repairs.

The boiler had been accounted for by James Ewing & Co in October 1861. Oddly, given the circumstances of the sale, an invoice, dated May 1873, was included in the sale accounts for the 24-inch mill ordered by Robert Gordon from George Fletcher & Co of London and Derby.¹²⁴

The following buildings were listed at the main house site at Stewart's:

a stonewall cottage with sitting room, kitchen and storeroom; two detached cottages boarded and shingled used as bedrooms; A stonewall cottage about 30 ft x 16 ft; walls of coach house unroofed by hurricane in 1871; ruins of stable destroyed by fire in October 1873; an iron tank; a stonewall water drip, a boarded bathing room and a privy.¹²⁵

Clarke's Estate, listed as 344 acres, was auctioned in London on 29 July 1874. Although the property had previously been valued at £6,180, the Ewings acquired it for £4,500, and conveyance to them was completed in July 1875. Among the awards of money as a result of the sale the Ewings, as consignees, claimed £2,527 and got it all; the Neilsons, as consignees, claimed £8,602 and got £2,058.

Clarke's was not the only one of the Huggins estates in the immediate vicinity to have gone through an enforced sale under the Commission. In 1880 Belmont was sold to the several firms owned by the Bristol sugar merchant Thomas Daniel. The larger Pinney's Estate, including Mountravers, was also sold to James Ewing & Co in February 1881. Many other plantations on Nevis went through the same process.

James Ewing & Co was founded around 1803 by the Glasgow West India merchant, absentee planter and slaveholder James Ewing, later of Strathleven near Dunbarton. He became a very significant merchant, banker, civic leader and (in some other matters) reformer in the city who led pro-slavery interests in the Glasgow West India Association. Over time, the wider Ewing family had acquired and continued to invest in estates in Jamaica, Guyana, St Kitts and Nevis. When he died in 1853 his role in the firm and his estates descended through his nephew Humphry Ewing Crum Ewing (senr d. 1887)¹²⁶ and on through the latter's son, Alexander Crum Ewing (d. 1912), and his son, Humphry Ewing Crum Ewing (junr d. 1946).¹²⁷

¹²⁴ UKNA, CO 441/11/1 Clark's. One of the difficulties mentioned in the records about dealing with the case of Clarke's Estate was the confusion caused in 1873 by the destruction of some documents in a courthouse fire in Nevis.

¹²⁵ Some of these buildings at Stewarts had been put up by Robert Gordon before 1869.

¹²⁶ Humphry is sometimes spelt 'Humphrey' and Crum Ewing is sometimes hyphenated.

¹²⁷ 'Ewing, James (1775-1853)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 2004; *The Vale of Leven's Famous Industrial People* <http://www.valeofleven.org.uk/famousfolk/industrials.html#ninth>; see 'James Ewing of Strathleven' et al in *Legacies of British Slavery* UCL database <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/21020>

Clarke's and Pinney's under the Ewings

For a while in the 1850s and 1860s a new energy and spirit of enterprise were injected into sugar production on Nevis with the arrival of Sir Thomas Graham Briggs from Barbados. He bought a large number of estates and modernised the production facilities, introducing steam technology to many of them. But the essential problems remained. West Indian sugar, which had lost its preferential tariffs, could not compete with subsidised European sugar beet. Workers were not paid enough so they emigrated. This necessitated unsuccessful trials with importing labour from Madeira and India. Two labourers from India, or family members, appear in the burial records for St Thomas Lowland and are associated in the record as having lived or worked on Clarke's. They are both described as 'coolie'. Catawee was buried, aged 40, on 24 September 1880 and John Thomas was buried in 1893.¹²⁸

For the Portuguese and Indians as well as everyone else, wages and conditions were still poor, the labour was hard and the people moved on. In 1876 of the 8000 acres on Nevis nominally under cultivation only just over half were producing sugar.¹²⁹

For a brief while in the 1880s and the early 1890s planters from St Kitts and Nevis found that the market in the US had opened up and that their sugar could command slightly better prices there than in Britain. This brought a few estates on Nevis back into production¹³⁰ and may have been what encouraged the Ewings to invest in improving production facilities at Pinney's Yard.

By acquiring both Pinney's Estate and Clarke's the Ewings had come to own two neighbouring estates amounting to 1074 acres. Working them as sugar estates together they were thus, at least in theory, able to pursue the economies of scale which Huggins had achieved but had not ultimately been able to profit from. They had two sets of works, the larger of which was at Pinney's Yard. Peter Thomas Huggins had rebuilt these works in the 1820s at enormous cost and the Ewings developed and modernised them. They can be seen in an 1880s photo and their remains can be found at Pinney's Yard today.¹³¹ The Ewings installed a new steam engine from WA McOnie of Glasgow, probably in 1883 or 1884.¹³² It is likely that sugar production from the two estates was centralised at Pinney's Yard, with Clarke's providing additional capacity.

The world sugar market and decline in Nevis

For a little while they must have benefitted from the opening up of the American market in the 1880s. However, prices for sugar were already low because of the success of European sugar beet, and then in 1895 the US began to favour cane sugar from areas such as Brazil, Cuba and the Dominican Republic. In 1898 the US market closed to sugar from the British West Indies altogether.

Substantial cuts in wages had been made by estate owners when the US market began to close. This treatment of sugar workers provoked a strike and then a riot in St Kitts, and on 16 February 1896 cane fields were set on fire. Marines were called in from a visiting Royal Navy warship and three people died. The trouble spread to Nevis the next day and again cane fields were set on fire. The fact that at this time Pinney's

¹²⁸ NHCS Archive, St Thomas Burial Register 1827-1957

¹²⁹ For more details see B Dyde *Out of the Crowded Vagueness* 2005 ch 16 especially pp173-75; also

C Eickelmann *The Mountravers Plantation Community 1734-1834* pt 3 Postscript <https://seis.bristol.ac.uk/~emceee/mountravers~postscript.pdf>

¹³⁰ B Dyde *Out of the Crowded Vagueness* p173

¹³¹ C C Lyon, photo titled 'Pinneys Estate, Nevis' <https://www.flickr.com/photos/caribbeanphotoarchive/7033097403/>

¹³² 'Engine 18 inch cylinder, 3 feet 6 inches stroke, Number 1284 W & A McOnie, 1883, Gearing double mill 5 feet by 28 inches, Cane Carrier and Juice pump and donkey feed'. The engine and works are described in indentures relating to Pinney's and Clarke's, dated 18 November 1905, in ECSCRN, Land Title Register Book (LTRB) 2 ff6-7.

and Clarke's were taken out of production by the Ewings might suggest that their fields were among those set ablaze.¹³³

It is unclear for how long the two estates were out of production. They may have been producing limited amounts of sugar by the time the hurricane of 1899 destroyed some of their neighbours' sugar works though not, it seems, the works at Pinney's Yard. According to Norman Maynard, the works were capable of producing up to 500 tons of sugar annually,¹³⁴ and this included sugar cane from the many smaller growers on the western side of the island. Pinney's, and it is assumed Clarke's also, was at least in partial cultivation in 1900.

The Royal Commission set up to look at the causes of the rioting and to make recommendations for dealing with the economic depression in the West Indies reported in 1897. Generally it suggested that at that time there was no alternative to continuing with sugar production as a base but it recommended land reform so that small producers were settled on their land, modern factories to centralise sugar production in each island and experimentation with other crops, for instance cotton.

It was probably in response to this that the Ewings gave some land to the Nevis government's Agricultural Department to run an experimental station. It was successful enough to be able in 1901 to offer 'economic plants' to other cultivators.¹³⁵

Absentee Ewings

Technically, before 1905 Clarke's was owned by Alexander Crum Ewing personally and Pinney's Estate was owned by the Ewings Sugar Estate Company Ltd of Glasgow of which Alexander was the head and in which his son Humphry Ewing Crum Ewing (junr) was concerned. The family and firm had much more substantial interests in Jamaica, including Taylor's Caymanas Estate for instance, for which they had claimed substantial slave compensation in the 1830s.¹³⁶ This, and the worry of their smaller estates in Nevis, prompted a report to the Colonial Office from Humphry that his father wanted to abandon Pinney's Estate and 'transfer some of the machinery thence to his Jamaica property'. However, he was afraid that this would 'be a finishing blow to the little community in Nevis'. It is unclear whether Humphry took the same view but there is no doubt that the idea of these estates being abandoned was viewed with alarm by officials. Reports to the Colonial Office suggested that closing the factory would be a disaster for the island and that other estates were also likely to close down.¹³⁷

Bearing in mind that Pinney's and Clarke's were 'usually worked together', it can be assumed that subsequent negotiations between the Ewings and the Colonial Office applied to both estates though generally it is only Pinney's that is mentioned directly. This was probably because of the 'factory' at Pinney's Yard. The officials in the Colonial Office were informed that the works not only handled the sugar from Pinney's but 'also from those contributed by over 160 neighbouring contributors'. They were thus well aware of their importance to the local economy. Because of the falling price of muscovado sugar in 1902, down £4:5:0 per ton, for their part the Ewings were seeking grant-in-aid to keep their estate in some production and the works in operation. Meanwhile the Colonial Office was being informed from St Kitts that Pinney's (and presumably Clarke's) was 'virtually out of cultivation'. Humphry Ewing confirmed, in effect, that there had been no replanting with new canes for the 1903 crop but that they were willing to manure

¹³³ V Hubbard *Swords, Ships and Sugar - History of Nevis* (5th ed) Premiere Editions International, Corvallis, Oregon, 2002 p189

¹³⁴ Norman Maynard 'Nevis at the Turn of the Century' Nevis Historical and Conservation Society *Newsletter* November 1987

¹³⁵ UKNA, CO 152/268 Humphry Ewing Crum Ewing, Gartur, Stirling, to CP Lucas, Colonial Office, 18 October 1901, and James Ewing & Co, 106 Bath Street, Glasgow, to Colonial Office, 18 October 1901. It is not clear what the plants were.

¹³⁶ See 'Map of area round Spanish Town, Kingston, Jamaica' ca. 1890s, Cornwall Records and Archives, HB/A38/1

¹³⁷ UKNA, CO 152/268: H Ewing Crum Ewing, Gartur, Stirling, to CP Lucas, Colonial Office, 18 October 1901, and James Ewing & Co, 106 Bath Street, Glasgow, to Colonial Office, 18 October 1901

and cultivate the ratoon canes in the ground for their second crop. At issue was the requirement 'to promise full cultivation for 1904' to earn the grant. The Ewing firm was unable to promise that, given the possibility of further falls in the price of sugar. The Colonial Office and the firm eventually settled on a compromise. The government agreed to remit taxes on sugar for two years; in return the firm agreed to use the works to process the crops of the local 'peasant farmers' and to replant the usual average of cane lands of former years, though not full cultivation.¹³⁸

In November 1905 the ownership of both Clarke's and Pinney's estates changed hands. Clarke's was transferred by his father Alexander to Humphry Ewing Crum Ewing 'the younger' who around that time was an absentee owner, living in the town of North Berwick near Edinburgh. On the same day Humphry also acquired Pinney's Estate from the Ewings Sugar Estate Company.¹³⁹ Three years later Humphry leased both estates for ten years to James Spencer Hollings, a planter living in Nevis on the old Tobin estate of Stoney Grove. Hollings was a talented civil engineer with a wide range of interests and a connection by marriage to the well-known supporters of Emancipation, the Sturge family of Montserrat.¹⁴⁰

The lease included the works at Pinney's Yard (which are described) but specifically excluded three acres round the house at Mountravers. Also excluded were 16 pieces of land from the two estates amounting to 181 acres. The impression given by some of the names of these pieces, such as Sandy Bay, Pond Piece, Stewart Bay, is that some or most of the fields were between the main road and the sea, with perhaps some close to the east side of the road. The annual rent of £75 for roughly 900 acres is a reminder of just how far land values had fallen and how little profit was expected from cultivating these estates.

Coconuts, copra and more riots

According to Norman Maynard who lived on Nevis at Cane Garden Estate in this period 'About 1910, Mr. Crum Ewing, the owner decided to give up growing cane and plant the whole estate in coconuts.' While Maynard was focussing on Pinney's Estate this would have applied to Clarke's as well. Since a large part of the two estates was leased to Mr Hollings, it is probable that what Maynard remembered was the lower part of the two estates which had been reserved from the lease and remained under Ewing. It is not clear what Hollings did with the rest of the land; some of it may have been planted with cane.

It is worth noting that Humphry Ewing Crum Ewing's house in North Berwick was called 'Nevis', suggesting a certain attachment to the island. However, he was probably always an absentee owner and certainly Pinney's and Clarke's were managed by his attorney on the island, Paitfield Mills, who lived first in the house at Pinney's Yard and then at Mountravers. While Mr Ewing's interest was always drawn to his affairs in Jamaica, he had clearly not given up on Nevis. In December 1914 he became the owner of Paradise Estate.¹⁴¹ This gave him a good swathe of the coastal area of the parish of St Thomas Lowland from near Charlestown north to Paradise, with the exception of Jessup's Estate.

Not long after this a change happened in the running of Pinney's and Clarke's. In January 1917 Mr Hollings died¹⁴² and, since on the Land Title Certificates there was no mention of a lease of the estates to someone else, it has to be assumed that the leased parts of the two estates together reverted to the management of Mr Mills.

¹³⁸ UKNA, CO 152/276 No 27056: Correspondence 1 and 11 July 1902, and 15 August 1902; No 34537 James Ewing to CP Lucas, 18 August 1902

¹³⁹ ECSCRN, LTRB 2 ff4 and 7 for Clarke's and ff3 and 6 for Pinney's dated 18 November 1905 <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP794-1-8-2> The lease, dated 11 May 1909, had taken effect from 1 July 1908 and the instrument was recorded in Book E. None of the instruments associated with the Land Title registrations in LTRBs 1-3 were digitally photographed for the British Library's *Endangered Archives Programme* 794 on Nevis.

¹⁴⁰ <http://sturgefamily.charlessturge.com/Discover/THE%20MONTSEERRAT%20CONNECTION.htm>

¹⁴¹ ECSCRN LTRB 2 ff12-13. Between the folios is a plan of Paradise Estate, 299 acres, dated 24 October 1914.

¹⁴² Familysearch.org and gravestone at Springfield cemetery St Kitts

Katherine Burdon, wife of the Administrator of St Kitts and Nevis, noted in 1920 that the Pinney coconut plantation ran for some two miles north from Charlestown between the road and the sea. She noted that the industry was of recent growth and was spreading round the island. Pinneys and Paradise were the oldest amounting to some 275 acres of which 150 acres were then at the bearing stage. The nuts were exported husked, presumably for the copra industry, but no use was made of the husk. According to her, it took a million nuts or 730 acres to make a factory viable.¹⁴³

The late Spencer Howell, whose father was a manager at Pinney's Estate, and possibly Clarke's too, grew up in Pinney's Yard in the 1920s. He remembered that the coconut palms were grown east of the road up to and just beyond Pinney's Yard; it was probably similar at Clarke's. He also remembered that some copra was produced. It was kept off the ground, dried and transported round Pinney's Yard on rails. People went to the yard on Saturdays for a barbeque and also for copra meat. A large herd of pigs was fed on copra.¹⁴⁴

Coconuts were, of course, not a new industry at Pinney's and probably not at Clarke's either. In 1842 Peter Thomas Huggins shipped at least 1,200 coconuts to Britain and was requested to send a British Plantation Certificate for 6,400 the next year.¹⁴⁵ But in the 1920s there was some effort to diversify away from dependence on sugar.¹⁴⁶

A confused picture of what was actually being grown on the estates emerges from accounts of the 1920s and 1930s. In general, on the island sugar and Sea Island cotton were both being produced, mostly by small farmers. Coconut palms were growing on the lower ground next to the shore on some estates and some larger estates were still trying to produce sugar. It is not clear whether Mr Ewing was trying to do this annually on Pinney's and Clarke's. Spencer Howell remembered that there were cattle pastured between the works at Pinney's Yard and the house at Mountravers. Perhaps it was so for a period and then sugar was grown in that part of the estate, or cattle roamed on Pinney's but sugar was grown on Clarke's.

Whatever the story, people were poor and wages were at rock bottom. On St Kitts in 1932 the wages of cane cutters were cut by a third from 1 shilling to 8 pence per ton. The failure or inability of planters to pay a living wage, the poor conditions that people lived in and the unwillingness to recognise any formal organisation like trade unions to represent workers all boiled over, and there were riots across the Caribbean. Trouble broke out on Shadwell and Buckley's estates on St Kitts on 28/29 January 1935 which led to troops being called in and firing on the crowd resulting again in three deaths.

According to the Nevis historian Vincent Hubbard, trouble broke out on Nevis the next day.

In the evening they marched out of town to Pinney's and Paradise estates where they set the cane fields afire and watched them burn throughout the night. By the time the fires were extinguished, about 100 acres of cane were destroyed on each of the two estates.¹⁴⁷

Unfortunately, he gives no source for this but, taking it at face value, it shows that cane was being grown on Pinney's (and presumably Clarke's) and Paradise. It is unclear why the Ewing estates were particularly noticed. Convenient location may have been a factor but perhaps it was because Pinney's had the factory where local sugar was processed and Ewing was an absentee owner who had a lot of under-used land.

The Caribbean-wide trouble forced the colonial government to investigate the causes of the riots and the desperate poverty which underlay them through the setting up of the Moyne Commission in 1938. Although

¹⁴³ KJA Burdon *A Handbook of St Kitts-Nevis* 1920 p214

¹⁴⁴ Spencer Howell in conversation with the authors 2006. The rails were still to be seen in Pinney's Yard in 2006.

¹⁴⁵ BULSC, PP Letterbook 67 31 August 1842 and Letterbook 68, 1 September 1843

¹⁴⁶ The Ewings had successfully tried a similar experiment moving from sugar to bananas on Jamaica.

¹⁴⁷ V Hubbard *Swords Ships and Sugar* 2002 p202

it was detailed and thorough and the evidence shocking, the Commission did not report until after the Second World War.¹⁴⁸

A local initiative under the auspices of the Agricultural and Commercial Society sought to re-invigorate sugar production on the island by asking for a grant to build two small and up-to-date sugar factories. In the process of presenting its petition it was claimed that Humphry Ewing Crum Ewing's attention was all on his Jamaica estates. This was almost certainly true since he had for many years been travelling back and forth from Britain to Jamaica and ultimately settled and, in November 1946, died there. However, the claim in 1938/9 that he had sold his estates on Nevis was not yet true. Sir Gordon Lethem, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, clarified the situation: 'Crum Ewing is of course still a landowner of the Pinney's Estate [and Clarke's] though he does practically nothing with it.' He added: 'I should correct myself and say he seems to have had a little more done within the last year or two than for some time previously.'¹⁴⁹ Not very long after, on 20 August 1941, Ewing retreated from Nevis and sold Clarke's, Pinney's and Paradise estates to a consortium of people led by Alexander Moir Reid of St Kitts.¹⁵⁰

Walter Wade and the post-war period

All three estates went through rapid transfers of ownership during and immediately after the war. Alexander Moir Reid held onto them for about a year. In 1942 he transferred Pinney's and Paradise to Ramirez Kawaja. Because Kawaja acquired both of these estates it is a fair assumption that he bought Clarke's along with Pinney's.¹⁵¹ In 1946 Ramirez Kawaja sold Pinney's Estate to a man from Montserrat, Walter Wade. The single biographical account of Mr Wade states that he owned Clarke's as well.¹⁵²

A USAAF aerial survey of Nevis, taken in 1946, around the time that Wade began his ownership of Pinney's and Clarke's, shows that the land between the road and the sea on both estates was given over to coconut palms. This extended to about 600 m east of the road, although in the case of Pinney's only in the area directly above Pinney's yard. East of the coconut groves is what seems to be uncultivated pasture and there is no evidence of cane fields. To the north there are other areas of palms on Paradise and Clifton estates and a small area around Belmont.¹⁵³

In 1952/3 Gordon Merrill recorded that 'Coconuts raised on a commercial basis occupy less than one thousand acres on Nevis, and the island annually exports to Barbados less than 200 tons of dried coconut.'¹⁵⁴ While the coconut plantation on Clarke's and Pinney's still extended east of the main road in aerial photos taken in 1968, by 1981 it had largely been confined to the land west of the road.

Walter Wade, also known as Wally Wade, was a hardworking self-made man from Montserrat. Born in 1889, he had to leave school aged ten to fend for himself when his widowed mother died. He started out as a labourer, barely literate, but he worked hard and saved his money. In the 1930s he built boats for trading between the islands, losing four of them but persevering and becoming wealthy enough to buy several

¹⁴⁸ For further details see C Eickelmann *The Mountravers Plantation Community 1734-1834* Postscript <https://seis.bristol.ac.uk/~emceee/mountravers~postscript.pdf>

¹⁴⁹ UKNA, CO 152/479/12 Sir Gordon Lethem, Government House, Antigua, to Mr Stockdale, 6 January 1939

¹⁵⁰ ECSCRN, LTRB 2 f7 for Clarke's, f6 for Pinney's and LTRB 3 f13 for Paradise. Reid was a planter in St Kitts (West Farm Estate) and Trinidad and was a member of the Legislative Council of the Leeward Islands. He died at Limuru in Kenya in 1961.

¹⁵¹ ECSCRN, LTRB 6 f7 for Pinney's Estate, 730 acres, and f9 for Paradise Estate

¹⁵² 'Walter Edston Wade' in Howard Fergus *A Gallery of Montserrat: some prominent people in our History* Canoe Press, University of the West Indies 1997 pp69-71

¹⁵³ USAAF aerial survey of Nevis photo '33V 311RW M539 16 PS 24 Jan 1946 5M28' from Overseas Survey Directorate Collection, originally located at the now defunct Museum of Empire and Commonwealth, Bristol, but since transferred to the National Collection of Aerial Photography in Edinburgh.

¹⁵⁴ G C Merrill *The Historical Geography of St Kitts and Nevis, British West Indies* Instituto Panamericano de Geografia e Historia, Mexico 1958 p105

estates on Montserrat. In 1946, when he had moved to Nevis, he bought Pinney's Estate from Ramirez Kawaja.¹⁵⁵ Apparently he also bought Clarke's, presumably at or around the same time, and Belmont.¹⁵⁶

According to his biographer he struck gold at Pinney's, and presumably Clarke's, by growing coconuts, raising livestock and producing copra which he shipped to Barbados together with horses, donkeys and cattle. He is said to have taught local people how to make copra, but he also introduced workers from Montserrat. Charlie Woodley of Nevis and various members of the Wade family remember copra drying in the sun on flat surfaces in the works at Pinney's and perhaps also at the works on Clarke's. They also remember the workers from Montserrat living in houses at Pinney's Yard.¹⁵⁷

Another very interesting example of Wade's energy and acumen is in connection with his livestock. During and immediately after the war the export of cattle from the island was forbidden in order to maintain meat supplies locally. Wade spotted a shortage of cattle in Trinidad and petitioned the Governor on behalf of himself and other local stockmen to be allowed to supply that market from Nevis. He was granted a trial run with stock from other providers and some of his own from Pinney's and presumably Clarke's estates. Having provided sufficiently detailed accounts to show that the project was viable he was allowed to proceed, thus helping himself and encouraging the growth of a burgeoning export market.¹⁵⁸

A born-again Christian and a member of the Pilgrim Holiness Church, he spent a good deal of money in charitable works. His biographer noted that 'He donated lands for mission houses as well as church buildings. The Pilgrim Holiness College in Barbados had a Walter Wade Hall which he financed.' Local stories on Nevis suggest that he had no great love for the days of slavery and sugar plantations or the trappings of white rule such as the so-called 'Great Houses'. He is rumoured to have dynamited for stone what was known as the 'slave dungeon', but was probably a hurricane shelter, in the yard in front of Mountravers house. The stone is supposed to have gone into building the Pilgrim Holiness church in Charlestown.

From defunct sugar plantation to luxury Four Seasons Resort

After an eventful life, having become a wealthy man through his own efforts and with fifteen children to follow him, Walter Wade died in Nevis in May 1971 still in possession of Pinney's and, presumably, Clarke's. It seems to have taken some time for his family to resolve problems with their father's Kittitian lawyer and sort out their inheritance.¹⁵⁹ It was not until 1974 that Wades' heirs transferred ownership of Pinney's Estate, for instance, to Pinney's Development Corporation. It is not clear what happened to Clarke's and at what point the two estates, so long worked in tandem, became totally separate entities again. Further research on Nevis in the more recent Land Title Certificates will be necessary to clarify that issue.

Bryan Dyde has pointed out that, as the sugar industry on Nevis declined, some estates were sold off to be divided up into smallholdings, others were bought by the government for use in land resettlement. To some degree this helped with unemployment. Sea Island cotton was by 1918 grown on 3,000 acres on Nevis and was the principal cash crop until at least the 1960s. But since Emancipation many people had to find work elsewhere. They travelled back and forth to the Dominican Republic, seeking employment as migrant workers on the sugar estates. There was significant emigration to the USA and Canada, even when quotas were imposed, until the USA stopped immigration in 1952. It is estimated that between 1955 and 1965 15,000 people from St Kitts, Nevis and Anguilla emigrated to Britain. Wages in the islands were very low.

¹⁵⁵ ECSCRN, LTRB 6 f72

¹⁵⁶ H Fergus *A Gallery of Montserrat* pp69-71. Apparently he also bought Tower Hill, 'Farms' and Bath.

¹⁵⁷ Charlie Woodley and Wade family members in conversation with the authors.

¹⁵⁸ 'Export of cattle from Nevis' National Archives of St Kitts and Nevis <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.kn/1341>

¹⁵⁹ H Fergus *A Gallery of Montserrat* pp69-71

Quoting Colonial Reports from the Leeward Islands for 1955-56, Dyde notes that a cane cutter earned £3.50 per week, women cotton workers earned £1 per week, the same as domestic servants.¹⁶⁰ In 2001 a study commissioned by the Caribbean Development Bank estimated that 32 % of Nevisians lived in poverty. According to Claudia Weisburg, who examined household food production on Nevis, in the 1980s three quarters of Nevisian households used pit toilets and just over half did not have access to water pipes at home. Remittance money sent from abroad continued to be an important part of family income into the 1980s.¹⁶¹

Two industries were of particular help to the economy on Nevis. In the 1980s a small but important sector grew in the offshore financial services industry, contributing to government income from the fees earned. In addition, since at least the 1950s, there had been a small number of plantation inns, or boutique hotels, such as Nisbets, Montpelier and Golden Rock. These catered to wealthier guests and provided both training and good employment in the hospitality industry.

Without further research in the land records, it is not known what particular path Clarke's Estate followed from being a coconut plantation and pasture in the 1970s to becoming the luxury Four Seasons Hotel and Resort. When it opened in 1991 it significantly boosted the local economy. Government revenues improved and large numbers of people were trained and employed. Something like a fifth of the adult workforce on the island was employed at the hotel at higher-than-average wages. Living standards rose dramatically.

Some of the people thus employed by Four Seasons may well be descended from those tough men and women who cut the cane, laboured at the mill, worked in the boiling house and lived in the villages, including the one on the edge of the 15th hole. These enslaved workers and their offspring struggled to survive long enough to make it through to freedom, and with their families forged generations of free people - the founders of modern society on Nevis.

A note on sources

The information on Clarke's in this report has been gathered in the process of preparing a larger study of Pinney's Estate, the neighbouring plantation to the south. While they were separate estates from the seventeenth century up to 1830, they were in the same parish facing many of the same problems, conditions and events. From 1830 through to the mid twentieth century they usually had the same owner and were worked in tandem.

This study therefore has relied heavily on the Pinney Papers at Bristol University Library Special Collections which were the principle source for Professor Richard Pares's seminal study of the Pinney family business *A West India Fortune* (Longmans, 1950), as well as for Christine Eickelmann's study of the enslaved population of Pinney's Estate, *The Mountravers Plantation Community 1734-1834*

<https://seis.bristol.ac.uk/~emceee/mountraversplantationcommunity.html>

Also important have been the Common Deed Record Books and Wills which are part of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court Records, held in the Nevis Court House but available online through the British Library *Endangered Archives Programme* for Nevis, EAP 794, <https://eap.bl.uk/project/EAP794>

The triennial slave registers from 1817 to 1834 and the slave compensation records, both held at the UK National Archives, are important in identifying individual enslaved people and what happened to them

¹⁶⁰ B Dyde *Out of the Crowded Vagueness* pp236-38 and pp256-57

¹⁶¹ D Curtis *Pleasure and Perils: Girls' Sexuality in a Caribbean Consumer Culture* 2009 pp33-5

before Emancipation. Except for the 1834 volume, the registers are available online at <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/1129/>

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