

**Clifton Estate, Nevis:
An Account of Absence and Ambition**



Clifton Estate from Tower Hill, 2016

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CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Early histories.....	4
Morton's Bay Estate.....	6
Lower Plantation	11
Clifton Plantation.....	13
Sheppard's Land.....	17
Nevis in the early nineteenth century	19
Laurence's Estate	20
The enslaved populations on the estates owned by Samuel Laurence	21
Compensation for the few	33
<i>HMS Thunder's</i> survey, 1848	34
An Encumbered Estate.....	36
Structures, Sites and Landscape.....	39
Appendix	41

Clifton Estate, Nevis: An Account of Absence and Ambition

Introduction

Clifton Estate in the parish of St Thomas Lowland on the West Indian island of Nevis has been acquired by a new owner relatively recently. Together with the neighbouring estate of Tower Hill, it is currently undergoing a process of conservation of both its natural and historic environments.

This report was commissioned in the hope that a search through the documentary evidence might provide a historical context for what is, or is not, revealed through archaeological investigation of the landscape and the preservation of historic remains.

A plan in the UK National Archives dated May 1887 shows Clifton as an estate of 554 acres running about two and a half miles east from the western shore of the island at Fort Ashby roughly on to the shoulder of the central mountain. There, with a boundary on Hog Valley to the east, it borders on Spring Hill estate to the north and Tower Hill to the south.

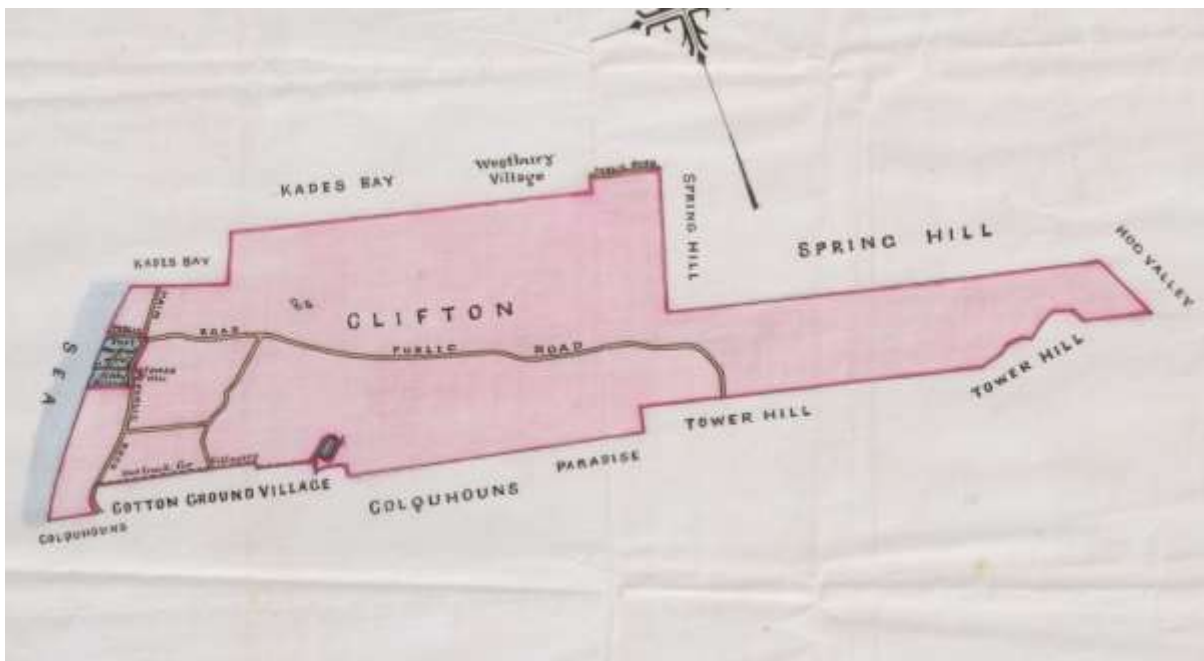


Fig 1: A plan of Clifton Estate, Nevis certified May 1887

The plan was produced to assist the sale of the estate through the Encumbered Estates Commission.¹ The particulars of sale note that Clifton consisted of the plantations 'known formerly' as Morton's Bay plantation, Clifton plantation, Sheppard's Land and Morton's Bay Pond.

Another document, produced to support the sale, records the estate as consisting of Morton's Bay plantation (200 acres), Clifton Plantation (100 acres), Sheppard's Land (90 acres), Lower Plantation (188 acres), another unnamed portion of land bounded on the north by Kades Bay plantation (no acreage given) and two further plots amounting to 4 acres.²

¹ UK National Archives (UK NA), CO 441/24/1 pt 2

² UK NA, CO 441/24/1 pt 1

This clearly reveals a difficulty, common on Nevis, of getting some consistency in the naming of plots of land. Sometimes the names can refer back over a century to some long-forgotten owner of land previously unmentioned. However, in this case it is clear that Clifton Estate in the 1880s consisted of at least four major plantations (one of which was called Clifton), each of which may have had their own works and their own enslaved workforces and villages at one time.

One other general point should be made at the outset. It seems likely that most or all of the estate sold in the 1880s was put together from the disparate plantations by Samuel Laurence (or Lawrence) in the early nineteenth century. So the area between Cotton Ground and Kades Bay Estate (or Cades Estate), known on the 1887 plan as Clifton, is shown as 'Laurence Estate' (or Lawrence Estate) on the Directorate of Overseas Survey maps of Nevis of 1960 and 1984.



Fig 2: Extract from 'Nevis with Part of St Christopher' D.O. S. 343, 1960

This report will go through the history of component parts of Clifton Estate until they come together under the ownership of Samuel Laurence in the early eighteenth century. From then on it will deal with them as one estate as they appear to have been managed.

Early histories

The boundary descriptions of two of the four major portions of land making up the estate, Morton's Bay and Lower Plantation, show that both had the sea as their western boundary. The descriptions seem to suggest that Lower Plantation was to the north of Morton's Bay estate and bordered on Kades Bay estate. Thus, Morton's Bay plantation, seems to have had Lower Plantation to its north and Colhoun's to the south.

Where the boundary was between them is not clear and so it is also unclear which one enclosed the town known variously as Morton's Bay, Littleborough and probably from about 1685, Jamestown. It is worth recalling what was happening at the town of Morton's Bay in

the late seventeenth century since it provided opportunities for the owners of the various estates in the vicinity.

Tessa Machling points out that the first mention of Morton's Bay as a settlement was in 1672 in a fort inventory. That same year a local act stated that it was one of five lawful ports for Nevis. She points out that another act three years later suppressing thatched houses in Morton's Bay and Charlestown suggests that the former settlement 'had now reached a reasonable size'.³

In November 1676 Governor Stapleton of the Leeward Islands included the following information in a report home: 'Principal towns and places of trade...In Nevis, five places for trade but two considerable; Charlestown where are good dwellings and storehouses, built with the country timber, not exceeding 60 feet long and 20 broad, story and a half, the 'Hurri-Canes' having taught the people to build low. Morton Bay, where there are but few houses because ships ride at Charlestown and send their long boats to Morton Bay for lading...'⁴

Nevis was the 'factory' in the Leeward Islands for the Royal African Company's business of selling enslaved people brought from West Africa in the late seventeenth century. It has been claimed that slaves were shipped to Charlestown and then some taken to Morton's Bay for sale. Certainly sugar was shipped from the bay in longboats out to the merchant vessels waiting in the 'road'. The planter Robert Helme wrote to Henry Carpenter on Nevis that he hoped they would not be stopped from 'receiving sugars in our storehouse at Morton's Bay or in anything else that may be our conveniency and noe disadvantage to you'.⁵ Whether or not slaves were shipped into Morton's Bay it is clear that there was some advantage for planters situated directly next door to this commercial centre.

Storehouses may have been revealed first in the archaeological investigations carried out by *Time Team* at Jamestown/Morton's Bay in 1998.⁶ Since then the foundations of large buildings have been recorded west of the main road by at least two different searches. Marco Meniketti's 'Historic Colonial Landscape Project' cleared 'a series of masonry foundations' of about 60 ft x 20 ft revealing 'parallel structures not unlike a warehouse district'.⁷

All the teams have at various times investigated the Nevis legend that Jamestown/Morton's Bay (at the bottom of Clifton Estate) was destroyed by a tsunami following an earthquake in April 1690.⁸ First there was 'a most amazing Earth-Quake' which destroyed all the brick and stone houses in Charlestown, the earth was thrown up in 'vast heaps' and 'great numbers of Large Trees were torn up by the Roots'. This was followed by the tsunami. 'The Sea itself for a time forsook the Shoar for about three quarters of a Mile together, and left a great number of Fish of a large Size to lye gaping upon the Sand, till it return'd again: which violent Motion of the Water happen'd diverse times, though not with the same Rapidness and Fury, nor at so great a Distance as at first.'⁹

³ Machling, T 'Jamestown, Morton's Bay and James Fort: Myth, Port and Fort' Morris, E et al *Nevis Heritage Project Interim Report*, University of Southampton, Department of Archaeology 2002

⁴ 22 November 1676 'Answer to inquiries sent to Colonel Stapleton Governor of the Leeward Islands...by Sir Robert Southwell' in Noel Sainsbury, W ed. *Calendar of State Papers Colonial Series 1675-76* (reprint) 1964 pp497-502 No. 1152

⁵ Hancock, D *The Letters of William Freeman, London Merchant, 1678-1685* London Record Society 2002 p190

⁶ Bellamy, P *Jamestown, St Thomas Lowland, Nevis: Archaeological Investigations by Time Team October 1998* Terrain Archaeology 2004

⁷ Meniketti, M 'Sugar Mills, Technology and Environmental Change: A Case Study of Colonial Agro-Industrial Development in the Caribbean' in *Industrial Archaeology* vol 32 Issue 1

⁸ Not, as the legend suggests, in 1680

⁹ 'An Account of the Late Dreadful Earthquake in the Island of Nevis and St Christopher' (London 1690) *Calendar of State Papers: Colonial* 1689-92 p278. We are very grateful to the late Brian Littlewood for providing a copy of this source

The archaeologists seem to have come to similar conclusions: that Jamestown was Morton's Bay and that it was severely damaged, but not destroyed, by a tsunami. In particular, a joint US/UK team suggested that there had been earthquake damage at the site and that the tsunami had buried Jamestown very deep across the site. However, according to their report, as much as anything else Jamestown/ Morton's Bay suffered from the long period of economic decline which followed from the destruction wrought by the French invasion of 1706.¹⁰

All this activity in the late seventeenth century, followed by a slow decline during the first half of the eighteenth century, was happening in and around the fields and works at the bottom of Clifton Estate on the plantations of Morton's Bay and Lower Plantation. One aspect of the archaeological investigation by *Time Team* in 1998 was entirely incorrect. The team stated that Jamestown/Morton's Bay may have stretched north of Morton's Bay Fort/Fort Ashby. Indeed, the programme filmed some ruins seen in the fields just north of Tyson Mansah's garden and shop. They are not the ruins of Jamestown but what they are is still a mystery. Further investigation of them may reveal something of either Clifton/Laurence's or Kades Bay's works.

Morton's Bay Estate

Investigation of the individual component plantations of Clifton Estate relies heavily on property deeds to be found in various collections on either side of the Atlantic. The most important of these is the collection of Common Deed Record books in the vault of the Supreme Court Registry in Nevis. This is supplemented, in some instances, by a collection of West Indian deeds in the Special Collections of Bristol University Library in the UK.

It would seem sensible to believe that both the bay and the plantation are named after Colonel Sir Francis Morton, President of the island's Council and a Colonel of the militia. He owned a number of estates in the northwest corner of the island, including Round Hill. V L Oliver notes that, in quick succession in London, he was knighted on 26 March 1679, made his will on 26 June and was buried in the church of St Mildred, Bread Street, on 9 July. In his will he left substantial quantities of sugar for purchasing communion plate for the parish of St Thomas Lowland.¹¹

One of the earliest deeds still extant on Nevis, which the French did not manage to burn in 1706, records that on 19 June 1678 Morton sold Round Hill estate to Michael Smith, a member of the island's Council and also a Colonel. His grandson, Michael Smith, is recorded as having owned Round Hill, Morton's Bay and an unspecified 'Upper' estate, but died at the age of 21. His wife Jane remarried and by a deed dated 18 February 1754 relinquished her dower in the three plantations for an annuity of £262. It is possible that Michael's brother inherited the three plantations and others, though he is recorded as having sold all his estates later.¹² It may well be that Colonel Morton had previously owned the plantation and sold Morton's Bay before 1679 to the Smith family with whom it remained until the 1750s.

Morton's Bay estate emerges more clearly in the ownership and affairs of the Williams family from 1766 through to the early eighteen hundreds. A deed registering a power of attorney

¹⁰ Hudgins, C, Klingelhofer, E and Leech R *Excavations at Jamestown Nevis 2003-2006* 1 September 2010, Nevis Historical and Conservation Society (NHCS) Archive, MG 22.86

¹¹ Oliver, V L and Brown, L B *More Monumental Inscriptions: Tombstones of The British West Indies* p108. There is a memorial in St Thomas Lowland to Morton's wife Mary who died in 1663.

¹² Oliver, V L *Caribbeana* vol 4 pp289-296 pedigree of Smith of Nevis noting Nevis Common Deed Record Book (Common Records) 1707-1728 f242 and Common Records 1754 f864. We are again very grateful to the late Brian Littlewood for providing a copy of *Caribbeana*.

dated 17 October 1793 recites some of the earlier history of the estate. It notes several agreements made by John Williams the elder (of Lower Brooke Street, St George, Hanover Square, London) and his wife Sarah to settle the marriage portion of Mary Charlotte Thornhill Moore, the intended wife of their son John Williams the younger. An agreement was made with the trustees of the marriage settlement dated 3 and 4 October 1766 that Williams the elder would sell his estates on St Kitts to fund the purchase of an estate to provide an annuity of £500 sterling should Mary Williams/Moore outlive her husband. By deeds of lease and release dated 28 and 29 July 1769 the trustees of the settlement agreed to buy, for £11,000, Morton's Bay estate in St Thomas Lowland, Nevis, of 200 acres and with 110 enslaved workers in the tenure, or occupation, of Peter Mathew Mills of Harley Street in London.¹³ Mills was the son and heir of Mathew Mills of Soho, presumably the Mathew Mills who was a member of the family of London sugar merchants and who was murdered in St Kitts in November 1752.¹⁴ Mills may have been in occupation of the estate because it was in arrears to him as a merchant, though it is possible that he owned it.¹⁵ In 1769 John Williams the younger extended his realm by purchasing the estate of Windmill and Paradise, later known as Colhoun's, immediately to the south of Morton's Bay. Soon afterwards he mortgaged Windmill and Paradise to P M Mills, his merchant and the consignee for his sugars, for £7,000 to cover some of the purchase price. The mortgage was vested in the hands of Mills's own trustee William MacDowall Colhoun.

At this point it is worth looking briefly at Morton's Bay the estate. Apart from the ownership link with Windmill and Paradise/Colhoun's to the south, it was a reasonably sized, stand-alone estate of 200 acres in a productive area of the island, with easy access to a bay for loading the sugar, rum and molasses it produced. It had a workforce of 110 enslaved workers who presumably had their own village somewhere alongside one of the ghuts. The boundaries given are repeated a number of times after 1769 and suggest that to the north was an estate belonging to the Payne family, to the west the sea, and to the south John Williams's other estate ie Windmill and Paradise.¹⁶ Ignoring that last ownership link to the south, Morton's Bay was not at this point linked in terms of ownership to the other estates which made up Clifton Estate in the nineteenth century. At 200 acres the estate would have had at least one set of works, if not two, housing for the enslaved workers and their families and at least one plantation estate house. One possible location for some of this infrastructure emerges from a look at Iles's 1871 map of Nevis. In the area of upper Cotton Ground, south of the ghut, is a house or works named 'Williams'. The land to the west of this, right on the northern edge of Cotton Ground, is described as 'Cliftons Lands'. All of this strengthens the suggestion that Morton's Bay as a plantation lay on the south side of Clifton's Estate.¹⁷

Again ignoring Windmill and Paradise for the minute, Morton's Bay as an estate should have been moderately productive in this period. John Pinney calculated that his 272 acres at Mountravers further south in the parish produced an annual profit of £1,219 over the period 1769-1778.¹⁸ Unfortunately Morton's Bay estate was overtaken by the tangled finances and political ambitions of those involved.

¹³ Bristol University Library Special Collections (BULSC), DM 78/159-160 17 October 1793

¹⁴ Thoms, D W 'The Mills Family: London Sugar Merchants of the eighteenth century' in *Business History* vol XI 1969 pp3-10

¹⁵ The affairs of the Williams family are complicated. Details, often repeated with slight differences, can be found in BULSC, DM 78/159-166, Nevis Common Records 1810-1814 ff675-690 and BULSC, Pinney Papers (PP) West Indies Box 1820-1822 Williams Claim

¹⁶ In BULSC, DM 78/159 Morton's Bay is described as bounded to the south by lands formerly belonging to the heirs of Mrs Bridget Woodley but then belonging to the said John Williams the Younger, to the north by lands belonging to Charles Payne and Somers Payne dec'd, to the east by land late of Somers Payne and to the west by the sea

¹⁷ Iles, J A B *Map of the Island of Nevis* 1871

¹⁸ That might be the equivalent of about £180,000 in 2016, depending on how the multiplier is calculated

John Williams the younger was born on Nevis.¹⁹ However, by the 1760s and 1770s, his family were in Wimpole Street, Marylebone and his parents elsewhere in London. He was making serious efforts to get himself elected to Parliament. In 1768 he stood and lost in the constituency of Fowey in Cornwall. In May 1772 he was elected in Saltash, again in Cornwall. He made two speeches, one on the slave trade, and only lasted as an M.P. for two months. He was accused of having bribed the electorate and had to stand down. In May 1774 he stood again for the constituency of Poole and lost.²⁰ A summary of his finances drawn up for the Pinneys noted that on becoming a candidate for election in Poole he needed more money and raised a mortgage on his estates; the mortgage may have been bought subsequently by another aspiring Nevis politician, the previously mentioned William Colhoun. The principal and interest had by this time risen to £17,000.²¹ Other mortgages had also been given on security of the Williams estates.

Colhoun was the son of Robert Colhoun, the Treasurer of St Kitts, and Frances, one of the Mills family. He was well connected and for a period of time owned estates on St Kitts, Nevis and St Croix, as well as three estates in Norfolk. For some reason the usually cautious Pinneys became heavily involved in his financial affairs and took years to extricate themselves. Richard Pares states that at the beginning Colhoun was not downright dishonest, more that he got himself into a 'horrid muddle' by adopting schemes he never saw clearly and never completed. By the end, both Pares and the Pinneys were much less charitable about his activities, Pares stating that he 'lied and broke promises without shame'.²² The last that was heard from him was from Normandy in December 1829 when he wrote that he would have been arrested if he had set foot in England.²³ The Pinneys should have been warned off by his political behaviour. He was M.P. for Bedford from 1784 to 1802. Initially he got himself elected with the ardent support of the followers of Pitt the Younger but immediately he swapped sides and supported the Whigs of Charles James Fox.²⁴

They should also have been warned by the shady dealing surrounding Morton's Bay and Windmill and Paradise. By 1776 Williams was very short of money and Colhoun was acting as a trustee for the heirs of Peter Mathew Mills. A judgement was made in the courts in Nevis for a debt of £1,400 and the local Provost Marshal forced a sale of the estates. William Colhoun was declared the purchaser. Various legal opinions disagreed on whether or not as a trustee he could become a *bona fide* purchaser. Some stated that, on his own mortgage, he could only become mortgager in possession until the mortgage was satisfied - at which point he would be required to hand the estates back. In practice, he acted on his own behalf. Since both Williams and Colhoun were not in the West Indies, all this was being done through their appointed local attorneys. John Ward, acting for the Williams family, made a private arrangement to let John Stanley, acting for Colhoun, into possession not only of Windmill and Paradise but also of Morton's Bay and forty slaves, perhaps to help work the estates. All the parties seem to have agreed later that there was no charge allowable on either Morton's Bay or the slaves and so they should not have been handed over. Thus Colhoun ended up with one estate as owner, instead of trustee for others. He was also the supposed owner of Morton's Bay and 40 slaves; the estate being in trust as part of the marriage settlement of Mrs Williams and her children. Both estates carried with them all the

¹⁹ John Williams was baptised in St George Gingerland in 1736 (Eickelmann, C *Nevis Names* (unpublished MSS) quoting *Caribbeana* vol 3).

²⁰ Namier, L and Brooke, J *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1754-1790* 1964

²¹ BULSC, PP West Indies Box 1820-1822 Williams Claim Summary written for J F Pinney of Somerton

²² Pares, R A *West-India Fortune* 1950 Appendix to Ch 11 which is all about Colhoun's affairs

²³ Eickelmann, C *Nevis Names* quoting BULSC, PP Dom Box 1 i/8 Wm Colhoun to Charles Pinney

²⁴ See Namier, L and Brooke, J *The History of Parliament 1754-1790* 1964 and Thorne, R G *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1790-1820* 1986

attendant revenues and costs. All the while Colhoun and Williams were pursuing their political careers and living at considerable expense in England.

Meanwhile the estates had local managers. This was not automatically a bad thing, for a good manager for an absentee proprietor was better than a bad resident owner. However, there was no question that the absentee proprietors were short of money and their Nevis estates and the enslaved workers were not at the centre of their concerns. That mattered because, during this period of the War of American Independence, French privateers were operating right off the island's western shoreline, supplies were difficult to get from Britain and were forbidden from North America. There was a genuine fear of famine on the island. The local people needed the backing of their proprietors; instead the attention was directed elsewhere.

For Morton's Bay the complicated questions of ownership and tangled finances persisted until June 1793 when John Williams the Younger died and left his estate in Nevis to trustees for his son. Within five months his wife Mary got married again, to John Bindley. She set about securing from her trustees her own entitlement, under her original marriage settlement, to an annuity from the estate. In the process, the rights of her son John Mathew Williams and daughter Sarah Charlotte Williams²⁵ were raised in court. In October 1793 a power of attorney was sent out to John Ward and George Forbes to take over and run all the estates. Included was a list of over a hundred named slaves of whom they were to take 'possession'. In the event the Williams family only recovered possession of Morton's Bay and probably the slaves. Morton's Bay was again a single unconnected estate.²⁶

From 1795 onwards John Mathew Williams, another absentee owner, followed along his father's path of constantly raising money by mortgaging and then remortgaging the estate. It is unclear whether Ward and Forbes ran the estate as managers or acted as attorneys and installed a manager. From 1802 William Manning of Manning & Anderdon acted as consignee for the sugars and probably supplier of plantation goods to the estate. He may well have been owed a considerable amount of money for he took the direction and management of Morton's Bay into his own hands. By 1811 Butler Thompson Claxton, in the role of consignee and supplier, was already owed £1,014. He compounded this when taking over John Mathew Williams's accumulated debt of £10,000.²⁷ Finally, and no doubt to everyone's relief, temporary calm was provided by the sale, through deeds dated 24 and 25 July 1817, of Morton's Bay and all the enslaved people on it. Samuel Laurence bought it for the sum of £14,000. Claxton provided a mortgage to secure the money.²⁸

The enslaved workforce at Morton's Bay Plantation, 1793

The enslaved people named in the 1793 document presumably were attached to Morton's Bay, and some will have been related to the 110 slaves bought with the estate in 1769. In 1793 they were listed continuously and without any indication of gender.²⁹ Here, based on experience with lists from other estates, they have been divided on a speculative basis but in

²⁵ By 1795 Sarah Charlotte Williams was married to Thomas Lane

²⁶ See BULSC, DM 78/159-166, Nevis Common Records 1810-1814 ff675-690 and BULSC, PP West Indies Box 1820-1822 Williams Claim for further details. Windmill and Paradise, by then called Colhoun's, remained in Colhoun's hands until about 1807 when the Pinneys forced a sale and ultimately conveyed the estate to William Bowrin after which it has sometimes been called 'Bowrin's' in the records.

²⁷ BULSC, DM 78/162 includes a long, but only partial, list of debts

²⁸ BULSC, DM 78/164-165

²⁹ BULSC, DM 78/159-160 Power of Attorney from Mary Charlotte Thornhill Williams dated 17 October 1793

the order they were originally given. The practicalities of powers of attorney suggest that this was the list as the Williams family understood it to be in 1793.

Table 1: A list of enslaved people probably on Morton's Bay Plantation, Nevis, as listed in a power of attorney dated 1793 [Headings added]

<i>Men (30)</i>	<i>Women (40)</i>	<i>Boys (13)</i>	<i>Girls (19)</i>	<i>Boy and Girl Children (11)</i>
Cato	Diana	Devonshire	Rachael	Avininy
Quashy	Hannah	Dublin	Sarah	Andrico
Old Davie	Jenny	Harry	Phillis	Quamina
Quacoe	Congo Celia	Tom	Harriet	A new Negro
Richmond		Bundere	Joan	Quashynaw
Bridgwater	Sukey	Johnno	Bess	Macoe
Cardiff	Congo Rose	Limerick	Phillis	Quaseba
Old Cudjoe	Baby Leah	Castile	A child	Grace
Congo Cuffe	Beneba	Constant	Daniel	Ruth
Yaw	Quasheba	Quamina	Diana	Venus
Dunno	Emas	Cudjoe	Alice	Violet
Pym's Nero	Mininba	Johnny	Quasil	
Pompey	Spranza	Coker	Franky	
Exeter	Sannaba		Greta	
Welcombe	Old Sarah		Labo	
Neptune	Nanny		Pareen	
Mushill	Moll Waters		Nanny	
Nero	Patient		Abba	
Hector	Priscilla		Cuba	
Ande	Daphne			
Romeo	Dorinda			
Little Sandwich	Long Hannah			
Pendars	Little Mimba			
Peter	Sepoy			
Penture	Juno			
Jack	Isabella			
Creol Hannabel	Sheba			
Gabriel	Ebbo Jenny			
Mattace	Ariadne			
Ned	Saint Kitts Leah			
	Margaret			
	Lettice			
	Dido			
	Saint Kitts			
	Nanny			
	Saint Kitts			
	Jenny			
	Old Philio			
	Juliet			
	Nancy			
	Fanny			
	Peggy			
	Molly			

The order gives some clues as to adults and children but within those headings there is no particular ordering by age. Nor are there many pointers as to origins, whether creole (born

on the island) or enslaved Africans. There are several people who seem to have been from the area of the river Congo. The women associated with St Kitts presumably had originated there or had worked on other Williams estates - the use of St Kitts in the list being only to differentiate them.

Quite a lot of the names, both male and female, are associated with the West African custom of naming children after the day on which they were born - so Quasheba and Beneba for girls born on a Sunday or a Tuesday, and Cudjoe and Quamina for boys born on a Monday or Saturday. Yaw is a specifically Ashanti name, from what is now modern-day Ghana, meaning born on a Thursday. But to some extent it depended on whether or not the manager did the naming and whether, if the child was born on Nevis, he had recorded the day accurately.

A number of names stand out as unusual on Nevis, for instance Dunno (seen on Antigua, Barbados and Jamaica), Emas, Labo, Avininy. A number of names show the strong connections of owners and managers on Nevis with the English West Country – Bridgwater, Devonshire and Exeter. There are also Irish and Welsh connections - Dublin, Limerick and Cardiff.

Several people are un-named but the Williams family may simply not have known who was on the estate in 1793. It is unlikely they were fed much information by Colhoun while he was in possession.

Lower Plantation

Documents relating to the sale of the whole Clifton Estate in the 1880s included Lower Plantation as a constituent part. In the second half of the eighteenth century the estate came to be owned by Sir Gillies Payne. He lived at Tempsford Hall in Bedfordshire and owned estates such as French Ground and Sandy Point on St Kitts, where the Paynes had long been settled.³⁰ The wider Payne family owned other estates on Nevis.³¹ He was also extremely well connected in Britain; his cousin Ralph Payne, Baron Lavington, was an M.P. and twice appointed Governor of the Leeward Islands where he was popular with the planters, though almost certainly not with his army of black servants.³²

The way in which land descended to Sir Gillies is not fully understood. It came from his father Sir Charles Payne of St Kitts (d. 1744) who presumably owned the land on Nevis a good deal earlier than 1744. Ultimately, in the 1750s or 1760s, Sir Gillies came into possession of an estate of 300 acres, which may have been called Lowland, in St Thomas Lowland.³³ It may be that this estate was split in some way. By 1773 Sir Gillies owned the estate known as 'Lower Plantation' of 188 acres referred to in the 1880s as part of Clifton.³⁴ The boundaries suggest that it was to the north of Morton's Bay. They may also indicate that it bordered on Fort Ashby. The western boundary included the sea and land owned by John Taylor.³⁵ The only known plan of Clifton Estate, from the 1880s, shows that Taylor owned a small plot of land on the eastern side of the road opposite Fort Ashby.

³⁰ Oliver, V L *History of Antigua* 1894-1899 vol 3 p7 for a pedigree of the Payne family

³¹ Payne's Upper (Morgan's), later part of Hamilton's Estate, for instance

³² See Ralph Payne's entry in *Dictionary of National Biography* 1885-1900 vol 44. He was well known for his verbose speeches in the House of Commons, for his lavish parties and for his deeply racist manner of treating his black servants in the Caribbean. See also

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/member/payne-ralph-1739-1807>.

³³ Oliver, V L *History of Antigua* vol 3 p10 quoting Close Rolls; also Bedfordshire Archives Service, BS1512 dated 1758

³⁴ See Nevis Common Records 1810-1814 from f736, indenture dated 31 October 1812, relating to Sarah Laurence, wife of Samuel Laurence and daughter of John Hendrickson

³⁵ Bedfordshire Archives Service, WY250, Assignment on Certain Trusts, 1 September 1802: 'plantation, sugar works, etc., called Lower Plantation, in parish of St. Thomas, Nevis, 188 acres land bounded north lands of late Walter Nisbet and James

An estate this size with a number of enslaved workers would have required a small village and at least one works. It is likely that the estate was run by a manager for the absentee owner. It would appear that after 1800 the Payne estates on St Kitts were run-down and probably the same was true on Nevis. Sir Gillies did make one nod in the direction of looking after some of his older or infirm slaves. In various versions of his will in Bedfordshire Archives he entreated his trustees to

emancipate and set free such of the Negroes ... as shall through Age or other Infirmary be incapable of Labour and shall not be likely to recover and to allow such Negroes the same privileges in their Houses, Grounds, Provisions and Cloathing as if they were able to Labour.³⁶

Sir Gillies Payne died in 1801. His final will dated 1794 directed that his Nevis estate be sold to provide various annuities for his wife Maria and some of his children.³⁷ The 188-acre estate was duly sold to Samuel Laurence on, or before, 1 September 1802.³⁸ The summary of this transaction does not make clear how much Laurence paid but sugar was profitable during the Napoleonic War and land and slaves were valuable. It is likely from subsequent events that Laurence put some money down and mortgaged the rest. Certainly he provided the estate and 56 enslaved people to further secure a mortgage from John Hanley in 1812.³⁹ It is worth noting that 56 people were nowhere near enough to do the hard physical labour on an estate of 188 acres. This could suggest that either the estate was always short-handed, the workers hard-pressed and the gang run-down, or that people were being brought in from other estates. Alternatively, only 56 slaves were required, together with the land, to secure the mortgage.

Table 2: A list of enslaved people on Lower Plantation in 1812⁴⁰

Boatswain	Phillis	Isaac
Joan	Couba	Ritta
Molly	Rachel	Jenny
Bob	James	Billy
Eve	Ann	Smith
Sophy	Margaret	Susanna
Hannah	Long Jack	Tom
William	Roger	Bass
Joe	Abba	Ackey
Jenny	Jonny	Frankey
Cottoe	Mickey	Sukey
Phill	Matilda	Betty
Christiana	Little Roger	Madlane
Jackey	Present	Jim
Bass	Dorinda	Mussy
Cordelia	Castele	Sally
Scipio	Abraham	Hannibal
Durham	Violet	Phibba
Jonny	George	

Smith, south lands formerly of Colhoun, and Williams, now of Beckfords, and lands late of News now of Samuel Lawrence, east by lands of late James Smith, formerly Charles Payne, west by the sea and lands of John Taylor and Washington.'

³⁶ Bedfordshire Archives Service, BS683 (1774) and BS684 (1787)

³⁷ Bedfordshire Archives Service BS1443, proved 1 July 1801. The trustees were to raise another £19,000, presumably out of the rest of his property to pay off various bequests to other children.

³⁸ Bedfordshire Archives Service, WY250, Assignment on Certain Trusts, 1 September 1802

³⁹ Nevis Common Records 1810-1814 from f736. The size of the estate and the boundaries remained the same as in previous descriptions and did so into the 1870s.

⁴⁰ Nevis Common Records 1810-1814 f737

There is a high correlation between this 1812 list for Lower Plantation and the 1817 list for the estate of Samuel Laurence – only four people are missing from the 1817 list. The latter gives the ages of the slaves in 1817 and this information can be made use of. The names above are presented in a particular way which is unusual for Nevis, mixing male and female and young and old, and not separating out males and females and organising them into adults and children.

This seems to suggest a series of possible families. The details can only really be speculative but there does seem to be a pattern, taking into account the ages given in the 1817 list.

So, taking the first few names on the list, together with their ages in 1817, the following possible family groupings emerge:

Boatswain – aged 70
Joan – 22 or 26
Molly - 22
Bob - 20
Eve – 40 or 16

Sophy – 33 or 55
Hannah - 13
William – 10 or 25
Joe - 7
Jenny – 16 (a second Jenny is not on the list in 1817)

Cottoe - 30
Phill - 12
Christiana - 6

Jackey – African, 40
Bass – Black 25, or Mulatto 46?
Cordelia – African 60
Scipio – 48 or 28
Durham - 32
Jonny - 4
Phillis - 26
Coubas – 7

Not all the names fit this kind of pattern and there will undoubtedly have been single people. However, the suggestion that members of the families are listed together may explain why the 1812 list is presented in the order given.

Clifton Plantation

The other two relatively large components of the wider Clifton Estate, as described in the 1880s, were 'Clifton Plantation' and 'Sheppard Land'. They are clearly linked historically and geographically. The first time the name Clifton was used for an estate on Nevis would seem to have been in the 1730s. In 1739 Samuel New and Richard Cox held joint tenancies of two estates. One, in St John Figtree, was called Bristol (146 acres). The other, in St Thomas Lowland, was known as 'Sheppard Upper now called Clifton' (86 acres). They also held

jointly 55 enslaved men, 16 women and girls. They seemed to have had an unusually large number of mules (24).⁴¹

The name 'Sheppard Upper' implies another piece of land called Sheppard. Boundaries for Clifton Plantation in the 1770s indicate that the land to the west of Clifton had been owned by Nathaniel Sheppard. It would seem, therefore, that there were two parts to Sheppard Land, both perhaps owned by Nathaniel at some point.

Not much is known about him. There was a Sheppard family on Antigua in the eighteenth century and he may be connected with them.⁴² In 1722 Nathaniel Sheppard was a member of the Council or Assembly for St Thomas Lowland on Nevis. By 1739 he was dead; his wife Ann survived him.⁴³

Although there were several people named Clifton on Nevis in the 1750s, the names of the two estates have their origins elsewhere. Both New and Cox were merchants of the city of Bristol in Great Britain and Clifton was a well-off village at that time just outside the city. New and Cox were on Nevis together in the 1730s. In 1733 New married on Nevis but his wife Mary died there in February 1743/44.⁴⁴ In February 1739 Richard Cox and Somers Payne were among others who appointed Dr Thomas Stewart, one white nurse and two black nurses, to look after the smallpox sufferers.⁴⁵ Cox was appointed a member of the island Council in place of Thomas Butler in 1740.⁴⁶ New was the Treasurer of the island and he, in particular, seems to have been pretty wealthy. In 1755 Thomas Mills wrote to Samuel New, now in Bristol, noting the 'very considerable' fortune New had left behind in Nevis. This included land called Stapleton's which later became a central part of John Richardson Herbert's Montpelier estate.⁴⁷

By the time New died in 1763 he and Cox jointly owned both Bristol and Clifton plantations and New alone owned a number of bits of land in Charlestown, including a piece next door to the Jewish Synagogue⁴⁸, and land in Georgia. In his will New left the bulk of his property, including his share of the two relevant plantations on Nevis to his son John:

To said son John my moiety of two plantations, the one called Clifton and Mountain plantation in the parish of St Thomas, Nevis in tenure of – Galloway esq the other called Bristol Plantation in the parish of St John, Nevis both held by me and said Richard Cox in common.⁴⁹

Another son, James, got a smaller portion of land in Nevis and half of the 1000 acres in Georgia.

So 'Clifton and Mountain' were being worked by a tenant, Galloway, almost certainly Tobias Wall Galloway. In 1769, which is only shortly after New died, a description of Tower Hill gave it as bounded on the northern side by lands of Archibald Thompson and 'lands of Tobias Galloway deceased'.⁵⁰ Tobias Wall Galloway, formerly a planter of St Kitts, died 2 December 1767.⁵¹ His main attention had been focussed on St Kitts and presumably he had employed

⁴¹ Nevis Common Records 1728-1740 f374. Bristol estate was formerly called Brodbelt's.

⁴² Oliver, V L *History of Antigua* vol 3 p84

⁴³ Eickelmann, C *Nevis Names*

⁴⁴ Mary, daughter of Captain Peter Melote of New York, born 12 October 1715, died in child-bed on 26 February 1743/44 and was buried with her still-born child in St Paul's, Charlestown. See monumental inscription in Oliver, V L *Caribbeana* vol 2 pp171-172. Not all the dates are clear in this entry.

⁴⁵ UK NA, CO 186/3 Nevis, Assembly; Council in Assembly 1738-1756

⁴⁶ 25 July 1740, see Oliver, V L *Caribbeana* vol 2 p64

⁴⁷ For Stapleton's see Small, D *Montpelier Estate, St John Figtree, Nevis: Contrasting Legacies on a Sugar Plantation* 2010

⁴⁸ For an account of the synagogue on Nevis see Terrell, M *The Jewish Community of Early Colonial Nevis* University of Florida Press 2005

⁴⁹ UK NA, PROB 11/885/501 proved 30 March 1763 PCC. A summary can be found in Oliver, V L *Caribbeana* vol 6 p116

⁵⁰ Small, D *Tower Hill: A preliminary chronological account* unpublished report 2007 quoting Close Rolls 6 September 1769

⁵¹ *Gentleman's Magazine* 1767. See Oliver, V L *History of Antigua* vol 2 p2 for a pedigree of the Galloway family, spelt Galloway

a manager on Clifton and Mountain. It seems sure that at least part of Clifton and/or Sheppard land lay to the north of Tower Hill.

James New was the vicar of St Philip and St James in the centre of Bristol and at some point rector of Compton Greenfield, in what is now South Gloucestershire. Presumably on the strength of his newfound wealth he got married to Frances Webb in 1763.⁵² Her marriage settlement involved various Nevis properties but not Bristol or Clifton estates.⁵³

Sometime later, in late 1770, John New went out to Nevis to organise the affairs of the two brothers, making an agreement with James before he went on how to settle debts and other matters. Bristol and Clifton estates are mentioned but the specifics are unclear. Clifton was again described as 'Clifton and Mountain' Plantation.⁵⁴ Given that Gallway had died it was still probably run by a manager for a while.

Over the next few years a number of the New properties were sold off or mortgaged, including Stapleton's in 1776. In July 1773 Richard Cox, in his own right and as attorney for John New, mortgaged for the sum of £2,500 Bristol plantation in St John Figtree (now 160 acres) and Clifton in St Thomas Lowland (now 100 acres) and 76 named slaves belonging 'to the said plantation' – which plantation is not clear. The boundaries given note that it was bordered on the west side by land 'late of Nathaniel Sheppard'.⁵⁵ The mortgage was given by Thomas Griffiths, a merchant of Bristol. It was extended in October 1775 for a further £1,500 paid by Thomas Griffiths on the strength of unspecified improvements to the estates.⁵⁶ It is not clear whether James New was a party to these transactions or made his own arrangements.

In 1786 the mortgages drawn up in the 1770s ended up in court. By that time Thomas Griffiths had died. His brother and heir, Morgan Griffiths, a mariner, had also died. Morgan's son and heir Charles Griffiths Griffiths (a young man under 21) and the Reverend James New were subject to an order of the High Court of Chancery. The release noted the £4,000 mortgage and the securities of Bristol Plantation (now 165 acres) and Clifton (still 100 acres) and the 76 slaves; the latter were described as belonging to (both) the *plantations*. The sums had not been repaid and the estates were subject to other mortgages and even the right of redemption had been put up for sale. Nevertheless, the court directed that they all sell back to James New the right and title to the estates.⁵⁷ It is not clear whether or not the News were running the estates through a manager or a tenant - indeed, during the period of the mortgages, whether they were in charge at all. The fact that James New was involved in this court case may suggest that he had inherited or had taken over the running of the News' lands in St Thomas Lowland.

⁵² See Oliver, *V L Caribbeana* vol 2 pp171-172 for some details of James New's parents and his own family. He had at least two sisters, Elizabeth and Martha, who married Edward Parris.

⁵³ Somerset Record Office, D/P/Ched/24/7 dated 20 July 1763

⁵⁴ Somerset Record Office, D/P/Ched/24/7 dated 11 October 1770

⁵⁵ Bristol Record Office (BRO), 37941/19 Mortgage dated 6 July 1773 Clifton was bounded to the east by lands late of Thomas Washington, the west with land late of Nathaniel Sheppard, north with land of Abraham Payne and south lands late of William Peterson from his Cocoa Garden to the top of the mountain. A William Peterson owned, or was in possession of, Spring Plantation in the 1720s. The Cocoa Garden may have been either an integral, or a detached, part of Spring.

⁵⁶ BRO, 37941/20 (damaged indenture)

⁵⁷ BRO, 37941/24a and 24b dated 1 and 2 December 1788

Table 3: A list of 76 enslaved people belonging to Bristol and/or Clifton Plantations on Nevis. These people were used as property, together with the land, by John New of Nevis and Richard Cox of Bristol to secure a mortgage from Thomas Griffiths of Bristol in 1773. [Headings and annotations added]⁵⁸

<i>Men (29)</i>	<i>Women (22)</i>	<i>Boys (4)</i>	<i>Girls (10)</i>	<i>Boy children (10)</i>	<i>Girl child (1)</i>
Sharlo	Rachel	Macduff	Nanno*	Friday	Betsey
Stephney	Kayah	Hannibal**	Macconanno	Frank	
Sanagotha-John	June	Mag	Polly	Francu	
Dick	Hagah	Codando	Minibah	Wiltshire	
Pompey	Nominia		Sue	Little Frank	
Jack	Delia		Mary Ann	Dramia	
Cooper	Madlane*		Jenny	Scipio	
Billey Long	Sukey*		Sabina	Little Ormian*	
Glasco	Peggy		Sophy	Dick	
Guy	Bess		Hetty	Monday	
Quashy	Judy				
Daniel*	Doll*				
Gilt (?Gill)	Cloe*				
Bath	Aminta				
Clifton**	Ophelia				
Kohwell	Daphne*				
Neddy	Maria-Augusta				
Jemmy	Phebe				
Codando	Cordelia				
Quomina	Amelia				
Will	Caroline				
Jack	Harriet				
Iso					
Smith					
Cooper					
Crook*					
Andrew					
George					
Harry*					

The names were written in the indentures as a simple list with no annotation. However, there were a number of standard ways of listing names on Nevis, including in the following order: Men, Women, Boys, Girls, Boy children, Girl children. The precise division of names shown here is speculative but is suggested by experience in analysing other estates. The age at which a boy child became a boy, or a boy a man, does not seem to have been consistent between estates - similarly with girls. The division may have had as much to do with strength and work capability as puberty and physical development.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ BRO, 37941/19

⁵⁹ For further details relating to age see C Eickelmann *The Mountravers Plantation Community 1734-1834 – Appendix 1* <http://eis.bris.ac.uk/~emceee/mountravers~appendix1.pdf>

There are one or two names suggesting the West Country connections of Cox and New, for instance Bath and Clifton. Many of the names are fairly standard names imposed by the masters of estates on their slaves and so it is difficult to speculate on how far these people appear on other lists. One group does seem to appear on a list associated with either Clifton or Shippard's Land in 1786:

Daniel, Crook, Harry, Madlane, Sukey, Doll, Cloe, Daphne, Nanno and possibly Little Ormian who may be listed as Little Ormond.

Two of the people on the 1773 list may have survived the harsh conditions through into middle age or more. The 1817 slave register for the estate of Samuel Laurence listed an African man called Clifton aged 70 and another enslaved man called Hannibal aged 52 or 53, though Hannibal was a name used quite often.

Lastly, there is no great clarity about which of the estates they were working on. To begin with one indenture identified them with 'the plantation' but does not say which. Another mentions them as being attached to 'the plantations'. It was probably not a big enough gang to have been working the larger of the two estates, Bristol. On the other hand, this group of mortgaged slaves may only have been a part of the workforce. There is at least one other example, that of the Pinney estates in Gingerland and St Thomas Lowland, where some members of the enslaved gang moved between the two estates to supplement one or other of the workforces.

Sheppard's Land

The fourth estate described in the 1880s as being part of Clifton was known as 'Sheppard's Land'. Recently the name has been heard in connection with a set of newly located works on the northern edge of Clifton Estate, so the name appears to be in current use.

Compared to Clifton/News, little is known about Sheppard's Land. It was described in an indenture dated July 1786 as being 90 acres. The document is considerably damaged but some details of the boundaries can be made out. The land was bounded to the east with lands late of John New called 'Shippards' (described as Clifton in 1874) and with lands late of Tobias Wall Gallway 'now of John Taylor'. To the west was land of William Colhoun, late John Williams, and land formerly of Mary Woodley, late of the said John Williams and now of the said William Colhoun (these may refer to Morton's Bay and Windmill and Paradise/Colhoun's). To the north were lands of Sir Gillis Payne...and of James Smith deceased (perhaps Lower Plantation in part) and to the south land of the said William Colhoun (probably Morton's Bay). The reference to Taylor owning the land to the east of Shippard's may well refer to Tower Hill which Taylor certainly owned in the 1790s or it may be that some of Clifton/News estate was owned in conjunction with Tower Hill for a while.

Shippard's Land seems in 1786 to have been held in trust, along with twenty named, enslaved people, by Archibald Thomson, William Jones and Thomas Bridgwater until such time as Richard Cox and John New paid over £2,000. This may have been money owed to Daniel Ross and others, due 20 July 1778. The indenture involves Edward Parris and this might suggest that it had something to do with the marriage settlement of Samuel New's daughter Martha who married Edward Parris.

Unfortunately the names of many of the slaves have been obscured in the document as well, but they include the following people, most of whom have already been seen in the 1773 list for Bristol and/or Clifton plantations:

Bristol, Daniel, Daphne, M..., Doll, Crooke, Harry, Nanno, Ormond, Little Ormond, Cloe, Madlane, Jenny.⁶⁰

So, it would seem that in the late eighteenth century, the News were running jointly or side by side two small estates, Clifton and Sheppard's Land. An estate like this would have had a set of works with perhaps an animal mill. Assuming there were slaves actually on the estate, they would have lived in a separate village in houses which were perhaps surrounded by small plots of land.

Without a series of estate plans it is difficult to point to the exact location of Clifton and Sheppard's Land. Fortunately there is some indication from the *HMS Thunder* survey of the waters and coast of Nevis in 1848.⁶¹ This locates a plantation house and/or works called 'News' a little over three quarters of a mile north, west and downhill of Tower Hill, almost directly due east of Nelson's Spring. On that basis this site could possibly be the set of works recently cleared on the modern Clifton Estate and perhaps the same site as 'Clifton's Upper Works' on Iles's 1871 map of Nevis.



Fig 3: Extract from chart 'West Indies Leeward Islands; St Christopher and Nevis' HMS Thunder 1848, corrected to 1868

Reverend James New died in Bristol in 1810 at the age of 74.⁶² It is not known whether he still held property and slaves on Nevis. Either he had already given up the estates in St Thomas Lowland or it was at this point that the estates were sold to another owner. Before, or around, 1802 Samuel Laurence had bought Lower Plantation. In 1812 the southern boundary of that estate included lands 'late News and now of the said Samuel Laurence.

⁶⁰ BRO, Nevis Box item 37941/23 'Release of a Plantation held? In Trust – William Thomson and others to Edward Parris'. There is another description of the boundaries dated 1874 in UK NA, CO 441/24/1. Several people were not on the 1773 list: Bristol, Ormond and Jenny.

⁶¹ UK NA, WO 78/603

⁶² Familysearch.org. Reverend James New was buried in St Augustine-the-Less, Bristol on 20 July 1810. See also Oliver, V L *Caribbeana* vol 2 pp171-172 for members of his family. His children may have been living in Walcot, Bath in 1846, according to the 1851 Census.

This suggests that he had bought either one estate or both Clifton and Sheppard's Land. As already noted, in 1817 he acquired Morton's Bay Estate.

Nevis in the early nineteenth century

At this point Laurence seems to have owned four roughly contiguous estates amounting to about 578 acres. This process of consolidating plantations into larger conglomerations had gone on throughout the eighteenth century. The Pinneys had by 1783 put together three contiguous estates running up the mountain in one estate of 393 acres which they called Mountravers or Lowland estate. John Pinney valued this property in 1802 at £30,000 and it was sold for £27,000 in 1808 to Edward Huggins. Huggins then carried on the process, buying up small estates like Scarborough's and Haynes Land to the south and consolidating them into a single estate called Pinneys of about 730 acres. John Richardson Herbert carried out a similar process in the building up of Montpelier.

In practice, judging by the way estates were paid for on Nevis, a smallish amount of money would have been put down and the rest would have been secured by a number of mortgages. Timing was all. It is not known how much Laurence paid for his estates in total. However, in 1817 he paid £14,000 for the 200 acres of Morton's Bay. In 1887 the whole estate of 554 acres was sold for £1,600, about a tenth of what he paid for one of the constituent parts. Land values had collapsed.

The reasons for this are largely concerned with the price of sugar and the profitability of the estates. Most economists seem to agree that the golden age for sugar and sugar planters (though not for their enslaved workers) ended in about 1775. However, the outbreak of the wars with the French in 1793 paradoxically introduced a new age of prosperity for planters. There were ups and downs, the victory at Trafalgar secured control of the seas for the Royal Navy but the introduction of Napoleon's Continental System restricted the access of British sugars to continental markets. However, according to J R Ward, March 1815, just before the end of the war, saw the average price of muscovado sugar at 90 shillings per hundred-weight - the highest ever recorded.

On the other hand, problems were mounting. By the 1820s there was considerable overproduction. Cuba was becoming significant, Brazil was reviving. Territories acquired from France and Spain were recovering and had access to British finance. 'By the 1820s sugar prices had returned to their levels of the 1750s, rum prices were 15 per cent lower, while the average cost of the main items of estate expenditure had doubled.'⁶³ From 1821 the price of sugar had been steady at about 30s per cwt net, but from 1829 it fell further to 25s and then 24s. Reasons again included over-production but also the fear of Emancipation, bankruptcies among the merchants and hurricanes.

On Nevis the 1820s were a particularly difficult time for everyone, especially for the enslaved population. The island suffered a series of droughts which brought about not only the collapse of sugar production but had a disastrous effect on the growing of provisions for the slave population. Droughts were felt every year from 1819 to 1823, except 1820. The distress was sometimes compounded by neglect and mismanagement. Dr Caines in 1830 gave evidence to Parliament about the case of Russell's Rest where he had attended in 1822 and 1823.

The gang during these years was very sickly; there were three prevalent complaints during this time, fever, dysentery and influenza (sic); there were a great many

⁶³ Ward, J R *British West Indian Slavery 1750-1834: The process of Amelioration* Oxford 1988 pp43-45

chronic complaints and broken constitutions.’ His evidence suggested that not all of these problems were due to the prevailing conditions. However ‘there were more deaths during the two years I attended the estate than any other estate I attended; they were a very sickly gang; I think we lost four from influenza...and several from dysentery; during this period provisions were very scarce, and I have known the negroes six weeks without provisions, except what they themselves got from the ground.’⁶⁴

Charles Pinney wrote to Samuel Laurence in June 1822 that he had had to buy cornmeal for Mr. Hendrickson’s estate to prevent starvation.⁶⁵ There was a notable increase in stealing and breaking canes in protest on estates.

Although there were small spikes in sugar prices they did not last long in the 1820s and 1830s. Heavily in debt, planters struggled to keep costs down, the soil was becoming less productive and owners on Nevis made only a half-hearted attempt to introduce the new technology of steam to their estates. From 1830 onwards the anti-slavery movement became more active and in time the heirs of Samuel Laurence were dealing with the changing nature of life on their estates after Emancipation.

Laurence’s Estate

Into this scenario stepped Samuel Laurence and his family. The family origins of this man are unclear. A Samuel Laurence, a carpenter, and his wife Sarah had several sons baptised in St George Gingerland in the early 1720s, and Samuel Laurence of Clifton Estate might be related.⁶⁶ Certainly by 1789 Samuel Laurence appears in the record as a merchant together with William Laurence. In the early 1800s, around the time he took over ownership of Lower Plantation and probably Clifton and Sheppard’ Land, he was acting as trustee for various people and an attorney for John Pinney in the matter of his Woodland Estate. By 1812 he was a member of the island’s Council.

He married, about 1800, Sarah Hendrickson, the sister of John Hendrickson, and they had a number of children, including John Hendrickson Laurence, Anne, Frances, Samuel and Edward William. Sarah inherited Hendrickson’s estate in St George Gingerland from her brother John in, or before, 1807. So, while he was establishing his own estate, Samuel Laurence also became an executor of his brother-in-law John and was responsible for Hendrickson’s.⁶⁷ Laurence was clearly trusted by the Pinneys; at various times he acted as the attorney on the island for one or other of the family. Occasionally he needed to borrow money from them.

Some of his correspondence with the Pinneys is informative. On 31 March 1825 he complained about the very bad price for rum and molasses on Nevis and that they ‘will not enable us to supply our estates with Provisions’. Other letters refer to the ‘forlorn state’ of the sugar markets in Britain and hoped for a favourable change in them. He noted in a letter from Nevis dated 30 July 1825 that a few days earlier ‘We had a severe gale of wind which

⁶⁴ ‘Enclosure 6 in No. 3’ in a ‘Dispatch from Governor Maxwell to Secretary Sir George Murray, July 7 1830’, p292, filed under ‘St. Christopher’, Hamilton College, USA. We are indebted to the late Vince Hubbard for this information.

⁶⁵ BULSC, PP Letterbook 28 25 June 1822

⁶⁶ Oliver, V L *Caribbeana* vol 2 p268. There were other Samuels. For instance in 1779 Samuel Laurence jnr and Edward Laurence were granted administration of the effects of Samuel Laurence Elder.

⁶⁷ Family information on the Hendricksons and Laurences is heavily dependent on C Eickelmann *Nevis Names*, the ‘triennial’ Slave Registers for Nevis and V L Oliver *Monumental Inscriptions of the British West Indies* 1927. The origins and fate of Hendrickson’s can be found in R A Pares *West India Fortune* 1950 which says that it had once been the Pinney estate of Upper Gingerland. It seems to have consisted of pieces of land around Fountain Ghut and along Hanley’s Road. The Pinneys held a mortgage on the estate. Laurence sold it to John Hanley in 1812 but it was given up again to Laurence in 1823.

injured many windmills. The old canes were blown down on several estates and all the vessels in the Road driven out but have returned without damage.⁶⁸ There is no particular mention of his estates in St Thomas Lowland. Much of his correspondence with the firm seems to have centred round his difficulties with Hendrickson's and his godson John Hanley. To compound his troubles, Sarah Laurence died on New Year's Eve in 1823, aged 52.⁶⁹ Samuel Laurence himself died in January 1826.

From then on until at least the late 1830s the estates of Samuel Laurence, that is what was known in the slave registers as 'The Estate of Samuel Laurence deceased' and 'Morton's Bay', were run by a manager, James Laurence, who may have been another son. Of Samuel and Sarah Laurence's children John Hendrickson Laurence joined the church and moved to a ministry at Scarborough on Tobago. Frances Laurence married John Woodley in 1820.⁷⁰ In February 1825, her sister, Anne, married Lockhart Gordon, the Collector of Customs on Nevis.⁷¹

The enslaved populations on the estates owned by Samuel Laurence

The names and details of the enslaved people who worked the estates on Nevis are hard to come by except for the period 1817 to 1834 when planters on Nevis, like owners of slaves elsewhere in the British West Indies, were required to submit detailed lists of the slaves on their estates. One of the purposes of this was to encourage planters to improve the conditions on their estates by shining a light on the numbers of people attached to each individual estate.

It is unlikely that the various components of Laurence's Estate were run as individual units. However, Morton's Bay was the last part of his estate bought by Samuel Laurence, not long before the slave registration system was introduced on Nevis, and this may account for there being a separate list for it.

Enslaved people on Morton's Bay from 1817 through to Emancipation in 1834

The list below has been mildly adapted from the original 1817 register.⁷² A star has been added to the names of those who may have been on the list of slaves attached, or otherwise, to Morton's Bay to be recovered from Colhoun in 1793.⁷³ The final column, not in the original, shows what happened to individuals.⁷⁴ Where there is no entry this reveals that the person survived their enslavement through to Emancipation. The phrase 'Dead by...' means that the person died between the last register and that particular date.

⁶⁸ BULSC, PP Letterbook 58

⁶⁹ Oliver, V L *Monumental Inscriptions of the British West Indies* 1927 p103 – buried at St Thomas Lowland

⁷⁰ Probably the Attorney General of St Kitts. He had died, possibly in St Kitts, by the time slaves were registered on Laurence's estate in 1828. These slaves reverted to his wife's possession. There seem to be confusions about him in the pedigree of Woodley in V L Oliver *History of Antigua* vol 3. It may be his will proved in 1829, UK NA, PROB 11/1757/364.

⁷¹ As a Justice of the Peace he took evidence in various cases of mistreatment of slaves on Nevis.

⁷² UK NA, T 71/364 ff29-30. The registers for other years can be found in T71/365-369

⁷³ See Table 1 above

⁷⁴ The phrase 'dead by' means that the person was dead by the day the register was drawn up in that year. So, a person dead by 1825 could have died in 1825.

Table 4: 'An alphabetical List and Return of all the Negro and other Slaves now resident on the Estate called Morton Bay and belonging to or in the lawful possession of Samuel Laurence Given in by me this fourteenth day of July one thousand and eight hundred and seventeen. Sam Laurence'

No	Names	Sex	Country	Colour	Reputed age	Subsequent fate
1.	Andrew	Males	Nevis	Black	7	
2.	Archey		"	"	2 ½	
3.	Bob		"	"	40	
4.	Bilsey		"	"	10	
5.	Billy		"	"	12	
6.	Castele *		"	"	48	Dead by 1822
7.	Charles		"	"	24	
8.	Daniel *		"	"	44	
9.	Dublin *		Africa	"	75	
10.	Daniel		Nevis	"	9	Dead by 1834
11.	English		"	"	34	
12.	Elijah		"	"	30	
13.	Edward		"	Sambo	4	
14.	Frank		"	Black	7	No 5 in 1831, by when dead
15.	George		"	"	6	Dead by 1831
16.	Harry		"	"	26	
17.	Jack *		Africa	"	33	
18.	James		Nevis	"	38	Dead by 1825
19.	Jim		"	Sambo	16	
20.	John		"	Black	12	
21.	James		"	"	9	
22.	Jerry		"	"	6	
23.	John Thomas		"	Sambo	4	Dead by 1834
24.	Jacob		"	Black	3	
25.	Joe Arham		"	"	3 ½	
26.	Joe Freeman		"	"	1 ½	Removed to Tobago by 1831
27.	Limerick *		"	"	46	Dead by 1831
28.	Mickey		"	"	28	Dead by 1825
29.	Mathias *		"	"	55	Dead by 1831
30.	Phillip		"	"	40	
31.	Peter Hendrickson		"	"	20	
32.	Peter Sprat		"	"	14	
33.	Parker		"	"	3	Dead by 1822
34.	Robert		"	"	1 ½	
35.	Sam		Africa	"	30	Dead by 1825
36.	Stepney		Nevis	"	30	Dead by 1828
37.	Santee		"	"	1 ½	Dead by 1822
38.	Tom Jones *		Africa	"	32	
39.	Thomas		Nevis	"	12	
40.	Tom		"	"	2 ½	
41.	William Thomas		"	"	3	
42.	Woodley		"	"	3 ½	
43.	William Bridgewater		"	Sambo	2 ½	

No	Names	Sex	Country	Colour	Reputed age	Subsequent fate
44	Abba *	Females	"	Black	46	<i>Dead by 1822</i>
45	Ann		"	"	2 ½	
46	Bitchy		Africa	"	30	
47	Clarisa		Nevis	"	32	
48	Christian		"	"	28	<i>As Christiana, dead by 1825</i>
49	Domingo		"	"	22	
50	Dido *		"	"	75	<i>Dead by 1822</i>
51	Franky *		"	"	43	
52	Fanny		"	Sambo	2	<i>Removed to Tobago by 1831</i>
53	Greeta *		"	Black	56	<i>Dead by 1828</i>
54	Joan *		"	"	48	<i>Dead by 1834</i>
55	Jenny		"	"	14	<i>Dead by 1825</i>
56	Indian		"	"	7	
57	Judy		"	Sambo	1 ½	
58	Lucy		"	Black	25	
59	Mimba *		"	"	40	
60	Molly *		"	"	50	<i>Dead by 1831</i>
61	Mary		"	"	14	
62	Mariann		"	"	3 ½	
63	Margaret		"	"	3 ½	<i>Dead by 1834</i>
64	Nancy Monday *		"	Sambo	44	<i>Dead by 1834</i>
65	Nanny Bennett *		"	Black	25	<i>Dead by 1834</i>
66	Nancy *		"	"	60	
67	Phillis *		"	"	58	
68	Penda		"	"	30	
69	Phillis *		"	"	45	
70	Patty		"	"	4	
71	Phebe		"	"	1 ½	<i>Dead by 1822</i>
72	Peggy		"	"	8	<i>Dead by 1825</i>
73	Quasheba *		"	"	46	
74	Susanna		"	"	32	
75	Sabella		"	"	22	
76	Sarah *		"	"	58	
77	Tina		"	"	28	
78	Violet *		"	"	58	<i>Dead by 1825</i>
79	Violet		"	"	4	

79 slaves was far too small a gang to work an estate of 200 acres. In any case it is unlikely that Morton's Bay was worked as an entirely separate estate. Probably the disparate parts of Laurence's/Clifton Estate were worked together, focussed on one main works with other works as support. Slaves from the estate of Samuel Laurence (ie the other three parts) and Morton's Bay will have shared tasks but might possibly have lived in separate villages. However, for recording purposes, the slave lists were kept separate through to the award of compensation in the 1830s.

Morton's Bay had a noticeably younger slave population than either Nevis as a whole or estates in the same parish. In 1817 21 out of 79 people, or 26%, were very young children between the ages of 0 and 4. This compared to 12% for Mountravers, just along the road, and 11% for Nevis as a whole. Also, the estate lacked the numbers of strong 20 to 39 year

olds who were usually the backbone of the workforce – 26% compared to 33% for Nevis as a whole. If this were a gang working the estate on its own it would have not have managed on any level.

Using the terminology of the registers, the 1817 register appears to use the term ‘Sambo’ to include everyone on the estate who was not black, unlike many of the registers for other estates which differentiate between gradations of colour, using terms like ‘mulatto’ and ‘mestee’. While nearly 16% of the population of Nevis as a whole at this time were identified as being of mixed race, only about 9% on the Morton’s Bay register were described as ‘Sambo’. In terms of origin, only 5 out of 79 (6%) were born in Africa, a lower percentage than for Nevis as a whole (14%).⁷⁵ The vast majority of people on the estate were born on Nevis. This reflects the large number of very young children.

Looking at the estate over the period 1817 to 1834, the numbers dropped from 79 to 68. It was a fall of about 11% and the decline in the population was fairly typical of estates on Nevis. Using the same registers it can be shown that slave populations fell over that period in 8 out of 10 Nevis estates.⁷⁶ This, of course, gave strength to the argument used by those favouring emancipation that amelioration of conditions on the estates had not worked.

The period between 1817 and 1822 bucked the trend. There were 9 deaths and 11 births. The proportion of deaths was rather lower among a basket of Nevis estates for these years and Morton Bay’s birth rate put it in the top third in the same basket.⁷⁷ After that, however, the births declined and failed to keep up with the number of deaths. The 1825 register seems to show the particular toll taken on the working slaves by the drought and starvation on the island since 1822. There were seven deaths in this relatively small population – four of the people were between 28 and 38 and one aged 58. Two further slaves should be noticed in the reduction in numbers: Joe Freeman and Fanny were ‘removed to Tobago’ sometime between 1828 and 1831.

The Enslaved people on ‘the estate of Samuel Laurence’

Laurence’s other slaves in St Thomas Lowland were usually listed in the registers in some variant of the phrase ‘on the estate of Samuel Laurence’ and later ‘of Samuel Laurence... dec’d’ or later still belonging to ‘the heirs of Samuel Laurence dec’d’. The names ‘Laurence’s Estate’ or ‘Clifton Estate’ were never used in the registers.⁷⁸ In effect they must have been the slaves on Lower Plantation, Clifton and Sheppard’s Land. Again the 1817 list has been reproduced with an additional column to indicate what happened to individuals.

Table 5: ‘An alphabetical list and return of all the Negro and other Slaves now resident on the Estate belonging to or in the lawful possession of Samuel Laurence Given in by me this fourteenth day of July one thousand and eight hundred and seventeen Sam Laurence’

No	Names	Sex	Country	Colour	Reputed age	Subsequent fate
1.	Aberdeen	Males	Nevis	Black	42	Dead by 1828
2.	Archy	“	“	“	22	
3.	Alfred	“	“	“	8 months	Dead by Feb 1822
4.	Billy Penny	“	“	“	40	

⁷⁵ For further comparisons between estates on Nevis see C Eickelmann *The Mountravers Plantation Community, 1734-1834* Pt 2 Chapter 7 <http://seis.bris.ac.uk/~emceeee/mountravers-part2chapter7.pdf>. For Nevis comparisons see B W Higman *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean* p463 Table S4.1 ‘Age Structure of Slaves by Sex, Birthplace and Colony, 1813 to 1834’ [1817 in the case of Nevis]

⁷⁶ Small, D *Montpelier Estate, St John Figtree, Nevis: Contrasting Legacies on a Sugar Plantation* 2010

⁷⁷ For information on 25 estates see C Eickelmann *The Mountravers Plantation Community, 1734-1834* Pt 2 Chapter 7 <http://seis.bris.ac.uk/~emceeee/mountravers-part2chapter7.pdf>

⁷⁸ For 1817 see UK NA, T 71/364. The registers can be followed in subsequent volumes.

No	Names	Sex	Country	Colour	Reputed age	Subsequent fate
5.	Bob	"	"	"	20	
6.	Billy (called Old Billy)	"	Africa	"	60	<i>Dead by Feb 1822</i>
7.	Bass	"	Nevis	"	50	<i>Dead by 1831</i>
8.	Boatswain	"	Africa	"	70	<i>Dead by 1834</i>
9.	Billy Smith	"	Nevis	"	43	<i>Dead by 1834</i>
10.	Bristol (a mason)	"	"	"	13	
11.	Bristol	"	"	"	11	
12.	Ben	"	"	"	3	
13.	Clifton	"	Africa	"	70	<i>Dead by 1831</i>
14.	Cudjoe	"	Nevis	"	36	
15.	Cuffy	"	"	"	19	
16.	Castele	"	"	"	10	
17.	Charloe	"	"	"	6	
18.	Castele	"	"	"	9	
19.	Clarke	"	"	"	6	<i>1828: Trf to Edward Laurence and leased to James Laurence</i>
20.	Cuffy	"	"	"	5	
21.	Don	"	"	"	42	<i>Dead by Feb 1822</i>
22.	Durham	"	"	"	32	<i>Dead by 1831</i>
23.	Dick	"	"	"	4	
24.	Edward	"	"	Sambo	11	<i>1828: Trf to Samuel Laurence</i>
25.	Edwin	"	"	Black	2	
26.	Falkner	"	"	Sambo	21	
27.	Figtree	"	"	Black	9	
28.	Frank	"	"	"	7	<i>1828: Bequeathed and trf to Revd JH Laurence</i>
29.	Frederick	"	"	"	8 months	
30.	George	"	"	"	38	
31.	George Sanders	"	"	Sambo	18	
32.	George Washington	"	"	Mulatto	16	<i>Dead by 1825</i>
33.	Goliah	"	"	Black	7	
34.	Hannibal	"	"	"	52	<i>Dead by Feb 1822</i>
35.	Hannibal	"	Africa	"	55	<i>Dead by Feb 1822</i>
36.	Henry	"	Nevis	"	13	<i>Dead by Feb 1822</i>
37.	Henry	"	"	"	8	<i>Dead by Feb 1822</i>
38.	Joe Powell	"	"	Mulatto	32	<i>Dead by 1828</i>
39.	Isaac	"	"	Black	43	<i>Dead by 1825</i>
40.	Jerry	"	"	"	42	<i>Dead by 1825</i>
41.	Jackey	"	Africa	"	40	<i>Dead by 1828</i>
42.	Jack	"	"	"	50	
43.	Jim	"	Nevis	"	20	<i>Dead by 1831</i>
44.	Jim	"	"	Mulatto	17	
45.	Jim	"	"	Black	18	<i>Dead by 1828</i>
46.	James	"	"	Sambo	7	
47.	Jack	"	"	Black	6	
48.	Joe	"	"	"	7	<i>Dead by Feb 1822</i>

No	Names	Sex	Country	Colour	Reputed age	Subsequent fate
49.	Johnny	"	"	"	4	
50.	John Huggins	"	"	Mestee	25	<i>Dead by 1834</i>
51.	Louis	"	"	Sambo	14	
52.	London	"	"	Black	10	
					months	
53.	Monday (called Long Point Monday)	"	"	"	50	<i>Dead by 1831</i>
54.	Monday (called Little Monday)	"	"	"	45	<i>Dead by 1834</i>
55.	Moses	"	"	Sambo	18	<i>Dead by Feb 1822</i>
56.	Mickey	"	"	Black	18	
57.	Mingo	"	"	"	8 days	
58.	Ned	"	"	"	46	<i>Dead by 1828</i>
59.	Ned	"	Africa	"	50	<i>Dead by Feb 1822</i>
60.	Nick	"	Nevis	Sambo	16	
61.	Pompey	"	"	Black	35	
62.	Phillip	"	"	"	20	<i>Dead by 1825</i>
63.	Peter	"	"	"	12	
64.	Phill	"	"	"	12	<i>Removed to Tobago by 1831</i>
65.	Roger	"	"	"	65	<i>Dead by Feb 1822</i>
66.	Richard	"	"	Mulatto	33	<i>Dead by Feb 1822</i>
67.	Rightus	"	"	Black	16	
68.	Roger	"	"	"	6	
69.	Seymour	"	Africa	"	26	<i>Dead by 1834</i>
70.	Scipio	"	Nevis	"	48	
71.	Sunday	"	"	"	37	
72.	Scipio	"	"	"	28	
73.	Siah	"	"	"	19	
74.	Samuel	"	"	"	18	
75.	Sydney	"	"	Sambo	8	<i>Dead by Feb 1822</i>
76.	Tuma	"	"	Black	48	<i>Called Teena in 1822, by when dead</i>
77.	Tommy	"	"	"	30	
78.	Tom Owens	"	"	"	28	<i>Dead by 1834</i>
79.	Tom Bass	"	"	"	25	<i>1828: Trf to Revd JH Laurence</i>
80.	Trouble	"	"	"	22	
81.	Tommy	"	"	"	22	<i>Dead by 1825</i>
82.	Thomas	"	"	Sambo	16	<i>1828: Removed to St Kitts</i>
83.	Will Keeffe	"	"	Black	8 months	
84.	William	"	"	Red	25	<i>Executed for a capital felony by Dec 1830</i>
85.	Wiltshire	"	"	Black	47	
86.	William	"	"	"	10	
87.	Abba	Females	"	"	40	<i>Dead by 1831</i>
88.	Ann	"	"	"	9	
89.	Bess	"	"	Mulatto	46	
90.	Bessey	"	"	Black	45	<i>Dead by 1831</i>

No	Names	Sex	Country	Colour	Reputed age	Subsequent fate
91.	Bess	"	"	"	25	
92.	Betty	"	"	Red	30	<i>Dead by Feb 1822</i>
93.	Betty	"	"	Black	44	<i>Dead by 1825</i>
94.	Bridget	"	"	"	2	
95.	Cordelia	"	Africa	"	60	<i>Dead by Feb 1822</i>
96.	Cottoe	"	Nevis	"	30	<i>Dead by 1828</i>
97.	Caroline	"	"	Sambo	19	<i>1828: Trf to Ann Gordon</i>
98.	Clary	"	"	Black	23	
99.	Cuba	"	"	"	7	
100.	Christiana	"	"	"	6	
101.	Doll	"	"	"	14	
102.	Dorinda	"	"	"	12	
103.	Drucilla	"	"	"	3	<i>1828: Trf to Edward Laurence</i>
104.	Diana	"	"	"	7 months	<i>Dead by Feb 1822</i>
105.	Eve	"	"	"	40	<i>1828: Trf to Revd JH Laurence</i>
106.	Eve	"	"	"	16	
107.	Eliza	"	"	Mestee	10	
108.	Elsey	"	"	Black	6	
109.	Frances	"	"	"	50	<i>Dead by 1831</i>
110.	Friday	"	"	"	50	<i>Dead by 1834</i>
111.	Fanny	"	"	Mulatto	42	<i>1834: Removed to Tobago</i>
112.	Fanny	"	"	Black	22	
113.	Franky	"	"	"	15	
114.	Franky	"	"	"	70	<i>Dead by Feb 1822</i>
115.	Greeta	"	"	"	6	
116.	Grace	"	"	"	2	
117.	Hetty Cooper	"	"	"	50	<i>Dead by 1834</i>
118.	Harriet	"	Africa	"	60	<i>Dead by Feb 1822</i>
119.	Hetty Cuffey	"	Nevis	"	46	
120.	Henny Owens	"	"	"	27	<i>Dead by Feb 1822</i>
121.	Hester	"	"	"	18	
122.	Hannah	"	"	"	13	<i>Dead by 1831</i>
123.	Judy	"	"	"	48	<i>Dead by Feb 1822</i>
124.	Joan	"	"	"	26	
125.	Jenny	"	"	"	16	
126.	Joan	"	"	"	22	
127.	Kitty	"	"	"	23	
128.	Kitty	"	"	Sambo	3 months	<i>1828: Trf to Ann Gordon</i>
129.	Luky	"	"	Black	52	
130.	Louisa	"	"	Mulatto	20	<i>Dead by 1828</i>
131.	Lucinda	"	"	Black	4	
132.	Louisa	"	"	"	4	
133.	Moll	"	"	"	40	<i>Dead by 1828</i>
134.	Mimba	"	"	"	34	
135.	Moll	"	"	"	37	<i>Dead by 1828</i>
136.	Madlane	"	"	"	18	
137.	Molly	"	"	"	22	<i>Dead by 1834</i>
138.	Madlane	"	"	"	42	<i>Dead by 1831</i>

No	Names	Sex	Country	Colour	Reputed age	Subsequent fate
139.	Maria(h)	"	"	"	90	<i>Dead by 1831</i>
140.	Mariann	"	"	"	18	
141.	Matilda	"	"	"	12	
142.	Mary Seymour	"	"	"	10	
143.	Margaret	"	"	"	6	
144.	Mariann	"	"	"	3	<i>1828: Trf /bequeathed to Catherine Laurence</i>
145.	Martha	"	"	"	8 months	<i>Dead by Feb 1822</i>
146.	Maria	"	"	Mulatto	2 weeks	<i>1828: Trf to Maria Laurence</i>
147.	Mussy	"	Africa	Black	60	<i>Dead by 1831</i>
148.	Nanny	"	Nevis	"	62	<i>Dead by 1825</i>
149.	Nancy	"	"	"	55	
150.	Nanny	"	"	Sambo	18	<i>1828: Trf to Maria Laurence</i>
151.	Nancy	"	"	Black	17	
152.	Ophelia	"	"	"	17	
153.	Penny	"	"	"	42	
154.	Present	"	"	"	38	<i>Dead by 1825</i>
155.	Penny Seymour	"	Africa	"	30	
156.	Phibba	"	Nevis	"	30	
157.	Phillis	"	"	"	26	<i>Dead by 1831</i>
158.	Peggy	"	"	"	24	
159.	Pareen	"	"	"	21	
160.	Plassy	"	"	"	10	
161.	Polly	"	"	"	4	
162.	Ritta	"	Africa	"	52	<i>Dead by 1831</i>
163.	Rachael	"	Nevis	"	35	
164.	Ritta	"	"	"	31	
165.	Rachael	"	"	"	22	<i>Dead by 1828</i>
166.	Sophy	"	"	"	55	
167.	Sabina	"	"	"	46	
168.	Suky	"	"	"	64	
169.	Sary	"	"	"	43	<i>' Sarah ' Dead by 1834</i>
170.	Suky	"	Africa	"	42	<i>Dead by Feb 1822</i>
171.	Sally	"	Nevis	Mulatto	37	<i>1828: Trf to Frances Woodley</i>
172.	Sophy	"	"	Black	33	
173.	Sally	"	"	"	24	<i>1828: Trf to Eliza Laurence</i>
174.	Suky	"	"	Sambo	14	
175.	Violet	"	America	Mulatto	44	<i>Removed to Tobago</i>
176.	Violet	"	Nevis	Black	48	
177.	Venus	"	Africa	"	50	

There was another group of enslaved people 'Belonging to Frances Laurence but in possession of and resident on the Estate of Samuel Laurence'

<i>No</i>	<i>Names</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Colour</i>	<i>Reputed age</i>
1.	Aaron	Males	Nevis	Black	7
2.	Billy Clarke	"	"	"	32
3.	Charles	"	"	"	3
4.	Harry	"	"	"	7
5.	Jacob	"	"	"	50
6.	Joseph	"	"	"	2
7.	Nelson	"	"	"	9
8.	Sampson	"	"	"	12
9.	Tom Clarke	"	"	"	18
10.	Citty	Females	"	"	25
11.	Juliet	"	"	"	21
12.	Isabella	"	"	"	6
13.	Leah	"	"	"	14
14.	Omar	"	"	"	12
15.	Patience	"	"	"	55
16.	Polly	"	Africa	"	44
17.	Penny Clarke	"	Nevis	"	28
18.	Patience	"	"	"	18
19.	Sylvia	"	Africa	"	42

There was also one further person 'Belonging to Ann Laurence but in possession of and resident on the Estate of Samuel Laurence'

<i>No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Colour</i>	<i>Reputed age</i>
1.	Patience	Female	Nevis	Black	13

It is only the intention here to follow the main group of 177 slaves as an illustration of what was happening on Laurence's estate. Why there were additional people is unclear and their subsequent lives may, indeed, distort the picture. They may have been inherited as property from a relative or may have been personal servants, or they may have worked as part of the gang on the estate.

Few African names had been 'issued' by the owners or managers, instead fairly common European names for slaves had been used. A number of names are replicated, for instance two Toms and one Tommy, three Jims, two Hannibals and so on. This would point to a number of gangs from different estates having been put together since it is unlikely that an owner or manager would consciously seek to create confusion. 14 individuals had surnames, not an unusual number for an estate of this size. Some of them are the names of planter families on Nevis and may indicate who had owned them previously.

Two individual enslaved families are indicated. Listed are a Penny Seymour, aged 30 born on Nevis, an African man aged 26 called Seymour and a child, Mary Seymour aged 10. Seymour did not survive through to Emancipation but his partner and child did. There are also two Owens – Tom aged 28 and Henny aged 27, both creoles ie born on Nevis.

The vast majority were creoles. Nearly 8% had been born and taken from Africa, which is a lower proportion than for Nevis as a whole and other known estates; on Montpelier, for instance, nearly 20% of the gang were enslaved Africans. They may have been a significant

group. One of their number was called Boatswain, a 70-year-old African who may have been the driver for the main gang in his active days. As a group the Africans tended to be in their fifties and sixties, with several in their seventies. Given that slavers liked to supply young people to their market this means that they may well have been taken from West Africa in the 1760s and 1770s. They would have been on Nevis a very long time, passing on significant aspects of language and culture. It is not surprising, given their age, that very few of the Africans made it through to Emancipation. Only two survived, the women Penny Seymour, then aged about 47, and Venus, aged about 67.

One of the enslaved women, Violet, had come from America, like four slaves on Tower Hill at the same time. It is not known whether this was a punishment transfer from America for disobedience, as was known to happen in reverse from Nevis to America. Whether they came together is not known but they will undoubtedly have shared some experiences and noted the differences between American and British West Indian conditions of slavery.

As far as colour is concerned, the 1817 register shows that the number of mixed-race people is in line with Nevis as a whole at roughly 15%. However, the details show that, in the language of the time, 10 out of 177 were 'mulattoes', usually described as a child with one white and one black parent – generally the mother was black. 13 were described as 'Sambo', the child of one black and one mixed-race parent. There is, however, a pattern. Sambos tended to be in their teens in 1817, like Louis who was 14. Mulattoes tended to be in their thirties and forties, like Sally who was 37. This seems to suggest an increasing stabilisation and confidence within the group, developing relationships between themselves and having children.

In terms of ages, Laurence's estate and Morton's Bay had fairly similar profiles. They both had a slightly above average percentage of slaves in the 0-19 age bracket, with Laurence's at 44% as compared to Nevis as a whole at 40%. Both comparatively lacked numbers in the strongest, fittest and most able age group of 20-39 year olds and both had slightly greater numbers of older enslaved workers.⁷⁹

Nevis

17

An alphabetical list and return of all the boys and other slave men residing on the estate belonging to or in the lawful possession of Samuel Laurence given in by me this fourteenth day of July one thousand eight hundred and seventeen

Sam Laurence

No	Name	Sex	Country	Colour	Age	Years
1	Abraham	Male	Nevis	Black	42	Years
2	Andy	"	"	"	22	"
3	Alfred	"	"	"	8	Months
4	Billy Murray	"	"	"	140	Years
5	Bob	"	"	"	20	"
6	Billy (called old Billy)	"	Africa	"	60	"
7	Bray	"	Nevis	"	50	"
8	Brabner	"	Africa	"	70	"
9	Billy Smith	"	Nevis	"	43	"
10	Bristol (A. Sharon)	"	"	"	13	"
11	Bristol	"	"	"	11	"
12	Ben	"	"	"	3	"
13	Edith	"	Africa	"	70	"
14	George	"	Nevis	"	36	"
15	Geoffy	"	"	"	19	"

Fig 4: Extract from the first page of the 1817 register for the estate of Samuel Laurence

⁷⁹ 20-39 year olds: Laurence's – 26%, Morton's Bay – 26%, Nevis – 33%. 40–59 year olds: Laurence's – 23%, Morton's Bay – 22%, Nevis – 19%

During the years 1817 to 1834 it is difficult to be certain about how the numbers on the estate of Samuel Laurence fared. The period was interrupted by Laurence's death in 1826 and subsequent transfers of slaves as a result of his bequests and agreements made between the heirs. The overall picture is that the gang declined from 177 to 148 in the 17 years. This was the general picture in Nevis as a whole, and setting aside the bequest and transfers, the bare fact is that births did not keep up with deaths. Overall, 87 people died and 78 were born. The same sort of process happened on Morton's Bay where 33 people died and 22 were born.

Comparisons have been made for the period 1817-1822 of the numbers of births and deaths on 25 estates on Nevis. Discounting deaths for the moment, Laurence's does reasonably well with an increase in numbers of 13%, compared to Tower Hill's slightly better 14.2% with a similar-sized gang and Hamilton's catastrophic 3% with a much larger gang. Unfortunately Laurence's is also quite high up the league of death rates with 15%, whereas Morton's Bay is nearer the bottom with 11% and Eden in St James Windward fared even better with 7%.⁸⁰ 1822 to 1825 was the only period on Laurence's in which births outweighed deaths. Sadly it also records the births and then the deaths of twin girls, Emma and Ellen. After 1825 births were half what they had been and remained consistently low. This may reflect the hard times of drought and starvation that the island went through. The 1828 register also records the 17 transfers of slaves to family members after the death of Samuel Laurence. It is unclear whether or not they remained active on the estate. The overall number declined further to 148 in 1831 and included the execution of William for a 'capital felony'. The number remained stable from then until 1834.⁸¹

Slaves could be condemned to death for offences such as murder, rape, the deliberate burning of canes or buildings, theft of goods over £5 and the practice of Obeah. These capital offences had to be tried in front of two magistrates and convictions based on two positive witnesses. What William was accused of is not known. However, his case was discussed in the island's Council and Assembly in 1828 and 1829. By December 1828, with reference to William, the legislature was seeking clarification on how to carry out a sentence which had been commuted from a death sentence to hard labour for life and looking for an alternative punishment – presumably because there was no facility to oversee hard labour. On 31 January following, the Assembly wanted an Act to authorise the transportation of criminal slaves. It also drew attention to the insufficient and insecure state of the gaol. On 26 June 1829 it was noted that Red William and Joe Macey had absconded. That happened because the Doctor and Justice of the Peace had taken off the shackles, as ordered by the President of the island's Council. 'At this moment' they were 'at large in the island to the terror and injury of its inhabitants'. Also at large, from other estates, were John Williams and Cuffe (for setting fire to the boilinghouse on Mr Arthurton's estate) and Monday, belonging to William Bowrin, for attempting to poison the family of Mr Howe. The Legislature decided on a \$50 reward. Although his sentence had been commuted, he was put to death,⁸² probably as much because of the incapacity and incompetence of the justice system on the island as whatever it was he was initially convicted of.

Two further issues are of note. The first is that in the 1817 register, under Samuel Laurence's name, a black man called London, aged 40, was noted as having absconded. It is not clear which estate he came from but the fact that he does not appear later on either Laurence's estate or Morton's Bay suggests he had freed himself by escaping off the island.

⁸⁰ Eickelmann, C *The Mountravers Plantation Community, 1734-1834* Part 2, Chapter 7 Increase and Decrease in the number of slaves on 25 selected plantations on Nevis during the period 1817-1822

⁸¹ The number calculated in 1831 and 1834 was 149 but it should have read 148.

⁸² UK NA, CO 186/13 Council and Assembly Minutes. See also Nevis Courthouse Records, Court of Kings/Queen's Bench & Common Pleas 1827-1836 and Kings/Queen's Bench & Common Pleas 1831-1844

It was noted above that sometime between 1828 and 1831 Joe Freeman and Fanny from Morton's Bay were moved to Tobago. Both would have been about fifteen years old in 1830. On 10 June 1829 Samuel Laurence's son, John Hendrickson Laurence, a clerk in Holy Orders in Scarborough, Tobago, married Lucy Stanley, the daughter of Joseph Webbe Stanley, in St Paul's, Nevis.⁸³ Joseph and Fanny's move was undoubtedly to do with this. They were registered on 10 January 1832 on Tobago as imported from Nevis.⁸⁴ Three others had preceded them from Laurence's estate: Phill, aged 12 in 1817 and therefore about 25 in 1830, Tom Bass about 38 in 1830 and Eve about 53 in 1830. All three were registered in January 1830 as having been imported (possibly on 12 July 1829) 'in a domestic capacity only, as per the certificate annexed by the Schooner *Isabella*'.⁸⁵ Oddly, there is no record of Violet in the Tobago registers. How they all viewed moving from the surroundings they knew to an unknown island is anyone's guess.

The structure of the workforce is revealed to some extent in the claims and counterclaims for slave compensation from 1834. A counterclaim was made on only 205 of the slaves of both the estate of Samuel Laurence/Clifton and Morton's Bay. The information provided shows that there were 4 'headpeople', such as drivers, and 6 tradesmen – coopers, carpenters and masons for instance. Then came 91 field labourers and 41 'inferior' field labourers; the difference between the two categories was a matter of age, the inferior labourers roughly being 6 to 16 and 60 to 69 and therefore on lighter work. In addition there were 7 domestic servants, 33 children under the age of 6, and 23 people employed on other duties, such as on the wharfs or on shipping and so on.⁸⁶ In comparative terms the combined estates had a smaller proportion of field labourers of various ages than nearby Mountravers and Clarke's/Four Seasons in the same parish.⁸⁷ They also had a proportionally larger number of children under the age of 6.

When considering simply the amount of work which had to be done, it is possible to get some notion by comparing the acreage of the combined estate (say 578 acres) to the overall numbers in the enslaved populations in 1834 (224). A crude figure is produced of 2.58 acres per slave. This compares with an overworked gang at New River with nearly 3 acres per slave and the poorly managed and relatively unproductive estate of Stoney Grove where the enslaved labour force worked 1.69 acres per slave. The number of children on the combined Laurence's estates would indicate that the adult workforce was relatively stressed.

Two further aspects of the lives of people on the estates are worth thinking about. Nothing is known about where the slaves lived on the Laurence estates. There were at least four component parts to his estates and at least two gangs of slaves listed in the registers. Since there had been four different estates, there might have been four different villages. The history of other estates in the parish, like Clarke's/Four Seasons and Mountravers, shows that villages were sometimes moved. In addition, no burial grounds have come to light so far. Often in the West Indies these were located within a few hundred yards of the villages, although they might, in the case of Nevis, also be found further up the mountain. So there are almost certainly at least three or four sites to be located by systematic survey of the landscape of the modern estate.

Documentary evidence and experience from other estates suggest that the locations of villages tended to be on rough, bouldery, unproductive ground, usually on the edges of ghuts and often on the boundaries with neighbouring estates and/or along roads. If Morton's Bay did border on Colhoun's estate, one possible location for a village for the Morton's Bay

⁸³ NHCS, Parish Registers, St Paul's Marriages 1826-1842

⁸⁴ UK NA, T 71/488 f84

⁸⁵ UK NA, T 71/ 484 f88

⁸⁶ UK NA, T 71/1237

⁸⁷ Clarke's/Four Seasons had 71%, Mountravers 75% and Laurence's/Morton's Bay 64% engaged as field labourers of various qualities. See C Eickelmann *The Mountravers Plantation Community, 1734-1834 – Postscript* <http://eis.bris.ac.uk/~emceee/mountravers-postscript.pdf>

gang is along the ghut which runs between the modern Laurence's/Clifton Estate and Cotton Ground.

The other question is the size of the village. Supposing that the Morton's Bay gang lived in a separate village, it would have been quite small, with perhaps 20 or 25 houses. Saddle Hill Estate's village with 85 slaves amounted to 2 acres. However, the 177 people on the estate of Samuel Laurence would have required a much larger area. A plan of Clarke's (Four Season's) Estate with over 200 slaves shows that the village covered 8 acres.

Somewhere on Laurence's/Clifton there was a school. The government Blue Books for the 1830s show that there was an explosion of education on Nevis, most of it private and charitably funded, or funded by individual estate owners. In St James Windward, for instance, there were six private schools on estates. The estate school at Clifton had 29 children, 15 boys and 14 girls, taught by Miss Richards. In 1834 she earned £8:5:17 a year and had 11 boys and 13 girls. By 1846, after Emancipation, the school had expanded. James Podd was the master (earning £28) with 32 boys and 23 girls. The school was called the Wesleyan Public School and instruction was 'partly by the British and partly by the Glasgow Training System in all the schools'. The Wesleyan Day School was still going strong on Clifton in 1859.⁸⁸

Compensation for the few

The British government bought off planter opposition to Emancipation with the promise of compensation for slave owners. This required slave owners to submit claims for a share of £20 million. The claims can be instructive about the structure of the slave populations on each estate and the economic histories of the estates.

Claim no. 132 for 'Clifton's, Paynes and Morton's Bay' for 224 slaves was registered initially on

1 August 1834 by William Laurence and John Hendrickson Laurence, the surviving trustees and executors of Samuel Laurence. Attached documents, certified by the Deputy Registrar of Slaves on Nevis, J H Pemberton, noted that 152 slaves were resident on the estate called Clifton and that another 68 slaves were also registered in the names of the heirs of Samuel Laurence. The latter clearly refers to the 68 slaves on Morton's Bay.⁸⁹ The claim also noted additions to the 1834 register with the birth of the following babies who were all born on the estate of Samuel Laurence:

Direanna, one month old, was born to Hester, who would have been about 35. The mother of James, two months old, was Frankey (Franky) who was 15 in 1817, while John, two months old, was the son of Greta (Greeta) who was 6 in 1817. Finally, there was Jobe, three months old, born to Christiana, who was also 6 in 1817.

While the claim was made by Samuel Laurence's surviving executors, there were several counterclaims. The most serious came from Samuel Bosanquet, James Hughes Anderdon and others of the bankers Bosanquet Anderdon of Lombard Street. Their claim is an illustration of the state of plantation finances at this time and shows that the money tended to go to the merchants and bankers rather than planters. The reality was that the workers got nothing. According to the papers, Laurence bought Morton's Bay in July 1817, using sums drawn on Butler Thompson Claxton subject to a mortgage. In August 1820 Claxton transferred this mortgage to Bosanquet Anderdon. Since it was not paid off, the bank in 1834 sought and obtained, in the Court of King's Bench and Common Pleas, a judgement against the heirs of Samuel Laurence for the outstanding sum of £19,946-3-11 with interest. All

⁸⁸ UK NA, CO 187/7, 187/8, 187/20 and 187/33 Blue Books Nevis 1833, 1834, 1846 and 1859

⁸⁹ UK NA, T 71/1038

Laurence's slaves, not just the ones on Morton's Bay, were to be liable. In the event, the bank's counterclaim was successful and they, not the heirs and executors of Samuel Laurence, were awarded the sum of £3,655-18-5.⁹⁰

One development particularly showed the newly emancipated population on Nevis attempting to put slavery behind them. They refused to remain in the old slave villages and worked to build homes in newly established settlements such as Jessup's, Nugent's and Cotton Ground. The early development of Cotton Ground is seen in documents in 1845 when plots of land were leased in Cotton Ground, on the land between Clifton and Colhoun's; it may have drawn land from both estates. The fact that the land was leased from Bosanquet Anderdon, the bankers and West India merchants of London, suggests that the firm had gained control of the combined Laurence estates. The leases detail the owners, the lot numbers, how big the lot was and the price paid. For instance, Rachel Ritchens of St Thomas Lowland leased Lot 22, a quarter of an acre, making her mark. On 20 October James Daniell, 'late of Clifton, Paynes and Morton's Bay plantation', leased Lot 2 of half an acre, opposite the school, just up from the main island road, making his mark. The fact that Daniell came from Clifton's shows that people from that plantation were, unsurprisingly, moving to Cotton Ground, just off the estate.⁹¹

HMS Thunder's survey, 1848

During 1848 the waters around Nevis were surveyed by *HMS Thunder* under the command of Captain Edward Barnett R.N. They were particularly concerned with the Monkey Shoals off the west coast of Nevis, the Narrows and a safe route to the shipping road off Charlestown from the south. As well as taking soundings, the survey involved noting significant landmarks on the island, very often wind or steam mills on sugar estates.⁹²

The Remarks Book for this survey noted the following about Monkey Shoals:

Paradise Mill on Nevis in line with the old mill on Tower Hill leads close to the SW of the shoals. Cades Bay Mill, which is the northernmost one on the shore, in one with Spring Hill Mill, which stands on the ridge that connects Hurricane Hill [Round Hill] to the mountain peak, leads to the west of them....⁹³

The survey resulted in two charts. The overall chart of Nevis was entitled 'The Islands of Nevis and Redonda, Antilles surveyed by Capt Edwd Barnett...HMS Thunder 1848'.⁹⁴ A more specific chart focussed on the Narrows but also recorded a significant amount of information about the estates on the northern end of the island, particularly those close to the shore. It was entitled 'The Narrows between St Christopher's and Nevis surveyed by Captn Edwd Barnett...HMS Thunder April 1848'.

The 'Islands' chart shows a set of works called 'Lawrence', with a windmill, close to the main island road, south of Cades Bay windmill. Also revealed is the location called 'News' significantly further east of the main road with a plantation road leading to it. In addition, the chart shows the early development of Cotton Ground.

⁹⁰ UK NA, T 71/1237 and T 71/882. For a summary see University College London *Legacies of British Slave Ownership Project* <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/claim/view/23745>

⁹¹ Nevis Common Records 1838-1847 from f714. The records include a plan of the lots in Cotton Ground.

⁹² The survey did not necessarily record all landmarks, only those which aided navigation.

⁹³ UK Hydrographic Office Archive, OD 510 from f69, *HMS Thunder*, 'Sailing Directions for the Islands Sombrero, Anguilla, Barbuda, Antigua, Nevis and St Christopher', Captain Barnett's remarks on Nevis dated 1 January 1849

⁹⁴ UK Hydrographic Office Archive, L6595. This particular 1848 version of the chart from the Hydrographic Office is different from the *HMS Thunder* charts of St Christopher and Nevis which are to be found in the UK National Archives at CO 700 and WO 78/603. UK HO L6595 shows views not found in the charts in the National Archives and was not 'corrected to 1868'.



Fig 4: Extract from 'The Islands of Nevis and Redonda, Antilles surveyed by Capt Edwd Barnett...HMS Thunder 1848'

These details are complemented by a set of 'views' of the shore drawn from on board ship. The relevant one shows Cades Bay Mill, lined up with Spring Hill, the first mill south which is presumably Lawrence's, further mills, including Colhoun's and St Thomas Lowland Church.⁹⁵

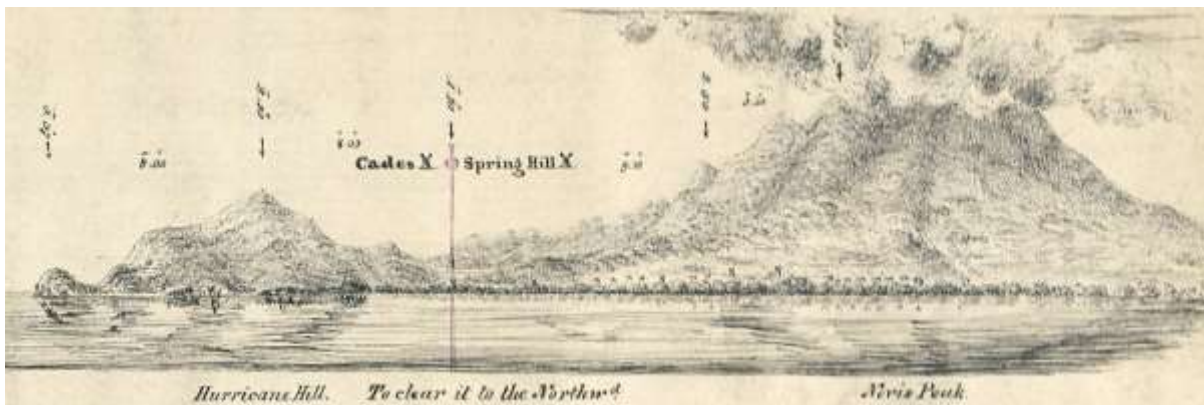


Fig 5: A view of a section of the west coast of Nevis drawn during the HMS Thunder survey, 1848

Further details are provided in the 'Narrows' chart.⁹⁶ Lawrence's windmill is shown in a yard, with one larger building to the north of it aligned north south and several smaller buildings on either side. It is located on an estate road about 420 m (465 yds) east of the main island road, about 560 m (620 yds) south of Cades Bay yard and a little over a kilometre north of Colhoun's. New's, un-named, is shown as just one building, with a second estate road leading directly to it about one and a half kilometres east of the road at Nelson's Spring. The lack of detail suggests either that it was not significant for navigational purposes or that it was no longer as important to the estate. However, it would seem roughly to fit with the ruins

⁹⁶ UK Hydrographic Office Archive L6598 'The Narrows between St Christopher's and Nevis surveyed by Captn Edwd Barnett...HMS Thunder April 1848'

shown in a similar position, east of Cotton Ground, on the D.O.S. 1984 map. These ruins are now being cleared and investigated and would seem to fit the works shown as 'Clifton's Upper Works' on Iles's map of 1871.



Fig 6: An extract from 'The Narrows between St Christopher's and Nevis surveyed by Captn Edwd Barnett...HMS Thunder April 1848'

An Encumbered Estate

Just as it was before Emancipation, Clifton/Laurence's combined estate was burdened by debt throughout the nineteenth century and its ownership is revealed in the constant recital of this burden.

If, as is likely, the bankers Bosanquet Anderdon took control of the plantation sometime around Emancipation they probably looked to ship it on elsewhere. In July 1854 William Weekes, a merchant of Nevis, set out the conditions, in detail, under which he would continue to advance money through a mortgage to Thomas Slater (Secretary to the Council of Nevis) for the cultivation of Clifton Estate.⁹⁷

Clifton was in the hands of Sir Benjamin Chilly Campbell Pine in the 1860s, but again under mortgage. Pine had extensive experience in Africa, including as Governor of the Gold Coast. For the sake of his health he was sent as Governor to St Kitts in 1859. An active reformer, he was appointed Governor in Chief in 1869 with authority to encourage the various legislatures to establish the Federation of the Leeward Islands, a task in which he succeeded in 1870.⁹⁸ It is likely that his attention was everywhere but on his estate on Nevis, and it was around September 1870 that Pine sold the estate to Reverend James Bovell and

⁹⁷ See Nevis Common Records 1847-1858 ff484-493 for the mortgage. Another version is to be found in a collection of papers from the lawyers Wigley & Burt which were being sold by a dealer in the early 2000s but have not been seen since.

⁹⁸ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 2004. In 1873 he left Antigua, returned to Natal and retired in 1875.

Clement King for £4,000.⁹⁹ Iles noted the new owners in 1871 and that the works were powered by steam, as were those at Tower Hill.¹⁰⁰

Bovell was born in 1817 and raised in Barbados but studied medicine in London and Scotland. He emigrated to Canada in 1848 and became a celebrated, if controversial, doctor, lecturer and contributor to medical journals. A deeply religious man, he rejected Darwinian ideas and was a follower of the Anglo-Catholic leaning Tractarians. He revisited the West Indies in 1870, decided to stay and take holy orders. To begin with he was a curate and then rector of the joint parishes of St George Gingerland and St John Figtree in Nevis and later the combined parishes of St Paul's and St Thomas Lowland.¹⁰¹ The plantation was mortgaged by Bovell and King for £3,000 in August 1874 to Thomas Daniel Hill, G H Chambers and Henry Bridges who, at this point, were the consignees for the estate's sugar and making advances for its upkeep.¹⁰²

In failing health for some years, Bovell died in 1880 and it may be at this point or shortly afterwards that the whole combined 'Clifton' estate was bought by Daniel Sharry Blake. Blake is likely to have come from St Kitts where both the names Sharry and Blake are to be found. The present owners of Fairview Inn on St Kitts state that one of its previous owners 'was the descendant of an enslaved African (Daniel Sharry Blake, around 1900)'.¹⁰³

Certainly Blake took control of a number of estates on Nevis very quickly, perhaps in an attempt to achieve economies of scale. From about 1882 to 1884 he owned the estates of Kades Bay, Potworks and Clifton and at the same time was leasing Jessup's and Colhoun's.

However, by December 1884 these estates had been supported to the tune of £1,750 by the firm of Samuel Dobree & Sons. Mr Blake himself signed an affidavit in September 1884 stating that he was unable to continue and he applied for a Receiver to be appointed to carry on the cultivation of the estates. The firms of Thomas Daniel & Co and Thomas Daniel & Sons were also owed money and they petitioned on 5 March 1884 for the sale of the combined Clifton Estate under the jurisdiction of the Court of the Commissioners for Encumbered Estates. Other claims were made, for instance two were filed in April and June 1886 by the firm of George Fletcher & Co of London and Derby whose steam engines and sugar milling equipment are found all over Nevis. The purpose of the court was to rejuvenate economic and agricultural activity in the West Indies by freeing the estates from the burden of debt. This was to be done by engineering arrangements between the parties or facilitating the sale of the properties, usually at knock-down prices.

The documents supporting the sale give the most detailed picture of the estate from any time in its working life.¹⁰⁴ As noted before, it was described as consisting of Morton's Bay plantation (200 acres), Clifton plantation (100 acres), Sheppard's Land (90 acres), Lower Plantation (188 acres), another unnamed portion of land, bounded on the north by Kades Bay plantation, and two further plots amounting to 4 acres.

The plan accompanying the sale was certified, in the draft version, in May 1887. It states that the plantation amounted to 554 acres 1 rood and 24 perches, though documents accompanying the 'Particulars of Sale' suggest that it was 582 acres. The final version of the plan shows three areas not part of the estate. Fort Ashby was owned by the government. Opposite it was a small plot of land owned by Tower Hill. Along the border with Cotton

⁹⁹ UK NA, CO 441/24/1 pt 1 West Indian Encumbered Estates Commission Papers

¹⁰⁰ Iles, J A B *Description of the Island of Nevis* 1871

¹⁰¹ *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* online http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bovell_james_10E.html

¹⁰² UK NA, CO 441/24/1 pt 1

¹⁰³ Delisle Walwyn & Co. There is no source for the information.

¹⁰⁴ See UK NA, CO 441/24/1 pts 1 and 2 for the principal information and the plans. Some of the information is repeated, along with additional details, in Nevis Court Records, Court of the Commissioners for the Sale of Encumbered Estates 1872-1887. The CO source contains correspondence concerning Kades Bay and Potworks.

Ground was an additional area jutting into Clifton belonging to the village. Worth observing on the plan is a feature, consisting of several buildings, north of the public road and about 360 m (400 yds) from the shore. This might be the Laurence works identified in the *HMS Thunder* survey.

The 'Particulars of Sale' give details of the boundaries but mixed up north and south, a fact recognised in a handwritten set of notes. They also give a description of what was for sale.

The buildings and machinery consist of a boiling house with battery of four tayches and four coolers; a curing house with two leaded molasses cisterns; engine room with eighteen horse power engine with mill and double gearing all in working order; a multitubular boiler six feet by twelve feet with horizontal steam chest in working order; two clarifiers, a manager's house, overseer's house, and six labourers houses all in fair order; one house in the yard; one megass house; one well without frame.

The estate is well provided with carts, plantation implements and utensils and other dead stock.

The live stock consist of four horses four mules seven donkeys one bull seventeen oxen two steers nine cows one heifer six heifer calves and seven bull calves.

The crop for 1888 will consist of 54 acres of plant canes and 72 acres of rattoons

The 'Particulars' point out that the estate was worked by share croppers and tenants. Two schedules identify the share croppers for 1887 and 1888 and how much land they were working; the third lists the tenants.¹⁰⁵

This was a working estate with a considerable acreage under cane and a mill which had been powered by steam since at least 1871 and probably before that. There is no mention of a second works but Iles's map of 1871 describes the works as Clifton's 'Upper Works', clearly implying a lower set of works. The description of the works in the 1887/1888 'Particulars' does not fit with the works which have recently been cleared but it might fit a refurbished set of works on the 'Lawrence' site identified near the main island road by the *HMS Thunder* survey. In addition to whatever is left of a steam-driven mill, archaeological investigation at potential sites of 'Lawrence's' works may also be able to uncover the remains of a windmill, a boiling house, a curing house and a number of dwellings.

There is also potential material in the archives of George Fletcher & Co concerning their claim on the estate. Given that Fletcher engines and steam equipment turn up on numerous estates on Nevis, it would seem likely that they supplied an engine to Clifton Estate sometime between 1848 and 1871. John Davy, who was in the West Indies from July 1845 to November 1848, heard a report from Nevis. He noted that the introduction of steam 'was hardly successful, for of the four (sic) steam engines erected, I was assured, only one remained in use, the other three being out of repair, as no artificer in the island possessed of the requisite skill to make them efficient'. In fact there were six engines on Nevis but none were on Clifton Estate.¹⁰⁶

The working nature of the plantation, even as it was being prepared for sale, is revealed in receiver's accounts prepared for the court. The receiver, throughout the period from September 1884 until he was discharged in January 1889, was J H H Berkeley, a task for which he was paid £93-6-8 a year. There was a manager Edward Gittens (£70) who may have had a house at Fort Ashby, since he is mentioned on the plan. The engineer for the estate was E Y Connell (£23-6-8). There were accounts for coopers, carpenters, blacksmiths

¹⁰⁵ See Appendix

¹⁰⁶ Davy, J *The West Indies Before and Since Slave Emancipation* 1854 p487 quoted in an article on early steam technology on Nevis by the authors, forthcoming

and a doctor. Between January and May 1886 90 hogsheads of sugar, valued at £585, were shipped to Weston & Wray at New York along with 73 puncheons of molasses. The following year 123 hogsheads of sugar were produced.¹⁰⁷

A sale of the estate was fixed for 7 June 1887 but postponed. It was then re-opened but postponed again for want of bidders. Finally the whole plantation was sold on 6 September 1887 to Mrs Rose van Engle for £1,600, a sum which demonstrates the complete collapse in land values since 1815.¹⁰⁸ A few days later Potworks was sold to Hilton Cheeseborough van Engle and in November Kades Bay to the petitioners Samuel Dobree & Sons.¹⁰⁹

Some planters in the West Indies thought that 'the court and its operations, especially the priority it accorded the consignee's claim, played into the hands of British merchants and damaged the interests of local planters and their dependents'. Sir Thomas Graham Briggs, who owned the neighbouring estate of Tower Hill and many other estates on Nevis, was opposed to the very process of the sale of estates through the Encumbered Estates Court. In 1882 he argued that the abolition of the court was vital for every person of property in the West Indies and 'above all to the wives and children of such, for at present they are liable to be shamefully robbed...without any chance of safety or redress'. He told a Royal Commission, hearing evidence in Nevis the following year, that the priority given to consignees' claims in these cases would destroy the resident proprietors. In the end, such complaints succeeded and, in time, changes were made to the system. These included the reprioritising of claims and the transfer of the court's powers to the Supreme Court. A further change was the introduction in 1886 of a proper system of land title registration which better secured title to land, particularly for small landowners, and which still exists today.¹¹⁰

The van Engles were not keen to hold on to Clifton for very long and it was for sale again in 1889. The particulars, published in the *St Christopher Advertiser*, are very similar to the previous description but there are additional details. They note that it was 'only a few minutes cartage from the works to the shipping beach of the estate'. Additional structures were noted, including a stable, a large cattle pen and two water tanks.

The planting arrangements were explained further: 'The crop for 1890 consists of 74 acres plant canes, of which 29 acres are Jamaica and 43 1/2 acres first ratoons; also 20 acres of plant canes and two small fields of ratoons on shares. For 1891, 36 acres are already planted with Jamaica plants, and other lands are being prepared.'¹¹¹

Whether or not the estate was sold at this point, by 1924 Clifton (548 acres) and Tower Hill (761 acres) were in the hands of J O Maloney. He was an agricultural instructor who had lived in Barbados and owned at least three other estates on Nevis.¹¹² The ownership of Clifton after Maloney can only be pursued through those same, vital, Land Title Registers in the Supreme Court Registry in Nevis.

Structures, Sites and Landscape

The wider Clifton/Laurence estate clearly contained a number of different sites and structures because of its complex history. Most of these have not yet been identified or clearly understood.

¹⁰⁷ UK NA, CO 441/24/1 pt 1

¹⁰⁸ UK NA, CO 441/3/6 Court sources differ as to whether it was Rose or Elizabeth van Engle

¹⁰⁹ A genealogical source states that the van Engle family (or van Ingle) came from St Kitts and owned McKnight, Fountain and Douglas estates. See <http://www.edwardcromarty.com/LINEAGE.htm> No sources are given for the information.

¹¹⁰ Brereton, B *Law, Justice and Empire: The Career of John Gorrie 1829-1892* The Press UWI pp212-219

¹¹¹ *Louisiana Planter and Sugar Manufacturer* v2-3 p360 7 December 1889, courtesy of David Rollinson

¹¹² Watkins, Frederick H *Handbook of the Leeward Islands* London 1924

Probably the most difficult to locate will be the villages in which the enslaved people lived because of the perishable materials used in house construction. It is likely that there will be at least two or more sites and that sites may have moved over time to new locations. On the other hand Nevis now has some experience in what to look for and where to look. Ghutsides are useful places to start, particularly on rough ground, probably near plantation or public roads. Afro-Caribbean pottery and European ceramics can help identify sites. 'Slabs' and other sources of water are useful indicators. The sheer size of a village of eight or more acres will provide a clue.

Associated with these villages will be burials or a burial ground. Burials may have happened underneath huts or in yards, based on some West African traditions, but equally it is just as likely that there will have been a burial ground, either quite close to any of the village sites or further up in higher ground.

Nevis is renowned for the 'greathouses' of the plantation owners. Given the temporary hold that many of the planters had on the various component parts of Clifton Estate and the number of absentee owners, there are unlikely to have been grand stone houses such as at Mountravers or Stoney Grove. It is possible that there will have been fairly modest timber-framed houses built on stone platforms. There are also house sites to be found for managers and overseers of at least four estates.

Similarly each of the four component parts of the estate may have had its own set of works and possibly more than one. One set of works, known presently as Clifton and probably the works identified as 'Clifton's upper Works' by Iles, is being cleared and stabilised. Another possible set of works identified as 'Sheppard's' appears to have been located on the northeastern edge of the estate. A third site has been tentatively located where the road down from Tower Hill turns north beside a local pond. Lastly, there are the works clearly identified as 'Lawrence' works in the 1848 *HMS Thunder* survey and possibly shown on the 1887 plan. This site seems the most likely candidate for those works described in the 1880s as having an 'engine room with eighteen horse power engine with mill and double gearing all in working order' and all the fixtures and fittings of a working steam mill.

It may be that a systematic investigation of the landscape will prove fruitful in understanding the infrastructure of the estate. For instance, careful study of the available aerial photographs from after the Second World War in collections in the UK and US may prove useful in locating sites. It would also be useful to overlay the 1887 plan of Clifton Estate on a modern D.O.S. map of Nevis to calculate exactly the extent and boundaries of the estate in relation to the modern landscape. This might clarify whether certain features were on one estate or another and could help identify other features in the long run.

October 2016

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Appendix

Particulars of Sale, Clifton Estate, 1887

In the Court of the Commissioners for Sale of Incumbered Estates in the West Indies (NEVIS).

In the matter of the Estate of DANIEL SHARRY BLAKE,—Owner.

Ex parte THOMAS DANIEL HILL, Sir GEORGE HENRY CHAMBERS, Knight, EDWARD CHAMBERS, GEORGE HENRY BRIDGES and JOHN STRACHAN BRIDGES, carrying on business as Merchants and Co-partners in the City of London under the style and firm of THOMAS DANIEL AND COMPANY, and in the City of Bristol as THOMAS DANIEL AND SONS.

NEVIS.

PARTICULARS and CONDITIONS of SALE of a valuable

SUGAR ESTATE

known as

"CLIFTON,"

situate in the Parish of Saint Thomas, Lowland, in the Island of Nevis, and comprising the plantations and lands known formerly as

"Mortons Bay Plantation," "Clifton Plantation,"
"Sheppards Land" and "Mortons Bay Pond,"

and containing together

582 ACRES

or thereabouts which will be sold by PUBLIC AUCTION together with the live and dead stock thereon before His Honor JOHN RAWLINS SEMPER, Local Commissioner for the said Island of Nevis at the Court House in the Town of Charlestown on TUESDAY the 24th day of JUNE, A.D. 1887, at 12 o'clock precisely, in one lot. *H. S. Semper*

The purchaser will have an indefeasible Parliamentary Title under the Seal of the above Court subject however to the reservations and conditions hereinafter mentioned.

Schedule No. 1 above referred to.

	Acres	Rattoons
A. Parris		
Peter Nisbet		do
John Walters		do
William Thomas		do
William Maynard		Plants
William Bennett		Rattoons
S. Bridgewater		do
do. do.		Plants
William Wilks		do
do. do.		Rattoons
William Smith		Plants
do. do.		Rattoons
Robert Smith		Plants
A. Broadbelt		do
B. Hamilton		do
John Jones		do
do. do.		Rattoons
William Thomas		Plants
A. Thompson		do
E. Nisbet		do
John Bertin		Rattoons
Joseph Huggins		Plants
Dily Coolie		do
Thomas Clarke		do
E. Thompson		do
do. do.		Rattoons
S. Smith		Plants
James Taylor		Rattoons
James Parris		do

Schedule No. 2 above referred to.

	Acres	Rattoons
A. Parris		
William Thomas		do
William Maynard		do
S. Bridgewater		do
William Wilks		do
A. Broadbelt		do
John Jones		do
E. Nisbett		do
A. Thompson		do
Thomas Clarke		do
B. Lawrence		Plants
John Nisbett		do
Rd. Lawrence		do
A. Ward		do

Schedule No. 3 above referred to.

	Acres	@ 1/3	7 Month
R. Huggins			
Mary Williams		1/3	
Edward Huggins		2/3	
Mary Jeffers		1/3	
L. Jeffers		1/3	
Haddys Coolie		2/3	