

Postscript, Mountravers after 1834

‘Such is life.’

**The conclusion to the obituary
of the last male descendent
of the Huggins family¹**

On 1 August 1834 slavery ended in the British colonies in the West Indies. Enslaved-born children under the age of six years became automatically free but everyone else had to undergo an apprenticeship. According to the work they had carried out during a particular 12-months period, people were classified either as agricultural labourers or as domestic servants. Regardless of classification, each apprentice was required to provide 45 hours a week of unpaid labour. It was envisaged that agricultural workers would serve apprenticeships of six, domestics of four years.

Special magistrates oversaw the workings of the apprenticeship system and adjudicated any disputes.² They were charged with enforcing the rights of apprentices, such as continuing to receive food and clothing allowances and medical attention. Under the new system special magistrates held important positions and, wanting to be at the centre of influence, Peter Thomas Huggins was among those who volunteered for this service. On 23 September 1834 the President Administering the Government, James Daniell, appointed him and nine other special magistrates.³

The changed civil status of people formerly enslaved meant that new laws had to be put in place and, as ever, the Nevis Legislature tried to get away with the least. An Act passed on 2 August 1834 stated how much employers had to provide by way of land and clothing (‘only the materials for which are to be furnished’) but at this stage no allowances ‘whatever [were] made for lodgings’. Unsurprisingly, the legislation passed in Nevis did not satisfy the demands made by the British government, and on 16 October 1835 a further Act was published by beat of the drum. It altered and amended the conditions of the first and, for instance, laid down weekly minimum allowances. Employers could provide a wide range of rations, but if they did not distribute the stipulated amounts, within a month apprentices could complain to a magistrate. Employers who ‘wilfully’ neglected to supply the allowances were to be fined N10s per week per person. The term ‘wilfully’ provided a get-out-clause for the mean-spirited employers and poorer sorts of planters. At times of shortages they could not be accused of deliberately withholding rations.⁴

Free children under the age of six were not entitled to anything. Their mothers had to meet their needs, but if mothers were destitute and unable to provide for them, the children could be contracted

¹ NHCS, GE/HH Unattributed newspaper cutting, Dr PT Huggins’s obituary, and RG 9.1 Gravestone Inscriptions, St Thomas Lowland Cemetery No 1687

² Green, *WA Slave Emancipation* pp121-22, citing CO 318/117 Memorandum 13 March 1833
On 23 September 1834 the President Administering the Government, James Daniell, appointed ten special magistrates (UKNA, CO 187/9 Blue Book Nevis 1835). Their appointment was later questioned as these men were considered too biased; they were either directly ‘interested in Apprenticed Labourers’, or were ‘very much connected with colonial society’. James Maynard, John Huggins, George Webbe, GSW Wattle and Peter Thomas Huggins fell into the first, and Joseph Stanley, Josiah Webbe Maynard junior, Philip P Claxton and Walter Maynard junior into the second category. Only one man, Thomas Duke, a merchant, was deemed sufficiently neutral and his appointment stood. The others had their commission withdrawn by the Secretary of State for the Colonies (HoCPP 1836’ Papers presented to Parliament by HM command, in explanation of the measures adopted by HM government, for giving effect to the Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies’ Part III (2): p334 No 1 Return of the names of the Special Magistrates removed from office and p335 Charles Kenny, Nevis, to The President Administering the Government, 6 October 1835).

³ UKNA, CO 187/9 Blue Book Nevis 1835

⁴ ‘Report from the Select Committee on Negro Apprenticeships’ Vol 3

The act published in Nevis in October 1835 laid down that employers were to provide exactly the same amounts of the same foodstuffs for adult apprentices as had been enshrined in Clause 1 of the 1798 Leeward Melioration Act.

to work on the estate until they reached the age of 21. It is not known whether on Mountravers any children ended up in bondage again, or whether families shared their food and clothing rations in such a way that they managed to sustain their offspring until Emancipation.

Land on which to live and grow food was the key to independent survival but the Act of October 1835 forbade squatting. Unless a property had been occupied for two years previously, magistrates could eject anyone they deemed an unlawful occupant, and squatters could be punished with up to three months in prison.⁵ Before slavery was abolished Peter Thomas Huggins had predicted that 'The negro will never cultivate the soil'.⁶ The problem was that there was no soil for the negro to cultivate. There was no public land left in the island.⁷

Enslaved people had always added to their food allowances by raising small domestic animals. Apprentices who lived on the estates had only small patches of land to pasture their livestock and town dwellers had no land at all, and out of necessity they allowed their animals to roam. By the 1830s there were now so many foraging creatures that they were considered a public nuisance⁸ but, rather than impound them, the police used their power to destroy any hogs, sheep or goats they found wandering in the street or straying onto cultivated lands. A British parliamentary enquiry considered killing these trespassing animals 'a wanton sacrifice of the property of apprentices' but the apprentices did not have sufficient legal redress to fight such injustices.⁹

The odds were stacked against them. Apprentices could still be sold, as this advertisement from the *St Christopher Gazette and Caribbean Courier* testifies:

March 20, 1835

For Sale: The Services of an Apprenticed Servant, an excellent COOK and WASHER, her Employer being about to leave the Island. Enquire at the Gazette Office. March 13.¹⁰

If apprentices wanted to be freed, under the terms of the Abolition Act they were permitted to purchase their discharge and their employers were compelled to accept the sum impartial appraisers considered a fair payment.¹¹ Employers could also set their apprentices free, just as they had manumitted their enslaved people. In practice, very few released their workers.

Realising that they had no future in Nevis, some people did what slavery had denied them: they chose to move about freely and to emigrate. One of their early destinations was Demerara. Agents from that

⁵ 'Report from the Select Committee on Negro Apprenticeships' Vol 3

⁶ PP, LB 60: PT Huggins, Nevis, to PA & Co, 15 December 1830

Peter Thomas Huggins's view that people were reluctant to work in the fields went back to the 1780s when the Legislature in their evidence to the Parliamentary enquiry into the Slave Trade had declared that free negroes were 'known not to cultivate'. Planters who wanted to retain the *status quo* commonly peddled this view. Clergymen, on the other hand, had less of a vested interest. This is evident from answers given to the select committee set up in 1832 in response to the Jamaican rebellion. A Wesleyan minister, for instance, reported that in Jamaica he had witnessed people's enterprising spirit: he saw them weaving straw hats and baskets whenever they could, found that they worked hard for themselves and walked twenty or even twenty-five miles to sell their produce in the market. He was sure that, once free, people would work for wages (Olwyn M Blouet 'Earning and Learning in the British West Indies: an Image of Freedom in the Pre-emancipation Decade, 1823-1833' in *The Historical Journal* Vol 34 No 2 (1991) p402 fn54, citing Parliamentary Papers Vol xx 'Select Committee to consider and report upon the measures which it may be expedient to adopt for the purpose of effecting the extinction of slavery throughout the British dominions, at the earliest period compatible with the safety of all classes in the colonies and in conformity with the resolution of this house on 15 May 1823' pp67-8).

⁷ Merrill, GC *The Historical Geography of St Kitts and Nevis* p90

⁸ UKNA, CO 186/14: 17 May 1832

⁹ 'Report from the Select Committee on Negro Apprenticeships' Vol 3 p74

After Emancipation the law concerning trespassing animals was extended to allow not only the police but also owners or renters of cane fields and other cultivated lands such as gardens to kill hogs and goats. A time limit was set for informing the owner of the animals. However, because the law was found to be 'insufficient to prevent and punish the trespass by stock' it was decided to appoint pound keepers. They came under the direction of the vestries which were also responsible for erecting and maintaining the pounds in which the animals were to be detained (HC Huggins (ed) *Laws of Nevis Act No 42* passed 9 October 1842 and Act No 52 passed 17 July 1848).

¹⁰ PP, Dom Box R-6: *St Christopher Gazette and Caribbean Courier*, 20 March 1835

¹¹ Green, WA *Slave Emancipation* pp121-22, citing Memorandum 13 March 1833 in CO 318/117

colony came to Nevis and offered to buy up their apprenticeships from their masters. In the period from 1835 to 1842 almost 300 people followed this recruitment drive and emigrated from Nevis to Demerara. But they committed themselves to another form of bondage because, in return for accommodation, food, clothing and wages, they were obliged to serve their employers for a fixed number of years.¹²

Others bought their freedom. Within 14 months of slavery having been abolished, it was claimed that the number of apprenticed labourers fell to 'nearly 7,000'. (Presumably this claim related only to the working population of 7,225.) It was said that 'many had purchased their freedom' but by the end of July 1835 only six people had contacted the Stipendiary Magistrate to complete the formalities. Although then registration did not cost anything, he reported that most had 'not thought proper to register their papers' with him.¹³ It is hard to imagine that people who had waited so long to be free and whose movements had been subject to tickets and chits from their masters would not have wanted to securely document their release from bondage; it is more likely that the registration process was never well advertised, or that people felt intimidated by the bureaucratic administration.

One particular group of people who had purchased their apprenticeships with a view to emigrating became the victims of a scam. They had boarded a vessel bound for America and then wanted to go ashore again but were prevented from leaving. They had been conned; they were to be sold in America. The Legislature got to hear of their plight, intervened and ordered them to be freed immediately.¹⁴ Just as crooks like Fletcher and Arundell had preyed on enslaved people wishing to escape from Nevis, there were now others ready to exploit the apprentices' desire for freedom.

Law and Order in the early years of the apprenticeship system

By the 1830s free mixed-race men had become part of the legal system. In the court house in Charlestown one sat as a judge, others were lawyers, jurymen,¹⁵ or enforced the law as constables and bailiffs.¹⁶ But while they enjoyed their new status within Nevis society, apprentices still worked under restrictions similar to pre-Abolition days.

For the majority of apprentices their movement was just as restricted as it had been under slavery. They could not choose where to work while their employer still had the right to move them within and off the island - as long as the employers owned the property on which these apprentices were to work. To ensure that employers adhered to this, taking apprentices to a different place required the written consent of two magistrates and, if employers wanted to take domestics and personal servants abroad, they had to travel together on the same ship. However, domestics now enjoyed one concession: they had the right to refuse to leave their home island. This did not apply to agricultural apprentice, and in practise domestic servants may have found it difficult to enforce their right.

Apprentices wanting to leave the island had to fulfil new bureaucratic requirements. They had to get their employer's written consent and travel with a passport that was issued by the government. If they did not comply, they were deemed runaways and could be sentenced to imprisonment, or imprisonment with hard labour. In addition, males could be given 30 stripes and women confined in

¹² Olwig, Karen Fog *Global Culture, Island Identity* p95, citing Methodist Missionary Society Archives, London: Correspondence West Indies General, 1803-1857, mf 566: 23 September 1836 and Bonham C Richardson *Caribbean Migrants - Environment and Human Survival on St Kitts and Nevis* University of Tennessee 1983 p88

¹³ It was claimed that the total number of apprenticed labourers amounted to nearly 7,000. Domestics and trades people, presumably, were not included in this count (HoCPP 1836 'Papers presented to Parliament by HM command, in explanation of the measures adopted by HM government, for giving effect to the Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies' Part III (2): p335 Enclosure No 342 Charles Kenny, Nevis, to His Honour the President Administering the Government, 6 October 1835). In total, 32 people are known to have been freed officially while serving their apprenticeships (ECSCRN, CR 1831-1835 and CR 1835-1838).

¹⁴ UKNA, CO 186/15: 19 and 21 July 1836

¹⁵ Levy, Rachel Frances (ed) *The Life and Adventures of John Levy* p58, p60

¹⁶ For appointments, see Court of General Sessions, 1815-1850 Various unnumbered pages

stocks for set periods of times. Both sexes could expect to be held in solitary confinement for the whole or part of their sentence.¹⁷ One major difference was that Justices of the Peace now decided on punishments. The ‘domestic authority’ held by owners and managers since the beginning of plantation slavery had been withdrawn as of 1 November 1833.¹⁸

During the first year the apprenticeship system operated in Nevis, 178 women and 107 men were recorded as having been punished. Only those committed to jail were counted while those sentenced to work to make up for lost time were not included.

‘Return of the number and nature of the punishments inflicted on the Apprenticed Labourers of Nevis, by the Stipendiary Magistrate, from 6th August 1834 to 31st July 1835’

WOMEN		
Offence	Punishment	Numbers punished
Absenting from estate, etc.	Imprisonment	18
Absenting from estate, etc	Stocks with imprisonment	20
Insolence and refusing to work	Stocks with imprisonment	35
Insolence and riotous conduct	Stocks with imprisonment	31
Disobedience of orders and refusing to work	Stocks with imprisonment	67
Theft	Stocks with imprisonment	1
Excessive insolence, etc.	Solitary confinement	6

MEN		
Offence	Punishment	Numbers punished
Neglect of duty	Imprisonment with flogging	5
Neglect of duty	Imprisonment with flogging	3
Insolence	Imprisonment with flogging	6
Disobedience of orders	Imprisonment with stocks	6
Disobedience of orders with neglect of duty	Imprisonment with stocks	36
Absenting themselves	Imprisonment with flogging	26
Absenting themselves	Imprisonment with flogging	13
Theft	Imprisonment with flogging	12

¹⁹

Floggings continued although, as a record for the period August 1835 to July 1837 shows, as time went by, in Nevis they declined in frequency.

¹⁷ ‘Report from the Select Committee on Negro Apprenticeships’ Vol 3

¹⁸ HoCPP 1833 (492) 4 Will IV ‘A Bill for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies’

¹⁹ HoCPP 1836 ‘Papers presented to Parliament by HM command, in explanation of the measures adopted by HM government, for giving effect to the Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies’ Part III (2): p334 Table 2 with information submitted by Charles Kenny, Stipendiary Magistrate for Nevis, 12 August 1835

Average number of floggings inflicted during each month, August 1835-July 1837

Colony	Approximate apprentice population	Floggings between August 1835 and January 1836	Floggings between January 1836 and July 1836	Floggings between August 1836 and January 1837	Floggings between February 1837 and July 1837	Percentage of the apprentice population flogged (August 1835 to July 1837)
Dominica	72,000	37	33	23	22	0.16
British Guiana	72,000	61	31	30	2	0.17
Grenada	21,500	21	8	14	3	0.21
Barbados	69,000	103	25	22	29	0.26
Jamaica	260,000	458	224	374	250	0.5
Virgin Islands	4,200	9	7	4	4	0.57
St Kitts	13,500	61	12	11	4	0.65
Nevis	6,200	34	22	8	6	1.13
St Vincent	9,300	45	62	72	48	1.18
Tobago	9,800	26	23	44	30	1.26
St Lucia	500	38	46	28	21	1.27
Trinidad	6,800	53	52	53	60	1.3
Montserrat	5,000	32	19	8	8	1.34
Total	579,800	978	564	691	487	Average: 0.77

20

According to the records, during the period from August 1835 until July 1837 in Nevis 1.13 per cent of the apprentices were subjected to floggings. This was a much higher proportion than, for instance, in Dominica or Jamaica. Both those islands had seen recent insurrections, and it is likely that magistrates there did not want to provoke another one by injudicious flogging. In addition, some islands such as Jamaica and St Vincent had started to employ another form of punishment, the treadmill.²¹ The Stipendiary Magistrate for Nevis, Charles Kenny, also called for a treadmill as a means of punishment but as far as is known, his demand was not met.

²⁰ This table includes figures for floggings in 14 British colonies. For some colonies figures are also available for the period before August 1835, but not for Nevis, St Kitts and St Vincent and the percentages have therefore been adjusted to take account of this. For Bahamas no figures are available for the period after August 1834 as all people had been freed in 1834 (HoCPP 1837-1838 (154-I) (154-II) 'Papers in Explanation of Measures to give effect to Act for Abolition of Slavery': Part V (1) Jamaica; Part V (2) Barbados and British Guiana).

²¹ Painting in the exhibition 'Breaking the Chains' in the ECM, Bristol (2008), and 'Report from the Select Committee on Negro Apprenticeships' Vol 3 p74

The figures above do not give an indication as to who received the most floggings: those apprentices attached to plantations, or the people who worked for the many small employers. These small employers were said to have been ‘almost invariably bad masters’, and when the rules for the apprenticeships were being discussed, some law-makers had wanted to give additional protection to the people who worked for them. They had wanted to find a way whereby enslaved people could not be compelled to be apprenticed to cruel masters,²² but no measure had been put in place and people were forced to remain with the same abusive masters and mistresses.

Generally the Legislature in Nevis reacted to events in the island by putting forward bills and by passing acts, and invariably they approved laws which favoured the interests of the slaveholders and later of the employers. Planters were given much leeway in which to operate while first enslaved people and then apprentices had little redress and were subjected to unnecessarily severe punishment. The bills which were tabled and the acts which were passed usually reflected the concerns at the time, and on the day enslaved people became apprentices an entirely new law came into force. It forbade the damaging, or uprooting and stealing of plants in ‘gardens, woods and cultivated lands’, implying that cane breaking had become a problem, as well as thefts from allotments. Another Act passed the day after slavery was abolished may suggest that the unrest of the 1820s was continuing into the 1830s²³ because this piece of legislation provided ‘for the summary punishment of common assaults and batteries, and of riotous and disorderly conduct’.²⁴

To enforce law and order, as a temporary measure planters could appoint from among their labourers two out of every hundred to act as constables. These were to be sworn in before a magistrate, kitted out with a uniform consisting of a hat and a jacket and given a salary of S£40 a year – the same amount other constables in the island received. That is what the British government had envisaged but in Nevis the Legislature decided to pay plantation constables not a fixed salary but by result: for every apprentice labourer they brought before the special magistrates plantation constables were to earn S1s6d.²⁵ These one-off payments were intended to keep the men vigilant but in order to earn the equivalent salary the plantation constables would have had to haul over 500 people a year in front of the law.

The Legislature not only introduced new laws deemed appropriate for apprentices but also sought to address the enforcement of such legislation among the wider population. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the administration of justice lay almost entirely in the hands of the slaveholders but, as the free population increased, public bodies had partly taken over that role. This had created more jobs for police officers, constables and jail keepers. But now the Legislature was beginning to prepare itself for the ending of the apprenticeship system when the administration of justice would entirely rest with the state. The Legislature stated that it aimed to establish proper ‘police forces and houses of correction’²⁶ but for the time being shelved the issue of setting up island-wide police forces - after all, at that stage it was still believed that the majority of people would remain apprenticed until 1840. As to the public jail, this was insufficient but the prisoners then held were in good health and their conduct had been ‘orderly and obedient’.²⁷

²² Williams, Eric (comp and ed) *Documents on British West Indian History* p79, citing CO 28/111: Governor Smith to Stanley, 29 July 1833

²³ Unrest in Nevis continued into the 1840s; in 1845 Constable Randle was charged for not suppressing a riot in the public streets (ECSCRN, Queen’s Bench and Common Pleas 1843-1851 f68-70).

²⁴ Huggins, HC (ed) *Laws of Nevis* Acts No 24, No 26 and No 28 passed 7 June 1834 and 2 August 1834

²⁵ HoCPP 1836 ‘Papers presented to Parliament by HM command, in explanation of the measures adopted by HM government, for giving effect to the Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies’ Part III (2): Copy of a Despatch from Governor Sir EJM MacGregor, St Kitts, to Mr Secretary Spring Rice 2 August 1834

The decision to make one-off payments to plantation constables was taken on 22 August 1834 (UKNA, CO 187/9 Blue Book Nevis 1835).

²⁶ ‘Report from the Select Committee on Negro Apprenticeships’ Vol 3 p74; UKNA, CO 186/15: 28 July 1836 and CO 187/9 Blue Book Nevis 1835

²⁷ UKNA, CO 186/15: 18 June 1836

The sentences people received for property crimes appear to have related more to the status of their victim than the value of their haul. This is demonstrated by three cases: John from the parish of St George's Gingerland broke into a dwelling house and stole a turkey worth N10s from the planter Stedman Akers Rawlins; Mickey, an apprentice labourer from St Thomas Lowland, stole a sheep worth N30s from a man called Benjamin in St James, and Wellington of St Paul's, also an apprentice labourer, stole close to N£37²⁸ from the merchant ²⁹ Garret Herbert Lans. John was sentenced to 25 lashes with the cat o'nine tails, two months in prison with hard labour and another 25 lashes; Mickey to the same number of lashes as John but only to 14 days imprisonment with hard labour,³⁰ and Wellington to 36 lashes, six months hard labour and another 36 lashes on release. These cases were all heard by juries and convictions were by no means automatic. Some of the accused were acquitted.³¹

Courts in Nevis and also St Kitts sentenced at least ten Nevis-born men to be transported to the penal colony Van Diemen's Land in Australia for crimes such as stealing, burglary and piracy. Some were sentenced to seven years transportation; other for life.³²

The harsh punishments did not stop the petty thieving. Although some of the victims appear to have been free people, possibly even apprentice labourers, most of them were influential white people, such as the Collector of Customs and Magistrate, Lockhart Gordon, and the President of the Council, the Honourable James Daniell. Indeed, President Daniell was burgled twice.³³ The Legislature expressed its concern over the 'wilful and malicious injuries to property'³⁴ and speedily passed 'an act for the prevention and punishment of larceny and other offences connected herewith'. This act covered a wide variety of offences, including robbery; house breaking and burglary; breaking and entering churches and chapels; theft from vessels in port and plundering wrecked ships or cargo; theft of glass, woodwork, or metal from public buildings; embezzlement by clerks; and stealing wills or court documents. In order to stop private individuals from taking the law into their own hands, it was made an offence to advertise a reward for the return of stolen property without bringing the offender to trial. In total, the Act contained 56 clauses but if that was not enough, on the same day the Legislature passed two more Acts: one 'for the prevention and punishment of offences against the person' (which covered murder, manslaughter, sodomy, rape, bigamy, and the abduction of children), and a further Act that concerned itself with property. Various clauses dealt with different types of properties – among them public bridges and dams of fish ponds – and laid down penalties. Anyone who set fire to megass, straw and grass could be transported 'beyond the seas' for seven years, or imprisoned for up to two years and, if the offender was male, he could 'be once, twice, or thrice publicly or privately whipped'. Arsonists who burnt cane, 'whether standing or cut down', faced double the periods of transportation and imprisonment, and the death penalty awaited those individuals or groups of rioters who set fire to or demolished ships, buildings - including churches - or machinery.³⁵

This Act was passed in September 1836 and just as in the 1820s enslaved workers had used arson as a means of protest, apprentices were doing the same in the 1830s. In 1836 and 1837 fires destroyed a large proportion of Charlestown. Among those who lost property were Walter Maynard

²⁸ N£ means Nevis currency, as opposed to S£ which stands for pound sterling

²⁹ PRO, BT 107/524

³⁰ ECSCRN, Nevis Court Records 1836-1843 f26, f117 and f133

The jury in Mickey's case consisted of Quashey Moore, Walter L Bucke, Joseph Hendrickson, William Browne, the blacksmith Roger de Grasse, William Pemberton, Robert Woolward, Edward Dore, Jack Huggins, William MacCoombe, Thomas deGrasse, John Richardson.

³¹ Among those who were acquitted were, for instance, Bodkin and Patty Mills. Bodkin of St Paul's was in May 1835 accused of stealing goods worth N1s from Anthony More and Patty Mills was in May 1837 indicted for larceny (ECSCRN, Nevis Court Records 1836-1843 f21 and f120).

³² <https://vdlworldimmigrants.wordpress.com/listing-of-people/> 'Beyond the Pale' - World Immigrants to Van Diemen's Land before 1900 c/o Julie Gough, Tasmania (accessed 10 January 2021)

³³ ECSCRN, Nevis Court Records 1836-1843 f33 and f234

³⁴ UKNA, CO 186/15: 24 March 1836

³⁵ Huggins, HC (ed) *Laws of Nevis* Acts No 29, No 30 and No 32 passed 12 September 1836

Mills and Peter Thomas Huggins. He suffered a 'severe loss'³⁶ but it is not known whether this was property he owned in town, or whether this was as a result of a separate attack on one of his plantations. Certainly the estate of the Commissioner for Slave Compensation, the Honourable Josiah Webbe Maynard, was fired deliberately, as was a piece of cane that belonged to the Honourable Walter Maynard Pemberton and a piece of cane on Jones's Estate. Rewards of £50 each were offered, and/or 'exemption from further servitude'.³⁷

It may be no coincidence that among the victims of these attacks were some of the men who in September 1834 had been appointed special magistrates. They were in charge of overseeing that the apprenticeship system worked and, if necessary, adjudicate disputes. But the British government had envisaged that these would be independent citizens and so questioned the appointment of the magistrates in Nevis as these men were either directly 'interested in apprenticed labourers' or 'very much connected with colonial society'. James Maynard, John Huggins, George Webbe, George Samuel Woodley Wattle and Peter Thomas Huggins fell into the first, and Joseph Stanley, Josiah Webbe Maynard junior, Philip Protheroe Claxton and Walter Maynard junior into the second category. Only one man, the merchant Thomas Duke, was deemed sufficiently neutral and his appointment stood. The others had their commission withdrawn by the Secretary of State for the Colonies.³⁸

The slave compensation fund

The British government had made distribution of its S£20 million compensation fund dependent on satisfactory legislation operating in the colonies. Nevis achieved this with the amendments passed in October 1835, and on 1 January 1836 Downing Street declared that Nevis had 'made adequate and satisfactory provision' and slaveholders could now 'participate in the compensation fund'.³⁹ Soon the money was coming through. For the apprentices it must have been galling to see their masters and mistresses count their cash. In total, Peter Thomas Huggins collected more than S£8,500 – worth over S£1 million in 2016.

To ensure the orderly distribution of the compensation fund, the British government had put in place a comprehensive system of administration and Huggins, like almost all slaveholders in the island, had gone through the process of lodging his claims. Everyone had to use pre-printed forms issued by the Registrar of Slaves. These had to be purchased: 'owners or directors of estates' paid 4s6d for their

³⁶ The fire in 1836 appears to have been less damaging than the second fire on 18 April 1837 (Oliver, *VL Monumental Inscriptions* p66). This was followed by a Thanksgiving Day on the 26th (RHL, MSS W.Ind. S.24 (a)). Iles and Hubbard attributed the fire in Charlestown in 1837 to the lack of rain fall (Hubbard, Vincent K *Swords Ships and Sugar* p176, citing JAB Iles *An Account Descriptive of the Island of Nevis* p11). However, two facts suggest that apprentices were setting fire to buildings and machinery: firstly, following concern over arson, legislation which addressed rioting arsonists had been passed the previous year, and secondly, rewards were offered for catching arsonists. See also PP, LB 66: P & C to WM Mills, 1 June 1837, and LB 66: P & C to PT Huggins, 2 June 1837.

Having lost property themselves - the Treasury books were burnt (UKNA, CO 187/10 Blue Book Nevis 1836) - the Legislature decided that in Charlestown no houses were to be built except of stone or brick, or within quarter of a mile. After 'the disastrous fire' the main street was to be improved and there were to be firebreaks to prevent 'a recurrence of the late awful calamity'. Perhaps for the first time an important aspect of public health was considered; to achieve a healthier environment, members of the Assembly wanted 'more ventilation' in the town (CO 186/15: 1 and 18 May 1837). No doubt this concern arose out of the cholera pandemic and shows how the Assemblymen reflected the contemporary view that the cause of the disease was 'bad air' (miasma). As yet it was not understood that cholera was a water-borne disease.

With 'the greater part of the town being destroyed' by fire in 1837 (Levy, Rachel Frances (ed) *The Life and Adventures of John Levy* p64) inhabitants of Barbados raised £500 by way of relief and the Legislature granted another £500 currency. When Bridgetown was damaged by fire in 1845, St Kitts and Nevis reciprocated (CO 28/119 No 98 and CO 28/161 No 22).

³⁷ UKNA, CO 187/9 Blue Book Nevis 1835

³⁸ HoCPP 1836 'Papers presented to Parliament by HM command, in explanation of the measures adopted by HM government, for giving effect to the Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies' Part III (2): p334 No 1 Return of the Names of the Special Magistrates removed from Office and p335 Charles Kenny, Nevis, to The President Administering the Government, 6 October 1835.

³⁹ HoCPP 1836 'Papers presented to Parliament by HM command, in explanation of the measures adopted by HM government, for giving effect to the Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies' Part III (2): p338 No 345 Lord Glenelg, Downing Street, to Governor Sir EJM MacGregor, 1 January 1836

forms; individual slaveholders paid half that amount.⁴⁰ Paying this money upfront would have excluded the poorest of slaveholders. Anyone wishing to claim had to register by 1 March 1835; those wishing to lodge counter claims had up to three months longer. The process caused some confusion. Numbers changed as individuals had died or been born, the Commissioners for Compensation had made mistakes in their submissions to London and some people ended up with duplicate claims. Others found that it was too late to begin registering people they had never previously declared: Mrs Henrietta Morris, a recipient of poor relief,⁴¹ had to forfeit five of her people to the Crown because she was registering them for the first time. She ended up being compensated for one person.⁴² Another claimant, the free black woman Ann Bennett, was sick and confined to bed when the registration had taken place and she got muddled over the number of people she owned. She later completed an additional claim form, made her mark and stated that she possessed two more individuals than originally registered. She thought there had been a decrease but found she actually owned 22 in total. She had been unable to account for all of them owing to her advanced age and forgetfulness.⁴³

There would have been much activity in the island, with everyone talking about the money they were going to receive. People could plan to buy new things, improve their houses, or purchase some land. If they managed to acquire a freehold property, this would entitle them to vote and to stand for election (the slave compensation money, therefore, was not only of financial benefit but brought with it civil rights). Those in debt could settle their accounts, and many people who were owed money would press for their debtors' compensation to be paid directly to them. To stake their entitlement, they initiated counter claims. These, too, were submitted on pre-printed forms.

Governors in each colony nominated boards of compensation. They collected the data which formed the basis for pay-outs, but the distribution of the £20 million fund lay in the hands of the Slave Compensation Commission. This was made up of representatives from the Colonial Office and the slave registry.⁴⁴ If anyone disputed entitlement to compensation, the commissioners in the island did not have the power to adjudicate;⁴⁵ this lay in the hands of the officials in England.⁴⁶

Allocations to the colonies were based on the number of enslaved people in each colony and the average value per person. For Nevis the calculation was based on 8,722 individuals at an average value of £39:3:11 $\frac{3}{4}$. However, the money that was actually allocated for these 8,722 people was less than half of the average value, £17:6:3, totalling £151,007:2:11 $\frac{3}{4}$.

Of all the colonies, at £17:6:3 per head enslaved people in Nevis ranked seventh in terms of their value. The lowest value per person was £12:0:8 $\frac{1}{2}$ (Bermuda), the highest £53:2:0 $\frac{3}{4}$ (Honduras); closely followed by the second highest, £50:12:1 (British Guiana), and Trinidad at £46:9:5 $\frac{3}{4}$. Among the Leeward Islands, however, the people in Nevis were valued the highest. In Montserrat they were valued at £16:5:11 each, in St Kitts at £16:1:0 $\frac{1}{2}$, and in Antigua at £14:8:4 $\frac{1}{4}$ each. The value per head reflected the severity of the working conditions in each island and the scarcity of labour.

In terms of total numbers, among the West Indian colonies Jamaica claimed for the most (311,692), while Nevis ranked fifth, followed by Montserrat (6,355), the Virgin Islands (5,192), Bermuda (4,203) and, lastly, Honduras (1,192).⁴⁷

⁴⁰ PP, Dom Box R-6: *St Christopher Gazette and Caribbean Courier* No 1031 Basseterre 20 February 1835

⁴¹ UKNA, CO 186/14: 27 December 1831 and 2 July 1832

⁴² UKNA, T 71/369

⁴³ In the role of administratrix, Ann Bennett also claimed compensation for one person for John George Burke (UKNA, T 71/1039). She was among the many free women who independently fulfilled civic and legal roles.

⁴⁴ *Office of Registry of Colonial Slaves and Slave Compensation Commission: Records* UKNA

⁴⁵ PP, LB 66: P & C to John Frederick Pinney, Somerton, 1 March 1835

⁴⁶ PP, LB 63: P & C to Claxton and Woodcock, June 1834

The Slave Compensation Commission ended operating in 1842, but one commissioner continued to arbitrate outstanding claims until 1848. Unappropriated money reverted to the treasury (UKNA, Introduction to Series T 71).

⁴⁷ PP, Dom Box R-6: Inter-Colonial Apportionment

Slaveholders had to state the occupations of their people and fit them into certain categories. It is noticeable that, compared to the island average of 50.9 per cent, Mountravers - and also Clarke's - benefited from a relatively large number of fieldhands (64.3 and 70.9 per cent). While island-wide only half the population worked in the fields, on Peter Thomas Huggins's estates two thirds of his people did so. Although higher than the Nevis average, compared to the rest of the Caribbean this number was still relatively low. According to Barry Higman, field labourers overall accounted for three quarters (almost 75 per cent) of the slave population.⁴⁸

Occupational Distribution of Enslaved People in Nevis, on Mountravers and on Clarke's, 1834

	Number of slaves, Nevis	% of total	Number of slaves, Mountravers	%	Number of slaves, Clarke's	%
<i>Praedial attached</i>						
Head People	276	3.1	6	4.3	4	2.7
Tradesmen	319	3.6	7	5	4	2.7
Inferior tradesmen	42	0.5	1	0.7	0	0
Field labourers	2,986 [2976]	33.8	60	42.9	73	49.3
Inferior field labourers	1,510	17.1	30	21.4	32	21.6
<i>Praedial unattached</i>						
Head people	7	0.08	0	0	0	0
Tradesmen	16	0.2	0	0	0	0
Inferior tradesmen	3	0.03	0	0	0	0
Field labourers	104	1.2	0	0	0	0
Inferior field labourers	46	0.5	0	0	0	0
<i>Non-praedial</i>						
Head tradesmen	88	1	0	0	0	0
Inferior tradesmen	25	0.3	0	0	0	0
Head people on wharfs shipping and other allocations	498	5.6	4	2.9	8	5.4
Inferior do.	112 [108]	1.3	0	0	0	0
Head domestic servants	909 [903]	10.3	11	7.9	6	4
Inferior do.	304	3.4	0	0	0	0
<i>Other</i>						
Children under 6	1,263 [1261]	14.3	13	9.3	19	12.8
Aged, diseased or otherwise non-effective	329	3.7	8	5.7	2	1.4
	8,837 [8,815]	100.28	140	100.1	148	99.9

49

⁴⁸ Higman, *BW Slave Populations of the British Caribbean* p49

It could be argued that the mostly urban St Paul's parish would have skewed the average number of field labourers. However, only 370 field slaves were registered in St Paul's parish, and of these 300 were employed on two large plantations which lay in that parish, Ward's and Hamilton's (UKNA, T 71/752).

⁴⁹ Higman, *Barry Slave Populations of the British Caribbean* p550 Table S7.1 Occupational Distribution of Slaves, as Classified for Compensation, 1834 (Nevis), and PP, Dom Box R-6: Loose sheet 'Compensation' (Mountravers and Clarke's). The figures in square brackets are those given in HoCAaP 1837-1838 Vol xlvi: Chadwyk-Healey mf 41.389 p357: Nevis.

'Praedial attached' people were those who worked on the land of their masters, those working elsewhere were classified as 'praedial unattached'.

It total, Peter Thomas Huggins claimed for 478 men, women and children and was paid compensation for 474. For 140 people on Mountravers Huggins received just over £2,500 (worth almost £300,000 in 2016).⁵⁰ The National Debt Office in London made the payments.

Peter Thomas Huggins's Compensation Claims and Payments

Claim Number	Estate	Number of slaves per 1834 slave register	Number of slaves claimed for	Number of slaves paid for	Estimated value of all slaves/£	Amount of compensation paid/£
133	Clarke's	148	148	148	8,795	2,710
134	Mountravers	142	144	140	6,303	2,514
135	Scarborough's	47	48	48	2,212	882
136	Parris's	138	138	138	6,102	2,434
	Total	475	478	474	23,412	8,540

51

As a result of compensation they received, Peter Thomas and his brother Edward Huggins were able to discharge debts of £10,500 to the House in Bristol,⁵² but compensation for the Golden Rock and New River estates, which Peter Thomas Huggins had inherited on his father's death, went to his brother Edward and to the House. Charles Pinney and his partner Robert Edward Case had initiated counter claims.⁵³

Everyone knew exactly how much compensation each inhabitant collected because details of payments for both St Kitts and Nevis were published in the *St Christopher Gazette*.⁵⁴ No doubt creditors were quick to lay claim to money that was owed. The compensation certainly represented a major injection into the island's economy. Cash had always been in short supply in Nevis and plantation produce had long been used as currency, but now there was a substantial amount of money coming to the island – in all just over S£151,000. The greatest part of this new wealth, however, did not reach Nevis but remained in Britain, and some of the money was spent on goods that were imported from Britain. While over the past seven years imports from Britain had decreased, in 1836 they reached 1829 levels again. This was not due to an increase in sugar exports to Britain –

⁵⁰ According to the 1834 registration return, there were 142 people in total on Mountravers. However, two people had died after January 1834 and before the end of July, leaving a total of 140.

⁵¹ Although in his last register he had recorded 142 people and two had died after the register was completed (Tallioe in January and George Smith in March), Peter Thomas Huggins initially claimed for 144 people (UKNA, T 71/1038). He did not update his claim form in the way that he had updated, for instance, his application for the people on Scarborough's. There he had remembered to submit the birth of an additional child, Phillis' son, who had been born since the last register had been completed. For Mountravers Huggins received compensation for 140, the correct number.

⁵² Pers. comm., WA Pinney, 2 January 1999

⁵³ *Slave Compensation Claims and Counter Claims by E Huggins, Charles Pinney and RE Case*, taken from BULSC, PN mf pp1532-550, citing UKNA, T 71/1237, 1039, 1295, 1301, 1261, 1266, 1225, 1227, 1340, 1369, 1038; HoCAaP 1837-1838 Vol xlvi; and PP, Dom Box R-6: Compensation File.

Claim Number	Estate	Number of slaves per 1834 slave register	Number of slaves claimed and paid for	Estimated value of all slaves/£	Amount of compensation paid/£	Compensation paid to
36	Golden Rock	220	222	10,269	4,096	E Huggins, Charles Pinney and RE Case
97	New River	179	178	6,574	2,694	Charles Pinney and RE Case and E Huggins

⁵⁴ The details for compensation paid to claimants in Nevis were published in St Kitts because there was no newspaper in the island. The ongoing compensation issue may have prompted a proposal that the island should start its own 'public journal' (UKNA, CO 186/15: 16 March 1837). Later that year the first newspaper was presented in Nevis (RHL, MSS W.Ind. S.24 (a)).

they had also dropped – but can almost certainly be attributed to the expected, and then the real, influx of compensation money. Similar patterns can be observed in other colonies, as well as in the overall figures for imports to all British colonies in the West Indies from Britain: from £3,914,808 in 1828, in 1833 they fell to their lowest point in ten years (£2,726,414) and rose to £4,288,033 in 1837.

Sugar exported from Nevis to the United Kingdom, 1832 to 1837

YEAR	1832	1833	1834	1835	1836	1837
£ Sterling	49,924	39,843	42,287	59,748	39,637	23,028

Value of Imports to Nevis from the United Kingdom, 1828 to 1837

YEAR	1828	1829	1830	1831	1832	1833	1834	1835	1836	1837
£	15,827	23,673	22,909	16,404	12,433	10,245	12,351	9,661	22,379	20,608

55

If it was indeed the case that people in Nevis spent some of their compensation money on goods imported from Britain, then British manufacturers and merchants did, one last time, benefit from the economic construct that was plantation slavery. They certainly profited directly from that proportion of the compensation money which remained in Britain: the commission on slave compensation payments taken by the agents who collected the cheques in London on behalf of claimants in Nevis⁵⁶ and the money paid to non-resident proprietors such as the Pinneys. In total, members of the Pinney family collected £36,396 but this included claims and disputed claims which related to properties in other Caribbean islands.⁵⁷

In Nevis, a relatively large number of people who received money from the compensation fund were free coloureds and blacks. According to Douglas Hall's rough estimates, these people then accounted for about 15 per cent of the population⁵⁸ but they represented about 25 per cent of all 303 claimants who received pay-outs.⁵⁹ In total, about £7,500 is known to have gone to free slaveholders. The money was for over 400 enslaved individuals and represented about six per cent of the total number held and five per cent of the total Nevis allocation.

In addition to the actual compensation payments, close to £1,900 came to Nevis to cover the cost of administering the claims: appraisers and commissioners collected £1,250 in salaries and the island shared another £1,300 with St Kitts to pay for secretaries, 'clerks, office rent, and contingencies'.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ 'Speech of Sir George Grey, Bart., under-secretary for the colonies, in the House of Commons, on Thursday, March 29, 1838, on Sir G Strickland's motion for the immediate abolition of Negro apprenticeship' printed by James Ridgway & Sons, London, from *Hume Tracts*. Appendix No 2 Return of an order of the Right Honorable House of Peers, dated 29th November 1837, requiring an account of the amount of sugars imported into the United Kingdom and Settlements in the West Indies and elsewhere, during the three years ending 5th January 1834; distinguishing each year, and each colony or settlement. Like accounts for the three years ending 5th January 1837; and Appendix 1 An account of the value of all exports to the British Colonies in the West Indies and to Mauritius, for ten years, ending 5th January 1837; distinguishing the years and the colonies – ordered by the House of Lords to be printed 21st December 1837. No 22'.

Exports from Nevis consisted mostly of sugar (£9,936), molasses (£812) and rum (£252). Other produce such as cotton wool (£93), arrow root (£13) and fruits (£5) accounted for only a small share (HoCPP 1840 (281) 'Tables of the Revenue, Population, Commerce, &c of the United Kingdom, and its Dependencies' Supplement to Part VIII; Colonies 1837 to 1839').

⁵⁶ Claimants in the colonies appointed agents in London to collect the money on their behalf. Alfred Latham of the London merchant house dealt with the payments for over 130 people (UKNA, NDO 4/9).

⁵⁷ The Pinneys pursued 11 claims relating to Nevis, two to St Kitts, and one each to Montserrat, St. Vincent and British Guiana. Their share-out was relatively small compared to two other Bristol firms, the Baillies and Messrs John and Thomas Daniel. They were concerned with claims totalling £91,632 and £63,577 but their payments related mostly to plantations in other islands. The Baillies' main holdings were in St Vincent and Grenada, the Daniels' in Barbados and British Guiana (Pares, R A *West India Fortune* p357 fn13). Another source states that Messrs Thomas and John Daniel received £55,178 and HJDE Baillie and GH Ames £23,024 (BCRL, Jefferies Collection, Vol 13 f184, handwritten note dated 1895 based on a parliamentary return issued in 1838).

⁵⁸ Hall, Douglas D *Five of the Leeward* p8 Table 1

⁵⁹ In Nevis 306 claims were submitted but, being duplicates, Numbers 159, 223 and 117 were cancelled (UKNA, T 71/1513).

⁶⁰ HoCPP 1837-1838 (215) 'Accounts of Slave Compensation Claims' Nevis pp342-43

Some of the clerks, no doubt, were mixed-race men. But while the staff received their salaries and the apprentices' employers their compensation payments, the apprentices still laboured under much the same conditions they had endured before slavery was abolished. They were never paid any money to make up for their loss of freedom and for providing years of free labour.

Growing congregations

Within a decade of churches and chapels having opened their doors to enslaved people, the congregations increased apace. To accommodate his growing flock, in 1834/5 Revd Henry Britten enlarged the Methodist Chapel in Charlestown so that three hundred people could worship under one roof. Among those known have been involved in the building work were people from Stoney Grove plantation. They carted some of the lumber.⁶¹

In other parts of Nevis the Methodist congregations were growing, too. At Newcastle the chapel had to be enlarged and at Gingerland galleries were erected to seat 250 children. In addition, Chief Justice George Webbe built a chapel and a school on his estate and handed these over to the Methodists.⁶²

The parish registers bear witness to how times were changing. When couples married or parents had their children baptised they were no longer recorded as 'slaves' but as apprentice labourers although, when John William Harper became the officiating Minister in St Thomas Lowland church, he used the technical terms 'praedial' (agricultural workers) and 'non-praedial' (domestics) until the next Minister, Revd John Armstrong, recognised that people were individuals. They had identities and skills and he recorded their jobs. He acknowledged them as masons, house servants, blacksmiths, carpenters, ostlers, shepherds, carters, or watchmen. In the church in St George's Gingerland people's jobs were recorded, too, and from the parish registers it is evident that about half a dozen women were pursuing traditional men's occupations. No doubt owing to a shortage of skilled males these women worked as coopers and carpenters, masons and blacksmiths.⁶³ After August 1838 the term apprentice labourer of course became redundant and all brides and grooms were described as spinsters and bachelors, or widows and widowers. Now they were people in their own right and defined by their civil status rather than as someone else's possession or employee.

Another important cultural development occurred around the time slavery was abolished: most of those who married in church possessed surnames; in the church in St Thomas Lowland after May 1837 they all did. However, this only applied to people who got married and, to a lesser extent, to those who underwent baptism as adults.⁶⁴ The legacy of slavery lived on for several more decades;

⁶¹ PP, WI Box 1829-1836: Accounts Stoney Grove Estate

In 1834 three of the churches in Nevis could accommodate 600 parishioners in St Paul's, and 250 each in St Thomas Lowland and St James Windward (UKNA, CO 187/8).

⁶² Anon *Kindle a Flame*

In the late 1830s the Nevis Methodists became desperately short of missionaries. Revd Thomas Edwards had died, then Revd John Bell succumbed to yellow fever and, after an illness, also Revd Robert Hawkins. The remaining man pleaded with the Wesleyan Missionary Society to send three new missionaries: 'Pray send them and send them quickly'. In the meantime he was 'anxiously looking out for someone to help' him because he worked alone and could not cover all the chapels. Some of them had to be closed. The previous Sunday he had ridden 14 miles 'in a hot sun on bad roads' and after returning to preach in town in the evening had felt exhausted. He warned the people at Mission House in London: 'If I am to do this I shall not last long. This is not England.' (SOAS, Wesleyan Missionary Archives, MMS/W.Indies correspondence/Antigua/FBN21 Item 60: List attached to file with 1839 Ant) (Courtesy of Margaret Stacey).

⁶³ The fact that women were doing men's jobs suggests that there were not enough men on the estates to do the work. One of the women, Susanna Bennet, who lived at Fidlers, was said to have been free – she was a smith – while the others worked on George Webbe's estates, Bachelor's Hall and Stoney Hill, as well as on Joseph Johnson Esdaile's Hard Times plantation (NHCS, St George's Gingerland Baptisms 1828-1838 Numbers 1017, 1081, 949, 1277, 1279, and 1280). Later, in the 1850s and 1860s, this shortage of men may have led to a woman called Ann Walters becoming the sextoness at St James (UKNA, CO 187/33, 34, 35 and 40 Blue Books Nevis).

⁶⁴ For example, Jemmy, an adult fisherman from Charlestown, was baptised in August 1837 (NHCS, St Paul's Baptisms 1835-1873).

some people were still known by their single name until they died. As late as 1872 the parish register for St Paul's church shows the burial of a man whose name was simply recorded as 'Portsmouth'.⁶⁵

One other change took place: increasingly the name 'Mount Travers', 'Mountraverse', or 'Mountravers Estate' appeared in the documents. Although the name has been used throughout this book, it was not on record until 1794. John Pretor Pinney (JPP) then referred to it as the middle plantation (Woodland being the upper and Charloes the lower).⁶⁶ The next mention came almost 40 years later, in February 1833, at the baptism of the last Huggins son. Mountravers as a name did not catch on immediately. Having been used in the parish register for St Thomas Lowland,⁶⁷ in the parish register for St Paul's it did not appear until the end of 1836,⁶⁸ and over the next few decades the name 'Pinney's' or 'Penny's' and 'Mountravers' was used interchangeably.⁶⁹ The estate, however, was not called 'Huggins's'. It was as if a neutral term had to be found to describe the plantation after Scarborough's, Clarke's and Parris's were added. The property was, and today still is, known as Pinney's or Mountravers – as if the Hugginses had never settled there. The three estates added by Peter Thomas Huggins, however, were and still are identified on maps as individual entities.

Emancipation and beyond

The Colonial Office foresaw that agricultural apprentices in the colonies would react violently once domestic apprentices received their freedom in August 1838.⁷⁰ Mindful of the unrest that had occurred since slavery was abolished it advised the British government to curtail the agricultural apprentices' term of six years and to terminate the apprenticeship period for both groups of workers at the same time. Accordingly, Parliament passed the Abolition Amendment Act which was followed by orders to Crown Colonies and self-legislating colonies to pass the necessary enabling legislation. On behalf of the British government, the governors channelled such orders to the island's legislatures, but in the case of Nevis Governor Colebrooke had to repeat his request for the Legislature to pass the act that would legally end the apprentice system in August. At their first general discussion on the subject in March 1838, four of the 21 Council and Assembly members present stubbornly withheld their consent, but eventually everyone did bow to the inevitable and at the beginning of June passed the act that would terminate the apprentice system on 1 August.⁷¹

On 1 August 1838 nearly two hundred years of slavery in Nevis finally ended. People who had previously escaped abroad or who had been sold into exile could now return, but apart from family and friends there was not much that would have enticed anyone back to the island. Although there was work to be had on the plantations, there was very little spare land on which to start a new life away from the plantations.⁷² Now people owned themselves but they did not own the land on which

⁶⁵ NHCS, St Paul's Burials 1844-1965

⁶⁶ PP, Misc Vols 7 1783-1794 List of Deeds and Papers at Nevis

⁶⁷ NHCS, St Thomas Lowland Baptisms 1827-1873 No 298

⁶⁸ NHCS, St Paul's Baptisms 1835-1873 No 40

⁶⁹ For instance, when James and Lucretia Weekes's daughter were baptised, in December 1859 the couple's residence was given as 'Pinney's' but when their son was baptised two years later, they were said to live on 'Mountravers' (NHCS, St Thomas Lowland Baptisms 1827-1873 Numbers 1212 and 1271).

⁷⁰ Green, *WA Slave Emancipation* p156

⁷¹ UKNA, CO 186/15: 26 February 1838 (and 10 March 1838); Despatches from Governor Sir WMG Colebrooke, Antigua, to Lord Glenelg, 16 April 1838, and 17 May 1838, on <http://website.lineone.net/~stkittsnevis/aprenti2.htm> and CO 186/15: 1 June 1828

⁷² One woman, who had run away from Nevis as a teenager in 1819 or 1820, remained enslaved well past Emancipation. Plassy (Placida) Lawrence, who had lived on Farm Estate in St John Figtree, escaped from Nevis with a man called Juan [presumably John] Scarbraugh. They went to St Thomas, then a Danish colony, where they were caught and handed over to the governor, to be returned to Nevis. Plassy Lawrence ran away again and this time was assisted by two women. One of these was Jane Huggins who, given her name, may herself have once escaped enslavement. With the women's help, Plassy got away to Puerto Rico but there she was sold into slavery to a man who put her in the field. She refused to do any work and consequently was exchanged for a cook and given to another man. Insisting she was free, she again refused to work and her new master shipped her off to Cuba with a group of Africans. In Cuba she was sold again. In the early 1850s she turned to the British consul in Havana who took up her case with the Spanish authorities. Their tardy reaction caused Plassy Lawrence to run away once more, this time aboard an English frigate. Her escape triggered an international scandal which was reported in the newspapers but attempts by the Spanish authorities to find her in Nevis or any of the surrounding islands were unsuccessful.

they had lived. If they wanted to keep ‘their traditionally-held houses and provision plots, they had to conform to restrictive conditions of wage-earning renters or leave the estate for uncertain futures – often away from the support of their families.’⁷³ In desperation, some people erected houses on the Jewish burial ground in Charlestown. The authorities were quick to seek ways of dispossessing and punishing them.⁷⁴

Instead of people returning in large numbers, an outflow of labour began. It looked as if the planters’ gloomy predication that ‘Emigration will follow Emancipation’ was proving to be correct.⁷⁵ Peter Thomas Huggins, too, had let it be known that he and his family might leave but then he chose to stay. Indeed, as if to anchor himself further to the island he decided to invest in a new house. As early as 1831 he had considered the idea of replacing his wooden dwelling which was ‘hardly tenable and would not stand a gale ten minutes’, but owing to the uncertain situation at the time had not gone ahead.⁷⁶ Against expectations the old house survived another hurricane, that of 1835, which had caused a lot of damage in the island,⁷⁷ and in 1838, around the time of Emancipation, Huggins revived the idea of building a new home. Not content with the local tradesmen, he asked for a specialist house carpenter to be sent from England and began ordering from Bristol iron window frames, tiles and paving tiles, doors, an ‘additional drawing room door’, as well as building materials, such as lime, cement, zinc and lead.⁷⁸

All these foreign imports were said to have tempted one of the workers to steal from Huggins. Blucher (also Blukar) Clarke was suspected of having helped himself to N£2:14:0 worth of white pine boards. The accused was a black man in his mid-twenties who had started off as a field hand on Clarke’s but was then employed as one of Huggins’s house servants, and whereas during slavery days Peter Thomas Huggins would have acted as judge, jury and punisher, the case went to court. A jury found Blucher Clarke not guilty.⁷⁹

The old wooden Great House stood on a stone plinth and Huggins’s new one was set at a right angle to it and built of local cut stone. Three-storeys high, it was a grand residence indeed and easily visible from the main island road and from vessels out at sea. Peter Thomas Huggins was making two very public statements: he and his family had committed themselves to staying in the island and they intended to live in comfort and style. The new building was his trophy house. The son of a former overseer, he was saying to the islanders that his family had become established, powerful and, above all, wealthy. He was securing his reputation as a successful planter and would be aggrieved to know that nowadays his house is often mistakenly thought of as having been built by the Pinneys.⁸⁰ However, today’s onlookers may be more interested to know that this was the first substantial building

Full details of her story are in *Engendering History, Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective* Ian Randle Jamaica 1995, edited by Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton and Barbara Bailey. I am grateful to the late Brian Littlewood for bringing Plassy Lawrence to my attention.

⁷³ Armstrong, Douglas V ‘Degree of Freedom in the Caribbean archaeological explorations of transitions from slavery’ in *Antiquity* 84 (2010) p153

⁷⁴ See Court hearing 2 October 1838 (ECSCRN, Court of General Sessions 1815-1850).

⁷⁵ PP, LB 63: FJ Galpine to P & C, 21 October 1833

Waves of emigration continued to reduce the labouring population. In the first decade of the 1900s 3,143 people left St Kitts and Nevis for the Canal Zone, the United States, Costa Rica and San Domingo. ‘Emigration fever’ was blamed for there not being a sufficient calibre of people to work in schools as pupil teachers (UKNA, CO 152/334 Report for the Blue Book Nevis 1911-1912 and No 7446).

⁷⁶ PP, LB 65: PT Huggins to PA & Co, 7 September 1831

⁷⁷ Hubbard, Vincent K *Swords, Ships and Sugar* p176

⁷⁸ PP, LB 61: P & C to PT Huggins, 1 November 1838; LB 66: P & C to PT Huggins, 26 November 1838; LB 67: P & C to PT Huggins, 1 March 1839, P & C to Stephen Moore, 20 and 23 May 1839, LB 67: P & C to PT Huggins, 1 and 15 June 1839, 5 July 1839, 1 January 1840, 15 April 1840, 14 December 1840, 1 June 1841, 15 July 1841; Pinney and Case Journal 1836 (1836-1840)

⁷⁹ The jury members at Blucher (Blukar) Clarke’s trial in 1840 were John Tyson, Robert Wollward, James Wallace, Edward Powell, George Powell, William Hanley, James Dore, Josiah Williams, Anthony Moore, James (no surname), Casteel Hendrickson, Peter Edward James and John Vaughan (ECSCRN, Nevis Court Records 1836-1843 f319). Blucher (Blukar) Clarke was also a family man; his and Isabella Jessup’s two-months-old daughter Martha was baptised in August 1835 (NHCS, Methodist Baptismal Records 1835-1873).

⁸⁰ See, for instance, <http://www.baras.org.uk/nevis/nevis>

on Mountravers – possibly even in the whole of Nevis - that was erected entirely by free labourers and tradesmen. Work continued over a period of at least three years.

With their house still not quite completed, in the autumn of 1841 the Hugginses travelled to England to attend their son Thomas's forthcoming wedding.⁸¹ They spent most of their time in London but found time to visit Charles Pinney in Bristol and briefly stayed with him at his impressive new house in Clifton.

As an Evangelical Christian, Charles Pinney was a keen and very active member of a number of religious and charitable organisations, among them the *National School Committee* and the *Bristol and Clifton Association for Promoting Moral and Religious Improvement of Ireland*.⁸² Having supported the conversion of enslaved people to Christianity he had found a new cause and turned his attention to converting Irish Catholics to Protestantism.

When Charles Pinney had last visited Nevis in the late 1820s, schools had just begun to be established but over the years they had become part of the fabric of the island, and Peter Thomas Huggins, no doubt, reported on the current situation. The school on Mountravers was still the only one in the whole of St Thomas Lowland but elsewhere in the island each parish had a public school and, in addition, Powell's Estate in St James Windward ran its own a 'parochial' establishment.⁸³ Funding was on a better footing than it had been during the time of Pinney's visit because Nevis was receiving aid - albeit only 'to a limited extent' - from the British and Foreign School Society.⁸⁴ Other financial support came from religious and educational societies, the vestry, and the West India Fund. For Huggins's school the Ladies Negro Education Society provided the teacher's salary of £25 a year. A young local woman, Rebecca Keepe, taught 47 boys and 46 girls.⁸⁵ However, while demographic

⁸¹ PP, Cat 4 Misc Deeds 1764-1841: Release Thomas Huggins to PT Huggins, C Pinney and RE Case, 16 October 1841

⁸² From Charles Pinney's diary of 1850 and from other sources it is apparent that he was involved in a wide variety of groups and associations. He chaired many of their meetings. Some organisations, such as the *Committee of Colston's Hospital*, the *Committee of the Blind Asylum* and the *Health of Towns Committee* concerned themselves with personal and public health issues - among them the state of Bristol's sewers - but most were of a religious nature: the *Protestant Association of Bristol*, the *Bristol Protestant Institute*, the *Lord's Day Society*, the *Church of England Scripture Readers Society*, the *Church Missionary Association*, the *Pastoral Aid Society*, and the *Church of England Young Men's Society*. After advancing Christian education among enslaved people he turned with evident fervour to promoting Protestantism among Jews and the Irish through the *Bristol Auxiliary of the Society for promoting Christianity among the Jews*, the *Church Education Society for Ireland* and the *Hibernian Committee*. He went as far as Bath to attend a meeting in the Assembly Rooms 'in support of the Society for sending ministers and others into different parts of Ireland in consequence of the extraordinary conversion from Popery recently in that island' and made his home, Camp House, available for a meeting of the *Ladies Auxiliary to the Bristol and Clifton Association for Promoting the Moral and Religious Improvement of Ireland*. As a Committee member, he had been actively involved in the Bristol and Clifton branch of this organisation since at least 1829. Charles Pinney's reading matter reflected his preoccupation with his Christian faith; he subscribed to the *Christian Examiner* and the *Calvin Translation Society*. He was also an Alderman of Clifton ward, a member of the Town Council, a member of the *Society of Merchant Venturers* and President of the Missions to Seamen which tried to improve the lot of seamen in Bristol (PP, LB 34 and Cat 4 Misc Vol and Items cont'd, preliminary listing, now in boxes Domestic Green Box File 1; *The Twentieth Report of the Sunday School Society for Ireland for 1810 (-1837)*; and Joseph Betsey (ed) *Historic Churches and Churchlife in Bristol*).

Writing in the 1850s after what the British call the 'Indian Mutiny', Charles Pinney once more saw Christianity as a means with which to bring people under control – just as Christianity was to have served in the West Indian slave colonies. He believed that 'the Christian instruction of the natives of India [was] the only means of really making them loyal' and ensuring that their energies were properly directed towards achieving 'prosperity of the country' (PP, LB 35: Charles Pinney to Edward John Huggins, 31 August 1858).

⁸³ Rebecca Keepe's salary was £5 a year less than that of a male teacher, Richard Morton's. He taught 50 boys and 30 girls at the school in St John's Figtree. In 1840 the teachers employed in Nevis schools were Rebecca Keepe, Robert Hurman and Eliza Hobson, James Hendrickson, Richard Morton and Harriet Nisbet (UKNA, CO 187/14 Blue Book Nevis 1840).

According to Richard Pares, in 1841 the school on Peter Thomas Huggins's estate was financed by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) but so far no evidence has been found for this (PN 1538).

⁸⁴ 1837 Annual Report of the British and Foreign School Society p29 (Courtesy of Brian York, Archivist of the British and Foreign School Society, 4 June 2004)

⁸⁵ In 1841 the Free School for infants at Scarborough's was attended by 46 boys and an equal number of girls. For some reason in the following year the number of girls dropped sharply by 13 (UKNA, CO 187/13-6 Blue Books Nevis 1839-42).

It is possible to glean some details about the young teacher's life from a variety of records. Rebecca Clifton Keepe was one of three daughters of William Cribb Keepe, the Deputy Provost Marshal and Director of Police. The son of John Keepe, the mason

changes suggest that there should have been a rise in the school population, between 1833 and 1840 it had declined. Island-wide, the number of pupils dropped from 510 in 1833 to 480 in 1840 and on Mountravers from 116 to 93. By 1842 the figure was 80. While this may have been an effect of families leaving the island, young children may also have been forced to work and thereby contribute to their families' finances. This is supported by the fact that, of the children on the books, on average only two-thirds regularly attended school.⁸⁶ Everyone had to be useful. Every pair of hands counted. People accustomed to receiving regular food rations now had to maintain themselves and their families from the money they earned, and wages were low – between one and nine shillings a day.⁸⁷

On their visit to England Huggins and his wife would have complained bitterly about the situation in Nevis. As a planter, a Justice of the Peace⁸⁸ and a member of the Assembly for St Thomas Lowland⁸⁹ Peter Thomas Huggins shared the views of other members of the island's establishment.

who had worked on Mountravers, he also owned a sloop, which he named after his eldest daughter, *Matilda* (UKNA, BT 107/484 Ports: Antigua – Nevis 1824). He died in 1827, aged 60 (NHCS, St Paul's Burials 1825-1837 No 187).

The Keepes were a local family. After his death, William Keepe's widow Eleanor registered the couple's personal slaves, together with those who belonged to Sarah Keepe and to another woman, the widow Mary Keepe (T 71/367). Sarah Keepe was his sister and Mary Keepe probably a sister-in-law, the wife of William Keepe's brother John Taylor Keepe, who had been mentioned in the will of the mason John Keepe. In that will John Keepe left to his daughter Sarah Edgerley Keepe two girls, Harriett and Sally (ECSCRN, Book of Wills 1787-1805 f190-1), and it is almost certain that Harriett was the same person who was appraised in 1831.

Aged 65, William Keepe's sister Sarah died in June 1830. A month later the other woman with whom William Keepe's widow had registered slaves, Mary Keepe, also died. She was 70 years old (St Paul's Burials 1825-1837 Numbers 347 and 353).

William Keepe's daughter Rebecca was still under age in 1831, when her sister Matilda applied to execute the will of Sarah Keepe, their aunt. Rebecca and Matilda had another sister, Esther Ann, who was then also under age (ECSCRN, Book of Wills 1830-1837 f41), as well as a half-sister (their father's 'reputed daughter' Ann with a mulatto woman). When it came to registering their people, 'Matilda Keepe and sisters' had it recorded that they had acquired Cubba and Harriet from their deceased aunt, and that a boy called William had been born. Two of the Keepe family slaves, Betsey and Amy, had been manumitted while another, Peggy, had died. William Keepe's widow Eleanor died in 1829, aged 51 (NHCS, St Paul's Burials 1825-1837). Compensation of £148 for nine people was paid to Matilda, Rebecca and Esther Keepe (HoCAaP 1837-1838 Vol xviii: Chadwyk-Healey mf 41.389 pp107-08).

In 1838 the young women lived in New Town in St Thomas Lowland. One of their neighbours was a prosperous house carpenter, James Herbert, who also acted as the Parish Clerk (ECSCRN, CR 1838-1847 f40). It is very likely that Rebecca Keepe and her sisters still lived in St Thomas Lowland in 1842 when Rebecca taught at Peter Thomas Huggins's school. It would have been within easy walking distance. However, by the late 1850 Joseph Williams, who had previously taught in the parish of St James Windward, had taken over as teacher (CO 187/32: Blue Book Nevis 1852).

All three sisters were literate and probably had a religious upbringing. William Keepe certainly supported the notion of educating enslaved people; in 1825 he had contributed £1 a year to the Nevis Branch of 'the Incorporated Society for the Conversion and Religious Instruction and Education of the Negro Slaves in the British West India Islands' (Anon 'Report of the Incorporated Society for the Conversion and Religious Instruction and Education of the Negroe Slaves...'). It would seem fitting that two of his daughters ended up teaching the children of former slaves. While Rebecca Keepe was school mistress in St Thomas Lowland, her sister Matilda Keepe taught at the Infant School held in St Paul's church (CO 187/10: Blue Book Nevis 1836).

⁸⁶ One observer attributed the drop in school attendance to the fact that, owing to the drought, harvest on the provision grounds had been very poor so that children had no food to take to school with them (Sturge, Joseph and Thomas Harvey *The West Indies in 1837, being the journal of a visit to Antigua, Montserrat, Dominica, St Lucia, Barbados, and Jamaica, undertaken for the purpose of ascertaining the actual condition of the Negro population of those Islands* Hamilton & Adams, London 1838 pp55-6).

In 1837 Nevis could boast eight day schools, seven Sunday schools and four private schools. The day schools had on their books 563 pupils, the Sunday schools 1,039. Of those, on average 351 and 660 pupils respectively attended, which represented about two thirds of all enrolled children (34th Report of the British and Foreign School Society pp114-15 Table showing the State of Education in the British West India Islands, and in British Guiana, from May 1837 to June 1838).

In 1845 Daniel Gateward Davis, who by then had become Bishop of Antigua, proposed that the Christian Faith Society should sustain a school in Nevis. The grant came through, and Revd John Armstrong reported in July 1849 that the school had 47 boys and 37 girls who learnt to read scripture, write, and do arithmetic. At another institution supported by the Ladies Negro Educational Society the gender mix was reversed; it was attended by 34 boys and 44 girls. The CFS-funded school suffered from a lack of books and the stipend was insufficient to pay a well-qualified teacher but Revd Armstrong praised the local teachers for being conscientious and reliable (Lambeth Palace Library, CFS f/5 1842-1929: Davis to CFS, 26 June 1845; Revd John Armstrong to CFS, 10 April 1849, 11 July 1849 and 23 October 1849).

⁸⁷ UKNA, CO 187/16 Blue Book Nevis 1842

⁸⁸ UKNA, CO 187/14 Blue Book Nevis 1840

⁸⁹ UKNA, e.g. CO 187/10 Blue Book Nevis 1836 and CO 186/16: 19 September 1839

They accused the workers of 'indolence and aversion to field labour'⁹⁰ and feared the presence of so many 'idle and disorderly persons and incorrigible rogues and vagabonds'.⁹¹ But the more enlightened citizens were also aware that some groups were unable to earn their livelihoods and, just before Emancipation, the Assembly had appealed to masters and mistresses to care for those vulnerable people and maintain them.⁹² Some employers did assist while others abdicated all responsibility. But there were also those unable to help because they themselves were poor. The situation was worse in town and a year after Emancipation, in the summer of 1839, the churchwarden for St Paul's appealed to the Legislature to assist destitute children and the aged and infirm poor who lived in his parish. Two years on, and the situation was no better. When the new President Administering the Government, Ralph Brush Cleghorn, came to Nevis in late 1841, he was shocked by what he saw: 'I have been much pained by the many cases of diseased persons whom I have found lying about the streets of this Town, some in a state of comparative nudity, all under distressing cases of ulcerated sores.'⁹³ Joseph Bailey, the captain of the *Earl of Liverpool*, gave a similarly 'deplorable account of the state of Nevis'.⁹⁴

Drought had destroyed much of the crop in 1837,⁹⁵ followed in 1838/39 by another twelve months of scorching sun without any rainfall.⁹⁶ In 1839 'malignant yellow fever' killed many inhabitants.⁹⁷ As befitted the troubled state of the island, the rum, which Peter Thomas Huggins sent to Bristol that year, was the worst ever produced and 'so miserably weak' that the House doubted anyone would buy it.⁹⁸

The new decade, too, started badly with much dry weather, resulting in another 'most ruinously short' crop. This was very unfortunate because just then the sugar market experienced a boom.⁹⁹ While in the early 1830s Peter Thomas Huggins's sugar had sold for \$49s a hundredweight,¹⁰⁰ in April 1840 the lowest grade, brown sugar, fetched \$63s or \$64s and 'middling' between \$65s and \$67s. Top quality sugar went for up to \$70s. Later on, at the beginning of July, a hundredweight of 'good to fine' sugar even made as much as \$80s to \$83s, and by the middle of the month this rose to between \$86s and \$88s.¹⁰¹ But not long after the rise came another fall. Large quantities of Mauritius sugar flooded the market and depressed prices.¹⁰²

Having stayed abroad for several months, the Hugginses returned to Nevis in the spring of 1842.¹⁰³ In England they had bought furniture for their house¹⁰⁴ and chosen paint and chandeliers,¹⁰⁵ but their

⁹⁰ PP, LB 67: Job Ede, Southampton, to John Frederick Pinney, 23 September 1840; also SRO, DD\CH/81/2: W M Mills (Dr), Nevis, to his father 26 August 1839

⁹¹ UKNA, CO 186/16: 23 May 1839

⁹² UKNA, CO 186/15: 19 July 1838

⁹³ UKNA, CO 186/16: 4 and 11 July 1839 and 2 December 1841

The St Kitts-born Ralph Brush Cleghorn had been appointed by the British government as President Administering the Government. The son of Robert Cleghorn and the free mulatto woman Margaret Steel of St Kitts, he had been an activist in favour of emancipation, but nevertheless had ended up receiving £45 compensation for two people (St Christopher's Uncontested Claims – List A). See also Edward L Cox in 'Forum: Free People of Colour in the Caribbean' in *Slavery & Abolition* Vol 28 No 1 (April 2007) and *The Law Journal for the Year 1832-1949* pp469-70.

⁹⁴ PP, LB 67: P & C to John Frederick Pinney, 22 September 1841; also Dom Box I ii-26: Charles Pinney to John Frederick Pinney, 22 September 1841

⁹⁵ PP, LB 66: P & C to PT Huggins, 15 May 1837, and Dom Box I ii-24: RW Claxton to JF Pinney, 19 April 1837

⁹⁶ SRO, DD\CH/81/2: Dr WM Mills to ES Bailey, undated but between July and October 1839, letter forwarded by ES Bailey to James B Coles at Taunton

⁹⁷ SOAS, Wesleyan Missionary Archives, MMS/W.Indies correspondence/Antigua/FBN21 Items 54 and 60: List attached to file with 1839 Ant (Courtesy of Margaret Stacey)

⁹⁸ PP, LB 67: P & C to PT Huggins, 1 November 1839

⁹⁹ PP, LB 67: Job Ede, Southampton, to John Frederick Pinney, 23 September 1840

¹⁰⁰ PP, LB 63: PA & Co to PT Huggins, Nevis, 8 December 1831

¹⁰¹ Not only sugar but also molasses prices had increased. In 1840 it fetched \$33s or \$34s per hundredweight, compared to four years earlier when 'good molasses' had sold for two or three shillings less (PP, LB 67: P & C to PT Huggins, 30 April, 1 and 15 July 1840, and LB 66: P & C to PT Huggins, 30 June 1836).

¹⁰² PP, LB 67: P & C to PT Huggins, 1 March 1841

¹⁰³ PP, LB 67: PC to PT Huggins, London, 20 and 31 January 1842, and 3 and 25 February 1842; also AB 1827 Pinney and Case: Export Account and PT Huggins's a/c

¹⁰⁴ PP, LB 67: P & C to John Frederick Pinney, 20 September 1841, and Charles Pinney to PT Huggins, London, 4 and 9 November 1841

enjoyment of some of the fancy new things may well have been short-lived. A few fragile items probably got damaged or broken on 8 February 1843 when an earthquake shook Nevis and other islands.¹⁰⁶ Guadeloupe suffered a ‘most appalling’ loss of life and property, and Antigua, too, fared very badly. In St Kitts and Nevis only livestock died but many buildings were destroyed so that Charlestown looked ‘like a rock quarry’.¹⁰⁷ All over the island boiling house chimneys had been injured or collapsed, and on many estates the mills were destroyed. Peter Thomas Huggins was lucky that his works had been spared¹⁰⁸ but the sugar made that year was ‘very bad’. Some of the barrels were so full of molasses that this resulted in a ‘considerable loss in the weight by draining’, and the 70 hogsheads he had shipped subsequently sold for a disappointing S57s6d per hundredweight.¹⁰⁹ Later in the year he sent more sugar but it, too, was of a ‘very low description ... having neither strength or colour’.¹¹⁰ It would have been little comfort to him that ‘All the sugars from Nevis this year have been of most inferior quality’.¹¹¹ People had been too busy repairing and rebuilding their properties.

But while the damaged sugar works could be rebuilt, a greater and longer lasting threat came from international competition. Sugars produced in the East Indies, Brazil and other Portuguese and Spanish colonies began flooding continental markets at a time when a general depression in Britain caused people to cut back on their sugar consumption. The drop in demand was mostly blamed on the ‘distressed state of the manufacturing population’, particularly the cotton workers.¹¹² With the market shrinking and other sugar producers increasing their production, Peter Thomas Huggins predicted that in a few years the value of West India property would be reduced to nothing.¹¹³ Countries that had started cultivating cane more recently had the edge over colonies such as Nevis where, after producing sugar for two centuries, the soil was exhausted. And the sugar that was made was no longer of top-rate quality.¹¹⁴ To boost his income, Huggins dispatched coconuts to Bristol - first 1,200 and then another 6,400 -¹¹⁵ but he did not regularly trade in these. Their value as an export article was negligible.

¹⁰⁵ The goods the Hugginses bought for their house were shipped to Nevis in the *Earl of Liverpool* (PP, AB 1827 Pinney and Case: Export Account), in which PT Huggins had shares (Farr, Grahame E (ed) *Record of Bristol Ships 1800-1838*). The final item of decoration, a case of pictures, was shipped out in 1845 (AB 1824 Pinney and Case: PT Huggins's a/c).

¹⁰⁶ Iles, JAB *An Account Descriptive of the Island of Nevis*

When in 1998 the British *Time Team* archaeologists excavated a midden heap next to the kitchen of the Mountravers Great House, they found a substantial number of pottery and glass sherds, among them a large amount of good quality table wares. Subsequent analysis by David Barker and Wayne Hardwick has shown that these dated to the early part of the nineteenth century, centring around the years 1815 to 1830.

At the time of the excavation the archaeologists believed that ‘the ceramics were discarded after a destructive event such as the earthquake of 1843’ but their subsequent analysis of the complete assemblage led them to reach a different conclusion. In the midden trench they had found very few food remains, hardly any clay pipes (which would normally be present in deposits of this type) and few other kitchen wares. Had an earthquake or a similar event caused the breakages, they would have expected to find a more mixed assemblage. The archaeologists concluded that ‘Perhaps the most likely explanation is that the midden represents a house or kitchen clearance resulting in the discard of large quantities of glass and pottery in a single event.’ The items found in the midden trench ‘simply represent[ed] a partial house clearance, probably the result of the up-grading of the family’s table wares.’ (P Bellamy and others *Mountravers, St Thomas Lowland, Nevis: Archaeological Investigations by Time Team October 1998* pp24-7) Most likely this occurred when the Hugginses returned from England, laden with new dinner services, tea sets and other upmarket items that would do justice to their new home.

¹⁰⁷ PP, LB 63: P & C to PT Huggins, 15 March 1843 and 1 April 1843

¹⁰⁸ PP, LB 63: P & C to PT Huggins, 15 March 1843 and Parliamentary Papers: Accounts and Papers – Colonies Vol 33 (1843) Further Papers relative to the Earthquake in the West Indies pp6-11

¹⁰⁹ PP, LB 68: P & C to PT Huggins, Nevis, 15 November 1843

¹¹⁰ PP, LB 68: P & C to PT Huggins, 15 January 1844

¹¹¹ PP, LB 68: P & C to PT Huggins, Nevis, 15 November 1843

¹¹² PP, LB 67: P & C to PT Huggins, Nevis, 8 February 1842, LB 68: Worthington Coker to P & C, 11 January 1843, and LB 68: P & C to Worthington Coker, St Croix, 1 March 1843

¹¹³ PP, Dom Box C3-27: PT Huggins, London, to Charles Pinney, 6 January 1842

¹¹⁴ PP, LB 68: P & C to PT Huggins, 15 October 1845

¹¹⁵ PP, LB 67: P & C to PT Huggins, 31 August 1842, and LB 68: Charles Pinney to PT Huggins, 1 September 1843

In 1863, 5,978 coconuts to the value of S£5.10.0 were exported from Nevis. This consignment represented about 0.01 per cent of the island’s total exports that year. Even locally-made clay pots which were sold to other West Indian islands at S£9 represented a greater share. Among natural produce, the export of tamarinds played a valuable but not vital role (worth S£150) (UKNA, CO 187/37 and CO 187/38 Blue Books Nevis 1863 and 1864).

Added to adverse weather conditions, competition from new producers and exhausted soil,¹¹⁶ planters in Nevis faced one more problem: labour shortages. On the one hand employers benefited from the fact that land was scarce in Nevis so that people were forced to sell their labour and continue working on the plantations, on the other hand it meant that many chose to emigrate and go where there was land as well as work. Agents from Trinidad and Guiana busily toured the islands, encouraging people to leave and, tempted by higher wages and cash incentives, in the decade following Emancipation 27,000 West Indians migrated to Trinidad and British Guiana.¹¹⁷ By 1846, just over 2,600 people from Nevis had left for Trinidad – men and women in almost equal numbers: 1,354 men and 1,255 women. The migrants from Nevis constituted the largest group that left the Leeward Islands for Trinidad¹¹⁸ and represented about a quarter of the island's population. Those whose family members had been sold into exile to Trinidad during slavery days could now try to find their kin again and begin a new life together.

In an attempt to keep people in Nevis, planters tried to obstruct their departure. They made false claims for debt against residents about to leave the island and, although this disrupted trade and cost money, the Legislature introduced a 30-day quarantine period for vessels from Trinidad and British Guiana in order to prevent the spread of disease.¹¹⁹ Despite these measures the outflow continued. Among those who emigrated were many people from Peter Thomas Huggins's plantations (this explains why after Emancipation a number of people disappeared from the Nevis records) while others left Mountravers for better conditions elsewhere in Nevis. Those who remained produced poor quality sugars. One reason for this may have been that Huggins's plantations were so short staffed¹²⁰ that he pressed his workers too hard and they ended up making substandard sugar. The verdict from Bristol was that Huggins's sugar was 'too grey for the grocers, too pricey for the refiners and many casks had an unpleasant smell.'¹²¹

The Assembly discussed the 'extensive and increasing emigration of the laboring population' and considered 'that an importation of liberated Africans ... would be decidedly beneficial to the island'.¹²² In St Vincent planters thought so, too, and covered their shortfall by bringing in Africans who had come from Sierra Leone – the colony that had been established in the late 1780s to repatriate enslaved people from Britain and the United States. Planters welcomed them as good workers and it was said that the Africans were 'so pleased with the change of abode that two ... were to return to Africa to bring out an additional number.' Peter Thomas Huggins's friend Charles Pinney believed that Nevis, too, might benefit from the same scheme¹²³ but Lord John Russell specifically vetoed sending

¹¹⁶ In an effort to enrich the exhausted soil, an enterprising planter imported dried sheep dung from the Spanish Main to Nevis to use as fertiliser (Sydney Morning Herald, 10 June 1847).

¹¹⁷ Green, *WA Slave Emancipation* pp1263-264

An additional outflow of labour were the men who chose to serve in the British merchant navy. At least men were known to have signed on in the mid-1830s (UKNA, BT 112 and BT 120 (various pieces) on findmypast.co.uk).

¹¹⁸ Hall, Douglas *Five of the Leewards* p41

However, it was noted that by 1846 'some of the labouring class' had already returned from Trinidad. Significant in stabilising the population was also the increase in births over deaths, representing a net gain in 1845 of 124 (UKNA, CO 187/20 Blue Book Nevis 1846).

¹¹⁹ Richardson, BC *Caribbean Migrants* p82 and p83

Workers also emigrated from other islands in large number. For instance, in May 1840 452 workers left their homes in Barbados, mostly for Trinidad and British Guiana. Planters sought to counter this outflow with legislation, such as restricting the times when vessels could enter and leave port, and requiring masters to declare the numbers of passengers, their departure port and their destinations. The General Emigration Agent, Samuel J Prescoed, argued that freed people had the right to choose where they lived and worked and that the legislation amounted to a 'Gagging Act'. He pointed out that the same masters who had previously sold enslaved people to Trinidad and Demerara and benefited from these sales now sought to deter people from going there because the work was 'too hard' and their employers would subject them to ill treatment. Prescoed called for a public meeting with the aim to petition the Queen to allow free movement. However, partly through the intervention of a local clergyman lost his motion (UKNA, CO 28/134/16 No 39, No 41, No 57 and No 330).

¹²⁰ PP, LB 68: Charles Pinney to PT Huggins, 1 February 1844

¹²¹ PP, LB 68: Charles Pinney to PT Huggins, 1 September 1843, and P & C to PT Huggins, 1 August 1844

¹²² UKNA, CO 186/16: 18 February 1841

¹²³ PP, LB 67: Charles Pinney to PT Huggins, May 1842

liberated Africans from the British outpost in Cuba to Nevis.¹²⁴ These were people who had been carried on Spanish slavers which had been intercepted by British vessels.

Charles Pinney also calculated that Huggins would benefit from the difficulties faced by debt-ridden estates to hire workers and that from the resulting surplus Huggins would 'get as much labour' as he required. This, in turn, would stem emigration because, having 'constant employment at home', the labouring class would 'hardly wish to leave the wealthy island of Nevis for the new colonies.'¹²⁵ As far as immigrant workers went, both Charles Pinney and Peter Thomas Huggins saw them not just as providers of labour, they also expected that these outsiders would exert a beneficial effect on the resident population. Both men hoped that the introduction of immigrant labour would encourage local people to work harder, or, in Charles Pinney's delicate phrasing, that it would 'stimulate ... people to more industrious habits'¹²⁶ and make them 'more attentive to their work'.¹²⁷ Huggins added another point. Referring to 50 immigrants who had recently arrived in Nevis, he stated that this would prove to resident workers that planters were able to procure labour from elsewhere and thereby induce locals 'to work, and that not by halves as at present'.¹²⁸ Pinney confirmed that the introduction of labourers into Jamaica from the East and from Africa had generally been a positive move, putting the planters there 'in much better spirits'.¹²⁹ The social upheaval that resulted from this mass migration was not considered by either men, or by the British government that oversaw the process of resettlement.

One step towards overcoming labour shortages and making planters more independent was to mechanise sugar production as much as possible. To facilitate the abolition of the slave trade, in the late 1790s one St Kitts planter had already advocated replacing people with machines; he recommended, for instance, the use of a 'dumb returner' for turning megass and a chaff-cutter for chopping the cane tops into animal fodder.¹³⁰ On Mountravers Huggins had introduced the plough in the 1820s (and Charles Pinney on Clarke's and probably on Parris's as well), and although some of the land would have been too steep or too stoney to work effectively, at least part of it could be turned mechanically. Huggins had the equipment but by 1840 he had lost his ploughman and asked for a replacement to be sent from England.¹³¹ A sticking point was that he offered poor wages and conditions, and the House could not find anyone except by offering what they considered 'extravagant terms'. For the time being they were not going to make any further enquiries.¹³² Bristol did raise the subject again some years later when it became apparent that Peter Thomas Huggins was so shorthanded that he was struggling to take in the crops.¹³³ Having apparently solved the problem of finding a ploughman, Huggins then encountered another setback. His plough broke and could not be repaired in the island. He required spare parts from Bristol but the House was unable to fulfil his order because they could not find any information about the kind of plough that had been sent to him before. Instead, they offered to have a new one made - an expense Huggins did not welcome.¹³⁴

¹²⁴ UKNA, CO 318/153 No 56: D Thurnbull, Havana, Cuba, to the Rt Hon Lord John Russell MP, 20 August 1841

An Anglo-Spanish agreement of June 1835 authorised British vessels to intercept Spanish slavers and any captured Africans were brought before specially formed commissions in Sierra Leone and Havana for distribution. At Cuba, 15 British vessels carrying a total of 150 guns were stationed to enforce the suppression of the Spanish slave trade (CO 318/153 Paper marked 'Foreign Office').

¹²⁵ PP, LB 67: Charles Pinney to PT Huggins, Nevis, 31 August 1842

¹²⁶ PP, LB 68: Charles Pinney to PT Huggins, 15 July 1844

¹²⁷ PP, LB 68: P & C to PT Huggins, 18 December 1845

¹²⁸ PP, Dom Box I ii-29: PT Huggins, London, to Charles Pinney, 28 November 1844

¹²⁹ PP, LB 68: P & C to PT Huggins, 18 December 1845

One planter in Jamaica who had no labour problems was a young relative of the Pinneys, Edmund Dickinson. He proudly reported that he could get the negroes to do anything; they worked day and night in two gangs 'but the 8 boilermen prefer going on without change from Monday morning to Saturday night thereby earning 3/9 for 24 hours work.' Dickinson was expecting to send home 500 tons which would yield a profit of between £8,000 and £12,000 (PP, Dom Box H-2: E Dickinson, La ?Covia, Jamaica, to ?P & C, 2 May 1845).

¹³⁰ Caines, Clement *Letters on the Cultivation of the Otaheite Cane* p280

¹³¹ PP, LB 67: P & C to PT Huggins, Nevis, 15 April 1840

¹³² PP, LB 67: P & C to PT Huggins, 2 November 1840

¹³³ PP, LB 68: Charles Pinney to PT Huggins, 1 February 1844, 16 September 1844, and P & C to PT Huggins, 1 October 1844

¹³⁴ PP, LB 68: P & C to PT Huggins, 31 January 1846

In the days of slavery, when workers used simple tools such as hoes and cutlasses, these could be maintained in the island and even ploughs, which were relatively undemanding contraptions, could often be repaired by the local blacksmiths. Steam engines, however, were far more complex. If they broke down, they required specialist maintenance. By the late 1830s six steam mills operated in the island (plus 44 cattle mills and 40 windmills);¹³⁵ a decade later only one remained in working order. John Davy, an Inspector General of Army Hospitals, remarked on the introduction of new technology and advanced agricultural methods in Nevis: 'I did not hear, nor have I since learnt of any improvements having been introduced, excepting the attempt to substitute steam power for cattle, or wind at the mill.' Davy pointed out that the introduction of steam was not very successful because the island suffered from a shortage of specialists able to maintain the machinery.¹³⁶ One man who had the skills was the 'engineer and blacksmith' Daniel Dangerfield. He had come from England. In a rare attempt at cooperation, Huggins had shared the expense of employing Dangerfield with other estates in Nevis,¹³⁷ but not long after taking up his post the man became 'inattentive' and his employers talked of sacking him.¹³⁸

Apart from the difficulty of attracting specialist staff and the expense of keeping the men, the machines required costly repairs, often with spare parts that had to be shipped from England. Having introduced a steam engine on Mountravers in the early 1820s, in 1835 Huggins had to replace the steam boiler head¹³⁹ and three years later was forced to order a new engine for Clarke's Estate.¹⁴⁰ Another problem Huggins encountered was a shortage of fuel. At one stage he 'could not purchase a bushel' of coal in the island and so had to delay harvesting part of the crop.¹⁴¹ Given the expense and the problems associated with maintaining the machines, it is unsurprising that few planters in Nevis converted to steam. By the late 1850s only another two estates had erected steam engines, bringing the total to eight.¹⁴²

In the years 1835 to 1845 daily wages for agricultural workers increased from N5d to between N6d and N10d, depending on age and fitness.¹⁴³ To avoid the problems of finding workers and having to pay them wages most planters in Nevis resorted to share-cropping. They divided some or all of their cane land into small plots which were planted, tended and cut by the workers in return for a share – usually half – of the value of the sugar sold while the landowners normally kept the entire production of molasses and rum. This was to reimburse them for the use of the plantation resources which remained in their hands: the mills, boiling houses, stock, carts for transport, etc. The planters also controlled the milling and boiling processes.

Share-cropping was attended by many problems: the division of land and profits was cumbersome and open to abuse, and some workers mistreated plantation stock and equipment while others did not pull their weight and cultivated their plots carelessly. Inattention to weeding and manuring caused soil

¹³⁵ Fryer, Judith 'Post-Emancipation Life in Colonial Nevis 1840-1880 as reported in the Blue Books – Part 1' in NHCS *Newsletter* February 2002, citing Blue Book Nevis 1840; also CO 187/13: Blue Book Nevis 1839

¹³⁶ Davy, John *The West Indies Before and Since Slave Emancipation* pp486-87

¹³⁷ PP, WI Box 1829-1836

¹³⁸ PP, LB 66: P & C to PT Huggins, 1 January 1836

In 1842 another engineer came to Nevis. Samuel Hickman travelled with Peter Thomas Huggins and his wife on the *Earl of Liverpool*. Hickman's wife, who lived in Manchester, was supposed to follow with the rest of their family (PP, LB 67: P & C to Stephen Moore, 2 May 1842). Hickman either died or returned to England; the following year the House introduced a William Barratt to Huggins as someone seeking work as a resident steam engineer in the islands (LB 68: P & C to PT Huggins, 27 December 1843).

¹³⁹ PP, LB 66: P & C to Fawcett, Preston and Co, 7 November 1835

¹⁴⁰ PP, LB 66: P & C to PT Huggins, 26 November 1838; LB 67: P & C to PT Huggins, 1 March 1839, and P & C to Stephen Moore, 20 and 23 May 1839

¹⁴¹ PP, Dom Box I ii-29: PT Huggins, London, to Charles Pinney, 28 November 1844

¹⁴² UKNA, CO 187/32 Blue Book Nevis 1858

¹⁴³ UKNA, CO 7/83 Enclosure No 2 by WT Nicholson: Table B 'Populations of the British Colonies'

That there were variations in wages is clear from another source. According to Iles, around 1854 field workers were still paid at the same rate of 5d a day as two decades earlier during the early days of the apprenticeship period. Presumably the wages he quoted were also in currency (Iles, JAB *An Account Descriptive of the Island of Nevis*). See also Hall, Douglas *Five of the Leewards* p55 Table 7

depletion, and many disputes arose because no one had overall control; neither the planters nor the share-croppers were used to working in a cooperative way. Some historians have claimed that the share-croppers were ‘not progressive cultivators’ and that the division of land prevented the ‘introduction of new techniques and the efficient use of agricultural machinery’¹⁴⁴ but in Nevis an underlying factor was the lack of investment. As long as planters were struggling to keep solvent, they were unlikely to provide tools, stock and machinery that would have allowed the share-croppers to work more efficiently. Nevertheless, despite the problems, by the mid-1840s agriculture in Nevis was ‘almost entirely conducted on the metairie or half and half system, and with more success and greater satisfaction than in any other of these colonies in which the same plan [had] been attempted.’¹⁴⁵

In the autumn of 1843 an outbreak of a ‘tropical fever’ affected Peter Thomas Huggins and also his workers.¹⁴⁶ Leaving one of his sons in charge,¹⁴⁷ in the following year he embarked on another trip to England to recover his health. Presumably he would have travelled with a manservant but it is not known who accompanied him.

Huggins mostly remained in London but also travelled to Bristol. No doubt he availed himself of the services of the Great Western Railway. Designed by the ground-breaking engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the line from London to Bristol had only been completed three year earlier and Huggins would have enjoyed the speed and comfort, if not the modernity of travelling by steam train. As if to confirm his approval of Brunel, he lodged in the newly-built Great Western Hotel which was part of Brunel’s vision of an integrated land/sea transport system; his first iron-hulled ship, the *Great Western*, had been launched in Bristol the previous year.

Comfortably settled in the hotel in the centre of town near the harbour and the Cathedral, Peter Thomas Huggins declined Charles Pinney’s invitation to stay at Camp House in Clifton. He claimed that he would be a nuisance because, owing to his bad leg, dressing took a very long time. This does, however, sound like a polite excuse¹⁴⁸ because, surely, the seven servants at Camp House could easily have accommodated him.¹⁴⁹ Perhaps Huggins tried to escape Pinney’s rants against ‘Popish enemies’¹⁵⁰ and his preoccupation with spreading Protestantism among Irish Catholics.

Before he returned to Nevis in the spring of 1845 Peter Thomas Huggins learnt that, following the recent death of Charles Pinney’s long-term business partner, Robert Edward Case, his friend was intending to contract his West India concerns.¹⁵¹ For Huggins this was bad news indeed. He was juggling his finances and relied on getting credit from the House whenever the need arose.

About the same time as Huggins returned to Nevis, John Davy, the Inspector General of Army Hospitals, came to the West Indies. While Huggins’s letters were always full of glum news - bad weather, lazy workers and failing estates - this outsider formed a much more positive view of the island and its inhabitants. Davy found ‘well ordered and peaceable people’ who were ‘more than commonly united in a community of interest.’ They were keen to acquire land of their own and, abandoning the old villages on estates, were building better houses either near the old ones or on detached pieces. Although ‘not highly prosperous’, at least the inhabitants suffered little distress. Fewer than 140 paupers lived in the island. Davy commented on the thrifty disposition of the inhabitants - over 1,800 had joined a benefit society - and he was surprised to find that Nevis was ‘even without a police’.¹⁵² Just after Emancipation the Legislature had revived the idea of a new police

¹⁴⁴ Green, WA *Slave Emancipation* pp1263-64

¹⁴⁵ Davy, John *The West Indies* pp484-85

¹⁴⁶ PP, LB 68: Charles Pinney to PT Huggins, 1 January 1844

¹⁴⁷ PP, LB 68: P & C to PT Huggins, 15 January 1844

¹⁴⁸ PP, Dom Box I ii-29: PT Huggins, London, to Charles Pinney, 28 November 1844

¹⁴⁹ 1841 Census page 16: Information on Camp House inhabitants

¹⁵⁰ PP, LB 34: Charles Pinney to Revd H Allen of Clifton, 12 August 1852

¹⁵¹ PP, LB 68: P & C to PT Huggins, 1 June 1844

¹⁵² Davy, John *The West Indies* p481 and p483

force headed by a new Chief - ¹⁵³ the previous Commander of Police, Josiah Webbe Maynard,¹⁵⁴ had died recently - ¹⁵⁵ but apparently no appointments had been made. This was partly rectified in the autumn of 1847 when the Legislature empowered Justices of the Peace in each of the parishes to engage a number of local men as constables. It appears that victims of crime had tried to administer justice themselves, without resorting to the authorities, and that this had resulted in another 'Act for the punishment of offences against the person'.¹⁵⁶

Davy acknowledged the positive influence of the clergy, particularly of the Methodist ministers, and estimated that well over half the population regularly attended services, with 4,000 worshipping in chapels and another 1,250 in the island's Anglican churches.¹⁵⁷ (9,571 inhabitants lived in Nevis in January 1844.)¹⁵⁸ In 1840 the Methodists had received a further boost when the Legislature legalised marriages already contracted in their chapels and allowed the Methodists to perform wedding ceremonies in Charlestown and in two outlying chapels which previously had only been licensed for 'public worship and preaching'.¹⁵⁹ However, although the majority of the population had embraced the Christian faith, African beliefs and African forms of worship were still very much alive. This is evident from a man called Noah and the followers he attracted.

In the late 1830s Noah was known to have operated in the Newcastle area. Meeting on Sundays and in the evenings, his services were long and often lasted until midnight. He read the Holy Scriptures and offered prayer 'with all the fervour which physical energy and animal excitement can produce',¹⁶⁰ and instead of silently following proceedings, his worshippers expressed themselves freely, joyfully and very physically. A young Methodist missionary, Revd John Bell, was shocked and dismissed this form of devotion as 'singing, screaming, dancing, jumping'. Noah's lively and emotional gatherings offended Bell's English sensibilities and, unable to condone members of his flock attending 'those midnight revelings (sic)', Revd Bell expelled 15 of them.¹⁶¹ But the 'Noahites' continued to meet well into the 1850s, assembling at Taylor's Estate. They married and had their children baptised in the

¹⁵³ UKNA, CO 186/15: 27 August 1838, 6 September 1838, and 1 October 1838

The Legislature decided that in Charlestown four constables were to be employed at N£80 a year. That the parish of St Paul's needed the most police officers is apparent from the Court records. In the year following Emancipation it is noticeable that three out of four assaults that were alleged to have occurred in 1839 involved men from St Paul's or had taken place in St Paul's: The carpenter James Thompson of St Paul's was accused of assaulting Camberwell with a bayonet, the planter Thomas Roper of St Paul's was accused of assaulting John Pemberton in St Paul's with 'force and arms' (a gun loaded with gunpowder and leaden shot), the merchant Joseph Herbert of St Paul's was accused of assaulting John Richardson with a gun, and the labourer Sam Taylor was accused of assaulting Grace Jones with an iron stake. James Thompson and Joseph Herbert were found not guilty, Thomas Roper was sentenced to six months imprisonment, the first 14 days in solitary confinement, and Sam Taylor was sentenced to three months in prison with hard labour (ECSCRN, Nevis Court Records 1836-1843 f274, f294, f297 and f289).

¹⁵⁴ UKNA, CO 186/15: 17 March 1836

¹⁵⁵ NHCS, St Thomas Lowland Burials 1827-1957 No 215

¹⁵⁶ Huggins, HC (ed) *Laws of Nevis Act No 48* passed 15 October 1847 and No 49 passed 14 January 1848

¹⁵⁷ Davy, John *The West Indies* p483

¹⁵⁸ RHL, MSS W.Ind. S.24 (a)

Population of Nevis as of 3 January 1844

Parish	Males	Females	Total
St George's Gingerland	1,257	1,381	2,638
St James Windward	681	807	1,488
St John's Figtree	984	1,083	2,067
St Paul's	634	863	1,497
St Thomas Lowland	862	1,019	1,881
	4,418	5,153	9,571

Sources: Watts, David *The West Indies* p459 Table 10.2, citing Richardson 1983; UKNA, CO 187/20 Blue Book Nevis 1846

In Nevis the census passed off without difficulty but in Dominica there were riots when people feared that slavery was to be re-introduced. The militia was mobilised (<http://www.lennoxhonychurch.com/artcile.cfm?ID=394>).

¹⁵⁹ Huggins, HC (ed) *Laws of Nevis Act No 39* passed 20 November 1840; also ECSCRN, CR 1838-1847 f328, entered 20 December 1841, and UKNA, CO 187/10 Blue Book Nevis 1842. In the last reference the date for the Dissenters Marriage Bill was given as 14 September 1841.

¹⁶⁰ Horsford, John Revd *A Voice from the West Indies* pp289-91

¹⁶¹ SOAS, Wesleyan Missionary Archives, MMS/W.Indies correspondence/Antigua/FBN21 Item 23: Revd J Bell, Nevis, to Mission House, London, 8 April 1839 (Courtesy of Margaret Stacey)

Karen Fog Olwig has examined in detail the influence of the Methodist missionaries and has emphasised the role respectability played in the new colonial society (*Global Culture, Island Identity*, in particular chapters 4 and 5).

Methodist Chapels, and among traditional Christians their temperance and adherence to monogamy earned them admirers. But their belief, which ‘combined heathenism and wild fanaticism’, only excited ‘contempt or pity’ and their ‘frantic voices and frenzied looks’ bewilderment. Their form of religion was too loud, too raw, too emotional - too African.¹⁶²

When Nevis finally abolished the death sentence for ‘Obeah Doctors’ in 1860,¹⁶³ the island appeared to close a chapter on its history but, as Charles Pinney had warned, ‘African superstitions’, as he called it, could easily make a comeback.¹⁶⁴

The year 1848 was most turbulent, economically as well as politically. In Britain the abolition of export duties, including the repeal of the Corn Laws, had led to panic in the money markets and restrictions on credit, which, in turn, caused the collapse of many businesses. The credit restrictions affected the economies across the Atlantic and companies failed. Among them was the West India Bank, an institution in which Peter Thomas Huggins had invested.¹⁶⁵ Faced with instability and afraid to lose their savings, in Nevis members withdrew their funds from the popular Friendly Societies, which were connected with the churches and the chapels.¹⁶⁶ People faced great uncertainties. In several European countries revolutions took place, France abolished slavery in her colonies, and a rebellion by enslaved people in Danish-held St Croix led to their emancipation. When news of the ‘disturbance in St Croix among the slave population’ reached Bristol, Charles Pinney feared that there might be uprisings ‘in other slave states’ such as Cuba and was relieved that at least in Nevis and other British islands rebellions were no longer a threat.¹⁶⁷ In North America, however, slavery continued, and among those who campaigned to bring it to an end were Charles Pinney’s niece Anna Maria Pinney and a relative of John Frederick Pinney’s wife Frances, Caroline Dickinson.¹⁶⁸

To deal with the aftermath of the earthquake of 1843, Nevis had applied for and received a loan of £12,000 from the British government¹⁶⁹ but, being short of money, in May 1848 decided to suspend repayment of the loan for five years.¹⁷⁰ And then, in August, a hurricane hit the island.¹⁷¹ News of this stimulated a ‘lively demand’ on the sugar market,¹⁷² but for Huggins the hurricane could not have come at a worse time.

¹⁶² Horsford, John Revd *A Voice from the West Indies* pp290-91

¹⁶³ UKNA, CO 187/34

¹⁶⁴ PP, LB 35: Charles Pinney to Edward John Huggins, 31 August 1858

¹⁶⁵ PP, LB 67: P & C to PT Huggins, 15 May 1840

¹⁶⁶ Horsford, John Revd *A Voice from the West Indies* p2

¹⁶⁷ PP, LB 69: Charles Pinney to George Webbe, Nevis, 1 September 1848

¹⁶⁸ PP, Dom Box 10: Anna Maria Pinney’s Scrapbooks

The involvement of those two Victorian women, Anna Maria Pinney and Caroline Dickinson, is the more remarkable because in the earlier days of slavery both the Pinneys and the Dickinsons had consistently opposed abolition. A history of the Dickinson family of Kingweston shows that they included a dynasty of MPs descended from Francis, a seventeenth century sugar Jamaican planter who married into another Jamaican planter family, the Fullers of Sussex. In 1745 the Dickinsons moved to Kingweston, which later became an estate of 5,000 acres (Dunning, Robert *Somerset Families*). Today their rather austere-looking house is a private school.

¹⁶⁹ Huggins, HC (ed) *Laws of Nevis Act No 47* passed 1 October 1844

¹⁷⁰ Huggins, HC (ed) *Laws of Nevis Act No 50* passed 3 May 1848

Nevis was desperately short of money and while suspending repayment of the loan to the British government, it was also decided to do without the services of an agent who represented the island’s interests in London. As early as 1837 the agent had been seen as someone whose services had become superfluous. When public funds were low, Joseph Stanley, the Speaker of the Assembly, had proposed that no money be paid to Mr Colquhoun (UKNA, CO 186/15: 1 May 1837). He and the other colonies’ agents had failed in two fundamental areas: to halt the abolition of the slave trade and the abolition of slavery. After Emancipation, they still retained certain jobs such as soliciting confirmation of laws, dealing with applications for favour, the appointment of councillors and petitions from the islands. In addition they took on organising labour from Asia but they lost an area of influence when the sugar market was opened up to international competition.

When James Colquhoun retired in 1841 after 25 years of service, he asked that his son Patrick should be appointed (UKNA, CO 186/16: 15 July 1841) but it was not until 1848 that Nevis withdrew him as its agent. Around this time other colonies also withdrew their agents: Jamaica in 1846, Montserrat and Barbuda in 1848, and St Kitts and Antigua followed in 1851. Dominica eventually followed suit (Penson, Lillian M *The Colonial Agents of the British West Indies* p214, p211, p231 and p240).

¹⁷¹ PP, Dom Box E3-19: Mary Weekes, Nevis, to Charles Pinney, 12 May 1849

¹⁷² PP, LB 69: Charles Pinney to PT Huggins, 30 September 1848

For several months Charles Pinney had pressed him to clear his debts. His friend had decided to close his merchant business in Bristol and he wanted a clean balance sheet.¹⁷³ It appears that Charles Pinney had transferred to Huggins the debts owed him in Nevis and the securities on which they were based, hoping to centralise them in a person from whom he might be able to collect,¹⁷⁴ and collecting that money had become a constant theme. By the end of 1848 Huggins's account with Charles Pinney was in arrears to the tune of over £1,500.¹⁷⁵ Unwilling to advance further loans - 'on the contrary I look forward to the entire liquidation of the amounts which still remain due to the firm' - Pinney wanted Huggins to pay off his debts and close his account. Requests for settlement became more urgent. For Huggins, who had been doing business with the House for decades, it came as a shock to be told 'to open a credit with some other mercantile house'.¹⁷⁶ In response to yet another letter pressing for payment Huggins finally replied, claiming that his poverty was such that the expense of postage had restrained him from replying earlier.

Appealing to their friendship and long commercial association, Huggins explained his situation: when the West India Bank failed, it had stopped 'all means of procuring money to cultivate the estates'. Charles Pinney's refusal to grant him a loan left him no alternative but to cast around. A merchant in London was willing to advance him money on a promise of shipments but that man also got into financial difficulties and pulled out of their engagement. Another merchant had stepped in and had offered to pay his bills, in return for receiving Huggins's sugars. Without this help he would not have been able to harvest his last cane but, because that crop was very short, Huggins could only send Pinney a small share. His next crop would be even worse because Mr Daniel had refused to advance him money to put in new plants and he had to rely on 'a few ratoons'. Then the hurricane flattened one of his works, damaged the mills and all his buildings. He was rebuilding the works but to replace the other structures, he estimated, would cost at least S£1,000 - 'half the coming crop'. He strove to set the plants for the following year in the hope that, in the meantime, he could procure the funds to harvest the crop. Just days before he wrote to Pinney his ratoons had been 'sadly cut up by a four days northerly gale', and Huggins appealed to his old friend: 'I can only add have patience and I will pay you. We are living on bare necessities and till all is paid I deprive myself and family of our usual comforts so as to be honest and just.'¹⁷⁷

One major item of expenditure Huggins had to face were repairs to the steam engine and having 'only just' got it up and running again,¹⁷⁸ in August 1849 another hurricane hit Nevis. It destroyed buildings which remained ruined for months to come. And dry weather that had started in 1848 continued until 1850. The pastures turned bare and cattle died from want of water and food. When normally an estate in Nevis might have produced per acre from between half to one hogshead of sugar, perhaps even as much as one and a half hogsheads,¹⁷⁹ lands only yielded one or two barrels.¹⁸⁰ On one plantation in Nevis, Lord Combermere's Camp Estate, it took 60 acres of cane to scrape together one hogshead.¹⁸¹ Peter Thomas Huggins's crop did not even cover half the cost of cultivation. He had previously complained about the 'very heavy' expense of labour¹⁸² and now he had to borrow more money to pay his employees. Others were in a similar position. They could not pay their taxes, and public projects suffered - repairs to the parish church, for instance, remained unfinished.¹⁸³ One very small improvement was that the fruit for which the island had been famed came back. In the late 1820s disease had destroyed countless trees but Peter Thomas Huggins managed to get them to

¹⁷³ PP, LB 69: Charles Pinney to GW Parson, St Kitts, 1 May 1848

¹⁷⁴ PP, LB 68: Charles Pinney to PT Huggins, 15 June 1846

¹⁷⁵ PP, LB 69: Charles Pinney to PT Huggins, 5 December 1848

¹⁷⁶ PP, LB 68: Charles Pinney to Thomas Huggins, 31 December 1847, and LB 69: Charles Pinney to PT Huggins, 31 March 1848, 15 July 1848, 15 August 1848, 15 September 1848

¹⁷⁷ PP, Dom Box I ii: PT Huggins to Charles Pinney, 20 January 1849

¹⁷⁸ PP, Dom Box I ii: PT Huggins to Charles Pinney, 12 May 1849

¹⁷⁹ Lambert, S (ed) *House of Commons Sessional Papers* Vol 69 Evidence by the Legislature of Nevis

¹⁸⁰ PP, Dom Box E3-20: PT Huggins to Charles Pinney, 27 May 1850

¹⁸¹ PP, Dom Box E3-20: PT Huggins to Charles Pinney, 6 June 1850

¹⁸² PP, Dom Box I ii-29: PT Huggins, London, to Charles Pinney, 28 November 1844

¹⁸³ PP, Dom Box E3-20: PT Huggins to Charles Pinney, 27 May 1850

grow again and was able to send a present of a barrel of sweet lemons and shaddocks to Bristol.¹⁸⁴ These were tokens of friendship, just as Charles Pinney accompanied his requests for payment with gifts of a cask of ale, a jar of tripe and a cheese.

Apart from the weather and labour shortages, events in Europe determined what happened to Mountravers and other plantations in Nevis. In 1846 Britain allowed foreign-produced sugar into the country and British colonies lost their long-held monopoly.¹⁸⁵ Reducing the duties, the government hoped, would increase consumption and briefly the market did, indeed, improve.¹⁸⁶ Prices appeared safe.¹⁸⁷ But then a depression of sugar prices set in,¹⁸⁸ and by the late 1840s the depression had turned into a slump. The crunch came with the final removal of protective sugar duties in 1851. The passing of the Sugar Equalisation Duties Act placed all produce on the same footing: West Indian sugar, beet sugar, East Indian sugar and slave-produced sugar from Cuba, Brazil and other foreign plantations. In the early 1840s, when sugar prices were still relatively high, the House had prophesied that 'Many estates this year will not pay the expenses of cultivation'.¹⁸⁹ For insurance purposes a hogshead of sugar was then valued at £40; within eight years, by 1848, its value had dropped to £13¹⁹⁰ and by 1855 it fetched only £9 to £10. By then prices had, indeed, fallen below the cost of production.¹⁹¹

All over the island estates were getting run down. Burdened with annuities, legacies and other complicated debts, they suffered from under-funding in addition to the effect of inclement weather and from a lack of care. One of those badly affected was the neighbouring plantation that had once belonged to Edward Jesup and then to Job Ede.¹⁹² Usually resident in Southampton, Ede had returned to Nevis where he had died some years earlier.¹⁹³ Peter Thomas Huggins had been his attorney,¹⁹⁴ and after Ede's death, in an effort to keep the estate 'in some sort of cultivation', Huggins tried to introduce share-cropping. The enterprise was unsuccessful. According to Huggins the men were 'too lazy to work [the fields] properly'. What Huggins did not acknowledge was that they would have found it difficult to be motivated – indeed, they would have found it difficult to carry out the work. For two years the labourers had not been paid, and buildings could not be repaired because Ede's heir and his merchant in England did not even send nails to make good hurricane damage. They had 'abandoned' their property.¹⁹⁵

Other estates which were known to have fared badly were Old Windward plantation in the parish of St James Windward and George Webbe properties in St George's Gingerland. Old Windward had been 'totally neglected' for several years by its occupier and, except for the windmill and the boiling house, the buildings were dilapidated and the still gone. It was burnt out.¹⁹⁶ On George Webbe's Gingerland estates all his works had been damaged in the 1848 hurricane. He had lost buildings and his lands were nearly out of cultivation. Having 'lost all situations as Chief Judge', Webbe had become 'a petty attorney' and, leaving 'his estates to his coloured family without means to cultivate them', he went to live in Charlestown. Huggins's verdict: 'his estates are gone to ruin'.¹⁹⁷

¹⁸⁴ PP, Dom Box I ii: PT Huggins, Nevis, to Charles Pinney, 30 March 1851

¹⁸⁵ Schuyler, Robert Livingston 'The Abolition of British Imperial Preference, 1846-1860' in *Political Science Quarterly* Vol 33 No 1 (March 1918) pp77-8

¹⁸⁶ PP, LB 68: P & C to PT Huggins, 15 February 1845, and 30 May 1845

¹⁸⁷ PP, LB 68: P & C to PT Huggins, 15 October 1845

¹⁸⁸ Green, WA *Slave Emancipation* p326

¹⁸⁹ PP, LB 67: P & C to John Frederick Pinney, 22 September 1841; also Dom Box I ii-26: Charles Pinney to John Frederick Pinney, 22 September 1841

¹⁹⁰ Pares, R A *West India Fortune* p200

¹⁹¹ PP, Dom Box E4: PT Huggins to Charles Pinney, 27 December 1855; also Michael Craton *Searching for the Invisible Man* p24

¹⁹² PP, Dom Box E3-20: PT Huggins to Charles Pinney, 12 March 1850

¹⁹³ NHCS, St Thomas Lowland Burials 1827-1957 No 339; also RHL, MSS W.Ind. S.24 (a), VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 3 p325

¹⁹⁴ UKNA, T 71/1039 and PP, AB 75 f51

¹⁹⁵ PP, Dom Box I ii: PT Huggins to Charles Pinney, 12 May 1849

¹⁹⁶ SRO, DD\CH/81/2: Dr W M Mills, Nevis, to E S Bailey, 1 June 1840

¹⁹⁷ PP, Dom Box I ii: PT Huggins to Charles Pinney, 20 January 1849, and Dom Box E3-20: PT Huggins to Charles Pinney, 11 February 1850

Webbe had owed Charles Pinney money and, to please his friend, Huggins had taken over the bond but when Webbe did not pay off his arrears, Huggins was left with the liabilities.¹⁹⁸ Webbe was one of the numerous debtors in the island. Some were so destitute that, when imprisoned for non-payment, they were unable to maintain themselves and legislation had to be put in place for their support.¹⁹⁹ So many people owed relatively minor sums to merchants and suppliers of services, such as blacksmiths and coopers, that just a few months before Emancipation the Legislature had discussed the need for setting up a court to deal with such small claims.²⁰⁰ But since then many of the estates had become insolvent, and to facilitate the sale of properties laden with complicated debts, the British government passed the Encumbered Estates Act. It permitted owners, most of whom lived permanently in Britain, to initiate the sale of their property in London through courts that were set up for the purpose.²⁰¹

One result of the economic malaise was that slowly villages began to be established.²⁰² Settlements that were independent of the plantations could come into existence once planters sold off some or all of their land. In the mid-1840s the village of Cotton Ground grew out of parts of Clifton Paynes and Morton's Bay plantations, which were then in the hands of the London bankers James Whatman Bosanquet and Charles Franks. The first 22 people purchased from their company small plots of land that were laid out along a 16-foot wide road.²⁰³ Jessops Village began with the sale of half-acre plots to 38 settlers. They each paid S£10²⁰⁴ to acquire land that had formerly belonged to an absentee, George Pollard, and the village was first known as 'Pollard's Settlement'. Immediately south of Pollard's was land called Ling's, which had been part of Clarke's Estate before it was sold to labourers.²⁰⁵ These were large areas but Huggins was also known to have disposed of just one acre of land on the southern side of his estate, near Craddock Road, to one individual, a man called Wiltshire Baret.²⁰⁶ He may have been born on Mountravers in 1820.

The parish registers for St Paul's and St Thomas Lowland reveal that people from Mountravers and Clarke's Estate remained mostly in the area. They either moved to Charlestown, or to Cotton Ground, Jessops Village, and Barns Gut Village. A few settled in Westbury. However, as is evident from the parish registers, after Emancipation many former Pinney-owned people and their offspring also remained on Mountravers and Clarke's, and they were joined by other workers:

Mary Scarborough, a washer, had four children who were baptised: three sons called **James** (baptised on 28 July 1838), **Alfred William** (3 April 1845),²⁰⁷ and **William Abbott** (17 March 1851),²⁰⁸ and a daughter called **Anna Olivia**, who was baptised on 8 August 1860.²⁰⁹ Mary Scarborough's residence was variously given as Montravers (sic), Pinney's and Parris's.

Thuvee Penny, a labourer on Pinney's, had an illegitimate child called **Heana** who was baptised on 26 November 1843.²¹⁰

¹⁹⁸ PP, Dom Box E4: PT Huggins to Charles Pinney, 3 May 1856, and 28 September 1856

¹⁹⁹ Huggins, HC (ed) *Laws of Nevis* Act No 53 passed 15 February 1849

²⁰⁰ UKNA, CO 186/15: 26 February 1838, and ECSCRN, Nevis Court Records 1836-1843

²⁰¹ Green, WA *Slave Emancipation* pp1254-256, and PP, Dom Box E3-3

²⁰² In the parish registers there is evidence that, as a first step, from the late 1840s onwards the term 'estate' tended to be dropped in the records, and from then on people's places of abode were recorded as 'Colhoun's', 'Clifton', etc. It was not until the 1850s that descriptions such as Cotton Ground (about 1856), Nugents (1856), Pollards Ground or Pollards Land (1857 and 1858), Haynes Land (1858), Craddock Road (1866), Westbury (1867) and Jessop's Village (1868) were in use. By 1860, four villages had been built in St John Figtree and one in St Thomas Lowland (UKNA, CO 187/34). In addition to villages being established, people squatted on what little public land there was – including the old Quaker Burial Ground in St Thomas Lowland and the Jewish cemetery in Charlestown (CO 187/33).

²⁰³ ECSCRN, CR 1838-1847 f620

²⁰⁴ DHC, Pollard MSS, D87/2: Letter from Nevis to AH Limmington, London, 26 March 1863

²⁰⁵ UKNA, CO 441/11/1

²⁰⁶ ECSCRN, CR 17 f322

²⁰⁷ NHCS, St Paul's Baptisms 1835-1873 Numbers 120 and 424

²⁰⁸ NHCS, Transcripts of Baptisms St Thomas Lowland 1831-1873

²⁰⁹ NHCS, St Thomas Lowland Baptisms 1827-1873

²¹⁰ NHCS, Transcripts of Baptisms St Thomas Lowland 1831-1873 No 701

Nancy Hull, also a washer woman on Pinney's, had a son called **Robert James**. He was baptised on 1 August 1845.²¹¹

Daniel Richards from Pinney's Estate was buried on 18 February 1846, aged 35.²¹²

William Payne, a labourer on Mountravers, with his wife **Martha** had a daughter called **Virginia** who was baptised on 5 November 1851.²¹³ On the same day **Alice Ann**, the daughter of another washer woman on Mountravers, **Ann Hodge**, was also baptised.²¹⁴ **Job Smith**, a labourer on Pinney's, with his wife **Bridget** had a daughter called **Rebeca** (sic) who was baptised on 2 April 1855.²¹⁵

Frances Drew, a seamstress on Pinney's, had a daughter called **Mary Louisa**. The child was baptised on 31 December 1857.²¹⁶

Francis Newton, a fisherman on Montravers (sic), with his wife **Elivs** (sic) had a son called **John Samuel**. He was baptised on 21 May 1865.²¹⁷

Sarah Anne Copia, a labourer on Pinney's, had a son called **Carlos Fernandos**. The boy was baptised on 29 June 1865.²¹⁸ His father may well have been one of the Portuguese who came to work in Nevis.

Huggins repeatedly complained that people would not work. According to him they wanted 'high wages, do as little as they can, knock off at three o'clock and call it a day's work.'²¹⁹ Charles Pinney tried to soothe his friend by admitting that 'no doubt it requires patience and judicious arrangements to manage your people' but - pointing to Huggins's long 'experience and fine estates' - he assured him that 'all difficulties' would be overcome.²²⁰ Huggins's problems persisted and he continued to grumble about labourers not wanting to work, or working half a day for a whole day's pay.²²¹ When the West India Bank failed,²²² Charles Pinney had thought that this would have 'the good effect of reducing the wages of the negroes' so that Huggins could get off his crop 'at a more reasonable rate'²²³ but the collapse of the bank did nothing to improve the situation for either the employers or the employees. To pay his labourers Huggins had to borrow money from elsewhere and he was still short of hands. He blamed the workers for choosing to relocate to other colonies. 'One or two coloured vessel owners' had taken up the business of encouraging people to go to Trinidad, or, as Peter Thomas Huggins put it, of 'seducing' them to move abroad.

People who had been enslaved all their lives could now move about freely and decide where to live and where to work. But their decision to leave Nevis could immediately make them dependent on their new employers because if they accepted the Trinidadian planters' advance of their \$10 fare, in return for their passage they were contracted to work on the planters' estates until they had paid back the

It is possible that this reference was mis-transcribed.

²¹¹ NHCS, St Paul's Baptisms 1835-1873 No 384

²¹² NHCS, St Thomas Lowland Burials 1827-1957 No 384

²¹³ NHCS, Transcripts of Baptisms St Thomas Lowland 1831-1873 No 897

²¹⁴ NHCS, Transcripts of Baptisms St Thomas Lowland 1831-1873 No 896

²¹⁵ NHCS, St George's Gingerland Baptismal Records 1852-1859 No 162

²¹⁶ NHCS, Transcripts of Baptisms St Thomas Lowland 1831-1873 No 1139

²¹⁷ NHCS, Transcripts of Baptisms St Thomas 1831-1873 No 1436

²¹⁸ NHCS, Transcripts of Baptisms St Thomas Lowland 1831-1873 No 1447

²¹⁹ PP, Dom Box I ii: PT Huggins to Charles Pinney, 12 July 1852

²²⁰ PP, LB 34: Charles Pinney to PT Huggins, 12 August 1852

²²¹ PP, Dom Box E4: PT Huggins to Charles Pinney, 9 June 1855

²²² PP, LB 67: P & C to PT Huggins, 15 May 1840

²²³ PP, LB 68: Charles Pinney to PT Huggins, 29 February 1848

money.²²⁴ They became bondsmen and bondswomen once more – tied to their employer and vulnerable to exploitation in an unfamiliar environment.

The migrants left Nevis on inter-island vessels such as the schooner *May Flower*. Fully laden with passengers, she departed in October 1852. It was said that she, like several other boats which transported workers to their new homes, was dangerously overcrowded. The state of these vessels gave the Legislature a welcome boost in their efforts to try and stem the outflow. It passed the Imperial Passengers Act which not only dealt with overloading vessels but also sought to address the ‘improper quantity and nature of the food supplied on inter-colonial voyages’. But whatever measures the Legislature took, they did not manage to stop the ‘tide of emigration’ to Trinidad and elsewhere.²²⁵ Scores of people from Nevis left for other countries and, in turn, migrants from various nations came to Nevis.

By 1856 at least 427 people had arrived from Madeira, a Portuguese dependency. They had left their island after disease decimated their crops.²²⁶ The old colour distinctions, which during slavery days had kept lighter-skinned people out of the fields, continued; planters tended to employ these southern Europeans for less demanding tasks, such as gardening and wood-cutting. Many Madeirans carried out small-scale trading. Although they came as indentured labourers and could return to their homeland after serving for five years, few did. Many died from malaria and yellow fever. The Madeirans were typical of first generation immigrants who wanted to save as much as possible so that they could return home with money in their pockets; it was said that they ‘deprived themselves of food and clothing in order to lay away savings ... [and] ignored the symptoms of disease until they were beyond help.’²²⁷ Tragically, in July 1847 in one 17-day period eleven Portuguese people died, and between July and December in the following year this was followed by another spate of deaths.²²⁸ Perhaps one of the last of the original settlers alive was a woman called Mary Rodriguez who had lived on Clarke’s Estate. Said to have been 70 years old, she died in November 1901.²²⁹ Like the names of many other Portuguese people, part of her name had either been anglicised or changed altogether, and just as many enslaved people never acquired a family name, so were some of these Madeirans buried with single names only.²³⁰

The same happened to most of the ‘coolies’ who came from India to Nevis. Earlier in the century, just after the abolition of the slave trade, a Parliamentary Select Committee had considered the ‘practicality and expediency of supplying West Indian colonies with free labour from the East’,²³¹ but whereas thousands of East Indians soon met planters’ demands in Trinidad, British Guiana and Jamaica, they did not arrive in Nevis until the 1870s.²³²

Nevis made its first request for 300 Indian workers in 1868. Two years later this was followed by another. The process stalled because the Emigration Board in London was not satisfied with the

²²⁴ PP, Dom Box I ii: PT Huggins to Charles Pinney, 30 March 1851

²²⁵ UKNA, CO 186/19: 14 October 1852, 19 May 1853 and 14 December 1854

²²⁶ UKNA, CO 318/259 and CO 318/261

See also WA Green *Slave Emancipation* p284 Table 17 and David Watts *The West Indies* p475 Table 10.4

²²⁷ Green, *WA Slave Emancipation* pp286-88

²²⁸ The first Portuguese person known to have been buried in Nevis was Francis, on the 8 June 1847, followed by Flora a day later. They were aged 24 and 30 years old. One 34-year-old man who died was known to have arrived on a vessel called the *Mary Biddy*. He was buried on 5 July 1847 (NHCS, St Paul’s Burials 1844-1965 No 528 and 529 and others. See also St Thomas Lowland Burials 1827-1957).

²²⁹ NHCS, St Paul’s Burials 1844-1965 No 435

²³⁰ Among those who were buried with single names was ‘Francis, a Portuguese’. He died in 1847. A year later a nameless Portuguese from Long Point was buried (NHCS, St Paul’s Burials 1844-1965).

²³¹ HoCPP General Index to the Reports of Select Committees 1801-1852, ref 1810-1811 (225) II 409

²³² Olwig, Karen Fog *Global Culture, Island Identity* p98, citing SOAS, Methodist Missionary Society Archives, Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (London) Archive West Indies, CA Correspondence, Antigua, 1833-1890 mf 1232: 11 November 1874 and mf 1236: 9 August 1875. See also the report for 1879-1880 by the Acting President of the Colony dated 25 September 1880 entitled ‘Emigration from India to Nevis (Leeward Isles)’ and reports for the period from 1881 to 1885 by the Protector of Immigrants (British Library, India Office Records: Public and Judicial Department Records: Judicial and Public Annual Files - Various items in IOR/L/PJ/6/).

provisions put in place to receive the migrants. One such stumbling block was a requirement by the Nevis Legislature that any worker who broke their contract was to be fined, and those unable to pay their fine were to be imprisoned for a period of three months. The Emigration Commissioners rejected this as ‘unnecessarily severe and disproportionate’ and instructed the Legislature to amend that clause to one week in prison with hard labour.²³³ In Nevis, however, this was ignored. Instead, the island administration sought to make money out of the migrants and proposed a fine of £210 for every year a person curtailed their indenture and a further £7:5:10 to cover their passage back to India. The Emigration Board responded by pointing out that migrants would be disinclined to come to Nevis because other colonies no longer attached such stringent requirements. The Commissioners also asked Nevis to remove the clause which allowed the Governor to take someone who had been ill-treated by their employer to another employer, or even to another island. This should only be done with the consent of the worker. In addition, Nevis had failed to reply to the British Government’s request for information about housing and health care and the Board needed assurances that these were adequate.²³⁴ Then the India Office - looking after the interests of its migrants - added a further objection. In Nevis wages were too low. The India Office asked for a minimum wage of \$1s a day – the rate payable in Jamaica. Slow in passing its enabling laws, the Nevis Legislature sought to procure Indian workers on the promise that in due course it would adopt the necessary legislation but the India Office did not accede to their request,²³⁵ and it took another two years for everything to come together. At the end of March 1874 the ship *Syria* arrived in Nevis with 315 East Indians aboard.²³⁶

A number of the newcomers, the so-called coolies, went to work on Mountravers and on Clarke’s. Their names, too, were changed, anglicised or shortened so that their real identities are lost – just like those of the Africans and the Madeirans before them.

Elizabeth Daniel, a coolie from Pinney’s, was buried on 15 October 1879. She was five years old.²³⁷ She may have been born just after she arrived in Nevis but could also have been born aboard ship.²³⁸

Catawee from Clarke’s was buried on 24 September 1880. Said to have been 40 years old, her age appears estimated.²³⁹

John Thomas, another coolie from Clarke’s, was buried in 1893.²⁴⁰

Other Indians were employed on Paradise estate.²⁴¹ Indentured for five years, some of the workers, however, chose to break their contracts and left for Trinidad while those who stayed did not renew

²³³ UKNA, CO 318/259: ?FW Murdoch to Sir Frederic Rogers, 26 January 1870, and Emigration Board to Sir Frederic Rogers, 22 July 1870

²³⁴ UKNA, CO 318/261: Emigration Board to Governor, 26 May 1871; see also CO 318/267 S Walcot to RGW Herbert, 28 August 1872

²³⁵ UKNA, CO 318/264: Correspondence received 9 March 1872, 3 August 1872, 15 and 27 November 1872

²³⁶ The *Syria* would have been the only ship to arrive with East Indian immigrants as Nevis only received 315 East Indians in total; St Kitts 337 (Mahabir, Kumar ‘The Lost Indians of St Kitts’, Paper presented at the ‘Legacy of Slavery and Indentured Labour: Conference on Bonded Labour, Migration, Diaspora and Identity Formation’ 6-10 June 2013 and <http://genforum.genealogy.com/grenada/messages/60.html>)

²³⁷ NHCS, St Thomas Lowland Burials 1827-1957 No 1300

²³⁸ On one voyage four children were born while 98 out of 458 people who had boarded the *Shand* died. Another 91 had to be sent to hospital after arrival (UKNA, CO 318/259: Hon JM Grant to Gov Secretary 15 March 1870). This was not unusual; in St Lucia the hospitals were crowded with recently arrived Indians who suffered from the ‘most painful form of sloughing ulcers’ (CO 242/1 St Christopher Gazette No 9 24 June 1879). Other complaints were bad provisions, for instance aboard the *Trevelyan*, and wrong advice given to the Indians aboard the *Dover Castle*. The Emigration Board which oversaw the transfer of people from the East Indies to the West Indies was alarmed and sought to improve the conditions (CO 318/264).

²³⁹ NHCS, St Thomas Lowland Burials 1827-1957 No 1325

²⁴⁰ NHCS, St Thomas Lowland Burials 1827-1957 No 1624

²⁴¹ Among those known to have worked on Paradise estate were two children, George Rea and Collowar, who died in the early 1880s, aged 4 and 14 years (NHCS, St Thomas Lowland Burials 1827-1957 Unnumbered and No 1433).

theirs. Instead of remaining in agriculture, they invested the money they received at the end of their contracted period and bought land and shops.²⁴²



1852 proved to be another 'very dry year'. The crops were 'very short' and again would not cover the cost of the labour and other expenses. Peter Thomas Huggins tried to economise as much as possible. While claiming that his estates had not made any profit for the last three years,²⁴³ he had, nevertheless, managed to reduce his debt with Charles Pinney by about £500 to £1,000.²⁴⁴ But the economic prospects were dire. With one third of the island out of cultivation, Huggins was hoping that the British government would intervene and 'save the property of these islands from destruction' - relief from Britain would be the only cure to their 'deplorable condition'. 'Every day I see things getting worse and worse ...' The inhabitants were unable to pay their taxes, some even did not 'find the means to live', and, if no help came, he predicted an apocalyptic collapse of all 'parochial and public institutions ... essential to civilisation'.²⁴⁵ He may have been particularly low-spirited because his bad state of health continued to trouble him²⁴⁶ and, having lost his wife the year before, he was still grieving. Jesse Huggins had died in October 1851 at the age of 62 years.

Mrs Huggins had been the 'most amiable benevolent character, a model of maternal affection and unpretending good sense and prudence blessed'.²⁴⁷ Over a period of more than twenty years she had given birth to at least eleven children; the last was born after three of their daughters had already been married for several years. Seven girls and four boys survived to adulthood but the Hugginses had to bury one of their adult daughters, Sarah Bell. Aged 25, she died a year after her husband, Philip Protheroe Claxton. The year their son-in-law died, 1836,²⁴⁸ the Huggins family had suffered another personal tragedy. Huggins's brother-in-law Walter Maynard Pemberton, together with his daughter Julia, had drowned when the ship on which they had travelled had sunk off the Isle of Wight.²⁴⁹

In the early 1840s two of the other Huggins daughters were living in Liverpool. Frances had married a man from that city, John Southern, and Elizabeth had temporarily gone to live there, too.²⁵⁰ She did not get married. Another daughter, Jessie, the wife of Henry Harding, was widowed in 1842 after twelve years of marriage.²⁵¹ She re-married in 1851 and the following year Huggins's daughter Ann

²⁴² Olwig, Karen Fog *Global Culture, Island Identity* p111 fn6, citing E Byron *More Families of Nevis Basseterre*, St Kitts 1981 p11

²⁴³ PP, Dom Box I ii: PT Huggins to Charles Pinney, 6 July 1852

²⁴⁴ PP, LB 34: Charles Pinney to PT Huggins, 13 December 1852

²⁴⁵ PP, Dom Box I ii: PT Huggins to Charles Pinney, 12 July 1852

²⁴⁶ PP, LB 34: Charles Pinney to PT Huggins, 13 December 1852

²⁴⁷ NHCS, St Thomas Lowland Burials 1827-1957 No 546 and RG 9.1: Gravestone Inscriptions, St Thomas Lowland Cemetery
²⁴⁸ Sarah Bell Claxton and her husband had been living on Stewart's estate. Philip Protheroe Claxton died in January 1836 (NHCS, RG 9.1 Gravestone Inscriptions, St Thomas Lowland Cemetery; also RHL, MSS W.Ind. S.24 (a): 14 January 1836). Mrs Philip Claxton died on 8 September 1837 (Oliver, VL *Monumental Inscriptions* Tablets in St Thomas Lowland church; also PP, LB 66: P & C to PT Huggins, Nevis, 1 November 1837. A memorial tablet to Philip Protheroe Claxton can be found inside the church of St Thomas Lowland, on the right-hand side of the nave).

²⁴⁹ Walter Maynard Pemberton and his daughter Julia were among a dozen passengers and several crew members who perished in the *Clarendon* (RHL, MSS W.Ind. S.24 (a): 28 August 1836). Only the second mate and two men survived (PP, LB 66: P & C to Walter M Mills, 15 October 1836).

Built at Chepstow in 1823, the *Clarendon* was a relatively new ship of over three hundred tons. The vessel had sported three masts, a square stern, and a bust head. The first owners, according to advertisements, had been Philip and George Protheroe but it had since been sold to other Bristol merchants (Farr, Grahame E (ed) *Record of Bristol Ships 1800-1838*).

The ship had been part-owned by at least one person in Nevis. The Manager of Stapleton Estate, John Walley, had once held shares in the *Clarendon* but had sold them (Christopher Claxton, Lieut RN A *Letter to Lord Combermere in reply to his Lordship's Attack in the Parliamentary Papers of 1830 upon the Juries of St Kitts and Nevis, including some Remarks on the Measures of Government with regard to the Colonies* p23).

²⁵⁰ PP, LB 67: P & C to John Frederick Pinney, 11 October 1841

²⁵¹ RHL, MSS W.Ind. S.24 (a): 14 September 1842

also got married. Her husband, William Austin Sanders, was a widower²⁵² who intermittently appears to have suffered from ill health.²⁵³ He was Rector of St James²⁵⁴ and later became officiating minister at St Thomas Lowland²⁵⁵ but also worked as a planter. He took on the run-down Potwork estate in St James Windward.²⁵⁶ In addition, he was appointed to the Council.²⁵⁷

Peter Thomas Huggins's wife had died when an outbreak of yellow fever began to spread through neighbouring islands. Nevis was spared the worst, and the Board of Health attributed this to the 'higher sanitary condition' that prevailed in Nevis. Aware of its responsibilities, it urged the Legislature to deal with a pond in Charlestown which was thought to have been 'the localising cause of many of the serious fevers which have from time to time visited the town.'²⁵⁸ However, when the next outbreak of disease happened, the pond was not the cause. Cholera arrived with a shipload of immigrants. And they had come not from Trinidad or other Caribbean colonies but from England.

The Legislature reacted quickly and appointed a Sanitary Policeman, ordered the inhabitants to 'remove brushwood, rubbish or filth of any description' and to speedily inter diseased corpses.²⁵⁹ Peter Thomas Huggins found himself at the centre of activity:

And now we are in a most awful state for a Liverpool emigrant vessel with 500 souls on board called in at our island having the cholera and five and six dying every day and before she could be ordered off she infected the black people who went on board and it has been raging in the island ever since to a most frightful extent. The mortality was so great that they could not get the dead buried (sic) fast enough and they had to put 8 and 10 in one grave. The country has consequently been put to a dreadful expense for coffins, physic and people to attend to them at any cost, most particularly to bury the dead for so soon as any one in a family is taken they all run away from him and leave him to die from want. I could not believe the negro character could be so unfeeling one to the other as we see it at present. Therefore we are obliged to exert ourselves doubly and at any cost to save their lives. I have been fortunately well supplied with medicine that I have had from England every year and for the last three or four weeks I have been in constant attendance mixing medicine for them, from all quarters they flock to me for we have but two doctors and they have as much as ever they can do the country paying them to attend to the poor unfortunate sick and I am sorry to say it has exhausted our Treasury. The country is in a state of bankruptcy. How are we to get labourers to take off the crop God only knows. It is most awful and distressing to contemplate. Mr Mills has lost both his sons. Paitfield is a great loss to the island. He died in a few hours. I have had some of my people die in 4 hours after they were taken quite well in the morning at work and dead by 4 o'clock. We have only to hope that it may please God in his infinite mercy to stay this most awful visitation and spare us...' ²⁶⁰

The cemeteries were full, and in St Thomas Lowland members of the vestry appropriated land to bury the dead elsewhere. They chose to use part of Paradise Estate, whose owner, the widowed Mrs Bowrin, was in St Kitts. Quarantine regulations were in force and she could not be reached and, without her permission, the vestry decided to go ahead with the burials. The members who took that

²⁵² Jessey Harding married Charles Kenney of St John Figtree on 6 February 1851 and Ann Huggins married William Austin Sanderson on 5 February 1852 (NHCS, St Thomas Lowland Marriages 1828-1965 Numbers 308 and No 313; also PP, LB 33: Charles Pinney to PT Huggins, 1 May 1851). Charles Kenney was President of the Council (UKNA, CO 186/19: 10 May 1845).

²⁵³ NHCS, St James Deaths 1843-1913

²⁵⁴ NHCS, St James Baptisms 1839-1877

²⁵⁵ NHCS, St Thomas Lowland Burials 1827-1957

²⁵⁶ ECSCRN, Court Records, Volume for the Court of the Commissioners for the Sale of Incumbered Estates in the West Indies (Nevis) 1872-1887

²⁵⁷ *Gentleman's Magazine* Vol XII New Series Jan-June 1862 p494

²⁵⁸ UKNA, CO 186/19: 26 April 1853 (Report dated 31 December 1852)

²⁵⁹ UKNA, CO 186/18: 19 January 1854

²⁶⁰ PP, Dom Box I ii-36: PT Huggins to Charles Pinney, 27 January 1854

Unusually, on Paitfield Mills's gravestone cholera was given as the cause of death (Gravestone inscription at St John Figtree cemetery).

decision were Peter Thomas Huggins, his three sons, his son-in-law William Austin Sanders 'and two coloured subordinates'. When Grace Eliza Bowrin found out, she was aghast that the men 'ordered the burial of almost all the cholera dead from their estates ... on this land ... thus making this estate a pestilential grave yard.' She was particularly upset because none of her labourers had died of cholera,²⁶¹ and one can only hope that Peter Thomas Huggins and his followers had taken note of the new 'sanitary rules and regulations' which required that corpses should be buried at a depth of at least six feet.²⁶² It is very likely that the people from Mountravers who had succumbed to the cholera were among those buried on Paradise Estate.

Mrs Bowrin never recovered friendly relations with the Huggins men. They became her enemies, but female solidarity precluded Peter Thomas Huggins's daughters, 'the young ladies', from her bitter resentment.²⁶³

The outbreak lasted into the summer and then abated. Sickness had taken its toll on Huggins's workforce and decimated it to such an extent that he found it ever more difficult to cultivate his estate: 'Our principal head people are nearly all gone and those that are left are ten times worse disposed than they were before the cholera.'²⁶⁴ Charles Pinney, although 'much distressed to hear of the dreadful visitation with which it has pleased God to visit Nevis', attached a moral lesson to the event and told Huggins that he hoped the survivors would see the disease as a warning to 'more serious reflection' and that it would make them 'better and more useful'.²⁶⁵ While both men held deeply racist views about the people who laboured for their benefit, Pinney's outlook, inspired by his Christian faith, tended to be more optimistic whereas Huggins's remained unremittingly negative.

Huggins suffered not only labour problems. The dry weather that had started in November the year before had continued and crops were half of what everyone had expected. In Gingerland the only estate not affected by drought was Walter Maynard's but elsewhere the want of water caused a 'frightful' loss of cattle. The equalisation of sugar duties between slave and non-slave produced sugar was a disaster for the post-slavery colonies and even affected its shipping: freight became scarce and expensive. Peter Thomas Huggins was more pessimistic than ever: 'I don't see anything but ruin and beggary before us.' His ill health continued. His legs were sore and doctors had advised him to leave Nevis but he could not afford another stay abroad.²⁶⁶ By September 1856 he had become 'lame and feeble'.²⁶⁷ Unable to work, he began renting out his estates: Mountravers to his son Edward John and Clarke's to Charles. They each paid him rent of £300 a year. What turned out to have been Huggins's last letter to Charles Pinney was again full of complaints about the weather ('No prospect of a crop for next year for want of rain in some parts'), about 'the negroes getting worse and worse' (at Colhoun's the works were burnt down and elsewhere cane fields were set alight but the culprits were not brought to justice) and about provisions being very expensive. The only cause for optimism – that sugar was very scarce in America, which ought to have commanded high prices – was of no use. Planters could not produce the sugar that was needed because of the poor weather conditions.²⁶⁸

The day after he wrote this letter he made his will,²⁶⁹ lived for a few more months and, after suffering a long and painful illness,²⁷⁰ died on 4 February 1857 and was buried the following day. Peter Thomas

²⁶¹ Wigley and Burt Papers, Box 2: Grace Eliza Bowrin vs Smith Morton

²⁶² Huggins, HC (ed) *Laws of Nevis* Act No 58 and No 59 passed 25 November 1850

²⁶³ Wigley and Burt Papers, Box 2: Grace Eliza Bowrin vs Smith Morton

²⁶⁴ PP, Dom Box I ii: PT Huggins to Charles Pinney, 10 June 1854

²⁶⁵ PP, LB 34: Charles Pinney to PT Huggins, 1 July 1854

²⁶⁶ PP, Dom Box I ii: PT Huggins to Charles Pinney, 10 June 1854

²⁶⁷ ECSCRN, Book of Wills 1837-1864 ff431-49 and ff449-50

²⁶⁸ PP, Dom Box E4: PT Huggins to Charles Pinney, 28 September 1856

²⁶⁹ ECSCRN, Book of Wills 1837-1864 ff431-49 and ff449-50

²⁷⁰ PP, Dom Box I ii: T Huggins, EJ Huggins, CP Huggins and PT Huggins to Charles Pinney, 28 February 1857

Huggins was 70 years old.²⁷¹ His friend Charles Pinney claimed he had been ‘universally respected and beloved’,²⁷² but people on Mountravers would have held different memories of him.

The end of the Huggins era

Peter Thomas Huggins left Mountravers, Woodland, Mountain, Charloes, Hope, Parris’s and Scarborough’s in trust to his eldest son, Thomas, and after paying off all debts, these estates were to go to Thomas’s brother Edward John. Thomas was to allow his three brothers and his unmarried sisters to live in the mansion house, and he was responsible for its upkeep. His father’s will also stipulated that he was to rebuild ‘the old or southern part’ (the original Pinney house) which by then was ‘in a very dilapidated condition’. In addition, Thomas had to pay annuities to his sisters and was charged with providing ‘a convenient and suitable four wheeled carriage and horses’ and grass, milk and other necessaries for Elizabeth and Julia for as long as they remained unmarried and lived at Mountravers.

The other properties, Clarke’s, Seymour’s, Ling’s or Old Road Estate, and Craddock’s lands, with a few acres called Horsepatch, also went to Thomas in trust and were intended to go to Charles.²⁷³ But, within two years of burying their father, Charles also died – just days after of celebrating his thirtieth birthday.²⁷⁴ It fell to Edward John to oversee all the estates.

As to his labourers’ work ethic, Edward John Huggins was as disparaging as his father had been.²⁷⁵ Charles Pinney agreed. With the population still not ‘under proper control’ he put forward his favourite remedy. He believed that only sincere adherence to the Christian faith could overcome labour, social and, indeed, any other problems:

This alone I feel convinced will elevate the Negro character in the West Indies, as well as the Hindoo or Mahomedan, and secure them from falling into their old African superstitions so enervating both to mind and body – and make them valuable members of society.²⁷⁶

Charles Pinney was referring not only to Indian Hindus and Muslims who were already in the West Indies but also to the native soldiers, the *sepoys*, who had risen against the mighty East India Company in what the British called the ‘Indian Mutiny’ but which for Indians was a struggle for independence. To improve the continuing labour shortages, the British government had muted a plan ‘to send the rebellious *sepoys* from India to the West Indies to be apprenticed to the planters’, and Charles Pinney hoped that the scheme of importing these mutineers would come to fruition. He believed they would ‘make excellent labourers, and, as no high cast natives were to be of the number, they would be easily managed.’²⁷⁷ Edward John Huggins disagreed. While approving of immigrant labour, he thought it would require troops to guard these tough, independent-minded people. He saw nothing but trouble ahead.²⁷⁸

²⁷¹ NHCS, St Thomas Lowland Burials 1827-1957 No 657 and RG 9.1: Gravestone Inscriptions, St Thomas Lowland Cemetery

²⁷² PP, LB 35: Charles Pinney to Thomas, Edward John and Peter Thomas Huggins, 31 March 1857

²⁷³ Peter Thomas Huggins’s had other lands and estates in Nevis: Haynes Land, which ran contiguous to Mountravers and Scarborough’s, Dasent’s (on which he had raised a mortgage), New River in St George’s Gingerland, Butler’s in St James Windward, and lands and buildings at Indian Castle in St George’s Gingerland. At his death PT Huggins had debts but was also owed money. His son Thomas, who was in possession of Golden Rock and Fothergills, owed him annuities amounting to £3,500 (Wigley and Burt Papers, Box 2: Document entitled ‘Last will and testament’ (possibly a draft) and ECSCRN, Book of Wills 1837-1864 ff431-50).

²⁷⁴ PT Huggins’s son Charles was born on 2 October 1829 and died on 15 October 1859 (Gravestone inscription at St Thomas Lowland cemetery).

²⁷⁵ PP, Dom Box I ii: EJ Huggins to Charles Pinney, April 1858, and Dom Box K2-10: EJ Huggins to Charles Pinney, 11 June 1861

²⁷⁶ PP, LB 35: Charles Pinney to Edward John Huggins, 31 August 1858

²⁷⁷ PP, LB 35: Charles Pinney to Edward John Huggins, 28 October 1857

²⁷⁸ PP, Dom Box I ii: EJ Huggins to Charles Pinney, April 1858

The year 1859 saw the arrival of Sir Graham Briggs from Barbados.²⁷⁹ A wealthy planter with an estate that gained a reputation as the most lavish of the old Bajan properties,²⁸⁰ he brought capital to Nevis and revived sugar production in the island. He purchased many debt-ridden properties, among them Old Manor, Round Hill, Tower Hill and Stoney Grove,²⁸¹ and in due course installed more steam mills so that by the late 1860s 13 operated in the island.²⁸² Briggs provided new opportunities for employment, and fieldworkers were able to demand higher wages. From Edward John Huggins's perspective, Briggs's arrival 'only tended to double the price of labor'.²⁸³ But Briggs also brought with him new ideas and he challenged some of the planters' stale old ways. Writing twenty years after Briggs's arrival in Nevis, John Alexander Burke Iles credited Briggs not only with advancing the island's 'material prosperity' by introducing much-needed capital, machinery and agricultural skill, Iles also recognised that this outsider changed some of the prevailing social attitudes. Briggs transferred to Nevis a 'system of correlative discipline between master and servant.'²⁸⁴

Other new players in Nevis were the Glaswegian merchants Humphrey Ewing Crum Ewing (commonly called Humphrey Crum Ewing) and Alexander Crum Ewing who traded as James Ewing & Co. In 1863, when he was trying to raise a mortgage, Edward John Huggins turned to their company to borrow £4,000.²⁸⁵ He did not even consider getting the money from Charles Pinney. Contact with him had ceased.²⁸⁶

In the mid-1730s, 20,000 acres of manured land had been worked in Nevis;²⁸⁷ in the early 1870s 12,000 acres were still being cultivated.²⁸⁸ About 730 acres of this, representing six per cent, was the land that constituted Mountravers, or Pinney's Estate.²⁸⁹ All of it then belonged to Edward John Huggins.²⁹⁰ Clarke's was then in possession of his eldest brother, Thomas. But within a decade all three remaining Huggins sons died: Thomas in September 1869, followed by Peter Thomas in November 1874 and Edward John in June 1878.²⁹¹

Clarke's Estate had already been auctioned in London in July 1874 and, although valued at S£6,000, it had only fetched S£4,500. The company of James Ewing & Co bought Clarke's, together with two other tracts of land,²⁹² and not long after Edward John Huggins's death the Ewings also petitioned for the sale of Mountravers.

²⁷⁹ Iles, JAB *An Account Descriptive of the Island of Nevis*

²⁸⁰ UKNA, CO 321/5/43 et al

²⁸¹ RHL, Mss W.Ind. S.24: handwritten notes in the back

²⁸² UKNA, CO 187/42 Blue Book Nevis 1868

²⁸³ PP, Dom Box K2-10: EJ Huggins to Charles Pinney, 11 June 1861

²⁸⁴ Iles, JAB *An Account Descriptive of the Island of Nevis*

²⁸⁵ When Edward John Huggins raised the mortgage of £4,000 from the Ewings, he mortgaged just over 670 acres, consisting of Mountravers, Woodland, Coker's, Parris's and Hope, Scarborough's and Haynes (Pers. comm., WA Pinney, 20 January 2000 and December 2001, citing ECSCRN, CR 1859-1866 pp301-09).

²⁸⁶ The last communication with the Hugginses was a letter written on 12 Feb 1862 which accompanied presents of a cask of ale and a box of cheese and hams (PP, LB 36). Having lost his wife Francis Mary in 1860 (she died, aged 64), Charles Pinney died in July 1867 at the age of 74 (Campbell, Mary V (ed) *Memorials of the Church and Churchyard of St Andrews, Clifton* Vol 2 and *Gentleman's Magazine* Vol IV New Series (July-December 1867) p398).

²⁸⁷ CSP 1734-1735 No 314

²⁸⁸ Iles, JAB *An Account Descriptive of the Island of Nevis*

²⁸⁹ ECSCRN, CR 1877-1899 c f10-1

²⁹⁰ Iles, JAB *An Account Descriptive of the Island of Nevis*

²⁹¹ Thomas Huggins's wife Anne had died in July 1864. He and two of his children may have fallen victim to an epidemic: he died on 14 September 1869, his second daughter Lucy Isabella on 30 October and his son Edward Melville Huggins a day later (Gravestone inscriptions at St Thomas Lowland cemetery). See also NHCS, RG 9.1 Gravestone Inscriptions, St Thomas Lowland Cemetery; also St Thomas Lowland Burials 1827-1957 Numbers 1189 and 1270

²⁹² After Thomas Huggins's death his son-in-law and executor Robert Gordon had taken over the running of Clarke's Estate, on which the Ewing firm held a substantial mortgage. The company had advanced Thomas Huggins £14,200 on condition that he consigned a certain amount of sugar to them to reduce the debt. Huggins also dealt with a London merchant house, Messrs Neilson of London, and consigned sugars to, and drew on, both companies. After Huggins's death, Gordon made another agreement with the Ewings's firm to consign sugar to them but he only sent about half the amount required to clear the debt. Gordon continued to draw on both companies, and when a considerable balance became due, Messrs Neilson pressed Gordon for payment. In February 1872 Neilson discovered that proceedings to sell the estate were being taken in the local Incumbered Estates Court and applied to get the case transferred to England - but only after the estate had already been sold in Nevis. A man called Murray (Vansitart) Huggins bought it for £6,003 but could not complete the purchase and the estate was again put up for sale, this time in London, in July 1874. Clarke's Estate (190 acres) was auctioned, together with lands known as

A receiver was appointed, a surveyor made a plan of the estate, and on 15 July 1879 'Mountravers or Pinneys' was sold to the petitioners. They paid S£5,000. Included were the plantations which Peter Thomas Huggins had acquired – Scarborough's and Parris's - as well as other surrounding lands. In the late 1820s, when it was still planted in cane, Parris's alone had cost S£5,250, but now this part of the estate, as well as Scarborough's, was nearly all uncultivated, and the highest lying plantation, Woodland, had been left completely unplanted. Although the property was in worse shape than it had been decades earlier, the sale of Huggins's estate does show how land prices had crashed since the beginning of the century. In the early 1800s 'prime cane land' at Mountravers had been valued at S£100 an acre, 'good cane land' at half the amount and pasture at less than a third.²⁹³ Now an acre sold at close to S£7.²⁹⁴

The sale of Mountravers was followed by claims from the Huggins sisters. They wanted the right to live in the mansion house and to pasture their 67 horned cattle on the estate. They also asked for possession of a piece of land previously omitted.

On 22 February 1881 the conveyance was finally executed.²⁹⁵ Members of the Huggins family had owned Mountravers and surrounding estates for just over seven decades.

Supported by an annuity paid by the Ewings²⁹⁶ and presumably the income derived from cattle husbandry, the sisters Elizabeth and Julia Huggins continued to occupy the Great House at Mountravers but in August 1895 Elizabeth died, at the age of 69 years.²⁹⁷ Two years later her 51-year-old nephew, Dr Peter Thomas Huggins, the last male descendent of the 'opulent and powerful' Huggins family, also died.²⁹⁸ It was believed that his widow and children would leave the island, and his obituary stated that this left 'only Miss Huggins of Mountravers on whose death the old family residence will (as the Estate have) pass to the hands of strangers and the aristocratic family of Huggins and their large possessions will cease to have any existence in Nevis.' The obituary concluded: 'Such is life'.²⁹⁹

The year Peter Thomas Huggins's grandson died, 1897, was also the year in which sugar production on Pinney's Estate was interrupted. This was as a result of protests over wages which had taken

Seymore's (87 acres) and Lyng's (66 acres). It was sold for £4,500 to the Ewings (UKNA, CO 441/11/1: Report by Reginald John Cust, 30 January 1875, and ECSCRN, Court Records, Volume for the Court of the Commissioners for the Sale of Incumbered Estates in the West Indies (Nevis) 1872-1887).

The Hugginses held other properties in Nevis, such as Belmont and Dasent's. Both estates were in debt, and in September 1883 the Daniel companies of Bristol and London petitioned for their sale. The merchants Claud Neilson & Son of London and others also filed their claims. In May 1880 a proposal was made to sell the estates in two lots, Belmont for S£1,020 and Dasent's for S£1,400. Conveyance of these estates was executed in September 1884 to the petitioners, the Daniel companies (ECSCRN, Court Records, Volume for the Court of the Commissioners for the Sale of Incumbered Estates in the West Indies (Nevis) 1872-1887; UKNA, CO 441/3/6, and NHCS, MG 1.20 Edward J Huggins to Wigley and Burt, 18 November 1854).

²⁹³ PP, LB 20: JPP to James Tobin, 5 February 1807

The relationship in the valuation of cane land to pasture is, roughly, similar to one carried out in June 1800 by Edward Pemberton, John Wallwin Maillard, William Hanley and Joseph Webbe Stanley. They valued an acre of cane land at Wansey's at N£100 and pasture at N£30 (ECSCRN, Nevis Wills Book 1787-1805 f357).

²⁹⁴ From the late 1870s the value of cane land remained unchanged for several decades: in 1911-12 an acre was valued between S£4 to S£8 (UKNA, CO 152/334 Report for the Blue Book Nevis 1911-1912).

²⁹⁵ UKNA, CO 441/3/6

The brothers Humphrey Ewing Crum Ewing and Alexander Crum Ewing acquired Pinney's Estate from the Commissioners of Incumbered Estates through their attorney, John Hart Hardman Berkeley (ECSCRN, Book 1870-1879 f540). Pinney's Estate was then described as 'containing lands called or known as Montravers (sic), Pinneys, Paris (sic), Cookers (sic), Hope, Scarborough, Woodlands, Mountain, Haynes and Keeps'. Its boundaries were Clarke's, Seymour and Belmont to the north; lands called Rossingtons and Ward's Estate to the south; the mountain to the east and the sea to the west. Three acres were then still in dispute. In addition, a small parcel of land, at the point where the southern border of the estate touched the sea, had been removed from Pinney's for use as a Public Infirmary. A contemporary plan shows that the infirmary and an adjoining cemetery were located just to the east of where TDC is today (ECSCRN, Book 1870-1899 ff10-1).

²⁹⁶ ECSCRN, CR Register of Titles Book 2 f6 (Courtesy of WA Pinney)

²⁹⁷ In March 1891 Helen Huggins of Mountravers was buried, aged 45. It is possible that this was the daughter called Helen whom Peter Thomas Huggins had mentioned in his will. She would have been born when Mrs Huggins was about 56 years old (NHCS, St Thomas Lowland Burials 1827-1957 No 1591 and No 1652, and gravestones at St Thomas Lowland cemetery).

²⁹⁸ NHCS, St Thomas Lowland Burials 1827-1957 No 1687

²⁹⁹ NHCS, GE/HH Unattributed newspaper cutting, Dr PT Huggins's obituary, and RG 9.1 Gravestone Inscriptions, St Thomas Lowland Cemetery No 1687

place the previous year. At the root of the protests lay the decline in the West Indian sugar industry. Beet sugar, manufactured in Europe in ever greater quantities, in the early 1880s had overtaken Caribbean cane sugar production, which had resulted in driving down prices in the London market to as little as S13s.³⁰⁰ Since they could achieve a higher price in the United States, West Indian producers had exported increasing quantities to America. This had kept the industry alive but in 1895 America favoured several non-British producing countries by introducing preferential duties on their sugars.³⁰¹ While West Indian planters were being squeezed out of their American market, they found it difficult to compete with European beet sugar manufacturers who also received financial support from their governments, so-called bounties. London, meanwhile, did not want to interfere in the free market.

West Indian sugar producers struggled to finance their operations and West Indian sugar workers struggled to make a living. The low sugar prices had kept wages low and early in 1896 estate workers in St Kitts demanded an increase. Their claim unmet, they went on strike. This turned into a riot. They set alight cane fields and an angry crowd stormed through Basseterre, breaking streetlamps and looting shops. A British warship lying off Basseterre dispatched marines. The riot act was read. The marines fired on the crowd, killing three people. The next day, on 17 February, the unrest spread to Nevis. On several estates angry workers set fire to cane fields. The Administrator requested troops from St Kitts. They came and occupied Charlestown, martial law was declared and a curfew imposed. In Nevis and in St Kitts the conflict lessened over the next few days but it spread to other Caribbean islands. The protests which had grown out of the general economic depression resulted in the British government establishing a Royal Commission to study the situation in the West Indies and to make recommendations.

The then manager of Pinney's and Clarke's gave evidence to the Commission. Robert Glegg, born in Scotland in 1856, a former military man, had been a clerk for a West India merchant in Glasgow and for the past 21 years had been continuously employed by James Ewing & Co in Demerara, St Kitts and Nevis. He had married a St Kitts-born woman, Maria Louisa Whatley, with whom he had four children. An experienced planter, he oversaw both Pinney's, then owned by Ewing's Sugar Estate Co Ltd, and Clarke's, owned by James Ewing & Co of Glasgow.

Glegg began his submission by informing the Commission of the cost of production of sugar on each estate:

Average cost for the last eleven years (1886-1896)

	Average Crop (tons)	Cost per ton	Cost per ton less offal
Pinney's	326	£12:4:11	£10:12:10
Clarke's	112	£11:11:11	£10:2:10

³⁰⁰ Richardson, BC *Caribbean Migrants* p173, citing JH Galloway *The sugar cane industry: an historical geography from its origin to 1914* Cambridge University Press 1989 p132 and Noel Deerr *The History of Sugar* Chapman and Hall, London 1949 p531

By the late 1890s monthly exports from the German customs area amounted to 31,642,200 kg in September 1897 and rose to 50,936,900 kg the following September. German sugar works used a variety of innovative techniques to manufacture a wide selection of products. These included crystallised and granulated sugars of varying grades; Kandis (sugar candy or rock candy); sugar sticks and cubes; Melis (a slightly yellow product); Farin (a darker sugar made early in the refining process); special confectionery sugars; liquid, crushed (pilé) and finely ground, even powdery sugars (UKNA, CO 318/293 Extract from the Reichs-Anzeiger No 243 of 13 October 1898).

³⁰¹ Dyde, Brian *Out of the Crowded Vagueness* p171

Average for the last four years (1893-1896)

	Average Crop (tons)	Cost per ton	Cost per ton less offal
Pinney's	350	£10:14:7	£9:10:3
Clarke's	100	£10:10:8	£9:13:11

He stated that by making economies, the cost per ton had been reduced over the past four years which meant that they had just broken even and did not earn anything for the owners. It was not possible to reduce the costs any further. He had tried to diversify by planting thousands of 'Arabian coffee' trees at 600 ft elevation but the experiment had not succeeded: the trees grew in sheltered places but had died in the open land.

The people who lived at Pinney's were mostly the remnants of the 'coolie immigrants', the labourers imported from India in the 1870s. Wages for men was 10d to 1s per day; for women 5d or 6d per day. Workers on the estates got free land for growing provisions. On the two estates about one third of the workforce was unemployed (about 130 people), with more hands due to be laid off after the crop had been taken in, leaving fewer than a hundred. The owners, like other planters in the island, had instructed that no more land was to be planted. Glegg foresaw that the managers, overseers and attorneys and their families were also going to be made redundant, with nowhere to go. The whole community would be ruined. Generally people had no great desire to emigrate but many had left for the Spanish Main and other places.

Glegg believed that sugar production could survive in St Kitts and Nevis, especially if central factories were established. Many peasant proprietors with two acres or less grew sugar and brought it to the estate mill to be processed 'on shares'.³⁰² Some sugar was sold locally, some was collected by merchants and sent to Canada.

He wanted to see the United States impose a tax on bounty-produced sugar although that would only help for a short while until the US developed its own sugar production. Equally, he asked that the British government supported the West Indian sugar industry by imposing duties on bounty-produced imports but in the immediate future relief was needed 'to save all ... from absolute ruin and beggary'.

In 1897 sugar production ceased on 'Pinneys and Clarkes'. The ripe cane was harvested but, for the time being, no more new plants were set.³⁰³ Apparently these were the only two estates in Nevis which ceased production. Robert Glegg died at the end of that year, on 25 December 1897.³⁰⁴

In 1899 a hurricane ripped through the island but it appears to have spared the works at Mountravers. It did, however, destroy some of those on nearby estates. The neighbours did not re-erect their works but instead sent their cane for processing to 'Pinney's'. As Glegg had stated in his evidence to the Royal Commission, the facilities at Pinney's were also used by 160 'peasant cultivators' who grew cane on small tracts of land without means of processing their crops. By then cane growing had resumed on both the Ewings's estates, Mountravers and Clarke's, but the Ewings also got involved in an initiative aimed at trying out new export crops. Once again, this placed Mountravers at the forefront of agricultural developments in Nevis.

The Ewings had given over some of the land to the government's Agricultural Department to run an 'experimental station'. By 1901 it was in a position to distribute 'economic plants' to other cultivators in

³⁰² Evidence To the Royal Commission by Revd Jones who served the parishes of St George's and St John's, suggested that the small sugar growers paid the estates one quarter of the sugar processed, which was 'possibly too large a proportion' (No 645, p218)

³⁰³ Hubbard, Vincent K *Swords, Ships and Sugar* pp188-89

³⁰⁴ Robert Glegg's widow Maria Louisa Whatley, born 1859 in St Kitts, died in 1952 (Gleggs from Toddstack Farm website, accessed 14 May 2023).

the island.³⁰⁵ This was very timely because in 1898 West Indian planters had lost their North American market. After introducing taxes unfavourable to British colonies, sugar-producing Puerto Rico had become an American territory and in an effort to protect their own industry, the United States had closed their market to the British product.³⁰⁶ The establishment of agricultural trials, no doubt, were in response to the recommendations made by the Royal Commission. It had recommended that Nevis should diversify into growing cotton and a variety of tropical fruits rather than rely on sugar as its sole export crop. At the same time the commissioners had advocated land reform to benefit small peasant farmers and to do away with share-cropping. The island also needed to modernise its production and establish its own sugar factory.³⁰⁷

It may be no coincidence that in 1901 the Ewings talked of pulling out of Nevis. Their main business interests lay in Jamaica and they did not want to continue the 'worry and anxiety connected with smaller estates situated far apart from them'. Humphrey Crum Ewing claimed that his father 'was quite determined to abandon Pinney's Estate and transfer some of the machinery thence to his Jamaica property' but, fearing that it would 'be a finishing blow to the little community in Nevis', Ewing approached the Colonial Office and laid out the company's plan: if the government paid a small annual sum, the Ewings, in turn, would hand over their works - either to a local committee, or to the government's Agricultural Department which had already set up the 'experimental station'.

The Colonial Office did not take up the offer. Although one internal memo pointed out that the Magistrate of Nevis had stated that 'the closing of this factory will be little short of a disaster as it is the best and largest employer in the island', another made the point that its closure was going to be followed by many others and would land the British taxpayers with a heavy burden:

I am afraid this is very serious for this small island but we cannot start subsidising out of date works of this kind and the inhabitants must adjust themselves to the changed conditions. This is only the first shut-down – we have plenty more next year, and to try to stop them with Imperial funds would be an endless undertaking.³⁰⁸

A few months later Humphrey Crum Ewing made another attempt at getting financial assistance for Pinney's Estate. This time he met with officials at the Colonial Office. He was told that the Office had received information from St Kitts that Pinney's was 'virtually out of cultivation', and it was made clear to him that any grant aid would depend on 'full cultivation' of the estate and continuing support for the 160 peasant cultivators. Ewing corrected the Colonial Office; the crop on Pinney's Estate consisted of ratoons, not new plants, and was 'very large for a St Kitts-Nevis estate'. He expected next year's crop to be even better. Although Ewing could not promise to fully cultivate the estate in future, his personal intervention was successful. The Colonial Office allowed the company remission of taxes for the years 1902 and 1903.³⁰⁹

For the time being the Ewings' enterprise remained the 'best and largest employer in the island' but their manager, Paitfield Mills, apparently found it difficult to recruit workers. One of his wife's cousins –

³⁰⁵ UKNA, CO 152/268: H Crum Ewing, Gartur, Stirling, to CP Lucas, Colonial Office, 18 October 1901, and James Ewing & Co, 106 Bath Street, Glasgow, to Colonial Office, 18 October 1901

³⁰⁶ Dyde, Brian *Out of the Crowded Vagueness* p171

³⁰⁷ Olwig, Karen Fog *Global Culture* p95, citing GC Merrill *The Historical Geography of St Kitts and Nevis* pp97-8

Attempts by Mr Estridge, a St Kitts planter, to diversify to tobacco were thwarted by the Royal Gardens, Kew. In their assessment West Indian growers, except Cubans, had never been able to produce good plants; they lacked the 'skill and judgment' (UKNA, CO 152/241: Royal Gardens, Kew, to CP Lucas, Colonial Office, 4 March 1898).

³⁰⁸ UKNA, CO 152/268: H Crum Ewing, Gartur, Stirling, to CP Lucas, Colonial Office, 18 October 1901, and James Ewing & Co, 106 Bath Street, Glasgow, to Colonial Office, 18 October 1901

³⁰⁹ UKNA, CO 152/276 No 27056: Correspondence 1 and 11 July 1902, and 15 August 1902; No 34537 James Ewing to CP Lucas 18 August 1902

then a young child - later remembered that 'Pinneys was a hard place for labour and men had to come all the way from Gingerland.'³¹⁰

When beet sugar flooded the European market, prices for West Indian sugar had fallen below the cost of production. In the 1890s people from all over St Kitts and Nevis had got together to seek help: 'proprietors, lessees, managers, overseers, and artisans engaged in the sugar industry ... and merchants, tradesmen, and other residents ...' They petitioned the British government to secure the abolition of bounties which continental governments paid their beet producers.³¹¹ Recognising that European beet sugar had made West Indian cane sugar uncompetitive and finally setting aside its objections to interfere in the market, in 1902 the British government called a convention in Brussels at which it was decided to abolish the financial incentives which had supported the European beet industry. While this was a positive development, it did not have an immediate effect. It took until the First World War for sugar prices to recover to their 1880s level.³¹²

Julia Huggins

By the turn of the century Peter Thomas Huggins's daughter Julia was the only remaining member of the family who inhabited the Great House. Behind the house lay her garden,³¹³ and about a kilometre up the hill, at Woodland, lived another woman, Miss Hodge. Nothing is known about her, except that some time in the early 1900s, possibly after she died, her property was purchased by an agricultural instructor who had previously lived in Barbados. John O'Donald Maloney already owned various estates in Nevis,³¹⁴ and for £100 he bought Woodland. 'Very cheap', Julia Huggins commented. A hundred years earlier, with a slightly bigger yard, her grandfather had paid £2,000 for the property.

During Julia Huggins's time John Symonds Udal was the Chief Justice of the Leeward Islands. An antiquarian, folklorist and amateur historian, he became interested in Mountravers through a skull found at the old Pinney residence in Dorset, Bettiscombe. He first visited Julia Huggins in February 1903.³¹⁵ After this they corresponded, and in one of her letters she mentioned a red coat that had fallen out of the ceiling.³¹⁶ Most likely this was one JPP had hidden there on his departure from Nevis in 1783. In another letter Julia Huggins denied the intriguing story of the shooting of a 'servant who witnessed the securing of the valuables' as 'just an old tradition without any real facts to verify it.' This was a more recent event that had taken place during the Huggins period of ownership, but she informed Udal that 'all those who could have given most information on the subject have all passed away.'³¹⁷

³¹⁰ Maynard, Norman 'Nevis at the Turn of the Century' in *NHCS Newsletter* (November 1987)

³¹¹ The people of St Kitts and Nevis had also petitioned the British government asking to be freed from having to pay certain types of taxes. This was granted for one year only (HoCOP 1897 (C.8359) 'West Indies (Sugar). Correspondence relating to the sugar industry in the West Indies': Governor Sir WF Hayes Smith, 5 February 1895, 9 and 13 April 1895, 10 May 1895, 20 October 1895, 20 November 1895, 2 and 27 October 1896).

In addition to requesting remission of taxes, the inhabitants of Pollards Village sought financial assistance from the King. Citing low wages and the distress in the island, in 1902 James Clarke Taylor wrote a communal appeal which was signed by over 570 'agricultural labourers and the descendants of emancipated slaves' on behalf of all the labouring people in the island. They wanted better health care and a share of uncultivated land for growing subsistence and export crops (UKNA, CO 152/276 No 16086 Memorial to the King by James Clarke Taylor, Pollards Village, 8 April 1902).

³¹² Richardson, BC *Caribbean Migrants* p173, citing Noel Deerr *The History of Sugar* p531

³¹³ ECSCRN, CR Register of Titles Book 2 f6 (Courtesy of WA Pinney)

³¹⁴ Rogers, George K 'A Taxonomic Revision of the Genus *Agave*...in the Lesser Antilles' in *Brittonia* Vol 52 (July 2000) pp218-33

Among the properties John O'Donald Maloney owned in Nevis was Hamilton Estate, which he bought in 1911 from Emile Sopenne Delisle and sold in 1915 to Hastings Charles Huggins (Robinson, D 'A short history of Hamilton Plantation' in *NHCS Newsletter* No 26 (May 1992) pp4-6, citing information drawn from ECSCRN, Common Records). In 1924 John O'Donald Maloney was known to have owned Clifton estate (Watkins, Frederick Henry *Handbook of the Leeward Island*).

³¹⁵ Udal, JS 'The Story of the Bettiscombe Skull' in *Dorset Natural History & Antiquarian Field Club* Vol 31 (1910) pp176-202

³¹⁶ PP, DM 1822/14: Julia Huggins, Mountravers, to Mr Udal, 7 May 1907

³¹⁷ PP, WI Box G: Julia Huggins to Mr Udal, 25 January 1904

When Judge Udal visited Julia Huggins, he found some mahogany furniture in ‘the old and roomy house at Mountravers’. The house was then

picturesquely terraced by lichen-covered and moss-grown steps flanked by old iron railings, with the solidly-built stone “slave-dungeon” long disused, a little to one side below the house; whilst the old-fashioned entrance-hall has many features of the “Chippendale period” in it, as shown by its old mahogany cupboards on the walls. From here, through the arch-way, may be seen the quaint old garden, now somewhat over-grown, perhaps, but restful and charming, in which many rare and beautiful tropical trees and shrubs are still growing in profusion ... Near the centre of the garden stands an old drip-stone, an obelisk in shape, which formed - and in many places does so still - the sole West Indian filter.³¹⁸

The drip stone, which was fed from a gutter running off the wooden house, can still be found near the ruined Great House but the building which Judge Udal called the ‘slave dungeon’ no longer exists; it was dynamited by a subsequent owner. It is unlikely that this structure was ever used to lock up people as they were generally held in the sick house. Being so close to the house, most likely this vaulted structure was an earthquake-proof hurricane shelter built by the Hugginses.

The mahogany furniture which Judge Udal mentioned included property that had once belonged to ‘old Mr Pinney’: a large desk with brass top, four chairs and a large armchair.³¹⁹ In her will Julia Huggins left the desk to Charles C Chittick, one of her executors, and the chairs to Judge Udal. He was also promised ‘the table with claw feet in the passage’. The principal beneficiaries of her will were her nieces Isabel Huggins and Jessie Annie Gordon (she lived in New Malden in Surrey) and her nephew Edward Beresford Gordon.³²⁰

A gravestone in the cemetery at St Thomas Lowland shows that ‘Julia Huggins of Mountravers’ died on 24 June 1910. Baptised together with her sister Jessie in 1834, she was at least past her mid-seventies.

The white population had lost another of its members. At the beginning of the twentieth century they numbered fewer than one hundred.³²¹

Attempts at improvements

When Julia Huggins died, the estate was rented by James Spencer Hollings. In July 1908 he had begun leasing Mountravers and Clarke’s from the then sole owner, Humphrey Ewing Crum Ewing.³²² Hollings, a London-born widower in his mid-60s, lived at Stoney Grove and in his capacity as a civil engineer³²³ supervised the building of Government House and the restoration of the Bath House.³²⁴ Previously he had made his mark in Montserrat, building bridges and roads and managing an estate that had belonged to his wife’s family, the Sturges.³²⁵

³¹⁸ Udal, JS ‘The Story of the Bettiscombe Skull’ pp188-89

³¹⁹ PP, DM 1822/14: Julia Huggins, Mountravers, to Mr Udal, 7 May 1907

³²⁰ PP, MSS in Red Boxes, Box 38-1: Julia Huggins’s will

³²¹ <http://www.britishonlinearchives.co.uk/9781851172276.php>

³²² ECSCRN, CR 15 f309 and f347

Paitfield Mills acted as attorney for Humphrey Ewing Crum Ewing when he leased Mountravers estate to James Spencer Hollings.

In 1905 Alexander Crum Ewing, the registered proprietor of Clarke’s, Seymours, and Ling’s, then called ‘Clarke’s’, transferred the property to Humphrey Ewing Crum Ewing the Younger. From him James Spencer Hollings of Stoney Grove leased Clarke’s, together with ‘Mountravers or Pinney’s Estate’. The indenture of the lease for ten years began on 1 July 1908 on an initial payment of S£75 pa (ECSCRN, ‘Memorandum of Transfer for a Sale’ dated 1905, with ‘Memorandum of a Lease’ dated 1909).

³²³ <http://www.mocavo.com/Institution-of-Civil-Engineers-1910/158369/210> Document uploaded 11 Nov 2013

³²⁴ Maynard, Norman ‘Nevis at the Turn of the Century’ in *NHCS Newsletter* (November 1987)

³²⁵ <http://www.sturgefamly.com/Discover/THE%20MONTSEERRAT%20CONNECTION.htm>

From Hollings's lease it is apparent that years of under-investment had taken their toll. The eight stables which he rented were 'in good order', but most of the other buildings on Mountravers were run-down: the galvanised roof in the boiling house leaked and was 'much rusted'; the walls of the curing house were out of plumb and the floor was sinking; the blacksmithy (walled and roofed with galvanised iron) had become much worn and insect-eaten, while the walls of the shingled storehouse were damaged and the overseer's house with its three small rooms had fallen into 'very bad order'. Two other small overseers' houses were in an equally poor state, but at least the five-roomed, stone-built and shingled manager's house down at Sharloes was 'in fair habitable condition'.³²⁶ Built in 1817 when Peter Thomas Huggins was putting his mark on the estate, the ruin of the manager's house still stands today.

Not included in the lease were three acres around the Great House at Mountravers, a number of parcels of land on Clarke's, and up to five acres which were planted as a commercial experiment: a nursery for coconut trees. Most likely this grew out of the 'experimental station' set up by the Agricultural Department. As it turned out, the trial was successful, and in about 1910 the lower third of the estate was given over to growing coconuts.³²⁷

'From Charlestown onwards for some two miles', between the road and the sea, palm trees grew along the coast in what was called 'the Pinney coconut plantation'. In fact this was land owned by Humphrey Crum Ewing and included the property that had once belonged to the Bowrins, Paradise Estate. The Ewings had acquired it, along with several other properties in Nevis. While coconut farming had become a growing industry around the island, the oldest plantations were at Pinney's and Paradise. By about 1912 200 acres had been planted in palms in Nevis;³²⁸ by 1920 this increased to 275 acres. Of these 150 had reached bearing stage. The nuts were husked and exported. According to one contemporary publication, it took a million nuts or 730 acres of land to make a factory pay.³²⁹ It is possible that the factory was then already at Sharloes in the area known as Pinney's Yard, although the same publication mentioned only the sugar works:

On the right lie the sugar works of the Pinney's Estate with the estate house, Mountravers, higher up the hill. Higher still and a little further on, lies Belmont and along the left side of the road run the old sugar works of Clarke's Estate now joined to Pinney's.³³⁰

By the 1920s the estate had moved to a mixed economy. Copra was produced at Pinney's Yard from palm trees planted from just east of the yard down to the sea. Cattle grazed on pastures between the edge of this plantation and the Great House while uphill, east of the house, semi-wild goats were allowed to wander.³³¹ In 1924, Pinney's and Clarke's, which measured 1,074 acres in total, were among 49 properties that had survived as working estates.³³²

In 1868 James Spencer Hollings married Edith Mary Sturge (1843-1895), the niece of the Quaker businessman Joseph Sturge, one of the founders of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. Hollings and his wife had five children: two sons and three daughters. His elder son – also called James Spencer Hollings – became a Metallurgical Engineer and director of an iron and steel company, and presumably it was for his son that Hollings senior sought to secure mining rights in Virgin Gorda. On 21 May 1914 Hollings wrote to the Acting Governor, asking him to extend the terms of a three-year lease granted to him the previous year for further twenty years (UKNA, CO 152/341 LI 1914 Vol 3 No 26583 JS Hollings, Stoney Grove to TAV Best, Acting Governor, Antigua, 21 May 1914).

See also the chapter 'Montserrat in 'Botanical Enterprises in the West Indies, 1890-1' in *Bulletin of Miscellaneous Information (Royal Gardens, Kew)* Vol 1891, No 53/54 (1891) pp103-68

³²⁶ Pers. comm., WA Pinney, 20 January 2000, and *The History of Mountravers and Pinney Estates*

³²⁷ Maynard, Norman 'Nevis at the Turn of the Century'

³²⁸ UKNA, CO 152/334 Report for the Blue Book 1911-1912

³²⁹ Burdon, K J *A Handbook of St Kitts-Nevis* p214, p203

Paradise measured 299 acres. In total, Humphrey Crum Ewing's properties in St Thomas Lowland amounted to 1,373 acres.

³³⁰ Burdon, K J *A Handbook of St Kitts-Nevis* p214

³³¹ Small, David *The Modern Pinney's Estate* p9

³³² Watkins, Frederick Henry *Handbook of the Leeward Islands*

In his early days Ewings's manager Paitfield Mills had lived in the manager's house at Sharloes, but later, most likely after Julia Huggins died, he and his wife Maude moved to the Mountravers Great House. A tall, elegant woman, Maude Maynard Mills played an active role in the community. She served as Superintendent of Schools in Nevis, taught fine embroidering and fancy work to the school girls and played the organ at St George's Church in Gingerland. Her sister, Anna Pemberton, also lived at the Great House. She had taken refuge there to escape her clergyman husband's many 'marital infidelities'.³³³

The Millises employed domestic staff, among them a laundress with a young nephew called Albert Powell. Later in life he fondly remembered the splendid balls held in the large room on the middle floor of the house Peter Thomas Huggins had built in the late 1830s - complete with a massive mirror, a very elaborate, marble-inlaid Adams mantelpiece, and a grand piano. Albert Powell also recalled how food was being prepared in what used to be John Pretor Pinney's counting house, while at Christmas the separate kitchen came into its own. Then the cook turned large hams over the massive fire place until they had reached perfection.³³⁴ This picture of convivial socialising in an opulent setting, mixed with comfortable domesticity, was in stark contrast to the prevailing social and economic conditions in the island and elsewhere in the Caribbean.

Some agricultural diversification had taken place, but the West Indian sugar industry had failed to recover. Nevis, in particular, had not got its own sugar factory, as recommended by the Royal Commission, nor had progress been made regarding land reform. The scenes of the 1890s were being replayed in the 1930s when, throughout the Caribbean, workers rioted over wages. People in Nevis joined in, and in 1936 Pinney's Estate burned again. By then some sugar was, once more, being cultivated, and it was the cane that the rioters set alight:

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

Armed troops were called in. They quelled the uprising.³³⁵

A hundred years after Emancipation sugar workers and planters made one last attempt to rescue the Nevis sugar industry. At the beginning of March 1838 the Agricultural and Commercial Society called meetings in Charlestown and in eight villages across the island. Concerned citizens turned out in their hundreds: planters, overseers, managers, 'peasant proprietors', but also shoemakers, druggists, teachers, housewives – the island's economy mattered to them all. They all aired their problems. About 3,000 acres were planted in cotton³³⁶ but the cotton growers, many of whom were women who worked small plots, lacked fertiliser and faced competition from the United States while the sugar producers suffered not only from competition and poor prices but also from outdated technology. Past owners of estates had not installed modern machinery and thereby failed to keep abreast of developments. Now owners of large estates had no money and they could not get credit. The labouring classes in the island suffered hardship caused by widespread unemployment.

The Agricultural and Commercial Society responded by seeking to rehabilitate the sugar industry. It proposed to ask the British government for £70,000 – half of it by way of a loan – to build two small sugar factories in Nevis. One of these was to be erected on the windward side. 28 large planters and 149 small cultivators pledged to keep the factories supplied with cane grown on almost 3,500 acres. Some small farmers, people like Eugenie Daniel from Brazier and Arthur Browne from Low Ground,

³³³ Pers. comm., Margaret Lyman to WA Pinney 1998, with editorial comment by Pinney

³³⁴ Pers. comm., Albert Powell, Nevis, 28 February 1998

³³⁵ Hubbard, Vincent K *Swords, Ships & Sugar* p202

³³⁶ Wright, Neil and Ann 'Hamilton's Sugar Mill, Nevis, Leeward Islands, Eastern Caribbean' in *Industrial Archaeology Review* Vol 13 No 2 (Spring 1991) p120

offered as little as an acre worth of cane, while the Round Hill Estate promised to contribute 300 acres. In all, over 1,300 people supported the Society by signing a petition which the Chairman forwarded to the Colonial Office with assurances that ‘all classes’ in Nevis were ‘willing to cooperate’.³³⁷ The Secretary of State for the Colonies pushed for improving the transport infrastructure – better roads and a pier – while reminding his colleagues in London that ‘a few competent trouble-makers could produce an unpleasant situation quite easily’.

The Colonial Office took no immediate decision.³³⁸ It was awaiting the outcome of a Royal Commission which had been set up in response to the riots that had taken place all over the Caribbean since 1934. Headed by Lord Moyne, between October 1938 and April 1939 commissioners toured the West Indian islands to investigate social and economic conditions. They concluded that landownership was one of the central problems and recommended that the system of share cropping should be replaced by land settlement which ‘should itself be based on a system of mixed farming with sugar cane as the chief crop.’³³⁹ In the early 1930s St Kitts and Nevis had already received loans worth S£18,000 from the Colonial Development Fund³⁴⁰ and the Commission recommended that the same fund should provide a substantial grant to finance the building of a small sugar factory.³⁴¹ As long as they did not have their own proper processing facility planters in Nevis were disadvantaged; in their old-fashioned mills they could make muscovado sugar but to produce better quality sugar they had to ship their canes to the central factory in St Kitts. This had opened in 1912 and had allowed St Kitts to fight the downturn in the sugar industry more successfully than Nevis.³⁴² But the Commissioners’ findings came too late. Later in the year war broke out in Europe and Nevis never got its sugar factory.

When the Agricultural and Commercial Society presented its petition to the Colonial Office it was noted that Humphrey Crum Ewing had transferred his main attention to Jamaica but the claim that he had sold his interests in Nevis was not correct. Sir Gordon Lethem, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, put his colleague right: ‘Crum Ewing is of course still a land owner of the Pinney’s Estate though he does practically nothing with it.’ Dismissively he added: ‘I should correct myself and say he seems to have had a little more done within the last year or two than for some time previously.’³⁴³

Two years later Humphrey Crum Ewing did, after all, sell the estate. At that time Maude Maynard Mills and her sister were still living at Mountravers. Maude was, by then, widowed. She died in June 1942 at the age of 83.³⁴⁴ After her death her sister went to live at her former home, the Hermitage in the parish of St John Figtree.

³³⁷ UKNA, CO 152/479/12: Frederic Henville, Charlestown, to Sir Gordon Lethem, 18 March 1938

³³⁸ UKNA, CO 152/479/12: Sir Gordon Lethem, Edinburgh, to H Beckett, 28 July 1838

³³⁹ Merrill, GC *The Historical Geography of St Kitts and Nevis* p98

³⁴⁰ In 1930 loans worth over S£14,000 had been made to St Kitts and Nevis for building concrete houses, erecting an ice-making and cold storage plant in support of the fruit and vegetable trade with Canada. In the following year almost £4,000 was made available for the land settlement scheme in Nevis. By April 1937 only about a quarter of the loan had been repaid (HoCPC 1938-1939 (37) ‘Abstract account of the Colonial Development Fund for the year ended 31st March, 1938, with a report of the Comptroller and Auditor-General’ p14).

Apparently the land settlement scheme which was in progress in Nevis took the form of facilitating the purchase of land by existing tenants rather than provide land for new people. In the first half of 1939 a further three estates were acquired for land settlement (HoCPC 1938-1939 (Cmd.6070) ‘Report on Labour Conditions in the West Indies by Major G St J Orde Browne OBE’ p109).

³⁴¹ Merrill, GC *The Historical Geography of St Kitts and Nevis* p98

³⁴² Major G St J Orde Browne OBE, the labour advisor for the Secretary of State, had a very wide remit and between 1937 and 1940 not only toured the West Indies but also West Africa and Northern Rhodesia. He visited the Leeward Islands briefly, between 19 December 1938 and 8 January 1939. He presented his report into ‘Labour Conditions in the West Indies’ in July 1939 and produced similar reports for West Africa and Northern Rhodesia (HoCPC 1938-1939 (Cmd.6070) ‘Report on Labour Conditions in the West Indies by Major G St J Orde Browne OBE’ p107).

³⁴³ UKNA, CO 152/479/12: Sir Gordon Lethem, Government House, Antigua, to ?Stockdale, 6 January 1939

³⁴⁴ NHCS, St Thomas Lowland Burials 1827-1957 No 2279

Paitfield Mills, the manager, died on 4 February 1930 at the age of 73. He was buried in the cemetery in St Thomas Lowland where his grave can still be seen.

After changing title twice, in 1946 Pinney's Estate was sold to a Montserrat-born entrepreneur, Walter Edston Wade.³⁴⁵ Having begun his working life as a semi-literate labourer, in the 1930s he had gone into inter-island trading and, exporting vegetables and donkeys as far south as Trinidad, had proven himself a successful businessman. To ship his goods, he built altogether four boats and although all of them came to grief on various reefs and rocks, he made so much money that he was able to buy two estates and a grocery store in Montserrat. Intent on enlarging his farming enterprises, he moved to Nevis where he acquired Pinney's estate from a Dr McPherson. Wade continued to grow coconuts and to keep stock. Perhaps remembering that Nevisians had torched the Pinney cane fields a decade earlier, he imported many labourers from Montserrat and built houses for them on the estate.

He exported the copra, as well as horses, mules and cattle to Barbados. So successful was Wade that he was able to buy several more properties in Nevis, among them Belmont and Tower Hill. A committed Christian, Wade is remembered as 'distinguished in dress and colourful in speech. His favourite colour was red, but he himself wore khaki suits and helmets, the hat associated with plantations'.³⁴⁶ However, the most visible industrial signs of sugar-producing plantations, the steam engine and the mill, Wade apparently removed from Pinney's Yard and sold to the Japanese for scrap. The boiler which still lies in the sea off Pinney's Beach is said to have come from the estate.

During Walter Wade's ownership Mountravers was mentioned in several post-war publications. One of them judged the plantation great houses in Nevis as not having 'any great architectural merit' and stated that they were all in ruins - except for 'one empty wing of Mount Travers'. Unfortunately the writer did not give any further detail.³⁴⁷ Mary Pomeroy's description of 1956 concentrated on the splendour of the Great House but, repeating Udal, she also touched on the brutal era of the plantation's history:

High on the slopes of the mountain to the right, the ruins of Mountravers conspicuously perch among green fields. This splendid Great House was lived in as recently as the 1920s when it was magnificently furnished with original Chippendale and Sheraton pieces and fine old English china. It has since been shorn of its glory; gone are the polished parquet floors, the split pediments, the marble Adam mantelpieces and pine panelling, but the proud shell still stands. However the old slave prison has been very well preserved ...³⁴⁸

Today Nevisians claim that Walter Wade was responsible for some of the destruction at the Mountravers Great House site, including the dynamiting of the so-called slave dungeon and the removal of valuable cut stone.³⁴⁹ One piece of this may be found in the back wall of the Wesleyan Holiness Church in Charlestown: a date stone from 1812, inscribed 'E.H.'. A skull and crossbones motif appears to have been scratched on later – perhaps by someone who remembered Edward Huggins's role in the 1810 flogging of the Mountravers men and women.

Said to have been a millionaire, Walter Wade died in Nevis in May 1971 at the age of 81.³⁵⁰ In 1974 his family sold the estate. Since then different parts of Mountravers or Pinney's Estate have changed hands until the Great House site was bought by a descendent of an American branch of the Pinney family and the rest of the land by Newfound Developers Group, a Canadian corporation.

³⁴⁵ Pinney, WA *The History of Mountravers and Pinney Estates*, citing ECSCRN, Book 5 f72, Book 6 f7 and f72

³⁴⁶ Fergus, Howard A *Gallery Montserrat* pp69-71

³⁴⁷ Acworth, AW *Treasure in the Caribbean* p19

³⁴⁸ Pomeroy, Mary *The Island of Nevis* p25

Mary Slater visited Nevis, perhaps in the 1960s, and may have seen Mountravers but it is also possible that she just paraphrased Mary Pomeroy's original observations: 'Opposite Pinney's Beach are the Mount Travers ruins, one empty wing stripped of Adam mantelpieces and pine panelling, the slave prison well preserved' (Slater, Mary *The Caribbean Islands* p154).

³⁴⁹ Pers. comm., Spencer Howell, Nevis, 14 June 2006

³⁵⁰ Fergus, Howard A *Gallery Montserrat* p69

Developments since the 1990s

Since the 1990s intermittent attempts have been made to advance the tourist potential of the estate. So far one developer's dream of a holiday village complete with fake windmill did not proceed beyond the planning stage while Newfound Developers' plans to erect modernist living pods with infinity pools and access to a communal golf course have remained a vision on the architects' drawing boards.

In the meantime the bush has gradually encroached on the historic remains. Recognising the importance of the estate to the history of Nevis, in 2008 the Nevis government took several selected plots of land into public ownership: the slave village site near Ward's boundary line, Sharloes/Pinney's Yard sugar works, ruins at Hope Estate, 'Haynes's works', Nugent's/Harpies Village and the land where the chapel-of-ease known as Scarborough's Church stood.³⁵¹ This church built on Peter Thomas Huggins's order was still in use until 1900,³⁵² but by the 1990s not much was left of the building. 'Today in a field, on what is now known as Pinney's Estate, a wall and some fallen masonry are pointed out by the old people in Nevis as the church "where slaves used to gather"'.³⁵³ In the early years of the new millennium, even these remains could only be located with great difficulty.

To read other chapters, please copy this link and paste it into your search engine:
<https://seis.bristol.ac.uk/~emceee/mountraversplantationcommunity.html>

February 2024

Copyright © Christine Eickelmann 2016-2024

Except for the use of brief quotations or brief excerpts with proper attribution to the source, this study or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever, nor any work derived from it, without the express written permission of the author. For permission, please contact c.e.eickelmann@bristol.ac.uk.

³⁵¹ For information about the fight to preserve the historic remains, see the following reports which are deposited in the NHCS archive: Small, D and C Eickelmann 'The Historic Pinney's Estate, Nevis – Preserving Selected Sites: a Short Report'; Small, D 'Pinney's Estate, Nevis – Notes on Site Plan'; Small, D 'The Modern Pinney's Estate, Nevis: An Historical Account of Seven Sites'; Newland, Cassy, David Small and Annsophie Witkin 'Pinney's Estate, Nevis: An Archaeological Evaluation of Seven Selected Sites'

³⁵² Pinney, WA *The History of Mountravers and Pinney Estates*

³⁵³ Walker, GPJ *The Life of Daniel Gatewood Davis* Chapter 2