

## PART 2

### The enslaved people

#### Chapter 1

#### The early beginnings, and how Proctor's and Charlot's plantations became Mountravers

*'God has not prepared Heaven for the lazy and sloathful.'*

Azariah Pinney, 1708<sup>1</sup>

This chapter introduces the main characters who, over several decades, built up and consolidated the various constituent parts of Mountravers plantation: William Freeman, the Helme brothers, Azariah Pinney, his son John and his daughter-in-law Mary. Although details are scant, the names of many of their enslaved people are known.

They all lived in violent times and faced privation from epidemics, war, hurricanes and droughts. A few of the enslaved people from Charlot's plantations appear to have survived until 1734.



#### ***Proctor's plantation: William Freeman and the Helme brothers***

The earliest names of any of the enslaved people known to have lived on lands that became known as Mountravers can be traced back to a lease of Proctor's plantation, dated February 1680/1. This document lists a number of people: four boys, **Jack Corry, long Will, Crato** and **Will**; two girls called **Jill** and **young Juggy**; and **Phillada, Minno Nanny, Bess, Madam, Hanna** and **Jaspsa**. In addition, one **unnamed woman** was recorded.<sup>2</sup> Two of the boys, Crato and Will, and the two girls Jill and Juggy (also listed as Gell and Jugg) survived for at least twenty years on the plantation. In the early 1680s they lived through hurricanes and droughts<sup>3</sup> and in the early 1690s through epidemics and food shortages. While they grew into adults, their owners changed and died, their friends and fellow perished, more Africans were bought and further land was cleared for growing sugar cane.

The estate they lived on, Proctor's, was named after the original owner, John Proctor. All that is known about him is that in the early 1660s he served as a member of the Nevis Council,<sup>4</sup> and that in his will of 1664 he left a third of the estate each to his wife Joyce, to a man called Robert Moore<sup>5</sup> and to Moore's four children. The ownership of the land was thus divided between six people. It appears that in the 1670s the joint-heirs sold the lease to the plantation to the merchant William Freeman and his business partner

<sup>1</sup> PP, Misc Vols 48 Misc Notes

<sup>2</sup> In the lease of February 1680/1 a second woman may have been listed but the section is illegible (PP, WI Box A).

<sup>3</sup> Hancock, David (ed) *The Letters of William Freeman* p274 Wm Freeman to Robert Helme, 18 July 1682

<sup>4</sup> CSP 1661-1668 No 737 (Courtesy of Brian Littlewood)

<sup>5</sup> Ensign Robert Moore possibly was a child from John Proctor's wife's previous marriage; Robert Moore's son Robert Moore, when selling his share in 1684, referred to his father's or grandfather's legacy. Robert Moore's four children were Robert, Anne, Elizabeth and Proctor John Moore (Courtesy of David Hancock).

Robert Helme.<sup>6</sup> These two, together with a third man, Robert Helme's brother William, shaped Proctor's early known history.

Born in St Kitts in 1645 as the eldest of Colonel William Freeman's eight children, William Freeman was a Creole (that is island-born). His father was among the earliest white settlers and planters of that island and had prospered until the French invasion of 1666.<sup>7</sup> Enterprising and energetic, William Freeman junior branched out and set up businesses in both Montserrat and Nevis. In Montserrat he and a friend, James Bramley, acquired land, and in 1670 the two men went into partnership and started a sugar plantation. By then Freeman had already established himself as a merchant in Nevis and had property connected to his commercial activities: 'a lot and wharf' on the southern side of Charlestown.<sup>8</sup> From a young age he also held public office. From at least 1664 he served as a member of the Nevis Assembly.<sup>9</sup>

In 1672 Freeman became an agent of the Royal African Company (RAC) in Nevis. A man employed by him, Robert Helme, joined Freeman and another merchant, Henry Carpenter, in the RAC agency.<sup>10</sup> About five years Freeman's junior and bound to Freeman for a period of seven years, Robert Helme had emigrated from Gillingham in Dorset to Nevis in 1670.<sup>11</sup> Apart from their involvement in the RAC agency and from jointly leasing Proctor's, William Freeman and Robert Helme also traded together as merchants and had store houses at Morton's Bay in the parish of St Thomas Lowland. By the end of 1677 Robert Helme's younger brother William engaged in running the Nevis-end of the business;<sup>12</sup> Robert had taken him on as an apprentice.<sup>13</sup>

As the headquarters for the RAC in the Leeward Islands, between 1674 and 1685 close to 11,000 enslaved Africans (perhaps as many as 17,000) were imported into Nevis.<sup>14</sup> While the local planters were

<sup>6</sup> According to David Hancock, William Freeman and Robert Helme bought the lease on Proctor's and Mountain on the eve of Freeman's departure from Nevis in 1674 or 1675 (D Hancock "A World of Business to Do": William Freeman and the Foundation of England's Commercial Empire, 1645-1707' in *William and Mary Quarterly* 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, Vol 62 No 1 (January 2000) p6 and p14).

<sup>7</sup> Some historians are confused as to whether one or two men by the name of William Freeman existed. Carl and Roberta Bridenbaugh, for instance, concluded after 'a careful reading of the Coppie Booke' that there was only one, who 'was sometimes called Captain and at others Major' (Bridenbaugh, C and R Bridenbaugh *No Peace Beyond the Line* p180 and pp321-25). However, all the evidence points towards there having been two men of the same name, father and son. William Freeman senior was said to have come from Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk. Described as a 'soldier of fortune and an adventurer, partly military, partly mercantile', he arrived in St Kitts in 1629 and acquired a 270-acre estate, which he lost to the French in 1666. He failed to regain the property when the English returned. He died in England in 1682 and left his property to his eldest son, William (Geoffrey Tyack *The Freemans of Fawley Court and their Buildings*, citing, among others, Strickland Papers D1245/FF30). The son, who was also known as Captain Freeman, died in October 1707 at the age of 62. His wife Elizabeth survived him (VL Oliver *History of Antigua* 1894 Vol 1 pp270-72). For a full account of the Freeman family see David Hancock's Introduction to *The Letters of William Freeman*.

<sup>8</sup> ECSCRN, CR 1707-1728 Folio number illegible, about f61

<sup>9</sup> Hancock, D "A World of Business" p11 fn17

<sup>10</sup> Robert Helme was agent for the RAC until he was replaced by Thomas Belchamber, who then acted jointly with Henry Carpenter (JC Jeaffreson (ed) *A Young Squire* Vol 2 pp249-50 and p258 Christopher Jeaffreson to Mr Vickers, St Kitts undated, and to Colonel Hill, St Kitts, 20 January 1685/6).

<sup>11</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* p xvii

<sup>12</sup> Ryland Stapleton MSS, 3.1 1675-1682 Freeman Accounts

<sup>13</sup> Hancock, D (ed) *The Letters* p151 Wm Freeman to William Helme, 10 March 1679/80

According to David Hancock, Robert was the only son of Robert Helme of Gillingham, Dorset, and his first wife, Alice (*The Letters*, Appendix I). However, the Helme family tree reveals that Robert's second wife Mary Card also had a son called Robert and that he was the RAC agent who married Sarah Baxter (VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 5 Helme Pedigree).

<sup>14</sup> Scholars have given various accounts of the number of Africans landed at Nevis. One source has it that in over more than four decades, from 1674 to 1716, a total of 8,445 Africans were imported. This would have meant an annual average of only 196 people (David W Galenson *Traders, Planters, and Slaves* pp94-5 Imports by Royal African Company, citing UKNA, T 70/936-59). Another source claims that records show that, on average, six to seven thousand enslaved people passed through Nevis every year up to 1730 (VK Hubbard *NHCS Newsletter* No 39 (November 1995) p5). David Hancock has produced what appears to be the most accurate figure. He has used several sources, but between them there are discrepancies in the number of people who were 'delivered to Nevis Factory and Leeward Islands' Depots'. According to Davies, during the period 1674 to 1685 a total of 6,604 African captives were delivered, while Eltis shows a total of 10,930 as recorded and as many as 17,046 as 'recorded, imputed and estimated'. For a period of six years, 1679 to 1684, David Hancock took figures from Freeman's Letterbook and documents in the T 70 series at the National Archives and, setting his own figures against Davies's, has come up with 500 more than Davies: at least 4,310 against Davies's 3,813 (D Hancock *The Letters* pp xxx-xxxi and Appendices IIA and IIB, citing David Eltis 'The British Atlantic

satisfied with their supply of workers, buyers from other Leeward Island colonies complained about being disadvantaged: they had to shoulder the cost of travelling to and from Nevis and only learned of the deliveries after the resident planters had already taken their pick.<sup>15</sup> RAC agents were even better placed. Before the local buyers could choose, they would already have selected the very best people for themselves, and it is likely that this is why about a quarter of the Proctor people survived for relatively long periods: from the outset they were particularly fit and strong.

William Freeman went to London in the mid-1670s to settle there,<sup>16</sup> but just before he left he bought a man called **Valentine**. Being 'very stout', he was intended to be trained as a cooper but, when it turned out that he was left-handed, Valentine was deemed 'not fit for that purpose' and was swapped with a man from Montserrat, **Bando**. He belonged to Freeman's partner, James Bramley. Bando's training as a cooper cost Freeman 1,000 pounds of sugar – equivalent to an RAC agent's basic salary for two months<sup>17</sup> - but when Bando returned to the Montserrat plantation as a fully-fledged cooper, Bramley refused to pay for his training in Nevis, and for years Freeman and Bramley squabbled over the cost. Three facts are noteworthy here: that enslaved men were skilled in trades such as coopering as early as the 1670s (in contrast, in Barbados a law of 1670 prohibited enslaved people from participating in any craft other than sugar-making),<sup>18</sup> that they were sent from Montserrat to Nevis for their training, and that some workers were relocated either on a long-term or a short-term basis between islands. Freeman and Bramley also swapped at least two other individuals, **Nero** and **Petter**.<sup>19</sup> Planters like Freeman who had properties in different islands could adjust their plantations' requirements by transferring their labourers; for the enslaved people, of course, being shifted to another island meant having to leave friends and family behind and, once more, having to get accustomed to a new environment. If they returned - like Bando - they took with them not only new skills but also a range of experiences that they could share with their friends. Therefore, among enslaved people in the Leeward Islands an exchange of information, ideas and possibly even trade goods occurred early on in the history of plantation slavery.

In March 1677/8 a census was taken in Nevis. This revealed that 3,849 enslaved people lived in the island. Of these, a relatively large number, 46, worked on Proctor's.<sup>20</sup> The total count on Proctor's would have included the Proctor/Moore people who were leased with the land<sup>21</sup> and anyone who worked in Freeman's and Helme's storehouses at Morton's Bay.

Among the 46 enslaved people on Proctor's would have been those Helme is known to have bought not long before the census took place. During a period of almost two years Helme built up his workforce and purchased men, women and children from five different vessels.

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Slave Trade', Table 10-1, pp197-98; and Eltis *et al* (eds) WEB DuBois Institute Dataset of Slaving Voyages (CD-ROM version), New York 1998; and KG Davies *Royal African Company* Appendix III p363).

<sup>15</sup> Bridenbaugh, C and R Bridenbaugh *No Peace Beyond the Line* p256, citing *Acts of Assembly, Passed in the Charibee Leeward Islands*, 49-50; KG Davies *Royal African Company*, 294-5, 311; UKNA T 70/646; and T 70/936-42

<sup>16</sup> Carl and Roberta Bridenbaugh state that William Freeman returned to England in 1678 (*No Peace Beyond the Line* p180 and pp321-25) but by then he was, quite clearly, already in England. According to David Hancock, Freeman left in late 1674 or early 1675 to serve in London as the personal agent to his sister's brother-in-law, William Stapleton (*The Letters* p xxi).

<sup>17</sup> In addition to an annual salary of 6,000 pounds of sugar, an RAC agent would have received a commission (D Hancock "A World of Business" p13). For the workings of the Royal African Company and the privileges enjoyed by its agents, see David Hancock's Introduction to *The Letters* pp xvii-xviii

<sup>18</sup> Bridenbaugh, C and R Bridenbaugh *No Peace Beyond the Line* p328 fn33

<sup>19</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* p17 Wm Freeman to Col Edmund Stapleton [Montserrat], 19 August 1678, Wm Freeman to William Fox, Montserrat, 20 August 1678, Wm Freeman to Robert Helme, Nevis, September 1678, and Wm Freeman to John Bramley, 13 August 1682

<sup>20</sup> David Hancock has used the figure of 46 negroes ("A World of Business" pp14-5 fn28). These 46 people were listed in the 1677/8 census by Robert Helme in Edward Bridgewater's company but Robert Helme, with Thomas Ridgeway, also appeared as a householder in Captain Burr's company. This may suggest that neither Robert Helme was then living on the plantation, nor his brother William. According to the census, William Helme was in Captain John Hughes's company. By the time the census was taken in March 1677/8, William Freeman had left Nevis (VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 3).

<sup>21</sup> PP, WI Box O-5 (Courtesy of David Hancock); also WI Boxes A and B

The first known individual Robert Helme acquired was a boy. Helme bought the child on 4 December 1674 from the slaver *Allepine*. On his own account he paid 3,000 pounds of sugar for the boy, and jointly with William Freeman he paid 3,800 pounds of sugar for a man who was probably intended to work in their storehouses at Morton's Bay. The boy and the man were chosen from a shipload of 94 men, 79 women, 11 boys and 8 girls.<sup>22</sup> Before the year was out both Helme and Freeman bought more Africans: Helme acquired eleven women and four boys and, just before he left for England, Freeman purchased six men, six women and 'a suckling child' - one of three who arrived on this particular vessel, the *Charles*. The buyers could choose from 263 people: 106 men, 126 women, 19 boys and 12 girls. From the next vessel, the *Industry*, 312 people were sold, while the captain, Humphrey Polgreen, claimed another six. The *Industry* had no girls on board; buyers could take their pick from 84 men, 123 women and five boys. Helme bought three of the boys, as well as two men and a woman. These purchases were accounted for on 24 May 1675,<sup>23</sup> and the next a few months later, on 22 January 1675/6. From Captain Steward Dare's slaver, the *Hawke*, Helme bought another man and five women. It was noted in the RAC account that of the 72 men on board one man had died and three of the 75 women. The *Hawke* also carried a small number of children: four boys and three girls.<sup>24</sup>

From one of the vessels that came to Nevis Robert Helme made only one purchase. In February 1675 he bought a 'suckling child' from the *James*, a slaver which had arrived from New Calabar. On board were 28 men, 26 women, 13 boys and 5 girls, but the infant was sold separately from them. While Helme claimed this 'suckling child' as his, the other Africans were divided up among 29 different buyers in the island. Given the utter ruthlessness with which buyers would separate shipmates, it is not surprising that the child would have been sold on its own, but it is surprising that the infant was sold and not given away as an 'extra' and that it was worth 500 pounds of sugar.<sup>25</sup> Raising this vulnerable child until it became productive would cost money - nursing an infant for eight months came to £6 -<sup>26</sup> and there was no guarantee that the youngster would survive long enough to be of value to either Helme's household or the plantation. This 'suckling child', therefore, represented a most unusual long-term investment. If the purchase was not based on commercial consideration, Helme's motivation to buy this infant may have been to placate a grieving mother whose baby had died. In that case his action was rather more charitable than one might have expected from a planter - as long as the child he acquired was actually an orphan. If its mother lived and was sold to someone else in the island, the purchasing of this child was just another inhumane deed.

In all, during the period December 1674 to January 1675/6 Robert Helme added to the plantation three men, 18 women, eight boys and this 'suckling child'. They cost a total of 47,500 pounds of sugar. Freeman's own purchases amounted to six men, six women and a suckling child, worth altogether 43,200 pounds of sugar. The fact that these men who could easily cream off the best would choose to buy two very young infants goes against all accepted notions of seventeenth century planters' buying preferences.

<sup>22</sup> UKNA, T 70/936 and David Eltis *et al* (eds) *The Transatlantic Slave Trade CD-ROM Voyage No 9998*

The Africans sold in the 1670s in Nevis cost about double as much as English political prisoners who had been sold to the plantations in the 1650s. Freeman and Helme bought a boy for 3,000 pounds of sugar and man for 3,800; depending on condition, the prisoners had each cost 1,550 pounds of sugar (Roberts, George 'On the Banishment of Participants in the Duke of Monmouth's Rebellion' in *Archaeologia, or Miscellaneous Tracts relating to Antiquity Society of Antiquarians of London Vol 34, London 1860 p351*).

<sup>23</sup> UKNA, T 70/936 and David Eltis *et al* (eds) *The Transatlantic Slave Trade CD-ROM Voyages Numbers 9997 and 20899*

<sup>24</sup> UKNA, T 70/936 [This voyage is not recorded in the CD-ROM produced by David Eltis *et al*]

<sup>25</sup> UKNA, T 70/936 and David Eltis *et al* (eds) *The Transatlantic Slave Trade CD-ROM Voyage No 9699*

The *James* was a 100-ton, Spanish-registered vessel. The journal of a subsequent voyage of what appears to have been another vessel of the same name (one that was English-registered) is printed in Elizabeth Donnan *Documents Vol 2 pp199-209* (see also David Eltis *et al* (eds) *The Transatlantic Slave Trade CD-ROM Voyage No 9968*).

<sup>26</sup> Ryland Stapleton MSS 3.1 Trant Account; see payments to Mrs Reeve 20 April, 21 June and 20 September 1680

Although the ratio of men and women varied on the ships, they cost the same on all of them, and it is worth noting that Helme bought considerably more women than men. The result was that in 1677/8, in addition to six children, there was an almost even gender mix among the 46 people on Proctor's: 19 men and 21 women.<sup>27</sup> This reflected the gender distribution in Nevis as a whole (as is evident from the 1677/8 census) and seems to indicate that Helme was engineering a situation where each person on Proctor's would have a mate of the opposite sex. If this was the case, it can be assumed that this was done without any regard to their regional origin. In all, of the people Helme purchased, 17 are known to have come from present-day Nigeria and six from the Gold Coast: the *Allepine*, the *Charles* and the *James* had loaded their captives at Calabar and the *Industry* at Cape Coast Castle. The African port of departure for the *Hawke* is not known.

On the plantation these Africans would have worked alongside several skilled white men Freeman sent from England: 'a cooper or two, a carpenter, &c'. He provided their fare of about five to six Pounds and they received wages of 1,000 pounds of sugar a year, but if the men were sick for over a month and did not work, their four-year contracts were extended by a corresponding period. If they survived until the end of their service, they were rewarded with a one-off lump sum of S£30 (worth about £6,000 in today's money). Their conditions were not ungenerous. White workers, particularly those with skills, were so much in demand in the colonies that in Britain unscrupulous dealers employed crimps to kidnap people. Sold into bondage, they would fetch a decent price.<sup>28</sup>

The first known consignment of slave-produced sugar from Proctor's was shipped to England in the summer of 1678. It was transported in ten butts.<sup>29</sup> Robert Helme was then managing Proctor's and sending sugars to England not only from the plantation but, in his capacity as a merchant, also on behalf of other planters.<sup>30</sup> Freeman, meanwhile, had settled in London where he ran a counting house, specialising in the import/export trade with the Leeward Islands. Directing operations, he was particular in his requirements: he disapproved of Helme's use of butts because these containers increased the cost of the freight and he asked Helme to use well-filled hogsheads instead. Freeman also found fault with the quality of the casks and blamed the coopers for not fixing enough hoops and for not nailing the casks sufficiently. The vessels did improve, and soon Freeman held up the Nevis-made hogsheads as examples of high workmanship. In addition to using locally-made butts and hogsheads, sugar was also shipped in pots and moulds that had been supplied from England. It was up to Helme to decide where to sell the sugar and while he consigned most of it to London, in the late 1670s he also sent some to Chester. This small town in northern England had its own sugar refineries, and the market price there was slightly higher than in the metropolis.<sup>31</sup>

On Proctor's plantation stood the usual buildings associated with sugar production: a boiling house for making the sugar, a curing house for its storage and a ground cane house for drying and storing the trash in preparation for burning in the boiling house.<sup>32</sup> In early 1679 Robert Helme received from Freeman more materials and equipment for the sugar works: sheets of lead for lining various parts of the mill and the

<sup>27</sup> Oliver, VL *Caribbeana* Vol 3

<sup>28</sup> Jeaffreson, JC (ed) *A Young Squire* Vol 1 p207 and p209 Christopher Jeaffreson to William Poyntz, London, 11 May 1677 and p298

<sup>29</sup> Freeman's correspondence suggests that there was a tradition on Proctor's of enslaved men working as coopers. In addition to Valentine, later Freeman mentioned that, if there was no 'negro cooper' already on the estate, he wanted one of the 'storehouse negroes', or a man from the plantation, trained as a cooper. Writing to Henry Carpenter, he also asked for one of the negro coopers 'w.ch belongs to mee at the rate appraised, in case wee have any want at our pltn. But otherwise am content hee shall goe with the rest, accordinge to the appraisem.t.' (D Hancock *The Letters* p355 30 November 1683 and p338 13 September 1683).

<sup>30</sup> Jeaffreson, JC (ed) *A Young Squire* Vol 1 p220 21 July 1677

<sup>31</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* p164 Wm Freeman to William Helme, Nevis, 14 July 1680; p43 Wm Freeman to Robert Helme, Nevis, 9 November 1678; p80 to William Helme & Co, 6 April 1679; p223 to Captain John Bramley, Montserrat, 5 September 1681; p126 to Anthony Henthorne, Chester, 12 October 1679; p131 to Robert Helme & William Helme, Nevis, 21 October 1679

<sup>32</sup> PP, WI Box O-5 (Courtesy of David Hancock)

molasses cistern, two large coolers, a potting basin, 200 sugar pots and drippers, and a cask with two dozen sugar bags and a large copper which turned out to be badly made. It had too thin a bottom so that the sugar boilers risked burning the syrup. Helme complained to Freeman and his partner's reply revealed his unscrupulous, bullying side. Freeman did not accept responsibility and simply claimed that the copper had been intended for sale in the island rather than for use on their plantation. He blamed Helme for not flogging it to other planters; Helme should have sold it because 'if they had been made for our own use, they should have been thicker'.<sup>33</sup> Tools and equipment often fell short of planters' expectations, and shoddy goods sent from England became a recurring complaint over the next century and a half.

After extending the original lease on Proctor's in June 1680, Robert Helme employed an unnamed 'overseer', left his brother William in overall charge and temporarily returned to England. Before he departed, he ordered that all timber on the land be felled and cane be planted as soon as the ground was cleared. On his return he was expecting the whole of Proctor's to be under cultivation.<sup>34</sup>

The Helme brothers and Freeman not only shared commercial interests but also became related by marriage: during his visit Robert Helme married Sarah Baxter, the sister of Freeman's wife Elizabeth.<sup>35</sup> Freeman was in business with the women's brother, William Baxter,<sup>36</sup> who at one stage stood accused of being involved in the kidnapping and the illegal shipping to the colonies of white indentured servants.<sup>37</sup> Freeman, too, got on the wrong side of the law when he killed a man in a duel. Tried for manslaughter, he was found guilty but was ultimately pardoned by the king.<sup>38</sup> A rough and spiky man, Freeman quick temper made him fall out easily with people<sup>39</sup> but he could also be generous.<sup>40</sup> This included engaging as an apprentice his nephew William Hearne, an impudent young pup whom his relatives wanted out of their way and packed off to Nevis. Freeman proposed to make him work on the plantation 'till he knows himself better',<sup>41</sup> and it is likely that Hearne, who was in his early twenties, may have briefly assisted on Proctor's.

After spending a few months in England, Robert Helme returned to Nevis, without his wife. With more land cultivated, Helme enlarged the workforce. The supplies increased accordingly. Originally Freeman had consigned to the plantation twenty barrels of Irish beef; this went up to 25 and an additional six of pork and then dropped to 24 of 'very choice beef' while 'the best pork' remained the same. Freeman did not regularly dispatch clothing or material that could be made into clothes; out of their trade goods Helme was to take whatever blue linen or coarse material he wanted for the plantation.<sup>42</sup> **'Thomas the taylor'** would have turned these into garments although as late as the 1750s a planter on St Croix observed that while some enslaved people wore pants and shirts it was 'not at all strange to see 100 or 200 naked

<sup>33</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* p68 Wm Freeman to Robert Helme, 14 February 1678/9

<sup>34</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* p185 Robert Helme, London, to William Helme, Nevis, October 1680

By 1687 so much of the wood had been felled in Nevis that a visitor to the island, Dr Hans Sloane, observed that the cleared ground extended almost to the top of the central mountain (Bridenbaugh, C and R Bridenbaugh *No Peace Beyond the Line* p270).

<sup>35</sup> Robert Helme was aged 30 when he married the 23-year-old Sarah Baxter in October 1680 (VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 5 p41).

<sup>36</sup> According to David Hancock, William Freeman had married Elizabeth Baxter by 1674. She was the daughter of John Baxter, a St Kitts and Nevis planter who had died in 1662, the sister of William Baxter, a London merchant, and the niece of William Baxter, a Lisbon merchant (*The Letters* p xvii). However, according to VL Oliver's *Caribbeana*, Elizabeth, Sarah and William Baxter were the children of the 'clothworker' John Baxter of St Dionys Backchurch in London (Vol 5 Baxter Pedigree).

<sup>37</sup> Jeaffreson, JC (ed) *A Young Squire* Vol 1 p298 and pp318-19

<sup>38</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* p xxx and JC Jeaffreson (ed) *A Young Squire* Vol 2 p304 Christopher Jeaffreson to Colonel Hill, 3 August 1686

<sup>39</sup> Jeaffreson, JC (ed) *A Young Squire* Vol 2 p202 Christopher Jeaffreson to Major Crispe, St Kitts, 6 June 1685

<sup>40</sup> Tyack, Geoffrey *The Freemans of Fawley Court* p130

<sup>41</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* p124 Wm Freeman to Robert Helme, 15 September 1679

<sup>42</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* p207 Memorandum to Robert Helme; p131 Wm Freeman to Robert Helme & William Helme, Nevis, 21 October 1679; p253 to Robert Helme, 15 January 1681/2; p321 to Robert Helme, 25 January 1682/3; p182 to William Helme, 6 September 1680

people on a single plantation.<sup>43</sup> And while Barbados in the late 1680s passed its first legislation requiring planters to supply minimum clothing allowances, in Nevis this was not introduced for another century.<sup>44</sup>

As far as health care provisions for the enslaved people went, there is no mention of doctors in the plantation documents. White medical practitioners had worked in Nevis since at least 1675 when an Act stipulated that 'chirurgeons' wanting to practice in the island required a licence<sup>45</sup> but generally enslaved people probably treated themselves and each other while planters supplied basic remedies. Robert Helme brought with him from England a medicine chest intended for Montserrat and the Nevis plantation may have been similarly equipped.<sup>46</sup>

Before Robert Helme's departure for England carpenters had started work on a dwelling house on Proctor's, and by the time he returned, it was finished.<sup>47</sup> Although Freeman thought that Helme would not stay for long, Helme's intention appears to have been to remain in Nevis for some time, and he dismissed Freeman's suggestion to turn the dwelling house into a curing house and he would have used, rather than sold, all the paving stones that had been sent from England. Freeman did not believe in squandering money on building and maintaining large houses in the West Indies – after all, sharing one room with Bramley on Montserrat had been good enough for him - and he considered Helme's 'fine' house an extravagance.<sup>48</sup> Judging by its value of £300 and an inventory drawn up twenty-five years later, the 'one story and half' house that Robert Helme had built was relatively modestly constructed, 'consisting of a large hall, chamber cellar porch and 2 upper rooms.'<sup>49</sup> Most likely the house as well as the works were shingled while some outbuildings may have been thatched.<sup>50</sup> Helme probably added two more buildings (a separate kitchen and a 'small hurricane house', or hurricane shelter)<sup>51</sup> when his wife Sarah joined him in Nevis in the spring of 1684 - much against Freeman's 'advice but on her husband's command'.<sup>52</sup> By West Indian standards even with the additions the couple's accommodation would not have been particularly opulent.

While Robert and his wife settled down to basic comforts in Nevis, Freeman invested his wealth and acquired Fawley Court, a grand property near Henley-on-Thames. Then in his mid-forties, he retreated from the hustle and bustle of London to Henley and turned his new home into an elegant country estate.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Tyson, George F and Arnold R Highfield (eds) *The Kamina Folk* p40

<sup>44</sup> The law in Barbados stipulated that men should be issued with drawers and caps, women with petticoats and caps. In case of non-compliance, a fine of five shillings was payable. The fine was to be used for specific purposes: a third was to go to the informer and two thirds to His Majesty for the use of the poor of the parish. The law came into force on 6 August 1688 (S Lambert (ed) *House of Commons Sessional Papers* Vol 70 Act No 329).

<sup>45</sup> CSP 1675-1676 No 570

<sup>46</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* p199 Wm Freeman to John Bramley, 10 March 1680/1

<sup>47</sup> An inventory reveals that on Proctor's were 'one dwelling house, one boyling house, one cureing house, one ground cane house and negro houses', as well as a 'bay store house, and two bay stone tolts' (PP, WI Box O-5, courtesy of David Hancock).

<sup>48</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* p251 Wm Freeman to Robert Helme, 3 January 1681/2; pp266-67 to Captain John Bramley, Montserrat, 13 April 1682; p372 to Robert Helme, 3 June 1684

<sup>49</sup> PP, WI Box B: Losses at Proctor's 1705/6

<sup>50</sup> Although thatching houses had been forbidden in Nevis since 1675, as late as 1711 the manager on the Stapleton plantation was planning to thatch the dwelling house and outhouses (Ryland Stapleton MSS 5.1: James Butler to Lady Anne Stapleton, 19 May 1711).

<sup>51</sup> PP, WI Box A: Inventory of the estate of William and Mary Helme, 13 September 1703

In the early 1680s several hurricanes struck St Kitts and may have damaged Nevis, too. These may have been the reason for building the hurricane shelter. Once Sarah Helme arrived in Nevis, the house may well have been adapted to suit her domestic requirements by adding a separate kitchen.

<sup>52</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* p370 Wm Freeman to Robert Helme, 18 March 1683/4

<sup>53</sup> Fawley Court, which lies thirty miles west of London and just a mile north of Henley-on-Thames. It had been owned by James Whitelocke, the son of a Cromwellian politician. Either William Freeman or his father took over a mortgage on the estate but when Whitelocke failed to pay the interest, William Freeman foreclosed and moved in.

Freeman commissioned the foremost architect and craftsmen to rebuild and enhance Fawley Court. His friend Christopher Wren is attributed with designing the family residence, which was completed in 1684, and the famous woodcarver and sculptor Grinling

While enjoying the delights of country living, he suffered from ill health and spells of blindness<sup>54</sup> and seemed to lose interest in his West India concerns. Freeman pulled out of his involvement with the Royal African Company, sold parts of his Montserrat holdings and offered Helme his share in the leasehold of Proctor's and other jointly-owned properties in Nevis, such as their storehouses in Morton's Bay. Although it looked as if he was committed to Proctor's long-term future, ever since the two men had begun leasing the estate Freeman appeared to waver between buying and selling his properties. In November 1678 he had written that Helme should 'by no means omit' purchasing Proctor's, yet six weeks later, regarding his Montserrat properties, he was inclined to sell rather than buy plantations. In February 1680 he moaned that he had received a mere thirty hogsheads of sugar from Nevis but only a few months later he claimed to his under-performing attorney in Montserrat that in Nevis, 'where there is not half the land, slaves or any other conveniency', the plantation was making £1,000 profit a year.<sup>55</sup>

Freeman offered his share in Proctor's to Robert Helme, and Helme, in turn, offered to sell his share to Freeman. From their ensuing correspondence it is apparent that the two men were trying to outmanoeuvre each other and that both were attempting to get hold of the whole plantation for themselves. (Freeman intended to buy Helme's share for the benefit of his brother Henry, a profligate loafer 'void of any employment'.) When Helme sent his partner an under-valued appraisal of their assets, Freeman spotted that 'several small things' were missing: among them six unnamed 'negroes', a plantation full of canes, a storehouse and three negroes who belonged to their storehouses, and 'many more horses, mules and mares & assess.' After he received a revised appraisal, Freeman seemed to go ahead with the purchase but did not commit himself and in the meantime agreed to Helme's request to continue living on Proctor's for another two years. After all, it saved the bother and expense of sending out a manager. Unconvincingly, Freeman claimed that his sister-in-law, Robert's wife, was an added ingredient in his deliberation: by buying Helme's share Freeman would be facilitating her wishes of returning to England. According to him, she was not inclined to settle in Nevis.<sup>56</sup> William Helme meanwhile, while supposedly acting on behalf of the Freeman/Robert Helme partnership and apparently

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Gibbons with designing a rare type of plaster ceiling in the drawing room. In 1688 the house received several royal visitors; William Freeman hosted William of Orange.

On Freeman's death in 1707, his nephew John Cook, the son of William Freeman's sister Catherine, inherited the estate, as well as West India property. According to Freeman's will, Cook was required to take on the name of Freeman. John Freeman, a Madras merchant and keen amateur architect, in the 1720s laid out the grounds, and successive generations have made improvements to Fawley Court. In the 1770s John's son Sambrook Freeman commissioned the best in their fields: Lancelot "Capability" Brown designed the park and James Wyatt re-decorated the principal ground floor rooms. Wyatt also designed a stuccoed temple on an island in the Thames. The temple now marks the start point of the Henley Regatta course.

After the death of Sambrooke Freeman's nephew Strickland Freeman in 1821, the estate passed to a distant cousin and in 1853 was sold to Edward Mackenzie, a Scottish banker. A hundred years later the Congregation of Marian Fathers bought the house and part of the land to establish a school for Polish boys. Today, the Marians still hold regular services at Fawley Court (Geoffrey Tyack *The Freemans of Fawley Court and their Buildings* Offprint from Records of Buckinghamshire Vol XXIV 1982 pp130-41, and <http://www.marians-uk.org/fawleycourt.html>).

In a fine example of how nineteenth-century wealth replaced seventeenth- and eighteenth-century West India wealth, the banker Edward Mackenzie also purchased a large estate that had belonged to the Hodges family (VCH Oxfordshire: online Texts in progress: Rotherfield Peppard December 2007 version, citing ORO, MS dd Cooper and Caldecott c 37 (1), (12) c 38 (6), Bodl. MS Ch. Oxon. 3386). Anthony Hodges of Bolney Court and Montserrat was the son-in-law of Jeremiah Browne, Mary Pinney's attorney.<sup>54</sup> Hancock, D "A World of Business" p21

<sup>55</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* p321 Wm Freeman to Henry Carpenter, October 1680; p321 to Robert Helme, 25 January 1682/3; pp330-31 to Robert Helme, 20 April 1683; p331 to George Liddell, Montserrat, 20 April 1683; pp330-31 to Robert Helme, 20 April 1683; p44 to Robert Helme, Nevis, 22 November 1678; p57 to William Fox, Montserrat, 7 January 1678/9; p167 to William Fox, Montserrat, 10 August 1680

Freeman claimed the Nevis plantation had made £1,000 profit but the figure looks suspect. He tended to play off one man against another and probably boasted about the successful operation in Nevis to shame his people in Montserrat. In fact, later he wrote that he found his 'estate in those parts will not amount to half what I did really believe it to be' (p365 fn Wm Freeman to Robert Helme, 18 February 1683/4).

<sup>56</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* p372 Wm Freeman to Robert Helme, 3 June 1684; p355 to Robert Helme, 30 November 1683; p384 to Robert Helme, 15 October 1684



with Robert's knowledge and collusion, bought the title to Proctor's.<sup>57</sup> This breach of trust between the partners should have ended their connections but Freeman took the brothers' manoeuvres in his stride. Although he angrily and noisily threatened a Bill in Chancery against 'W. H. (I cannot call him your bro.)', he concluded his letter with a placatory 'let all things be past and no more thought of ...'<sup>58</sup>

Freeman and 'W. H.' had been at loggerheads for some years. William Helme claimed that his indenture with his brother expired at the end of 1679 and that from then on he was entitled to commission on the goods he sold in the company's store.<sup>59</sup> Angered by his 'very rough style with seeming threats',<sup>60</sup> Freeman disputed the timing, repeatedly rebuked him for failing to supply financial statements and accused him of selling company goods on his own account – something he was not allowed to do until his apprenticeship expired. This allegation of William doing his own deals may well have been true; after all, he was able to buy a house and land<sup>61</sup> and a year later his first estate. The funds for this, almost certainly, came from his side-line of selling company wares on his own behalf, as well as the profits from a well-planned and lucrative smuggling operation masterminded by Freeman, who, despite his suspicions about William Helme's loyalty, had made him party to this venture.<sup>62</sup> Involved in Freeman's meticulously prepared get-rich-quick schemes were a couple of trusted captains, their unsuspecting crews, the Helme brothers and the son of a friend of Freeman's, Thomas Westcott, who was also indentured to Freeman. Between them they carried out Freeman's instructions and forged documents, broke off customs seals, concealed cargo, clandestinely landed the contraband in hidden coves, deceived officials about the contents of the vessels – one of which was the aptly named *Adventure* – and made a lot of money in the process. William Helme was at the centre of operations at the Nevis end and largely responsible for the disbursal of the illegally imported wares which Freeman had consigned to Thomas Westcott. Between them, William Helme and Thomas Westcott were to share part of the commission but, according to Freeman, they short-changed him, pocketed his part of the commission and some of the cargo. Freeman claimed that Helme and Westcott sold brandy, wine and fine silks on their own, rather than on the company's, account.

Freeman, like all absentees, had to trust the information his partners and managers gave him. He had to rely on their honesty. But the men stationed in the island outposts forged alliances. They found ways and means of cheating supplies, produce and profits out of their Metropolitan partners or masters. Entrusted with acting in the absentee's interest, they struck their own bargains. They were on the spot, they knew

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<sup>57</sup> In February 1680/1 Proctor John Moore issued a receipt to William Helme for '£30 and stores ... being in full for an Interest by me sold in a plantation' and in 1684 Robert Moore signed a receipt for money received from William Helme for part of the legacy left by his 'father or grandfather' (PP, WI Box A).

<sup>58</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* p384 Wm Freeman to Robert Helme, 15 October 1684

Freeman's outburst 'Hee was certainly not your fathers son but one put upon him or changed at nurse' appears to have been taken by David Hancock to mean that they were step-brothers but it looks more likely to have been an insult, as well as an attempt by Freeman to divide the Helme brothers.

<sup>59</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* p149 Wm Freeman to Wm Helme, 10 March 1679/80

According to David Hancock, William Freeman, the Helme brothers and a man called Thomas Westcott, who was bound to Freeman for seven years until 1679, were jointly involved in a dry goods store in Nevis (D Hancock (ed) *The Letters* p63 fn).

<sup>60</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* 269 Wm Freeman to William Helme, 14 April 1682

<sup>61</sup> A Bill of Sale dated 15 April 1680 for a house and land at the North end of Charlestown documents the sale from James Collins to William Helmes (sic) (PP, Misc Vols 6 List of Deeds and Papers, 1783).

<sup>62</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* pp273-74 Wm Freeman to Robert Helme, 18 July 1682; p167 to William Helme & Thomas Westcott, 10 August 1680

This was Freeman's second smuggling operation. In the previous year he had consigned the goods to Robert Helme but after Helme's return to England, Freeman had to make do with Thomas Westcott and William Helme. Freeman was evading recently passed legislation that forbade the importation of French goods for at least three years (D Hancock *The Letters* p168 fn1). After the third shipment Freeman realised that the restrictions on French trade were not enforced as strongly as they had been and that smuggling was not necessary any more.

Carl and Roberta Bridenbaugh have suggested that from smuggling goods and making legal and illegal profits Freeman was able to contemplate retiring from business sometime after October 1679 (*No Peace Beyond the Line* p180 and pp321-25). It follows that William Helme had also benefited substantially.

what they could or could not get away with, and William Helme had, rightly, judged that Freeman enjoyed little – and certainly no legal - recourse to recover anything that was spirited away from a shipload of smuggled goods. Helme claimed that his money came from another enterprise with Westcott but Freeman knew better; he had made his own enquiries and claimed he could prove the contrary.<sup>63</sup>

While Freeman and Robert Helme employed bluff and double bluff and the Helme brothers were engaged in double-dealing, Freeman played off his West Indian managers and attorneys against one another and solicited information from one man about the other – always swearing them to secrecy. He appealed to Robert Helme to find out discretely what his nephew William Hearne was up to, enquired from the newly appointed Deputy Governor of St Kitts about Westcott's activities in St Kitts,<sup>64</sup> and asked Thomas Westcott and Henry Carpenter about William Helme's business in Nevis. Robert Helme, in turn, complained to Carpenter how he had suffered under Freeman: 'You may remember ... how vexatious he hath been to me', and while the Helme brothers felt hard done by Freeman, Freeman dismissed them as 'young guidy headed conceited boys'.<sup>65</sup>

Robert and William Helme's mother died in August 1683, and the following year Robert intended to return to England and settle on a small estate near Poole in Dorset. In preparation for Helme's departure, Freeman dispatched a manager, Mr Stanilife, to run Proctor's. Stanilife was to take Helme's place and possibly also manage some other properties Freeman was planning to acquire in Nevis. Although, as he put it, sugar was then 'such a miserable low comodity' (sic), Freeman was willing to spend up to £1,500 on another plantation and he cast around for suitable, reasonably priced land. He made some clandestine enquiries on his own account<sup>66</sup> but also encouraged Helme to purchase land adjacent to Proctor's. Freeman reasoned that it costs much the same to run a large plantation than a small one.

One of the properties Freeman had in mind was neighbouring seaward-lying 'Allins'. The estate was not doing well. Its previous owner, William Allen, had mortgaged part of it, and after Allen's death, to pay off her dead husband's debts, his widow and her new husband had mortgaged the whole estate. 'Allins' would have been a useful addition to Proctor's, and the owners, Mr and Mrs Charlot, might have welcomed selling their estate. But the purchase did not go ahead. Instead of enlarging his concerns, Freeman contracted. He decided to sell his share in the leasehold to Proctor's to Robert Helme.<sup>67</sup>

Helme's people may have brought in the next crop and shipped it off to England but within a year of acquiring the leasehold to Proctor's he was dead. In his mid-thirties, Robert Helme died sometime in 1685.

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<sup>63</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* pp273-74 Wm Freeman to Robert Helme, 18 July 1682

<sup>64</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* pp352-53 Wm Freeman to Robert Helme, 29 November 1683; p335 to Thomas Hill, St Kitts, 8 September 1683

The Deputy Governor, Thomas Hill, meanwhile, was doing his own bit of business on the side and his own bit of cheating. It involved a consignment of indentured servants which Hill and two St Kitts planters, Christopher Jeaffreson and a Mr Vickers, jointly financed. Jeaffreson, then in England, dispatched the bondsmen but the two men on the spot, Hill and Vickers, immediately picked the best and then failed to consign to him his share of the sugar they had made. Jeaffreson much regretted his previous praise of Hill as a trustworthy man (JC Jeaffreson (ed) *A Young Squire* Vol 1 pp159-62).

<sup>65</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* p193 Wm Freeman to Thomas Westcott, Nevis, 11 January 1680/1; p193 to Henry Carpenter, 11 January 1680/1; p308 Robert Helme, London, to Henry Carpenter, Nevis, 31 October 1680; p258 Wm Freeman to Robert Helme, 2 March 1681/2

<sup>66</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* p380 Wm Freeman to Robert Helme, 9 August 1684; p393 to John Mortimer, London, 16 March 1684/5

<sup>67</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* p393 Wm Freeman to Robert Helme, 5 March 1684/5; pxx fn37

Sarah, his widow, remained in Nevis. She dealt with her husband's financial affairs and presumably carried on managing Proctor's plantation but, five years after she lost her husband and aged only 33, Sarah Helme also died.<sup>68</sup> Proctor's appears to have fallen to her brother-in-law, William Helme.

### **William Helme and his wife Mary**

William Helme had been in Nevis since the 1670s. At the time of the island-wide census in 1677/8 he was about twenty years old<sup>69</sup> and, apprenticed to his brother Robert, had then owned one male – presumably his personal servant.<sup>70</sup> Three years later, by 1681, he had acquired a plantation and although he claimed that the money for this came from some business in which he and Thomas Westcott had been involved, it had probably been bought with the proceeds from Freeman's smuggling venture.<sup>71</sup> Ten years on, and William Helme also held property in Antigua,<sup>72</sup> had been appointed to the General Council<sup>73</sup> and was married.<sup>74</sup> He and his wife Mary had two children, William and Mary, but he did not live to see them grow up. Like his brother before him, William Helme died young, in 1691.<sup>75</sup> He was also only about 33 years old. Although early deaths were common, he may have lost his life during a particularly unhealthy period. Ever since a large number of refugees had arrived from St Kitts in the summer of 1689, diseases had wreaked havoc among the inhabitants of Nevis.<sup>76</sup> By November that year five hundred whites and two

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<sup>68</sup> When Robert Helme died, he was owed money (VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 5 p41) but he also left his widow with a substantial debt of almost 400,000 pounds of sugar. This he owed the RAC and had resulted from his post as their agent. When the RAC started legal proceedings, William Freeman dealt with Sarah Helme's affairs because he had stood security for her husband (D Hancock *The Letters* p xxxiii). According to her will of 1687, the widowed Sarah Helme appears to have remained in Nevis.

The Helmeses had no children, and so Sarah Helme left various sums to family and friends. The residue was to go to her nine-year-old niece Elizabeth Baxter, the daughter of her recently deceased brother William. The girl probably was her goddaughter; her sister had wanted Sarah's husband to become the girl's godfather, but this did not happen; Elizabeth Baxter was baptised very soon after Freeman had written to Robert Helme about the proposed arrangements for the forthcoming baptism (D Hancock *The Letters* p58 Wm Freeman to Robert Helme, 18 January 1678/9 and VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 5 Baxter family tree).

By the time Sarah Helme's will was proved in June 1701, Elizabeth Baxter was 'of full age' (VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 5 Helme Pedigree and *History of Antigua* Vol 1 p271).

<sup>69</sup> William Helme was born on 25 February 1657/8 (VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 5 pp40-1).

<sup>70</sup> Oliver, VL *Caribbeana* Vol 3 List of Nevis Inhabitants

<sup>71</sup> It is possible that the plantation Helme acquired was Mountain (see also footnote 98 below.)

<sup>72</sup> PP, WI Box A

<sup>73</sup> Oliver, VL *Caribbeana* Vol 5 pp40-1

<sup>74</sup> The evidence as to whom William Helme married is inconclusive. According to David Hancock, William Helme's wife was Mary Coltby, the daughter of Thomas Coltby. When her father died in 1678, he left her his Mountain estate (D Hancock "A World of Business" p15 fn29). Pares was undecided; in his Notes he wrote that 'The origin of the Helme fortune was Mary Coltby Mary Helmes [Travers?]. According to Pares, Mary Coltby granted the lease on Mountain (PN 22 and PN: Inventory 14 December 1678). Another source stated that 'William Helme married [Sarah, deleted] Mary Baxter' (NHCS, C1a Handwritten Pinney Family Tree). However, this information is probably based on an entry in VL Oliver's *Caribbeana* (Vol 2 p357).

It is, of course, possible that William Helme first married Mary Coltby, thereby acquiring Mountain, and then Mary Baxter. His marrying twice would explain why his widow had two married 'daughters', i.e. step-daughters. However, these two women, Mary Smith and Anne Cary, could have been the children from a marriage of her second husband, Henry Travers. Mary Baxter almost certainly was related to the London Baxters. Robert Helme's widow Sarah, in her will of October 1687, mentioned her aunt Mrs Mary Baxter in London, presumably the sister or sister-in-law of her father John Baxter. William Helme's wife may have been this woman, or a daughter of John Baxter not shown in the very sketchy Baxter family tree.

Mountain plantation was originally purchased from Captain Peter Seymour (PN 22, citing MSS Racedown).

<sup>75</sup> Hancock, D *The Letters* p xxi

<sup>76</sup> The refugees from St Kitts were Protestant, English settlers who had fled when the Irish Catholics in St Kitts rose in support of James II. A Catholic, he had been King of England and Scotland since 1685 but in 1688 James's parliamentary opposition invited William of Orange, the Protestant Stadholder of Holland, to take the throne. After William arrived in England in 1688, William Freeman was said to have received him on his progress from Torbay to London (Geoffrey Tyack *The Freemans of Fawley* p130).

William and his wife Mary, the Protestant daughter of James II, were crowned joint sovereigns in April 1689. In response, James led a rising against the English in Ireland. The Irish settlers in St Kitts supported James's cause and destroyed or took over English-run plantations. In 1690 James II was defeated in Ireland at the Battle of the Boyne and afterwards remained in exile in France.

hundred blacks had died,<sup>77</sup> and over the following months, outbreaks of smallpox, dysentery and a malignant fever had killed such a large proportion of the population that 'the strongest of the Leeward Islands had become the weakest.'<sup>78</sup> Those who survived had too little to eat. Scarcity of food caused discontent.<sup>79</sup> And just when Nevis was beginning to recover, ships crews and soldiers sent from England again spread infections.<sup>80</sup> No doubt, among those who perished were enslaved people from Proctor's.

When William Helme died, one half of Proctor's was leased to a John Carter,<sup>81</sup> and from 1696 the whole of Proctor's was let to the very busy Mrs Margaret Dewitt, who was also renting other estates.<sup>82</sup> To the enslaved people it would have mattered little who ran the business but with each new owner, with each new manager, they would have had to regain privileges they had established under previous regimes and adjust to different standards of discipline, different methods of work. If their situation worsened, they could only hope that the next master or mistress would change life for the better, but uncertainty and loss of continuity can be unsettling. Over the coming years the people on Proctor's had to adjust to many more changes.

Left to bring up two young children, the widow Mary Helme re-married and in 1700 had another son, Henry,<sup>83</sup> named after his father. Her new husband, Henry Travers (also Traveis and Travies) of St Bride's, London, probably was considerably older and may also have been widowed; it is likely that he was the father of two women whom Mary Travers called her 'daughters', Mary Smith and Anne Cary.

After Henry was born, Mrs Travers prepared to go to England. Intending to return to the West Indies, she employed a manager and engaged an attorney who was to oversee the running of Proctor's and of another estate she owned, Mountain. This property in the parish of St John Figtree, which had come to her either through her father or through one of her husbands, was small and consisted of only 40 acres; in the late 1670s it had been worked with 16 enslaved people and 22 animals.<sup>84</sup> While living on Mountain, the manager was to work as much of Proctor's as he could, growing sugar as well as provisions.<sup>85</sup>

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In St Kitts, the English settlers capitulated to the Irish and took their families and enslaved people to Nevis. Although Protestant and English - like the majority of Nevis inhabitants - these incomers from St Kitts were not well received; the Lieutenant of the Leeward Islands, Christopher Codrington, later reported that the people of Nevis were 'a most turbulent and ungovernable people', who had treated the St Kitts refugees badly and in an 'unchristian' manner (Sir Alan Burns *History of the British West Indies* p375, citing CSP 1689-1690 Numbers 262 and 548). The inhabitants of Nevis exploited the distress of the incomers from St Kitts and benefited from them having to sell their enslaved people at less than half their value so that they could buy food and other necessities - no doubt at an inflated price.

For details of the military activities in St Kitts and Nevis see chapter 8 'Imperial Conflicts' in Vincent K Hubbard *A History of St Kitts*.

<sup>77</sup> CSP 1689-1692 No 548; also C Bridenbaugh and R Bridenbaugh *No Peace Beyond the Line* p192

<sup>78</sup> Bridenbaugh, C and R Bridenbaugh *No Peace Beyond the Line* p192

<sup>79</sup> Burns, Sir Alan *History of the British West Indies* p375, citing CSP 1689-1690 No 548

<sup>80</sup> Bridenbaugh, C and R Bridenbaugh *No Peace Beyond the Line* p192

The troops sent from England were to defend Nevis from the French after France had declared war on England in March 1689. The English and the French fought in St Kitts in 1690. In 1697, the Treaty of Ryswick provided five years of peace until the War of Spanish Succession broke out in 1702. As far as Nevis was concerned, the most important outcome of that war, which was settled in 1713 by the Treaty of Utrecht, was that France surrendered its part of St Kitts to Britain.

<sup>81</sup> From 1 January 1691, William Freeman's brother Henry Freeman and Mrs Christian Helme leased one half of Proctor's to John Carter [possibly John Cary or Carew] and on the same day Francis Franklyn leased three women to [presumably William] Helme: Gill, Bess and Old Woman (PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box: Lease from Franklyn to Helme, 1 Jan 1691).

The involvement of Francis Franklin [also Francklin and Franklyn] suggests that at some stage William Helme may have mortgaged part of the estate to him. In 1680 Francis Franklin owned land that bordered Proctor's to the south (PP, WI Box O-5, courtesy of David Hancock; also WI Boxes A and B).

<sup>82</sup> PP, WI Box A

<sup>83</sup> Oliver, VL *History of Antigua* Vol 3 p143 and Joseph Foster (ed) *Alumni Oxonienses 1715-1886*

<sup>84</sup> PN: Inventory 14 December 1678

According to David Hancock, Mrs Mary Helme was the daughter of Thomas Coltby and the widow of William Helme, but it appears that Hancock mixed up Proctor's and Mountain; he stated that Mountain was leased to Margaret Dewitt when it was Proctor's that was rented to her (D Hancock "A World of Business" p15 fn29). This puts into question the theory that Mountain came to Mary Helme from her father and makes it more likely that she had acquired the estate from her husband, William Helme.

Before she had married Henry Travers, a man called Solomon Israel had been her attorney, but – possibly at his suggestion - she appointed Israel's friend Azariah Pinney to look after her business during her absence. Mary Travers would have known Pinney well because for at least seven years he had been involved in the property next to Proctor's on the seaward side, Charlot's. The owners, Henry and Ruth Charlot, had gone to New England, leaving Pinney to act as their attorney, and he was working their land. Mary Travers instructed that, in addition to Mountain and Proctor's, Azariah Pinney was to oversee the running of another property on the south side of the island in the Gingerland parish, Saddle Hill. This Mary Travers was renting from Mary Smith, one of her [step]daughters. Mary Smith, in turn, also engaged Pinney as her attorney.<sup>86</sup>

Mrs Travers left for England with the baby and the children from her previous marriage, William and Mary Helme. She probably travelled without her husband - it is likely that he was not in Nevis then – but would have taken with her one or two slave-servants to attend to her and the children. Before she left Nevis, Mrs Travers gave Azariah Pinney competent and organised instructions, which showed not only that she was educated and literate but also that she understood how to be in charge of a plantation business. In a letter she directed that her sugars be sent to Bristol, Liverpool and London and that all sugars destined for London be consigned to her uncle-by-marriage, also called Henry Travers. Azariah Pinney was to ensure that her overseers complied with all her instructions, and she asked him to find a tenant for her husband's Antigua plantation and to give notice to Mrs Dewitt to quit Proctor's.<sup>87</sup>

People who rented plantations had little interest in their long-term future; they rented properties to earn money, to make a profit. Maintaining land, workers, livestock and buildings was not a priority and so it was with Mrs Dewitt. During her tenancy she let the buildings deteriorate. Proctor's was neglected, run down, and the repairs required so much work that Mrs Dewitt was charged 3,000 pounds of sugar, the equivalent of three months' rent.<sup>88</sup> Mrs Dewitt vacated the plantation and, instead of finding another tenant, from October 1701 Mary Travers's attorney Azariah Pinney rented Proctor's with a London business partner of his.<sup>89</sup> Although Mary Travers may well have heard rumours about Azariah Pinney deliberately mismanaging Charlot's in order to get hold of the plantation, she trusted him with her own affairs. As long as he paid the rent, it did not make any difference to her who occupied Proctor's. To Pinney, who could work Charlot's and Proctor's as one large unit, holding the joint-lease and acting as Mary Travers's attorney meant that his affairs had got nicely entwined with his neighbour's.

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Mary Helme's marriage to Henry Travers, according to David Hancock, took place in 1696 (D Hancock *The Letters* p xxi fn38) but on 2 August 1697, when Solomon Israel acted as her attorney for renting out part for the plantation to Mrs Dewitt, she was still known as Mary Helme (PP, WI Box A). She certainly was married by 30 May 1698, when Solomon Israel signed a receipt on behalf of Henry Travers, Mrs Helme's new husband, for Mrs Margaret Dewitt's rent (WI Box A).

<sup>85</sup> PP, WI Box A

<sup>86</sup> On 30 May 1701 Mary Smith appointed Azariah Pinney her attorney (PP, WI Box A); a day later the agreement to rent Saddle Hill for five years was made between Mary Travers and Mary Smith.

<sup>87</sup> Mary Travers developed impressive commercial links with merchants in various parts of the country; she directed that if Azariah Pinney shipped sugars to London, they were to be consigned to the merchant Henry Travers of Lothbury; at Bristol they were to go to ?Fras Plomar, and at Liverpool to William Clayton & Co (PP, WI Box A).

<sup>88</sup> PP, WI Box O-5: Valuation report dated 30 August 1701 (Courtesy of David Hancock)

Both Mary Travers and Margaret Dewitt were very enterprising women. Apparently Mrs Travers also leased another plantation, Paradise, which Mrs Dewitt rented from Mrs Travers for at least 18 months (PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box). In partnership with Francis Francklin, in 1700 the widow Margaret Dewitt also rented half a plantation and eight slaves from the cooper John Smith (VL Oliver *Caribbean* Vol 6 p8). This information emerged from John Smith's will and it is very likely that this John Smith was the husband of Mary Smith and that the plantation mentioned was Saddle Hill and that he died soon after making his will. When Mrs Mary Smith rented out Saddle Hill to her ?stepmother Mary Travers, this may have been following the death of her husband John Smith. Appointing Azariah Pinney as attorney in Nevis suggests that Mrs Smith also left Nevis, probably travelling (with her ?stepmother Mary Travers) to England.

<sup>89</sup> Pares, R A *West India Fortune* pp39-40

### **Azariah Pinney**

Azariah Pinney had arrived in Nevis in late 1685 at the age of 24.<sup>90</sup> He was the youngest of ten children of the Presbyterian minister and preacher of Broadwindsor in Somerset, Revd John Pinney and his wife Jane French.<sup>91</sup> Azariah Pinney was to lay the foundations for creating Mountravers. But he may never have left England had he not got involved in an uprising.

Originally a yeoman and a lace-dealer, in the summer before he arrived in Nevis Azariah Pinney joined a rebel army. Along with other men, mostly artisans from the West Country, he had fought in support of the Duke of Monmouth, a Protestant intent on claiming the throne. The Duke's uncle, the Roman Catholic king James II, had succeeded Monmouth's father to the crown, and the Duke, the eldest but illegitimate son of Charles II, attempted to raise the country against the new monarch. After landing at Lyme Regis, Monmouth quickly gained support in the West Country but his campaign failed. His untrained troops were no match for the king's standing army and Monmouth's men were defeated in a battle fought on drained moorland near the village of Westonzoyland in Somerset. 200 Royalists and 300 rebels died, a thousand rebels who tried to escape were killed and hundreds taken prisoner - among them Azariah Pinney. Charged with waging war against the Crown, Monmouth and 320 of his accomplices were executed and Pinney was due to be hung in Bridport. But his life was spared.<sup>92</sup>

Prisoners were a valuable commodity. They could be bought and sold, or transported to the colonies as agricultural labourers, and Azariah Pinney was among one hundred men given to Jerome Nipho, one-time Private Secretary to the Queen. Nipho then sold him to George Penne, 'a needy Papist' and hanger-on of the Court,<sup>93</sup> who bargained for his ransom, and it was Azariah's sister Hester who put up the money so that he could buy his freedom.<sup>94</sup> Hester - with their sisters Rachel, Sarah and Jane - was also in the lace business and among the few successful, independent businesswomen of her day.<sup>95</sup> Spared his life on condition that he was exiled from England for a period of at least ten years,<sup>96</sup> Azariah Pinney was taken from Dorchester gaol to Bristol where he remained<sup>97</sup> until he sailed to the West Indies. He left behind his wife Mary, a woman about whose origin and activities very little is known, except that she was born as Mary Coleman (also Colman) in 1661<sup>98</sup> and that she worked with her sister-in-law Hester in

<sup>90</sup> Azariah Pinney was born on 30 October 1661.

<sup>91</sup> Pinney, William *The Pinneys* Unpublished MSS and Pamela Sharpe 'Pinney, Hester (1658-1740)' *Oxford DNB*

<sup>92</sup> Pares, R *A West India Fortune* pp9-11; also W Macdonald Wigfield 'Azariah Pinney: Yeoman of Axminster' in *Devon Historian* Vol 29 (1984) and other documents in the SRO, such as T1PH/wig/2/1 List of rebels to be transported to Jamaica, Nevis and St Christopher.

Whether or not Azariah Pinney had turned King's evidence remains unresolved. According to one document, Malachi Mallocke and Azariah Pinney were the only two men among Nipho's one hundred who were taken out of his custody to stand as a witness (Mallocke) and sent away to Bristol (Pinney). Another document stated that Azariah Pinney was sent in custody to Bristol to be transported to the colonies 'to his Majesty's order'. Pares concluded that 'It might appear from all this that Azariah had purchased his life by turning King's evidence; but that is not the right explanation'. Pares, however, does not explain his reasoning or state what he believed to have been the correct interpretation. It could be argued that Mallocke was still being held, willing to give further information while Pinney, 'young and obscure' and a man who 'had not distinguished himself in the rebellion' (R Pares *A West India Fortune* p7), had already given sufficient evidence for the Crown to let him go. An added ingredient may have been the fact that the Pinney family used their influence in Court through George Booth with whom Azariah's sister Hester was 'romantically connected' (Sharpe, Pamela 'Pinney, Hester (1658-1740)' and William Pinney *The Pinneys of Nevis*).

<sup>93</sup> Small, David *Mountravers – A Chronology*

<sup>94</sup> Pares, R *A West India Fortune* p341 fn16

Another source states that Azariah's brother Nathaniel accounted for the ransom of £65 in his account book of 1685 (Roberts, George 'On the Banishment of Participants in the Duke of Monmouth's Rebellion' p355).

<sup>95</sup> Sharpe, Pamela 'Pinney, Hester (1658-1740)' *Oxford DNB*

<sup>96</sup> Pinney, William *A The Pinneys*

<sup>97</sup> On 26 September 1685 he was taken to Bristol (Pers. comm. Brian Littlewood, 18 December 2003, citing *Book of Emigrants*).

There, according to the accounts, a payment of 17s was made for 10 days 'dyet and lodgings' (PP, AB 2; also George Roberts 'On the Banishment of Participants in the Duke of Monmouth's Rebellion' p355).

<sup>98</sup> It is possible that Azariah Pinney's wife Mary Coleman (also Colman) was related to the people who ran the London merchant house Coleman and Lucas.

arranging lace-making apprenticeships for girls.<sup>99</sup> Luckily for future generations of Pinneys, Mary conceived just before Azariah sailed off into exile, and in the following year their son John was born.<sup>100</sup>

Azariah Pinney was not the only volunteer from Monmouth's army who ended up in the West Indies. Bound for St Kitts and Nevis and indentured to Governor Sir William Stapleton,<sup>101</sup> another seventy of his fellow rebels left Bristol. Some years earlier 300 assorted convicts had failed to arrive in St Kitts,<sup>102</sup> and the colonies very much welcomed this influx of white, Protestant men. White adults and enslaved adults were then about equal in numbers but any outbreak of disease could quickly tip the balance.

Azariah Pinney has been portrayed as an early example of a man who realised an American Dream: banished to the hostile West Indian shores, ship-wrecked along the way,<sup>103</sup> this model entrepreneur quickly turned his hand to commerce and then to the planting business and by the end of his life, through sheer hard work and a healthy constitution, had become 'the founder of a great colonial fortune'. His meagre belongings - the much quoted 'Bible, a small quantity of liquor, and £15 in hard cash'<sup>104</sup> - are held up as the foundation for his rise from a poor exile to a wealthy, powerful man but, no doubt, on the voyage he drank the liquor, ate the two cheeses he took with him and, when ship-wrecked, probably also lost the bible and his two trunks. Certainly, the £15 was a substantial sum (about £2,850 in 2016) that could have gone towards laying the foundation for his commercial enterprises, and Azariah Pinney was shrewd, ambitious and opportunistic, but once he got into the plantation business he could not have prospered without the enslaved people who worked the land and produced the sugar, nor the men who managed his land and oversaw his workers. In the first instance, however, it was his family who substantially supported him during his early years abroad: his sister Hester supplied him with fine bone lace, his father, who lived in religious exile in Ireland, with tallow, and his brother Nathaniel with other useful trade goods, such as axes and hoes. From 1686 to 1690 Nathaniel alone consigned over £600 worth of goods to him.<sup>105</sup> In return, in Nevis Pinney bought sugar and indigo for sale in England,<sup>106</sup> and while in the early years the wares belonged to his family and he earned commission on each transaction, later he seems to have bought and sold merchandise on his own account and at his own risk.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Sharpe, Pamela 'Pinney, Hester (1658-1740)' *Oxford DNB*

<sup>100</sup> John Pinney was born on 3 May 1686 (VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 1 p45, also R Pares *A West India Fortune* p11).

<sup>101</sup> Azariah Pinney's brother Nathaniel paid £5 for his passage, and with his ransom having been paid, Azariah was, therefore, not indebted but could immediately start to work in the West Indies for his own benefit. He sailed on the ketch *Rose Pink*, while Stapleton's men were transported on the *Indeavor* (Wigfield, W Macdonald (comp) *The Monmouth Rebels 1685*). Sir William Stapleton's governorship ended in 1685, the year the Monmouth Rebels were sent to Nevis (Penson, Lillian M *The Colonial Agents of the British West Indies* p60).

<sup>102</sup> Oldham, Wilfrid *Britain's Convicts to the Colonies*, citing CSP America and West Indies 1661-1668 p257

<sup>103</sup> Pinney, William A *The Pinneys*, citing John Cussen, Nevis Leeward Islands 1930

<sup>104</sup> Pares, R *A West India Fortune* p10 and p11, also Natalie Zacek *Settler Society in the English Leeward Islands* p104

The earliest mention of Azariah Pinney's 'bible, a small quantity of liquor, and £15 in hard cash' was in TS Ashton's review of *A West-India Fortune* ('Review: A West-India Merchant' in *The Economic History Review* New Series 1951 Vol 4 No 1 pp123-24). A list of Azariah Pinney's items is also found in CC Trench *The Western Rising* pp250-52. For an account of Azariah Pinney's expenses see also George Roberts 'On the Banishment of Participants in the Duke of Monmouth's Rebellion' pp355-56.

<sup>105</sup> Included in the goods sent to Azariah Pinney from Bristol in July/August 1686 was a large amount of bone lace (PP, AB 2). His father sent the tallow from Dublin where he had lived since coming into conflict with the Church over his nonconformist beliefs (R Pares *A West India Fortune* pp4-5 and p32).

Generally the rise of the Pinney family's fortunes is attributed to their West India interests but Pamela Sharpe's extensive research into the life of Azariah's sister Hester Pinney (1658-1740) has challenged this view and shifted the focus; Sharpe revealed that through her business dealings Hester greatly contributed to the wealth and status of the Pinney family ('Dealing with Love: The Ambiguous Independence of the Single Woman in Early Modern England' in *Gender and History* Vol 11 Issue 2 (1999) pp209-32).

<sup>106</sup> Among the sugar shipments which Nathaniel Pinney recorded were '4 hogsheads of sugar received from my brother by Captain Morgan in *Rose Pink* September 1687'; the next load of six hogsheads of Muscovado sugar was accounted for in November 1687 (PP, AB 2). Shipments of indigo were recorded in Nathaniel Pinney's accounts in the 1680s and 1690s. On 28 October 1691, for instance, he sold a barrel to Richard Codrington of Bristol, brought from Nevis by Captain Whitchurch, and another two barrels that had been shipped in the *Europe* by John Needs (PP, AB 3).

<sup>107</sup> Pares, R *A West India Fortune* pp32-5

CC Trench stated that Pinney bound himself to the sugar merchant Merewether working in his office (*The Western Rising* pp250-52) but, according to Pares, Azariah Pinney only 'established a connection' with Richard Meriwether'.

The earliest reference to Azariah Pinney's direct involvement in plantation affairs comes from a letter sent from Boston in June 1694. It was written by Ruth Charlot who had engaged Pinney as her attorney. With her third husband she owned the estate below Proctor's on the seaward side. She had inherited the plantation from her second husband, William Allen, who, in turn, had inherited it from his father.<sup>108</sup> William Allen and his wife Ruth had lived on the plantation, together with their daughter Hannah and three children from Ruth's previous marriage, William, Laurence and Ruth Haddock.<sup>109</sup> At some stage William Allen had mortgaged part of the estate with some of its enslaved people and stock, and when he made his will in July 1683, he left it to his wife and their daughter, Hannah. However, he wanted his stepchildren to inherit Hannah's share if she died before she was fourteen years old, and as the girl appears to have died young, the estate fell to his widow and the Haddock children from her previous marriage.<sup>110</sup> Soon after William Allen died, his widow re-married. Her third husband, Henry Charlot, may have been a Frenchman; he certainly did not live in Nevis permanently and may not have brought into the marriage any land of his own. To pay off William Allen's debts, the Charlots mortgaged the whole estate and Henry Charlot soon set about improving it. He bought new sugar-making equipment - coppers and a cooler -<sup>111</sup> but within two years had to let go of four people and he mortgaged 'One negro boy two negro women and one boy more.'<sup>112</sup> The Charlots had hoped to recover the title to their mortgaged property but they fell behind with their payments and by October 1688 owed 172,000 pounds of sugar to John Streater and company of Nevis.<sup>113</sup>

As luck would have it, John Streater appointed Azariah Pinney as one of the overseers of his will and Pinney was therefore well positioned to become involved with the Charlots and their plantation. Added to this, two years later, in 1693, Henry Charlot chose as one of his attorneys Solomon Israel,<sup>114</sup> a well-established Jewish merchant in the island<sup>115</sup> whose business paths were to cross Azariah Pinney's on more than one occasion,<sup>116</sup> and it was probably Solomon Israel who installed Pinney to oversee the running of Charlot's plantation. When in June 1694 Ruth Charlot wrote from Boston to 'Capt. Penny' (sic),

<sup>108</sup> William Allen's land had originally belonged to William Leach (PP, WI Box O-5, courtesy of David Hancock; also WI Boxes A and B).

<sup>109</sup> The name of Ruth Allen's first husband is not known. He could have been Laurence Haddock (the name of her son); a Laurence Haddock was in Nevis from at least December 1674 when he bought an African boy directly from a slaver. In the following year he purchased a man 'for Webb' from another slaver (UKNA, T 70/936).

However, William Freeman, in his letters, also mentioned a Captain Joseph Haddock, the uncle of Richard Haddock, and as Freeman was closely linked with Nevis, it is very likely that this Joseph Haddock was Ruth Allen/Charlot's first husband (D Hancock (ed) *The Letters* p81).

Captain Haddock appears to have died before April 1679, when he was described as 'the late master of the *Quaker Ketch*'. Sir Richard Haddock mentioned him in connection with enslaved people taken from Tobago (Act of the Privy Council (Colonial) 1613-1680 No 1259).

Captain Joseph's Haddock's nephew Sir Richard Haddock was born in about 1629 and came from an important seafaring family 'whose name occurs at Leigh as early as 1327'. It is likely, therefore, that Joseph also came from Leigh-on-Sea in Essex. While his nephew's life is well-documented, nothing more is known about Joseph Haddock (Henning, BD (ed) *The House of Commons 1660-1690* Vol 2 pp460-61).

<sup>110</sup> Pares, R A *West India Fortune* pp36-8

When he died, William Allen left 8,000 pounds of sugar for Laurence and 30,000 pounds to be divided between William and Ruth (PP, WI Box A). 30,000 pounds of sugar was about equivalent to the price of ten child slaves.

<sup>111</sup> PP, WI Box A: 1685 Henry Charlotte Receipt for equipment from John Adye

<sup>112</sup> PP, WI Box A: Charlot's Accounts 1698-1704; also Bill of Sale dated 20 October 1687

<sup>113</sup> Pares, R A *West India Fortune* p36; also PN 7

<sup>114</sup> Henry Charlot's other attorneys were his wife Ruth and Richard Tovey (PP, WI Box A).

<sup>115</sup> Terrell, Michelle M *The Jewish Community of Early Colonial Nevis* p47 and p49, citing ECSCRN, CR 1707-1728 f85

<sup>116</sup> Over a number of years Azariah Pinney and Solomon Israel conducted business together or were involved in other activities. Both men, for instance, served as executors of a friend's estate (VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 5 p306); in 1717/8 Solomon Israel witnessed Azariah Pinney's will and together they lent money to one of the poorer inhabitants in the island (WI Box B – 1717: Bond of William Griffin with Azariah Pinney and Solomon Israel and UKNA, CO 186/2: 28 August 1735 and 11 November 1735).

Solomon Israel had not only been Henry Charlot's attorney but also Mary Helme's when she rented out part of her plantation to Mrs Dewitt (PP, WI Box A: Document dated 2 August 1697).



she asked him in his role as her attorney to begin the sugar crop and to furnish her son Laurence Haddock 'with such things or cloathing as is needful'.<sup>117</sup> By then the Charlots' main moneylender, John Streater, had died, followed soon after by his widow and his business partner Edmund Scrope,<sup>118</sup> to whom the Charlots were also indebted. Pinney had become not only the executor of John Streater but also an administrator of Edmund Scrope's estate, and with Henry Charlot appointing Pinney as his attorney,<sup>119</sup> within ten years of arriving in Nevis, he was at the very centre of the Charlots' business affairs.

### ***The first known enslaved people on Charlot's, May 1696 to October 1701***

On 19 May 1696 Azariah Pinney compiled 'A List of Movables upon the Estate of Mr Henry Charlotte'. First he noted down seven men, nine women and three children - nineteen in all – then the animals (headed 'The Cattle'): five horses, four mares, two oxen, three bulls, two bull calves, two cows, and three heifers. His record was thorough; he went on to log all the tools and equipment, the furniture and household goods, ending with the foodstuffs<sup>120</sup> but interestingly did not record any branding irons, either for marking people, animals or hogsheads.

During 1696 seven additional people arrived on Charlot's. Their fates speak of painful and turbulent times. Three people, **Caesar**, **Jenny** and **Fortune**, bought from a Mr Douall, all died within a year: Caesar on 2 January 1697, 'being poisoned (sic) by Tamberlaine and Mall', Fortune on 16 July and Jenny on 19 September. Of a further four purchased in 1696, two died within two days of each other: **Nanny** (Naany) on 7 February 1797, being poisoned by Mall, and on the following day a man or a woman called **Cranjer**. At that time an enslaved man was in charge, 'my Negro **Tom**'. Just a week earlier he had started 'to look after the plantation', and on the same day Tom started work, the black horse died, 'having been 3 days sick & none of the Negroes spake of it till after he was dead'. This all happened during crop time; Tom oversaw the workers at a particularly difficult period. He ran Charlot's for a few months after one overseer had left and until a new one started, but Tom was sold after October 1701 and died shortly afterwards. The woman **Moushell**, or Moshell, who was also bought in 1696, had treatment in 1703, was sold and died shortly afterwards as well. One additional man, **Nero**, was only mentioned once when in February 1697 he helped with the grinding.<sup>121</sup> He probably died before October 1701.

In May 1696 there were seven men on Charlot's. Two of them were dead within less than two years: **Cuffe**, bought from Philip Brome, died on 7 December [1696] of a 'broken belly'; **John** died sometime

<sup>117</sup> PP, WI Box A, and PN 20A

<sup>118</sup> Sarah Streater, John Streater's widow and his executrix, died before having taken the probate. The daughter of Sarah Minor, she was a Bristol woman, while John Streater may have been a Quaker. He left £10 'to poor Quakers ... to the men's meeting'. In England Streater's brothers Henry and Samuel were to act on behalf of the deceased. The other overseers in Nevis were the merchant Sylvanus Taylor, Captain William Meade and the surveyor Ebenezer Kyrland. While Streater left to each of the four overseers of his will a beaver hat for their troubles, Streater must have held Azariah Pinney in special regard; he bequeathed him an additional £5 (VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 5 pp299-310). Pinney acted as attorney for both Henry and Samuel Streater which meant that he was very familiar with everyone's affairs (R Pares *A West India Fortune* p40).

<sup>119</sup> Pares, R *A West India Fortune* pp36-7 but see also VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 5 pp299-310

As early as 1686 – a year after his arrival in Nevis - Azariah Pinney had oiled the commercial wheels by sending a present of a barrel of beer to Mr Scrope. At a cost of £2:12:0, this was a valuable gift (George Roberts 'On the Banishment of Participants in the Duke of Monmouth's Rebellion' p356).

Pares stated that 'The Charlots went to New England' but Mrs Charlot presumably returned to Nevis because a power of attorney dated July 1695 was for Henry Charlot's wife, Azariah Pinney and James Bevan (PN 1: Letter of Attorney).

<sup>120</sup> The names of the men were Charles, Dick, Tomlyn, Dull, John, Cuffe and James; the women were Franck, Lane, Moll, Betty, Sabella, Pendar (or Pendor), Namino, Dina and Pranser; then there were three girls, Sarah, Jenny and Mahreah. Azariah Pinney probably annotated later: two men and one woman were listed as 'dead'. Elsewhere on the same side are three named men (two dead) and two women bought by Azariah Pinney in 1696 (PP, WI Box A). There are some discrepancies in the original lists and a typed transcript (PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box).

<sup>121</sup> PP, WI Box A: Typed transcript filed under 1697

after May 1696 and before 13 September 1697. Other men survived into the next century: on 9 November 1703 a doctor charged N18s for 'dressing **James** his foot & curing the same' and N3s for treating **Dull** who was then sold. **Charles** was fluxed in 1703/4, and **Dick** had medical treatment between 1704 and 1706. **Tomlyn**,<sup>122</sup> who with **Mall** (also Moll), had poisoned the newly purchased Caesar, and Mall, who also poisoned Nanny on her own, survived whatever punishment they received for killing these two people; both Tomlyn (also spelt Tamberlaine) and Mall were alive in October 1701. Of the other women who were on Charlot's in May 1696, **Naime** (also Namino) died sometime before September 1697, and both **Dina** and **Pranser** (also Prancer) were dead by 1701. **Ffrank** survived, as did **Betty**, who may have been the woman treated by William Semple in December 1703; he charged N18s for 'curing an ulcer in Bettys ankle'. Between 1704 and 1706 Semple also treated the woman **Sabella** (Isabella, Sybela and Sibela), and in December 1703 charged N£1:6:0<sup>123</sup> for 'Curing an ulcer in each of **Ppendars** legs'. Ppendar (Penda and Pinder) had further treatment between 1704 and 1706. **Lane** (Lain), too, was ill over a number of years. Between 1702 and 1706 she had medicines and treatments costing a total of N£5:5:0, and after being fluxed, having her foot dressed and a large ulcer in each leg treated,<sup>124</sup> she was then sold. **Sarah** and **Mahreah** (Mareah), who may have been her daughters, were also sold sometime after October 1701.

To make up for losses, sometime after mid-September 1697 and before October 1701 Azariah Pinney purchased at least nine more people: **Daniel**, **Jack**, **Newffrank**, **Catalina**, **?Franni**, **Luwa**, **Marea**, **?Sporamse**, and **Cuffee**. By October 1701, Cuffee was 'in England', where he may have worked for Azariah Pinney's wife.<sup>125</sup> The others had died.

Judging by the dates in the medical accounts doctors were called in when needed. Sometimes they treated people on several successive days. How effective their interventions were is impossible to ascertain; the mortality on Charlot's cannot be compared with other plantations as so far no data has been found. However, it does appear that, compared to losses on Mountravers in the second half of the eighteenth century, a relatively high number of people died within a very short space of time. To sum up:

- Of 19 people listed in May 1696, by October 1701 six had died. Of the 13 survivors four were then sold.
- Of seven people bought in 1696, by October 1701 five had died and two had survived. They were sold and then died after being sold.
- Of the nine people bought sometime between September 1697 and October 1701, eight died during that period and one man was in England.
- Out of a total of 35 people either already at Charlot's or bought for the plantation, more than half, 19, died between May 1696/September 1697 and October 1701. Including one man, who was in

<sup>122</sup> From 1697 onwards Tomlyn was spelt Tamberlaine. He had been named after Tamburlaine (or Timur I Leng), a fifteenth century Mongol ruler made popular in one of Christopher Marlowe's late-sixteenth century tragedies (Nicholas Rowe reworked the tragedy; his *Tamerlane*, which characterised William III, appeared in 1701). Marlowe's charismatic Tamburlaine conquered lands across Asia and punished the vanquished kings and queens by enslaving them. Tamburlaine died before he lost his acquisitions and thereby escaped earthly punishment. Azariah Pinney may have thought it clever to turn the table on Marlowe's hero and call an enslaved man Tamberlain, but he may also have seen personal qualities in this man that made him choose the name: charisma and strength as a leader but also an element of cruelty.

At least two other names may have been borrowed from contemporary literature. Phillada, a woman on Proctor's, may well have been named after a popular seventeenth century anonymous poem, 'Phillada flouts me', and Ppendar on Charlot's may have been named after Pandar in William Shakespeare's *Pericles*.

<sup>123</sup> N£ means Nevis currency; S£ sterling

<sup>124</sup> PP, WI Box A: Charlot's Accounts 1698-1704, and WI Box B: Medical Expense a/c December 1704-May 1706

<sup>125</sup> It is possible that Azariah Pinney's wife visited him in Nevis and that she took Cuffee with her to England (PP, WI Box A: Handwritten inventory).

England, 16 survived until October 1701 but a total of six were sold. Two of these died shortly afterwards.

### ***Azariah Pinney's story continued***

Throughout the 1690s Azariah Pinney established himself in the island. He started to buy small tracts of land in the parish of St Thomas Lowland<sup>126</sup> and involved himself in island politics. He took up his first official position in June 1697 when he became Treasurer<sup>127</sup> and afterwards replaced the agent of the Royal African Company, Philip Brome, as Collector of Liquor Duties.<sup>128</sup> Payment for the post of Treasurer was by way of commission; for any debts collected he received eight per cent. Pinney did well out of this and held the position of Treasurer for ten years.<sup>129</sup>

Philip Brome, the RAC agent, later alleged that the RAC, too, had a claim on the Charlots' property. According to him, Mr and Mrs Charlot had taken out a mortgage from the Company – without informing their main financier, Streater. Brome alleged that they had not repaid the loan.<sup>130</sup> It is likely that this was just diversionary mischief, borne out of envy and malice: Brome was not only unable to produce any documents - he claimed they were lost in an earthquake - but he had also become one of Azariah Pinney's political enemies.<sup>131</sup> In addition, Brome's wife was a Helme and, by the time Brome made his allegation, Pinney had become involved with the Helme plantation, Proctor's.

Soon after becoming Treasurer of the island, Azariah Pinney, as attorney for Streater's executors, entered into a partnership with an experienced planter, Edward Parris.<sup>132</sup> He was another man with whom Pinney was to have crucial links that ultimately led to the amalgamation of Charlot's with neighbouring Proctor's estate.

The partnership between Pinney and Parris was formalised with an agreement which stipulated that it was to last for four years. Each man had to contribute an equal number of horses and cattle and fifteen people.<sup>133</sup> The contract matter-of-factly stated that any enslaved person killed by cruelty was to be replaced 'by the party so killing'<sup>134</sup> but did not lay down what sanctions the murderer could expect. Legally, 'the killing of Negroes' was an offence,<sup>135</sup> but neither partner would have wanted to take the other

<sup>126</sup> PN 1 and PP, Dom Box S1

<sup>127</sup> 'Extractions from the Calendar of State Papers' Colonial Series 15; America & the West Indies May 1696 to October 1697 (Courtesy of Brian Littlewood)

<sup>128</sup> Azariah Pinney's appointment as Treasurer angered Brome's friend Governor Codrington, particularly as Pinney had publicly attacked another friend of Codrington's, John Palmer (R Pares A *West India Fortune* pp42-3). In November 1696 the Council decided to send 'Messages to the Governor requesting that John Palmer may be suspended from the Council' and debates about his removal continued into the following year ('Extractions from the Calendar of State Papers'; Colonial Series 15; America & the West Indies May 1696 to October 1697: Attachment: Lists of the Councils of the Leeward Islands, courtesy of Brian Littlewood). Although Codrington made his displeasure known, he consented to Azariah Pinney's appointment (*A West India Fortune* p43).

<sup>129</sup> Pares, R A *West India Fortune* p43

Towards the end of his tenure Azariah Pinney incurred expenses that had not been sanctioned by the Council. An Act was passed to enable the then Treasurer 'to demand and receive the debts contracted by Azariah Pinney as Treasurer'. The debts related to the time before the French invasion (UKNA, CO 185/4: 11 May 1713).

<sup>130</sup> PP, WI Box A

Brome died between December 1705 and 1708. The debt was dormant for 20 years and the Charlot/RAC agreement must, therefore, have been entered before about 1685, soon after the Charlots had got married (PN 6A: Philip Brome to Azariah Pinney, undated).

<sup>131</sup> Pares, R A *West India Fortune* p38

According to Pares, Brome claimed that the documents got lost in the Jamaican earthquake of 1690 but in the original document Brome only mentioned an earthquake, not its location. This could have been the earthquake with was said to have happened in Nevis in 1690 (Anon *An Account of the Late Dreadful Earth-Quake*, courtesy of Brian Littlewood).

<sup>132</sup> PP, Misc Vols 41 Anna Maria Pinney's Notebooks Vol 6: Agreement E Parris and A Pinney August 1697

<sup>133</sup> Pares, R A *West India Fortune* p40

<sup>134</sup> PP, Misc Vols 41 Anna Maria Pinney's Notebooks Vol 6

<sup>135</sup> CSP 1675-1676 No 570 (Courtesy of Brian Littlewood)

to task publicly, and it is questionable whether a third party would have chosen to intervene. Most importantly, any act of cruelty would have had to have been witnessed by a white man; if an enslaved individual saw a white man killing a black, they could not give evidence against him. In Britain, any landless peasant was allowed to testify in Court and, in theory at least, his testimony carried the same weight as that of a nobleman, but enslaved people were denied this basic right. Revd Smith, an eighteenth-century commentator on Nevis life, acknowledged that 'these procedures are very despotick' but justified the injustices by appealing to his readers' fears. Because by then blacks outnumbered whites he thought it 'absolutely necessary' that they should not have the right to bear witness against white men.<sup>136</sup> The legal framework, therefore, gave white people a free hand to rob, rape, or maim enslaved people. Unless a white man took up their cause, they stood no chance of legal redress. And even if someone was taken to task, the brotherhood of planters closed ranks. The fact that enslaved people could not bear witness against white men was central to the system of slavery; it protected whites from the consequences of their abuses. Restrained only by their conscience, owners and managers could exercise their power almost unchecked. The law of 1675 against killing negroes was periodically renewed - in 1734 and again in 1798, with the Legislature adding fixed penalties for their maiming - but almost right up to the abolition of slavery planters protected their right to oversee their properties as they saw fit. What went on in the field or the boiling house was out of sight and beyond legal control.

Significantly, a month after Azariah Pinney and Edward Parris made their agreement, the inventory of plantation goods was headed 'formerly Charlotts', implying that as early as September 1697 Pinney considered the estate out of the hands of the Charlot and Haddock families. This was despite them, as the owners, taking out a fresh mortgage with Pinney in the following year. This loan was repayable by instalments in four years. Failure to comply meant losing the plantation.<sup>137</sup> Meanwhile Azariah Pinney bought on his own account his first property in the northern part of Charlestown and later added more land and houses in town.<sup>138</sup>

In 1701 the four-year-agreement with Parris expired. Parris withdrew his people from Charlot's and from October Azariah Pinney started renting Mrs Mary Travers's Proctor's plantation in partnership with another business partner, the London merchant and one-time agent for Nevis,<sup>139</sup> Richard Meriweather. Both estates could be worked together but labour was short and for some years additional workers had to be hired from other owners. Recompense sometimes was in sugar, at other times in cash. In 1701 and 1702 Azariah Pinney paid 1,500 pounds of sugar and N£14 to Ursula Bartlett, 4,400 pounds of sugar for 'Mr Comb's negroes', £15 to Thomas Wallwin and 1,600 pounds of sugar 'in behalf of William Ling as guardian to John Combs a minor'.<sup>140</sup> Some of the people hired may have been skilled craft workers, who, it appears, carried out repairs to the buildings on Charlot's. Accounts record the purchases of materials - board for a shade, nails and board for the boiling house and a brass block for the mill - as well as labour for mending the still and for hanging a roller and a wooden cooler. The last entry in one account was for 'shingling and nailing the boyling house windows, spouts and a gate'. Looking with hindsight at this final item of expenditure, the gate appears almost symbolic: Azariah Pinney shut the gate behind the Charlots because, by the time this work was carried out, he had started proceedings to foreclose on them.

<sup>136</sup> Smith, Revd William *A Natural History of Nevis* p233

<sup>137</sup> Part of an account book for the period 1698-1704 looks like Azariah Pinney's attorney's account. It was headed '1698 Planta formerly Charlotts'. Entries for 1699-1700 suggest that repayments were made (PP, WI Box A). Azariah Pinney foreclosed on Ruth Charlots *et al* on 12 June 1705 (R Pares *A West India Fortune* pp36-8, and PN 1).

<sup>138</sup> PP, Cat 4 Misc Deeds 1538-1750: Bargain and Sale, from Robert Henly and Robert Yale (or Yate) to Azariah Pinney of premises in the North part of Charlestown, Nevis, 19 October 1699, and PN 1

<sup>139</sup> CSP 1711-1712 No 368; see also VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 3 pp27-35

<sup>140</sup> PP, WI Box A: Charlot's Accounts 1698-1704

One of Mrs Charlot's sons, Laurence Haddock, contested Azariah Pinney's claim. Having left the estate in May 1702,<sup>141</sup> he accused Azariah Pinney of deliberately mismanaging the plantation and of being wasteful so as to make repaying the debt ever more difficult. Pares surmised that 'payments must have been slow in coming' and they probably were - but for the reasons Laurence Haddock gave. It is impossible to establish now whether Azariah Pinney did, indeed, forge or alter one of the documents and thereby 'wormed' him and his brother 'out of what they had in their infancy,' as Laurence Haddock alleged, and whether Pinney was aided by 'the other despot', Solomon Israel, but the aggrieved Haddock certainly felt that the men conspired against his family.<sup>142</sup> While Pares did not find the accusations, 'in general, convincing', some of the early documents do look suspicious. In overseer Wesbury's contract, for instance, Azariah Pinney included a curious secrecy clause; Mr Wesbury was 'to deliver the plantation with a particular account of what's on it *to none but me or my order*',<sup>143</sup> and, looking at the number of deaths among the Charlot's people and also its livestock, Haddock's allegations of mismanagement seem credible. Regardless of the proof he offered, Haddock lost his legal challenge. Angered by his lack of redress, he took matters into his own hands and by way of compensation 'carried away' two unnamed individuals and a mare he had bought.<sup>144</sup> Sometime after he left Charlot's, Laurence Haddock and his brother William went to sea and that was the last that was heard of them.<sup>145</sup>

Azariah Pinney acted as Richard Meriweather's attorney and factor<sup>146</sup> and the two men not only jointly leased Proctor's but they also bought another, much larger plantation. It measured 380 acres, came with a sizeable workforce and had once belonged to Sir John Bawden. The property which Pinney and Meriweather bought was later known as Lady Bawden's, or Mount Ida's and Wansey's. They purchased it in August 1702 from Sir John's widow<sup>147</sup> and soon after rented it out to a Robert Lowrey (also Lowrey and Lorey). Among the security Lowrey gave were his own 29 people. The five-year-contract stated that he was to employ a surgeon to take care of the workers and that at the end of the lease Lowrey was to make good any losses among those he rented. This was an improvement on the conditions under which Proctor's had been let to the neglectful Mrs Dewitt and at least ensured that Lowrey would endeavour to look after those in his possession. A clause in the contract also stated that Pinney was allowed the use of a plantation 'negro carpenter' as often Lowrey could spare him - <sup>148</sup> further evidence that enslaved people worked in skilled occupations even at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The year 1703 saw the death of both the owner of Proctor's and her husband. Henry Travers died early in the year in Nevis and Mary Travers at the beginning of May in London. She had wanted to be buried in Nevis and prior to leaving for England in 1701 had made precise plans for her last resting place<sup>149</sup> but, blind and disfigured from smallpox, Mary Travers ended her life at her house in Hatton Garden. Her will

<sup>141</sup> PP, WI Box A: Charlot's Accounts 1698-1704

<sup>142</sup> PN 7A

<sup>143</sup> Pares, R *A West India Fortune* pp36-8; pp18-9 [author's italics]

<sup>144</sup> The inventory of 25 October 1701 stated that Laurence Haddock had 'a white horse in lieu of a bull' which may have been the same mare he was said to have carried away (PP, WI Box A).

<sup>145</sup> A financial account of 1789 mentioned a debt owed to a Laurence Haddock, St Eustatius - a son perhaps? (ECSCRN, CR 1789-1790 f291)

<sup>146</sup> For one half of the plantation Azariah Pinney signed the lease in his own capacity and for the other half as attorney and factor to Richard Meriweather (PP, WI Box B).

<sup>147</sup> PP, Misc Vols 6 List of Deeds and Papers, 1783; also R Pares *A West India Fortune* p38

Sir John Bawden had been one of the prominent London merchants involved in West India traffic (C Bridenbaugh and R Bridenbaugh *No Peace Beyond the Line* p320) and had also held property in Barbados. The Oldmixon family were among Sir Bawden's cousins (VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 5 pp278-83), and in the context of claying muscovado, Oldmixon wrote that 'Sir John Bawdon order'd his overseers to attempt it two or three and twenty years since, in that plantation in this island which is now Mr Merriweather's' (VL Oliver *Monumental Inscriptions of the West Indies* p76, citing 'British Empire in America' (1<sup>st</sup> ed) Vol 2 1708 p197). Although Meriweather and Pinney had jointly purchased Bawden's estate, Oldmixon did not mention Pinney as co-owning it.

<sup>148</sup> Robert Lowrey leased Lady Bowden's on 4 February 1703 for 46,000 pounds of muscovado sugar (PP, Misc Vols 6 List of Deeds and Papers, 1783; PN 25, and *A West India Fortune* p41).

<sup>149</sup> PP, WI Box A: Mary Travers to Azariah Pinney, 31 May 1701

directed that Proctor's was to be equally divided between William and Mary, her children from her previous marriage to William Helme, and that her two [step]daughters, Mary Smith and Anne Cary, and her son Henry Travers were to get £300 each out of her 'whole and sole estate' – presumably her Mountain estate in St John Figtree parish. Henry, her youngest child, was also left the estate that had belonged to her second husband. This is believed to have been property in Antigua.<sup>150</sup>

### ***The Proctor and Mountain people, June 1701 to September 1703***

As soon as Azariah Pinney heard of Mary Travers's death, he made an inventory of all the people on Mountain and Proctor's. In June 1701, when she had sailed to England, there had been 37 in total; by the beginning of September 1703 the number was reduced by one but in just over two years more than a third - 14 people - appear to have died, with one woman, Dina, recorded as a 'runaway, supposed dead'. Those who had been lost had been replaced by 13 new arrivals: three woman, five boys and five girls. The majority of the children would have been newly purchased although some may have been born on the plantation - a year later Azariah Pinney noted for the Saddle Hill estate, where there were only four female adults, that two girls had been 'borne lately'.

Dina, the 'runaway supposed dead', and another woman, **Lucy** (also Lace), who was marked as 'a runaway', were the first people on record who sought to escape the Pinney regime. In Nevis they were, however, far from being the first people who had tried to free themselves. The first runaway – indeed, the very first four enslaved Africans who were recorded in this island - was in the context of one of them having been 'out in rebellion'.<sup>151</sup> But Nevis is relatively small and conditions for hiding were not ideal. By the 1680s much of the wood had been cleared for planting although a visitor to the island did note that escapees could still take refuge near the top of the central mountain. There they had a small stand of timber.<sup>152</sup> However, if this visitor knew of such a hideout, planters would have been aware of it, too. While large-scale, settled and organised maroonage could not be sustained for long in Nevis, the mountain did provide sanctuary for a small number of refugees. In the 1760s, for instance, two white sailors jumped ship and hid at the mountain with two 'runaway negroes'.<sup>153</sup> If people managed to escape to St Kitts, they had a better chance of losing themselves high up on Mount Liamuiga. If caught, they were imprisoned and their owners had to redeem them at a cost of 1,000 pounds of sugar and a daily rate of sixpence. In some cases the ransom exceeded the runners' value, and presumably their masters never claimed them.<sup>154</sup> But being kept in jail was only part of the punishment. The real punishment happened on the plantations. Those who had sought to escape faced brutal treatment. On Proctor's even women were chained; Mary Travers issued instructions to that effect.<sup>155</sup> This would have meant that they were put in iron rings, weighing perhaps ten or twelve pounds, which were securely hammered in place around their ankles. Thus shackled, they had to work and sleep for days, if not weeks. If other abscondee had been caught, four or five people might be chained together.<sup>156</sup> Persistent runners risked mutilation or execution. In the face of such punishment, escaping took immense courage and determination.

While planters sought to control the movement of their people, they found it impossible to do so at all times and they tolerated a certain amount of 'nightwalking' or 'wandering',<sup>157</sup> when people left their

<sup>150</sup> PP, WI Box A, and VL Oliver *History of Antigua* Vol 3 p143

By September 1704 the lands 'late of Proctor John Moore' were 'in the occupation of William and Mary Helme' (PP, WI Box B).

<sup>151</sup> Pers. comm., Brian Littlewood, 10 October 2003, citing James Hewett's will in VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 4 pp106-07 'Abstracts of Nevis Wills'

<sup>152</sup> Bridenbaugh, C and R Bridenbaugh *No Peace Beyond the Line* p270

<sup>153</sup> Henly, Peter *The life of Peter Henly* pp16-9 (Courtesy of George Tyson)

<sup>154</sup> CSP 1693-1696 No 1120 Minutes of the Council of Nevis 2 July 1694

<sup>155</sup> PN 20, citing Racedown XII, Plantation Management, 'Instructions to my Overseer Christopher Wattis'

<sup>156</sup> Lambert, S (ed) *House of Commons Sessional Papers* Vol 69 p462; also MLD, Mills Papers, Vol 4 2006.178/10 (6 March 1777)

<sup>157</sup> Lambert, S (ed) *House of Commons Sessional Papers* Vol 70 p84

plantations for short visits elsewhere. It appears that Dina had escaped for long periods, whereas Lucy seems to have absented herself regularly and then returned on her own accord.

When Mary Travers left Nevis, twelve individuals from Proctor's were on her Mountain estate: three men (**Cori**, Crato, and Will); four women (Gell, Jugg, **Mamma Rosa** and **Old Woman**)<sup>158</sup> and five children: **Robin**, **Jemie**, **Mingo**, **Moly cook**, and **Fransway**.<sup>159</sup> By September 1703, Cori and Crato had died and Will was the only surviving adult male from Proctor's. It is likely that he had been on the plantation as a boy since at least 1680/1 and that he had grown up with the girls Jill and Juggy (Gell and Jugg). Jill was also still alive by September 1703 but Juggy had died sometime during the previous two years, as had another of the women, Mamma Rosa, and one of the boys, Mingo. He had been ill and was found dead after he had been fluxed.<sup>160</sup>

Of the other, non-Proctor people, one man, **Grame**, was noted as 'dead' but presumably eight more had also died. They were on the 1701 inventory but then were not recorded again: **Tom**, **Andra**, **Betty**, **Cecilia**, **Ffraico**, **Arra**, **Jemie** and **Stocka**, also Staka. Dina, the woman who was known for running away, was thought to have died.

The 15 non-Proctor people who had survived since 1701 were: **Cedree** (Chegery, Cedric), **French Harry**, **Mara Cola** (Margola), **Catterana** (Katherine), **Lucy** (Lace, 'a runaway'), **Nanny** (Papa Nanny), **Sarah**, **Codell** ('Codell or Ushee'), **Cuffee**, **Dav** (Davee), **Fransway** (Franswape or Fransways), **Jack Cash** (Jacklash), **Pettill Moly** (Pettymal), **Franke** (Frankie) and **Mary Cory** (Marylong). Of the last two, Franke probably was and Mary may have been alive in 1734. The woman known as Papa Nanny, most likely, was from the Pawpaws (also Popos, or Poppas)<sup>161</sup> from the southern part of today's Benin.

The Proctor group had since June 1701 increased by eight. They were three women called **Cranna Robbin**, **Guinye James** and **Ebo Bess** and three boys and two girls but of these five children only three of their names are known: **Benny**, a boy, and the girls **Mallucca** and **Juggie**. The other new, non-Proctor people were two boys called **Taffie** and **Andrew** and three girls: **Bornebough**, **Sarah** and **Phillis**.<sup>162</sup> **Charlot's and Proctor's plantations: in the hands of Azariah Pinney and Richard Meriweather** Azariah Pinney, meanwhile, enlarged the planting operation by renting additional land on the seaward side of Charlot's<sup>163</sup> and prepared for the court case that was to get him possession of Charlot's. He engaged a surveyor, John Hilton, whose job it was to measure the land and establish its value. To perform his work, Hilton needed several people to clear the ground, carry equipment and hold his measuring rods. In another instance surveying charges had included the hire of several people 'to help the surveyor',<sup>164</sup> and Pinney may well have made some extra money by renting Hilton a few people from the plantation. The work afforded the assistants some variety and gave them an opportunity to pick up

<sup>158</sup> Old Woman had been mentioned in a lease of part of Proctor's in 1691 (PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box).

<sup>159</sup> The Name Franksway (sic) appeared as a surname in the 1678 census for St Kitts (VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 2).

<sup>160</sup> PP, WI Box A: Charlot's Account 1703

<sup>161</sup> Gaspar, David Barry *Bondsmen and Rebels* p90

<sup>162</sup> PP, WI Box A: List of the negroes I leave for my Mountain Plantation, dated 3 June 1701; Inventory undertaken September 1703 (warrant 24 August 1703) for Mountain (front and back); Inventory of the estate of William and Mary Helme, orphans, dated 13 September 1703

<sup>163</sup> The land Azariah Pinney rented belonged to Catherine and Mary Murphy - possibly the mother or, more likely, the sister of Eleanor Murphy to whom Azariah Pinney paid the rent (PP, WI Box A). The women probably did not live on this property; Mary Murphy was later described as 'of Antigua' and it appears that, although Mary at one time owned at least one **enslaved** boy (he had been left to her by the Bristol merchant William Waters), the Murphy women hired no slaves to Azariah Pinney (VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 5 p301).

<sup>164</sup> The hire of the helpers was included in the 'charges for surveying Captain Keynell's plantation in Nevis' and accounted for in November 1714. The surveyor engaged five enslaved people for four days and four for one day (PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box).

new skills. Hilton's survey established that the estate consisted of six pieces of cane land of varying sizes, containing almost 116,000 plants.<sup>165</sup>

In 1704 Azariah Pinney set in motion the acquisition of Charlot's. He paid off with £100 the heir-at-law of the original Streater debtor, William Allen's brother Henry, for his share in the title to Charlot's plantation,<sup>166</sup> and on 12 June 1705, over twenty years since the then owner had mortgaged the plantation and over ten years since Azariah Pinney had first been concerned with it, the final decree for Charlot's was rendered. The plantation went out of possession of the Charlots and the Haddockses and into the hands of Azariah Pinney and his business partner Richard Meriweather.<sup>167</sup>

The two men were still renting Mary Travers' plantation, neighbouring Proctor's, which belonged to her orphaned children, and Azariah Pinney and Richard Meriweather were to get drawn into their affairs, too. Before her death, Mary Travers had appointed a man called Daniel Puckle to act as legal guardian until her children William and Mary Helme and Henry Travers came off age. However, according to one source she originally named Daniel Puckle as trustee to Henry Travers and Azariah Pinney as trustee to the Helme children,<sup>168</sup> which would explain why Pinney was in 1704 in a position to give power of attorney to his old planter-partner Edward Parris to act on behalf of the under-age William Helme. This power of attorney was recorded in Antigua and presumably related to the inheritance of the Antigua property.<sup>169</sup> However, within three years the young William Helme had died, as had Daniel Puckle, and Azariah Pinney's business partner Richard Meriweather was chosen to replace Puckle to act on behalf of William's sister, Mary Helme.<sup>170</sup> Through the death of her brother she had become the sole successor to Proctor's.

### ***More Charlot people, October 1701 to 1706***

Since he and Meriweather had started renting Proctor's in October 1701, Azariah Pinney had purchased new people for Charlot's. Over twenty more names emerge in various doctors' accounts. Some of the patients, however, may possibly have been from Proctor's or Mountain, or those workers he hired from other owners and for whose care he thereby became temporarily responsible.

The accounts from late 1702 through to 1706 testify to the effort and expense of keeping people alive: rum, tobacco, beef, codfish and herrings 'for sick negroes', and rum for all in cold and rainy weather.<sup>171</sup> Medical bills alone amounted to over N£110,<sup>172</sup> roughly equivalent to the cost of replacing three women, and, in today's money, worth in the region of £14,000 sterling.<sup>173</sup> Expenses of such magnitude suggest

<sup>165</sup> On 29 August 1703 John Hilton surveyed the land. The grand total was 115,873 plants [=1331.87 canes per acre] at a value of £40 (PP, WI Box A).

<sup>166</sup> Pares, R *A West India Fortune* pp36-7, and PN 6

<sup>167</sup> PP, WI Box B; also PN 2 and R Pares *A West India Fortune* pp36-8

Azariah Pinney, with Richard Meriweather (also spelt Merryweather), later purchased for N230 the last one sixth of Charlot's that had remained with one of the Haddock children, Ruth. She had, in the meantime, got married to Edward Prentice. The 'indenture and release' was dated 9 April 1709, and Charlot's then consisted of 84 or 87 acres (PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box).

<sup>168</sup> Oliver, VL *History of Antigua* Vol 3 p143

A James Puckle, a Notary Public in London, had in 1702 already been mentioned in a document concerning Proctor's (PP, WI Box A). It is likely that David Puckle was a partner in a firm of lawyers.

<sup>169</sup> The 'Letters of Guardianship now granted to Azariah Penny of Antigua, merchant' were dated 16 February 1703/4 and were recorded on 17 November 1704. This document appears to have been drawn up after Mary Travers's death and seems to have applied only to her son William Helme. Azariah Pinney's power of attorney to Edward Parris regarding William Helme was recorded on 14 July 1704 in St John's, Antigua. The Helmses and the Traverses, had land there (VL Oliver *History of Antigua* Vol 3 p143).

<sup>170</sup> Oliver, VL *History of Antigua* Vol 3 p143

<sup>171</sup> Azariah Pinney distributed rum in November, January and February (PP, WI Box A: Charlot's Accounts 1698-1704).

<sup>172</sup> PP, WI Box A: Charlot's Accounts 1698-1704, Will Semple's Account, and WI Box B: Dr Peter Christian's Account

<sup>173</sup> In 1706, the average value of men was £45 for a man, £ 36 for a woman (PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box). It is assumed that these were currency amounts for which an exchange rate of 170 % was used.



that Azariah Pinney attempted to save the people rather than let them perish but significantly perhaps, the extra food and the medical expenses started being recorded from late 1702 onwards. Laurence Haddock had, by then, aired his allegations of Pinney's wasteful expenditure and of his neglect of the plantation people, and Pinney was on course to acquire Charlot's for himself and Meriweather. It appears that in preparation for taking over Charlot's he began caring for the workers. Supplies were still meagre, though; the fact that he bought '4 yds bays for the sick negroes' suggests that healthy people had little given to them by way of blankets or covering.<sup>174</sup> Bays (also baize) was a coarse woollen material.

Those extracts from the medical accounts that are legible show that there were no direct accidental injuries (except, perhaps, Tony's eye wound) but that most people suffered from worms, sores, ulcers and intestinal problems. Largely, these were the manifestations of various illnesses but these were not recorded. The flux, which was mentioned, could have been simply a watery discharge or diarrhoea,<sup>175</sup> or the more serious amoebic or bacillary dysentery. One can only guess as to what lay behind the complaints, but flux, sores and ulcers are indicative of a poor diet and unhygienic conditions.

Some of the ulcers in the feet may have been caused by thorns and other fragments that got lodged in the skin, or cuts and lesions that had become infected and had failed to heal. After hurricanes many people injured themselves when, barefoot, they stepped onto debris of splintered wood, broken glass and rusty nails, and once the skin was punctured, the wounds got infected. Untreated, they turned into debilitating sores which were slow to heal. Even worse, small wounds could act as pathfinders for tetanus, and as something as insignificant as stepping onto a rusty nail could kill because there was no effective protection or cure.<sup>176</sup>

The presence of so many wounds and sores may also suggest that many people suffered from chiggers, a tiny larva that lives in low, damp areas and is particularly prevalent in early summer when vegetation is at its heaviest. Chiggers lodge themselves into skin where clothing fits tightly, or where the skin is thin, tender or wrinkled: between the toes, around the ankles, in the back of the knees, in front of the elbow, or in the armpits. All these areas would have been exposed because people walked about barefoot and wore few clothes. Once chiggers find a host, they feed on skin cells, and, if not extracted in time, cause the surrounding flesh to corrupt. Sores then ensue. The only way to eliminate chigger larvae completely is to launder clothes in very hot water and to have hot, soapy baths or showers, but that was not an option and may not have been known as a remedy. Chiggers could be removed from the skin but it was a difficult process. Revd Smith described how skilful negroes would pick out the chigger with a pin or needle and then rub 'a little tobacco ash' into the wound.<sup>177</sup> However, such treatment presupposed not only that someone was adept at extracting the larvae – which can be so small that it cannot be seen without a magnifying glass - but that people also had time for such procedures and time to let the little wounds heal properly. Walking barefoot, especially during the wet season, delayed the healing process, and without proper aftercare ulcers could lead to amputation or ultimately death. In the late 1820s a doctor in Nevis quoted the case of a man, Bolam, who died from an ulcerated leg. It could have been amputated but the doctor believed he could cure it and, indeed, after treatment the leg got better, but twice Bolam was ordered back to work too early and the wound deteriorated again. Each time he returned to the sick house but when he entered it for the third time 'his constitution was so shattered and dropsical that nothing could be done for him, and he died shortly after.'<sup>178</sup> Certainly many of the people on Charlot's suffered from putrid sores; wounds that had gone septic and which, in time, could kill.

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<sup>174</sup> PP, WI Box A: Charlot's Accounts 1698-1704

<sup>175</sup> Dawson, Ian and Ian Coulson (eds) *Medicine and Health through Time* p211

<sup>176</sup> Collins, Dr 'A *Professional Planter*' p312

<sup>177</sup> Smith, Revd William *A Natural History of Nevis* pp98-9

<sup>178</sup> NHCS, RG 12.10 Indictment of Manager on Stapleton p289

The treatment the patients received was mostly unspecified ('curing', 'treating'). Some of the entries in the accounts were illegible, others difficult to decipher because of erratic spelling and the use of abbreviations, but it appears that the doctors were mostly fluxing and purging their patients (inducing diarrhoea and vomiting), drawing out worms, dressing sores with unspecified material, and administering remedies such as pills, electuaries, boluses, juleps, and the generic 'phisick'. In the days before mass-produced medication doctors prepared medicines by hand and had to make their concoctions suitable for swallowing. They used a syrupy paste made of sugar or honey and water – electuaries – while others were added to sweet drinks, or juleps. At that time most of the ingredients may well have been local materials while certainly in the second half of the eighteenth century many of them were imported from specialist suppliers in England.

Although nowadays many of the treatments are considered arcane quackery, Azariah Pinney's calling in of doctors to treat the sick suggests an enlightened approach to healthcare. According to the medical and social historian Roy Porter, in the late seventeenth century many patients in the British isles – and, no doubt, in Nevis, too - were still being exposed to such practises as fortune-telling, dowsing, and palmistry whereas the educated elite viewed these methods with growing scepticism and concern.<sup>179</sup> They wanted a more scientific and methodical approach to health care. In Nevis 'chirurgeons' already needed licences to practice, and as early as 1701 the Legislature had sought to regulate physicians as well.<sup>180</sup> The doctors Pinney called in were approved practitioners.

Three medical men attended to people on Charlot's: William Semple, who worked with an apprentice, Dugall Grey,<sup>181</sup> and Doctors Joseph Chapman and Peter Christian. They were known to have treated the following people:

**Cuffee** had pills and purges on 18, 20 and 30 September 1703. On 9 November 1703 the doctor cured his foot of worms.

On 18 September and 19 December 1703 **Tony** (Toney) was fluxed, had sundry ulcers in his legs seen to and was given 'internal medicines for the flux'. Ill again a few days later, on 27 December 1703 Tony was treated for an eye wound.

**Peeter** (also Peter) had 'sundry sores' in his legs which were 'cured' on 9 November 1703 but between 1704 and 1706 he received more treatment. Also on 9 November 1703, **Abasa's** and **John boy's** feet were cured of worms. Between December 1704 and May 1706 John had more treatment for a 'putrid ulcer on his toe and one on his foot'.

On 5 December 1703 **Jacob** was fluxed, his sores were dressed and his leg treated again later.

**Adman** had an ulcer in his ankle, which was cured on 19 December 1703, and he was given 'phisick' while **Samson** (also Sanson) and **Kate** were fluxed. Both also had worms drawn out, as had **Pegie**. All three had additional treatment for ulcers: Pegie suffered from a large one in her ankle, Samson had one in his leg and Kate had an ulcer in her foot. Between 1704 and 1706 Samson underwent more treatment, and Kate probably was the 'negro girl Katy' whom the doctor cured 'of siveralls (sic) putrid ulcer and foot

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<sup>179</sup> Porter, Roy *Enlightenment* p152

<sup>180</sup> 'Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council appointed for the Consideration of all Matters relating to Trade in Foreign Plantations' Part III, published 1789: No 40 conf. 24 December 1701

<sup>181</sup> Dugall Grey may have previously worked for the 'chyrurgeon' Alexander Strennoh who in 1699 had left him some money in his will (VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 5 pp299-310).

and toes by salivation'. The negro girl Pegie (also Pegg and Paggy), was treated again in 1703 and between 1704 and 1706. She was then inflicted with an ulcer in her thigh.

**Andrew**, too, had an ulcer in his leg which was 'cured' on 27 December 1703 when he was also fluxed. On the same day and a month later, **Hary**, **Gritta** and **Hannah** were fluxed and treated for ulcers in their legs and ankles. **Sarah's** ulcer in her leg was cared for and she had more treatment between 1704 and 1706. **Jack** received a pill from Dr Chapman. Additional names that appear are **Cathrina**, **London**, **Cropear** or **Crapear**, **Adendo**, **Molly**, **Emelie** and **Susanna** but their medication or treatment is illegible. One woman was treated after she was 'bit by a dog'.<sup>182</sup>

Having won his court case against the Charlots in 1705,<sup>183</sup> Azariah Pinney acquired additional people. This is evident from the many new names which emerge from a 1705/6 medical account for Charlots: **Bristol** had a putrid ulcer; **Pierro** (also Piero) was given a 'pill purgant' and, suffering from a 'putrid ulcer', **Chester's** leg was dressed. The woman **Cato** (who had an unnamed daughter) was administered 'bol. stomat.' Also mentioned were the men **Dull** and **Fortune**, the boy **Will** and five women called **Manipa**, **Biseorne** (or Biscome?), **Ara** (also Arraw), **Judy** and **Lindia**, as well as **Dasilt**, **Rabin**, **Gorgo**, **Louisa**, **Dana**, **Dindia** and **Zolinda**.<sup>184</sup>

### ***The French invasion of Nevis and its aftermath***

On 22 March 1706 French forces attacked Nevis. Their invasion had far-reaching repercussions for all inhabitants but the enslaved people suffered the most. However, it also gave them an opportunity to demonstrate their fighting spirit and display their combat skills.

Three thousand French troops under the command of Pierre le Moyne d'Iberville landed where it was thought impossible to land, at Green Bay near Long Point, while another detachment engaged the Nevis militia in a diversionary tactic at the other end of the island, at Paradise Beach. The Long Point troops advanced on Charlestown, which they took after some resistance from a handful of militiamen stationed on 'a hill above Bath Plain' and from the men in Fort Charles.<sup>185</sup> As one correspondent put it, 'about eighty men to the fifteen hundred [were] too many ... to stand against long'.<sup>186</sup> By the end of the day the French had captured 22 English vessels that lay in the harbour, looted or burnt them and torched the documents in the Court House and the Court House itself. Two thirds of Charlestown was ruined by fire. Its residents - shocked, homeless, plundered - fled to the 'Dodan'<sup>187</sup> or 'Deodand', a stronghold high up in the mountain built as a safe place to which 'women, children, old men and negroes' could retreat at times of war.<sup>188</sup> They were joined by what remained of the militia. Pursued by the French they, too, had escaped to the deodand and, although surrounded and outnumbered by the enemy, were prepared to go on fighting. Some of the 'grandees', however, 'anxious to save what they could of their property (and their skins)',<sup>189</sup> pressed for surrender and not a single shot was fired. The French regarded this lack of resistance as spineless.

<sup>182</sup> PP, WI Box A: William Semple's Medical a/c 1703/4, and WI Box B: Medical Expense a/c December 1704-May 1706

<sup>183</sup> Pares, R A *West India Fortune* p38; for more detail see PN 2

<sup>184</sup> PP, WI Box B: Medical Expense a/c December 1704-May 1706; Expenses for 'Charllo' 12 February 1705-9 May 1706

<sup>185</sup> Burns, Sir Alan *History of the British West Indies* p416, citing a CSP 1706-1708 No 270; also The *Boston News-Letter* 13 March to 20 April 1706; reported 21 April 1706 (Courtesy of Vincent Hubbard) and Vincent K Hubbard *Swords, Ships and Sugar* pp114-15

<sup>186</sup> Ryland Stapleton MSS 4.13: Thomas Easom to Lady Stapleton, 22 April 1722

<sup>187</sup> *Boston News-Letter* 13 March to 20 April 1706; reported on 21 April 1706 (Courtesy of Vincent Hubbard)

<sup>188</sup> CSP 1693-1696 No 356; Sir Alan Burns *History of the British West Indies* p416, citing CSP 1699 No 863

<sup>189</sup> Hubbard, Vincent K *Swords, Ships and Sugar* pp116-17 and Sir Alan Burns *History of the British West Indies* p416

Two days after the invasion members of the Council surrendered the island. Among them was 'Azariah Piney'. Then in his mid-forties, he had long given up his post as officer in the militia – something d'Iberville found worth mentioning - <sup>190</sup> but he served on the Council and, while being held captive in his house in Charlestown, he added his signature to the capitulation document. He signed it from his bedside. As Pares put it, 'he was sick – or shammed sick'. Azariah Pinney later asserted that, ill with the flux, he had persistently refused to sign the surrender document but, threatened with removal to France, 'was forced to sign for the saving his life and for no other reason.'<sup>191</sup> Other members were threatened with transportation to Cuba, or with having their wives taken as hostages and these men, too, signed the treaty under duress. Councillor James Milliken's property was plundered and burnt,<sup>192</sup> and Azariah Pinney later claimed to have lost 'one large dwelling roome and three upper chambers well furnished' and pewter, brass and iron ware, 'a steward roome and kitchin' and two horses, as well as cash, tables, chairs and pictures, linens, a silver hilted sword and a pair of pistols plus ducks, geese and chickens.<sup>193</sup>

In complete contrast, over 1,400 enslaved people, meanwhile, held out in the mountains.<sup>194</sup> A recently passed piece of legislation allowed them to carry certain types of weapons during times of war,<sup>195</sup> and, formed into a regiment and officially armed with bills and lances, they had assisted in the defence of the island. The enslaved men had stood alongside their masters, but while their masters had failed to grasp the opportunity to fight with them shoulder to shoulder, they had capitulated. Determined not to succumb,<sup>196</sup> the men 'fought on gallantly against the French'.<sup>197</sup> Angered by the blacks' resistance and contemptuous of the white inhabitants' lily-livered conduct, the French pressed for harsh terms of surrender and, to save what remained of their property, the Council agreed to D'Iberville's demand to deliver to Martinique those people who were still at large in the woods, or to pay compensation of £30 per head. The inhabitants had six months to keep this pledge.<sup>198</sup> To secure the promised handover, the French took four white men as hostages. Azariah Pinney knew them well; two of them were his neighbours from St Thomas Lowland, Phillip De Witt and Thomas Abbot. They and two other young planters, Charles Earle and Joseph Stanley, were shipped off to Martinique. The French also took the enslaved people they had captured - 3,187 people in all. They assured them that 'they should live as well as their masters' and gave them hope that they might gain their freedom, 'or at least a very pleasant and

<sup>190</sup> UKNA, SP 78/165: Memoire from d'Iberville concerning the capitulation of Nevis island, 4 October 1708, Paris

<sup>191</sup> Pares, R *A West India Fortune* p48

<sup>192</sup> CSP 1716-1717 No 66 vii-xvi

<sup>193</sup> PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box: 'Nevis Losses sustained by Azariah Pinney'

Just before the invasion, Azariah Pinney may have spirited away his - or the country's? - money: on 25 February 1705/6 he had sent a bag of money to Colonel Rowland William in Antigua (WI Box B).

<sup>194</sup> Burns, Sir Alan *History of the British West Indies* p416, citing CSP 1706-1708 No 270

<sup>195</sup> The Act No 51 of 1702 provided that 'able men slaves' were to be armed in case of alarms and a 'Bill or Launce (sic)' provided 'for every such as able slave as shall be deemed capable' (HC Huggins (ed) *Laws of Nevis 1680-1773*). The practice of fighting alongside enslaved men was not new but went back to earlier times: when threatened with an attack by the French in May 1678, a thousand of the 'ablest negroes' were armed with spears (JC Jeaffreson (ed) *A Young Squire* p224).

<sup>196</sup> The historian Vincent Hubbard explains the enslaved people's willingness to fight the French. Six years earlier, at a time when England and France were not at war, the French had killed a number of Nevis inhabitants in an unprovoked attack. The incident had started with an Admiral de Modene failing to strike his colours on entering Charlestown harbour. This was naval protocol in order to establish whether friend or foe had arrived and, not knowing with whom they were dealing, the gunners at Fort Charles put a shot across the Admiral's bow. This offended him. Negotiations between the two sides then took place in which De Modene claimed that not hoisting the flag had been an oversight and, by way of reconciliation, they agreed on a ceremonial exchange of salutes: at a set time the gunners at Fort Charles would fire a salute to France, followed by a French salute to England. This display of firepower was going to be a spectacle: 'Word spread quickly throughout Nevis and people of every station of life gathered at the Charlestown bayfront'. But instead of firing blanks, de Modene used live ammunition and hit Fort Charles and then two other French vessels purposefully fired into Charlestown itself: 'Men, women and children gathered at the bayfront were killed by the guns and buildings smashed to pieces. Broadside after broadside was fired into town and people ran for their lives ...' (VK Hubbard *Swords, Ships and Sugar* pp66-7). Almost certainly black people were killed in this event, and the treacherous behaviour by the French lingered in their memory. However, in 1706 the fear of being sold to the Spaniards definitively accelerated their eagerness to fight.

<sup>197</sup> Burns, Sir Alan *History of the British West Indies* p416, citing CSP 1706-1708 No 270

<sup>198</sup> *Boston News-Letter* (13 March to 20 April 1706; reported on 21 April 1706)

easy servitude'.<sup>199</sup> However, while awaiting shipment, these people realised that they had been duped; they were to be sold to the Spanish to work in mines in Mexico. To escape such dreadful fate a number of captives jumped overboard. Some managed to get ashore and joined forces with about 600 others. Well-armed, they attacked the invaders and it was reported that they 'used them so as to give no quarter, that the French durst not move half a mile out of town for fear of the negroes. The enemy lost about 500 men at Nevis, 130 men were blown up and killed at blowing up the forts and splitting the great guns.' The enslaved people killed cattle to sustain themselves and managed to hold out until the enemy retreated - suddenly.<sup>200</sup>

At the time it was said that some of the masters felt shamed by such courageous behaviour, and that the enslaved fighters proudly proclaimed their refusal to accept surrender.<sup>201</sup> Their bravery was such that fifty years later this episode was still remembered; Governor Payne used it as an illustration when during the Seven Years War he tried to convince the St Kitts Governors that enslaved people should be allowed to serve in the island's militia.<sup>202</sup>

The promised handover of the 1,400 enslaved people to the French never happened. True to their word, the French kept the hostages. Eight years later, in November 1714, two of them managed to escape from prison in Martinique and the following year the other two, Thomas Abbott and Charles Earle, petitioned for their release from captivity.<sup>203</sup> The last man died in jail in 1719.<sup>204</sup> Those captured people, over 3,000, who had been shipped off the island by the French, were indeed sold to the Spanish in Mexico. However, six people were singled out and dispatched to French New Orleans where three each ended up working for the Governor and another leading citizen.<sup>205</sup>

Among those the French carried off the island were six of Azariah Pinney's people - five from Charlot's and a boy who had lived in Charlestown - and another nine from Lady Bawden's plantation. Later Pinney claimed compensation for his losses, and from his claim their names emerge: **Oma, Dick, Catto**, two girls called **Betty** and a boy called **Johnny**. Oma, a forty-year-old woman, was worth £30. The values of the two men corresponded to their ages in reverse order: Dick, who had probably worked on Charlot's for the last ten years, was fifty years old and worth £25; Catto, who had been treated by the doctor not long before,<sup>206</sup> was 25 years old and worth £50. The 17-year-old Betty was worth £35, the seven-year-old Betty £20. From the house in town Pinney lost Johnny, a sixteen-year-old boy who presumably had been one of his domestic staff. Johnny was worth £40. Together these six were valued at £200 but the total

<sup>199</sup> Hubbard, Vincent K *Swords, Ships and Sugar* p116, citing John Oldmixon *The British Empire in America* Vol 2 London 1708 p254

<sup>200</sup> *Boston News-Letter* (13 March to 20 April 1706; 21 April 1706 and 20 May 1706) and R Pares *A West India Fortune* p47

<sup>201</sup> Hubbard, Vincent K *Swords, Ships and Sugar* p118

<sup>202</sup> In the 1750s Governor Payne reminded the Legislature of St Kitts that 'The negroes stood by their masters at Nevis in Queen Anne's war while our flag was flying, they are most of them (we see) good marksmen, they don't love the French ...' However, fearing rebellion, the Legislature decided not to arm them but they did arm freedmen (VK Hubbard *Swords, Ships and Sugar* p119).

<sup>203</sup> The hostages Joseph Stanley and Philip De Witt (also Dewitt) escaped from their prison in Martinique by night in a small sloop from St Kitts. Rochell, the French Commander at Fort St Pierre, wanted them returned but the Council refused to hand them over (UKNA, CO 155/4). In July 1718 Philip Dewitt was in prison in Nevis for a debt but was released when the Legislature stood security. Stanley had died by then and his widow tried to raise compensation for the time her husband had spent in prison but it appears she did not succeed. Just a couple of months before he died, in September 1720 Azariah Pinney's son John Pinney lent Philip De Witt some money (PP, WI Box B). Philip De Witt was buried on 20 June 1742 in St John Figtree (NHCS, St John Figtree Births, Baptisms, Marriages, Burials, 1729-1825).

The Legislature regularly sent money to the two remaining hostages and, for instance, in June 1716 granted Charles Earle money towards his plantation expenses: £100 'for the ironwork of one compleat cattle mill' (UKNA, CO 155/5 and PC 1/58/1: Petition of Thomas Abbott and Charles Earle, hostages of the French April 1715; also Acts of the Privy Council (Colonial) 1680-1720 No 1191).

<sup>204</sup> Burns, Sir Alan *History of the British West Indies* p416, citing Acts of the Privy Council Vol ii No 1191 and CSP 1720-1721 No 28

<sup>205</sup> Hubbard, Vincent K *Swords, Ships and Sugar* p118

<sup>206</sup> Catto appeared in the medical accounts of 1705/6

loss for Charlot's was estimated at £1,200 and the loss for the townhouse at over £1,400.<sup>207</sup> From Azariah Pinney's and Richard Meriweather's Lady Bawden's plantation the French took nine people, four males and five females: **Munday** and **Will**, aged 40; **Tony**, aged 36, **Scipio**, aged 30; **Cooba**, aged 40; **Husaa**, aged 38; **?Anmia**, aged 36; **?Tanwell**, aged 26; and **Phillis**, aged 24. Together they were worth £360.<sup>208</sup>

Although the disappearance of these people was tragic, estates in the parish of St Thomas Lowland got off relatively lightly. Plantations that lay in the direct path of the troops advancing on Charlestown sustained much greater losses. In the parishes of St John Figtree and St Paul's one owner alone, Lady Stapleton, lost 147 people.<sup>209</sup> All in all, planters and merchants in Nevis estimated their damage from the invasion at a million Pounds, but many years later the Imperial Exchequer granted only a tenth of that amount for St Kitts and Nevis.<sup>210</sup> Planters, at least, were partly compensated; the enslaved people had no such recompense. Those who lost whatever property they had accumulated had to rely for replacements on the benevolence of their masters. But for anyone whose family members had been seized and taken off the island, there was no comfort at all. Their grief was everlasting.

The French troops had looted heartily and on a grand scale. As Pares pointed out, although the invaders had instructions from the French king to seize one of the colonies, d'Iberville's objective was to plunder rather than to conquer.<sup>211</sup> His mission was in fact privately funded and relied on volunteers: buccaneers and colonists, many of whom, like d'Iberville, were French Canadian.<sup>212</sup> They killed or seized animals, stole machinery, stills and coppers and any gun or cannon they could remove. They hauled away barrels of nails, paving stones, boards – everything that could be lifted they appropriated.<sup>213</sup> Sometimes captured individuals assisted them and revealed their masters' treasures.<sup>214</sup> The invaders torched the church at St Thomas Lowland<sup>215</sup> and laid to ruin cane fields, mansion houses and storehouses, even slave quarters.<sup>216</sup> They did not spare the dead, either. In the churchyards they dug up graves and defaced monuments and tombstones.<sup>217</sup> One inhabitant stated that the French 'plundered, ransacked and burnt the greatest part of the island.'<sup>218</sup> The fires burnt so fiercely, they could be seen as far away as Antigua - a distance of some forty miles.<sup>219</sup>

Although there was less damage at Charlot's than on some other estates, the list of items burnt, destroyed, or damaged conjures up a picture of devastation. The enslaved people not only lost some of their houses and possessions but they also had to put back into order and repair their master's properties. Azariah Pinney claimed for the loss of 'a dwelling house of two rooms below and above

<sup>207</sup> PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box: 'Nevis Losses sustained by Azariah Pinney'; also R Pares *A West India Fortune* p48

<sup>208</sup> At Lady Bawden's plantation, the total compensation claim amounted to almost £2, 900. Roughly half of this was for lace, merchandise and money, £1,575, and a quarter for buildings: £500 for one large boarded and shingled mansion house, outhouses, workroom, steward room, hall and pigeon house; £200 for a large, new boiling house and £50 for a mill that had been burnt. The four males came to £180 (Munday and Will £40 each; Tony and Scipio £50 each) and the five females to £182 (Cooba £30, Husaa and ? Anmia £36 each, ?Tanwell and Phillis £40 each). The rest of the total of £2,878:10:0 was for smaller items. Azariah Pinney's attorneys Jeoffry Meriweather and Thomas Cottgrave submitted the claims (PN 21A and PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box).

<sup>209</sup> Lady Stapleton's 147 people were worth £5,622 (Ryland Stapleton MSS 4.13: An Account of Losses Sustained).

<sup>210</sup> Burns, Sir Alan *History of the British West Indies* p417, citing CSP 1706-1708 No 355

In a (draft?) petition dated 18 March 1708 losses in Nevis were estimated at 'upwards of £3,000,000 sterling' (PP, WI Box B). Under an Act of 1710, the Imperial Exchequer granted £103,003 (Burns, Sir Alan *History of the British West Indies* p438). This was by way of a loan, approved in 1714, from which many years later Nevis received £73,000 and St Kitts £30,000 (VK Hubbard *Swords, Ships and Sugar* p124). Richard Merryweather (sic) was one of the agents in London who in April 1712 made representation to the Government on behalf of the island of Nevis (CSP 1711-1712 No 368).

<sup>211</sup> Pares, R *A West India Fortune* p46

<sup>212</sup> Hubbard, Vincent K *Swords, Ships and Sugar* p112

<sup>213</sup> CSP 1716-1717 No 66 vii-xvi

<sup>214</sup> Pares, R *A West India Fortune* p47

<sup>215</sup> CSP 1712-1714 No 165

<sup>216</sup> Hubbard, Vincent K *Swords, Ships and Sugar* p117 and p120

<sup>217</sup> CSP 1706-1708 No 355

<sup>218</sup> Ryland Stapleton MSS 4.13: Thomas Easom to Lady Stapleton, 22 April 1706

<sup>219</sup> Dunn, R *Sugar and Slaves* p144

boarded and shingled and good timber', a boarded and shingled boiling house, a copper receiver, four coppers, two copper coolers, one new still and worm, three hundred pounds of led for the 'bed of the mill, spouts etc' and a cask which was burnt when the boiling house went up in flames. Eighteen acres of canes, which would have produced 2,000 pounds of sugar, lay ruined, and horses and mares had been stolen.<sup>220</sup> On one estate a young mare was found again several months later.<sup>221</sup>

The island was in chaos, and some sought to exploit this chaos for their own benefit. Among them was Colonel Johnson, the Governor of the Leeward Island. Brazenly he laid claim to Mary Helmes's 'house, mills, coppers, boyling house, etc', which had survived the French attack, and maintained that D'Iberville had left these standing for him and were now his. He dared 'any person to meddle with it, etc'. Representation was made to recover the property<sup>222</sup> but further action became unnecessary. Governor Johnson was murdered.<sup>223</sup>

Less than three months after the French invasion Azariah Pinney left Nevis and sailed to England. While he was away, Nevis conducted an island-wide census. This revealed just over 5,000 inhabitants: 1,353 whites and 3,676 enslaved people. The 42 men and 56 women who belonged to Pinney's and Meriweather's Lady Bawden's and Charlot's plantations were put forward for registration by the man they had left in charge of their affairs, their factor Thomas Cotgrave (also Cottgrave).<sup>224</sup>

The invasion had more than halved the island's workforce. No country could easily weather such a devastating setback to its economy. Recovery, it was predicted, would take ten years.<sup>225</sup> In trying to address the labour shortage, Colonel Daniel Parke, the new Governor, sought to repopulate Nevis with German immigrants - mostly Protestant refugees who were fleeing to Holland and England to escape religious persecution. But the British government vetoed Parke's suggestion and, instead, the German refugees settled in large numbers in the North American colonies.<sup>226</sup> As bonded servants, they could have augmented the diminished labour force and assisted in the recovery of the island's economy. As it turned out, it took a quarter of a century for the enslaved population to edge up to the 6,000 mark again.<sup>227</sup>

#### *Enslaved Population of Nevis, 1706-1734*

1706	March 1707/8	1711	April and Dec. 1713	March 1713/4	Feb. 1714/5	Jan. 1718/9	1720	May 1722	April 1724	1729	1734
6,023 <sup>228</sup>	3,676 <sup>229</sup>	4,412	4,383	4,915	5,392 <sup>230</sup>	5,224 <sup>231</sup>	5,689 <sup>232</sup>	5,276 <sup>233</sup>	5,626 <sup>234</sup>	5,646	6,330 <sup>235</sup>

<sup>220</sup> PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box: 'Nevis Losses sustained by Azariah Pinney'

<sup>221</sup> PP, WI Box B: Losses for Saddle Hill

<sup>222</sup> CSP 1706-1708 No 472

<sup>223</sup> Burns, Sir Alan *History of the British West Indies* p419, citing CSP 1706-1708 No 862

<sup>224</sup> Pares, R A *West India Fortune* p345 fn26

<sup>225</sup> CSP 1706-1708 No 318

<sup>226</sup> Knittle, Walter Allen *Early Eighteenth Century Palatine Emigration*, citing contemporary diarist Luttrell Vol vi p420, 422 and 454 and CC 1710-1711/96

<sup>227</sup> The figure quoted for 1724 (6,000) appears to have been an estimate (S Lambert (ed) *House of Commons Sessional Papers* Vol 70 pp275-77). In May 1722 there had been 5,276 enslaved people (UKNA, CO 155/6); a rise of over 700 in about two years seems improbable.

<sup>228</sup> Pares, R A *West India Fortune* p22, citing CO 184/1

<sup>229</sup> Oliver, VL *Caribbeana* Vol 3 pp173-79

<sup>230</sup> The figures appeared in the context of the slave/troops ratio in various parts of the island (UKNA, CO 155/4).

<sup>231</sup> UKNA, CO 155/5

Some of the losses may have been due to a hurricane that swept the island in September 1718 (Smith, Revd William *A Natural History of Nevis* pp240-42)

<sup>232</sup> Watts, David *The West Indies* p313

<sup>233</sup> UKNA, CO 155/6

Faced with such a severe deficiency in labour and to make up for the shortfall, those plantation workers who had escaped transportation must have had their workload increased to an intolerable level. At the same time the islanders had nothing to eat but potatoes<sup>236</sup> and a smallpox outbreak claimed lives; it was reported that the 'pestilence' was so great that half the people were dead or dying.<sup>237</sup> Under these conditions people not only had to rebuild their homes and those of their masters, they also had to carry on working, making sugar and rum. The invasion happened during crop time and presumably the 533 tons of sugar which were produced that year had been processed before the French arrived, but the cane fields still needed tending and new crops had to be planted. Two years earlier, Nevis had produced almost 3,000 tons of sugar, which represented nearly a fifth of the colonies' total production but, as it turned out, although the enslaved population recovered within a generation, it was to take another eighty years for the island to reach that level of production again.<sup>238</sup>

Undoubtedly, work was much harder than before. At the same time people also had to deal with the trauma of losing friends and relatives, and while everyone was settling back into their lives, in August 1707 a hurricane struck Nevis. It ruined much of what had been rebuilt and replanted.<sup>239</sup> There were no roof shingles to be had and, exceptionally, for a period of three years, in Charlestown people were allowed to cover their houses with the more flammable white ground thatch or grass.<sup>240</sup> As a fire precaution these had been outlawed in the early 1680s.

Although building materials were in short supply, in the following summer Azariah Pinney learnt that his works was being built at Charlot's, and that 'all things' were well and the island enjoyed 'a fair prospect of canes'.<sup>241</sup> After the invasion Nevis had experienced a prolonged drought but that appears to have ended. On the plantation some people were sick and given extra rations of fresh beef, yet there was sufficient surplus labour to hire out two of the workers to Pinney's friend Solomon Israel who employed them for about four months. While Azariah Pinney was away in England, everyone had new jackets made, or was issued with new buttons for their 'Negro jackets'.<sup>242</sup> This was a sign that normality was returning but for many more years Nevis suffered from the devastation the French had left behind.

### ***John Pinney and his wife Mary Helme***

While Azariah Pinney made a life for himself in the West Indies, his son was growing up in England. John had chosen to study at Pembroke College, Oxford, and in one of his last letters from Nevis Azariah Pinney had lambasted his son for spending so much of his hard-earned money on an expensive education. Azariah blamed his wife; she had allowed John too many liberties while he had sweated his 'very blood' during 'many years' in exile. He was not going to let his wife and son forget how he had suffered in the West Indies and, no doubt, their reunion was marred by further reproaches.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> UKNA, CO 186/1

<sup>235</sup> Lambert, S (ed) *House of Commons Sessional Papers* Vol 70 pp275-57; also CSP 1734-1735

<sup>236</sup> *Boston News-Letter* (13 March to 20 April 1706; reported on 21 April 1706)

<sup>237</sup> CSP 1706-1708 Numbers 355 and 653

<sup>238</sup> Hubbard, Vincent K *Swords, Ships and Sugar* p120; also David Watts *The West Indies* p285, citing Deere 1949 and Bereton (1971)

<sup>239</sup> Coke, Thomas Dr *A History of the West Indies* pp10-1

<sup>240</sup> UKNA, CO 155/4

<sup>241</sup> PP, WI Box B: Richard Meriweather to Azariah Pinney, 17 June 1708

<sup>242</sup> PP, WI Box B: Meriweather and Pinney a/c 1709

The account was for ten dozen buttons for 'negro jackets'. These 120 buttons may, perhaps, have been for 30 or 40 jackets.

<sup>243</sup> Pares, R *A West India Fortune* p50

According to Pares, Azariah's wife Mary brought up their son in Lyme and Axminster but it appears that at some stage she also worked with her sister-in-law in London (Sharpe, Pamela 'Pinney, Hester (1658-1740)' *Oxford DNB*). A Mary Pinney was in May



During Azariah Pinney's stay in England Richard Meriweather was appointed as Mary Helme's guardian. He replaced Daniel Puckle who had died. Mary's brother William had also died in the meantime and Mary, as the only surviving child from Mary Travers's first marriage to Major William Helme, had become the sole heiress of Proctor's and Mountain plantations in Nevis and an estate in Antigua.<sup>244</sup> In 1708 she married Azariah Pinney's son John Pinney, and this union was to bring together the two adjoining properties of Charlot's and Proctor's. However, if this marriage was an economic enterprise engineered by wily old Azariah, it was neither particularly uncommon nor frowned upon, and the couple appear to have formed a genuine attachment to each other.<sup>245</sup>

John Pinney was 22 years old and his wife a little younger. Living in London, at first these two enjoyed a relatively carefree time. John attended to his legal studies at the Middle Temple less enthusiastically than he attended to his wife<sup>246</sup> so that a couple of years into their marriage John's father, then back in Nevis,<sup>247</sup> repeatedly rebuked him for their high living. Pinney senior criticised Mary's expensive tastes and alleged that John's extravagance was her doing. Azariah Pinney also resented her superior airs and accused her of encouraging John to keep unsuitable company. Perhaps worst of all, he blamed her for almost turning him into an atheist.<sup>248</sup> Someone in England provided Azariah Pinney's ammunition. Pares suspected his 'rich and pious partner Richard Meriweather' but Pinney also solicited information about the goings-on in London from his sister Hester.<sup>249</sup> Aware of these accusations, Mary Pinney defended herself to her aunt Christian Brome in Nevis: 'I believe Mr [John] Pinney can assure you that I am not extravagant in anything for there is not a penny I lay out without his knowledge & approbation.'<sup>250</sup> Christian Brome, a Helme and the wife and then widow of Azariah Pinney's erstwhile enemy Philip Brome, may well have mediated on Mary's behalf. Azariah Pinney's hectoring letters stopped.

While the young people were amusing themselves in London, he, meanwhile, was leasing their Proctor's plantation, again in partnership with Richard Meriweather.<sup>251</sup> During the French invasion the dwelling house at Proctor's had been destroyed and the large boiling house and still house damaged. Azariah Pinney got to work on repairs and improvements. He oversaw the building of two rooms 'for the manager and servants', a large boiling house with five coppers, a *lignum vitae* mill, a still, as well as two animal pens and 'other conveniences'.<sup>252</sup> No people had been lost on Proctor's but 34 on the Mountain estate,<sup>253</sup> and presumably because there was then no serviceable sugar works on Proctor's, Mary Pinney's people

1712 among five people who signed a document in London; she may well have been Azariah's wife but could also have been their daughter-in-law, John's wife (CSP 1711-1712 No 410, citing CO 153/11 pp468-69).

<sup>244</sup> There is no evidence that Mary Helme also inherited Saddle Hill, as Pares suggests. This property was in the hands of Mary Travers's (step)-daughter Mary Smith.

<sup>245</sup> PP, Misc Vols 6 List of Deeds and Papers, 1783: Marriage Settlement, 15 October 1708

Pares claimed that the marriage between Mary Helme and his son greatly annoyed, rather than pleased, Azariah Pinney. However, given that, at the time of the wedding, Pinney was in England, it seems wholly implausible that he would have been unable to dissuade his son. Instead, it appears that he only turned against his daughter-in-law a couple of years into the marriage. As the correspondence could not be located in the Pinney Papers, we have to rely to what Pares used as evidence although the letter from which he quoted only concerned John Pinney's ingratitude and high expensive living and, written by Azariah before the wedding, did not mention John's future wife (R Pares *A West India Fortune* p50).

<sup>246</sup> Pares, *R A West India Fortune* p51

<sup>247</sup> Pares wrote that Azariah Pinney went to England from 1706 to 1710, probably basing this date on an inventory of April 1710 of Captain Isaac's slaves (PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box). He must have returned by the end of 1709 as his nephew John Clarke wrote from London in February 1709/10 that he was 'glad to hear of your safe arrival' (WI Box B: John Clarke, Bell & Unicorn, Poultny, London, to Azariah Pinney, 'merchant in Nevis', 1 February 1709/10).

<sup>248</sup> Pares, *R A West India Fortune* p51, citing letters 19 April, 5 June and 2 August 1710

<sup>249</sup> Pares, *R A West India Fortune* p51

<sup>250</sup> PP, WI Box B: To Hon'd Madam, signed by 'your niece', 27 February 1711/2

<sup>251</sup> John and Mary Pinney's lease of Proctor's, dated 8 December 1709, was for a period of eight years (PP, WI Box B and PN 6).

<sup>252</sup> PN 14

<sup>253</sup> At Mountain, Mary Pinney lost three men aged 23, 32 and 35; 13 women (one aged 20, two aged 26, six aged 30, one aged 35, two aged 36, one aged 40); ten boys (aged 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12 and two aged 16); and eight girls (aged 3, 4, two aged 5, two aged 12, one aged 15 and 16 each) (PP, WI Box B).

must have been moved over to the Mountain estate in St John Figtree. There the dwelling house, the boiling house and the still house had all been damaged and, acting as his son's attorney,<sup>254</sup> Azariah Pinney repaired the dwelling house, erected a new boiling house and put in a new copper.<sup>255</sup>

It is not known how many enslaved people then worked on either Proctor's or Mountain but in April 1711 a total of 937 were counted in St Thomas Lowland, where Proctor's lay, and 1,506 in St John Figtree parish, where Mountain was situated.<sup>256</sup> At that time a handful of troops were stationed around the island, roughly corresponding to the numbers of enslaved people in each parish: nine in St Thomas and ten in St John – hardly enough to calm either the enslaved people's or the planters' nerves. Neither were there enough troops if the enemy came to raid the island's labourers again, or if the labourers rose against their masters. Enslaved people had cause to be worried. The French, having plundered Montserrat, harassed Nevis for about three months with the threat of another invasion<sup>257</sup> but, equally, planters had cause to be worried: a 'design to attempt a rising against the white inhabitants' had been discovered in St Kitts.<sup>258</sup> The troops were billeted all over Nevis until the end of the war when, finally, on Saturday, 12 June 1714 the Articles of Peace between Britain and Spain were proclaimed in the 'most solemn and public manner' in the market place of Charlestown.<sup>259</sup> The War of the Spanish Succession, which had started in 1702, was over, and with the crowning of George I as King of Britain, France and Ireland, a quarter of a century of peacetime began.

Azariah Pinney's presence in Nevis triggered the emigration of several people from England. One of these was a cousin's son, William Gundrey.<sup>260</sup> At first signs were good. The young man enjoyed life in Nevis, quickly put on a lot of weight, and, although he had left a wife behind in England, Gundrey had no intention of returning home.<sup>261</sup> He may have worked on the plantations but, more likely, Azariah trained him as a merchant, planning on making him 'fit for business.'<sup>262</sup> But, after only a short time in Nevis, Gundrey died and, reluctantly, Azariah Pinney paid his funeral expenses.<sup>263</sup> Another young man called Wharton intended to come to Nevis but, having heard unfavourable reports from his sister about his character, Azariah Pinney forbade 'the coming of young Wharton till two years hence, if at all.'<sup>264</sup> But he welcomed his son and his son's family coming to Nevis.

John and Mary Pinney left London early in 1715.<sup>265</sup> By then they had two young daughters, Christiana Hester, who was about five years old,<sup>266</sup> and Sophia Joanna Wilhelmina. The Pinneys took the girls with them. Mary Pinney had proudly written that Christiana 'is very well & grows very pretty' and she 'grows very strong & nimble above expectation'.<sup>267</sup> The girl had been looking forward to seeing her 'grandpapa' - Mary Pinney was perhaps less keen - but Christiana had to wait a little longer: before Christmas John Pinney was ill again and this delayed the family's voyage. Mary Pinney was relieved; the hold-up suited

<sup>254</sup> PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box: Power of Attorney

<sup>255</sup> PN 14

<sup>256</sup> UKNA, CO 155/4

<sup>257</sup> Pares, R A *West India Fortune* p48

<sup>258</sup> Despite being tortured with 'lighted matches between their fingers', the accused men, Josea, Johny Boy and Triconell, had 'confessed nothing'. Josea was sentenced to a public whipping in Old Road Town and was banished 'further than Nevis'. If he returned, he was to be 'put to death'. The others were acquitted (UKNA, CO 155/4).

<sup>259</sup> UKNA, CO 155/4: 8 June 1714

<sup>260</sup> PP, Misc Vols 49: Azariah Pinney, Nevis, to Mrs Hester Pinney, 20 October 1712

<sup>261</sup> PP, WI Box B: William Gundrey, Nevis, to Hester Pinney (Crescent), 14 July 1713

<sup>262</sup> PP, Misc Vols 49: Azariah Pinney, Nevis, to Mrs Hester Pinney to be left with Mr John Clarke at the Bell and the Unicorn in the Poultry (sic), London, 10 September 1713

<sup>263</sup> PP, MSS in Numbered Folders, folder 29

<sup>264</sup> PP, Misc Vols 49: Azariah Pinney, Nevis, to Mrs Hester Pinney, 10 September 1713

<sup>265</sup> PP, WI Box B: Mary Pinney to Aunt Brome, December 1714

<sup>266</sup> In a family tree one of John and Mary Pinney's daughters is recorded as Hester Christiana but in her letters Mary Pinney referred to her as Christiana.

<sup>267</sup> PP, WI Box B: Mary Pinney, London, to her 'dear sister', 2 February 1711/2

her as she felt not yet strong enough to withstand a winter voyage. A few months earlier the couple had buried their second daughter, Anna Henrietta Maria (she was about two years old), and Mrs Pinney had 'hardly recovered' from the birth of her last child, Sophia, whom she was nursing.<sup>268</sup> However, once in the West Indies, she almost certainly handed the girl to the care of a wetnurse, and within two years of arriving in Nevis, Mrs Pinney gave birth to two more children, Azariah Walter Helme and George William. But as one child was born, another one died: first the oldest daughter, Christiana, and in the following year the couple's first boy, Azariah. In eight years Mary Pinney had given birth to five children and had buried three.

The family presumably occupied 'Helme's house' on the Mountain estate in St John Figtree, which, until quite recently, had been let to the Lieutenant General as his official residence.<sup>269</sup> Mary Pinney may have invited one of her stepsisters, and her daughter, to come and live with them;<sup>270</sup> she had corresponded with her on very friendly terms. Mrs Pinney had also written a few letters to the other stepsister and to her stepbrother Henry Travers. As heir to his great-uncle Henry Travers, he had inherited considerable personal estate, houses, rent and ground rent in England,<sup>271</sup> and it may have been in this context that Azariah Pinney had written to his son: 'I think you ought to take care of Travers. Perhaps they won't let him come of age if they can help it.' In the next sentence Azariah Pinney went on to advise about the sale of land on Antigua,<sup>272</sup> and one is left wondering who 'they' were and why John 'ought to take care of Travers'. Henry Travers lived, at least, until he was 17 years old when he entered Trinity College, Oxford, but after that no more is known about Mary's half-brother.<sup>273</sup>

John Pinney's expensive education and his legal training stood him in good stead and he was appointed Chief Justice of Nevis. The old prison house had recently been repaired but the Court House probably still lay in ruins: until at least 1714 Court hearings had been held in a house hired from a woman called Oliva or Olivia Williams. By way of payment she had requested a year's Tavern Licence, and it is ironic that soon after granting her such a permit the Council discussed the introduction of a Rum Licence as an instrument for curbing 'the negroes' great opportunities to commit all manner of rogueries and thefts'.<sup>274</sup> John Pinney, like his father, was appointed a member of the Council,<sup>275</sup> and for four years the two men served together. On a body of seven men, this father and son team presented a powerful alliance.

Among the legislation they and the other Council members passed was 'An Act for the Good Government of Negroes and other Slaves', which included a fine for anyone who sold rum to an enslaved person on Sundays. The Act did not apply to freed people, and it is difficult to see how this prohibition (and also one of the other clauses, which allowed for the dispersal of 'disorderly negroes') could be enforced as it depended on the quick and immediate identification as to who was an enslaved and who was a free

<sup>268</sup> PP, WI Box B: Mary Pinney to Christian Brome, Nevis, 17 December 1714

<sup>269</sup> UKNA, CO 155/4: 9 April 1711, including Account for 5 years rent; 14 April 1711 and 11 December 1714

<sup>270</sup> The stepsister with whom Mary Pinney corresponded was either Anne Cary or Mary Smith. She had lived in lodgings with a Mr Turtell and his wife, and Mary Pinney had expressed her gratitude that they had 'been kind to let [her] live with them'. Given the friendly tone of her letters, it is very likely that Mary Pinney offered to accommodate her stepsister and her daughter.

<sup>271</sup> Henry Travers (Traveis) was buried at Bexley, Kent, where his wife was also buried (VL Oliver *History of Antigua* Vol 3 p142 and p144).

<sup>272</sup> PP, WI Box B: Azariah Pinney to John Pinney, 28 August 1711; also quoted as 'I think you ought to take care of Travers (one of fair Mary's Antigua connections) ...' in Anna Maria Pinney's Notebooks (Misc Vols 48).

<sup>273</sup> Oliver, VL *History of Antigua* Vol 3 p143

<sup>274</sup> UKNA, Co 155/4: 14 April 1711, 1 May 1711 and 30 September 1714, 14 December 1714

<sup>275</sup> Generally the Governor recommended to the King whom he should appoint to the Council but sometimes appointments were engineered by intrigues in England. In exceptional cases, Governors could appoint themselves, for instance when the death of a member resulted in a total membership of less than seven. The principal qualifications for becoming a member were having a 'good estate' and being free from debt (Burns, Sir Alan *History of the British West Indies* p280).

John Pinney was appointed to the Council on 31 August 1715 (CSP 1714-1715 No 590 and No 616). The earliest meeting he attended appears to have been on 13 February 1715/6 (UKNA, CO 155/5).

person. In addition, those who made money from selling rum on a Sunday would hardly have been interested in enforcing this particular piece of legislation. While trying to curb drinking on Sundays, the Act was mostly concerned with what had exercised the Council since well before John Pinney's arrival: 'runaway negroes'. It fixed fines at N20s a day for anyone harbouring runners and set out rates of rewards: N£6 for catching those who used boats and N6s for bringing in anyone absent for seven days or longer. The Act also stipulated that an enslaved person striking a white person should be whipped and allowed the evidence of two or more enslaved individuals as sufficient in the trial of runaways who had committed 'felonies and other capital crimes' that were punishable by death or by chopping off limbs, or, as the Act put it, 'where Life or Member is in question'. But while enslaved people could give evidence against their own, they could not bear witness against white people, and their right to give evidence only applied in the case of runaways who were put on trial for the most serious of crimes. For those runaways who were imprisoned the Act required their owners to reimburse the marshal for the food they ate during their incarceration. Anyone not claimed within three months was to be sold at public auction. The law also restricted to N£30 the compensation paid to owners for their absconders who had been killed.<sup>276</sup> This upper limit for compensation also applied to those enslaved people executed for criminal deeds.<sup>277</sup> What the Council did not address were the dreadful conditions on the slaving ships that arrived in Nevis. According to John Huffam, the Royal African Company agent, captives arriving in the island 'were feeble and weak at their landing and many having such a contraction of nerves by being on board and confined in irons that [they] were hardly capable to walk...'<sup>278</sup> Neither did the Council address the conditions in which people lived on the plantations. Nevis had no minimum standards for food, shelter or clothing.

The only evidence of John Pinney buying enslaved people concerned three unnamed 'negro men' whom he acquired in June 1720 for N£90 'in part payment for lumber' from the widow Esther Pinheira, but there is evidence that his father, meanwhile, was lending out money and taking as security land and people. In addition to owning a boy called **Oronogua**,<sup>279</sup> Azariah Pinney acquired several people, among them **Judy, Ami, and Phibba**, whom he bought at a Marshall's Sale. Judy came from the estate of George Littman, who owed Pinney money,<sup>280</sup> and Ami and Phibba were auctioned off after court judgments against William Stanton<sup>281</sup> and John Thornton. Thornton, who ten years earlier had owned thirty people, had died a few months previously and Ami may well have been sold to settle his debts.<sup>282</sup> Phibba was sold to settle Stanton's debt of N£17.<sup>283</sup> The sales were ordered by Robert Lowery, who in the early 1700s had rented Lady Bawden's from Azariah Pinney and Richard Meriweather. He had since become the Deputy Provost Marshall and in that capacity had overseen the sales.

Lady Bawden's was still held jointly by Pinney and Meriweather until, on 9 June 1718, more than three decades after arriving in Nevis, for the first time Azariah Pinney became the sole legal owner of a plantation. Meriweather had died and except for 200 acres of mountain land, which were still held in common,<sup>284</sup> the men's joint assets were distributed. These were Lady Bawden's, Charlot's and three properties in Charlestown. The animals then on Lady Bawden's were divided up but the plantation itself

<sup>276</sup> 'Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council appointed for the Consideration of all Matters relating to Trade in Foreign Plantations' Part III, published 1789 and UKNA, CO 185/4 Nevis Acts

<sup>277</sup> For instance, in 1736/7 Major Samuel Gardner and Thadeus Bridgwater were reimbursed N£30 each for their executed men (UKNA, CO 186/2) and in 1739 John Woodley received N£30 for one of his executed people (CO 186/3). By the 1750s the upper ceiling at which compensation was paid had been lifted, and the average amount of compensation was then just over N£70 (Natalie Zacek 'Reading the rebels: currents of slave resistance in the eighteenth-century British West Indies', citing entries from UKNA, CO 186/1-3).

<sup>278</sup> Hubbard, Vincent K 'Slave Resistance in Nevis' *NHCS Newsletter* (November 1995) p5

<sup>279</sup> PP, WI Box B

<sup>280</sup> PP, WI Box B 1715

<sup>281</sup> PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box 2: Document 7 May 1717

<sup>282</sup> Oliver, VL *Caribbeana* Vol 6 p11

<sup>283</sup> PP, WI Box B

<sup>284</sup> ECSCRN, Book of Wills 1787-1805 ff357-66, and PP, D7 Family Letterbook, 1801-1803

went to Meriweather's heirs, Christopher and William Slade from Warminster in Wiltshire, while Charlot's went to Pinney. Although at 120 acres Charlot's was smaller, it was more fertile and more valuable, and Pinney had to compensate the other party with an additional payment.<sup>285</sup> He and Meriweather had jointly owned a hundred people, and these were shared out. Pinney got half, 38 adults and 13 children. This group must have more than doubled the existing labour force on Charlot's, making it well-handed.<sup>286</sup> At the point when Azariah Pinney became the sole owner of Charlot's he bought an additional ten acres of land adjoining Charlot's. This secured unhindered and direct access to the sea.<sup>287</sup> A sloop, the *Hamilton*, which he then co-owned, may well have anchored off the beach.

After the birth of her last child, George, Mary Pinney had suffered from ill health. Her husband was then away on Antigua, intending to sell her land there. Years before, during the war, his father had advised him to hold onto the land until peacetime and until Antigua had recovered its equilibrium after the murder of the Governor there.<sup>288</sup> While John Pinney was away, his wife reported to him some of the domestic matters - George's first tooth and a purge she had to undergo - and their correspondence suggests a caring, loving relationship. He was concerned for her well-being - he approved of the purge and advised that if she was still 'not quite well, take another' - and expressed his longing and devotion for her: 'This sale of your land will keep me here till next week & longer I will not stay, being more desirous of seeing you than you can imagine. I am My Dear your most affectionate Tender Loving Husband.'<sup>289</sup> Within a week, he was back in Nevis.<sup>290</sup> His wife was soon pregnant again, and on 27 January 1719 she gave birth to another son, John Frederick.<sup>291</sup>

Azariah Pinney, then in his late fifties, was ill and planning to return to England to recover his health.<sup>292</sup> As was customary, before travelling he made his will. Among the four men who witnessed this document was his old friend Solomon Israel<sup>293</sup> with whom he was still doing business.<sup>294</sup> Surprisingly for a Jew in

<sup>285</sup> In his will of 20 December 1713, Richard Meriweather left his half of Lady Bawden's to Christopher and William Slade and, if they died without issue, to Thomas Wansey. Meriweather listed the joint assets of the two partners: Lady Bawden's land which consisted of 176 acres 6 perches, Charlot's 112 acres 6 perches, 2 boiling houses and coppers, 2 case mills, 'the still', 102 'negroes' and 3 portions of land in Charlestown (PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box). Charlot's contained 120 acres in total but eight acres remained undivided. Unlike Lady Bawden's, it had access to the sea (PP, Dom Box T-3, WI Box B and R Pares *A West India Fortune* p39).

<sup>286</sup> Azariah Pinney's share were 18 men worth £940, 19 women and two children worth £699, seven boys worth £95, and six girls worth £84. Unfortunately there is no record of their names (PN 15 and PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box). Another version states that he ended up with 18 men, 20 women, seven boys and six girls (WI Box B).

<sup>287</sup> For £200 Azariah Pinney bought additional land from Mary Murphy, who in May 1718 gave power of attorney for the sale of 10 acres 'bounded to the North and East with the Highway between the same land and the land of the said Azariah Pinney, on the West with the sea and on the South with the land now or late of His Excellency Walter Hamilton'. The land was sold through Mary Murphy's attorney John Huffam, an agent of the Royal African Company in Nevis (PP, WI Box B, also WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box).

<sup>288</sup> PP, WI Box B: Azariah Pinney to John Pinney, 28 August 1711

<sup>289</sup> PP, WI Box B: John Pinney, Antigua, to Mary Pinney, Nevis, 26 February 1717/8

<sup>290</sup> John Pinney wrote from Antigua to his wife on 28 February 1717/8 that he thought had 'made a good bargain' by selling her land at S£350 - worth around £70,000 in 2016 (PN 16).

<sup>291</sup> Sedgwick, Romney (ed) *The House of Commons* Vol 2 p348

<sup>292</sup> Pares, R *A West India Fortune* p48

<sup>293</sup> In his will of 28 March 1718, Azariah Pinney left £10 and £5 to his niece Jane Hoare and his nephew Azariah, rings to his sisters Rachel Scrimshaw and Hester Pinney, and £250 each to John and Mary's children George William and Sophia. To his wife he left jewels, £100 and an annuity for life of £80. The rest of the estate was to go to John 'in fee'. The will was witnessed by Solomon Israel, Samuel Clarke junior, William Nicholls, and John Peterson (VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 6 p13). Jane Hoare must have been his niece; according to Pamela Sharpe, his sister of the same name had died in 1694 ('Pinney, Hester (1658-1740)').

Azariah was the son of Azariah Pinney's brother Nathaniel who died in 1731 (PP, AB 4). Azariah was alive until at least October 1737 when he wrote to his aunt Hester Pinney (PP, DM 1841/7).

<sup>294</sup> Not long before he left Nevis, Azariah Pinney, together with Solomon Israel, lent money to a man called William Griffin (PP, WI Box B: Bond dated 11 February 1717).

Michelle Terrel attributes Solomon Israel's ability to 'move within the upper social, political, and economic classes of Nevis' to his marriage of a non-Jew, Catherine (*The Jewish Community* p147). Almost certainly it was their daughter Mary Israel who married George Frost in 1730 and whose son Solomon Frost died in 1773, aged 36. No baptism record exists for him but the St John Figtree parish register is incomplete. For instance, William Bennett Frost's baptism was not recorded either, and, given the names of two of his children (Ann Israel Frost and Solomon Bennett Frost), William Bennett Frost almost certainly was another son of George Frost

eighteenth century Nevis, Solomon Israel had become part of the island's establishment; he held the posts of Treasurer and Clerk to the Assembly.<sup>295</sup> Before Azariah Pinney left Nevis sometime after May 1719,<sup>296</sup> he attended to one last business matter and granted a mortgage of £860 to the widow Margaret Cressey. The loan was secured on land and enslaved people, and later Mrs Cressey's Claygutt estate was to play an important part in the Pinney affairs in Nevis.<sup>297</sup> Not long after reaching England, Azariah Pinney died in London in early 1720.<sup>298</sup>

Her father-in-law's death was only the first of four deaths that year of people who were close and dear to Mary Pinney. When in April 1720 the Pinneys bought morning attire - black gloves, black flannel, crepe and silks - <sup>299</sup> this, most likely, was for the funeral of their six-year-old daughter Sophia, and later in the year one of Mary Pinney's aunts, Mrs Christian Brome, died. Born in Gillingham, Dorset, she was an older sister of Mary's father William Helme and had lived in Nevis for most of her life. Mary appears to have been close to her and she, no doubt, mourned the loss of her aunt. Mrs Brome died on 1 November and was buried in St Thomas Lowland,<sup>300</sup> but before the news of her death reached England, less than six weeks later, on 11 December 1720, Mary's husband died.<sup>301</sup> John Pinney was 34 years old. He is remembered in a 'handsome marble armorial slab' inserted in the floor of the centre isle in St John Figtree church.<sup>302</sup>

### **Mrs Mary Pinney**

In 1720 one joyous event had taken place: Mary Pinney had given birth to another daughter, Christiana Maria. But with her husband buried, her childbearing days were over and she came into her own as a businesswoman. Pares's portrayal of Mary Pinney as a profligate, shallow and useless woman 'who would not go to the market but left everything to her servants' only tells half the story. In ten years she had given birth to seven children and had buried her husband and four of her children, none older than six years.<sup>303</sup> Her sorrow was no different from the parents who, at that time, saw so many of their offspring die young, and from the grief endured by the countless wives who lost their husbands early, but despite suffering from ill health<sup>304</sup> she also succeeded in holding together a complex plantation business. More than a century later a Victorian Pinney woman, Anna Maria, recognised her strengths and wrote

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and his wife Mary Israel (St John Figtree Births, Baptisms, Marriages, Burials, 1729-1825). In 1836 Solomon Bennett Frost, almost certainly Solomon Israel's great-grandson, was paid compensation for four people (PP, Dom Box R-6).

<sup>295</sup> UKNA, CO 155/5

<sup>296</sup> The last Council meeting Azariah Pinney attended was on 23 April 1719 (UKNA, CO 155/5). A month later he was granted leave of absence (*Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries* Vol 8 p344).

<sup>297</sup> PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box; also JS Udal 'The Story of the Bettiscombe Skull' in *Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club Annual* Vol 31 (1910) p190 fn

<sup>298</sup> Pares, R *A West India Fortune* p48

<sup>299</sup> The clothes and materials were bought from Hananiah Arrobas (PP, WI Box B). She had lived in Nevis since at least 1707/8, when the census recorded her as having three black individuals in her household (VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 3 pp132-39). She died in 1729/30 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Charlestown (Terrell, M *The Jewish Community* p62).

<sup>300</sup> Mrs Christian Brome's grave and that of her two husbands have survived in the cemetery at St Thomas Lowland church. In Gillingham Church, a tablet also recorded the death at Nevis of Mrs Christina Broome, 'widow of Richard (sic) Broome, who died on 1 November 1720, aged 68' (VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 5 p.x).

<sup>301</sup> Oliver, VL *Caribbeana* Vol 1 p45

<sup>302</sup> Udal, JS 'The Story of the Bettiscombe Skull' p184

According to one source, John Pinney left for England soon after Azariah Pinney and died in London, basing it on document dated 14 June 1721, in which John Pinney was described as 'formerly of Nevis but in St Bennett Fink, London' (*Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries* Vol 8 p345). The correspondence from William Coleman to Mary Pinney suggests that John Pinney died in Nevis.

<sup>303</sup> Mary and John Pinney's children were Hester Christiana (1710-16); Anna Henrietta Maria (1712-14); Sophia Joanna Wilhelmina (1714-20); Azariah Walter Helme (1716-17); George William (1717- died young [1728 or 1729]); John Frederick (1719 d. unm. 1762); Christiana Maria (1720 – died young) (PP, Genealogy Spring File). When John Pinney died, three children were alive: George William, John Frederick and Christiana Maria (WI Box B, see also JS Udal 'The Story of the Bettiscombe Skull' p184). According to Pares, the children were George William, John Frederick and Sophie but these were the children mentioned in Azariah Pinney's will of 1718 (R Pares *A West India Fortune* p52).

<sup>304</sup> PP, WI Box B: William Coleman to John Pinney, 18 January 1720

admiringly of her. Remarking on her business-like handwriting, Anna Maria Pinney was convinced that '... she did a world of work in the hot climate of Nevis.'<sup>305</sup>

John had died without leaving a will and first of all, to secure their legal position in case she died as well, Mary Pinney appointed the well-respected and recently widowed Jeremiah Browne as guardian for her children George William, John Frederick and Christiana Maria.<sup>306</sup> Then, as Azariah Pinney's administrator, she paid off the sum outstanding on Charlot's.<sup>307</sup> In the meantime, the merchant William Coleman of London had advised her 'for peace sake' to settle £120 a year on Azariah Pinney's widow, which, according to Coleman, had been Azariah Pinney's intention.<sup>308</sup> Mary Pinney either knew differently, or she thought that such settlement was too generous; before Governor Hamilton she swore a declaration that her father-in-law had left his wife £100 and a dower of £80 a year but that this was to be revoked if the widow contested the will. According to Mary's sworn statement, her late father-in-law had also laid down that, if the French took the island again and until it was recovered, his widow's dower was to be reduced from £80 to £50 a year.<sup>309</sup> Her testimony tallies neither with Azariah Pinney's will nor Coleman's advice but that did not make any difference; it appears that her mother-in-law, the 'old gentlewoman' Mary Pinney, died around the time the details of her inheritance were being settled.<sup>310</sup>

On her husband's death, Charlot's had descended to her, and Mary Pinney owned three estates in Nevis - Charlot's, Proctor's and Mountain - and possibly also some land in Antigua.<sup>311</sup> As Charlot's and Proctor's, no doubt, were worked as one unit, at this stage it may be more practical to discard the terms Charlot's and Proctor's and use 'Mountravers' instead. On Mountravers would have been people from these two plantations but also others from Lady Bawden's and from the Mountain estate. Some of the Mountain people may well have wished to remain on that plantation as domestics when after March 1722 the house there was let to His Excellency General John Hart, but it was let without staff. At over £100 a year, it was rented out fully furnished, and a complete inventory reveals many fine items of furniture, bedding and household commodities.<sup>312</sup> Among the domestic items were a dozen ivory-hafted knives and

<sup>305</sup> Anna Maria Pinney was the granddaughter of John Pretor Pinney. Mary Pinney's son John Frederick and John Pretor Pinney's mother Alicia Clarke would have talked about Mary Pinney to John Pretor Pinney, who then passed what he knew of her to Anna Maria (PP, Misc Vols 48 Misc Notes). A woman with an enquiring mind and a wide range of interests, she was very keen to study the history of her forebears. She appears a well-informed, trustworthy source.

<sup>306</sup> PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box; also Misc Vols 6 List of Deeds and Papers, 1783

The document in which Mary Pinney appointed Jeremiah Browne as guardian was dated 9 January 1720 but must refer to 1721. The dates '9<sup>th</sup>' and 'January' were inserted later, as if the document had been prepared for December 1720. Jeremiah Browne was the Speaker of the Assembly during the period John Pinney served as a member of the Council (CSP 1716-1717 No 425 vi). Elizabeth, his wife, died in October 1720 and was buried in St George's Gingerland (VL Oliver *Caribbeana* vol 2 p271).

<sup>307</sup> As administrator of Azariah Pinney dec'd, on 26 July 1721 Mary Pinney paid 3,494 pounds of muscovado sugar to William Slade of Warminster in Wiltshire, and to Thomas Wansey, infant son of Thomas Wansey, late of Warminster (PP, Cat 4 Misc Vols and Item, Bound Vol of Misc MSS 1672-1806).

<sup>308</sup> PP, WI Box B: William Coleman, London, to Mary Pinney, 13 February 1720/1, with a copy of a letter 21 January 1720/1

<sup>309</sup> PP, 'WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box: Fragments of statement dated 6 April 1720

<sup>310</sup> None of the Pinney family trees or genealogical files state when Azariah Pinney's wife died, but after William Coleman and Mary Pinney discussed the widow's inheritance she was not mentioned any more.

<sup>311</sup> Pares, too, was not quite sure what lands the family held at the time; he believed that the Helmes' Antigua plantation seemed to have been sold sometime in John Frederick's minority' (R Pares *A West India Fortune* p52).

<sup>312</sup> UKNA, CO 186/1: 15 June 1722

A Protestant Irishman and former captain in the British army, for six years (1714-1720) John Hart had served as Governor of Maryland. In Maryland he had fought a very personal and acrimonious battle over Catholics' political and civil rights with Charles Carroll, an Irish Roman Catholic settler and one of Maryland's most powerful men. Hart, a man of 'pride and tenderness of ego', was responsible for legislation that deprived Maryland Catholics of the right to vote for the next half century until the coming of the American Revolution (Hoffman, Ronald 'Marylando-Hibernus': Charles Carroll the Settler, 1660-1720' in *The William and Mary Quarterly* 3<sup>rd</sup> series Vol 45 No 2 (April 1988) pp207-36).

Hart came to the West Indies to replace Governor Walter Hamilton. He quickly formed opinions about the inhabitants of the different islands: Antiguans were 'sociable and well-bred people', those of St Kitts 'a very brave people ... and very good seamen', but in Nevis he encountered 'the most obstinate and particular temper'd people I have ever convers'd with'. While the wealthiest and best-educated landowners lived in England, those left behind were 'most obstinate and perverse in their nature and manner' (Burns, Sir Alan *History of the British West Indies* p457, citing CSP 1722-1723 Numbers 220 and 417).

forks and a dozen ebony-hafted forks, as well as six good table cloths, but it appears that over the years these were stolen; Mary Pinney later ordered another three dozen knives and forks with ivory handles and two more pieces of tablecloth - the best her supplier stocked.<sup>313</sup> An inventory made just before Hart rented her property suggests a comfortable, prosperous home that Mary Pinney had furnished and equipped with grace and elegance.<sup>314</sup>

According to Pares, Mary Pinney went to live in England 'and the estates must have been managed by attorneys and overseers.'<sup>315</sup> If there were other employees appointed, no documents have survived except for one, which records that her late husband had paid a man called James Wignall 'as manager of his plantation'. Having worked for at least two years, Wignall probably left in July 1719.<sup>316</sup> If, indeed, Mrs Pinney did go to England, she may have engaged as attorney a man called Francis Sanders. She certainly was back in Nevis by at least mid-1728.<sup>317</sup>

If Mary Pinney remained in the island throughout the 1720s, during the coming years she, her people and everyone else experienced drought, disease, famine and unrest. The drought had started in 1717, continued in the following year when a hurricane added to everyone's misery,<sup>318</sup> and then recurred in the years 1721, 1724 and 1726. In between, in 1723, another four storms occurred, one of which was very severe. It caused a great deal of damage to canes and to the plantation-grown food crops.<sup>319</sup> Indian corn, Guinea corn, cassava, potatoes and canes, pasture grass for the cattle – no plants had time to establish themselves before they were destroyed by the next hurricane, or the next drought. The rector of St Paul's church in Charlestown, Revd Robert Robertson,<sup>320</sup> described the terrible conditions: droughts were 'generally followed by an army of worms, flies, and other insects, which eat up what little green things are left on the earth.' Next came 'a scarcity of Indian provisions, and a proportional dearth of these from England, Ireland, and the North Continent.' The shortage of food was accompanied by "a most dreadful mortality among the negroes and livestock, crops next to nothing, and ships returning with dead freight [ballast]".<sup>321</sup> In 1722 an outbreak of smallpox on a neighbouring island once again threatened Nevis,<sup>322</sup>

<sup>313</sup> PP, Pinney (West India) Box C: Robert Corey junior to Miles Mills, 8 October 1728

<sup>314</sup> The Legislature decided that Mrs Mary Pinney's house was suitable to accommodate the new governor (UKNA, CO 155/6: 30 March 1722). After renting the house for a year, the lease was not renewed (R Pares *A West India Fortune* Appendix II Inventory of the Pinney House, Nevis, 1722, found in UKNA, CO 186/1: 30 March 1722).

<sup>315</sup> Pares, R *A West India Fortune* p52

<sup>316</sup> PP, WI Box B: John Pinney's account with James Wignall

<sup>317</sup> Mr Francis Sanders' account was dated from around 1722 (PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box 2).

If Mary Pinney did in fact go to England, she may have returned to Nevis as early as 1727 - the year her daughter Christiana appears to have died. However, there is also evidence to suggest that Mary Pinney remained in Nevis. In an undated entry which appears between the period 10 November 1722 and 1 January 1723, 'Madam Mary Pinney' purchased 486 gallons of molasses from John Kitt, the manager of Jennings & Ball Range plantation (Ryland Stapleton MSS Bundle 5.1: Sir William Stapleton's plantation [J & BR] accounts, 1722). Having rented out Mountain to the Governor, she could have lived on Proctor's, Charlot's or in one of her properties in Charlestown.

Mary Pinney may have sent her daughter to school in England whilst remaining in Nevis. Her daughter's schooling costs were accounted for on 18 January 1726/7 (WI Box C), and on 6 May 1727 she paid Peter Heuie £24 'for drawing her daughter's picture' plus frame (Cat 4 Misc Vols and Item, Bound Vol of Misc MSS 1672-1806). This, most likely, was after Christiana had died.

<sup>318</sup> Smith, Revd William *A Natural History of Nevis* pp240-42

<sup>319</sup> Ryland Stapleton MSS 4.11.8: Timothy Tyrrell to Sir William Stapleton, 2 October 1723

Even the absentee proprietors got to feel the shortages. Manager Tyrrell sent some shells to Britain but could not procure the usual gifts of oranges or shaddock; there had been 'but very few' since the last storm. As to the guinea hens, almost all had perished except for a few young ones but, no doubt, the starving plantation people had helped themselves to these (Ryland Stapleton MSS 4.11.2: April 1724). In August 1724 another storm in Nevis caused damage in the mountain land but not in the lower estates (Ryland Stapleton MSS 7.1: Timothy Tyrrell to Lady Stapleton, 25 May 1725). As the enslaved people's provision grounds were in the mountain areas, it is very likely that their crops were, once again, destroyed.

<sup>320</sup> PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box

<sup>321</sup> Gaspar, David Barry 'Slave Importation, Runaways, and Compensation in Antigua 1720-1729' p310, quoting Robert Robertson *A Letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of London*, J Wilford, London 1730; in Inikori, Joseph E and Stanley L Engerman (eds) *The Atlantic Slave Trade*

<sup>322</sup> UKNA, CO 155/6: 25 February 1722



which had experienced an outbreak a few years earlier,<sup>323</sup> and in the winter of 1725 fevers spread over the country. On one plantation a quarter of all the inhabitants were sick. Whites were affected, too.<sup>324</sup> Drought had destroyed food crops, and water was in such short supply that it had to be imported by the hogshead from Montserrat and Guadeloupe.<sup>325</sup> Inhabitants were reduced to live off corn and herrings, and many enslaved people, as well as stock and wildlife, died from want of food and water. The situation did not ease until May 1726 when the rains finally came. The decade of natural disasters ended with another one when in 1729 a deluge of rain caused such floods that the land was damaged and several horses and mules lost their footing and were swept away into the sea.<sup>326</sup>

In response to the ongoing deprivations, unrest occurred in the island. Workers from one plantation set alight the still house from another,<sup>327</sup> runaways committed thefts and robberies<sup>328</sup> and after the 1725 crop it almost came to open rebellion. It was said that the enslaved people planned 'an insurrection ... in order to cut off all the whites, and take the island for themselves.'<sup>329</sup> But their plans were discovered, the Nevis militia mobilised and troops requested from St Kitts. Although they had not confessed to anything, two of the alleged ringleaders were brutally killed: one was hanged, the other burnt alive.<sup>330</sup> About a dozen people were suspected of being involved in the plot and, on thin evidence, imprisoned.<sup>331</sup>

When the drought continued, so did the flight from the plantations. 'Fugitives "plagu'd everybody" in Nevis'.<sup>332</sup> Retribution was swift. Caught while stealing corn, one man was 'cut to pieces'; others were beaten to death.<sup>333</sup> Some of the runners were apprehended – the Stapleton plantation handed out a sizeable part of its rum production by way of rewards - <sup>334</sup> while others managed to escape capture but then perished from illnesses. Nevis, however, was not the only island that suffered; in the Danish West Indies some planters let their people starve to death while others gave them extra holidays, 'with the

<sup>323</sup> On 14 December 1714 the *Hamilton Galley* under its commander Charles Burnham had arrived with smallpox from Widdaw (UKNA, CO 155/4). Just then, John Pinney and his family were arriving in Nevis.

<sup>324</sup> Ryland Stapleton MSS 7.1: Timothy Tyrrell to Lady Stapleton, 3 February 1725, and MSS 6.3 Summary

<sup>325</sup> Zacek, Natalie 'Reading the rebels: currents of slave resistance in the eighteenth-century British West Indies', citing VL Oliver *History of Antigua* Vol 1 p xcvi

<sup>326</sup> Ryland Stapleton MSS 4.5: Joseph Herbert to Sir William Stapleton, 12 June 1726, 24 June 1726 and 25 August 1729

<sup>327</sup> Harvard Stapleton MSS: Notes of Timothy Tyrrell's letter, 30 May 1723

<sup>328</sup> Zacek, Natalie 'Reading the rebels: currents of slave resistance in the eighteenth-century British West Indies', citing CO 186/1 Parris to Nevis Assembly, 10 September 1724

<sup>329</sup> Ryland Stapleton MSS 4.3: Joseph Herbert to Sir William Stapleton, 29 September 1725

<sup>330</sup> According to one contemporary second-hand source, widow Symonds's slave was hanged and widow Sargent's burnt alive (Ryland Stapleton MSS 4.3: Thomas Butler, London, to Sir William Stapleton, 21 November 1725). However, Vincent Hubbard quoted Governor Hart as writing to England that 'the negroes 'were sufficiently terrified by the execution of two of them that were burnt ...' (VK Hubbard *Swords, Ships and Sugar* 5th ed p127).

Sarah Lytton and Mary Combs gave evidence that Mrs Symond's man Soco had informed his mistress, and that Samuel Bayley had overheard his brother John Bayley "say that a Negro Man named Tom Cleverly belonging to Colonel Jorey knew as much or more of the matter meaning the rising of the Negroes, than the Negroes that were already brought in upon that account". Soco was said to have heard two men called Johnny and Sambo talk about the rising (Natalie Zacek 'Reading the rebels: currents of slave resistance in the eighteenth-century British West Indies', citing CO 186/1: Depositions of Sarah Lytton and Mary Combs).

Natalie Zacek has raised the possibility that, because none of the alleged conspirators confessed to a conspiracy, 'It is entirely possible that the Nevis plot of 1725 existed only in the paranoid mind-set of the slaveholders, or in the bondspeople's dreams of revenge and liberty.' This seems implausible for several reasons. Firstly, the people apprehended may not have been the actual conspirators; secondly, those who were tried may have denied any involvement to save others who were implicated, and thirdly, the conditions in the island had been so awful for so long that the enslaved people may well have planned to mutiny.

See also Hubbard, Vincent K *NHCS Newsletters* (February 1996) p9 and (February 2000) p10 and Sir Alan Burns *History of the British West Indies* p460, citing CSP 1726-1727 No 1

<sup>331</sup> Ryland Stapleton MSS 4.3: Thomas Butler to Sir William Stapleton, 21 November 1725

<sup>332</sup> Gaspar, David Barry 'Slave Importation, Runaways, and Compensation in Antigua 1720-1729' p310, quoting Robert Robertson A *Letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of London*

<sup>333</sup> Ryland Stapleton MSS 4.5: Joseph Herbert, Nevis, to Sir William Stapleton, 25 August 1727

<sup>334</sup> Gaspar, David Barry *Bondsman and Rebels* p201

natural result that the blacks stole right and left and became exceedingly difficult to manage'.<sup>335</sup> On Mountravers, too, several incidents in 1728 suggest that there may have been widespread, possibly even organised, unrest on the plantation: two women were treated for dog bites,<sup>336</sup> and two men and a woman were sold to Maryland.<sup>337</sup> The dog bites may suggest they had been hunted down after attempting to escape, and usually the selling abroad was reserved as the ultimate punishment for rebellious individuals. On Mountravers, the banishment of Ami, **Towerhill** and **?Abilt** (probably Abbott) is the first record of this practice. The woman, Ami, had been acquired at auction by Azariah Pinney and had lived on the plantation for eleven years,<sup>338</sup> but nothing is known about the men. These three may well have made their journey into their American exile on the sloop *Hamilton*, which Mary Pinney had inherited from her father-in-law. Other slaveholders, too, exported their unwanted people this way; on the same vessel Captain George Sharp had earlier transported six enslaved people from Nevis to New York.<sup>339</sup>

After all these years of poor crops Mary Pinney would have had little income from the plantation but, despite business being slow all round, she would have made some money from the sloops she owned, the *Hamilton* and the *Little Rock*.<sup>340</sup> Her stores may also have brought in some rental income<sup>341</sup> and she had money tied up in at least one mortgage, granted to Mrs Cressey by her father-in-law just before his departure from Nevis. This she foreclosed in the March 1728<sup>342</sup> and, as a result, she acquired land as well as six new individuals. Mrs Pinney had already taken on another plantation the previous June; she must have thought that the 112 people she owned were sufficient to manage an additional estate.<sup>343</sup> Mary Pinney was still expanding her business and rented a 48-acre plantation not far from Mountravers. This had belonged to her aunt Christian Brome.<sup>344</sup> Mrs Brome had been married twice and apparently acquired

<sup>335</sup> In the year following the drought, the unrest in the Danish West Indies resulted in the execution of seventeen people but so far no evidence has been found which suggests that retribution on a similar scale happened in Nevis (Westergaard, Waldemar *The Danish West Indies* p165, quoting B&D 1724-1727 (22 November 1725), SP, St Th (26 May 1725) PBO 1683-1729 (18 December 1725)).

<sup>336</sup> PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box 2: Doctors account for the Estate of Mary Pinney dec'd

<sup>337</sup> PP, WI Box C: 12 April 1728

<sup>338</sup> PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box 2: Court judgment 7 May 1717

<sup>339</sup> In July 1720 Jeffrey Meriweather, Azariah Pinney and Nicholas Burroughs of Nevis owned the Bermudian-registered sloop *Hamilton*. By 1721 Meriweather no longer had a share in the vessel but Burroughs did while Pinney's had passed to his son (BRO, 41561/43). Burroughs had died by 1725, leaving an under-age son (VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 6 pp79-80 and Vol 2 pp310-13). Given that Mary Pinney was in 1725 the registered owner of the *Hamilton*, it is likely she had bought out Burroughs. It appears that her vessel made regular trips to North America; in August 1725 the *Hamilton* arrived once more at New York (Donnan, E *Documents* Vol 3).

<sup>340</sup> Writing about Mary Pinney, Anna Maria Pinney mentioned 'one of her [Mary Pinney's] sloops *Little Rock*' (PP, Misc Vols 48 Misc Notes). The *Little Rock* had in 1720 been sent from London, with goods 'on account and risque of Madam Christian Brome' and consigned to her. William Coleman of London sent a long list of items, including a horse whip for a woman and two 'best lined masks' (WI Box B). As Mrs Brome died intestate, it is very likely that Mary Pinney acquired the vessel on her death.

William Coleman also mentioned another vessel, the *Wiltshire*, which he had not been able to sell because there was no market at that time (PN 16, quoting WI Box B: William Coleman to Mary Pinney, 30 October 1721).

<sup>341</sup> In September 1722 the manager of Jennings & Ball Range, John Kitt, paid 'Madam Mary Pinney for 5 Months rent of one of her Stores' at £4:0:0 per month (Ryland Stapleton MSS Bundle 5.1: Sir William Stapleton's plantation accounts, 1722).

<sup>342</sup> From the available documents it is not entirely clear whether Margaret Cressey mortgaged the whole estate or just part of it (PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box 3; see also ECSCRN, CR 1707-1728 images 73-75 (folio numbers not clear). I am grateful to Michael E Newton for this last reference).

<sup>343</sup> On 8 February 1727/8 Mary Pinney petitioned President John Richardson because her 112 people had been entered in the lists kept in St Paul's parish, whereas she 'always used to give those negroes in the lists taken for St Thomas Lowland and St John Figtree parishes' (PP, WI Box C).

<sup>344</sup> Thomas Helme from Gillingham had written to Mary Pinney on 7 May 1722, offering his land in 'her neighbourhood' for sale. This he had probably inherited from Christian Brome. Mrs Pinney appears to have rejected the offer (PN 17).

This Thomas Helme was likely to have been Mary Pinney's uncle Thomas, rather than her cousin, his son of the same name (baptised in June 1675): before he knew of John Pinney's death, William Coleman had informed the Helme family in Gillingham (Mary Pinney's uncle Thomas and aunt Mary) of their sister Christian Brome's death. They, and Mary Pinney's father William Helme, 'were all of one mother ... so that land and houses belong to your uncle Thomas Helme'. Thomas and Mary Helme relinquished their right of administration to John and Mary Pinney (PP, WI Box B: William Coleman, London, to Mary Pinney, 13 February 1720, with a copy of a letter 21 January 1720). Mary Pinney had mentioned Christian Brome's daughter in a letter of 17 December 1714 (WI Box B) but the daughter appears to have died between 1714 and 1720. Sometimes the term 'daughter' was used to mean 'daughter-in-law' but the tone of the letter suggested that she was a daughter, or possibly a step-daughter.

this small estate through her second husband. Her first husband, Aaron Chapman, a merchant and member of the Council, had died in 1693 at the age of 40,<sup>345</sup> and the widow Chapman had then married the RAC agent and merchant Philip Brome (Azariah Pinney's political enemy). After her first husband had died, the Chapman family had brought a suit against the newly-wed Mrs Brome, appointing Azariah Pinney to act on their behalf,<sup>346</sup> and her second husband's death had resulted in further litigation.<sup>347</sup> The case, which developed into a full-blown Chancery suit, appears to have involved this particular 48-acre plantation.<sup>348</sup> Mary Pinney was probably caught in the Brome versus Helme crossfire when, not long into her lease, two members of the Gillingham Helme family taxed her with ingratitude ('which is worse than the sin of witchcraft') for not giving them an account of their property.<sup>349</sup> For those on the spot, withholding information could be a powerful tool.

When Aunt Brome died in 1720, she had owned sixty enslaved people: forty on her estate, eighteen at her house in Charlestown and another two who were herding sheep and cattle at the salt ponds in St Kitts.<sup>350</sup> Presumably on her death all her domestic staff from Charlestown moved to the St Thomas Lowland plantation to work for Mary Pinney, who in 1727 took a seven-year lease. The agreement included the renting of 'one boarded and shingled boiling house and curing house, four coppers, one compleat sugar mill, one trash house'.<sup>351</sup> But as if renting an additional estate was not enough, around the same time Mary Pinney ordered extensive construction work. John Edgerley laid almost 24,000 shingles, made sundry repairs to the house, probably at Mountain,<sup>352</sup> while Christopher Wilkinson was busy with the sugar works, most likely those on the old Proctor's estate:

Walling boyling house and carrying up the gable end  
Bricking and facing 3 coppers  
Building a large molasses cystem  
Making bed-spout of 2 mills  
Arching and placing a large water cistern  
Laying floors in the cook room and ?slood room  
Building 3 stoves and false back belonging to the kitchen.<sup>353</sup>

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Thomas Helme senior appears to have died by the time Christian Brome granted Mary Pinney the lease. In 1731, a Letter of Administration of the estate of the widow Christiana Brome or Broom of Nevis was granted to her nephew, Thomas Helme.

<sup>345</sup> CSP 1685-1688 No 2631 and VL Oliver *Caribbeana* Vol 5 Helme Pedigree

<sup>346</sup> A document dated 21 August 1696 records the appointment by John Chapman, Elizabeth Channing, Anne Pinney, and Mary Chapman of Azariah Pinney and Joseph Chapman as attorneys to obtain rights for the estate of Aaron Chapman dec'd and Christian Chapman. With a testimony and seal of the Mayor of Lyme Regis, this document also points towards another early West Country link (PP, WI Box A).

<sup>347</sup> Phillip Brome, Charles Brome, Martha Brome, William Jones, Susannah Jones, Jarrett Smith defended a case brought by Mary Pinney (PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box 3; also DM 1841/5). A document dated 9 March 1715 recites extremely convoluted and confusing family relationships between these people. Central to the dispute was Philip Brome's will (PP, WI Box B).

<sup>348</sup> On 29 April 1735 depositions from the witnesses were taken at the house of William Weeks in Charlestown, Nevis (PP, DM 1841/7).

<sup>349</sup> PN 16 Racedown, Box XI: Mary Helme to Mary Pinney, 20 May 1728

<sup>350</sup> PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile Box': Administration, 9 January 1720/1; Inventory, 8 February 1720/1

It is interesting to note that two people were stationed at the salt ponds. Towards the end of the seventeenth century access to the salt ponds by people from Nevis had been made so difficult that Nevis was threatened with running out of salt, and having a permanent presence there may have been a way of ensuring a regular supply of salt reached Nevis (CSP 1693-1696 No 1120 Minutes of the Nevis Council 2 July 1694).

<sup>351</sup> The appraisalment by Samuel Clarke and Francis Sanders was done on 26 June 1727 and the lease dated two days later. The estate was worth nearly £300 (PP, WI 'Damaged or Fragile' Box). The spinster Christian Helme granted the lease; it appears that Thomas Helme senior, the brother of Christian Helme/Chapman/Brome, had died and that Christian Helme was a granddaughter. The land was near but not next to Proctor's and Charlott's. On one side it bordered the sea.

<sup>352</sup> PP, WI Box C: John Edgerley's a/c

<sup>353</sup> PP, WI Box C: Christopher Wilkinson's account for 1728/9

While Mary Pinney proved herself a decisive and energetic businesswoman, in her private life she was to suffer yet more grief. She lost her youngest child, Christiana, and also her son and heir, George.<sup>354</sup> Christiana was not yet seven years old and George under ten.

In connection with George's death, in February 1729 Mary Pinney had occasion to appear before the Earl of Londonderry, who, having succeeded Governor Hart to the post as Governor of the Leeward Islands, had become the tenant at her Mountain house. Governor Hart had only lived at the house for a year, and, as it turned out, his successor also remained for only a year. The Earl died and after his death the lease was not renewed<sup>355</sup> but it appears that the Mountain house, for a while, was still used for official business. Workmen framed 'the end of the Council room',<sup>356</sup> and it appears that the Legislature decided to repair the building to make it fit for a Court Hall and Secretary's Office. In 1732 the house was referred to as 'Miles Wells's house';<sup>357</sup> Miles Wells was Mary Pinney's servant and most likely had been left behind to look after the building while she had returned to England.<sup>358</sup>

### **The early 1730s**

Despite successive droughts, by the late 1720s sugar production in Nevis had begun edging up to what it had been at the turn of the century, before the French invasion,<sup>359</sup> but just then the 'blast' got into the canes and damaged the crops.<sup>360</sup> In 1731 the 'Plantation Affairs' chapter in the *Gentleman's Magazine* reported glumly that 'The crops are very short at Nevis ... and the ponds are almost dry',<sup>361</sup> and soon another drought added to the calamitous state of affairs,<sup>362</sup> as did another hurricane in June 1733. Over a dozen vessels were lost at St Kitts and there was also damage in Nevis, described by Revd Robert Robertson as 'but small': many trees were uprooted, canes damaged, and 'negro huts' and the 'slighter sugar works beat down'. He foresaw reduced sugar production.<sup>363</sup>

<sup>354</sup> PP, Cat 4 Misc Vols and Item, Bound Vol of Misc MSS 1672-1806: Admon of the estate of George William Pinney, late of Nevis, died intestate, granted to his mother Mary Pinney widow by Thomas, Earl of Londonderry, Captain General of the Caribbean Islands, 18 February 1728/9

<sup>355</sup> Pares, R A *West India Fortune* p53

<sup>356</sup> PP, WI Box C: John Edgerley's a/c

<sup>357</sup> UKNA, CO 186/2: 31 May 1732

<sup>358</sup> In her will of 10 November 1729, Mary Pinney left £50 to her servant Miles Wells, the rest of her estate was to go 'in fee' to her only son. As executor she appointed her son, as trustees Berkely Seymour Esq of Somerset, merchant William Coleman of London and Jeremiah Browne and John Spooner of St Kitts. John Huffam, Thomas Baker, Sommers Payne, and John Woodley junior witnessed the will which was proven on 21 November 1735 by John Frederick Pinney (UKNA, PROB 11/674/160).

Except for Berkely Seymour, some details are known about the men Mary Pinney trusted. William Coleman was a partner in the London merchant house Coleman & Lucas and John Spooner a Speaker of the St Kitts Council around the time she made her will (UKNA, CO 155/7). Jeremiah Browne, formerly a member and Speaker of the Nevis Assembly (CO 155/5: 12 September 1715 and 12 April 1716), then was Chief Justice of St Kitts. After Mary Pinney died, he installed as manager on Mountravers a relative of his, James Browne.

It is likely that Mary Pinney made her will before she departed for England because the witnesses all appeared to have been Nevis-based: John Huffam was the godson of a wealthy and well-connected former governor of Nevis (*Caribbeana* Vol 5); Thomas Baker and Sommers Payne may have been merchants (Stapleton Cotton MSS 13 (ii) and (iii)). In the 1750s Payne owned nine people (PP, Dom Box P) and several properties in the parishes of St Paul's and St John Figtree (ECSCRN, CR 1757-1762 f69, and BULSC, DM 78/164). He probably was quite young when he witnessed Mary Pinney's will; Sommers Payne died sometime between 1754 and 1772 (UKNA, CO 186/6: 9 December 1772). Equally young was John Woodley junior (1710-1767), the fifth child and third son of William Woodley (1676-1739) and Bridget Wall (1682-1756) (Hazel Lake *Sugar Planters of Little Parndon*).

<sup>359</sup> Between 1700 and 1704 Nevis produced 2,858 tons of sugar. Following the dramatic drop-off in sugar production to 631 tons during the period 1705 to 1709, during the period 1725 to 1729 this rose to 2,588 tons. Between 1730 and 1734 production fell to 2,390 tons and then, between 1735 and 1739, sunk to 1,871 tons (David Watts *The West Indies* p286).

<sup>360</sup> CSP 1734-1735 pp221-24

<sup>361</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine* Vol I 1731 p219

<sup>362</sup> Ryland Stapleton MSS 4.5: Joseph Herbert to Sir William Stapleton 29 May 1733

<sup>363</sup> A letter from Barbados dated 25 July 1733 to Isaac Hobhouse in Bristol reported 14 vessels lost at St Kitts (BCRL, Jefferies Collection, Vol 13 f141); Natalie A Zacek *Settler Society in the English Leeward Islands, 1670-1776* p20, quoting Robert Robertson *A Short Account of the Hurricane, that pass'd thro' the English Leeward Caribbee Islands, on Saturday the 30th of June 1733* (London: Privately printed, 1733) pp10, 12.

By then, Nevis had 'fallen into great decay'.<sup>364</sup> The infrastructure was in poor shape, the state of the road around the island made travelling very difficult and the defences were insufficient. As far back as April 1715 it had been decided to raise £800 in taxes to build fortifications on Saddle Hill<sup>365</sup> but work still had not begun; only a lookout had been stationed there. It was said that over a hundred enslaved people were needed to do the building work.<sup>366</sup> Meanwhile the main protection for Charlestown, Fort Charles, was in a terrible state. It had no proper storage for powder and provisions, the cistern was damaged and only a few little thatched huts just to the windward of the magazine provided shelter for the matrosses, their guns and ammunition. One well-aimed shot fired from a ship could destroy everything. While the matrosses counted among their armaments '36 guns scarce fit for use', at the strategically important, but undermanned, Black Rock Fort at the other end of Charlestown six worn-out guns were supposed to prevent the enemy from landing.<sup>367</sup> Further north, a good ditch and rampart and bastions made from masonry protected the fort on Pinney's Beach but these puny defences with their single cannon were no match for a determined invader.<sup>368</sup>

It seems, though, that Governor Mathews' report of inhabitants making 'no effort to defend or prepare' was exaggerated because periodically improvements were made, and his judgment that planters failed to develop their estates<sup>369</sup> was rather harsh; Nevis was exposed to a combination of factors that damaged its prosperity and hindered its progress. In addition to the natural disasters that befell the island throughout the 1720s and the early 1730s, the British colonies were subject to high duties and had to compete with those sugar producers that had managed to elevate themselves from small beginnings to positions of economic strength, such as the French colonies and Dutch Surinam. This also meant that British colonies competed with Martinique, Guadeloupe and Hispaniola for all kinds of plantation supplies from North America. Scarcity pushed up the prices, and often Nevis had to make do with the refuse.<sup>370</sup> In the French West Indies, slaveholders were exempt from paying taxes on enslaved people commandeered for building and strengthening fortifications,<sup>371</sup> a concession not granted in the British colonies and one that encouraged military building projects. And while ships defended the French islands at times of unrest or war, Nevis did not benefit from such protection. By the 1730s its defence rested on just over 300 militia men, a tenth of its previous strength,<sup>372</sup> and in an attempt to attract more white settlers, the Legislature introduced another Bill to redress the balance of 'Christian Men Servants in proportion to Negroes'.<sup>373</sup> A quota was set of 'one white man to every twenty negroes' but this law could

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<sup>364</sup> CSP 1734-1735 No 314

<sup>365</sup> UKNA, CO 155/4: 2 April 1715; also CSP 1716-1717 No 66 ii

<sup>366</sup> UKNA, CO 161/1: 13 November 1722 and CO 155/6: January 1722/3

<sup>367</sup> UKNA, CO 186/2: 25 February 1731/2

<sup>368</sup> CSP 1734-1735 No 314

<sup>369</sup> CSP 1734-1735 No 314

<sup>370</sup> CSP 1732 p72 No 40

<sup>371</sup> McCloy, Shelby T *The Negro in the French West Indies* p28

<sup>372</sup> CSP 1734-1735 pp221-24

<sup>373</sup> UKNA, CO 186/2: 28 January 1733/4

Although Pares wrote that in the 1670s Nevis was so prosperous that it did not seek any legislation regarding white servants in the way St Kitts and Antigua did (*A West India Fortune* p22), in May 1675 one of the Acts passed in Nevis contained a clause that was to encourage the importation of servants by indenture (CSP 1675-1676 May 1675 No 570). A further Act of December 1701 also encouraged the importation of white servants and obliged all planters to keep a white servant 'to every twenty negroes living'. The Treasury was to buy male, white Protestants between the ages of 16 and 50 for N£12, and then sell them to make up the quota ('Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council appointed for the Consideration of all Matters relating to Trade in Foreign Plantations' Parts III, published 1789 Act No 48 of 1701). Azariah Pinney almost certainly bought one of these, 'the white boy Croker'.

In 1725 the Nevis Legislature once again debated how to increase the number of whites in the island. This time they targeted absentees with large estates: anyone not resident in Nevis was to ensure that they had one white man for every hundred acres of land (Ryland Stapleton MSS 7.1: Timothy Tyrrell to Lady Stapleton, 3 February 1725). It is interesting to note that this requirement was to form part of a new Militia Act and that the debate took place after a period of drought, sickness and starvation when whites may well have feared that enslaved people would rise against the terrible conditions.

not be executed effectively as planters were unwilling or unable to pay the penalties. Along with the other Leeward Islands and also Barbados, Nevis suffered from emigration to the Dutch and Danish islands<sup>374</sup> and was not only in need of white men but also of enslaved workers. Such was the shortage of labour that the fields were 'not duly cultivated' and the Council admitted that Nevis suffered 'a general decline and decay'.<sup>375</sup> Once flourishing, it had become 'a desert island to what it was thirty years ago'.<sup>376</sup> Planters from Nevis, along with those in other colonies in the British West Indies, complained of economic distress.<sup>377</sup>

Hand-in-hand with the island's economic and physical decline went a corrosion of moral standards among the white population. In the mid-1670s Nevis had been the only Leeward Island that could boast 'some ministers and schoolmasters',<sup>378</sup> but half a century later it had lost its ambitions. It had gone stale and degenerated into a state of immorality. The institutions were non-existent or so reduced that they barely functioned. By the 1720s there were no schools; the Parish Clerk Henry Gray used to teach 'reading, writing and arithmetic' but he was getting too old and when others tried to instruct the children, they failed just after two or three months. Some of the island's churches were without ministers: William Smith had left the parish of St John Figtree, Henry Pope St George's Gingerland, and Mr Johnson in St James Windward had died. Since Mr Johnson's death no one had lived in his house, and it and the church were decaying. The churches at St Thomas Lowland and St Paul's in Charlestown did at least have a minister but Mr Cradock's congregation was small. The old Scot Robert Robertson, who had been in post at St Paul's since 1707, wearily witnessed the decline. He looked back on the olden days when his parish had contained about seventy households with three hundred whites, but steadfastly Revd Robertson continued to hold services: twice on Sundays and almost daily on special occasions such as Passion week, Easter and Whitsun. His forenoon services used to be attended by half his parishioners, but the number had dropped from one hundred and fifty or more to sixty or seventy, and many of those were not islanders but 'transient or seafaring' folk. For his afternoon service ten souls, at the most, turned up and sometimes no one came. Robertson's disappointment is evident from his observation that 'At present there is not above three or four Christian families in my parish.'<sup>379</sup>

In an attempt to stop the rot and to restore piety and orderliness, the Legislature introduced a Bill that forbade a string of evils: 'blasphemy, profaneness, adultery, fornication, poligamy (sic), incest, prophanation of the Lords Day, swearing and drunkenness.' Literacy was seen as a key instrument for betterment and, too little, too late, a Bill 'for erecting and maintaining schools for the training up of youth to reading' was brought in to redress the balance.<sup>380</sup>

This was the situation in Nevis in 1734, the year Mary Pinney died.<sup>381</sup> She was in her mid-forties. Her only surviving child, the 15-year-old John Frederick, inherited the plantations.

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The proportion of white men to enslaved people varied between islands and sometimes was based on the acreage of estates as well as the number of slaves. According to Sir Alan Burns, the general rule was one white man to every 'ten negroes' (*History of the British West Indies* p217 fn6). The requirement in Nevis of one white man to every twenty negroes may indicate a more relaxed attitude among the white population, based on fewer incidents of insurgencies among the enslaved people. On the other hand, the island could not reward its contracted servants with gifts of land, so that the low ratio could equally well have been a sign that the Legislature was realistic in its expectations of attracting a sufficient number of white men.

Another aspect to having a substantial poor white population was that planters feared that they and the enslaved people would find common cause and unite in their opposition. In the context of Virginia, see Anthony S Parent *Foul Means* p172.

<sup>374</sup> Lambert, S (ed) *House of Commons Sessional Papers* Vol 70 pp275-77

<sup>375</sup> UKNA, CO 186/2: 22 October 1731

<sup>376</sup> Burns, Sir Alan *History of the British West Indies* p459, citing CSP 1724-1725 No 516 and CSP 1728-1729 No 24)

<sup>377</sup> Ward, JR *British West Indian Slavery 1750-1834* p12

<sup>378</sup> CSP 1675-1676 No 784

<sup>379</sup> Oliver, VL *Caribbeana* p340; Vol 1 p10; Vol 3 pp321-23 The Church in Nevis, Queries 1723-4, Replies 7 May 1724

<sup>380</sup> UKNA, CO 186/2: 28 January 1733/4

<sup>381</sup> PP, MSS in Numbered Folders (Folder 7)

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

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