

# Tower Hill Estate, Nevis

## *A Preliminary Chronological Account*



Detail from a survey of Nevis by *HMS Thunder*, 1848, corrected 1868,  
courtesy of the National Archives

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# Tower Hill Estate, Nevis

## A Preliminary Chronological Account

### Introduction

This report presents a preliminary chronological account of the history of Tower Hill Estate in the parish of St Thomas Lowland on the West Indian island of Nevis. It has been commissioned by David Rollinson of Bridgwater, Nova Scotia, past Director of the Nevis Field Studies Centre, on behalf of a client. In addition to giving a basic history of the estate the report will seek to give an assessment of the available documentary material and identify further possible avenues of research.

The report deals only with what might be termed the 'historic' estate which in the mid-eighteenth century consisted of 240 acres. By contrast a property called 'Tower Hill', presumably centring on the historic estate, was listed in 1924 as being of 761 acres. More recently a real estate advertisement by Resort Properties Online describes Tower Hill Estate as being '600+ acres' and the photos shown suggest that this modern property covers the uphill parts of a number of other historic estates to the south of Tower Hill.

### Location and Mapping

The obvious ruins at Tower Hill are located on the 1984 D.O.S map of Nevis on an isolated grassy knoll about one and a half miles due east of the parish church of St Thomas Lowland and over half a mile beyond the top end of the village of Barnes Ghaut.<sup>1</sup> No plan of the estate has yet come to light. [See Addendum] It might possibly be seen as the furthest plantation centre which is shown almost due east of 'Batterie F' on the 1758 French map of the island.<sup>2</sup> The first clear reference to the estate appears in the relatively accurate survey of the island in 1848 by Captain Edward Barnett of HMS *Thunder* in which the estate is shown without a windmill. By contrast, downhill and to the west are shown the windmills of Jessup's, Paradise and Colhoun's estates.<sup>3</sup> Iles's occasionally inaccurate 1871 map of Nevis shows Tower Hill linked to Jessup's Mansion, southwest of it, by what appears to be a plantation road which is clearly still in existence today. It also suggests that the estate centre was situated on the Upper Round Road linked with Wansay's, Rossington's and Ward's estates to the south.<sup>4</sup> A limited plan of Tower Hill was found in the Nevis Courthouse Registry. Entitled 'Plan of Tower Hill Estate the property of The Hon'ble Joseph Briggs' it was signed by L M Kortryks, licensed surveyor, and stated the estate amounted to 341 acres 1 rood 2 perches. It was attached to a Certificate of Title dated 10 August 1900 which stated that Gillespie Brothers, merchants of the City of London, were by then the registered proprietors of Tower Hill. Further research in these records would reveal in more detail how and when proprietorship was transferred from Briggs to Gillespie Brothers to J O Maloney.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Nevis with part of Saint Christopher (Saint Kitts)* Nevis, 1:25,000, edition 5 O.S.D. 1984

<sup>2</sup> *Carte de L'Isle de Nieves* (Bellin) in 'Description Geographique des Isles Antilles...' 1758

<sup>3</sup> *West Indies Leeward Islands, St Christopher and Nevis Surveyed by Captn. Edwd. Barnett RN...* April 1848, UK National Archives WO 78/603

<sup>4</sup> J A B Iles *Map of the Island of Nevis* in 'An Account Descriptive of the Island of Nevis, West Indies' 1 January 1871

<sup>5</sup> NC (Nevis Courthouse) Land Titles Register Book 1 f138

There is little detail on the plan, for instance it does not show the location of the works or any house, although it does show a public road going through the western edge of the estate. Plans of similar date for neighbouring estates such as Clifton and Paradise show where the boundaries between the estates lay.<sup>6</sup> On a 1920 War Office map of the island the estate is shown as one of the 'Uninhabited Estate Houses and disused Estate Works', clearly indicating that it was no longer a working estate.<sup>7</sup> Post-1945 Directorate of Overseas Survey (DOS) aerial photographs of the area (and some earlier USAAF sorties) may well provide clues as to the location of historic structures on the estate.<sup>8</sup>

## Tower Hill under the Burt Family

The first clear reference to Tower Hill Estate comes in two 1769 indentures from Close Rolls in the UK National Archives. The first, dated 6 September 1769, is between 'William Mathew Burt of Maiden Early, Berks(hire), Esq., and Charles Pym Burt, late of St Croix, but now residing in London, Esq., of the one part, and William Hyndman of Nevis Esq., of the other part.'

It states that for 5 shillings the Burts grant to Hyndman:

'all that plantation called Towerhill Plantation in the parish of St Thomas, Nevis, containing 240 cares, abutted and bounded east with the Mountain, west with the lands in the possession of Archibald Thompson, Esq., north with lands belonging to the said Archibald Thompson and lands of Tobias Gallway, Esq., deceased, and south with the lands of the heirs of the late Mathew Mills, Esq., deceased....all which lands...formerly were in the tenure and occupation of William Burt, grandfather, and afterwards of William Pym Burt, father of William Mathew Burt, Charles Pym Burt, and now in the possession of the said William Hyndman, Esq., and his under tenants...for one whole year, he paying one peppercorn for rent if lawfully demanded...'.<sup>9</sup>

This gives the acreage and boundaries in 1769 and links the ownership of the estate in the early eighteenth century to the Burt family. The first of this family known about was Colonel William Burt who signed a petition got up by Leeward Island planters in 1670, was a member of the Council and Deputy Governor of Nevis. He died in 1686. There is some confusion in the 1677-8 Census of Nevis which shows a Captain William 'Burr' with his own company or division and a Captain William 'Burt' in Major Daniell Lanhather's company. It is possible that the latter may be the son of the former. In any case the latter is shown with 7 white men, 1 white woman, 6 white children and 16 negro men, 17 negro women and 15 negro children. This number certainly suggests an estate with 48 black slaves, 8 white people and 6 white children, though where the estate was is not clear.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Digital copies of many of these plans can, in the near future, be consulted either through the Nevis Courthouse Registry office, the archive at the Nevis historical and Conservation Society (NHCS) or on-line through the British Library

<sup>7</sup> *The Presidency of St. Kitts and Nevis 1*: 2 miles, Major J A Burdon, War Office, 1920

<sup>8</sup> The Bodleian Library has some sets and the UK National Collection of Aerial Photography (NCAP) received, indirectly, the first print collection of the DOS

<sup>9</sup> Oliver, V L *The History of the Island of Antigua* vol. 1 pp88-91, 'Pedigree of Burt' quoting from Close Roll, 9 Geo. III., Part 15, Nos. 5 and 6

<sup>10</sup> Oliver, V L *Caribbeana* vol. 3 pp27-35 and 70-81

## The second Colonel William Burt

This second William Burt, the grandfather mentioned in the 1769 indenture, was styled 'President' of the island, or more properly 'President of the Council of Nevis' from 1699 to his death in 1707. The indenture clearly states that he, at least, owned Tower Hill. He obviously upset some of the white planters on Nevis during the French invasion of the island in 1706. Oliver reports a note from Nathaniel Estwick of St Christopher dated 18 November 1707. 'President Burt is dead...Col. Burt is not much lamented, his indifferent behaviour when the French visited the Islands being still remembered against him.'<sup>11</sup>

It is unclear whether Colonel Burt was too valiant, thus for instance arming his slaves, or not valiant enough. However, the island was devastated by the depredations of the French and it is possible that Tower Hill was burned or damaged at this time; certainly other plantations nearby were burnt. Records at the National Archives, in the form of claims for, and payments of, compensation may indicate this and give some details. His marriage to Elizabeth Pym allied his family with another of the powerful Nevis families.

## Colonel William Pym Burt

As the eldest son Colonel William Pym Burt would have been the principal heir. As well as owning Tower Hill, he inherited a quarter-share in Morning Star estate and its enslaved workforce on the death of his first wife, Mary Hill, in 1715 and immediately gave it to their two daughters, Elizabeth and Frances. He also had a patent on Dog Island, west of Anguilla.<sup>12</sup> In addition he seems to have had joint financial ventures with John Smith of Stoneyhill estate.

Around 1725 he moved from Nevis to St Kitts, becoming Chief Justice and Treasurer of the latter. There is an estate centre called 'Burt's' about three quarters of a mile east of the town of Sandy Point and at least seven of the fourteen children with his second wife Louisa, the youngest daughter of Sir William Mathew, were baptised in the church of St Anne's at Sandy Point between 1725 and 1738.<sup>13</sup>

Very shortly after the French invasion of 1706 the 1707-8 Census of Nevis shows that 'the orphans of Colonel William Burt' had 54 slaves, that is 21 black men and 33 black women, together with 3 white men and 3 white women. In addition, two other Burts had 6 slaves, possibly servants, and two white women in their households between them.

Burt's settlement in St Kitts suggests that Tower Hill was an estate with a manager after 1725. Straddling the period of his departure to St Kitts there are a number of plantation receipts and notes in the Pinney Papers at Bristol University Library which show that he was using Mary Pinney of Mountravers Estate as a merchant. For instance an account which runs from 2 June 1721 to 1 May 1725 debits William Pym Burt for sums concerning soap, nails and 312 feet of 'joyce' in 1721 and, in 1722, for '2 hhds sent by the negroes' and '6 tierces sent to your work'. He was credited from June 1721 to August 1724 for 35 casks of sugar. There is no mention of the estate

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<sup>11</sup> *Antigua* vol. 1 pp88-91, 'Pedigree of Burt' quoting from Vol. 10 Board of Trade, Leeward Islands

<sup>12</sup> *Caribbeana* vol. 5 pp89-96 'Burt of Nevis' pedigree

<sup>13</sup> *Caribbeana* vol. 5 pp89-96 'Burt of Nevis' pedigree

but presumably it is Tower Hill.<sup>14</sup> Similar accounts appear for 1722 and 1723 and further investigation may reveal more.

In the same collection there appears an interesting receipt signed by one Butler Hunt who may have been a ship's captain. 'Nevis April the 12<sup>th</sup> 1728 received from Mrs Mary Pinney two negroe men named Towerhill and Abbott and one negroe woman named Amy which promise to dispose of for her proper Acct and risque in the province of Maryland and to remit their net proceeds in staves and shingles...'.<sup>15</sup> This is the first mention of named slaves who may have been connected with the estate and almost certainly they were sent to America as punishment.

Col. William Pym Burt died on 4 April 1750. His will, dated 21 November 1748, left various sums to his wife and daughters and the bulk of his estate, which presumably included the St Kitts estate, to his eldest son William Mathew Burt. The summary given in *Caribbeana* mentions that his estate in Nevis was given to his two sons, Charles Pym Burt and Abednego Vanlemput Burt.<sup>16</sup>

The latter was born in 1730 and died in December 1752. He may have been managing Tower Hill since in April 1752 he was described as being 'of Nevis' and on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of that month he sold a half share in two estates of 250 acres and 60 acres to his eldest brother William. The two estates are un-named in the summary given in *Caribbeana* but the source given is 'Nevis Deeds' and so the 250 acre estate may be Tower Hill.<sup>17</sup> Whether the sale was actually completed or not became a matter requiring clarification in 1769.

### Charles Pym Burt and his brother William Mathew Burt

William Mathew Burt had a colourful life. He was a member of the St Kitts Council between 1748 and 1755. In 1758 he was consulted on the planning of a British military expedition to capture Martinique during the Seven Years War and in 1759 went as Crown Agent with the expedition that took Guadeloupe. From 1761 to 1768 he served as MP for Great Marlow. His speeches reflected his colonial interests and mostly concerned the slave trade and the West Indies. His first recorded speech, supporting peace negotiations, was reported as 'dull as far as could be heard'.<sup>18</sup> He was Governor of the Leeward Islands from 1776 to his death in 1781 during the particularly difficult period, for the islands, of the American War of Independence. He railed against the St Kitts Assembly for having 'caught the infection from America' and being 'deeply tinged with the principles of Republicanism'.<sup>19</sup> By contrast with these weighty political matters he kept camels on one of his Caribbean estates, like the Pinneys at Mountravers. As well as the family estate on St Kitts he owned a country 'seat' at Maiden Erlegh, near Reading in Berkshire, since demolished.<sup>20</sup>

His younger brother, Charles Pym Burt, a lawyer and member of Gray's Inn in London, member of the Nevis Assembly and Council at various times and President of the Council in 1766, is likely to have been the one with overall responsibility for Tower Hill though he is unlikely to have been a resident proprietor for much of the

<sup>14</sup> Bristol University Library Special Collections (BULSC) Pinney Papers (PP) West Indies Box C filed under 1725

<sup>15</sup> BULSC PP West Indies Box C filed under 1728

<sup>16</sup> *Caribbeana* vol. 5 pp89-96 'Burt of Nevis' pedigree quoting St Kitts Deeds vol. 1

<sup>17</sup> *Caribbeana* vol. 5 pp89-96 'Burt of Nevis' pedigree quoting Nevis Deeds vol. i f450

<sup>18</sup> Namier, Sir James and John Brooke (ed) *The History of Parliament, The House of Commons 1754-1790* HMSO, London 1964 pp163-4

<sup>19</sup> Hubbard, Vincent K *A History of St Kitts – The Sweet Trade* Oxford MacMillan Education 2002 p90 quoting *Calendar of State Papers* October 25 1780

<sup>20</sup> See [http://www.berkshirehistory.com/castles/maiden\\_erlegh\\_house.html](http://www.berkshirehistory.com/castles/maiden_erlegh_house.html)



time. Baptised at Sandy Point on St Kitts in 1726, he had married and buried two wives before leaving for St Eustatius, some years before 1764. There he married Petronella, daughter of Governor John Heyliger of that island. She died in 1770 and within three months he had married again.<sup>21</sup> In all, he had thirteen children. Apart from Tower Hill he had a half share in St John's plantation on St Croix where he also lived for a period. Given the extent of his family he may have had interests in other estates as well.

Little information about Tower Hill has emerged from this period of the estate's history. In 1755 Burt paid tax on 81 slaves in St Thomas Lowland.<sup>22</sup> In May 1764 he manumitted Louise, daughter of his mulatto woman Charlotte, 'in regard for the consideration he holds' for her. In December of the same year he assigned to his wife Petronella, by deed of gift, Hannah and her son Scipio, and the girl Kitty, daughter of his 'late Negro woman' Maria.<sup>23</sup> These people may have been associated with Tower Hill and the Nevis Common Records may reveal yet more information about the enslaved population of the estate during this period.

In March 1761 Burt's younger sister Mary married, as his second wife, Charles Spooner on St Kitts. Shortly thereafter, on 20 January 1762, Burt is reported as having sold 'Tower Hill plantation of 240 acres' to her husband, though this is not quite the end of the Burt family's involvement with the estate.<sup>24</sup>

## Charles Spooner

Charles Spooner came from a wealthy family from St Kitts. His father John had been the Speaker of the Council of St Kitts around 1728 and in 1753 is recorded as owning one plantation in Christchurch Nicola Town, two in St Mary Cayon and one in St George Basseterre. In addition he owned a plantation in Jamaica. The family were clearly very wealthy and well connected. His eldest son, also called John, married the only daughter and heir of William Fortescue, the Master of the Rolls in England.<sup>25</sup> The couple lived at the country estate of Buckland Filleigh in North Devon and in London at St George's, Hanover Square.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to Tower Hill, Charles Spooner owned a half share and the reversion of the other half of Blubber Valley, a 1200 acre plantation on Antigua bequeathed to him by Robert Pearne in 1757. Together with others, including the merchant William Manning, he had an interest in many estates on Tortola. On St Kitts he either owned or had an interest in estates in St George Basseterre, St Peter Basseterre and an estate in St Mary Cayon, which is presumably the modern Spooner's Estate complete with ginnery.<sup>27</sup> There was also a plantation called The Levell or Prospect in Christchurch Nicola Town. Bristol University Special Collections has ten catalogue pages of material relating to Blubber Valley including a plan of the estate. Other material relates to the Tortola estates and there are nine account books dealing with the affairs of the two Cayon and Nicola Town estates in the period 1819-1826.<sup>28</sup> The Smathers Library at the University of Florida has a letterbook covering the period 1765-1772 relating to the management of the Simon estate on St Kitts. Although

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<sup>21</sup> His wives were Catherine Wood, Hester Duport, Petronella Heyliger and Anna van Hemert. He died in 1788 and is buried at Isleworth in London.

<sup>22</sup> BULSC PP Domestic Box P

<sup>23</sup> Eickelmann, C, *Nevis Names* unpublished Mss quoting NC CR 1763-1764 f330 and NC CR 1764-1769

<sup>24</sup> *Caribbeana* vol. 5 pp89-96 'Burt of Nevis' pedigree quoting St Kitts Deeds vol. 1

<sup>25</sup> *Caribbeana* vol. 1 pp2-3 'Spooner of St Christopher' pedigree

<sup>26</sup> See Buckland Filleigh Community Page <http://www.devon.gov.uk/>

<sup>27</sup> The St Christopher Heritage Society may have a map of Spooner's Estate dating from 1753

<sup>28</sup> BULSC West Indies Collection DM 89/4

there is no mention of Tower Hill further investigation of this material may reveal information about the estate.

One further point is worth noting about Charles Spooner. He settled in London, latterly in Harley Street, and became the Colonial Agent at various times for Nevis, St Kitts, Montserrat and Grenada. As such he was appointed a member of the Sub-Committee established in 1788 by the *West India Planters and Merchants' Standing Committee*, to fight the abolition of the slave trade.<sup>29</sup> He gave evidence to the 1788 Parliamentary Enquiry into the Slave Trade. As an agent for various islands he gave a standard planter defence of conditions on the plantations, arguing that slaves on English islands were better treated than those on French islands. Some of his evidence spelt out details about slave housing, provisions and medical care. He claimed rather remarkably that, through working their own provision grounds, some people could acquire as much as £400 to £500 sterling worth of property. He noted that the death rate on his own estates was 6% per annum while the birth rate stood at 4% and, like others attempting to defend the slave trade, put the blame for the inability of the enslaved population to reproduce itself squarely on to the slaves themselves. He noted that lockjaw was the most fatal disease among children, killing half of all black people - whether slave or free. Since some of Spooner's evidence came from his own estates, detailed research into his testimony to the committee may reveal more about conditions on his Nevis estate.<sup>30</sup>

Spooner himself died in 1790 and in the short summary of his will given in *Caribbeana* there is no mention of any estate on Nevis. This is because in some way the estate had by 1769 reverted to Charles Pym Burt. There are various possibilities as to why this might have happened. One of them is that the sale in 1762 to Spooner was in fact either a lease or a mortgage, the land then reverting to Burt. Another possibility is that it was a sale which was never completed.

### The Burts, William Hyndman and Tower Hill

As noted before, Charles Pym Burt and his elder brother William Mathew Burt were involved in two indentures dated 6 and 7 September 1769. The first rehearsed the previous Burt ownership of the estate and gave its boundaries. It was in effect written as a lease of the plantation for a peppercorn rent for one year to William Hyndman of Nevis.

The second involved William Mathew Burt stating that he had had an interest in the estate but that he now confirmed he was releasing all his title to the estate. He stated, therefore, that he was joining in the sale and conveyance of the estate by Charles Pym Burt and his wife Petronella to William Hyndman for £12,500.<sup>31</sup>

The boundaries to Tower Hill given in the first indenture are worth noting. The estate to the west owned by Archibald Thompson may have been what is now called Paradise estate, particularly since it is known that Paradise was owned in the early eighteenth century by the Pym family. The indenture states that to the south Tower Hill was bordered by land owned by the heirs of Mathew Mills. There clearly was a separate piece of land to the south since the boundaries of Jessup's estate, beyond

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<sup>29</sup> Penson, Lillian M *The Colonial Agents of the British West Indies* 1971 Appendix II

<sup>30</sup> Pitman, Frank Wesley 'Slavery on British West Indies Plantations in the Eighteenth Century' in *Journal of Negro History* vol. 11 no. 4 1926 pp584-668

<sup>31</sup> *History of Antigua* vol. 1 pp88-91, 'Pedigree of Burt' quoting from Close Roll, 9 Geo. III., Part 15, Nos. 5 and 6



that piece of land, are given as having to the *North* land belonging to the heirs of Mathew Mills.

The importance of this may lie in the fact that the Mills family were merchants, as well as plantation owners. Their papers, which for a long time were in private hands, have recently emerged into the public domain in the UK. They may provide information about the Nevis estate which bordered on the Mills's own estate; indeed it is possible that the Mills firm acted as factors for the estate.

1769, therefore, saw the sale of Tower Hill to William Hyndman. Not much is known about the family. According to Oliver, Hon. Robert Augustus Hyndman, member of the Council of Dominica, got married in 1807 and Oliver's footnote to this entry states that the Hyndmans came from Nevis and Antigua.<sup>32</sup> The Hyndman family ownership of Tower Hill may have only lasted an extremely short time because William Hyndman died in 1770. His will mentions his wife Mary, two sons, William and John, and his daughter Sally Hardman and his friend 'Archibald Thomson' of Nevis. A codicil to the will stated that his executors had power to sell all the real estate but that the settlement of his estate in Grenada was to be 'perfected'.<sup>33</sup>

## Tower Hill under John Taylor

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century the plantation may have benefited from a more stable period of ownership. It is not clear who succeeded immediately but by 1796 John Taylor was the proprietor. John Taylor for most of the 1790s was one of the attorneys for John Pinney on Nevis and their families were on very friendly terms. In January 1796 Pinney's relative, Dr Thomas Pym Weekes, who had come back from Martinique extremely ill, reported to Mrs Pinney that he had made his way to the Taylors at Tower Hill to recuperate.<sup>34</sup>

John Taylor came from a powerful and wealthy family on St Kitts. His father was Nicholas Taylor who died in 1751. His mother, with five minors on her hands, married William Wells junior of St Kitts who, later on, left his step-son John Taylor £5,000 in his will. According to Samuel Baker's 1753 'Map of St Christopher', a Samuel Okes Taylor owned two plantations in St John's parish where a John Taylor also owned one and Nicholas Taylor, perhaps the deceased father, owned three estates in Christchurch Nicola Town and one in the parish of St George.<sup>35</sup> There is a Taylor's Estate immediately south of the airport outside Basseterre today.

John Taylor's brother, George, settled in England in the county of Surrey where he began the building of a new mansion at Carshalton Park.<sup>36</sup> When John Taylor returned to England in 1799 he and his family went to live there with his brother. John Taylor died in 1832. The two brothers and John's wife, Eleanor, were all buried in the local parish church.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Caribbeana* vol. 1 p380

<sup>33</sup> *History of Antigua* vol. 2 p94

<sup>34</sup> BULSC PP Domestic Box S-1 Misc. correspondence 1790-1830

<sup>35</sup> *Caribbeana* vol. 4 p36. We are grateful to Anne Rainsbury of Chepstow Museum for this reference.

<sup>36</sup> See [www.sutton.gov.uk/Sutton/Relaxing+and+Leisure/Heritage/Orangery+Carshalton.htm](http://www.sutton.gov.uk/Sutton/Relaxing+and+Leisure/Heritage/Orangery+Carshalton.htm) and <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=43049> The house was later demolished

<sup>37</sup> *Caribbeana* vol. 4 p36. For Taylors of Nevis, St Kitts and Carshalton Park, Sutton, Surrey see *Gentlemen Slavers – Sutton's connections with the transatlantic slave trade* Sue Barnard, London Borough of Sutton Library and Heritage Service, 2009

There were regular letters in the 1790s between John Pinney and his attorney on Nevis, John Taylor.<sup>38</sup> They mostly concern Pinney's affairs on Nevis but there are some passing references to Taylor's concerns. Similarly there are entries in Pinney's accounts which refer to Taylor. Several events stand out.

On 18 July 1781 there is reference in the accounts to John Taylor's bill on William Manning for £210. This suggests that, at that time, Taylor was using the merchant firm of Manning as his factor in England. Less than a year later, on 13 May 1782 Pinney paid £11-15-0 for the 'monthly tax on 188 slaves' on behalf of Taylor. It is assumed that this refers to Tower Hill and, if so, the slave numbers had substantially increased on the estate since 1755, almost certainly through purchase. There are also many examples of Pinney making available to Taylor ready cash throughout 1782 and 1783.<sup>39</sup>

On 30 August 1791 Pinney paid money for the hunting down of one of his runaway slaves: 'To cash paid for discovering were (sic) Patch was concealed, who ran away Feb 18<sup>th</sup> last and was this day caught in Mr Taylor's Mountain and concealed there by a negro of his called Joe N16s7 1/2d.'<sup>40</sup> Patch was an enslaved woman from Pinney's Mountravers Estate and it is likely that she had a relationship with Joe. There was clearly some skill and determination involved in hiding a person on Tower Hill for six months and it is likely that others did so either before or after this.

In 1796 a disaster hit the works on the estate. Dr Thomas Coke, the Wesleyan missionary reported that on 8 June a keg of gunpowder exploded after a 'ball of fire struck a windmill'; it killed two men and wounded 40.<sup>41</sup> John Pinney wrote to Taylor on 7 September: 'It grieved me to hear from your Brother the particulars of the lightening upon your windmill and the loss you sustained in consequence of it. I shall be happy to hear that you have recovered all the negroes which were wounded'.<sup>42</sup> The letters immediately following do not comment further but a wider search of the Pinney Papers might produce follow-up details. A letter in January 1797 indicates that Taylor was an enthusiast for the introduction of 'Otaheite' sugar cane from Tahiti. Pinney felt it was 'an infatuation (which) seems to pervade almost every individual in our little spot – your sanguine expectation far exceeds every idea of mine. Williams opinion coincides with yours and he seems as warm an advocate for planting them'.<sup>43</sup>

By September 1798 Taylor was in England to settle with his family ultimately at Carshalton Park.<sup>44</sup> Because of this a young Mr Mills was appointed attorney for the estate and it has to be assumed that there was a resident manager. Probably by 1817 the manager was Samuel Sturge who signed the triennial slave registers on behalf of Taylor in 1817, 1821 and 1825.

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<sup>38</sup> Copies of letters to Taylor can be found in the Pinney letterbooks in Bristol University Library's Special Collection.

<sup>39</sup> BULSC DM 1173 Nevis Journal f32, f62 and passim

<sup>40</sup> BULSC DM 1173 1789-94 Nevis Ledger p91, also BULSC PP Account Book 39, Cash Account

<sup>41</sup> Coke, Dr Thomas *A History of the West Indies - the Natural, Civil and Ecclesiastical History of each Island with an Account of the Missions* 3 vols., London 1811 p18

<sup>42</sup> BULSC PP Letterbook 11 ff293-6

<sup>43</sup> BULSC PP Letterbook 12 John Pinney to John Taylor January 18 1797

<sup>44</sup> For Taylors of Nevis, St Kitts and Carshalton Park, Sutton, Surrey see 'Gentlemen Slavers – Sutton's connections with the transatlantic slave trade' (Sue Barnard, London Borough of Sutton Library and Heritage Service, 2009)

## The enslaved population under John Taylor

The 1817 Slave Register, which has been copied from the register in the National Archives (see Appendix), reveals 171 names. The population had therefore fallen nearly 10% from 1782 when tax was paid on 188 enslaved. This drop was in keeping with the general trend on Nevis and demonstrates the failure of the planters and of the system of slavery itself to do enough to improve welfare sufficiently for the population even to maintain itself.

In 1817 12% of the population had been born in Africa but most of the people were creoles, in other words born on the island. The proportion of Africans varied widely on estates in Nevis. Clarke's, now Four Seasons, had roughly the same proportion as Tower Hill. On Montpelier 19.5% of the people were Africans while on Richmond Lodge Africans made up only 4.7% of the people on the estate. On Tower Hill most of the Africans were men. In general the Africans who survived enslavement to 1817 seem to have fallen roughly into two groups: those from 55-65 and those in their 30s. Unusually, the list includes two men and two women whose country was identified as America. Roughly 37% of the people on Tower Hill were young, under the age of 15, a slightly greater proportion than for Nevis as a whole (33%) and a bit larger than Mountravers for instance (30%).

The potential clearly exists for analysing the triennial slave registers through to 1834 in a way which will allow conclusions to be drawn about the structure of the slave population. Characteristics which could be looked at include the age and gender structure, country of origin, naming patterns and survival rates through the period, as well as looking at what happened to individuals.

## Tower Hill in the nineteenth century

Sometime in the period from 1825 up to the end of 1828 Tower Hill was sold by John Taylor to Walter Maynard Pemberton. The agreement for sale included the estate of Kades Bay, some or all of the modern Cades Estate on the coast.<sup>45</sup>

The extended Pemberton family was a very large clan on Nevis and linked to numerous families and estates on the island.<sup>46</sup> At various times members of the family owned Woodland, Dunbar's, Hermitage, Low Ground, Morning Star and North Wales estates, to name some of them. Walter Maynard Pemberton and his wife Anne Prentis, the sister of Peter Thomas Huggins of Mountravers, themselves owned Spring Hill Estate, just over a mile to the north of Tower Hill, and they seem to have continued to live there.

Just before he died Walter Maynard Pemberton was paid £2,807 as compensation for the ownership of 155 slaves on Tower Hill. This may have induced him to visit Britain and it would have been better if he had not. He and his daughter, Ann, drowned off the Isle of Wight in the wreck of the *Clarendon* on 11 October 1836.

His wife kept hold of Tower Hill until January 1850 when she sold the estate to the Bristol West Indies merchant Thomas Daniel for £4,009.<sup>47</sup> She may well have mortgaged the estate previously to Daniel whose firm was run in conjunction with his

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<sup>45</sup> NC CR 1823-1828 f651-6 Index

<sup>46</sup> See, for instance, *Caribbeana* vol. 1 pp266-272

<sup>47</sup> NC CR 1747-1858 f201

brother John from both Bristol and London. It had mortgages, or other claims, on a number of estates on Nevis.

They may not have held on to the estate for very long because Iles records in 1871 that the estate belonged to Sir Thomas Graham Briggs. Briggs was an extensive land owner in Barbados and was appointed President of the Legislative Council there in 1876. However, he saw an opportunity to revive the cultivation of sugar on Nevis. Starting in the 1860s he is reputed to have bought approximately 15 estates on Nevis. He invested heavily in labour-saving equipment such as steam engines and, by example, helped to kick-start mechanisation on other estates.<sup>48</sup> One of the estates which was mechanised with a steam engine by 1871, according to Iles, was Tower Hill.

Under Briggs the estate must have prospered marginally, for a while, since it was not one of the estates sold in the 1880s under the West Indian Incumbered Estates Commission. This was a commission set up to sort out the affairs of failing estates burdened by debt and many estates on Nevis were sold under its auspices. The neighbouring Clifton Estate was one of these; it was put up for sale in 1887. Initially no-one bid for it including the petitioners, Thomas Daniel & Co. In the end it was sold to a Mrs Elizabeth van Engle. The plan of the estate shows that on its eastern end, but to the south, it bordered on Tower Hill and a small area of Paradise Estate with a public road running south through Tower Hill.<sup>49</sup> It should be possible with other nineteenth-century plans of the adjoining estates to work out precisely where the boundary lay. The 1887 plan of Clifton's Estate also shows that Tower Hill owned a very small plot of land on the eastern side of the main island road, immediately opposite Fort Ashby.

Briggs's work to revive the sugar industry on Nevis was the last sustained effort to do so and the cultivation of sugar was abandoned on many estates after the turn of the century. As has been noted before, the 1920 War Office map of Nevis identified Tower Hill as one of the 'Uninhabited Estate Houses and disused Estate Works'. This indicates that it was no longer a working estate.<sup>50</sup> Around this time Watkins' 'Handbook' lists Tower Hill as 761 acres and owned by J O Maloney.<sup>51</sup> Not a lot is known about Maloney except that he had lived in Barbados and in 1910 was an agricultural instructor on Nevis with a botanical interest in agaves.<sup>52</sup> He was a substantial landowner because, in addition to Tower Hill, he is listed in Watkins as owning Clifton Estate (548 acres), between Tower Hill and the sea, as well as Indian Castle (396 acres), Fothergill (248 acres) and Bachelor Hall (130 acres) estates, all in the parish of St George Gingerland.

It is likely that oral history in the neighbourhood of Tower Hill, together with sources in the Nevis Courthouse, will prove the most useful sources of information for the estate during and after this period.

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<sup>48</sup> Olwig, Karen Fog *Global Culture, Island Identity - Continuing Change in the Afro-Caribbean Community of Nevis*, Harwood Academic Publishers, Chur, Switzerland 1993 p96

<sup>49</sup> NA CO 441/24/1 pt 2 Encumbered Estate Papers, Clifton

<sup>50</sup> *The Presidency of St. Kitts and Nevis 1<sup>st</sup>*: 2 miles, Major J A Burdon, War Office, 1920

<sup>51</sup> Watkins, Frederick H *Handbook of the Leeward Islands* London 1924

<sup>52</sup> Rogers, George K A Taxonomic Revision of the Genus Agave...in the Lesser Antilles in 'Brittonia' vol. 52 pp218-233

## Quaker Burial Ground

For one further historical note there is no clear place in the chronology of the estate. Previous research for other projects has revealed that Oliver, in his *Monumental Inscriptions of the West Indies*, refers to seventeenth-century memorials to Governor Lake and his daughter; the memorials had been in St Thomas Lowland church. 'Mr Huggins had removed them from an old Quaker burial ground at Pollards. *There was another Quaker ground at the corner of the road leading up to Tower Hill.*'<sup>53</sup> Vincent Hubbard notes 'In 1705 restrictions against Quakers were repealed by the Nevis Council but less than a century later, no Quakers remained in the Caribbean'.<sup>54</sup> Clearly the burial ground at Pollards has already been built on and so it is worth suggesting that great care needs to be exercised with the burial ground on the way to Tower Hill.

There was also a rumour around 2005 of a slave burial ground in the general area of the top of the road leading from Jessup's Estate to Tower Hill with rough, unmarked gravestones. This does not ever seem to have been investigated archaeologically. Indeed, the rumour may have arisen from a confusion about the location of the upper Quaker burial ground.

In 2008, and again in 2016, the authors and friends on Nevis relocated the site of one grave with a gravestone situated on the southern side of the road, just outside the entrance to Tower Hill estate. The grave is in a vulnerable location and, irrespective of whether or not it is the site of a Quaker burial ground, a field evaluation should be made of the surrounding area to establish if there are other graves in the vicinity.

## Tower Hill in the twenty-first century

The present owner has made considerable effort to have the remains of the works at Tower Hill dug out of the surrounding land on a promontory with a wonderful view over to St Kitts. Extensive and well-built remains have been revealed, including the base of the windmill and the steam-mill works, together with cisterns and a large collection of ceramic material. It is unclear to what extent these remains have been systematically recorded archaeologically.

## Some concluding notes on plantation size and infrastructure

### Acreage

- The size of the estate, given as 240 acres in 1769, is roughly comparable to the 270 odd acres which John Pinney owned at Mountravers in the 1770s on which, at that time, he produced on average about 110 hogsheads of sugar. It is substantially smaller than the 473 acres of Jessup's estate in 1755. Even the 'Mountain' or upper part of Jessup's was over 300 acres.

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<sup>53</sup> Oliver V L *Monumental Inscriptions of the West Indies* p107 quoting as his source 'Mrs Burdon's Handbook p214'

<sup>54</sup> Hubbard, V *Swords, Ships and Sugar* 2002 p56

- The expansion in slave numbers on Tower Hill to 188 by 1782 suggests a growth in the size of the estate.
- Further research in the Nevis Common Records will probably reveal at what point the estate expanded to over 700 acres but it is likely to have occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century when land was comparatively cheap. It may have happened during the ownership of Sir Thomas Graham Briggs in order to achieve economies of scale in the production of sugar.

### Housing and provisions for the enslaved population

- Slave housing on the estate may go back to at least the last quarter of the seventeenth century. There may have been 54 enslaved people on the estate in 1707 and possibly more before the French invasion of 1706. There were 81 in 1755 and 188 in 1782.
- There were 111 slaves on Jessup's estate in 1748 and the area allocated to their housing on an estate plan dated 1755 amounts to slightly more than 6 acres. On Clarke's estate in the same parish, around 1800, about 8 acres were given over to slave housing.
- Thus, a comparable sort of area must have been allocated at Tower Hill, though it may have been moved at various times.
- A possible location for a village is along the public road and ghut which run north of the tanks shown on the 1984 map of Nevis.
- Associated with any village there would have been a burial ground.
- The enslaved population would have had provision grounds. In the case of Jessup's Estate this amounted officially to 17 acres at the top of the estate, just below where the mountain became very steep.
- It is likely that the emancipated population on Tower Hill moved themselves off the estate into the newly forming villages of Barnes Ghaut, Jessup's and Cotton Ground in the 1840s, as happened on other estates in the parish.

### Works and roads

- It seems likely that the windmill was built in the latter part of the eighteenth century during the time of John Taylor's ownership.
- It was clearly damaged in 1796 but was probably repaired.
- No windmill is shown at Tower Hill on the 1848 HMS *Thunder* survey.
- There was a steam engine at Tower Hill by 1871.
- There was a public road running into the estate from the north through the neighbouring Clifton Estate in 1887. This is also shown on Iles's map of 1871, as is the road leading up from Jessup's.

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## Appendix

'An alphabetical list and return of all the Negro and other Slaves now resident on the Estate called Tower Hill and belonging to or in the lawful possession of John Taylor Given in by me this tenth day of July one thousand and eight hundred and seventeen Samuel Sturge'<sup>55</sup>

<i>Number</i>	<i>Names</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Colour</i>	<i>Reputed Age (years)</i>
1	Amba	Female	African	Black	55
2	Anneese	"	Creole	"	40
3	Abba Margaret	"	"	"	3
4	Ann	"	"	Mulatto	1
5	Adgareen	"	"	Black	1
6	Aberdeen	Male	"	"	25
7	Augusta	"	"	"	21
8	Andrew	"	"	"	15
9	Aron	"	"	"	14
10	Abraham	"	"	"	14
11	Betsy Taylor	Female	"	"	54
12	Betty Merica	"	American	"	52
13	Barbara	"	Creole	"	31
14	Betsy hope	"	"	"	18
15	Bell	"	"	"	11
16	Betty Gundo	"	"	"	2
17	Brown	Male	"	"	11
18	Ben	"	"	"	10
19	Bonaparte	"	"	"	8
20	Billy	"	"	"	1
21	Ceasar	"	African	"	65
22	Cuffee	"	"	"	55
23	Charles England	"	"	"	54
24	Clarke	"	Creole	"	18
25	Charles	"	"	"	6
26	Clara	Female	"	"	76
27	Cubba	"	"	"	46
28	Clara	"	"	"	44
29	Chloe	"	African	"	35
30	Cotto	"	Creole	"	38
31	Citty	"	"	"	34
32	Cotteen	"	"	"	33
33	Charlotte	"	"	"	30
34	Cloney	"	"	"	13
35	Charity	"	"	"	12
36	Cotteen	"	"	"	10
37	Caroline	"	"	"	8
38	Cicely	"	"	"	9
39	Charlotte Cole	"	"	"	7
40	Candish	"	"	"	2
41	Charlotte Taylor	"	"	"	5 months

<sup>55</sup> UK NA T 71/364

<i>Number</i>	<i>Names</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Colour</i>	<i>Reputed Age (years)</i>
42	Dianna	"	African	"	60
43	Domingo	"	Creole	"	1
44	Dominica	Male	African	"	40
45	Dillian	"	"	"	36
46	Daniell	"	"	"	35
47	Duncan	"	Creole	"	19
48	Dinney	"	"	"	4 months
49	Esther	Female	"	"	75
50	Ephy	"	"	"	70
51	Ellsee	"	"	"	45
52	Eliza	"	"	"	27
53	Edmond	Male	"	"	30
54	Edward	"	"	"	8
55	Foe	"	African	"	63
56	Franswa	"	"	"	36
57	Frances	Female	"	"	32
58	Fortune Joan	"	Creole	"	15
59	Grace	"	"	"	8
60	Guinea	Male	African	"	60
61	Grant	"	Creole	"	37
62	George	"	"	"	4
63	Hood	"	"	"	34
64	Harry	"	"	"	45
65	Hamlet	"	African	"	40
66	Hamilton	"	"	"	32
67	Harriet	Female	Creole	"	16
68	Hannah Gratia	"	"	"	6
69	Hermis	Male	"	"	2
70	Jimmy	"	African	"	63
71	Joe	"	"	"	32
72	Johnno	"	Creole	"	50
73	Johnny	"	"	"	32
74	Jacob	"	"	"	29
75	Jack Merica	"	America	"	28
76	Jervis	"	Creole	"	19
77	Jim	"	"	"	17
78	Jeffery	"	"	"	15
79	Jupiter	"	"	"	6
80	Jimmy	"	"	"	5
81	John	"	"	Mulatto	7 months
82	Joan	Female	"	Black	34
83	Jennett	"	"	"	23
84	Jinny	"	"	"	14
85	Jontong	"	"	"	8
86	Jinny Maria	"	"	"	5
87	Judy	"	"	"	4
88	Kitty Monday	"	"	"	37
89	Kildare	Male	"	"	14
90	Lewise	Female	"	"	30
91	Lewsha	"	"	"	28
92	Leah	"	"	"	26
93	Lucretia	"	"	"	17
94	Lucy	"	"	"	9

<i>Number</i>	<i>Names</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Colour</i>	<i>Reputed Age (years)</i>
95	London	Male	"	"	8
96	Lazarus	"	"	"	5
97	Mishell	"	"	"	50
98	Moses	"	"	"	16
99	Mimba	Female	"	"	60
100	Mary	"	"	Mulatto	37
101	Mary	"	African	Black	36
102	Myrtilla	"	Creole	"	18
103	Molly	"	"	"	18
104	Molly Doll	"	"	"	13
105	Marinner	"	"	"	11
106	Madlane	"	"	"	10
107	Margret	"	"	"	7
108	Mary Ann	"	"	"	6 months
109	Martha	"	"	"	2 months
110	Nanny	"	African	"	70
111	Nannett	"	Creole	"	75
112	Nanny Monday	"	"	"	46
113	Nanny	"	"	Mulatto	45
114	Nannett	"	"	Black	38
115	Nancy	"	"	"	27
116	Nelly	"	"	"	16
117	Nichola	Male	"	"	20
118	Nelson	"	"	"	17
119	Phillip	"	"	"	55
120	Phillip	"	"	"	37
121	Peter	"	"	"	19
122	Plummer	"	"	"	5
123	Pontack	"	"	"	2
124	Prince	"	African	"	36
125	Pareen	Female	"	"	32
126	Peggy	"	Creole	"	52
127	Phillis	"	"	"	50
128	Polly Foe	"	"	"	37
129	Patty	"	"	"	33
130	Patience	"	"	"	36
131	Penda	"	"	"	32
132	Pheby	"	"	"	24
133	Penny	"	"	"	25
134	Presance	"	"	"	21
135	Phibba	"	"	"	10
136	Pussey Doll	"	"	"	7
137	Peggy Phillip	"	"	"	2
138	Phillidea	"	"	"	1
139	Quamina	Male	"	"	7
140	Rodney	"	"	"	36
141	Roewood	"	"	"	15
142	Rachel	Female	American	"	23
143	Roslind	"	Creole	"	25
144	Rossey	"	"	"	4
145	Sarah	"	"	"	56
146	Susannah	"	"	"	50
147	Sophy	"	"	"	32

<i>Number</i>	<i>Names</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Colour</i>	<i>Reputed Age (years)</i>
148	Sally Joan	"	"	"	12
149	Sally Pussey	"	"	"	12
150	Sarah	"	"	"	9
151	Sophisa	"	"	"	8
152	Sally Gusset	"	"	"	8
153	Shuey	"	"	"	7
154	Sancho	Male	African	"	35
155	Scipio	"	"	"	28
156	Sammy	"	Creole	"	27
157	Siah	"	"	"	26
158	Stephen	"	"	"	20
159	Samuel	"	"	"	11
160	Sam Taylor	"	"	"	8
161	Stather	"	"	"	5
162	Turpin	"	"	"	60
163	Toby	"	African	"	33
164	Toney	"	Creole	"	9
165	Thomas Daniell	"	"	"	5
166	Teazel	Female	"	"	20
167	Violet	"	"	"	60
168	Venture	Male	African	"	45
169	Wilson	"	American	Mulatto	32
170	Windsor	"	Creole	Black	20
171	William	"	"	"	13