

CHAPTER 10

CRAB ISLAND REVISITED

Abraham Howell, in spite of his repulse from Crab Island by the Danes in 1683, and the destruction by the Spaniards of the subsequent settlement in 1688, still had his eyes set on the wooded valleys of Crab, lush green in comparison to Anguilla.¹



1. Map of Vieques

Some of the Anguillians who continued to trickle into the English Virgin Islands were also anxious to move with him to Crab Island in a third attempt to settle it. These movements into the Danish Virgin Islands continued to be unauthorised, and exposed the people to attack from the

¹ See Chapter 9. The Lure of Crab.

Spanish and the Danes. They were desperate men to choose such a dangerous course of action.

In April 1716, Governor Walter Hamilton passed on to the Privy Council Committee for Foreign Plantations an Account of the Virgin Islands sent to him by the deputy governors of Anguilla and Virgin Gorda, Abraham Howell and Thomas Hornby.² In their Account of the Virgin Islands we see Abraham Howell at his best.³ Howell and Hornby described each of the Virgin Islands, starting with Crab Island, in terms of their agricultural potential, the value of their harbours to both trade and to the navy, and the quality of their timber for building and for export. The old patriarch showed himself to be not only literate, but an explorer, geographer, mariner and military strategist. His purpose in writing the Account was to try to persuade the authorities to extend the protection of the Crown to the English settlers on Crab Island by declaring it to be a part of the colony of the Leeward Islands. He was by this time an old man. He was probably an infant among the first settlers of 1650. Sixteen years later, in 1666, they elected him to be their governor. In 1716, now about the age of eighty years, he was still a visionary and a leader of men.

² Spanish Town was the original name of Virgin Gorda, being the name of the main settlement on that island, and still the name of the town on its north-west coast. For consistency, and to avoid confusion, wherever a dispatch refers to Spanish Town, it is rendered as Virgin Gorda in this work.

³ Chapter 15: The Settlement of St Croix.

Howell and Hornby described Crab Island as the best of the Virgins. The land, they wrote, was extraordinarily good, nearly all of it being cultivatable. The soil was very rich and the land was level. There were two good roadsteads, and two better harbours. They played down the attributes of the remainder of the Virgin Islands. The soil of Tortola and Virgin Gorda, they wrote, was poor, and their harbours inadequate. This Account may be considered a sort of brief for their main argument, which was that the Governor ought to permit the starving inhabitants of Anguillia and Virgin Gorda to emigrate to Crab Island.

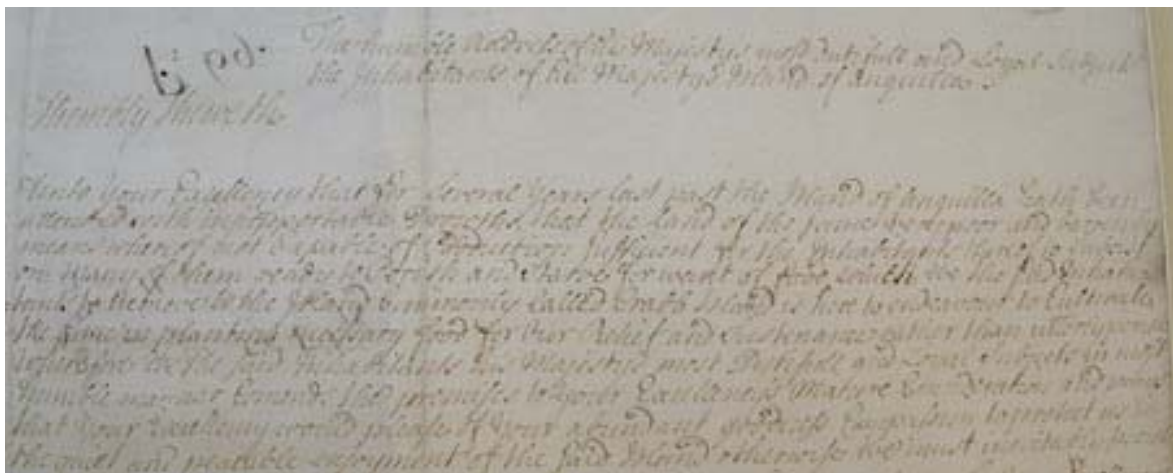
In his 1716 dispatch to the Committee for Trade and Foreign Plantations, Governor Hamilton commented on this aspect of the Account.⁴ He noted that though the soil of Crab Island, as they said, was very good for agriculture, yet it came with the disadvantage that it was very close to Puerto Rico. The Spanish claimed sovereignty over it. They considered the West Indian homesteaders to be trespassers. As Hamilton observed, the result was that no settler would be safe in his property on Crab. He reminded the Committee of the earlier incident of 1688 when the settlement under the command of William Pellet was destroyed by the Spaniards. He put forward an alternative solution to the Committee. He

⁴ CO.152/11, No 6: Hamilton to the Committee on 10 April 1716, enclosure 5: Account of the Virgin Islands.

urged that consideration be given to the need of the Anguillians to be resettled elsewhere. His proposal was to allot them small plantations from the late French half of St Kitts. The French lands were captured by the British in Queen Anne's War, and confirmed as entirely British by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713.

Hamilton reported to the Committee that the Anguillians petitioned him to permit them to go and settle Crab Island.⁵ From this, it is clear that the Anguillians under Howell did, at least, seek the Governor's consent before they decided to take action. They were not ignorant of the legal consequences of an unauthorized settlement on foreign soil.

Hamilton enclosed a copy of the Anguilla petition with his dispatch.



2. An extract from the 1716 Anguilla petition to settle Crab Island. CO.152/11. (UK National Archives®)

⁵ CO.152/12/1, No 67: Hamilton to the Committee on 6 January 1718, enclosure 5: Humble Address of the People of Anguilla.

From the style of its writing, it was almost certainly written by Abraham Howell himself. This petition was the formal application of the Anguillians for a commission from the Governor in Chief to found the settlement on Crab Island. Such a commission would legalise the settlement and bring it under the full protection of the Crown, or at least of the man-of-war stationed in Antigua.

The petition is signed by 42 of the leading citizens on Anguilla.

<i>Christopher Hodge</i>	<i>Benjamin Arrindell</i>
<i>Thomas Hodge Sr</i>	<i>Isaac Arrindell</i>
<i>Benjamin Hodge</i>	<i>Andrew Watson</i>
<i>Arthur Hodge</i>	<i>Samuel Floyd</i>
<i>Peter Hodge</i>	<i>Samuel Lloyd</i>
<i>Nehemiah Richardson</i>	<i>John Richardson</i>
<i>Jeremiah Richardson</i>	<i>William Richardson</i>
<i>George Richardson</i>	<i>Joseph Mason</i>
<i>John Richardson</i>	<i>Daniel Bryant</i>
<i>William Chalwill Sr</i>	<i>Rowland Williams</i>
<i>William Chalwill Jr</i>	<i>Henry Osborne</i>
<i>Abraham Challwill</i>	<i>Thomas Allen</i>
<i>William Gumbs</i>	<i>George Garner</i>
<i>Thomas Gumbs</i>	<i>David Derrick</i>
<i>Thomas Coakley</i>	<i>William Smith</i>
<i>Ceasar Coakley</i>	<i>Cornelius Harrigan</i>
<i>Edward Coakley</i>	<i>Peter Harrigan</i>
<i>John Richardson</i>	<i>William Beal</i>
<i>Abraham Wingood</i>	<i>Bezaliel Howell</i>
<i>Thomas Lake</i>	<i>Abraham Howell</i>
<i>John Lake</i>	<i>Joseph Lake</i>

It recites that for the past several years Anguilla was suffering from a severe drought. As a result, the land became very poor and barren and was incapable of

producing the minimum of crops for the people to subsist on. Many Anguillians were on the verge of dying from starvation. They, therefore, craved the Governor-in-Chief's consent to their removing themselves to Crab Island.

Governor Hamilton reports that he refused their pleas. He was well aware that the wholesale settlement of the Anguillians on an island so close to Puerto Rican would start an international incident. There was no way that he was going to risk being the cause of an embarrassing diplomatic incident between Britain and either Spain or Denmark without direct and explicit instructions and authorisation from London.

While he waited for word from London, in October 1716 Governor Hamilton produced a list of the names of the free male inhabitants of Anguilla.⁶ Together with the signatures to the Petition, this is the first detailed and accurate census of Anguilla. In the style of the time, this 1716 census names the free white men, the numbers of adult white women and white children in their households, the total number of slaves, and out of these the numbers of slaves able to work.

Men's names	White Men	White Women	White Children	Negroes	Working Negroes
Capt George Leonard	1	1	5	33	20
Capt Abraham Howell	1	1	2	15	10
Arthur Hodge	1	1	7	13	8

⁶ CO.152/11, No 56: Hamilton to the Committee on 3 October 1716, enclosure: List of the Inhabitants of Anguilla.

John Rogers	1	1	5	26	16
Dar. Downing, Wid	0	1	7	12	10
Isaac Thibou	1	1	0	4	3
Isaac Aderly	1	1	1	6	4
Charles Kagen [ie, Keagan]	1	1	1	2	2
Peter Rogers	1	1	0	10	4
John Chapman	1	1	1	3	3
Elli. Connor, Widow	0	1	3	3	1
Paul Rowan [ie, Ruan]	1	2	0	13	7
Timothy Connor	1	1	5	0	0
Joshua Newton	1	2	4	9	4
Peter Downing	1	1	1	7	4
Jeremiah Spencer	1	1	1	6	2
Catherine Downing, Widow	0	1	1	14	10
Deborah Gumbs, Widow	1	1	5	27	17
William Chalwill [ie, Chalville]	1	1	5	21	13
John Pain [ie, Payne]	1	1	2	7	5
John Haragin [ie, Harrigan]	1	1	1	6	3
Jeremiah Martin	1	1	5	3	4
George Leonard	1	1	5	5	4
Sarah Leonard, Widow	0	1	3	1	1
Bezaliel Howell	1	1	6	22	10
Thomas Flanders	1	2	0	7	4
Richard Downing	1	1	2	9	5
David Darick [ie, Derrick]	1	1	6	9	4
Charles Kagen [ie, Keagan]	1	1	5	5	4
Cornelius Harragan [ie, Harrigan]	1	1	10	3	3
Briant Makdonaha [ie, MacDonough]	1	1	8	2	2
And. Tellies	1	1	2	0	0
Samuel Floid [ie, Lloyd]	1	1	4	9	4
William Gumbes [ie, Gumbs]	1	1	3	7	7
Edward Leake [ie, Lake]	1	1	6	19	10
Doriy. Py, Widow	0	1	0	3	2
Thomas Loyde [ie, Lloyd]	1	1	5	6	6
John Richards	1	1	6	4	2
Thomas Howell	1	2	7	24	17
Daniel Briant [ie, Bryant]	1	1	4	13	7
John Leake [ie, Lake]	1	1	4	8	5
Abraham Arundell [ie, Arrindell]	1	1	4	4	2
William Roberts	1	1	6	1	1
John Bryant	1	1	3	7	5
Richard Roberts	1	1	5	5	1
Thomas Leake [ie, Lake]	1	1	5	5	5
Rowland Williams	1	1	1	4	2
Ann Williams, Widow	0	1	1	3	2
Micl. Rowan [ie, Ruan]	1	1	1	12	7
Bazaliell Rogers	1	1	1	2	1
Jone Leake [ie, Joan Lake]	0	1	0	4	3
Jane Leake [ie, Lake]	0	1	0	0	0
John Welch	1	0	0	1	1
William Farrington	1	1	8	7	4
Alice Flight, Widow	0	1	1	2	1
Richard Arthur	1	1	6	5	5
Richard Richardson	1	1	2	10	5
Thomas Rumny [ie, Romney]	1	1	2	8	4
William Long	1	1	0	4	1
Darby Carty	1	0	4	3	3
William Howell	1	1	3	11	6
Abednigo Pickren [ie, Pickering]	1	1	3	10	5

Edward Coakley	1	1	0	4	3
John Rumny [ie, Romney]	1	1	4	5	4
John Downing	1	1	0	2	1
Grace Leonard	0	1	2	7	3
John Morgan	1	1	4	4	3
John Powell	1	1	7	3	1
Peter Frare	1	1	2	5	3
Samuel Vincent	1	1	1	4	1
Thomas Hughes	1	1	7	4	4
Robert Lockrum	1	1	5	3	3
Thomas Rumny [ie, Romney]	1	1	7	0	0
Thomas Coakley	1	1	9	22	9
Edward Coakley	1	1	5	12	9
John Thomas	1	1	3	11	6
James Richardson	1	1	2	2	2
Thomas Richardson	1	1	5	7	5
Jacob Howell	1	1	2	17	12
Thomas Hodge	1	1	8	18	12
Christopher Hodge	1	1	6	21	13
Peter Hodge	1	1	2	3	2
Benjamin Rogers	1	1	0	6	4
Henry Hodge	1	0	0	9	7
Susannah Manning	0	1	0	1	1
Oliver Downing	1	1	3	8	6
William Bale [ie, Beal]	1	1	0	1	1
Thomas Rogers	1	1	7	28	16
Bezaleel Rogers	1	1	1	11	8
Jeremiah Richardson	1	1	9	13	11
Nehemiah Richardson	1	1	2	15	9
Edward Welch	1	1	2	6	3
Ann Arrindell	0	1	2	3	1
Mary Watson	0	1	5	0	0
Joan Gladden [ie, Gladding]	0	1	0	1	1
Benjamin Arrindell	1	1	0	5	5
Thomas Hancock	1	1	7	1	1
Samuel Kentish	1	0	0	1	1
John Richardson	1	1	9	32	22
Abraham Wingood	1	1	0	3	2
Henry Leonard	1	1	2	11	7
Totals	89	103	342	820	514

Table 2: Anguilla's first census. Governor Hamilton's 1716 List of the Inhabitants of Anguilla: CO.152/11.

He lists in the first column the names of the free white men who are the heads of households. There are 101 named men. The second column shows that 89 of them are alive and present on the island. If they have died, or are absent, or the head of the household is a woman, no number appears in this second column. In the third column appears the number of adult white women in

the household, of whom there are 103. We are not given their names, nor any indication whether they are a spouse or an adult daughter. Most probably they are the spouses. In the remaining columns appear the numbers of white children, 342, and the numbers of African slaves, 820, showing those of working age, 514, meaning that there were 306 who were children or infirm persons.

Howell's enthusiasm for the attractions of Crab Island was not confined to his written Account. He was modest when describing his personal accomplishments. But, he was ready to lead his desperate people in their search for improved living conditions when both their own deputy governor George Leonard and the Governor-in-Chief refused them permission to chance their luck on Crab Island. After nearly forty years of the long drought, the Anguillians were desperate men. Under the leadership of Abraham Howell, without waiting for a response from the Governor, about a third of the men of Anguilla moved in their sloops to Crab Island.

Deputy governor George Leonard immediately reported the exodus to Governor Hamilton.⁷ His letter of 12 August 1717 recounted that Howell went off to Crab Island, taking with him some 40 white men and between 20 and 30 black men, and without consulting him (see *illus 3*). Leonard wrote that he used every argument to

⁷ CO.152/12/1, No 54: Hamilton to the Committee on 26 August 1717, enclosure: Leonard's letter of 12 August 1717.

keep the people of the island together until the Governor received an answer from London on the question of giving them land in St Kitts. But, he explained, nothing worked with desperate men. They held on to the one small chance they saw of survival. They left Anguilla for Crab Island in spite of the Governor's specific instructions to the contrary. Their attempt to occupy Crab Island was, as he observed, a desperate move, driven by drought and starvation in Anguilla. As they saw it, their only chance of survival was to take and hold an alternative place of settlement. He wished them well, but as he wrote, the success of such a rash action was to be doubted.

For an old sloop captain and cotton farmer, Leonard shows himself in his letter to have a way with words almost to match Abraham Howell. These were not uneducated men. Leonard's letter shows a use of graphic metaphor, couched in the most dignified terms, describing what was a very difficult time for his island and its people. The events that were unfolding would tear apart life on the island. A substantial part of his little settlement was falling away from under his feet. Family and business relationships on the island were disintegrating due to the impossibly harsh living conditions.

People would die as a result of this desperate adventure. Yet, there is hardly a bitter word against Howell in his dispatch. He makes no attempt to place any

of the blame for the crisis in his little island government on his predecessor.

May it please Y^r Excellency
 In Obedience to me Y^r Excellency's Commands I have
 all endeavoured to keep the people of this Island together until
 Y^r Excellency had an answer from home which accordingly
 I did use all arguments with them that I could produce
 I think them what a fatherly care I should have had for
 them & Y^r Excellency's promise to continue Y^r care over
 them until Y^r Excellency had orders to call them to great
 content but all would not do with such a man for having
 no orders to restrain them they had had of any kind: what
 Order Capt. Abraham Howell brought from Y^r Excellency
 I have not neither was he so near to his former sent and
 signified Y^r Excellency's instructions to me to him: but I
 did not understand he had any regard for it: but went away
 to Gales Island and carried away forty one white men and
 about twenty or thirty Negroes with him. I wish them
 well, but the success of such rash actions are always to
 be doubted - As for Mr. Morine of Spanish Town he
 proceed from Dutch Extraction and was born at Paris
 and of a Protestant Religion -
 In concluding with humble thankfulness for y^r Pardon
 Y^r Excellency was pleased to express for the death of My
 Son, I beg leave to subscribe
 Yourself Y^r Excellency's most
 Humble and Obedient
 Serv^t
 George Leonard
 Anguilla August 12th
 1717

3. Leonard's letter to Governor Hamilton of 12 August 1717: CO.152/12/1. (UK National Archives®)

The two men may have been rivals for authority in Anguilla. But, when duty called, each tried in his own way

to carry out his responsibilities as he saw them to his people.

In his subsequent dispatch of 26 August, Governor Hamilton explained to the Committee that nothing that he or Leonard said to the poor people of Anguilla was successful in restraining them.⁸ He was apprehensive that the mischief of this unauthorised settlement on Crab would not stop with the Anguillians. He learned that several of the poor inhabitants of the other islands were talking of also removing themselves and their families to Crab Island. This he feared would weaken the military strength of the British islands in case war broke out.

At this time, the populations of Nevis, St Kitts and Montserrat were greatly reduced as a result of the devastations of the French in the just ended war. Hamilton's main concern as the head Leeward Island administrator was to keep the four main islands as well settled as possible so that there would be sufficient men to serve in the militia in time of war. Any leeching away of the populations of Antigua, Montserrat, Nevis or St Kitts to Crab Island would only serve to weaken their defences. This was a far more serious concern to the colonial administration than the weakening of the poor and defenceless outpost of Anguilla.

⁸ CO.152/12/1, No 54: Hamilton to the Committee on 26 August 1717.

Meanwhile, Abraham Howell's 1717 action, though he would never know it, was the cause of a diplomatic crisis between London and Copenhagen. Whitehall reacted, even though very sluggishly, to the pressure being brought from Anguilla to permit them to go to the other less inhabited Virgins claimed by Denmark. In August 1717, the Board of Trade asked the Danes for an explanation as to their settlement on the island of St John.⁹ Baron Sohlenthal, the Danish Ambassador, responded in July 1718. He reminded the Privy Council of the instructions given since September 1672 by the Committee for Foreign Plantations to Governor Stapleton. They told him then to exercise every mark of friendship towards the Danes in St Thomas and the other Danish Virgin Islands. Baron Sohlenthal objected to the pretended claim of the Anguillians to Crab Island since that time. The Danes were, he wrote, the first nation to take possession of those islands, and always successfully opposed the attempts of the British to establish themselves there. He made a pointed dig at his readers in Whitehall, which could not have failed to influence the eventual attitude of the authorities in London as they dwelt with the Anguillian request to be granted patents to land in the Virgins. The British, he wrote, previously thought the Virgin Islands not worthwhile settling for a nation which possessed such vast and fertile lands in

⁹ CO.152/12/3, No 101: Craggs of 3 July 1718.

America. The Danes, he claimed, were satisfied with the crumbs left over for them in the West Indies. This, he suggested, made even less justifiable the 1717 landing by the Anguillians on Crab. Therefore, on behalf of his King, he insisted in the strongest possible terms that they should be immediately ordered to leave the island. This was not the first nor would it be the last time that developments in Europe, about which the Anguillians were completely unaware, would decisively influence their fate.

As soon as Governor Hamilton received word from Deputy Governor Leonard of Abraham Howell's action, he made arrangements to visit Anguilla and Crab Island. He arrived in Anguilla on 11 November 1717, and was able to see for himself the hardships suffered by the islanders. He described the island as long and narrow, and the soil so worn out that the people could hardly feed their families. He took what was the second census of the people of Anguilla. It lists the names of the free white men, the numbers of adult white women and white children in their households, and the numbers of their slaves.¹⁰ This reveals that there were a total of 1,171 blacks, whites and children present on Anguilla, including 96 free white men. The gaps in the second column listing the numbers of men indicates those that were not present

¹⁰ CO.152/12/2: Hamilton to the Committee on 6 January 1718, enclosure 4: List of the Inhabitants of Anguilla taken on 22 November 1717.

at the time he took the census. They were those who emigrated from Anguilla and Tortola to Crab Island.

	Men	Women	Children	Negroes
Captain George Leonard	1	1	4	41
Arthur Hodge	2	1		4
John Wignall	1	2		16
Isaac Thibou	1	1	1	3
Samuel Downing	1	2	6	11
Peter Rogers	1	1	1	12
John Rogers	1	1	6	29
Charles Kagen Sr [ie, Keagan]	3	3		5
Jeremiah Martin	1	1	5	5
Patrick Young	1			1
Timothy Connor	1	1	5	1
Paul Rowan [ie, Ruan]	1	2		15
William Beal		1		1
Joseph Newton		1	4	11
Peter Downing		3	3	20
Thomas Gumbs		2	4	25
William Chalwill		2	2	18
John Paine [ie, Payne]	1	1	3	6
Charles Kagen Jr [ie, Keagan]	1	1	2	3
John Harragan [ie, Harrigan]	1	1	1	8
Cornelius Harragan [ie, Harrigan]	2	2	6	4
John Chapman	1	1	2	4
William Howell	1	1	4	13
Abednigo Pickering	1	1	4	10
John Morgan	1	1	4	5
John Rumney [ie, Romney]	1	1	4	7
Edward Coakley Jr		1	3	5
Bryant Monoha [ie, Monahan]	2	3	5	3
Richard Roberts	1	1	6	6
William Roberts	1	1	7	1
John Bryant	1	1	3	6
Rowland Williams		3	1	6
Thomas Lake	1	1	5	6
Richard Richardson	1	1	1	7
William Gumbs		1	3	7
Thomas Howell	1	3	6	25
Michael Rowan [ie, Ruan]	1	2	1	15
John Richardson Sr	1	2	1	1
Thomas Lloyd	1	1	3	4
Benjamin Lake	1	2	1	14
Samuel Floyd [ie, Lloyd]		2	2	6
David Derrick	1	3	2	7
Abraham Howell		1	1	10
Abraham Downing	1	1	2	11
Richard Downing	1	1	3	7
Bezaliel Howell		2	4	20
Thomas Flanders	1	2		
Edward Leonard	2	1	1	1

George Leonard	2	2	5	2
Isaac Adderly	1	1	2	5
John Connor	4	4		3
Henry Hodge Jr	1	1	3	18
John Hodge	1	1		1
Peter Hodge		1	3	3
John Downing	1	1	1	3
Thomas Knight	2	2	5	6
Robert Lockrum	3	1	3	3
Jacob Howell	1	3		16
Thomas Richardson	1	2	2	3
James Richardson	1	1	2	3
John Thomas	1	1	3	14
Peter Frare	1			5
Hugh Flemming [ie, Fleming]	1			8
Phillip Leonard	2	1		2
Darby Carty	3	2	1	6
William Coakley	1	1	6	18
John Powell	2	2	5	4
Thomas Rumney [ie, Romney]	1	2		8
Thomas Rumney Jr [ie, Romney]		1	3	5
Thomas Hodge		3	5	16
James Glass			1	1
Thomas Rogers	2	3	4	30
Oliver Downing	3	2		8
Benjamin Rogers	1	1		6
Henry Hodge Sr				6
Susan Manning		1		1
Edward Welch	2	2		6
Henry Leonard	2	1	3	14
Jacob Arundell [ie, Arrindell]	1	3		3
Mary Watson		1	4	1
Benjamin Arundell [ie, Arrindell]		1	1	3
Samuel Kentish	1			1
John Lake Sr	1	5		9
John Lake		2		4
Abraham Arrundell [ie, Arrindell]	1	2	5	5
Daniel Bryant	1	2	2	10
Jeremiah Richardson	1	2	5	12
Nehemiah Richardson		1	3	13
John Richardson	1	2	7	27
William Farrington	1	3	5	6
Alice Hoyet		2		2
Abraham Wingood		1	1	4
Totals	96	97	154	824

Table 3: Governor Hamilton's 1717 List of the Inhabitants of Anguilla: CO.152/12.

After inspecting Anguilla and taking the list of the male names, he sailed for Crab Island, where he disembarked on 18 November 1717. Of this island he wrote,

This is a long and very level island, but one mountain in it at the south west end, not high, well timbered and an excellent soil. It is about nine league¹¹ long and in most parts about six or seven miles broad except at the east end where it is not above two or three miles broad for about seven or eight miles. It has a good harbour at the south side about a third down from the east end when once ships are in, but the passage in is very narrow and ships must warp not again except they have the wind far northerly.

This island seems to be very fertile and excellent land but then it is attended with this inconveniency that it lies so near to the island of St John de Porto Rico that slaves upon the least disgust may easily escape over in either canoes or bark logs it being just to the eastward of the center of that island, the channel shallow and not above three leagues over. . .

While on Crab, he also made a list of the white and black inhabitants. This Crab Island census shows that 46 white men and 62 black men immigrated in a desperate attempt to find improved agricultural land.¹² The census contains no columns for women or children, indicating there were none present. This says the men did not move to Crab with all their families and possessions, but left them at home in Anguilla until they were sure that it was safe for them to join the men. After Governor Hamilton returned to Antigua, several wives and children, as we shall see, later joined the men on Crab Island

¹¹ A league was a now obsolete unit of measurement of 3 miles.

¹² CO.152/12/2, No 67: Hamilton to the Committee on 6 January 1718, enclosure 9: List of the Inhabitants of Crab Island.

before the settlement was finally destroyed by the Spanish.



4. An extract from the Crab Island census of 1718.
CO.152/12/2. (UK National Archives®)

The 'Complete list of the men able to bear arms and of negroes on Crab Island' reveals that at the time of Governor Hamilton's visit there were a total of 108 men on Crab.

White Men	Negroes
Henry Osborne	0
Thomas Allen	2
George Garner	1
Nehemiah Richardson	5
George Richardson	0
Jeremiah Richardson	0
John Richardson	0
Christopher Hodge	2
Thomas Hodge	3
Arthur Hodge	0
Benjamin Hodge	0
Abraham Chalwill Sr	4
William Chalwill Jr	0

Abram Chalwill	0
Abraham Wingood	7
Edward Coakley	0
John Richardson	0
Thomas Lake	4
John Lake	0
Benjamin Lake	0
David Derrick	1
Peter Downing	2
William Beal	1
Peter Hodge	1
John Richardson	0
William Richardson	1
Samuel Lloyd	3
Samuel Lloyd Jr	2
Benjamin Arrindell	1
William Gumbs	2
Thomas Gumbs	3
Joseph Mason	0
Isaac Arrindell	0
Andrew Watson	0
William Smith	0
Daniel Bryant	1
Rowland Williams	1
Cornelius Harrigan	1
Joseph Harrigan	0
Peter Harrigan	0
Bezaliel Howell	4
Thomas Howell	2
Abraham Howell	5
Thomas Coakley	3
Ceasar Coakley	0
Peter Downing	0
Total	46
Total	62

Table 4: List of Men able to bear arms at Crab:
CO.152/12.

These names on the list show that support for the new settlement ran the length of Anguilla. The principal families from each of the three Divisions were all represented. They included the Richardsons, Hodges, Chalvilles, Coakleys, Lakes, Gumbses, Lloyds, Arrindells,

Harrigans, Howells, and Downings. It is clear that deputy governor Captain George Leonard, who did not join the expedition to Crab, commanded the loyalty of 96 free white male Anguillians, while Captain Abraham Howell could muster only half that number.

In March 1718, Governor Hamilton was back at St Kitts when he received word of the Spanish destruction of the settlement at Crab Island. He wrote to the Committee to tell them that just what he dreaded came pass.¹³ On 10 February 1718, the Spanish coast guard from Puerto Rico arrived at Crab Island with one man-of-war and six sloops. They were in such force that they went immediately on shore and demanded the surrender of the island. The Anguillians resisted but were overwhelmed. They suffered several men killed. Some, with their wives and children and black and white servants, were taken as prisoners to Puerto Rico. Many others, apparently the majority, were able to save themselves by flight to the eastern side of Crab. They were subsequently rescued by several Leeward Island sloops that luckily came upon them. The Spaniards completely destroyed the fledgling settlement, including a large store of dyewood, before they carried off their prisoners.

The Spanish history books record that 300 soldiers arrived from Puerto Rico. They destroyed the fort on

¹³ CO.152/12/3, No 87: Hamilton to the Committee on 15 March 1718.

Crab Island and burned the town. They put the fields of corn, cotton, sugar and tobacco to the torch. The cannon were taken to Puerto Rico and installed in the Castillo de San Geronimo. By contrast, there is no contemporary Anguillian account of the disaster. Abraham Howell was among those taken prisoner, and it would be several months before he could make his escape and find his way back to Anguilla.

Governor Hamilton did not intend to leave the captured Anguillians to the Spaniards. The man-of-war HMS Scarborough from the Barbados station was away in St Kitts at the time on another mission. It was on its way to Puerto Rico with orders from the Admiralty to demand the return of a ship seized by the Spaniards after peace was declared at the end of the previous war. The Governor's plan was, at the same time, to have the man-of-war demand the return of the captives from Crab. He sent HMS Scarborough on to Puerto Rico with these new instructions.

Hamilton raised again with the Committee the question of offering the remaining Anguillians parcels of land in St Kitts. He also suggested, for the first time, the possibility of acceding to their request that they be given patents to land in St Croix. He described the advantages of that island over Crab. As usual, he was careful not to overstep his authority and authorise their resettlement in

St Croix. Instead, he explained, he was awaiting the Committee's directions on that matter. He hoped it would be very soon, as the people of Anguilla and Virgin Gorda were in a starving condition and were only restrained with difficulty from scattering to foreign islands.

He pointed out again that if only the poor people of Anguilla were provided for out of the conquered land of St Kitts, they would long since have contributed to the strengthening of the defences of the main islands of his colony. As they were now dispersed to foreign islands, they were altogether useless and so many men lost to the Leeward Islands militia. If the Committee was minded to authorise another colony, he preferred St Croix over Crab Island. His moderate and deferential language was designed to placate the Privy Council in London, not to put any great pressure on it. Then as now, pressure on London was the last thing that a colonial Governor would apply, if he valued his career. He was not to know that London had long ago decided that there was no merit in any British claim to St Croix. St Croix was confirmed as Danish, and there was no question of allowing British citizens the right to emigrate to a foreign-owned island.

On 13 June 1718, Hamilton's proclamation forbidding any more colonists to go and settle Crab Island

arrived in Anguilla.¹⁴ It was read and exhibited there as it was in each of the Leeward Islands. The proclamation promised that he offered all the protection and encouragement in his power to all those that returned to their homes, and free grants of waste land. As usual, in his proclamation, he expressed the hope that he would be able to obtain for them parcels of land in the former French part of St Kitts when it was disposed of. This proclamation was a classic case of closing the stable door after the horse bolted. At least, it served the purpose of making it clear to the Anguillians that those that returned would not be penalized. As such, it influenced subsequent events.

In December 1718, Hamilton was at St Kitts. He wrote to the Committee with good news.¹⁵ Nine months after the debacle on Crab Island, Abraham Howell arrived in St Kitts. Hamilton learned from him that the prisoners were dragged through all the Spanish ports at Puerto Rico, Hispaniola and Cuba. He and the two or three others that were captured with him were released on the intercession of an Agent of the Royal Asiento Company. A ship of the company took them to Jamaica from where they got passage to St Kitts.

¹⁴ CO.152/12/3, No 118: Hamilton to the Committee on 10 September 1718, enclosure: Proclamation of 13 June 1718.

¹⁵ CO.152/12.3, No 136: Hamilton to the Committee for Trade and Foreign Plantations on 10 December 1718.

While it is unlikely that any of the captured black slaves were released, at least 22 of Howell's hardy band of 46 white males survived to sign the 1727 Anguilla Proclamation on the accession to the throne of King George II. There may have been others who came from other Leeward Islands, and who escaped from Crab Island and returned home, but we do not have any details of who the survivors were. In the custom of the period, the Spanish would not have treated the slaves in the same manner as they treated free white men. Slaves would have been counted as prize won in battle and shared out among the Spanish victors.

Many of the Anguillians on Crab Island appear to have saved themselves by flight when the Spanish attacked. Howell was taken, he claimed, with only two or three other Anguillians. If this means that the majority of them were able to make their escape while their fearless captain remained with the rear-guard, one is justified in speculating that the old captain successfully organised the escape of his people. The likelihood is that on the Spanish attack he mounted a successful rear-guard action before giving himself up. Unfortunately, we do not know the names of the other men who survived this action with him. We only know that seven or eight of them were killed in resisting the Spanish landing. Included among those killed was Bezaliel Howell, the old

man's son. The captured Anguillians organised their own escape from Puerto Rico on a British slaver from Jamaica engaged in the Asiento trade. The evidence is that the Anguillians received no assistance either from London or from Hamilton in making their way back to Anguilla via Nevis. As Hamilton wrote five months later, the Governor of Puerto Rico never gave any answer to the demand that was sent with HMS Scarborough.¹⁶

The settlement on Crab Island was destroyed, never to be attempted again by Anguillians, though there were sporadic attempts by other Leeward Islanders for another hundred years. All the Anguillians' property on Crab Island was confiscated. While most of the immigrants on Crab returned to Anguilla and other Leeward Islands, they lost all of their personal belongings. The loss of life and property for the struggling colony in Anguilla was devastating.

In trying to peer through the mists of time to that distant past to understand what happened to the Anguillians after the destruction of their settlement on Crab, we turn to the subsequent loyalty Proclamation of 1727 to glean what little information we can from it.¹⁷ The signatures interest us (see illus 5).

George Leonard

Thomas Lake, Jr

¹⁶ CO.152/12.4, No 152: Hamilton to the Committee in May 1719.

¹⁷ CO.152/16: Mathew to the Committee on 12 October 1727: The 1727 Anguilla Proclamation of King George II.

<i>John Rogers</i>	<i>Joseph Keegan</i>
<i>Thomas Howell</i>	<i>John Godden</i>
<i>Jacob Howell</i>	<i>Benjamin Lake</i>
<i>Bezaliel Rogers</i>	<i>Thomas Coakley</i>
<i>Peter Rogers</i>	<i>David Derrick</i>
<i>Abraham Downing</i>	<i>Edward Gumbs</i>
<i>Abraham Howell, Jr</i>	<i>George Dobbony</i>
<i>Thomas Hodge</i>	<i>Thomas Rogers</i>
<i>James King</i>	<i>Richard Richardson</i>
<i>John Payne</i>	<i>Henry Hodge</i>
<i>Edward Coakley</i>	<i>Thomas Gumbs</i>
<i>Arthur Hodge, Sr</i>	<i>John Bryant, Jr</i>
<i>Arthur Hodge, 2nd</i>	<i>Abraham Chalwill</i>
<i>David Derrick, Jr</i>	<i>John Connor</i>
<i>Benjamin Rogers</i>	<i>Rowland Williams</i>
<i>Samuel Lloyd</i>	<i>Ceasar Coakley</i>
<i>John Bryant</i>	<i>George Leonard, 2nd</i>
<i>John Keagan</i>	<i>John Lake</i>
<i>Henry Leonard</i>	<i>Jeremiah Richardson</i>
<i>John Floyd</i>	<i>Jacob Richardson</i>
<i>John Gumbs</i>	<i>Edward Lake</i>
<i>John Hughes</i>	<i>Thomas Lake</i>
<i>Thomas Richardson</i>	<i>Edward Rogers</i>
<i>Thomas Coakley, Sr</i>	<i>William Bryan</i>
<i>Francis Goldsly</i>	<i>Henry Rumney</i>
<i>Josiah Blake</i>	<i>Benjamin Downing</i>
<i>John Derrick</i>	<i>Thomas Hodge, Jr</i>
<i>William Richardson</i>	<i>John Rowan</i>
<i>George Leonard, Jr</i>	<i>William Farrington, Sr</i>
<i>Jacob Gumbs</i>	<i>William Rich'dson, 2nd</i>
<i>Thomas Call</i>	<i>John Harrigan</i>
<i>Samuel Downing</i>	<i>Thomas Flanders</i>
<i>Tim Connor</i>	<i>Derby Carty, Jr</i>
<i>Michael Rowan</i>	<i>William Gumbs</i>
<i>Paul Rowan</i>	<i>Edward Bartlett</i>
<i>William Howell</i>	<i>Richard Roberts</i>
<i>Thomas Farrington</i>	<i>Joseph Richardson</i>



5. The signatories to the 1727 proclamation: CO.152/16.
(UK National Archives®)

This Proclamation was not an initiative of the Anguillian planters. It was a legal requirement of the day that the planters subscribe and append their names proclaiming the accession of the new king. The British were still concerned about the acceptance of the new German Protestant monarchy in Britain. The threat of the Roman Catholic Stuart dynasty was still present. Each householder in the colonies, including Anguilla, was therefore required to join in signing a proclamation declaring the accession of King George II on the death of his father, King George I.

Governor Mathew reported to the Board of Trade in 1727 that King George II was proclaimed by the people of Anguilla on 7 October at The Valley.¹⁸ It was signed by only 76 of the free Anguillian men. The planters, he

¹⁸ CO.152/16, folio 56: Mathew to the Committee on 12 October 1727.

wrote, came together to join in the signing of the Proclamation. He claimed that the Anguillians proclaimed the new king in the most solemn, decent and cheerful manner that they were capable of. This was not quite true. Governor Mathew glossed over what really happened at the signing in an effort to reassure the Committee that his colony was working smoothly.

The following year, he gave a more truthful version about what happened at the signing.¹⁹ The event, he now wrote, was characterized by the misbehaviour of some of the planters. He does not explain what he meant by 'misbehaviour'. Clearly, there were problems in Anguilla over the signing of this oath of loyalty. He writes that the signing was not unanimous. There were disturbances and instances of rowdy behaviour at the time. We can be certain that not all the planters joined in the proclamation as there are only 76 signatures to it. It is noticeable that Abraham Howell does sign it. If he did sign it, his name would appear as 'Abraham Howell Sr', but that signature is missing.

It was not that any of the Anguillians supported the Stuarts. They had no interest in supporting the Roman Catholic Stuart dynasty in its struggle to reclaim the throne of England. They were not concerned about the Stuart or any other dynasty. No Governor-in-Chief

¹⁹ CO.152/16 folio 251: Mathew to the Committee on 20 January 1728.

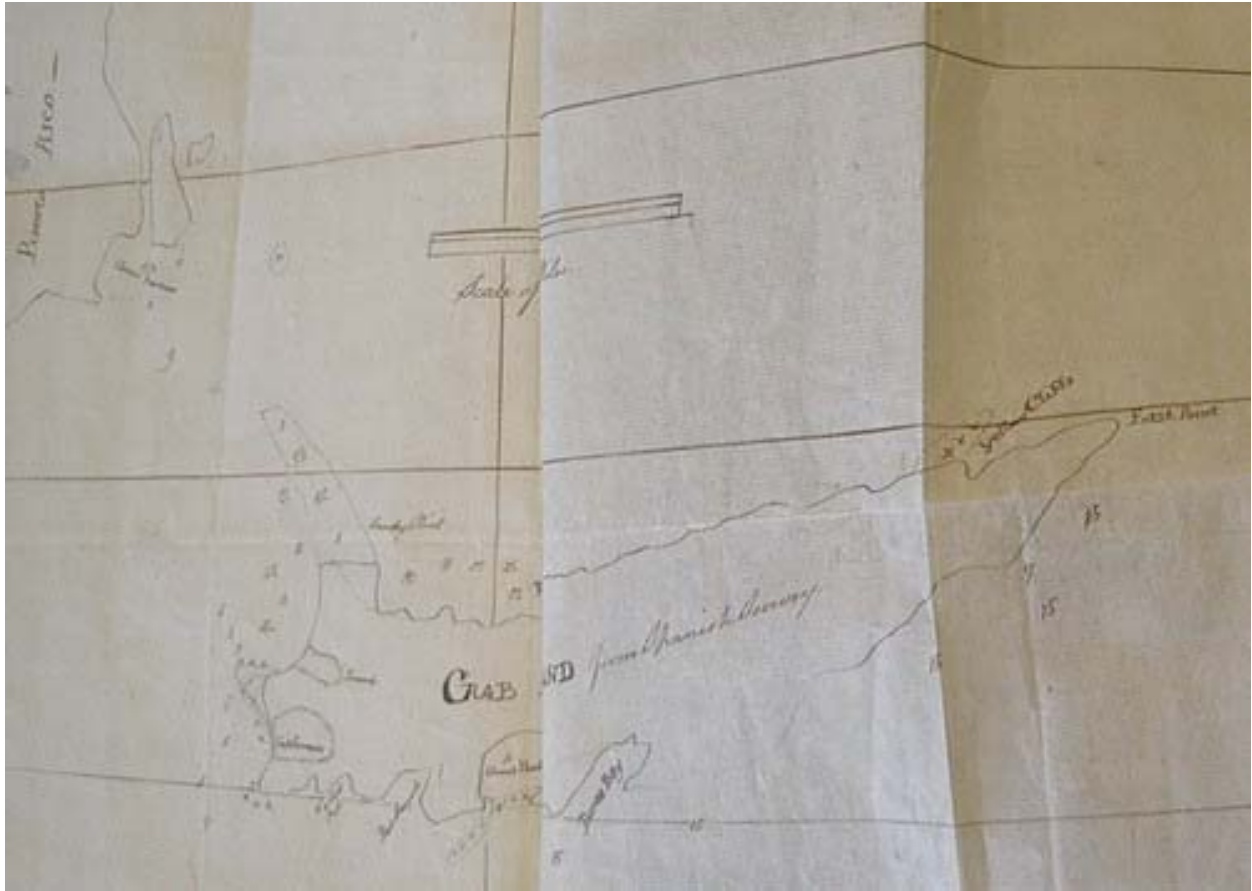
showed any interest in the condition and affairs of this the third generation of Anguillians. Why should they on their part care about the coronation of King George II? With old deputy governor Leonard now almost permanently resident in Antigua, such little form of organized government as there was on Anguilla broke down. One can imagine the outrage and indignation that was felt by the sturdy, self-reliant islanders when they were called together, not for some act of government relevant to their condition, but to join in what for them was a completely meaningless and irrelevant ritual of signing a proclamation in honour of an unknown, distant and uncaring King. Deputy governor Leonard was able to persuade only 75 of them to sign the proclamation. It appears Abraham Howell was leading a significant minority of discontented Anguillians who refused to sign the declaration of loyalty to King George II.

It is one of the characteristics of the Anguillians that they did not then, and still do not now, rely on expressions of official concern. They have always sought their own solutions to national problems. There is no record of their ever receiving compensation for their destroyed property. There is no evidence even of the authorities demanding such compensation. How could they? The settlement on Crab was illegal, so that compensation was not to be expected. The destruction by the Spaniards of the

settlement on Crab also relieved the pressure on London from Denmark. From Whitehall's point of view, the violence of the Spanish action was a neat solution to the diplomatic crisis. Their preference was to let the Danes struggle with Spain for ownership of Crab Island.

Crab Island was to remain Spanish in spite of the competing claims of the Anguillians and the Danes of St Thomas and St John. It was, eventually, accepted by both the Danes and the British that Vieques, to give the island its proper modern name, was a dependency of Puerto Rico, and not politically a part of the Virgin Islands. It remains attached to Puerto Rico to this day.

The earliest English map of Crab Island is a very faded one of 1818 drawn for Governor Thomas Probyn and submitted by him in a dispatch to the Earl of Bathurst. This dispatch related to an attempt by a group of Kittitians to revive the British claim to Vieques. The Anguillians never again showed any interest in settling Vieques.



6. Crab Island in 1818. (UK National Archives®)

Abraham Howell fades from the scene after this venture. If he was about twenty-five years of age at the time of his election in 1666 to be deputy governor of Anguilla, he was at least eighty six years of age at the time of the signing of the 1727 Proclamation, a very advanced age for that time.

At the time of the 1717 census, the Howell and Leonard families were at the peak of their social and economic importance in Anguilla. There are five Leonard men recorded as being then on Anguilla, Captain George Leonard and his four sons, Edward Leonard, another

George Leonard, Phillip Leonard and Henry Leonard. They are all recorded as being present on Anguilla indicating they did not go on the adventure to Crab Island. The Crab Island Census shows that Abraham Howell was present with five slaves. He left behind in Anguilla his wife, a child, and ten slaves. His sons, Bezaliel Howell and Thomas Howell, were with him on Crab Island with four and two slaves respectively. Left behind in Anguilla were William Howell, another Thomas Howell, and Jacob Howell. Within a few years the two cotton growing families ceased to dominate the little island. The sugar planter families of the Gumbses and Richardsons came to dominate social life in the 1740s and afterwards.

Crab Island was not to affect Anguillians for nearly another 300 years, and then only in a very tangential way. In the late 1970's the US navy were using a part of Vieques as a bombing range. Forced by pressure from local fishermen, environmentalists and Puerto Rican nationalists to consider vacating their naval facility on Vieques, they looked around for an alternative site. Dog Island, a small uninhabited cay several miles off the north coast of and a part of Anguillian territory, was found appealing by certain US navy consultants. They wrote that they thought that its situation was ideal for use as a practice range. The pros and cons of such a development were hotly debated on Anguilla. The sound

of low-flying jets approaching on their bombing run and subsequently the detonating of high explosives just a few miles of Anguilla's northern tourist beaches would not be conducive to the happiness and welfare of visitors or residents. It was several years before the British government turned down the proposal. The US Navy eventually in the year 2003 abandoned their bombing range in Vieques and turned the property over to a National Park, which it still remains.

And so we end the tragic story of Captain Abraham Howell's efforts to settle the Anguillians on Crab Island. He may have failed in his attempt to find land for the dispossessed of Anguilla and the Leewards who flocked to his standard, but the Anguillians still had outlets open to them. As Governor Hamilton warned as early as July of 1719, the survivors of Crab Island were scattered among the various islands of the colony. They and others were discontented. For want of land in the better islands, the Anguillians were obliged to consider moving to the smaller Virgin Islands. As we shall see, they were to have more luck on St Croix and Tortola, and others of the Virgin Islands, than on Crab.