

Chapter 11

TOBACCO, COTTON, AND SALT

What sort of persons were the early Anguillians? What was the attraction that made desperate men abandon the more fertile, if overcrowded, colonies of Barbados, St Kitts, and Nevis and prefer this thirty-five square mile barren, drought-ridden outpost of empire? Were there advantages that encouraged some of the early immigrants to opt for Anguilla as an alternative to the new and land-rich settlements in Virginia and Maryland? What were they doing in Anguilla? What, other than subsistence agriculture, the breeding of small stock for meat and for export, and fishing, were they occupying themselves with? The answers must be as varied as the different types of persons that arrived to try to make a living here. There is no one clear-cut explanation. Due to the absence of written records left by our ancestors from those early days, we are largely left to infer and to speculate.

The surviving records reveal that the main commercial occupations on land in the earliest days of settlement were the growing of tobacco and cotton, the reaping of salt, and the raising of food crops and cattle, ie, goats and, in the wetter years, sheep and cows.

Tobacco and cotton had the advantage that they were small-planter cash crops. These crops survived in Anguilla long after they were replaced in the larger islands by sugarcane. Growing and reaping sugarcane required a lot of capital (to purchase slaves and sugar-mill equipment) to be successful, and capital was in short supply for much of Anguilla's history.

The availability of potable water was essential for the survival of the new settlement. Besides the salt ponds, there are also three brackish-water ponds situated away from the coast. These are Cauls Pond, Bad Cox Pond and East End Pond. They each have a limestone outcrop at the water's edge on the northern shore. Springs feed into the ponds from fissures in the limestone outcrops. Besides the Fountain Cavern and the several Indian Wells, these springs were the only sources of fresh, if brackish, water on the island easily available to the islanders. There are no rivers flowing on the island, even in the wettest years.

The Sir William Halcrow & Partners Water Resources of St Kitts, Nevis & Anguilla report published in 1964, reveals that there are in all fourteen springs in the island. Most of them are saline. The degree of salinity depends to a large extent on the amount of rain falling in any period. The settlers found water, too, in the wells that

the Amerindians left. They eventually dug some twenty-five other wells, scattered over the island.

When the island was first occupied by Europeans and Africans, we can be confident that the surface was covered in considerably more soil and vegetation than there is today. Once the forest cover was removed, the exposed topsoil began to erode down into the 'bottoms' or out to sea. Only low-lying scrub now grows on the higher ridges. The lack of tall trees is unfortunate. Forests, besides conserving the soil cover, encourage more rain to fall from passing clouds than falls today. The three inland ponds were fresher then than they are today. No trace of alligator remains were ever found around any of these ponds, as suggested by Charles de Rochefort. If, as was likely, the island was wetter then than it is now, we can well understand that tobacco and corn were easily raised, and that the cattle multiplied very fast as he wrote.

Anguilla is described by geographers as a seasonal forest island. In this it resembles Antigua, Barbados, St Barts, Statia and St Martin. In all these islands, long-lasting changes have taken place in the natural vegetation and wildlife. There is presently more rain falling in Anguilla than would fall in a true desert. Yet, as the Carlozzis observe in their Conservation and Caribbean Regional Progress published in 1968, parched barrenness generally pervades the island, save for

exceptional years of heavy rainfall. It is their theory that it was the livestock that reduced Anguilla to the scrubby state that it is presently in. Goats played the most important role in creating the barren appearance of the island. They denuded the land. Where they roam, all is picked bare. Much of the soil has, as a result, eroded away. Until the goat is recognized as the dangerous vermin it is, they urge, and is completely banned from the island, it will always be difficult to grow anything successfully in Anguilla.

The early Anguillians traded in timber from one end of the Caribbean to the other. There was a ready market among the planters of the bigger, sugar cane-growing islands for building timber. West Indian mahogany was much in demand from the seventeenth century for furniture and panelling in the homes of the wealthy in England. The largest trees in Anguilla were soon cut down and exported. Soon, Anguillian sloops were roaming the Virgin Islands of St Croix, St Thomas, Tortola, and Crab Island in search of timber for the markets of the Caribbean and Europe. The mahogany trees that presently dot the island are not true West Indian mahogany. They are the smaller Honduran mahogany, imported into Anguilla and others of the West Indies by the Imperial Department of Tropical Agriculture in the early decades of the twentieth century. This was the

period when the colonial authorities tried to help the dryer and poorer islands diversify their agricultural industries by importing from Honduras new varieties of sisal for rope making, paw-paw for the extraction of the enzyme papain, lumber for construction, and shade trees such as the Saman tree (*albiza saman*) for the cattle industry.

The large native trees that covered the island were cut down very early. Not only did land need to be cleared for cultivation. There were also valuable dyewoods to be cut for export to England. A variety of dye-wood trees grew in Anguilla in the seventeenth century, as they did on all the neighbouring islands. Dyewood is today a forgotten, almost unknown product. But, at one time, fortunes were made in the Caribbean by merchants who traded in it. Dyewoods used to be called by a variety of names. The Portuguese word 'brazil' is the source of the English word brazen. 'Brazil wood' produced a red coloured dye, which the name refers to in Portuguese. It grew profusely in the West Indies but was soon almost completely cut down and exported to Europe. Another source of dye was 'campeachy wood', first exported from the Gulf of Campeche in Mexico, where it grew profusely. Depending on which salts it was mixed with, campeachy could produce a red, blue, or black dye. Near to the Gulf of Campeche was the territory where woodcutters would eventually establish the British colony of Belize, a rich

source of logwood and brazil-wood. Logwood produced a red dye when processed in an acidic medium, and blue in an alkali solution. Nicaragua or peach-wood, also called by the Dutch 'stockfish-wood', produced an inferior red dye. All these dyes were obtained from the wood by rasping or grinding it fine, and then boiling it.

Dyewoods were for a short period of time a profitable export from Anguilla and the other islands. In the first quarter of the eighteenth century, there are several references in the Colonial Office records to this Anguilla trade. One such is a 1719 dispatch by one George Lillington of Barbados, shortly after the Anguillian settlement on Crab Island was destroyed. He reported that the Spaniards burned a large quantity of dyewood that the settlers collected before the destruction of the settlement.

Old Fustic or Dyers' Mulberry is made from the heartwood of the member of the mulberry family originally found in the forests of the West Indies. This tree is also known as *Chlorophora* or *Morus tinctoria* in the older texts. Oliver Hodge, who leads nature walks through the Katouche Valley, can point out to you Fustic trees growing along the path. It was used to produce the khaki colour much favoured among army and school uniforms in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The dyewood industry has to a large extent now been made

obsolete by the discovery of synthetic aniline dyes manufactured in the laboratory.

Until as recently as the 1970s, Anguillian trees were also cut down to make charcoal, then the staple fuel for cooking. If you turned your back for a moment on your orange or soursop tree, you might find it cut down and removed. All the primeval trees were soon destroyed by this combination of bad husbandry and the need for fuel. The first cylinders of propane gas for cooking began to be imported in the early 1970's. At first, these cylinders were inconvenient as, until the early 1990's, it was not possible to refill empty gas bottles locally. They had to be shipped to Puerto Rico for refilling. Today, charcoal is a luxury fuel for barbecues, and the trees have begun to recover.

Those West Indian islands with mountains can attract rain, at least during the rainy seasons. In a flat island such as Anguilla is, during periods of drought, few livestock would survive but the goats. It is not for nothing that the children's geography textbook in my school-day said dismissively about Anguilla's climate, "*Anguilla participates in passing Atlantic weather systems.*" The keeping of sheep and cows, and the cultivation of cash crops, were limited to the periods when there was sufficient rainfall to permit their survival. Otherwise, we mainly kept goats, and grew peas, sweet potato, and corn.

Anguillians have always grown their vegetable crops in numerous 'bottoms' that are dotted over the island. The origin of the word 'bottom' is Dutch, not English. The Dutch were to be found in several islands within sight of Anguilla, namely, St Maarten, Saba, and St Eustatius. They occupied those islands before any settlers moved to Anguilla from Barbados or St Kitts. The Dutch are responsible for naming the relatively stone-free 'bottoms' that they cultivated. This word 'bottom' is one of the few relics that remain of the early Dutch influence in Anguilla. They are so-called, according to the Dutch historian of the Netherlands Antilles, Dr Hartog, from the old Zeeland word 'botte', meaning 'bowl'. The English-speakers heard the Zeelander word as 'bottom'. So, the main town on the neighbouring Dutch island of Saba sits in the eroded crater on the top of a volcano and is incongruously named 'The Bottom'. The naming is in the Zeeland dialect, and is due to the bowl shape of the volcanic crater in which the town is located.

There are few other remaining signs of Dutch influence in Anguilla. 'Statia Valley Estate' may be named after the early Dutch who were temporarily moved here after the English captured the island of St Eustatius (Statia) in the Anglo-Dutch wars of 1665-1667 and 1672-1674. The Anguillian surname 'Hazell' is Dutch in origin. It appeared in Saba as early as 1677 and is frequently

met today in both Dutch and English islands. In the same year, the name 'Van der Poll' also appeared in Saba. This was later anglicised in Anguilla to Vanterpool. The name 'Zeegars' also appeared in Saba at an early date. This later became 'Sagers' or 'Zakers'. These were all well-known names in Anguilla in later years.

Tobacco was originally grown in Anguilla by the Amerindians. The Amerindian industry in all the islands was taken over by the newcomers. It was an ideal small-farmer cash crop. Apart from its small bulk, and its ability when dried to survive the long voyage across the Atlantic, tobacco possessed other advantages to recommend it. Its cultivation could be undertaken on a small scale. It did not need the outlay of much capital. Farmers found they could grow their crop on a comparatively small area of land. They needed only a few helpers, perhaps the members of the family.

The Amerindian habit of smoking tobacco was introduced by John Hawkins into England as early as 1574, causing King James I in 1604 to pen a futile polemic, which he titled A Counterblast to Tobacco, against the 'vile custom' and 'filthy novelty'. West Indian tobacco competed in England unfavourably with Virginia tobacco. It paid a higher duty and fetched a lower price. West Indian tobacco was less mild and less palatable than that of Virginia. Besides, Virginia enjoyed the

advantage of being able to produce tobacco in great bulk from a large area of land. Virginia's supplies came near to meeting the demand of the entire English market. There was less risk than trading with the scattered islands of the West Indies. Merchants found it more convenient to deal with Virginia than with small suppliers such as Anguilla. Already, by the year 1639, eleven years before the settlement of Anguilla in 1650, the price of tobacco on the London market dropped alarmingly. These disadvantages caused tobacco to be replaced by sugar in Barbados, even before tobacco began to be planted in Anguilla.

In Anguilla, tobacco cultivation lasted longer, probably because there were few alternatives. The last reference to tobacco being grown in Anguilla in the Colonial Office papers is an unattributed memorandum probably prepared by Under-Secretary Joseph Williamson in 1667. He relates the information given to the Committee for Trade and Foreign Plantations by Major Scott, that salt was made in Anguilla and that tobacco was grown there. After that, there is no mention of tobacco grown in Anguilla for export. There was no future in planting tobacco in Anguilla, and we can be sure the industry soon died out.

Barbados and the other English islands looked for other crops. The first choice was cotton. In Anguilla,

cotton replaced tobacco as the planters' cash crop within a few years, certainly within the first generation. It proved to be more successful than tobacco ever was. Cotton was in some ways, like tobacco, an ideal cash crop for farmers. It required little capital outlay. It could be reaped by the planter and his family with a few helpers. It did not spoil once kept dry. Cotton continued as the main cash crop of the islanders until the middle of the eighteenth century, a run of nearly a hundred years.

International demand for cotton then was comparatively small. Wool was more popular in Europe for the manufacture of clothing. The demand for cotton in Europe did not increase substantially until the late eighteenth century when the Industrial Revolution produced the automated ginning and spinning mills that made it more economic than wool. But Europe received sufficient supplies from elsewhere, and no one got rich from growing cotton in Anguilla.

The strain of cotton that is native to Anguilla possesses an unusually long strand or staple (see illus 1). It was from Anguilla that cotton seed was exported in the eighteenth century to the Bahamas. There, its superior quality was first recognized. After the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the British government provided loyalists and partisans of Great Britain homes and land in the Bahamas. In an 1835 anonymously written article

titled Cotton: Its Introduction and Progress of its Culture in the United States, from the Southern Planter, it is explained how the new settlers in the Bahamas procured cotton seed from Anguilla.¹ In 1785 they successfully introduced the culture of cotton on several of the Bahama Islands, particularly on Long island and Exuma.



1. A 15-foot-high Sea Island Cotton tree at Corito (by the author)

The anonymous author relates how in the winter of 1785 his Georgia cotton-farmer father received a bag of cotton seed from Col Roger Kellsall, then a planter on Exuma. Several other Georgian cotton-planters received at the

¹ Cotton: Its Introduction and Progress of its Culture in the United States, from the Southern Planter. In **Edmund Ruffin, ed** - The Farmer's Register, A Monthly Publication Devoted to the Improvement of the Practice and Support of the Interests of Agriculture. (Shellbanks, Va: Published by the proprietor, 1835) Volume 2, pages 354-355.

same time cotton seed from their old associates or friends now exiled to the Bahamas. Among the planters who received cotton seed was Josiah Tattnall of Savannah, from his father, then the Surveyor General of the Bahamas islands. Anguilla cotton seed was eventually found to flourish best in the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina, from which islands that strain of cotton now takes its name. The botanical name for Sea Island cotton is *Gossypium barbadense*, but as Dr Jones ruefully remarked in his Annals of Anguilla, it ought properly to be *Gossypium anguillense* (see Illus 2).



2. Close-up of a cotton boll on a Sea Island Cotton tree growing at Corito (By the author)

The story of the spread of Anguilla cotton to the cotton belt of the United States is well-known. In his biography of the Georgia planter James Hamilton Couper, James E Bagwell writes that the type of cotton that Couper produced was not the short staple variety made famous by Eli Whitney's gin, but rather a more delicate, more restricted type of higher quality.² This cotton surpassed all other varieties in length and strength of fibre and in fineness and silkiness of texture. It brought prices double that of short-staple or upland cotton. Moreover, it was ginned in a different way for a different market. While short-staple cotton was manufactured into a commonplace fabric with many uses, the aristocratic long-staple variety was used only to make the fine cambric and laces for the wealthy.

Bagwell explains that there were several varieties of long-staple cotton, but the type grown in the southern United States took its name from the place where it was first grown – the Sea Islands. Bagwell also explains the connection between the Anguilla cotton seed and the Sea Islands. He writes that the introduction of the Anguilla cotton to Georgia and South Carolina came as an indirect result of the American Revolution. Following the British defeat, a number of Georgia planters made their home in the Bahamas. But, as planters, what could be grown

² **James E Bagwell** - Rice Gold: James Hamilton Couper and Plantation life on the Georgia Coast. (Mercer University Press, 2000), page 52.

there? The British government came to their aid and introduced the seed of a variety of cotton which was already flourishing on the island of Anguilla. The Georgia expatriates prospered in the cultivation of this new cotton. They also kept close ties with their friends and kinsmen back in Georgia. Consequently, in the same year 1785, Colonel Roger Kelsall, a planter in the Bahamas,³ sent a bag of the newly received Anguilla cotton seed to his former business partner, James Spalding, on St Simons Island, one of the barrier islands off the coast of Georgia known as the Sea Islands. Spalding planted the seeds the following spring. They came up having luxuriant foliage, bloomed, but bore no fruit. When winter came, Spalding cut the stalks back. The next spring, 1787, new sprouts came up from the roots, bloomed and produced excellent cotton. During the same time, other Sea Island planters received more bags of the new seed from friends or relatives in the Bahamas and witnessed similar results. Anguilla cotton cultivation spread from Georgia to the coast of South Carolina, and thence to Alabama and Mississippi, thereby beginning the first cotton belt in the United States. Hence, Anguilla cotton became Sea Island Cotton.

³ Roger Kelsall, a Loyalist, was granted 100 acres of land by the Rt Hon the Earl of Dunmore at Exuma in 1788. Per A Talboy Bethell, The Early Settlers of the Bahamas and Colonists of North America. (Heritage Books, 2008) a facsimile reprint of the 1937 3rd revised edition

The Anguilla cotton eventually arrived in Mississippi. The Vick family, after whom the city of Vicksburg in Mississippi is named, took up planting the Anguilla cotton seed which they got from South Carolina. They named their Mississippi cotton farm 'the Anguilla Plantation'. The railroad was later given a right of way through the plantation on condition that they named the depot, which they planned to build at the nearby town of McKinneyville, 'Anguilla'. The town for a while carried both names, McKinneyville and Anguilla. To avoid the resulting confusion, the US Postal Department agreed to the change of name to Anguilla. The town of Anguilla, Mississippi, has now sprawled out into the area that used to be the Anguilla Plantation (see Illus 3). While it flourishes in the cotton belt of the USA, the Anguilla cotton is not now cultivated in Anguilla for export, but it grows wild throughout the island. It lives for several years and if left to itself can grow into a tree some 20 feet high.



3. Map of the town of Anguilla, Mississippi

There is a reason for dwelling for so long on the saga of the spread of Sea Island Cotton from Anguilla to the United States. On 19 July 1906, the famed British colonial agriculturalist Daniel Morris gave a speech at a meeting of the West India Committee in London. He subsequently published the speech as a 19-page pamphlet, "Sea Island Cotton in the West Indies".⁴ In it, he claimed that he had personally secured from the Sea Islands a supply of the very best Sea Island cottonseed and conveyed it to the West Indies. In this way, he took credit for the introduction of the superior variety of cotton growing in the West Indies. Because of his influence and credibility, there has grown up a doubt that *Gossypagi barbadensis* was always endemic to the West Indies. The sources going back to the 1820s cited above hopefully demonstrate the truth, that the traffic went the other way from Anguilla to the Sea Islands via the Bahamas.

There are several salt ponds in Anguilla. These were created millennia ago when coves and bays became cut off from the sea by sand bars forming across their mouths. As with similar sea-level salt ponds in other islands, they never completely dry out. Their bottoms are a few inches below the level of the nearby sea. As the brine becomes concentrated by evaporation, the salt

⁴ Daniel Morris, Sea Island Cotton in the West Indies. (London: Whitefriars Press, 1906).

precipitates out on the bottom of the pond. It forms a thick crust on the bed a few inches below the surface of the pond. This underwater salt deposit was reaped by the workers bending over, breaking off and lifting up bits of the slab of salt. These were thrown into the small salt barges, or 'flats', floating alongside the pickers. It was back-breaking work.

Several ponds in Anguilla were originally picked in this way. The more important salt works were at the Road, Long Path, Rendezvous, Cove, Maundays Bay and West End Ponds. Most were abandoned years ago. Until recently, when Hurricane Klaus in 1984 forced Anguilla's principal market in Trinidad to seek salt elsewhere, only the Road Salt Pond produced salt for export (see Illus 4).



4. The Road Salt Pond, with tufts of salt visible (by the author)

The Dutch were responsible for developing the salt industry of Anguilla. Since the sixteenth century, the Dutch were the major traders in salt in Europe. They used large quantities of it for curing their herring. Their principal source was the salt flats of Portugal. Salt herring was and still is an important Dutch industry, both for local use and for export. Spain was then earnestly Roman Catholic, while the Netherlands were adamantly Protestant. In 1580, Portugal came under Spanish rule. The Protestant Dutch were already at war with Roman Catholic Spain. The Spanish barred their entry to the

Portuguese salt flats. Dutch salt traders were forced to look elsewhere for supplies. This was one reason the Dutch originally came to the Caribbean. They were far more interested in reaping salt, and in trading with the English, French, and Spanish settlements, than in planting cash crops. Dutch ships would sail to the West Indies filled with trading goods and return to the Netherlands filled with salt. That explains why they were content to occupy islands that were all unsuitable for agriculture. St Eustatius (Statia), Saba, Sint Maarten, Curacao, Aruba, and Bonaire were notable principally for their salt ponds. These islands were also strategically placed for trade with their neighbours. Neither the French nor the English were interested in trade in dry goods. This was a niche the Dutch were happy to fill.

The salt industry was carried on in Anguilla from the earliest days of settlement. In 1624, twenty-six years before settlement, Anguilla was described by a Dutch sea captain as having *“no fresh water, but a salt pan with enough salt for two to three ships a year.”* This refers to the Road Salt Pond, the most productive of all the salt works in Anguilla. The early references that we find in the records give us an indication of how the salt industry was operated in Anguilla. Originally, the ponds were communal property. Each man owned only the salt that he reaped. He heaped it up under palm-frond shelters on

the beach. There he stored it, awaiting ships that would visit the island for the sole purpose of purchasing it.

Vere Langford Oliver records in his History of Antigua published in 1894 that in 1708 Governor in Chief Daniel Parke granted title to the Road Salt Pond to one John Brady of Antigua. Brady appears to have done nothing with his prize. He promptly transferred it to one Martin French of Antigua and Montserrat (see Illus 5). What use Martin French made of the pond is not recorded. His name does not reappear in the Anguilla records of the period.

John Brady, Esq., was granted salt ponds in Anguilla 24 Jan. 1708 by Governor Parke, which he assigned to Martin French 21 April 1709.

5. Extract from VL Oliver, History of Antigua, p.275.

Another early reference to the salt industry of Anguilla is met in 1769 when Jehabed Clark swore a formal protest. A 'protest' is a notarized report of loss or damage to a ship or its cargo for insurance and other purposes. Clark's protest relates to the sinking of his brigantine Elizabeth. From this document, it appears that the Elizabeth was wrecked on Sandy Island. The protest reads as follows,

Anguilla. I, John Payne, Deputy Secretary and Notary Public for the Island aforesaid, do by this Public Instrument of Writing make known to all people to whom the same may or shall come that on this twenty ninth day of April one thousand seven hundred and sixty nine,

Jehabed Clark, Master, David Cullam, Mate, and Benjamin Welch, Mariner of and belonging to the late Brigantine Elizabeth owned at Piscataga [. . .] personally appeared before me, and being duly examined and sworn on the Holy Evangelists of Almighty God, depose and says that

On Sunday the 23rd day of this instant month sailed from the island of Grenada bound for this island aforesaid for a load of salt; on the 28th day instant turning up that shore, there being a small sandy key off the harbour being enclosed with a parcel of shoals and shallow ground and not being acquainted, the Brigantine miss-stayed and sailed on the reef, who immediately bilged and found it was impossible to get her off. In a short time after some people from this island came to our assistance and saved all they could, having on board four casks of coffee, one hogshead of rum and two bales of cotton.

Wherefore, I the said John Payne, Deputy Secretary and Notary Public, do at the special instance and request of the said Jehabed Clark, David Cullam and Benjamin Welsh, master, mate and mariner of the said Brigantine Elizabeth, and to and for the benefit and advantage of all and every the person or persons that now are or shall or may be in any way interested in or entitled to either said Brigantine Elizabeth and her lading on board or any part thereof, protest against the vessel's mis-staying and all accidents herein mentioned and for and in respect of all costs, charges, losses, damages and expenses whatsoever that already have or at anytime hereafter shall or may happen to be sustained for touching and concerning the aforesaid Brigantine Elizabeth and her lading being run on shore or any ways however suffered.

Clark relates that on 28 March 1769, he and his crew were on their way sailing from Grenada to Anguilla for a load of salt. Their brigantine Elizabeth, we learn, was registered at Piscataqua (now known as Portsmouth) in the colony of New Hampshire. The Elizabeth's trade in salt in the West Indies was lawful under the Navigation Acts, as New Hampshire was a British colony. It appears that the brig rounded Anguillita, the little islet at the western tip of Anguilla. The Elizabeth sailed eastwards up the northern coast of Anguilla, heading to Road Bay to purchase salt. The crew was not familiar with Road Bay, and Captain Clark accidentally sailed his brig onto the reef at Sandy Island. There, it immediately took in water and sank. Shortly after, people arrived from Sandy Ground Village. They saved all they could of his ship's simple cargo. This amounted to four casks of coffee, one hogshead of rum and two bales of cotton. Of interest is the additional fact that Captain Clark seems to have employed an Anguillian, Benjamin Welch, among his crew.

There are in the Colonial Office records isolated references to the salt industry of Anguilla. So, in 1774, Governor in Chief Ralph Payne reports to Lord Dartmouth of the Committee for Trade and Foreign Plantations that *"500 hogsheads of sugar; 100 hogsheads of rum, 500 bales of cotton, and 50,000 bushels of salt"* had been

exported from Anguilla.⁵ The Road Pond appears in the early years to have been continuously reaped communally, with each family picking as much salt as they could and storing their pickings in heaps on the beach awaiting the visit of a ship looking to purchase. Eventually, in 1853 there commences a flurry of correspondence over the formation of a joint stock company in St Kitts to exploit the Road Salt Pond.⁶ In 1867 Edward Carter Lake acquired the lease of the Road Salt Pond.⁷ It is likely that communal picking of salt ceased around this time.

It was not until the middle of the eighteenth century that a very few Anguillian farmers accumulated sufficient capital to invest in the mills and coppers and slaves necessary at that time to make sugar. Alternating cycles of drought and rain, accompanied by hurricanes, last in the Leeward Islands for about forty years.⁸ This meteorological phenomenon is known to meteorologists as the Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillation.⁹ In recent years,

⁵ CO 152/54 – Dispatch No 17. Payne to Dartmouth on 24 June 1774 reporting on his visit to Anguilla.

⁶ Co 241/37 – Minutes of a meeting of the Assembly of 21.4.1853: Pickwood gives notice of a Bill for the Incorporation of a Company for Working the Anguilla Salt Pond.

⁷ See for example, CO 239/117 - Dispatch No 92/6746. Governor in Chief Stephen J Hill to Lord Buckingham on the lease of the Road Salt Pond.

⁸ Though over a period of 1,000 years the periodicity over the region has been calculated to be approximately 60 years:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4525293/>.

⁹ In recent years, periods of great heat and increased hurricanes have lasted from 1930-1965 and from 1995-today. While the associated increased rainfall means that

periods of increased hurricanes have lasted from 1860-1900, 1930-1965 and 1995-today. If the present period of increased rainfall and of hurricanes lasts for 40 years commencing in 1995, we can expect good rain to fall at least to the year 2035.

We have seen that it was only after the long drought that endured from the 1680s to the 1720s came to an end that sufficient rain began to fall to permit a short-lived sugar cane industry to struggle into existence in Anguilla between the years 1725-1780. The principal sugar factories built in this 55-year period, bits of the ruins of which remain visible, are those at Benzies over-the-hill at North Hill; the Hughes' Estate ruins at South Hill; and Governor William Richardson's sugar works at the St Augustine's Anglican Church in East End. We shall look in more detail at the sugar industry in Anguilla in Chapter 18.

All these ancient industries are now closed. The occasional tobacco plant may survive in someone's grandfather's hedge. Sea Island cotton shrubs are hardy plants and grow wild all over the island. The birds use the lint to make their nests and scatter the seeds in the process. A few surviving grandmothers can recount stories of the hardships involved in picking salt. Sugar cane grows in a few back gardens, for the enjoyment of

fruit trees will flourish for a few more years, we can expect dangerous hurricanes to occur in the Leeward Islands annually until about the year 2035.

the children, but will flourish only if it is watered through the dry season. The best agricultural lands are planted over now with houses, offices, and hotels. No longer is the young Anguillian boy presented at his seventh birthday with a goat kid to look after, so that when it is grown, he can sell it in Sint Maarten for pocket money. Instead, both he and his sister have the latest electronic gadgets and toys to play with. The Anguillians of the twenty-first century find more productive crops to reap than their ancestors ever enjoyed. Some of these new crops and industries, such as tourism, even prefer long periods of drought to ripen them so they can be more easily plucked.