

CHAPTER 18

SUGAR ARRIVES

Sugar cane was not grown in Anguilla until the second quarter of the eighteenth century. In this, Anguilla was late taking up the industry. This date was long after sugar replaced tobacco and cotton in the rest of the Leeward Islands in the mid-seventeenth century. We saw that in the early years of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, cotton and ground provisions were the main cash crops of the island planters. The leading settlers were all described as cotton planters. In Anguilla, cotton survived as the main cash crop of choice until well into the eighteenth century. The Governor in Chief would appoint the richest and most important planter in Anguilla deputy governor. When George Leonard was deputy governor, he was a cotton planter. Until he fades from the scene in 1735, he remained a cotton planter. Leonard was the richest and most influential man in Anguilla at the time of his appointment. As a cotton planter, he was a poor man in comparison to the sugar planters of the Leeward Islands.

By the 1730s, the early sugar planters of Anguilla began to challenge the Howell and Leonard families in wealth and influence. The Hodge, Gumbs and Richardson families were to become the leading families

of the island. Their incomes from their Anguillian plantations were supplemented by the profitable trade of their sloops. They extended their landholdings into St Martin and St Croix. Leonard's last years were troubled by the unwillingness of his wealthier and more unruly subjects to obey his orders. After his death, his family ceased to have any influence in Anguilla. His son George Jr worked his plantations in neighbouring St Martin, but the family gradually disappears from the scene.

The long drought in Anguilla seems temporarily to have come to an end about the year 1725. Weather conditions improved to the extent that the growing of sugar cane became feasible. The population continued to increase. There were white servants and African slaves available to be employed in the new industry. In July 1720, Governor Walter Hamilton sent London a list of the population of the Leeward Islands (see illus 1 and table 1).¹

¹ CO.152/13, folio 159: List of the Inhabitants of the Leeward Islands taken on 18 July 1720.

List of the inhabitants in the Leeward Islands, with the number of white men, free and un-free, together with the number of Negroes, taken on board the 18 day of July 1720

	Free Persons				Servants Free and Un-free				Militia	Negro
	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Men	Women	Boys	Girls		
St Christoph	645	694	626	575	163	54	28	15	755	7,321
Nevis	331	426	206	312	33	18	13	4	378	6,589
Montserrat	486	492	295	320	64	10	9	12	444	3,772
Antigua	739	819	744	652	471	140	45	42	1,109	19,186
Anguilla	133	164	112	139					121	879
Virgin Islands	92	86	90	103					88	364
Gorda	39	48	61	55					53	266
Totals	2167	2729	2164	2156	70					

1. Governor Hamilton's estimate of the population of the Leeward Islands in 1720. CO.152/13. (UK National Archives®)

The original document is torn and faded, but it is possible to reconstruct it in its entirety (see table 1)

	Free Persons				Servants free and un-free				Militia	Negro
	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Men	Women	Boys	Girls		
St Kitts	645	694	626	575	163	54	28	15	755	7,321
Nevis	331	426	206	312	33	18	13	4	378	6,589
Montserrat	486	492	295	320	64	10	9	12	444	3,772
Antigua	739	819	744	652	471	140	45	42	1,109	19,186
Anguilla	133	164	112	139					121	879
Virgin Gorda	92	86	90	103					88	364

Tortola	39	48	61	55					53	266
Total	2,467	2,729	2,134	2,156	731	222	95	73	2,948	37,477

Table 1: List of the Inhabitants of the Leeward Islands, 18 July, 1720: [CO.152/13](#).

This shows that in 1720 the population of Anguilla consisted of 163 white male settlers, of whom 121 were in the militia, 164 white women, 246 white children, and 879 black slaves. The sugar industry typically required a population of many times more black slaves than of whites. The more-or-less evenly balanced numbers of free persons and slaves suggest that sugar was not yet being made in Anguilla.

By 1724, we find the first hint that a small amount of sugar was being grown in the Virgin Islands, with which Anguilla was unofficially classed. Governor John Hart wrote that the produce of the three islands of Anguilla, Virgin Gorda and Tortola were sugar, molasses and cotton.² These he wrote were their cash crops. The islanders, he explained, generally illegally disposed of them to the Dutch in St Eustatius or to the Danes at St Thomas, where they also purchased the essentials that they needed. He commented that these essentials were not of any significance as the inhabitants lived in a very poor condition.

² CO.152/14, folio 325: Hart to the Council on 10 July 1724. It is not clear from the report whether each of the three islands was producing each of the three products. That is one possible interpretation. It is equally possible that he lumped the produce together, and that only one of them, eg, Tortola, produced any sugar and molasses.

Because of the drought conditions, it is unlikely that sugar cane was growing in Anguilla as early as 1724. In any event, the date of 1724 is nearly eighty years after the usual date of 1640 given for the commencement of sugar cane growing in Barbados. With the production of sugar and rum, came an increase in wealth for a few of the major landowners. There was the usual increase in the ratio of slaves to free people. The smaller parcels of potential cane land began to be bought up by the larger planters. That may be why the population statistics for the year 1724 show that there now were 360 whites and 900 slaves as compared to 548 whites and 879 slaves just four years earlier. The falling number of free persons compared to slaves is a good indicator of the presence of a sugar industry. The consolidation of land in the hands of the wealthier planters, and the migration of the landless free persons to other places where they might have a chance to start over, is another indicator.

With the increase in wealth of the major planters of the Virgin Islands that sugar production signalled, the communities were now ready for their first Councils. Governor Hart was in Anguilla in May of 1724 on official business. He appointed the first Council, but we are not certain who they were. Whatever little sugar industry there was, was very poor and of limited extent. He would

not have found many planters that he would consider suitable to be appointed members of a Council.

During his 1724 visit to Anguilla Governor Hart issued patents to land. He gave John Bryan and Daniel Bryan their patent to four parcels of land.³ The description of the parcels reads:

The one bounded southward with the lands of Thomas Floyd and William Farrington running east, from thence to the land of John Richardson Senior, bounded with the land now in possession of Ann Williams, bound with the great Spring, running east to the path known by the name of Shoal Bay path, running along the said path bounded with Thomas Lake [. . .]avana.

Also, one other parcel of land bounded on the west with the land of John Lake, southwardly with Edward and Thomas Lake, north with a ledge of rocks.

Also, a piece or parcel of land in The Valley bounded northwardly and eastwardly with Abraham Howell, southwardly with [. . .] Connor and Paul Rohan, westwardly with Governor George Leonard.

Also, one other parcel of land in the Stony Ground bound on the north with John Connor, eastward with the land of [. . .] Harrigan, southward with the land of William [. . .] running to the westward a half mile.

The first parcel was described as bound on the south with the lands of Thomas Floyd and William Farrington, on the east with the land of Ann Williams and the Great Spring, with the Shoal Bay Path and Thomas

³ Anguilla Archives: [John and Daniel Bryan's 1724 patent](#).

Lake. 'The Great Spring' was an alternative name for the Fountain Cavern. This first plantation was very large by Anguilla standards. It stretched from the Farrington in the south to the Brimegin and Shoal Bay Plantations in the north. This was most of the area we know as Stoney Ground.

The boundaries of the second parcel were not any more clearly described. No doubt it was obvious at the time what was meant by "*bound on the west with the land of John Lake, south with Edward Lake and Thomas Lake, and north with a ledge of rocks.*" Today, we have no idea where these boundaries were.

The third parcel of land was situated in the Valley. The fact that Abraham Howell lay on the north and east of it suggests that it was a plantation lying to the west and south of Wallblake Plantation, ie, that it was the Stacia Valley Plantation. "*Westwardly with Governor George Leonard*" suggests that at this time Leonard owned the George Hill Plantation.

The fourth parcel was in Stoney Ground. Its boundaries are unclear, but, with its southern boundary being a half mile long, it was also a substantial plantation by Anguillian standards.

From an endorsement at the foot of this patent we see John Bryan the following year transferring his half interest in the above lands to his brother, Daniel Bryan,

who was left as the sole owner. Was this development, perhaps, a sign of the conglomerating of estates that took place as sugar began to replace cotton? Perhaps John was joining the stream of Quaker settlers moving on the Virgin Islands, or more likely he was joining the Anguillian settlement on St Croix. He was shedding interests in land in Anguilla that he no longer wanted. He disappears, and nothing more is heard of him in the archives.

Some forty years later, one John Bryan of St Croix was sued by John Hancock, a carpenter of Anguilla, for a debt. We learn from the record of the trial that as a result of another suit, his land at Little Harbour was sold to Edward Payne. We cannot be sure this the same John Bryan. Daniel Bryan, as seen in various earlier patents and conveyances, owned land at the end of the seventeenth century in the Valley Division and in Stoney Ground. In Thomas Lake's 1717 conveyance he was described as possessing the land of Mrs Ann Hackett at Stoney Ground.⁴ The likelihood is that John Bryan emigrated with the Anguillians who were settling St Croix, and that his family became Danish subjects. They did not give up their Anguillian connections. With their sloops and family contacts intact, they continued to own property on both islands and to travel from one island to the other for years to come.

⁴ Anguilla Archives: [Thomas Lake's 1717 conveyance](#).

The Anguillian planters chose an inauspicious time to move into sugar production. The price of rum and sugar during the 1730's was depressed on the London market. The lowest prices were reached in 1733.⁵ By that date, sugar cane was grown on Anguilla. We do not know when and to what extent locally made sugar and rum began to be exported. In 1734, Governor Mathew reported that the Virgins, including Anguilla, produced no sugar for export.⁶ Their chief products then, he wrote, were cotton and ground provisions, ie, maize, pigeon peas and sweet potatoes. Five years later, in 1739, deputy governor John Richardson (1679-1742) made his will. Among many bequests, he left as we shall see below his "*mill, stills, boiling house and still house*" to his wife Joan Richardson for her life and after her death to his son, William Richardson, and grandsons John Richardson and William Richardson for so long as they planted cane to make rum and sugar.⁷

When deputy governor John Richardson refers in his will to his mill, he is not referring to a windmill. There is no windmill on this estate. His canes were crushed in an animal round. This consisted of two iron mills one of which was turned by animal power against the other, the sugar canes being inserted by hand between the two of

⁵ Frank Wesley Pitman, The Development of the British West Indies (1917) p.92.

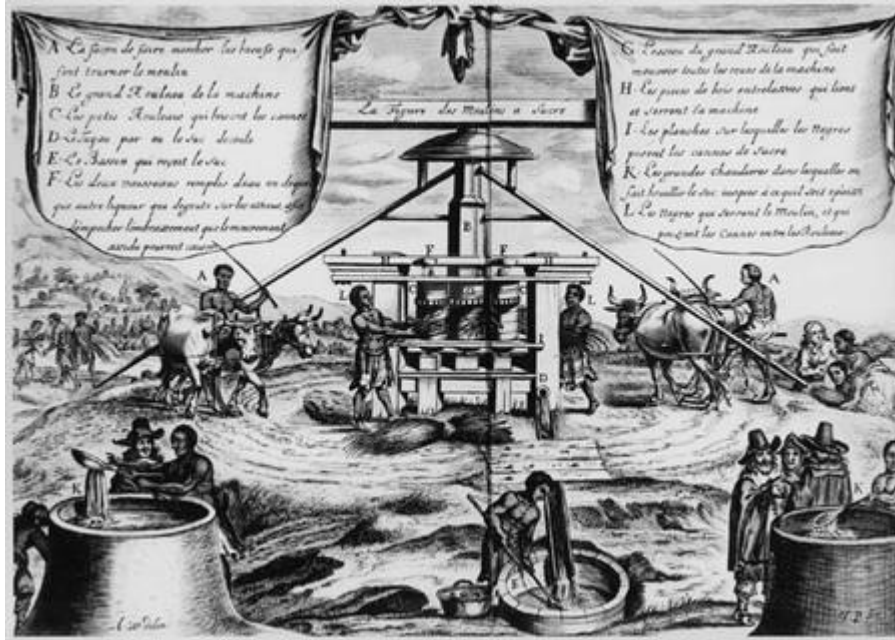
⁶ CO.152/20: Mathew to the Committee.

⁷ His tomb with its engraved slate slab can be found at Sandy Hill Cemetery.

them. In a typical animal round, donkeys, mules or other cattle were yoked to a long axle attached to one of the mills. They were made to walk round and round, turning the mill to crush the canes which were pushed by hand between the mills as they turned. Animal rounds were common in the Leeward Islands in the early period of sugar manufacture. The more efficient windmill was soon introduced into the richer islands of Antigua, Nevis and St Kitts. In Anguilla few windmill ruins, if any, can be seen. Most of the mills in Anguilla were animal rounds (see illus 2).

By tying this condition to his gift, deputy governor John Richardson was trying to ensure posthumously that his heirs would be obliged to keep up the struggle to grow sugar cane. His will reads in part:

Item. I give and devise unto my lawful and now married wife Joan Richardson all my estate both real and personal during her life or widowhood freely to be possessed and enjoyed by her my said wife, and at her decease or end of widowhood, to be divided in manner and form as follows.



2. An animal round as depicted by Charles de Rochefort.

Item. I give and devise unto my two grandsons John and William Richardson the sons of my son John Richardson of the island of St Martins deceased a certain part of my plantation in the said Island being bounded on the north side with a parcel of land formerly known by the name of Arrowsmiths next adjoining the Church in Spring Division of said Island running along said highway to a tamarind tree now standing to the westward and adjacent to my now dwelling house, from thence running along said highway to the old breastwork near the south end of my fence, and from said breastwork running to a cliff of rocks on the north end of Long Pond Bay, and is bounded on the south side with the sea, and from said land of Arrowsmiths running the same course of said land of Arrowsmiths to a pond known by the name of Calls pond, and is bounded westwardly with the neighbouring plantations;

and also a parcel of land I now have in Stony Valley, and is bounded on the north side with the lands of William Farrington Sr deceased

and also the one moiety or half of the land that I lately purchased of Joseph Burnett;
which three parcels of land to be and remain to them my said grandsons, and the lawful begotten male heirs of their bodies, the elder being preferred before the younger and for want of such male heirs said land shall descend to my son William Richardson and the lawful begotten male heirs on the part of my said son William Richardson [and for want of such male heirs] it shall go to the female heirs of my said grandsons John and William Richardson, and for want of such female heirs it shall go to the next surviving heirs of blood and to their heirs forever, equally to be divided betwixt them. They shall not sell, or make away with any of said lands or Plantations except it be to my son William Richardson or to his lawful begotten heirs or line of blood.

Item. It is my Will that my mill, stills, boiling house and still house with all the necessaries and utensils thereto belonging shall be and remain where they are now are for the joint benefit of my said son and grandsons and their heirs as above said as long as they plant canes to make rum and sugar, and when they cease from such planting canes and making rum and sugar as above said they shall be sold, excepting the boiling house and still house, and the price thereof equally to be divided between my children and grand children, remembering that the children of my deceased daughter Mary Wingood and the child of my deceased daughter Elizabeth King shall have the one fifth part thereof divided between the child of my deceased daughter Elizabeth King, to have the one half, and the children of

my deceased daughter Mary Wingood shall have the other half to be divided betwixt them, and the children of my deceased son John Richardson shall have the one fifth part divided betwixt them.

Item. I give and devise unto my son William Richardson all the rest of my lands in said Island together with my now dwelling house and other houses on said land except what is heretofore willed and devised or bequeathed and other appurtenances and privileges thereto belonging or there from arriving, to him my said son and the lawful begotten male heirs of body and in their lawful begotten male heirs of his body and their line or lineage being males, and, for want of such male heirs it shall go to the male heirs of the part of my said grandsons John and William Richardson, and for want of such heirs it shall go to ye lawful begotten female heirs on the part of my son William Richardson, and for want of such female heirs, it shall go to the next surviving heirs of blood and to their heirs forever, equally to be divided betwixt them. He my said son shall not sell nor make away with any of my said lands or plantations except it be to my said grandsons or either of them, or to either of their lawful begotten heirs or line of blood.

Item. I will that my son William Richardson shall be at half cost and trouble to build each of my said grandsons a house of thirty-two feet long with height and breadth proportionable, both to be boarded and shingled, on their parts of said plantation when and where they shall think proper.

Item. It is also my will that if I recover the interest in Antigua or any part thereof which belonged to my deceased father John Richardson Sr of said island of Antigua or any other that my said grandsons shall have one moiety and my son William shall have the other

freely to be held and enjoyed by them in such manner as in every particular prescribed touching my estate in this Island.

We learn several things about Anguilla in the 1730s from this will. For one, by 1739 the island was sufficiently developed to have more than one Anglican church. Not only was there the Anglican Church at The Valley, but now also a second one in the East End of the island. Richardson referred to it in the second paragraph above only in passing, in describing the location of one of his devises. The land in question, he writes, is “*adjoining the Church in Spring Division.*” The site of this church was probably where the St Augustine’s Anglican Church stands at East End at present. The present Church is built to the south of his sugar works. Their remains, the animal round, boiling house, and curing house, can be seen to this day part hidden in the scrub just a hundred feet north of the church buildings.

We see how far flung his family was. The Richardson family was in Anguilla from the earliest days of settlement. His father John Richardson Sr owned a plantation in Antigua. The likelihood is that he acquired it at about the same time as his contemporary, deputy governor George Leonard, bought property in Antigua. His deceased son, John Richardson Jr, lived and died a Frenchman in St Martin. We saw that his grandchildren,

John and William, joined the Danish settlement in St Croix. Only William was left in Anguilla.

The Gumbs family also tried to improve their lot by growing sugar cane. For the few deceptive years that it rained more than usual in Anguilla, they managed as best they could, but not with any great success. William Gumbs Sr was a member of John Richardson's Council. By the year 1738 his name begins to be mentioned as a member of the Council. He was probably one of the wealthiest men on the island at the time. He died a grandfather in 1749, leaving several plantations to his children in his will of the same year.⁸ It reads in part:

Imprimis. I give and bequeath to my dear beloved wife Elizabeth Gumbs all my estate both real and personal during her life or widowhood.

Item. I give and bequeath to William Gumbs my eldest son all my dwelling houses, out houses and store houses situated upon my place of residence with my coppers and mill willing that whatsoever products of cane are reaped from my other lands shall not be debarred of the privilege of being made of by the said coppers or mill if by those to whom underwritten it is willed shall be desired. Computing value the said building to six hundred pounds currency of the island, willing when once an equal dividend is made of all the rest of my personal estate here to the rest of my children, then he the said William Gumbs shall come in coequal in what is over and above the said dividend.

⁸ Anguilla Archives: [William Gumbs' 1749 Will](#).

Item. I give and bequeath unto Thomas Gumbs my fourth son a piece of land commonly known by the name of Hazard Hill in this island purchased of one John Lloyd and that the said Thomas Gumbs must be made equal with every child.

Item. I give and bequeath unto Benjamin Gumbs my fifth son a certain piece of land commonly known by the name of Hazard Hill in this island purchased of one Thomas Lake and that the said Benjamin Gumbs must be made equal with every child.

Item. I give and bequeath unto my fourth daughter Joanna Jones and Catherine Gumbs my youngest daughter the lands and houses at Crocus Bay and a piece of land known by the name of the Great Cockpit also a piece of land purchased of one Thomas Skerret in this island and that the said Joanna Jones and Catherine Gumbs shall be made equal with every child.

Item. I give and bequeath unto my second daughter Mary Barton a piece of land in the island of St. Martins in the Dutch Quarter adjoining Mr Aaron Westerland and my lot on the bay and that the said Mary Barton shall be made equal with every child.

Item. As to what little Negroes I gave away is not to come in when a day of division or dividend shall be made.

Item. I give and bequeath unto my son Jacob Gumbs my land in the Dutch part of St Martins which he now lives on but the Negroes, mill, coppers, still to be valued and the said Jacob Gumbs shall be made equal with every child.

From these devises William Gumbs was a substantial planter by Anguillian standards. He owned sugar estates

not only in Anguilla, but in Dutch St Maarten as well. We first saw him in the Archives when he was mentioned in the 1739 conveyance of Thomas Hughes as owning land at Crocus Bay. In the year he made the will and died, he was a sugar planter. He bequeathed to his widow Elizabeth Gumbs, as we saw above, all his estate during her life or widowhood. He left his first son William Gumbs all his Anguillian dwelling houses, outhouses and storerooms, with his coppers and mill.⁹ He left his fourth son Thomas Gumbs, John Lloyd's Hazard Hill. To his fifth son Jacob Gumbs, he left his sugar estate in Dutch St Maarten, and an equal share with his other children in the slaves, mill, coppers and still. Jacob already owned his own sugar works and estate in St Martin. To his daughters, Johanna Jones and Catherine Gumbs, he left his lands and houses at Crocus Bay, at Great Cockpit, and other land. To his daughter Mary Barton, he left other lands in St Maarten. What we do not know with any certainty is the location of his sugar plantations in Anguilla.

William Gumbs Sr was a member of Governor Arthur Hodge's 1741 Council. He was too elderly to play an important role in the fighting in 1744 and 1745. He was one of those Anguillians who sent Governor Hodge to England to plead the cause of retaining St Martin as a

⁹ We later find William Gumbs Jr serving on Benjamin Gumbs' 1750 Council.

British possession and an Anguillian dependency during the peace negotiations. As a sugar planter and landowner in both the British and Dutch territories, he was put to much inconvenience. Because of his holdings, he was suspect by the Leeward Islands British administrators of harbouring either Dutch or French sympathies. The Dutch in turn suspected, probably with justification, that he retained British sympathies. He received little assistance from either of them when administrative problems arose.

The litigation that caused William Gumbs' 1749 will to be preserved in the Anguilla Archives was due to his estate not being properly administered after his death. The will became the subject of lawsuits in the 1750s and 1760s. When his personal estate was eventually appraised in 1754, it included the buildings and equipment set out in table 2.

	£ s
1 copper and 2 furnaces	40 00
2 skimmers and 1 ladle old	1 10
Boiling House and 3 coolers	50 00
1 still worm and kitchen and worm tub	95 00
Mill Oct	80 00
1 old mare	10 00
1 house	10 00
a white faced horse	20 00
1 mare	14 00
1 mare and foal	16 10
a house	100 00
Negroes	
Tower Hill	50 00
Toney	30 00
Bristol	42 00

Fortune	15 00
Limbrick	33 00
Cudgoe	24 00
Venter	34 00
Adam	100 00
France	45 00
Scipio	70 00
Will	46 00
Jim	65 00
Prince	60 00
[. . .]	30 00
Old Harry	65 00
Negro boys	
Mathew	50 00
Cambridge	45 00
Catou	41 00
Peter	34 00
Quachey	34 00
Abraham	33 00
Amboy	33 00
Tony	25 00
Fontu	20 00
Trouble	15 00
Harry	15 00
Women	
Sarah	15 00
Harry	40 00
Mimboe	40 00
Susannah	45 00
Morotor	10 00
Bess	35 00
Liddey & child	60 00
Cubbo	40 00
Dina	40 00
Nan	42 00
Present	25 00
Cattalin	12 00
Moll	12 00
Bella	10 00
Henrietta	25 00

Table 2: The 1754 Valuation of William Gumbs' Estate (Anguilla Archives).

From this assessment, other than his house the most valuable equipment on his sugar estate was his distillery. That tells us that William Gumbs' probably grew sugar canes principally to distil rum. His boiling house

contained only one copper, and two furnaces. One copper would not have been enough to make sugar. If he was producing rum he would not have needed the several coppers found in sugar-producing factories. He would convert the sugar cane juice to molasses by boiling it in his copper, and then fermenting and distilling it to produce alcohol.

By far the major part of William Gumbs' estate lay in his slaves. The appraisers listed their names and their values. There were sixteen male slaves valued at £789.50. There were eleven boys worth £345.00. There were fifteen women and children valued at £451.00. The total estate amounted to £2,022.00 current money. Of this sum, the land, sugar mills, houses, stills and animals, were appraised as being worth £437.00. The balance of his estate consisted of his slaves. Of the sixteen male slaves, the names of two are missing. Of the remaining fourteen, only one bore an African name: Cudjoe. He was an old man as he was only valued at £24.00. The likelihood is that he came from Africa and was not born in the West Indies. Others of the men bore European place names such as Tower Hill, Bristol and France. Yet others carried classical names such as Scipio and Cato. Some bore English nicknames such as Tony and Jim. The estimated value of each varied from a low of £15.00 for Fortune to a high of £100.00 for Adam. Among the

eleven boys were two African names: Quacky and Fontu, and one European place name: Cambridge. There were four biblical names: Adam, Mathew, Peter and Abraham. There was a variety of other soubriquets such as Amboy and Trouble. Among the fifteen women, there were three African names: Mimboe, Moroter and Cubboe. There were four traditional European first names such as Sarah and Henrietta. There was a variety of nicknames such as Bess, Nan and Moll. In this alone they were distinguished from the horses, which were not named. Their value far exceeded that of house and factory, which were very poor structures.

William Gumbs' son, Thomas Gumbs Sr, died a few years later, in 1754. He was a prominent planter and a member of both Arthur Hodge's Council of 1741 and of his brother Benjamin Gumbs' Council of 1750. He inherited John Lloyd's Hazard Hill Plantation from his father. By the time he died, he owned other estates, including Kidneys Plantation and Diggeries Plantation, the locations of which are now uncertain. In his 1753 will, he divided up his estates among his six living children. He was able to leave his daughter Margaret a feather bed and furniture. He did not mention any other personal possessions. He did not state whether his estates grew cotton or sugar cane.¹⁰ From the period we are dealing

¹⁰ Anguilla Archives: [Thomas Gumbs' 1753 Will](#).

with, it is safe to assume that he grew cane, but it was not a very profitable enterprise.

Thomas Gumbs' son, Thomas Gumbs Jr, served on his uncle Benjamin Gumbs' Council of 1750-1768. He made his last will in 1769. He died some time before 1774, the year his will was probated.¹¹ He was a major planter, owning several estates. These included Richard's Land (Little Dix), John Ruan's Land, the Long Ground, and North Side Plantations. Whatever the produce of his plantations, it did not include any great quantity of sugar cane. He did not claim in his will to own a sugar mill or rum still.

Throughout the years when sugar cane was grown in Anguilla, roughly 1725-1780, it was never a successful crop, unlike in the main sugar islands. Sugar cane never occupied all the agricultural land of Anguilla, as in the sugar islands. It was grown on the estates only of the wealthiest and most successful planters. They grew it only on their best agricultural land. Given the largely rocky surface of Anguilla, this was only a small part of their lands. The sugar industry did not last long. Before the end of the American Revolutionary War, all trace of it disappears from the Anguilla records.

Small quantities of sugar cane continued to be grown in Anguilla into the nineteenth century. During

¹¹ Anguilla Archives: [Thomas Gumbs Jr's 1769 Will](#).

periods of good weather, when sufficient quantities survived to make it worthwhile, it was cut and shipped the ninety miles to the factories of St Kitts to be ground up. This was uneconomic. The practice did not persist for more than a few years.

In the Archives, it is not unusual to come across a planter with large areas of land, none of which appears to be given over to sugar cane. When in 1739, Elizabeth Rogers purchased half of Crocus Bay Plantation from Samuel Downing of Tortola for £172.00, there is no indication that it was under sugar cane.¹² She sold it a few years later to Joseph Burnett, together with a part of the adjoining Roaches Hill Plantation, for £183 3s 4d. It was still not under sugar cane. Crocus Bay Plantation was more likely devoted to small stock and food crops rather than to sugar cane. There is no trace of a sugar round or boiling house in Crocus Bay. Most of the land in Anguilla over the centuries and up to the twentieth century was dedicated to small stock rearing with small patches of subsistence farming in the shallow bottoms.

Another important planter of Anguilla's third generation who died about this time was Darby Carty. The Cartys first appeared in Anguilla in 1695. Owin Carty was then mentioned as a former owner of a parcel of land in the Valley Division. Darby Carty, possibly Owin's son,

¹² Anguilla Archives: [Elizabeth Rogers' 1739 deed.](#)

first appears in the Anguilla Census of 1716. No woman is listed as being present in his household. That means that he was then a single man, most likely a widower, as his household contained four children and three slaves. By the time of the 1717 census the following year, two of his children were adult men in his household, and only one was listed as a child. He was evidently prospering, as he now owned an additional three slaves. He must have re-married, as there were now two women in his household, perhaps a wife and a grown-up daughter. None of his family ventured with Abraham Howell to Crab Island. Darby Carty Jr signed the Proclamation of 1727. There was no explanation why Darby Carty Sr did not sign, or indeed, whether he was still alive on Anguilla.

It was probably Darby Carty Jr who purchased a patent to various parcels of land around the pond in Sandy Ground from Governor in Chief John Hart in 1724.¹³ The background to the patent is expressed in this way,

George, by the Grace of God of Great Britain, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the faith etc. and sovereign Lord of the island of Anguilla and all other His Majesty's American Plantations and Colonies.

To all to whom these letters patent shall come, greeting.

¹³ Patent issued by Governor John Hart in St Kitts to Darby Carty, located in the Anguilla Record of Deeds, 1792-1803 in the St Kitts Archives, transcribed by Heather Nielson in 2005.

Whereas we are possessed of divers lands in our said island of Anguilla, and for as much as we are sensible that the settling and improving thereof will in time be of service to us and our [heirs] and the revenue of our Kingdom be thereby augmented, the which we have taken into consideration and being willing to give due encouragement to such persons as are desirous to settle the same, know ye therefore that we of our especial grace certain knowledge and mere motion by and with the advice and consent of our trusty and well beloved John Hart, our Captain General and Governor in Chief in and over all our Leeward Charrabee Islands in America lying to the leeward of the island of Guadeloupe and to the windward of the island of Saint John de Porto Rico in America aforesaid, have given, granted and confirm unto our well beloved subject, Darby Carty, his heirs and assigns forever, the certain piece or parcel of land in our said island as hereafter mentioned,

The patent then grants several parcels of land, all to the north and east of the Road Salt Pond. To the west there was only the sea.

viz: a certain plantation or parcel of land lying and being in the Road Division of the said island of Anguilla, bounded on the north side with the land in the possession of Thomas Coakley and Winifred Bates and running north north west to the top of the hills bounded with the northern plantations; thence running east to the land of George Leonard senior; south with the land of Thomas Romney; south and west with the Road Pond, containing by estimation fifty acres, be the same more or less, and now in the tenure and occupation of the aforesaid Darby Carty,

as also one other small piece or parcel of land in the north side of the Road Pond bounded north north west with the land of Thomas Romney senior, thence north to the top of the hills and bounded as aforesaid; east with the land of the aforesaid Thomas Romney senior, south with the Pond and now in the tenure and occupation of the said Darby Carty containing by estimation five acres, be the same more or less,

as also two small slips or portions of land lying on the south side of the Pond, the one bounded north with the Pond, east with the land of Edward Coakley, south to the most southern plantations, west with the land now in the possession of John Pickerin;

the other parcel of land bounded north with the Pond, east with the land of John Pickerin aforesaid, south with the most southern plantations, west with the land now in the possession of Arthur Hodge junior, which both said parcels of land contain about five acres, be the same more or less, and now in the tenure and occupation of the aforesaid Darby Carty,

From these words, we see that Darby Carty was working these lands for some time before he got his patent to them. By obtaining this patent, he was solidifying his title and making it unchallengeable. It is not clear what crops or other produce he derived from the lands, but it is probable that it was mainly used for keeping small stock and ground provisions. By occupying land around the pond, he was acquiring the right to pick salt each year during the season.

In 1741 one William Carty, probably a son of Darby Carty Sr, witnessed the deed of gift of John Hughes Sr to his son John Hughes Jr.

It is probably Darby Carty Jr's will of 1757 that we have.¹⁴ In it he described himself as a planter, but he does not say that he was a sugar planter. From his will, there is a suggestion that there were grandchildren living at the time. He left all his estate to his wife Elizabeth, and after her death to his children. He is particularly proud of his 'Brenana Garding', which can only be a misspelling for his banana garden. This, he directs, is to be "*at liberty for all my children.*"

William Gumbs Sr's widow Elizabeth made her last will in 1760. She died nine years later. In addition to the residuary gifts of land made to their children by her husband in 1748, she left to William Jr and Benjamin the Forest Plantation, still known by that name at Forest Bay on the south coast of the island.¹⁵

In 1764 we see William Gumbs Jr giving his slave son Harry his freedom by the instrument known as a 'deed of manumission'. By this time, he is known as William Gumbs Sr. The deed reads:

¹⁴ Anguilla Archives: Darby Carty's 1757 Will.

¹⁵ Anguilla Archives: Elizabeth Gumbs' 1760 Will.

Anguilla. To all certain people to whom this present writing shall come, I William Gumbs of the above said Island send greeting.

Know ye that I the said William Gumbs Sr for divers good causes and considerations me hereunto moving, but more especially for and in consideration of the love, good will and affection which I have and do bear towards a Mulatto boy known and called by the name of Harry, have given and granted and released and by these presents do hereby clearly and absolutely give, grant and release unto the aforesaid Mulatto boy Harry his freedom and absolute liberty peaceably and quietly to possess and enjoy the same without being disturbed or molested or hindered of the same freedom and liberty by any man or manner of person or persons that shall or may hereafter claim any manner of title to the aforesaid Mulatto boy Harry from, by or under me.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal this thirty-first day of October and in the year of our Lord God one thousand seven hundred and sixty four, 1764.

Signed, Sealed and Delivered]

*In the presence of us:] (sd) William
Gumbs (LS)*

(sd) William Bryan

(sd) Thomas Gumbs Sr

Harry was most probably William's son. Harry's deed is typical of an Anguillian manumission of our period. It was the most important document that a free black man in Anguilla could own. Under the slave laws of the time, if a black man was found 'at large' and could not prove that

he was a free man, he was liable to be considered as a slave. In Anguilla, where most people were known to each other, that might not be much of a risk. But a free black man took a risk if travelled to another island, perhaps as a sailor on one of the island schooners, without proof he was a free man. It was always essential that he be able to produce evidence of his status, or risk re-enslavement. It was not unknown, in the days when all cooking was done on open fireplaces, for important documents to be set on fire by accident. The tragedy that such a mischief caused was for many years captured in the cry, "*My free-paper burned*". School children of today will not be familiar with the expression, but until recently it was common to hear West Indian school children complaining at the end of the long school vacation in September, "*My free-paper burned!*"

Deputy governor Benjamin Gumbs' 1768 will indicates to us the wide extent of his sugar estates and holdings. Benjamin Gumbs II, as he is also known, was evidently the most powerful man on the island at the time. He was an important planter and a member of Arthur Hodge's Council from 1741. He inherited more property at the death of his father, Benjamin Gumbs Sr, in 1748. In 1750 he was appointed deputy governor of Anguilla. He ruled over a Council that consisted of the island's major merchants and planters. He governed Anguilla

until his death in 1768. He left a large family, most of whom appear to have emigrated from the island within a few years of his death. His youngest son Benjamin Gumbs III was appointed deputy governor in his turn. Benjamin III was later to become famous as the Col Benjamin Gumbs who led the defence of Anguilla against the French in 1797. But that is outside of our period.

Benjamin Gumbs II made his last will on his deathbed in 1768. He evidently wrote the will himself, as the bequests are written in a way that a lawyer would not have written them. They are very confused. He makes gifts of land he previously gave away by deed. Despite such confused bequests, we are grateful that he listed his extensive sugar holdings in full. These included Statia Valley, Katouche Bay and Shoal Bay Plantations, True Loves, Hazard Hill, and Dog Island.¹⁶ A contemporary legal opinion by St Kitts attorney John Barker on the validity and effect of the bequests in his will is filed in the Archives together with his will. They were exhibits in litigation that took place after his death, which is why they have survived.

One of deputy governor Gumbs' devises is of his sugar estate at Katouche Bay which he left under the name 'Catouche Bay Plantation' to his two daughters, Ann Warner and Catherine Payne. They received the

¹⁶ Anguilla Archives: [Benjamin Gumbs' 1768 Will](#).

northern and southern halves respectively. The dwelling house and its appurtenances were on the southern half, up the hill above the sugar mill and boiling house. All that remains to show their location are the many fragments of European pottery and glass dating back to the 1760s that litter the ancient public pathway alongside the pond.

It was his wish that the boiling house on the southern half should be held by each of his two daughters in equal shares. From this we learn that there was an animal round, and a boiling house associated with the plantation. There is no mention of a curing house. The sisters operated Katouche Bay as a sugar cane plantation until an extended period of drought caused it to revert to ground provisions and grazing of small stock. Little is left of the early plantation works. All that survives relatively intact is the old plantation well. It was used for drawing water for cattle and small stock pastured around until the middle of the nineteenth century. Now that it too is abandoned, it is slowly falling into disrepair. The northern and southern escarpments of the valley show evidence of continuing and recent erosion. The many boulders that litter the ground lie there as mute testimony to the futile effort that was put into trying to squeeze some profit out of the estate over the past centuries.

The location of the boiling house can be found, if with difficulty. It has completely collapsed, and trees now

grow out of the rubble. There is no trace of either the animal round or the curing house where the barrels of muscovado sugar, if any, were stored until they were ready to be shipped. It is very possible that the sugar cane juice was used solely for distillation into rum and that no sugar was made. The animal round was located on the slope immediately above the boiling house. We know that because the architecture of a sugar factory of this type required that the juice from the mill run by gravity to the boiling house where it dripped into the boilers waiting for it. A visit to the location reveals that the soil from higher up the hill has subsequently eroded and covered the site of the round. There are no ruins of foundations of houses to be seen anywhere on the slopes of the valley. The buildings of the estate were evidently never very substantial and have now eroded away.

The modern asphalt road on the northern slope leading out of the valley that gives access to the ruins is steep, running through the Masara Resort. They can also be accessed from the south-east by the ancient Amerindian footpath from George Hill Village which is still in use to this date. The old public footpath from North Hill Village to Crocus Bay descends from the clifftop to Katouche Bay then along the beach and up the pathway that is now covered by the modern road. Until the 1980s these paths were in regular use by pedestrians, until a

modern asphalt road around the top of the valley was built.

Assuming some sugar was made, there is no sign of the ruins of a jetty from which the hogsheads of sugar were shipped. Katouche Estate was poor and unproductive and could not afford a jetty. When Benjamin Gumbs II followed by his daughters cured what little sugar his estate produced, their workers rolled the barrels of muscovado sugar from the curing house down to the beach.¹⁷ At the beach, the barrels were tipped into rowing boats and taken out to the visiting ships that transhipped them to their destination. There was no need for Benjamin Gumbs to go to the expense of building a jetty. At that time there was no question of using a road. Other than the main road from the airport to the old Court House on Crocus Hill asphalted in the 1960s, the public roads of Anguilla were rocky, dirt roads until after the British Invasion of 1971 when the first asphalted roads began to be built.

Of all the plantation buildings that may once have stood in Katouche Bay, only the old estate well is easy to locate. It lies just off the track that runs from George Hill Village down past the old Gavannah phosphate mine to the sea. The well is some eight feet in diameter and ten

¹⁷ Muscovado was the name given to sugar of the lowest quality. It was raw or unrefined sugar obtained from the juice of the sugarcane by evaporation and draining of the surplus molasses.

feet to the water. It lies within a short distance of the ruined boiling house. The well was preserved because it was kept in use until the 1950s for watering the cattle that were pastured in the valley. The well is the only real evidence that remains of the previous agricultural use of this valley. The water in the well is only some two feet deep. The well is lined with cut stone held together by lime, evidence of its comparative old age. It is now abandoned and beginning to be filled with leaf and wood litter.

The Coakleys of this third generation of Anguillians were members of an important Anguillian, St Martin and St Croix planter family. The Coakleys appeared early in the records of Anguilla. Two Edward Coakleys and one Thomas Coakley were listed in the 1716 census.¹⁸ One of the Edwards was obviously a young man, just married with no children and only four slaves. The other Edward had five children and twelve slaves. Thomas had nine children and twenty-two slaves. Thomas Coakley, Edward Coakley Jr, and Caesar Coakley signed the 1717 Crab Island petition. They were present with Abraham Howell for the 1717 Crab Island census.¹⁹ On Crab Island, only Thomas was accompanied by slaves, three of them. Edward left five slaves behind with his wife and three children. William Coakley did not accompany the

¹⁸ Chapter 10: Crab Island Revisited.

¹⁹ Chapter 10 *ibidem*.

party to Crab but was present on Anguilla for the 1717 census.²⁰ He was then married with six children and eighteen slaves. He was a planter of substance on Anguilla even at that time. Edward, Thomas Sr, and Caesar Coakley all survived the Crab Island escapade to sign the 1727 proclamation.²¹ Edward Coakley is next seen witnessing deputy governor John Richardson's will in 1739.²²

Benjamin Coakley of Anguilla was the son of William Coakley Sr and the nephew of John Coakley Sr, two Anguillian brothers who went to St Croix in the early 1740s.²³ William Coakley acquired a plantation in St Croix by marrying a rich widow. He later transferred this estate to his brother John and moved back to Anguilla where he died leaving a will dated 1768. John Coakley Sr also acquired a St Croix sugar plantation known as Castle Coakley. His heirs continued owning this property until 1810.

William Coakley's 1768 last will and testament dealt with the Coakley's Road Estate.²⁴ By the time of his death his children were all living in St Croix. Coakley's Road Estate was a cotton and sugar plantation at Sandy

²⁰ Chapter 10 *ibidem*.

²¹ Chapter 10 *ibidem*.

²² See *ante*.

²³ According to research on the Coakley family done by George F Tyson and citing the VI Families website.

²⁴ Anguilla Archives: [William Coakley's 1768 Will](#).

Ground, running to the south and east of the Road Salt Pond. It is mentioned as a part of Darby Carty's boundary in his patent set out earlier. The ruins of a sugar mill, probably belonging to the Coakleys, stood until recently on a plot of land at Sandy Ground beach, just to the south of the Customs building. It has now disappeared to make way for modern construction. The Coakley plantation house stood on the eastern slopes of North Hill, adjacent to and east of the cemetery. We know that from William Coakley's will, which reads:

Item. I do hereby order and set apart one piece or parcel of land situate in my plantation in the Road Division and adjoining to my dwelling house by a Tamarind Tree within my fence such piece or parcel of land to be about forty yards square and attributed only for my own and my family's burial place.

Item. I cut my daughter Sarah Coakley out of all my estate real and personal only allowing her one shilling, even fruit from off my fruit trees or one drop of water out of my well as being an undutiful child.

Item. I give devise and bequeath unto each and every of my sons, viz, William, Edward, John, Samuel, Solomon, Benjamin, Richard and Joseph all my real estate except that part which I attributed for my burial place, share and share alike, to them, their heirs and assigns forever such equal shares to be made and divided amongst them at the time that the youngest of them shall arrive to the age of twenty one years, but in case of the death of any or either of my said sons the survivors shall have and possess such part or parts as may happen to

belong to any such son or sons that may happen to depart this life before the time of the said division to be shared, share and share alike, between my surviving sons. . . .

Item. It is my will and desire that there may be three tombs built at the expense of my said estate, that is to say, such three tombs to be erected over the graves of my father, my mother and my brother Thomas.

William Coakley's 1768 will sheds light on the little walled cemetery near to the well under North Hill and presently named the Old Anglican Cemetery. This is really the old Coakley family cemetery, later turned over to the Anglican Church. The tombs presently visible but overgrown with bushes and brambles include the three tombs that William made provision for in his will. Other than the foundations of a small structure east of the cemetery, nothing of the Coakley home remains. The Road Well is probably the sturdiest structure of the old estate that has survived.

The Coakleys settled and occupied substantial areas of both Blowing Point and Sandy Ground. In the 1749 conveyance of John Farrington to Solomon Romney of the Romney estate at Blowing Point, Edward and William Coakley were described as forming the southern boundary.²⁵ They probably owned the estate between Blowing Point harbour and the Romney estate on the north.

²⁵ Chapter 5: The Second Generation.

There is only one court case in the records of the Archives that tells us anything further about the Coakleys. In a case of 1752, we see William Coakley Sr suing his neighbour Edward Hughes for encroaching on his Road Plantation.²⁶

February 9th, 1751/2	
At a Meeting of His Majesty's Council, Being present	
Honourable Benjamin Gumbs Esq,	Deputy Governor
Benjamin Roberts]
Joseph Burnett] Esq's and Members of ye Council
Thomas Gumbs]
William Coakley Sr sues Edward Hughes for having lands of said Coakley in his possession.	
It is the opinion of this Council that the several parcels of land in ye Road shall be run out, and accordingly as said parcels of land measure, the same shall be adjusted between the said Coakley and Hughes.	
Signed by Command Benjamin Roberts, Clerk to the Council.	

Table 3: William Coakley Sr v Edward Hughes.

Edward Hughes' Plantation on South Hill was one of the major plantations on Anguilla (see illus 3). It was long ago broken up into small parcels of land. The older people at South Hill to this day call the land that stretches from Long Bay in the west to the Methodist Church at South Hill 'the Hughes' Estate'. The Hughes and Coakleys were neighbours and were related to each other. At the old Coakley family cemetery, founded by William Coakley, the one surviving legible tombstone is that of Edward's daughter Rebecca who is recorded as dying of a "*bilious fever*" at the age of 21 years in 1775.

²⁶ Anguilla Archives: [A selection of 1741-1776 judicial decisions.](#)

The sugar plantations of John Richardson²⁷ and William Gumbs²⁸ are the only ones mentioned as such in documents dated prior 1750. In later documents there are several other sugar plantations referred to. These include those of Thomas Hodge and Richard Richardson. They were probably growing sugar cane during an earlier period. In 1743, Anguilla, Spanish Town and Tortola with three thousand slaves are reported making about one thousand hogsheads of sugar and one million pounds of cotton. There is no indication how much, if any, came from Anguilla.



²⁷ Anguilla Archives: [John Richardson's 1739 Will.](#)

²⁸ Anguilla Archives: [William Gumbs' 1748 Will.](#)

3. The smoke house for curing meat to the west of the ruin of the Hughes Great House at South Hill (by the author).

The evidence of sugar cane cultivation increases in the second half of the century. In May 1765 there is a list of customs declarations made by various Anguillian planters, or their managers, for the export of sugar from Anguilla.

1	<p>Anguilla, I, Benjamin Gumbs, do swear that the following two Hogsheads of rum and eight barrels of muscovado sugar which are intended to be shipped on board the Sloop <u>Dispatch</u>, John Claxton Commander, and bound for Georgia are of the growth, produce and manufacture of the said Benjamin Gumbs' plantation in the Parish of Spring Division in this island.</p> <p>The above affidavit was sworn in my presence the third day of May 1765.</p> <p>(sd) Benjamin Gumbs</p> <p>(sd) David Hunter</p> <p style="text-align: center;">***</p>
2	<p>Anguilla, I Thomas Hodge do swear that the following three Hogsheads of rum and one Hogshead of sugar which are shipped on board the Sloop <u>Wild Daniel</u>, David Hill master, and bound for Virginia are of the growth produce and manufacture of said Thomas Hodge's Plantation in the Parish of The Valley Division in this Island.</p> <p>The above affidavit was sworn in my presence on the fifteenth day of May 1765.</p> <p>(sd) Thomas Hodge</p> <p>(sd) Benjamin Gumbs Governor and Collector</p> <p style="text-align: center;">***</p>
3	<p>Anguilla, I Benjamin Gumbs Esq do swear that the following two Hogsheads of rum and six barrels of sugar which are shipped on board the Sloop <u>Wild Daniel</u>, David Hill master, and bound for Virginia are the growth produce or manufacture of said Benjamin Gumbs Esq's Plantation in the Road Division in this Island.</p> <p>The above affidavit was sworn in my presence on the 15th day of May 1765.</p> <p>(sd) Benjamin Gumbs</p> <p>(sd) Benjamin Roberts</p> <p style="text-align: center;">***</p>
4	<p>Anguilla, I David Sagers Manager of Mr Richard Richardson's Plantation do swear that the twelve barrels of sugar and one Hogshead of rum which are shipped on board the Sloop <u>Wild Daniel</u>, David Hill master, for Virginia are of the growth produce or manufacture of said Richard Richardson's Plantation in the Parish of the Road Division in this Island.</p> <p>The above affidavit was sworn in my presence the fifteenth day of May 1765.</p> <p>(sd) David Sagers</p>

	(sd) Benjamin Gumbs Governor and Collector

5	<p>Anguilla, I Thomas Hodge do swear that the following fifteen Hogsheads of muscovado sugar which are intended to be shipped on board the Brigantine <u>Abraham</u> whereof Roger Woodburn is master and bound to Great Britain are the growth produce or manufacture of said Thomas Hodge's Plantation in the Parish of The Valley Division in this Island.</p> <p>The above affidavit was sworn in my presence the 24th day of May 1765.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(sd) Thomas Hodge</p> <p>(sd) David Hunter Justice of the Peace</p>

6	<p>Anguilla, I Benjamin Gumbs Esq do swear that the following [. . .] barrels of sugar which are intended to be shipped on board the [. . .] <u>Hanna</u>, Henry Haughton master, and bound for North Carolina are of the growth produce or manufacture of said Benjamin Gumbs Esq's Plantation in the Parish of the Road Division in this Island.</p> <p>The above affidavit was sworn to in my presence on the 24th day of May 1765.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(sd) Benjamin Gumbs</p> <p>(sd) Benjamin Roberts</p>

Table 4: Customs declarations for Anguillian sugar in 1765. (Anguilla Archives)

These affidavits show deputy governor Benjamin Gumbs performing his duty as collector of customs and enforcer of the Navigation Acts. What accuracy can be ascribed to these declarations is uncertain. The planters who swore to their truth had a financial interest in minimising the amount of sugar they made. Most of it they preferred not to declare, but to illegally trade with the Dutch for the goods they needed. These planters were all related to the deputy governor by blood or by marriage. They were all members of his ruling island Council. He was one of them in so many ways. The product of each estate declared as being shipped was very small. One was as little as one hogshead of sugar. The biggest was only

fifteen hogsheads. One of the planters, Richard Richardson, was even substantial enough to employ a manager of his plantation, David Sagers.²⁹ Not all Anguilla's sugar was declared as being exported to the mainland northern colonies. Virginia, Georgia and North Carolina are named. Some of the sugar was being shipped directly to Great Britain.

It would not be safe to draw any conclusions about the extent or the success of Anguilla's sugar industry from these declarations. No other similar declarations from either later or earlier years are preserved. The most that we can say with some certainty is that in the year 1765 some small amount of sugar was exported from Anguilla. We also learn the location of several the sugar plantations. We see them throughout the island in each of the three Divisions: Spring, Valley and Road. Deputy governor Gumbs owned a sugar plantation in Spring Division and another in Road Division. Thomas Hodge owned one in The Valley Division, while Richard Richardson's was in Road Division.

By the year 1770, Anguilla's sugar exports were enough for the first time to be separately given in the economic statistics and tables of the Leeward Islands. They were pathetically small when compared with the

²⁹ Chapter 11: Cotton and Salt.

figures of the exports from the other islands (see table 5).³⁰

From	To Britain	North America	Other Islands
Antigua	£430,210	£35,551	£230
St Kitts	367,074		
Nevis	43,828	14,155	
Anguilla	3,800	2,058	
Dominica	43,395	16,496	
Montserrat	89,907	12,633	
Virgin Islands	61,696	10,133	

Table 5: Sugar Exports of the Leeward Islands in 1770.
(Southey)

With a total of less than £6,000 in sugar exports for the year, Anguilla is producing just 10% of her nearest competitor, Dominica. It is fair to assume that the export figures reflect the production figures. This shows how tiny Anguilla's sugar production was in comparison to the richer islands around her. Weather and other agricultural conditions in Anguilla remained so difficult that no amount of dedication and hard work could draw any significant quantity of sugar out of her soil.

We search the literature in vain hoping to find anything published that will reveal details of the agriculture of Anguilla during our period. In the mid-1750s the author of a leading popular work on commerce claimed to describe conditions in Anguilla at this time.³¹ He wrote that the settlers produced no great quantity of sugar on the island. Rather, they devoted themselves to

³⁰ Southey op cit, Vol 2 p.407.

³¹ Malachai Postlethwaite, A Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce (1757).

farming ground provisions at which they were very successful. It was this farming that allowed them to live in the manner of the old biblical patriarchs. Every man was sovereign in his own family. According to him, they wished for no other sort of government in Anguilla. This information is out of date. It is no more than a repetition of Oldmixon's inaccurate and condescending 1708 description.³² At this time, Anguilla was at the height of a short-lived period of prosperity.

A typical Anguillian boiling house, animal round, and curing house of the eighteenth century can still be seen in the ruins at Benzies, over the Shannon Hill on the north coast (see illus 4, 5 and 6). Who Benzie was is not now known. The ruins of the boiling house and curing house at Benzies lie overgrown with trees and scrub, in a sad state of disrepair, almost on the beach.

³² See Chapter 6: War and the Settlers.



4. The overgrown ruin of the sugar boiling house at Benzies (by the author).

They are very small in comparison to the ruins of the other sugar islands. They were not in use for any long period of time. We do not know if this small, abandoned factory ever made any sugar. We do not know who owned it. 'Benzies' is more accurately the name of a nearby bay, used for swimming years ago by the residents of North Hill.

The West Indian sugar plantation of the eighteenth century is tied to the condition of slavery. The slaves of Anguilla were treated no differently from those elsewhere in the Caribbean. The times were cruel for both Africans and Europeans. Barbaric legal punishments were the

custom of the period, even in England. The penalty for any type of mutiny among whites and blacks was severe. In the three planters' wills from the period before 1750 that have survived, it is to be noticed that not one slave is given his or her freedom, although this was to become a common feature of later wills.³³ Indeed, the slaves of Anguilla were just as discontented as those of the other islands.

There is some evidence that they planned to take part in the great slave uprising in St Bartholomew of 1736. In January 1737, Governor William Mathew enclosed with his report an affidavit sworn by John Hanson of Antigua referring to a slave conspiracy discovered in French St Martin.³⁴ The Anguillian slaves were said to be part of the planned rebellion and they were to join with those in St Martin.

³³ Anguilla Archives: Peter Rogers' 1731 Will, see Chapter 14; John Richardson's 1739 Will ante; and William Gumbs' 1748 Will ante.

³⁴ CO.152/22, folio 302: Mathew to the Committee on 17 January 1737.



5. The ruined and overgrown, plastered inside wall of the curing house at Benzies (by the author).

There is no information, however, on who the leaders of the Anguillian slave rebellion were, or on the outcome of the plan. There was also a big slave uprising in Antigua that year, which was savagely suppressed. Mutilation and maiming, if not death, would be the fate of any Anguillian black person discovered planning to join the rebellion in St Martin.



6. The overgrown, derelict animal round at Benzies sugar works (by the author).

Commerce and society among the planters and merchants reached a high point in Anguilla in the last few decades before the rebellion in the northern colonies of America brought ruin to many of them. The resulting British blockade of trade between the Leeward Islanders and the rebelling colonists ended a lucrative market for Anguillian traders and smugglers. Lawsuits recorded in the Anguilla Archives after 1776 were no longer brought for tens of pounds sterling but for smaller amounts of mere shillings and pence. The second Anguillian war of 1796 when the invading French burned The Valley

completed the destruction of the colony's economy. It would remain in a depressed state for nearly 200 years.

The sugar plantations ceased to be worked in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The slaves were rented out to planters in other islands to help earn their keep and to produce income for their impoverished white and coloured Anguillian masters. After years of service in Aruba and elsewhere, they eventually returned to the island, with enough money to purchase their freedom. There is a fascinating series of deeds in the Anguilla Archives, towards the end of the eighteenth and in the early decades of the nineteenth centuries. These slaves, returning after years of rented labour in other islands, saved their money. First, they purchased their own freedom. Then they purchased that of their spouses and children, for hundreds of pounds sterling in some cases. Then, they purchased the lands and remaining estate of their previous masters, usually for a few paltry pounds.

The plantation lands of Anguilla ceased to have any value for their previous white owners. These disappeared, presumably in large part to the US mainland. There they were absorbed into that country's melting pot. Their descendants and those of their ex-slaves who remained in Anguilla intermarried and carry their names still. They are the Anguillians of today. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the

qualities of character and spirit that enabled the early Anguillians to survive and persist were refined in the furnace of drought, neglect and hardship. These qualities produced the present-day islanders. The basic elements of white and black, seaman and subsistence farmer, contributed to shape the Anguillians of today. These are rightful heirs of George Leonard, Abraham Howell, John Richardson and Benjamin Gumbs.

Next: [Chapter 18 - Sugar Arrives \(Part 2\)](#)

[Chapter 19 - Conclusion](#)