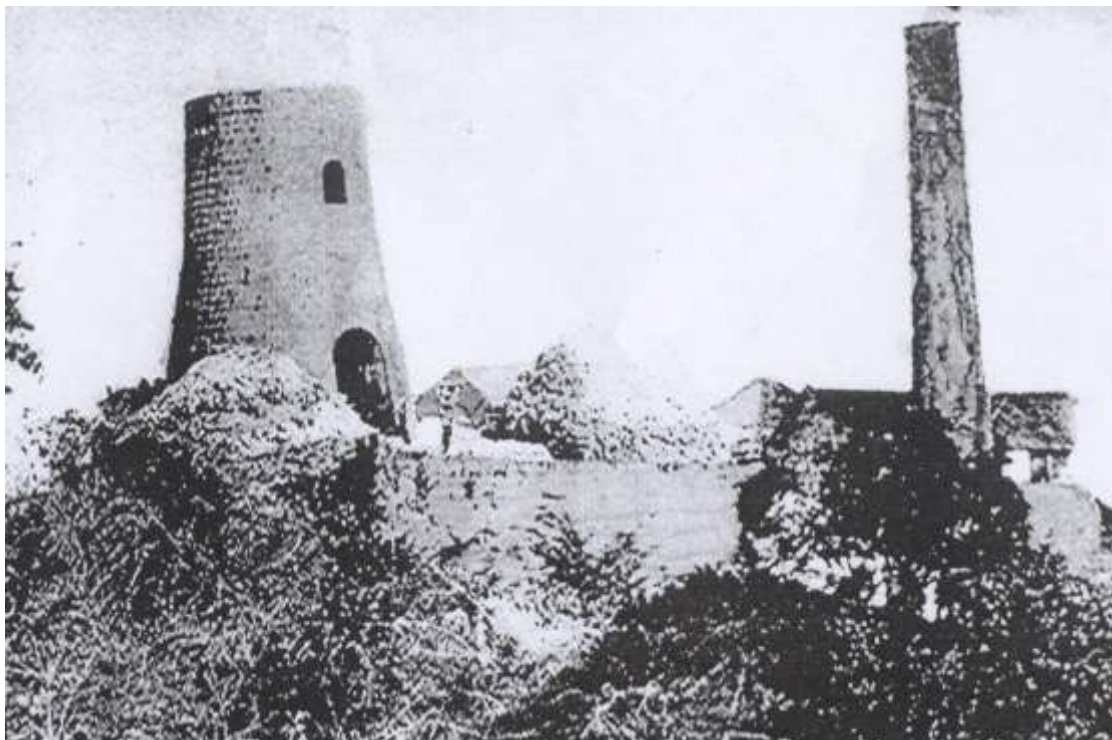


Bush Hill Estate

St John Figtree

Nevis

A preliminary assessment of the documentary evidence



Detail of Sugar Mill and Native Hut, Nevis
(A M Losada, uncertain date, courtesy of Mrs Jackie Armony)

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Bush Hill Estate, St John Figtree, Nevis

A preliminary assessment of the documentary evidence

Project Background

The sugar works at Bush Hill in the parish of St John Figtree, Nevis, present one of the most complete and undamaged sites among the sugar plantations on the island. This joint project, evaluating and recording the facilities at the site, arises from the enthusiasm for the site of the present owner, Lincoln Hoffman and his family of Montpelier Plantation Inn; David Rollinson, sometime Director of the Nevis Field Studies Centre; Dr Marco Meniketti, Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at San Jose State University and Director of the Institute for Advanced Interdisciplinary Caribbean Studies; and David Small, Research Associate in the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology at Bristol University in the UK.

The establishment of the project led the Hoffman family to provide generous funding for a preliminary review of the documentary evidence available concerning the people involved with the plantation during the period of enslavement and in the post-emancipation era. This report provides such an assessment together with suggestions about how to take the documentary research forward.

Location, mapping and photographic evidence

The works at Bush Hill are located roughly 1.5 km due west of the summit of Saddle Hill on a northern branch of Grandee Ghut and around 500 m south of Montpelier Plantation Inn and 600 m northeast of the ruins at Richmond Lodge, as evidenced by the 1984 D.O.S map of Nevis.¹ It is unclear whether the estate appears on the 1758 Bellin map of Nevis. The first secure mapping reference to an estate called Bush Hill, in the right general location, uncovered so far is in 1848. In the relatively accurate survey of the island by Captain Edward Barnett of *HMS Thunder* Bush Hill appears south of estates called 'Clarke' and 'Montpelier' and northeast of Richmond Lodge.² The name Bush Hill and the location are repeated on a similar map of Nevis by J Parson in 1858 but Clarke has changed to 'Clark's' and Montpelier is not shown. In an edition of the 1848 *HMS Thunder* survey published in 1864 with corrections in 1868, Bush Hill is again shown with a windmill. On this map 'Clarke' or 'Clark's' is shown as 'Upper Clarke Mill'.³ Iles, in his often inaccurate 1871 map of the island, shows Bush Hill roughly in the right location, 'Montpelier' in the location for Clarke estate and 'mansion' for the house on what had been labelled Montpelier on previous maps. On the 1920 War Office map of the island, brought up to date by Major J A Burdon, Administrator of the Presidency, Bush Hill, Montpelier and Richmond Lodge are all shown as 'Inhabited Estate Houses or Estate Works in use'.⁴

No plan of Bush Hill has yet been found among the documentary evidence. Neither has any description of its size or boundaries emerged before 1919. An indenture

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

² *West Indies Leeward Islands, St Christopher and Nevis Surveyed by Capt. Edwd. Barnett RN...* April 1848

³ UKNA WO 78/603 *West Indies: Leeward islands, St Christopher and Nevis surveyed by Capt. E Barnett HMS Thunder 1848*

⁴ *The Presidency of St. Kitts and Nevis* 1 inch : 2 miles, Major J A Burdon, War Office 1920

dated 17 January 1919 between Charles Chittick and Henry Rawle Collins of the one part and Eleanor Linda Collins and Clara Collins of the other describes Bush Hill as bordered on the east by Budgen's Estate, on the west by the sea, on the north by part of Budgen's and by Richmond Lodge and on the south by a ravine and part of Cox Heath Estate.⁵ It is unclear why Budgen's is described as being to the east of Bush Hill when it appears to be to the west. A lease of the estate by the two Collins sisters to Edmund Tucker Puncheon, dated 1 March 1919, describes the estate as 327 acres including the part of the estate known as Dogwood.⁶ It is not known whether Dogwood was always part of the estate or added sometime before 1919.

The only depiction of Bush Hill that has been found so far is an early twentieth or late nineteenth-century photo by A M Losada with the title 'Sugar Mill and Native Hut, Nevis'; the date of the photo could be checked with Ms Jackie Armony, past Secretary of the St Christopher Heritage Society, whose grandfather took it. For a long while the scene remained unidentified on Nevis until it was confirmed on a field walk in 2004 by David Small and David Rollinson, particularly, in the first instance, because of the distinctive flare of the windmill tower. Incidentally, the photo was in 2006 misleadingly placed on a Heritage Trail sign at Golden Rock Estate.

A note about sources

Apart from investigating the usual sources for Nevis history in the National Archives in the UK, such as slave registers and slave compensation records, some material related to Bush Hill had already been found in the Nevis Courthouse Records. In addition, the Pinney Papers at Bristol University Library Special Collections will no doubt prove fruitful, given more investigation.

However, the principal effort has gone into tracing the biographies of the owners of Bush Hill, where they have been identified, in the hope that, by following the family connections between them, not only will more information come to light about them as individuals but also that they will provide possible leads for other sources of information about the estate.

A passing reference to Bush Hill in G P B Naish's *Nelson's letters to his wife...* suggested that the estate had been owned in the 1780s by one George Forbes. He was a friend of Prince William Henry (1765-1837), third child of George III, later King William IV and at the time a Captain in the Royal Navy who visited the Leeward Islands with Nelson in 1786/7.⁷ By pursuing the connections between individuals and families and working either side of this period it has been possible to establish a clear line of ownership of the estate between 1786 and the 1920s. The connections have also provided possible lines of enquiry back into the early 1700s and conceivably back into the late seventeenth century.

One further piece of clarification is required. Three early twentieth-century transcripts of a diary or diaries have been found at the Rhodes House Library at Oxford University, one of which is certainly from the personal diary of Walter Lewis Bucke who owned Bush Hill from 1837 and may have been involved with the estate before then. Until now they have been filed under 'W. L. *Burke*'. It may be that the original diary, as opposed to transcripts, is still on Nevis. It has only recently been possible to

⁵ Nevis Courthouse, Common Records (NC CR) CR 17 f161

⁶ NC CR 17 f197

⁷ Naish, GPB (ed) *Nelson's letters to his wife and other documents 1785- 1831* Routledge and Keegan Paul, London 1958 p44

have a look at the Rhodes House transcripts. Some significant events from them have been included in this chronology but it is possible that, with closer study when time becomes available, they will reveal more information about the owners of the estate in the early nineteenth century.

Bush Hill in the early eighteenth century

Previous research connected with the Pinney estate had shown that Bush Hill was owned in the 1820s by George Clarke Forbes. This, together with the Naish reference to George Forbes in the 1780s, established Forbes ownership of the estate in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was common in that period for middle names to be taken from the mother's family name. Thus a maternal link with a Clarke family was suggested.

Research has shown that at the London Metropolitan Archives there is a collection of Clarke papers which covers the period 1696/7 – 1810.⁸ The catalogue shows, for instance, that in 1700 John Clarke (elsewhere described as a merchant of Edmonton) surrendered the copyhold estate at Bush Hill (now in London) to the uses of a will. In 1741 his brother, Samuel Clarke of Bush Hill, died and by his will William Clarke, probably the eldest surviving son, inherited the residue of the real and personal estate of his father. From other sources it is known that William Clarke died in 1783. In 1785 an Act of Parliament was passed for 'vesting the moiety of estates of William Clarke dec., bequeathed to daughter Mary Forbes, in new trustees' to allow disposal of the remainder of the estates of William Clarke's two daughters. In 1785 there is a 'Lease and Release: William Campbell, Elborough Woodcock, George Forbes esq. of Kensington and wife Mary, Anna Clarke of Berkley St., Portman Square to John Blackburn and his trustee William Drewe of New Inn, gent.'

Bush Hill near London

Bush Hill is presently a district on the northern fringes of modern London between Enfield and Edmonton. The *Victoria County History* shows that Bush Hill, or 'Halliwick' estate, was 'a small estate centred on the house between the New River, Bush Hill and Bush Hill Road'. Although the history goes back to at least 1523, in 1664 it was owned by a London Alderman John Bathurst. In 1696 it was sold by his daughter to John Clarke (d. 1701), 'merchant of London'. 'The estate passed to John's brother Samuel (d. 1742) and from him to William Clarke (d.1783), who left two daughters Anna Clarke and Mary Forbes. It was auctioned in lots in 1784, when the house and 39 a. were purchased by John Blackburn (d.1798) of London who was building up an estate in the area....The late 18th-century house consisted of a main block three storeys high and nine bays long with two flanking wings each of three bays. A seven-bay portion remains of this building.'⁹

It has not yet been possible to trace what sort of merchant John Clarke was but in 1740 a Samuel Clarke and a William Clarke are listed in 'Kent's (London) Directory' as 'Turkey Merchants' of Charterhouse Square.

Nowhere in the catalogue is there any mention of Nevis but a number of features make this collection of Clarke papers interesting. To begin with, the George Forbes who marries Mary Clarke is described as of Kensington and we know that the

⁸ LMA ACC/1076 'Clarke Family'

⁹ www.a2a.org.uk/search/doclist

George Forbes who was the proprietor of Bush Hill on Nevis had a house in Kensington. Secondly, there is the coincidence of the two Forbes dealing with an agent or lawyer called Woodcock on behalf of their wives' properties. Thirdly, the fact that Mary Forbes, nee Clarke, comes in to property in 1783 on the death of her father just before the time when George Forbes and his wife first appear on Nevis is also very significant. In addition, there is simply the conjunction of estate names. It seems almost certain that the estate on Nevis is named after an already established estate just outside London. Incidentally, it may also be no coincidence that a river called New River runs through this area of London.

Clarkes on Nevis

Moving the focus to Nevis, maps and slave registers show us that Montpelier, the neighbouring estate to Bush Hill, was for a long time in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries known as 'Clarke's or Montpelier and Stapleton's'. Fortunately, or rather unfortunately for researchers, Clarke was a very common name in the Caribbean from the seventeenth century onwards. For instance, there was a significant family of Clarkes on Antigua. Confusion often reigns in researching Nevis history because of the fact that there were two Clarke estates: Montpelier and the estate, in the parish of St Thomas Lowland, which is now the Four Seasons.

However, there was in 1751 what may prove to be a very significant case in the Chancery Court in Antigua. In effect it was a dispute between John Richardson of Nevis and William Clarke, merchant of London, as to who was the rightful heir of Colonel John Netheway, a Lt. Governor of Nevis who died in 1691 and owned 1,000 acres. William Clarke's answer (summarised in *Caribbeana*) hinged on the fact that a Jonathan Netheway dec'd, a previous heir of the Colonel, had married a Clarke (unnamed in the summary) and that his, William Clarke's, late father was Samuel Clarke.¹⁰ Elsewhere in *Caribbeana* V L Oliver produces a pedigree of the Netheways which suggests that the Mary Clarke who married Jonathan Netheway was the daughter of John Clarke, a merchant in 1682 of Hogsdon (now Hoxton, part of the London Borough of Hackney).¹¹ This John Clarke may be the merchant whose will, of 1700, appears in the Clarke Papers. All of this fits with the history of the Clarke family as shown in the catalogue of Clarke Papers in London.

A notebook in the Pinney Papers dated 1755, which is a list of individuals and planters paying the 'General's Tax' on slaves, lists Samuel Clarke and the orphans of Samuel Clarke and J H Clarke as paying tax on 64 slaves.¹²

Worth noting too is that among the Budgen papers, in Bristol University Library's Special Collection, is an indenture dated 1739 which notes a previous lease from 'Samuel Clarke of London Esquire' to Daniel Smith of London of 'All that his plantation or parcel of land...commonly called Colonel John Netheway's plantation containing by estimation three hundred and twenty seven acres'.¹³ Unfortunately no boundaries or parishes are given. It is unclear whether there is any significance in the same acreage being given for Netheway's Estate in 1739 and Bush Hill in 1919. Netheway's may have been what is now called Budgen's or may be in the near vicinity of Budgen's, Bush Hill and Clarke's/Montpelier.

¹⁰ Oliver, V L *Caribbeana* (hereafter *Caribbeana*) vol. 4 p31

¹¹ *Caribbeana* vol. 5 pp35-37 Netheway pedigree

¹² Bristol University Library Special Collections (BULSC) Pinney Papers Domestic Box P

¹³ BULSC West Indies DM 89/3/39

In practice there are numerous early references to Clarkes on Nevis. In 1738 a William Clarke of Nevis and then London, bequeathed his plantations to his wife Henrietta, probate being granted in March 1745/6.¹⁴ Earlier still, in the 1707 Census of Nevis there were two Samuel Clarkes.¹⁵ Before that a Joseph Clarke, merchant of Nevis, was granted 125 acres in 1684 by Governor Sir William Stapleton, although it is not clear whether this was on Nevis or on Antigua.¹⁶

In conclusion, it is very likely that the Clarke family which is represented in the Clarke Papers at the London Metropolitan Archives, and which held a country seat called Bush Hill on the northern fringes of London, also were active planters on Nevis and that one of their plantations on Nevis called Bush Hill demised around 1783 to a Mary Clarke who married a George Forbes of Kensington. It is unclear how the Clarke family originally acquired their land on Nevis but it may have come through land grants from one of the governors in the late seventeenth century. More certainty about these conclusions could be raised by further research at the London Metropolitan Archives and by tracing ownership of the land at Bush Hill on Nevis back through the Common Records in the Nevis Courthouse.

Bush Hill under the Forbes family, 1780s to 1837

The Special Collections Department at Bristol University Library not only houses the Pinney Papers but is one of the repositories in the UK for more general historical material relating to the West Indies. In this latter collection there is some of the commercial correspondence of the merchant Peter Gausson and his son Samuel mostly concerning Grenada. Peter Gausson (b. Geneva 1723), originally Jean Pierre Gausson, a Huguenot émigré, was an influential London merchant who was the first foreign-born governor of the Bank of England and a director of the East India Company. His son, Samuel (1759-1812), inherited a fortune from his father and represented Warwick as an MP from 1796 to 1802. In 1786 he bought Brookmans Park, a large estate at North Mimms in Hertfordshire.¹⁷

In the Gausson correspondence in Bristol¹⁸ is a series of eight letters from George Forbes of Bush Hill, Nevis, to the Gaussons covering the period 1787 to 1791.¹⁹ The letters suggest that Forbes and his family were newly arrived on Nevis, show that he was indeed a friend of Prince William Henry and was otherwise well connected. He had a house in Kensington, borrowed money from Peter Gausson and eventually dealt with Thomas Coutts & Co., then fast becoming one of the country's leading private banks.

The origins of George Forbes's own family are unclear, as yet, but there is a strong suggestion in one of his letters that he did not consider himself to be English. In a letter to Samuel Gausson he complained about the waste of public expenditure in the West Indies. He noted that before he went to the West Indies he had been 'near Twenty year a public accountant and above 1 million went through my hands...and I believe it appears that I never took one shilling from the public – It is now otherwise

¹⁴ *Caribbeana* vol. 6 p114

¹⁵ *Caribbeana* vol. 3 pp173-179

¹⁶ Oliver, V L *The History of the Island of Antigua* vol. 1 pp137-138

¹⁷ Namier, Sir James and John Brooke (ed) *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1790-1820* HMSO, London - biography of Samuel Gausson

¹⁸ BULSC West Indies DM 125/2/1-74

¹⁹ BULSC West Indies DM 125/2/15, 18, 28, 31, 35, 36, 44 and 48

but *you are a rich and Generous nation*.²⁰ The 'you' is clearly significant. There were strong clans of Forbes in both Scotland (Aberdeenshire and elsewhere) and in Ireland. Of the two countries Scotland is considered to be the more likely and this might prove a fruitful avenue of research. Forbes was certainly a lawyer because, on 21 February 1789, one William Burke appeared before him, as a Justice of the Court of King's Bench and Common Pleas on Nevis, to witness signatures to an indenture.²¹

The first letter to Peter Gausson is worth quoting in full because it gives a flavour of the succeeding correspondence:

'Bush Hill in Nevis 18th May 1787

My Dear Sir,

We are all very well and like our Situation which is healthy, Cool and pleasant – I transmit enclosed a d/t (?draft) for £28.8 being the interest of the £550 with (...) on that sum still due and my reason for not sending you the (...) for the £275 is as follows – Mr Neave who did advance me £1800 has just hinted, that as He advanced that sum merely as I was a friend of yours, He expected half the payment would be remitted him this year – my answer was that I should send him all my sugar, at least from £1000 to £1200 and should not draw above £100, that He might have the (?half) in his own hand. – I thought it best to make my Engagem't good with him, particularly as I understood from you that my Bond should remain with you till paid, which I assure you shall be complied with, and early next year I shall send what was to have come this one, as it will then be quite convenient to me –

I send Home 50 hnds [hogsheads] this year and have not a doubt but I shall double it next as we are very seasonably placed and our Land good; they have been frightened by what they call a Borer²² on the Low parts of our Island; but many here remember a visitor in wet seasons. I have no land where they ever yet appeared. I hope to have my plan quite completed by Jany next, but as I have enlarged it, so it has subjected me to a greater advance than intended, yet I have not cause to repent.

I expect his RI Highness Pr Wm tomorrow, He comes to bid us farewell, as he goes to the Northward not to return. – He has been three times here and staid generally Ten days; I have had the honor to be long known to him, and He made my Habitation as much His Home, as was consistent with a strict Officer who never lies out of His Ship.

Mrs Forbes begs to join in Compts to you; pray be so good as present mine to Mrs Gausson to Mr Keate and to all Friends believe me with unfeigned truth

My Dear Sir

Your most Obedt

Humble Servant

George Forbes'²³

²⁰ BULSC West Indies DM 125/2/48 George Forbes to Samuel Gausson 13 June 1791

²¹ *Caribbeana* vol. 1 p338 quoting Nevis Common Records 1787-1789, Book Y f531

²² The borer was a small insect which perforated the canes and devastated the crop. Letters associated with the Pinney and Stapleton estates confirm the presence of the insect on the island in the years 1787-1789 but it only affected some estates.

²³ BULSC West Indies DM 125/2/15 George Forbes to Peter Gausson 18 May 1787

It is not known when Forbes married Mary Clarke but it must have happened before 1785. They had at least three children since the will of his son, George Clarke Forbes (d. 1827), mentions his mother, *sisters* and niece. One of the sisters was called Christianna (also Christiana) and in 1792 she married Magnus Morton on Nevis. Her brother, George Clarke Forbes, was probably at least 21 by 1791 because in that year George Forbes wrote about requesting him to conduct family business in England.²⁴ George Forbes's wife, Mary, owned a farm with her sister in Hertfordshire and the family also probably owned another at this time in Essex which George Clarke Forbes seems to have inherited. One or other of the parents also owned a house in Kensington, the fashionable part of London, to which the family hoped to return from Nevis but which, in the meantime, was rented out to a banker.

It is unclear exactly when the family arrived on the island or how many of them there were but the purchase of slaves and the tone of the Gausson letters indicate that they arrived on Nevis in the autumn of 1785 or early in 1786. In a 1791 letter Forbes described himself as a 'first settler'. The timing of this arrival should be seen primarily in the context of the death of William Clarke in 1783 and the settling of his daughters' inheritance by Act of Parliament in 1785. But in a wider context, if George Forbes was a Scot, he can be seen as one of many gentlemen from north of the border who sought to make or extend their fortunes in a Caribbean which offered rich pickings to those Scots with skills, land or connections. It was fortunate for them that family circumstances conspired to send them to the West Indies in the period of vigorous recovery after the end of the American War of Independence and at a time when land values were high and the profitability of sugar plantations was recovering.

A royal connection

Clearly, from his first letter to Peter Gausson, George Forbes had a connection with Prince William Henry, the future King, which had great potential in the long run, although not necessarily in the Caribbean. Forbes's claims about the longstanding nature of this friendship were borne out by the Prince as reported in the letters between Nelson and his future wife Frances Nisbet. Despite the best efforts of the Royal archives at Windsor Castle it has not proved possible yet to date the origins of their friendship. Prince William Henry, in command of the frigate *Pegasus*, was being chaperoned on a royal tour of the Leeward Islands by Captain Nelson. Forbes managed to cause everyone anxiety by inadvertently causing a potential breach between the Prince and the President of the Council. John Richardson Herbert, who had been helping to finance the celebrations surrounding the Prince's visit by loaning planters the money with which to entertain the royal visitor, was invited by Forbes to dine at Bush Hill with the Prince and others. Prince William had, however, requested that he dine alone with Forbes. When Forbes understood this he put Herbert off, thus causing great offence and anxiety.

Nelson wrote to Frances Nisbet on 23 February 1787 from the *Boreas* anchored in Basseterre Roads, St Kitts:

'This business of Mr. Forbes's seems in some measure a mistake throughout for I have talked to His Royal Highness upon the subject as much as an humble individual could to a person in his elevated situation. It appears upon the whole clear to me that Mr. F. asked Mr. Herbert without thinking and when His Royal Highness desired that nobody might be there he came to tell Mr. Herbert of it, but he might certainly have done in a better way. I told the

²⁴ BULSC West Indies DM 125/2/48 George Forbes to Samuel Gausson 13 June 1791

Prince that Mr. Herbert was fearful he had done something that was displeasing. He said by no means and that it was impossible he could be uncivil to a person who had wished to shew him every attention. But that he desired to be alone at Forbes's that they might talk over old stories. I then mentioned Mr. Nisbet's being there as also Capt. Goldfrap. He told me it was not his intention to have had Mr. Nisbet but he had rode to town with him in the morning had attended him to the race course and that as he could not at that late hour get home that he could not do otherwise than ask him. That Capt. Goldfrap he knew nothing about him, but he understood he was some relation of Mr. Forbes's. He said many handsome things of Mr. Herbert that he had always heard him well spoken of etc. but that it was natural he should like Mr. Forbes his old acquaintance and wish to be much with him. This most probably is all I shall ever hear of the story. If you think Mr. Herbert would like to know it you will tell it, if not keep it to yourself. Tell me a little on that head. If this letter comes safe and you think there is no danger of their miscarrying I shall perhaps say much. If there is, I shall write less...'²⁵

Two days later Nelson added to his report:

'I can't write Mr Herbert about the Prince since you have not told me what to do about it. He certainly told Mr Forbes that he would not have anybody there and Mr F. to please him thought fit to offend Mr Herbert and yet its possible the latter was not intended...(the Prince) was vastly sorry to see me hurt, but that he certainly told Forbes not to have anybody there, but had not the most distant intention of offending anybody. That he had the highest esteem for Mr Forbes and should be much with him when ever he came to Nevis (*that man has been given histories*).'²⁶

The affair staggered one stage further. On 27 February Nelson reported on a very pleasant ball at Mr Woodley's on St Kitts where 'the women got well routed' and a conversation with the Prince about Mr Herbert. The Prince mentioned that on St Kitts 'Mr Priddie advanced money to the country and at Nevis he knew he could not have been entertained if Mr Herbert had not given security for the money'. The Prince added that 'Mr Forbes etc. are far more convenient companions in certain offices'. Nelson also noted that 'Miss Parsons is liked. The Prince danced with her and Miss Thompson last night. Tonight I have to fag at the public ball. Oh how I wish it over and I was returned on board the *Boreas*.'²⁷

The reference to Forbes and others being 'far more convenient in certain offices' might lead to the conclusion that Forbes was acting as a 'procurer' of women for the twenty-one year old Prince who had a strong sexual appetite. According to his biographer, Philip Ziegler, his health was not always good in the West Indies. 'Much of his suffering was self-inflicted. Though far from a habitual drunkard he often drank too much and, in May 1787, he was on a mercury cure for 'a sore I had contracted in a most extraordinary manner in my pursuit of the *Dames de Couleurs*'.²⁸ So much for the gossip surrounding George Forbes and Bush Hill.

²⁵ Naish pp43-44 Nelson to Mrs Nisbet 23 February 1787

²⁶ Naish pp45-46 Nelson to Mrs Nisbet 25 February 1787

²⁷ Naish pp46-47 Nelson to Mrs Nisbet 17 February 1787

²⁸ Ziegler, Philip *King William IV* London, Collins, 1971 pp58-59 quoting Prince William to the Prince of Wales 20 May 1787 Royal Archives RA44769

Resettling an estate

It is clear from the Gausson letters that the newly arrived family were resettling a run-down estate. According to Forbes the land was owned by his wife and her sister, who was likely to have been Margaret Clarke. In explaining his finances to Samuel Gausson on May 25 1789 he noted that he paid an annual rent of £300 for 'the base land, which belongs to my wife and her sister, and which I may buy for £3000 to each any time during my lease, but which is needless'.²⁹

Although no plan of the estate has turned up yet, a plan has been found of two pieces of neighbouring land swapped in 1789 between John Smith Budgen of Budgen's Estate and John Richardson Herbert of Clarke's or Montpelier and Stapleton. The land given to Herbert by Budgen had Forbes's Bush Hill estate to the west and Herbert's estate to the south and east. Land values in this swap varied between £20 and £25.³⁰

The resettling of the estate almost certainly began with the buying of slaves. Christine Eickelmann found a list of 67 slaves, 35 men and 32 women, who were mortgaged by Forbes on 13 August 1786 to John Cooke of New Bond Street, London. The list awaits further analysis but the slaves had all been bought at different dates between February and June 1786. The earliest purchases included a mason with the given name Simon who was 25 years old and described as 'very able'; none of them are very young children.³¹ Either he already had slaves who were not mortgaged to Cooke or he bought more because on 1 August 1787 he reported to Peter Gausson that he had 'already near 90 negroes... fit for the field; I am in treaty for 10 more which shall be my last purchase for Two years'. The fact that he had to buy slaves strengthens the argument that at the very least he was resettling a run-down estate.

In the same letter he reports: 'I shall have all my buildings in thorough order by Christmas...' In his first letter in May 1787, as noted before, he had stated that he hoped to have completed his enlarged plan by the following January. These were probably optimistic assessments written for his backer. However, by April 1789 he was reporting the following:

'By the end of this year I shall have put the last hand to the finishing of this Estate, by the building a Stone windmill which I am now about; at that period I shall have paid Mr Neave and my agents Messrs Baillie & Co. – and shall be able to say I have a certain Estate for 150 hnds sugar perhaps the finest that goes from these Islands and not more than what two crops will clear due upon it'.³²

These are the only references in the letters to buildings on the estate.

The money for Forbes's resettling of the estate came from a number of sources. As we have seen, Gausson lent him £550 and the purchase of slaves was financed by John Cooke but he also borrowed from two other sources, financing the loans by consigning sugar to them. This is made clear in a letter to Samuel Gausson in 1789:

²⁹ BULSC West Indies DM 125/2/15 George Forbes to Samuel Gausson 25 May 1789

³⁰ BULSC West Indies DM 89/3/23 and 50 Budgen Papers

³¹ NC CR vol. 1785-1787

³² BULSC West Indies DM 125/2/31 George Forbes to Peter Gausson 10 April 1789

'This estate is now almost completely settled and will be totally so by Christmas. It will have stood me £15,000 sterling, of which I only owe now, £1000 to Mr Neave, and £3000 to Messrs Baillie Pocock & Co but I shall be able to pay them in six months at the usual rate of planters being now in Treaty for that purpose. I agree to consign £2000 worth or 100 hhds Sugar annually to a West India House who agree to be in advance £2000 which in two years will clear me. I give security on a Lease of 18 years to come of this Estate...'

This was subject only to the rent of the land paid to his wife and her sister. Optimistically, Forbes suggested that his estate would make 150 hogsheads annually. He stated: 'I mean to remain two years longer here where my expense is not £500 a year in order to return clear'.³³

Baillie Pocock & Co in 1794 were merchants, probably in the City of London, and to be found at 79 Coleman Street.³⁴ They were most likely an offshoot of the activities of the merchant George Baillie or possibly his slave trading and planter cousins, Alexander, James and Evan Baillie of Dochfour (near Inverness, Scotland). All of them had extensive interests in the West Indies, particularly St Kitts, Grenada and St Vincent. The Neaves were rich West India merchants whose country seat was Dagnam Park in Essex; among other interests they held estates on Nevis. In a follow-up letter to Samuel Gausson, Forbes explains that he had agreed to send two thirds of his consignments to Baillie Pocock & Co. (one third of which was to be absorbed in cancelling the balance due) and the other third to Neave (half of which was to reduce his balance).³⁵ The papers of both these firms, if they can be traced, might prove useful sources of information about the sugar produced and what sort of supplies were ordered for the estate.

In the penultimate Forbes letter in the Gausson collection Forbes's reports were a little more pessimistic. 'I need not dwell on the three, if not four miserable years these islands have experienced, and particularly to a first settler.... This is not a Good Year, but I hope to send Home sugars to nett between £2 and £3000'. He stated that he had planned to have 'taken my passage to England last year' but was prevented by reports of war. However, as he now meant to take his family home in 1792, he would put off returning until then.³⁶ He must have carried out this plan at some stage but would have done well to have remained on Nevis, given his ability to live on £500 a year there and his expensive royal connection in England. In December 1794 Fanny Nelson reported to her husband: 'Charles Mills called yesterday, says the West Indies is worse than ever. The Forbes are going to the West Indies in a very great hurry, how could it be otherwise they lived quite in style...'³⁷ For the moment Bush Hill and the Forbes family must disappear from view for several decades, though it is possible that further search in the Pinney Papers may reveal more about this period.

Plantation structure

One problem that needs to be sorted out is the size of the estate. There are various clues given in the sources above; unfortunately they suggest contradictory

³³ BULSC West Indies DM 125/2/35 George Forbes to Samuel Gausson 25 May 1789

³⁴ www.londonancestor.com/kents/kents-b.htm quoting from 'Kent's Directory for the Year 1794: Cities of London and Westminster, & Borough of Southwark'

³⁵ BULSC West Indies DM 125/2/36 George Forbes to Samuel Gausson 26 January 1790

³⁶ BULSC West Indies DM 125/2/44 George Forbes to Samuel Gausson 21 February 1791

³⁷ Naish pp264-265 Fanny Nelson to her husband 17 Dec 1794

conclusions. It is possible that the estate always included Dogwood and was therefore always about 327 acres. But up to now no information has been found about Dogwood itself and so it is not possible to draw any conclusion from that source. Some information about this part of the later estate could possibly be gleaned from the Nevis Common Records.

It might be possible to work out the acreage of Bush Hill from the £6,000 value of the land given by Forbes himself and from the value of the neighbouring land belonging to Messrs Herbert and Budgen. But this is really too rough a calculation to make because one would have to take into account an inflated valuation by Forbes of his own family's land and the fact that not all the land on an estate would have been worth between £20 and £25 per acre. However, a price of £6,000 on Forbes's estate would suggest an estate of at least 250 and probably more than 300 acres.

The numbers of enslaved people given in 1787 suggest a smaller estate than that. At that time Forbes mentions aiming for 100 slaves 'fit for the field'. It is unclear from this whether he means a total plantation labour force of about 100 or 100 field slaves plus additional skilled and domestic workers. Given that the first register of slaves in 1817 lists 96 slaves, the former seems more likely. If that is the case then the estate was considerably smaller than 250 acres. John Pinney in the 1770s and 1780s worked an estate of 273 acres with a workforce which rose from 175 to 211. On the other hand Bush Hill may have suffered losses which were not replaced.

Lastly, since we do not yet have reliable figures for output this does not present much of a guide. In 1787 Forbes reports that he sent home 50 hogsheads (hhds) of sugar. Shortly thereafter he was aiming at 100 hhds and his goal was 150 hhds. The latter figure could suggest an estate of 300 or more acres. However it is worth noting that Pinney averaged only about 110 hhds a year in this period from 273 acres and one suspects that Forbes's 150 hhds was an extremely optimistic figure, and certainly so if he only had a total workforce of about 100.

It is likely that the question of estate size can be resolved through further research in the Nevis Courthouse Records.

Bush Hill and George Clarke Forbes

It is unclear when George Forbes died; his wife Mary was still alive in November 1826 when their son George Clarke Forbes drew up his will. The latter was a lawyer who first appears in the West Indies as Attorney General of Tortola sometime between 1806 and 1808. This emerges from the trial at the Old Bailey in 1816 on a charge of forgery of one Anthony M'Kenrott. The case involved bills of exchange for £800 supposedly drawn by, and placed to the account of, George Clarke Forbes and which it was alleged by M'Kenrott that Forbes would cover by shipping produce from the West Indies. One of the witnesses, John Dougan stated that Forbes was Attorney General of Tortola while Dougan, who knew him intimately, was there (between May 1806 and May 1808). He noted that Forbes wrote 'a very crabbed hand'. Another witness, Thomas Latham, a merchant in London, stated that he had had a lot of business dealings both with George Clarke Forbes and his father.³⁸

The relationship with Tortola will prove very significant in due course in connection with the enslaved population on the estate. However there may also be another

³⁸ <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/luceneweb/hri3/> Proceedings of the Old Bailey Case Ref t18160110-45

important connection. In an infamous case Arthur William Hodge, planter and member of his Majesty's Council on Tortola, was executed there on 8 May 1811 for the murder of his slave Prosper. Hodge's treatment of his slaves, including evidence that he poured boiling water down the throat of his cook Margaret, rightly caused uproar and was used in Parliament to demonstrate that the ending of the slave trade had not improved the conditions of enslaved people in the British Caribbean. It is worth investigating whether or not Forbes was Attorney General at the time of the trial and whether he had anything to do with it.

According to the diary of Walter Lewis Bucke, George Clarke Forbes arrived with his family on Nevis on 21 February 1814³⁹ and shortly thereafter he hired a small number of slaves from John Pinney. He was appearing on the scene at the beginning of a most difficult time for planters and their enslaved workforces. 1815 saw the beginning of the long decline in the price of sugar, rising costs and collapse in the value of land. The 1820s were to bring droughts, disease and high mortality among the slaves on many estates. Robberies and instances of resistance in the form of cane-breaking were reported by correspondents.

On 2 March 1815 Forbes was elected member of the Assembly for St John Figtree.⁴⁰ In May 1817 he was a member of the committee (of the Assembly?) set up to enquire into the situation of slaves on Nevis following the acquittal in 1817 of Edward Huggins senior on yet another charge of the cruel punishment of slaves.⁴¹ Forbes seems to have been on Nevis more or less continuously from about 1814 to 1821 when he returned to England to Bath. From then on until his death in 1827 he shuttled back and forth between Bath and Nevis. From at least 1818 he was acting as one of the attorneys on Nevis for the Pinney family. He was particularly active in managing the legal aspects of the Pinneys' involvement with, and loans to, the family of John Henry Clarke who owned Clarke's Estate, now the Four Seasons.

There are several interesting glimpses of him as a person. While he was in Bath in 1821 he wrote to Charles Pinney that it would be a 'great pleasure' to accompany Pinney to Bristol any day: 'I am such an idle fellow that any day is precisely the same to me...'⁴² On another occasion he wrote to Pinney's firm in Bristol requesting it to send out a gig 'painted patent yellow and the lining grey, the crest as below.'⁴³ This request is particularly interesting since a gig body 'without wheels shafts or springs' and 12 lbs of yellow ochre are listed in a 1919 inventory of the estate (see Appendix B). One wonders whether they can still be found on Nevis.

So far no record of his marriage to Jane Smithson has been found, nor where she came from. There is one reference in the parish register to a child being baptised at St John Figtree on Nevis on 27 January 1822. Since no children are mentioned in either George Clarke Forbes's will, or that of his wife, it must be assumed that the child did not survive. It seems that Mrs Forbes and family left Nevis for England in 1822 since the transcript of Walter Lewis Bucke's diary gives the following entry:

³⁹ Rhodes House Library, Oxford (hereafter RHL) MSS W Ind. S. 24 (b) Typed transcript of the personal diary of Walter Lewis Bucke

⁴⁰ UKNA CO 186/10 Minutes of the Legislative Council and Assembly 1812 -1815

⁴¹ BUL Parliamentary Papers, Nevis: Slavery Microfiche XVII.33

⁴² BULSC Pinney Papers Domestic Box C1 Bundle 7 G C Forbes to Charles Pinney 9 August 1821

⁴³ BULSC Pinney Papers Letterbook 58 G C Forbes, Nevis to Pinney, Ames & Co 1 August 1825

'1822 August 1st I went to Bush Hill, & Mrs Forbes etc to England'. On 4 September 'Mr Forbes arrived' and on 17 September 'I left Bush Hill'.⁴⁴

Forbes probably stayed for a number of years for there is an extraordinary entry in the diary for 3 November 1824 'G Forbes shot'. No further details are given except that on 8 October 1826 'Mr Forbes' was recorded as having sailed for St Thomas and on 1 November 'Edwin went to Bush Hill'.⁴⁵ It is not yet clear who Edwin was but he was certainly a member of the extended Bucke/Baker family and presumably went to Bush Hill as manager after the owner's departure.

Forbes died, almost certainly in Bath, sometime between January and May 1827. His fellow attorney, John Colhoun Mills, reported to Pinney, Ames & Co. on 8 October 1826 from Nevis that Forbes was ill and had gone home in the packet. His will, dated 13 November 1826 and written in Falmouth 'having lately arrived there in his majesty's ship *Ffrolic* whereof Thomas Charles Baron is commander' describes him as Solicitor General of Nevis. It noted that his mother, sisters and niece 'being in good circumstance and not requiring any assistance from me I have not given them anything by this my will'. He bequeathed £2,000 to his sister-in-law 'Sarah Smithson of the City of Bath, spinster' and left everything else including the real estate to his 'beloved wife' Jane. One of the executors was his 'friend' George Bucke of Nevis.⁴⁶ A farm in Essex was sold for £3,800 in June 1828 as part of Forbes's effects.⁴⁷

It is unclear how often Jane Forbes travelled back and forth to Nevis with her husband in the 1820s. She certainly is recorded as living at various, probably rented, addresses in Bath during this period. From 1827 she was responsible for the estate although, as will be seen, she may have leased it soon after her husband's death. She continued as owner through the period of Emancipation, claimed compensation as the owner of the slaves on the estate and eventually, together with her sister-in-law Christiana Morton Herbert, sold Bush Hill in 1837.⁴⁸

She seems to have gone everywhere, including Nevis, with her unmarried sister, Sarah Smithson, in tow. Together they are recorded, with two servants, in the 1841 census as living at 4 Cotswold Villa in the parish of Leckhampton, a mile or two southeast of the Regency spa town of Cheltenham in the Cotswolds. Her age was given as 62, indicating she was born around 1779/1780.⁴⁹ Her death is registered in Cheltenham in early 1850 and that of her sister (born about 1781) in early 1855.⁵⁰ They are buried together in a plot at St Peter's Parish Church, Leckhampton. The rather damaged gravestone gives her age as 84, some way off the age suggested by the 1841 Census.⁵¹ In her will there is no mention of any children and she left everything to her sister.⁵²

One further footnote on the family of George Clarke Forbes may be interesting even though it is of marginal relevance to Bush Hill. On April 6 1792, at St John Figtree, Forbes's sister Christianna married Magnus Morton, the nephew of John Richardson

⁴⁴ RHL MSS W Ind. S. 24 (b)

⁴⁵ RHL MSS W Ind. S. 24 (b)

⁴⁶ UKNA PROB 11/1727 Will of George Clarke Forbes proved 9 June 1827

⁴⁷ BULSC Pinney Papers Domestic Box C2 bundle 13 R E Case to Charles Pinney, Nevis 7 June 1828

⁴⁸ NC CR 1835-1838 f270-271

⁴⁹ Ancestry.library edition 2007 taken from 1841 Census, parish of Leckhampton f19

⁵⁰ Ancestry.library edition 2007 quoting England and Wales BMD Death Index 1837-1983

⁵¹ uk.geocities.com/llhs@btinternet.com/familyhistory/sectionk.pdf 'St Peter's Leckhampton Tombstone Inscriptions'

⁵² UKNA PROB 11/2111 proved 22 April 1850

Herbert, President of the Council of Nevis for many years and proprietor of Clarke's or Montpelier and Stapleton's plantation.⁵³ Magnus Morton inherited eventually from Herbert on condition that he took the name Herbert, though after that his name varies confusingly between Magnus Morton and Magnus Morton Herbert, depending on the source. The couple had a number of family tragedies, losing one child through miscarriage and in 1825 a son died.

Magnus Morton was clearly not highly regarded in the Nelson household. In 1795 Nelson wrote to his wife: 'As to Mrs Hamilton I am not surprised at any part of her conduct or young Morton, who is a blockhead.'⁵⁴ Clearly Christianna came to think the same or worse long before her death in 1835.⁵⁵ In 1828 the Pinney firm wrote to Charles Pinney on Nevis that 'Moreton remains in France and Mrs Moreton at Bath. I understand from Mrs Forbes she has not the slightest wish to see him...'⁵⁶

None of this would amount to anything more than family gossip, except that it should be read in the context of the break-up of the Herbert estates on Nevis. After the death of Martha Williams Hamilton, Morton inherited the agglomeration of estates built up by his uncle John Richardson Herbert. At least one of the estates, Cox Heath, was in receivership by 1817. Certainly others were by 1828. For those interested in the estates of J R Herbert, including Montpelier, it would be an interesting question to investigate the effects on the management of those estates and on their enslaved populations of the 'failure' under Magnus Morton Herbert.

Plantation arrangements under the family of George Clarke Forbes

Forbes clearly had an ongoing relationship with the Pinneys from at least 1818. This may have developed further during the visit of Charles Pinney to Nevis in late 1819 and through 1820. In 1821 Forbes was writing to Pinney from Bath, returning a plan of an iron mill which Pinney had lent him for copying.⁵⁷ The Pinney firm, as a West India factor, was forwarding to its correspondents plans for both steam engines and horizontal mills from various firms. These included local Bristol firms such as Stephen Dobbins & Co. and J Winwood & Co. The timing of Forbes's interest may suggest that he was thinking about changing the design of his mill from vertical to horizontal.

Further use of the firm that same year is indicated by a letter from Forbes in Bath to Charles Pinney, requesting that he send out on the firm's ship '25 hhds coal and 10 hhds lime on the terms you mention and wishing the *Usk* a good and speedy passage...'⁵⁸

Though the Pinneys were keen to contract their concerns on Nevis, Professor Pares points out that, as one of their legal advisors, Forbes had a special claim on their

⁵³ *Caribbeana* vol. 5 p226 pedigree of Herbert

⁵⁴ Naish pp220-221 Nelson to his wife 25 August 1795

⁵⁵ Christianna Morton Herbert died at Montagu Street, Portland Square, London on 3 April 1835 as reported in *Court Magazine*. Her husband died in Brussels in October 1834. See Herbert of Nevis Pedigree, *Caribbeana* vol. 5 pp223-232. For her will, proved 7 April 1835 see UKNA PROB 11/1845/354.

⁵⁶ BULSC Pinney Papers Domestic Box C2 Bundle 13, R E Case to Charles Pinney 7 June 1828

⁵⁷ BULSC Pinney Papers Domestic Box C1 Bundle 7 Forbes to Pinney dated 1821 on the cover

⁵⁸ BULSC Pinney Papers Domestic Box C1 Bundle 7 Forbes, Green Park Place, Bath to Pinney 22 June 1821

goodwill. As a result they made him a loan of £5,000 in 1822.⁵⁹ This shows that Bush Hill was never really clear of debt in the 40 years after the initial loans made to George Forbes.

It is likely that, after the death of Forbes, his wife Jane leased the estate. R E Case's letter to Charles Pinney of 7 June 1828 reported the following to him: 'Mrs Forbes informs me that a Bucke has the entire disposal of the sugars. She will not allow any Bills to be drawn. She understands there are claims sent in against the Estate of which they had no idea of and that all arrangements in respect to the Estate must be made with Bucke'.⁶⁰ Probably this refers to George Bucke, the friend of her husband, who signed the 1828 Slave Register for the estate but it is also possible that the lessee was his brother Walter Lewis Bucke.

It has not been possible in the time available to trawl the account and letterbooks in the Pinney Papers but both the practical and financial links indicate that this would be worth doing for the period from 1818 up to the death of George Clarke Forbes in 1827. Further research may reveal information about the extent to which the estate's production of sugar and rum was shipped to Bristol, about return shipments of plantation supplies and the financial arrangements for paying off the loan made to Forbes.

The enslaved population of Bush Hill in the period 1814-1837

The 1807 abolition of the British Atlantic slave trade did not fulfil the hope of the abolitionists that it would bring a consequent amelioration of, or improvement in, the conditions of the existing enslaved population in the different islands under British control.

Pressure from abolitionists both within and from outside the British government resulted in the requirement on the different islands to register each and every slave. The main aim of recording every individual, including all births and deaths, was to close off the continuing illicit trade in slaves. This would remove all hope from planters that they might keep the numbers of their working population up by means other than improving the conditions of that population.

Copies of the entries for Bush Hill from the six registers for Nevis, starting in 1817, have been obtained from the National Archives at Kew in London (formerly the Public Record Office).⁶¹ These await analysis by Christine Eickelmann. The first register in 1817 lists all the slaves for the estate and subsequent registers, ending with 1834, records every addition by birth or purchase and every deduction, usually because of death. This should make it possible to follow the fate of individuals and particularly to see who survived from the partial list of 1786. The first two registers were signed by George Clarke Forbes and his wife Jane; three more were signed by George Bucke and the last one in 1834 was signed by Walter Lewis Bucke.

⁵⁹ Pares, R A *West India Fortune* p265

⁶⁰ BULSC Pinney Papers Domestic Box C2 Bundle 13, R E Case to Charles Pinney 7 June 1828

⁶¹ UKNA T 71/364-369

The bare facts are as follows:

Year	Additions	Deductions	Total
1817			96
1822	8	14	90
1825	8	6	92
1828	7	10	89
1831	5	7	87
1834	6	9	84

Slave numbers for Bush Hill Estate, Nevis, extracted from the Triennial Slave Registers at the National Archives, Kew

This table reveals a steady but significant decline in the slave population which is entirely in keeping with trends revealed by research on other Nevis estates. From past experience with estates on Nevis it should be possible to use the registers to present a snapshot of the enslaved population over these two decades before Emancipation. The data may reveal details about age structure, gender balance, origins and relative rates of birth and death. These can be compared to similar snapshots of other estates on Nevis.

However, the 1817 Register reveals a more complicated story than is first apparent. Among the 96 slaves are 37 identified as Africans. 20 of them are found in one block and 17 others are listed singly or in small groups.⁶² Some of the ages of these Africans, for instance infants under one year old, suggest the possibility of George Clarke Forbes trading illegally in slaves.

Tortola Apprentices

More light is thrown on the case by a parliamentary enquiry into practices on the estate which is unique for Nevis, though the enquiry also involved cases on St Kitts, Tortola and Antigua. The investigation was carried out on Nevis probably in 1823 and the whole was reported on to Parliament in 1826.

The background to the case concerns the 1807 Act of the Abolition of the Slave Trade which allowed for the seizure and detention of ships caught trading in slaves. The 'Slaves or Natives of Africa' on any such vessel were to be handed over to the civil or military authorities and either enlisted in the forces or apprenticed, for a term not exceeding 14 years, in the same way as a free person might apprentice themselves to a master. To employ them in the fields instead of, or in addition to, the existing enslaved population on an estate was not sufficient.

The enquiry shows that George Clarke Forbes around 1814 had apprenticed to him by the Collector of Tortola 29 such Africans who were then taken to Nevis to work on his estate. In 1823 the Commissioners appointed by Parliament investigated their conditions on the estate, taking statements from them and from Forbes. Questions were asked of them about what work they did, how they had been treated, what they had been taught, what allowances they had and what they hoped for in the future. Their names, ages, ethnic origins and distinguishing marks were given and information was provided about which captured ship they had come from.

⁶² UKNA T 71/364 ff161-162

This is a unique record for a Nevis estate and for a group of Africans on the island. It has the potential to provide a wealth of information not only about practices on the estate but also about cultural practices before arrival in the Caribbean and the extent to which creolisation had taken place over the period. There is also the possibility of investigating through naval and colonial records the circumstances in which the Africans were taken from their home continent and the various tales associated with the capture of the vessels in which they were found. Since the Africans were questioned and their replies were reported it gives an unparalleled opportunity for the project to present a black, African voice from Nevis in this period of enslavement. Hopefully it might also be possible to marry the details of this group with the archaeological evidence revealed by the project. It is a crucial element in the story of the estate.

Slave compensation and sale of the estate

The act of Parliament in 1833 abolishing slavery provided a sum of £20 million for compensating the owners of slaves in the colonies. Its distribution was based on the number of enslaved people appearing on the registers on 1 August 1834. A list from the Office of Assistant Commissioners of Compensation, dated 27 January 1835, shows that Jane Forbes registered a claim for 84 people as 'owner in fee'.⁶³ Although the Pinneys initially contested her claim (No. 19), on the basis of money still being due from the loan made to George Clarke Forbes, in fact they withdrew this counterclaim. She was then awarded £1440.9s.8d by the Commission for 84 slaves on 15 February 1836.⁶⁴ Having held on to the estate, probably for the compensation money which may have been used to pay off the loans to the estate, Jane Forbes and her sister-in-law, Christianna Morton Herbert, sold the estate to Walter Lewis Bucke on 10 August 1837 for £3,000 Nevis Currency.

The purchase price reflects the complete collapse in land values which occurred on Nevis and elsewhere in the Caribbean after the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. Also on the estate were 67 apprentice labourers and 27 horned cattle, one pony, one mule and three asses.⁶⁵ It remains to be seen why there were only 67 apprentices in 1837 when 84 slaves were claimed for in 1835. The records on Nevis could usefully be examined to clarify this.

Bush Hill from Emancipation to the twentieth century

The new owner of Bush Hill was the brother of George Bucke, the executor and friend of George Clarke Forbes who had signed many of the slave registers on behalf of Jane Forbes. According to information in the Bucke diary, George Bucke landed in Antigua 16 March 1787.⁶⁶ He does not seem to have owned his own estate in 1817 although he may have acted as manager of one or more. As attorney he signed the 1825, 1828 and 1831 slave registers for Bush Hill but he also acted as an attorney for a number of other estates, including the nearby Pembroke Estate. George Clarke Forbes in 1826 described him in his will as 'Merchant' of Nevis. Bucke is recorded as

⁶³ *St Christopher Gazette and Caribbean Courier* 13 February 1835 in BULSC Pinney Papers Red Box 38 - 3

⁶⁴ *House of Commons: Accounts and Papers* vol. xviii 1837-8 session, on microfiche, Chadwyck-Healey fiche 41.389 pp107-8

⁶⁵ NC CR 1835-1838 ff270-271

⁶⁶ Rhodes House Library, Oxford, MSS W Ind. S. 24 (a) Handwritten copy, by D J Dunning of Alexandra Hospital Nevis, of a diary found in Nevis written by Walter Lewis Bucke

having lived at Hard Times Estate in 1830. In 1831 he personally registered nine slaves.⁶⁷ He was killed by a fall from his chaise on 12 May 1833.⁶⁸ According to the Nevis Courthouse Common Records he bequeathed a small number of slaves to his brother Walter.⁶⁹ His own will notes that he had the official post of 'Master and Examiner' on the island and in it he left half of his equitable estate to his brother Walter. Sums of money were also left to his sister Bertha.⁷⁰

Based on experience researching other estates on Nevis, the Bucke family seem to originate in that group of people who worked their way up the social and economic ladder on Nevis from being overseers to becoming managers and eventually owners. Although it has not proved possible, yet, to establish a family connection, there is mention of a John *Buck* in 1765 working, possibly as an overseer, on Jessup's Estate in 1765. Jessup himself had strong connections with the county of Essex. The Bucke family ties from the mid-nineteenth century onwards are complex but they and their successors on Bush Hill have strong connections with East Anglia which might possibly reveal useful information about their origins and, perhaps, about the estate if explored.

In 1827 Walter Lewis Bucke described himself to Pinney, Ames & Co as having been a resident planter on Nevis for 27 years.⁷¹ This would have him arriving on Nevis in 1800. In fact, according to his own diary he left England on 18 February 1802 and landed at Nevis on 24 April and about six months later he went to live at Coxheath Estate.⁷² As an individual he registered 14 slaves in 1817 - not enough for a plantation. His diary records that he broke his leg on 9 May 1823 and twelve days later it was amputated. When he signed the register for Bush Hill in 1834 he was acting as attorney for Jane Forbes but, in his diary, he makes no mention of that. He seems to have buried two wives in 1831 and 1835 and remarried on 16 April 1835. His son, Walter Henry, was born on 8 December 1836. In 1836 he was awarded £524 compensation in two separate claims for 28 slaves of his own.⁷³ He records in his diary on 23 July 1836 that his relative Edwin left Bush Hill and that on 3 October following he himself 'Came to Bush Hill'. However he makes no mention of becoming the owner of the estate in 1837. Documents in the National Archives record that he was elected member for St John Figtree in the Nevis Assembly in 1839.⁷⁴ By 1848 he also owned the nearby, 145 acre estate of Richmond Lodge, also known as Salt Pond Ghut, which in that year, together with Thomas Slater, he sold to a John Richards.⁷⁵ The latter is significant, though the family relationship with Bucke is not clear, because Richards and his wife Mary Suzannah inherited both Bush Hill and Zetland estates from Walter Lewis Bucke when he died in 1858.⁷⁶

Very little has so far come to light about the management of the estate during this period. For instance, there are no entries in Bucke's, albeit personal, diary which mention either Emancipation in 1834 or the ending of enforced apprenticeship in 1838. There is, however, a note in the diary of a 'Hurricane which blew down Bush

⁶⁷ UKNA T 71/368

⁶⁸ RHL MSS W Ind. S. 24 (a)

⁶⁹ NC CR 1831-1835 ff270-271 index

⁷⁰ UKNA PROB 11/1860. Administration granted 23 April 1836

⁷¹ BULSC Pinney Papers Letterbook 60 29 June 1827

⁷² RHL MSS W Ind. S. 24 (a)

⁷³ *House of Commons: Accounts and Papers* vol. xviii 1837-8 session, on microfiche, Chadwyck-Healey fiche 41.389 pp107-8

⁷⁴ UKNA CO 186/16

⁷⁵ NC CR 1847-1858 ff166-172

⁷⁶ NC Nevis Book of Wills 1837-1864 f474, Will of Walter Lewis Bucke entered 1 March 1858. Bucke's grave is in the churchyard of St John Figtree.

Hill works and a great many bldgs on the island' on 12 August 1835.⁷⁷ No further details are given. The very detailed Royal Navy survey by HMS *Thunder* in April 1848 shows Bush Hill and Dogwood, both with windmills but it is unclear whether the two are associated.

By 1871 the two clearly are associated in J A B Iles's list of sugar plantations being listed one after the other. Both are given as wind-powered so there had been no introduction of steam to the estate by then. However, there was a change for both of them because there was a new proprietor, Walter Henry Bucke.⁷⁸ Bucke was the son of Walter Lewis Bucke but the precise nature of the relationship with John Richards, who inherited from Walter Lewis Bucke, can only be cleared up with further genealogical enquiry.

Walter Henry Bucke was associated with the estate for at least 34 years and was probably the proprietor who put in the Fletcher steam engine which remains at the works today. He appears as a schoolboy aged 14 in the parish of St John DE Sepulchre in Norwich, Norfolk in 1851. The memorial tablet to him in St John Figtree church describes him as 'of Bush Hill' and it confirms that he was born on 8 December 1836 and shows that he died on 15 December 1917. According to the same tablet, his wife Susan was born on 24 January 1834 and died on 25 April 1905. The tablet was erected by his godson Rev. H R Collins. The couple were buried in the churchyard along with Martha Williams Bucke who was aged about 87.

It is likely that H R Collins was the son of Rev. John M Collins who, according to Iles, owned Richmond Lodge Estate in 1871. V L Oliver shows that J M Collins had been the Rector of St Paul's Church in Charlestown but that he became the Rector of St George Gingerland around May 1874 and remained so until 1890.⁷⁹ Thereafter he left Nevis and appears in the 1891 Census in England as a Clerk in Holy Orders in the parish of Minster Close Precincts in Peterborough, Northamptonshire. He was aged 56 and with him were his wife Martha Hamilton Williams and two daughters Elinor (elsewhere Eleanor) Linda and Zoe Clara, aged 20 and 15 respectively; all of them were born in the Leeward Islands.⁸⁰

In his will Walter Henry Bucke appointed Charles Chittick and Rev. Henry Rawle Collins as executors. Bucke left Bush Hill and the lower part called Dogwood, but the whole known as Bush Hill, and also his estate called Zetland to be sold as well as his household goods and furniture. Henry Rawle Collins nominated and appointed William Slater Maynard of Cane Garden Estate, planter, as attorney to carry out the sale.⁸¹

By an indenture dated 17 January 1919 the executors sold both Bush Hill, including Dogwood, and Zetland to Eleanor and Clara Collins, who were living in Cambridge, for £3,700. The borders of Bush Hill were given as: to the East (sic), Budgen's Estate; to the West, the sea; to the North, part of Budgen's and Richmond Lodge; to the South, the ravine and part of Cox Heath Estate.⁸² Within about six weeks the two sisters, who had known Bush Hill as an estate from their Richmond Lodge plantation, leased the joint estate of Bush Hill and Dogwood of 327 acres, to a Nevis planter,

⁷⁷ RHL MSS W Ind. S. 24 (a)

⁷⁸ J A B Iles *An Account Descriptive of the Island of Nevis, West Indies* 1 January 1871

⁷⁹ *Caribbeana* vol. 2 p371 and vol. 3 pp215-218

⁸⁰ Ancestry.library edition 2007 quoting 1891 Census for Minster Close Precincts, Peterborough, UKNA RG 12/1227

⁸¹ NC CR 17 f109 – the will was proved at Charlestown 2 January 1918

⁸² NC CR 17 f161

Edmund Tucker Puncheon, whose address was given as Bush Hill. He was to pay £160 sterling a year, keep the estate in a plantable condition and not to sell firewood or trees.⁸³ This was the occasion for the inventory given in the Appendix B.

It is unclear for how long or to what extent Bush Hill and Dogwood remained a working sugar estate into the twentieth century or how long it remained in the Collins family. Vincent Hubbard has written that during the First World War the windmill towers at Dogwood, Brown and Cox Heath estates were whitewashed as an aid to navigation.⁸⁴ The fact that Puncheon was enjoined to keep the estate in a plantable condition suggests that it was still in that condition in 1919. The associated inventory may tell the experienced industrial archaeologists/historians whether the equipment suggests a working estate. As previously noted, the War Office map of 1920 suggests that either the house was lived in at that time or the works were in use or both. Dogwood is not shown at all.

Watkins in his 1924 list of Nevis estates gives Bush Hill as 327 acres and the owner as 'Z N Collins', though he states that 'Z M Collins' owned Zetland (176 acres).⁸⁵ It is likely that both of these are mistakes and that they should read 'Zoe Clara Collins'. The reason for this is that Miss Collins and her sister Eleanor did not sell Zetland until 1930. It might be worth trying to track down the papers of the solicitor who handled the sale in the hope of finding plans of the two estates.

Clearly the Losada photograph is an important source of information. It shows a working estate with what might be a cane trash heap next to a windmill that has no cap or sails. This suggests that they relied at that time on the steam engine. The buildings look in good order. The other important aspect of the photo is what the caption calls a 'Native hut', boarded and thatched, standing on the western side of the ghut slightly northwest of the works. It would certainly be worth checking the date of the photo with Ms Jackie Armony.

While further information about the estate in the twentieth century, including plans, may well be found in the records in the Nevis Courthouse, it is likely that the best sources of information on the workings of the estate in this period will be found through oral history via the staff and neighbours of Montpelier Plantation Inn and among members of the local community.

⁸³ NC CR 17 f197

⁸⁴ Hubbard, V *Swords, Ships and Sugar* Corvallis, Oregon, 2002 p198. The work was carried out in 1916.

⁸⁵ Watkins, Frederick Henry *Handbook of the Leeward Islands* London, Misc. Official Publications, 1924

Preliminary conclusions

- Bush Hill estate on Nevis was probably named after an earlier estate on the northern fringes of London, near Edmonton.
- In the 1780s the land on Nevis was the property of Mary Forbes, nee Clarke, and her sister.
- Clarkes have been associated with Nevis since the late seventeenth century though the precise relationships between members of the family are not clear. However it is likely that the Clarke family of Bush Hill near London owned the estate on Nevis from at least the middle of the eighteenth century and possibly earlier.
- It may have been part of, or associated with, the large landholding of Col. John Netheway.
- After the death of William Clarke in 1783 George Forbes, who was well connected, and his wife Mary began the resettlement of the Nevis estate from 1786 onwards.
- This resettlement, financed by loans from various London-based merchants, began with the purchase of slaves and involved the building of plantation structures such as the windmill which can be seen today.
- George Clarke Forbes inherited the estate from his father and bequeathed it to his wife who sold it in 1837.
- As yet there is inadequate information to draw any firm conclusions about the size of the estate or its output.
- The triennial slave registers can reveal much about the enslaved workforce in the period 1817 to 1834 but the numbers show that the workforce was in decline in the period leading up to Emancipation.
- This enslaved workforce was illegally augmented by apprenticed Africans from Tortola about whose origins and conditions much can be learnt.
- The estate was bought by the Bucke family in 1837, a family with strong connections with East Anglia, and remained with them and their connections into the early twentieth century.

Acknowledgments

Our thanks go especially to the staff members at the Nevis Courthouse, the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society and Bristol University Library Department of Special Collections for their patience in ferreting out the documents requested and their help in answering questions.

Special mention should also be made of Brian Littlewood. Without his particular help material which touches on biographical and genealogical matters would always be the poorer.

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Appendix A

Schedule of slaves on George Forbes's Bush Hill Estate 1786⁸⁶

Names	Ages	When bought	Value paid	Quality	Trades and Occupations
Simon	25	1786 /Feb 10 th	170	Very able	Mason
Priam	45	May	270	Very able	Head carpenter and millwright
Robin	24	May	120	Very able	Carpenter and joiner
Prince	25	May	160	Very able	Tight cooper
Johnno	36	May	160	Very able	Driver
Pong	30	April 5 th	200	Very able	Head boiler
Sambo	32	May	150	Very able	Watchman and very Trusty
Billy	50	May	80	Able	Field
Daniel	25	May	100	Able	Field
Johnny	26	May	100	Able	Field
Charles Tobin	19	May	100	Able	Field
Scipio	22	May	100	Able	Field
Sam	23	May	100	Able	Field
Gill	30	May	100	Able	Field
Damson	32	May	100	Able	Field
Charly	16	May	90	Able	Field
Somerset	15	May	90	Able	Field
Joe	16	May	90	Able	Field
John	16	May	90	Able	Field
Moris	15	May	90	Able	Field
William	14	May	90	Able	Field
Hanibal	14	May	90	Able	Field
Piner	13	April	90	Able	Field
Sotherby	14	May	90	Able	Field
Bob	30	June 2 nd	150	Very able	Field and Boiler
Tomma	17	May June 2 nd	100	Able	Field
Charles Brand	18	June 2 nd	100	Able	Field
Tarrot	18	June 2 nd	100	Able	Field
Manuel	16	June 2 nd	90	Able	Field
Tommy Percival	26	June 13 th	100	Able	Field
Peter	28	June 13 th	100	Able	Field
Boatswain	30	June 13 th	100	Able	Field
Fortune	30	June 13 th	100	Able	Field
Charles Percival	25	June 13 th	100	Able	Field
Semmy/Jemmy?	16	June 13 th	100	Able	Field
Great Ritta	50	April 5 th	50	No descript.	No descript.
Mary	50	April 5 th	70		

⁸⁶ NC CR vol. 1785-1787

Beneba	30	April 6 th	80
Toosy	36	April 6 th	70
Rachel	24	April 6 th	80
Hagar	16	April 6 th	70
Peggy	13	April 6 th	60
Fanny	20	March 10 th	90
Dinah	23	March 10 th	90
Phillis	30	March 10 th	90
Moll	36	March 10 th	80
Susanna	24	March 5 th	100
Peggy Nesbit	28	March 5 th	100
Kitty	30	March 5 th	100
Charlotte	19	March 5 th	100
Jenny	17	March 5 th	85
Lucky	17	March 5 th	85
Young Moll	16	March 5 th	85
Nanny	17	March 5 th	85
Hannah	18	March 5 th	85
Dolly	16	March 5 th	85
Sally	16	March 5 th	85
Suky	18	March 5 th	85
Ritta	20	March 15 th	95
Silvia	40	June 5 th	80
Franky	14	June 13 th	75
Flora	22	June 13 th	100
Lettice	24	June 13 th	100
Rose	20	June 13 th	100
Fanny Sandford	21	June 13 th	100
Penda	20	June 13 th	100
Fanny	29	June 13 th	100

Appendix B

Inventory from Bush Hill Estate 1919 (associated with the lease by the Collins sisters to Edmund Tucker Puncheon 1 March 1919)⁸⁷

2 sugar ladles in fair condition
1 sugar skimmer do.
1 carron pan whole
1 carron pan old
1 apoc. [apothecary's?] scale
1 lb weight for above
3 striking spouts
3 other wooden do.
1 Galv. [galvanised?] do.

Liquor loft

1 skimming and molasses pump
1 old carron pan
1 cold water pump for Engine
2 old Retorts
1 oscillator
10 old boiler tubes
1 copper cone shaped Bucket
1 cast iron water pipe 8' x 2"
1 Ore [?] 1 ½" Iron pipe fittings for Pump
1 Air vessel for Pump
2 Carron pans (1 large and 1 small) whole
1 do. (1 large) with a crack

Engine Room

1 vice
1 spanner
2 side roller spanners
1 lap roller
1 large carron pan (whole)
1 horse gear
1 Harness safe
3 saddle racks
1 harness box
2 small carron pans cracked
2 medium do. do. do.
1 large do. do. do.
2 large vats

Stores

8 Good boiler Tubes
2 2nd qual. [quality?] do.
1 Blow off cock
1 Lifter [?] complete for spare wheel shaft
coupling gin and gearing
2 garden pumps
1 old cistern pump
1 old Rope Fall

⁸⁷ NC CR 17 f197

1 Baking [Baling?] Press
1 double brass sheared iron Block
1 triple do. do. do. do. do.
1 wooden block
1 piston for steam engine
1 slide valve rod
4 iron bars [bows?]
1 ½ draught chains
1 back chain
1 piece hose
2 boxes old iron
1 gig body without wheels shafts or springs
5 lengths galv. Spouting. say 6 ft
1 glister pipe
5 lbs horse hair
2 lengths flat spouting
2 bells, 1 cracked 1 (of) 90lbs 1 (of) 69 lbs
1 anvil
6 lengths 1 ½" cast iron steam pipe say 6 ft
2 pieces lead (234 lbs)
1 cone shaped copper bucket
1 cart saddle
7 lengths old piping
8 spanners
3 dog. boilers Revels [Revets/Rivets?]
1 Box sundries
10 ft 1" Asbestos Packing
8 ft 5/8" do. do.
1 pr. Bottom bearings for spare wheel shaft
sundry pieces old iron
1 old bell for Engine
1 ?gear do. do.
1 old ?callivator [calibrator?]
1 old corn mill

Cellar under the house

1 horse (wooden)
1 ladder
1 set pinions for rollers
1 trough
1 pinion for fly wheel shaft
3 pinions for windmill
1 Millyard 600 lbs capacity
12 lbs yellow ochre
17 trunions for wind mill
iron work for 2 carts with wheels and axles
sundry pieces p. pine scantling
1 slab Mahogany on foot fitted in house and used as a sable
1 Mahogany gun case and cover used as shelves case in Dining Room and cover in
Bed Room

Eleanor Linda Collins by her attorney Chas. C. Chittick
For Clara Collins by her attorney Chas C. Chittick
Edmund Tucker Puncheon
Lionel Alexander Selkredge of Charlestown, Writing Clerk