

## **CHAPTER 13**

### **OFFICIAL PLANS TO RESETTLE THE ANGUILLIANS**

We have seen that the first quarter of the eighteenth century was characterized in Anguilla by continuous drought. The resulting hardship caused the Anguillians to make repeated requests to the Governor-in-Chief for land to be granted to them elsewhere. The Governor's overriding concern was improving the King's revenue from his colony. He was concerned that the Anguillians should be moved, if at all, to one of the four main islands. They might there be profitably employed by the planters in growing sugar cane. Any trade they engaged in could then be properly regulated and taxed. This attitude of the colonial authorities conflicted with the determination of the Anguillians to remove themselves as far as possible from the government and taxes of the Leeward Islands. The result was that, in spite of the hardship, the Anguillians mainly remained where they were.

The period before the American Revolution saw several efforts to persuade the people of Anguilla to move to a number of different locations. We shall deal with them separately below. So far as the records permit, we shall use the various official invitations to the Anguillians to emigrate as a framework for looking at the conditions of life and the struggles of the second and third generations of Anguillians.

## Antigua

It will be recalled<sup>1</sup> that after the 1689 evacuation of Anguilla by Lieutenant **Edward Thorne**, Governor **Christopher Codrington Sr** attempted in vain to persuade the Anguillians to settle in Antigua. We learn something about the scheme because Codrington was severely criticized by the planters of Nevis, and he wrote at length to the Committee explaining his intentions. The Nevisians, he wrote, were jealous as they wanted the Anguillians to work on their own sugar estates.

While Codrington and the Nevisians wrangled, the Anguillians returned from Antigua to their island, and the impoverished settlement continued to grow. Developments in the early part of the eighteenth century were, therefore, all part of the continuing saga over the survival of the settlement. Nothing in this respect changed with the birth of the new century.

Governor **Christopher Codrington Jr** arrived in Antigua in 1701 and assumed the government of the Leeward Islands. He continued his father's policy of attempting to resettle the Anguillians in Antigua. He characterised<sup>2</sup> them as a thorn in the side of the Government of the Leeward Islands, and a drain on the revenue. He devised a scheme to tax the undeveloped

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 6: War and the Settlers.

<sup>2</sup> CO.152/4, No 11, folio 29: Codrington to the Committee on 11 January 1702 [query].

land of large landowners in Antigua. He persuaded the Assembly in Antigua to pass the appropriate law. His hope was that the tax would prove so burdensome that the owners would willingly part with some of the land that they were not using. These recovered areas of land he proposed to dole out in parcels of five or ten acres to small farmers from Anguilla and Virgin Gorda. He hoped by this measure to draw off a great many of the settlers of those two islands where he considered they were perfect outlaws.

There is no record whether this tax measure imposed on the Antiguan landowners in fact resulted in any land being made available to any planter from Anguilla. If any Anguillians did take up the offer, it was certainly not in large numbers. The census of Antigua taken in 1753 shows only one or two members of each of the **Welch, Roberts, Carty, Gibbons, Richardson** and **Coakley** families living there. The **Leonard** family, which held a cotton estate in Antigua during the 1720's, appear to have all departed.

### **The Windward Side of St Kitts**

With the outbreak of Queen Ann's War in 1702, the need to strengthen the major islands of the colony against French attacks grew urgent. The possibilities presented by the Anguillians, otherwise wasted, so far as the planters of St Kitts were concerned, were obvious to

them. In 1702, the members of the Council of St Kitts petitioned<sup>3</sup> Governor Codrington expressing their fear that the French were about to attack the island. The Council learned that **Monsieur de la Gennes**, the commander of the French forces in St Kitts, sent for the French forces from St Martin and St Barts to reinforce him. They requested that the people of Anguilla and Virgin Gorda should be ordered to remove to St Kitts. They offered to send the necessary sloops to bring over the Anguillians to settle the windward side of St Kitts. Codrington Jr was able, however, to drive the French from St Kitts in 1702, almost without firing a shot.

Nothing more is heard of this plan to use the Anguillians to strengthen the settlement on the windward side of St Kitts. **Edward Lake's** 1704 patent<sup>4</sup> from Codrington refers specifically to the need to give encouragement to the settlement of Anguilla by granting land at peppercorn rents. This tells us that the planters of St Kitts were not encouraged in their effort to have the Anguillians removed to St Kitts to work on their plantations.

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<sup>3</sup> CO.152/4: Codrington to the Committee: Petition of the St Christopher Council [query].

<sup>4</sup> Anguilla Archives: Edward Lake's 1704 patent. See: Chapter 5: The Second Generation.

## **Barbuda**

The Virginian Colonel **Daniel Parke** was appointed Governor-in-Chief of the colony of the Leeward Islands in 1706. He too entertained designs on the persons of the Anguillians. He conducted a long-running battle with the Codrington family over Barbuda. He considered they possessed no right title to it. At one time, he toyed with the idea of re-settling the Anguillians in it. He put<sup>5</sup> this suggestion forward to the Privy Council as one of his justifications for wanting to confiscate Barbuda.

In 1709, he replied to the 22 Articles of Complaint made against him by the Antiguan planters. He wrote to the Council that he hoped to bring up from Anguilla, Virgin Gorda and Tortola between 150 and 200 families to settle on Barbuda. At present, he wrote, those families were lost to the Crown of England. What little cotton they made, they sold to the Danes. He claimed that these families were formerly driven off from Antigua and St Kitts by the large sugar planters forcing them off their land. As they led a very hard life in Anguilla and the Virgins he was sure that they would be glad to come and settle on Barbuda. There, he theorised, they would be much better off raising horses, cattle and corn for sale in Antigua, and cotton for export to Britain.

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<sup>5</sup> CO.152/8: Parke to the Committee: Reply to the Articles of Complaint. [query]

Before Parke could take any steps to effect his plan for the re-settlement of the Anguillians on Barbuda, he was killed in 1710 by an angry Antiguan mob. That was the last that was heard of his project. The life he described for these the second generation of Anguillians was one of extreme deprivation. Even allowing for the fact that he had a reason to exaggerate, in that he was arguing to save his career, it is certain that by the early eighteenth century, conditions in Anguilla were severe, and that life on Anguilla was punishing.

### **The French Lands on St Kitts**

The beginning of the eighteenth century in the Caribbean saw the accession to the throne of Queen Anne, 1702-1714. Her reign was marked by the War of the Spanish Succession, 1702-1713, referred to locally as Queen Anne's War. During this war, insignificant Anguilla escaped invasion, unlike Nevis, St Kitts, Antigua and Montserrat, the four major islands in the Colony of the Leeward Islands. Thanks to **Marlborough's** successes in the European war theatre, the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 saw the British in a strong position. They could refuse to hand back certain war-time conquests, including the French part of St Kitts. In this treaty, the French ceded to the British their half of that island, thus ending eighty years of troubled joint occupation.

For a while, it seemed that the Anguillians might be settled *en bloc* on a part of these lands. General **Walter Hamilton** was appointed Governor-in-Chief in 1715. Hamilton was to have a greater impact on Anguilla's destiny than any previous Governor-in-Chief. He was an intelligent and dynamic administrator. During the five years of his administration he bombarded the 'home government' with information about his Colony of the Leeward Islands and ideas for its development. In the year 1716, he mooted for the first time his plan for resettling the Anguillians on the conquered French lands. It is possible that the proposal was put forward before this date.

In his April 1716 dispatch,<sup>6</sup> he included a petition from **Abraham Howell**, on whom he conferred the honorary title of 'Governor of Anguilla', and which we will look at in more detail in the next Chapter. The Anguillians petitioned him to allow them to settle St Croix. Governor Hamilton had a better idea. He urged that they be encouraged by granting them small plantations in the former French part of St Kitts. This, he said, would be vastly to the benefit of the British Crown and the strengthening of the chief British islands of the Leewards. He repeated<sup>7</sup> the proposal in almost identical terms in

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<sup>6</sup> CO.152/11, No 6: Hamilton to the Committee on 10 April 1716.

<sup>7</sup> CO.152/11, No 56: Hamilton to the Committee on 3 October 1716.

October of the same year and again in a dispatch<sup>8</sup> of July 1717, written at Antigua, his home island.

The Privy Council took up the matter of resettling the Anguillians on the French Lands with the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury. In October 1717, they urged<sup>9</sup> the Treasury to accept Governor Hamilton's suggestion. They recommended that about 3,000 acres should be reserved to be distributed gratis, in small plantations of from eight to ten acres each, for the encouragement of the poor families of the Leeward Islands to settle there to improve the defence of the island. They urged that the Governor be authorised to promise the inhabitants of Anguilla in particular that they would be given portions of the land.

That same month the Committee wrote<sup>10</sup> back to Governor Hamilton. They were as yet unaware that half the population of Anguilla had already, in desperation, gone off under the leadership of Abraham Howell in their third abortive attempt to settle on Crab Island. The Committee considered what he wrote about the poor inhabitants of Anguilla. The Lords of the Treasury were responsible for the disposal of the French lands in St Kitts. The Committee recommended to the Treasury that as many of the Anguillians as could be settled in St Kitts

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<sup>8</sup> CO.152/12/1, No 62: Hamilton to the Committee on 7 October 1717.

<sup>9</sup> CO.153/13, folio 134: Privy Council to the Treasury on 16 October 1717.

<sup>10</sup> CO.153/13, folio 144: The Committee to Hamilton on 24 October 1717.

be given small plantations, after the poor inhabitants of St Kitts were provided for. They warned the Governor that he would do well to encourage the people of Anguilla to remain where they were. He was to endeavour as much as possible to prevent any of them from removing to any foreign settlement. The Anguillians must await His Majesty's decision on the method and manner of the disposal of the former French lands in St Kitts.

In the end, no Anguillian is recorded as having been granted one acre of this land in St Kitts. It was just as well that the Anguillians took matters into their own hands. For better or for worse, they escaped the Council's closing strictures to the Governor.

The Anguillians meanwhile took matters into their own hands. As we have seen, in early August 1717, unable to plant their lands because of the severe drought which persisted for several years if not decades, and suffering from starvation, half of the Anguillian men emigrated under the leadership of Abraham Howell to Crab Island.<sup>11</sup> As a result of this exodus to Crab Island, Hamilton visited Anguilla on 11 November 1717. In his dispatch<sup>12</sup> concerning his visit, he described the island, as we have seen, as being so worn out that the inhabitants could hardly feed their families from it. He repeated the lament that the people of Anguilla, Virgin Gorda and

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<sup>11</sup> Chapter 10: Crab Island Revisited.

<sup>12</sup> CO.152/12/1, No 67: Hamilton to the Committee on 6 January 1718.

Tortola were not yet granted land out of the French half of St Kitts, which would greatly strengthen the population of the chief islands and increase the revenue. As it was, they were, in his view, altogether useless as contributors to the revenue.

As more and more settlers emigrated to Tortola and St Croix from Anguilla, Governor Hamilton continued to urge that land in the French part of St Kitts be allocated to the Anguillians. In July 1719, he wrote<sup>13</sup> warning that the settlers were inclined to remove to the other smaller islands for want of land in better places. He pleaded that he could not prevent this continuing emigration to the Dutch and Danish islands unless the Council would allow him to distribute some of the lands in the French part of St Kitts among them. He singled out as needing special assistance the people of Anguilla. He concluded that they must desert that island. It was so barren that it would not grow even 'indian provisions', ie, corn and cassava, sufficient to feed them. Hamilton was to pursue this idea for several years.

On 24 October 1717, as yet unaware that the Anguillians gave up all hope of hearing positively from either London or the Governor-in-Chief in Antigua and already began their enterprise of seizing Crab Island, the

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<sup>13</sup> CO.152/12/4: Hamilton to the Committee on 15 July 1719 [query].

Committee wrote<sup>14</sup> Governor Hamilton. They explained that they placed his suggestion that the Anguillians be allotted lands in St Kitts before the Lords of the Treasury. They urged him to encourage the people of Anguilla, in the meantime, to stay where they were.

It was not until 19 November that the Committee in London received Governor Hamilton's dispatch of 26 August concerning the exodus to Crab. **William Popple**, the Secretary to the Committee, wrote<sup>15</sup> to **Charles Stanhope**, the Secretary to the Treasury, setting out the known facts. He enquired laconically, with no apparent appreciation of the urgency of the situation in Anguilla, whether there was any hope that General Hamilton might be able to suggest to the Anguillians that they would be taken care of when the French part of St Kitts was disposed of. The Treasury do not appear to have responded.

After **William Popple's** letter to **Charles Stanhope** of 19 November 1719, the correspondence concerning offering Anguillians land in St Kitts ends. There is no indication in the Colonial Office records that the Lords of the Treasury ever decided, even in principle, to allocate land in St Kitts to the Anguillians. The idea was most likely scrapped on the death of its most ardent advocate, Governor Hamilton, and his replacement in 1720 by

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<sup>14</sup> CO.153/13: Popple to Hamilton on 24 October 1717.

<sup>15</sup> CO.153/13: Popple to Stanhope, Secretary to the Treasury, on 19 November 1719.

**Viscount Lowther.** **John Hart**, who followed him in 1721, did not take up the proposal either.

As early as 1716, short-term grants were being made of tracts of land in the French part of St Kitts. In April 1716 Governor Hamilton dispatched<sup>16</sup> an 'Account' of these early grants. This showed only two planters with Anguillian connections in the French Lands. They were **Philip Driscall** with twenty four acres, and **Peter Edney** with seventy acres, thirty three slaves and five horses. It would not appear that any other Anguillians were able to acquire holdings in the French Lands. Hamilton died in 1720. The pressure on the Lords of the Treasury to apportion some of the French Lands in St Kitts to the Anguillians eased. Nothing more is heard of the idea. The French Lands were eventually auctioned off in large parcels to the major wealthy sugar planters of St Kitts.

The land in the French part of St Kitts was eventually auctioned off in large parcels, far beyond the price of Anguillian small farmers, to the major sugar planters of St Kitts. In any event, the long drought in Anguilla that caused the emigrations of 1688 and 1717 appears to have ended by 1725. With adequate rainfall to maintain the subsistence agriculture that was all that the stony soil of Anguilla could manage, the pressure to emigrate lessened.

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<sup>16</sup> CO.152/11, No 6: Hamilton to the Committee on 10 April 1716, enclosure No 3: An Account of the Grants of Land to the French Part of St Christopher.

During the eighteenth century, Anguilla was informally classed as one of the Virgin Islands. Family relations continued to be maintained with St Kitts, from where the original settlers arrived in 1650. We see evidence of this is provided by **Joan Richardson's** 1753 Will.<sup>17</sup> She was the widow of the late deputy governor, **John Richardson**. From her Will, we learn that she removed from Anguilla to St Kitts sometime after the death of her husband in 1741. Her maiden name was Edney, so that she was the sister, or at least a relative, of Peter Edney above. She probably moved back to St Kitts to live with her daughter and principal beneficiary, **Dorcas Scanlon**. All the witnesses of her Will are Kittitian names of the period. One of them was **Anthony Sommersall** who swore the affidavit of due execution of the Will in Anguilla in 1754, after her death.

### **The Bahamas**

We have seen earlier<sup>18</sup> that, towards the end of 1718, Governor **Woodes Rogers** of Nassau attempted to entice the Anguillians away to his colony. In July 1719 there was talk in the island of removing wholesale to the Bahamas. The drought was still severe, and was not to break until 1725. Numbers of small homesteaders were moving away from the island. As Governor Hamilton

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<sup>17</sup> Anguilla Archives: Joan Richardson's 1753 Will.

<sup>18</sup> Chapter 8: The Buccaneers and Anguilla.

reported,<sup>19</sup> there were at this time about 1,700 people on the island. He described them as industrious and careful. He said he believed that they would be of excellent use if they could be settled on the other main islands of the Leewards. He also noted that there were over 100 effective fighting men amongst them. They would be useful for the militia in time of war. He regretted that, because of the delay in allowing them land in the French part of St Kitts, they were now talking of removing to the Bahamas. He need not have been concerned. There is no evidence that any Anguillian families took up Governor Rogers' offer.

### **Jamaica**

Jamaica was captured from Spain by **Admiral William Penn** and **General Robert Venables** in May 1655. It was hungry for English settlers to develop the large areas of land that were available. Roughly 5,000 settlers and soldiers joined the fleet at Barbados and St Kitts. There may well have been some Anguillians among them. The following year, some 1,500 more settlers departed from Nevis bound for Jamaica. Again, there may have been Anguillians amongst them. The principal attraction was the offer of land. This was an opportunity to grow crops that could sustain a family to a greater extent than the precarious living offered by tobacco, cotton and the other

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<sup>19</sup> CO.152/12/4: Hamilton to the Committee on 15 July 1719.

minor staples available in Anguilla. Another incentive was the growth of the sugar boom in the Leeward Islands. Small farmers were squeezed out by the consolidation of small farms into sugar plantations. Many of these small land holders moved on to the mainland colonies in search of a better future.

Direct invitations were sent from Jamaica to Anguilla. In 1721, Governor **Nicholas Lawes** of Jamaica sent notices to Anguilla and others of the Virgin Islands promising land and offering encouragement to those that wished to emigrate to Jamaica. Hamilton expressed<sup>20</sup> his annoyance at this. He wrote that he was struggling to keep up numbers in his colony as a protection from the French and Spanish forces. Governor Lawes, he complained, wrote a letter which was being handed about in a clandestine way in all parts of the Leeward Islands. It provided encouragement and land to all persons who would come and settle on Jamaica. Lawes proposed to the people of Anguilla specifically that if they moved with all their possessions to Jamaica they would have much better land, a greater quantity of it, and be secure from the Spanish and other enemies. The result of Hamilton's complaint was a firm memorandum<sup>21</sup> from the Committee to the Treasury. There is no suggestion in any of the

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<sup>20</sup> CO.152/13: Hamilton to Popple on 19 May 1720 [query].

<sup>21</sup> CO 153/14, folio 1: William Popple, Secretary to the Committee, to William Lowther, Secretary to the Treasury, on 2 August 1721.

subsequent dispatches that any of the Anguillians took up this offer to emigrate to Jamaica.

However, there is a suspicious dip in the population figures<sup>22</sup> for the island immediately after 1720. In that year, Governor Hamilton recorded<sup>23</sup> the population of Anguilla and the other Leeward Islands (see ill 1).

*List of the Inhabitants in the Leeward Islands with the number of Servants free and unfree, together with the number of Persons fit to bear Arms, and of the Negroes that are therein the 18 day of July 1720*

	Free Persons				Servants Free and Unfree				Number of Persons fit to bear Arms in the Militia	Negros
	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Men	Women	Boys	Girls		
St Christophers	245	324	626	575	123	54	28	15	755	7821
Nevis	331	426	206	312	33	18	10	4	378	5689
Mountserrat	496	492	295	320	61	10	9	12	444	3772
Antigua	739	819	744	652	171	140	45	42	1109	19186
Anguilla	133	164	112	129	—	—	—	—	121	879
Spanish Town	92	56	90	102	—	—	—	—	88	364
Tortola	39	48	61	55	—	—	—	—	53	266
Total	2167	2729	2124	2156	73	212	122	73	2167	7821

1. Hamilton: List of the inhabitants of the Leeward Islands on 18 July 1720. (UK National Archives®)

<sup>22</sup> Chapter 18: Sugar Arrives.

<sup>23</sup> CO.152/13, folio 159: List of the inhabitants of the Leeward Islands on 18 July 1720.

There were in Anguilla 133 white men, some 121 of them fit to bear arms. The other 13 were old or infirm. In addition, there were 164 white women, 251 white children, and 879 black people. This adds up to 548 whites and 879 blacks or a total population of 1,427.

Four years later, Governor Hart supplies the Committee for Trade and Foreign Plantations with another estimate<sup>24</sup> of the population of the Leeward Islands (see ill 2).

*Answer* - The Number of the Inhabitants Whites and Blacks in the Several Islands according to the Nearest Computation (viz)

Island	Whites	Blacks
St. Antegoa	5200	10800
St. Christopher	4000	11500
Nevis	1100	6000
Montserrat	1000	4400
Anguilla	360	900
Spanish Town	340	650
Sarigola	420	780
	<u>12120</u>	<u>44030</u>

2. Hart to the Committee on 10 July 1724. CO.152/14. (UK National Archives®)

This time, he gives the population of Anguilla as being 360 whites, of whom only 85 (see ill 3) were fit for the

<sup>24</sup> CO.152/14, folio 325: Hart to the Committee on 10 July 1724, Answers to Queries.

militia, and 900 blacks, to a total of 1,260, down from 1,427.

A handwritten list of militia estimates for the Leeward Islands in 1724. The list is written in cursive and includes the following entries:

	White Men
At Antigua . . . . .	1100
St. Christophers . . . . .	1200
Nevis . . . . .	300
Montserrat . . . . .	350
Anguilla . . . . .	85
Spanish Town . . . . .	78
Sartola . . . . .	100
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	3513

3. Governor Hamilton's estimate of the militia of the Leeward Islands in 1724. CO.152/14. (UK National Archives®)

This means that during the short period of 1720 to 1724, at the end of the previous, long forty-year drought, the population decreased from 1,427 to 1,260, or by over 150 persons. It seems that the harsh climatic conditions in Anguilla obliged a number of the poorer farmers to leave.

The Anguillians at this time moved freely to and from the others of the Virgin Islands, whether they were British, Dutch or Danish. There were frequent complaints about them settling in, and illegally trading with, the neighbouring Dutch and Danish islands. Their preferred destinations were St Martin and St Croix. We will look at

the Anguillian settlement of St Croix in a later chapter.<sup>25</sup>

There is no record of any of them moving to Jamaica to take up the invitation of Governor Lawes.

### **British Guiana**

In the Anguilla of today, there is no oral history or other recollection of any of the attempts to relocate our ancestors as described above. There is no folklore about Crab Island, or the settlement of St Croix and Tortola, credited to the Anguillians by Justice Suckling. There is, however, an altogether fictitious story that is regularly heard on the radio, and at gatherings of Anguillians who discuss Anguilla's struggle to become self-sufficient and self-governing. That is the epic tale of the refusal of our ancestral Anguillians, newly freed from slavery in 1834, to be forcibly removed by the British Government from Anguilla and deported to the new colony of British Guiana. We are assured of the fact, by persons who appear to know, that the colonial authorities put pressure on our forefathers. They were told they must leave the drought-stricken and infertile land of Anguilla and emigrate to the lush and welcoming fields of Demerara, Berbice and Essequibo. However, the stalwart Anguillians stoutly resisted, refused to be moved, and clung patriotically to their beloved 'Rock'. As a result, we are informed, the British were blocked in their plan to strip Anguilla of its black

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<sup>25</sup> See Chapter 15: The Settlement of St Croix.

‘indigenous’ inhabitants and to re-populate the island with the white unemployed and homeless of Britain.

As usual, this myth springs from a genuine historical event. The records show that, after the Apprenticeship Period ended slavery in Anguilla, some three boat-loads of newly-freed Anguillians boarded ships and sailed to British Guiana. The correspondence between the Governor of the Leeward Islands and the Secretary of State in London reveals that Anguillians were lured by promises of free land, to be given to them if they would help to populate the supposedly uninhabited interior of Guiana.<sup>26</sup> Far from encouraging the Anguillians to leave their island, the colonial government was concerned at the Guianese attempt to rob the Leeward Islands of much needed, newly-freed labour. The Governor in Antigua begs the Secretary of State to register a protest with the Governor of British Guiana, and to demand that he stop stealing Leeward Islands citizens.

And so, we read in the records that it was with much relief that, some three years after they departed, the Governor of the Leeward Islands reported to London that the majority of the emigrated Anguillians returned to their

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<sup>26</sup> CO.239/56, Despatch No 61/71 of 28 November 1838. Sir William Colebrooke, Governor of the Leeward Islands, to Lord John Russel, Secretary of State.  
CO.239/55, Despatch No 40/2040 of 10 July 1839: Colebrooke to Lord Russel.  
CO.239/59, Despatch No 34/1620 of 15 July 1840: Colebrooke to Lord Russel.  
CO.239/59, Despatch No 35/1624 of 18 July 1840: Colebrooke to Lord Russel.  
CO.407/6, folio 184, 23 January 1840: Lord Russel to Colebrooke.

island, disenchanted with the snake-infested conditions they met in the jungles of Guiana.