

CHAPTER 16

GOVERNMENT ARRIVES

Until the year 1825, the deputy governor of Anguilla and his Council acted as Executive, Legislature and Judiciary of Anguilla. They were not a properly constituted Assembly, and enacted no real laws. They were a court without a legislature to enact any statutes for them to apply. The Governor-in-Chief never empowered them to deal with serious cases. Only a few of the Council records from our period survive in the Anguillian Archives. They are not complete. Many of the pages are torn. They lie in their brown paper wrapping on a shelf in the Registry of Deeds. The pages are as disorganised as a shuffled pack of playing cards. They offer us only brief and broken glimpses at the Council's activities. We are given tantalising snap shots of the problems the Council faced and dealt with. For all the documents' shortcomings, they are a major source. It pays to take a careful look at them. They are our principal source of information on the daily lives of the first Anguillians.

From the start, Anguilla was treated differently from the other Leeward Islands by the Governors-in-Chief. It was not viewed as a part of the Virgin Islands or of any other territory in the Leeward Islands. It was left for centuries without any organised form of government. Between 1650 and its absorption into St Kitts in 1825 it

possessed no elected Assembly. No locally made statutes could be made to regulate the life of the community. There was no financial assistance offered from outside. There was no law by which any local tax could be imposed, even assuming the people could pay it. For many years, the citizens could muster only a rump of a Council for their governing. The main reason for the island's neglect by the colonial authorities was that it was too poor to be bothered with. The Anguillians were viewed as causing more problems than they were worth.

From about 1711, Anguilla's status changed in the Governor-in-Chief's statistical reports to London. He began including Anguilla in his reports on the Virgin Islands, without any explanation. There was never any formal connection between Anguilla and the Virgin Islands. The linkage was only a matter of convenience. It was a reporting convenience, merely avoiding having to make a separate column in the report for such a poor and unproductive island. This informal grouping continued in the Colonial Office records for a period of about twenty-five years, and then ended.

There was much in common between the Virgin Islands and Anguilla. They were equally unprofitable to the Crown. Their economies were continuously depressed. Social life and culture there was inferior to that in Antigua and St Kitts. They lay relatively close to

each other. A small sailing boat could do the trip from Anguilla to Tortola in half a day. Their families and enterprises were closely intertwined. They were easy enough to access from government headquarters in Antigua, as they lay directly down wind. It was only the return trip that was uncomfortable. It was a long haul for a schooner having to tack upwind sailing from the Virgin Islands to Antigua. If the Governor were minded to sail from Antigua to Anguilla, there would be no suitable accommodation in Anguilla for the overnight stop. Dignitaries must spend the night in great discomfort on deck in Road Bay harbour. Not only was it difficult to sail back to Antigua or St Kitts from Anguilla, but tacking against the wind only prolonged the discomfort of seasickness suffered by the colonial administrators. One was also obliged to sail through unfriendly seas. The Dutch and French islands of Saba, Statia, St Barths and St Martin/St Maarten lay between the Virgin Islands and Antigua and the rest of the Leewards. They formed effective psychological and geographic barriers to Antigua and St Kitts. All these were valid geo-political factors for including Anguilla with the Virgins.

In 1724, the relationship between Anguilla and the Virgin Islands was semi-formalized. In that year, Governor **John Hart** described¹ Anguilla as being

¹ CO.152/14, folio 325: Hart to the Committee on 10 July 1724. Replies to Quarries.

a very barren place, and has never yet been surveyed, and the few inhabitants that have any grants from my predecessors or myself hold them by the same tenure as the people of Antigua.

As part of Governor Hart's attempt to improve government in Anguilla, he appointed **Col Francis Phips**, a St Kitts planter, to be lieutenant governor of all the Virgin Islands. He was to supervise the deputy governors of Anguilla, Virgin Gorda and Tortola. Col Phips earned a reputation for integrity and service. His appointment was accepted by the people of the islands. He visited Anguilla once or twice a year to administer the government. It is unlikely he received any profit or reward from this duty. There was certainly no public payment due for his service.

By this time, Leonard held the office of deputy governor for some thirty years since retiring as a sloop captain. With increasing age and absenteeism, not to mention the long drought that reduced many of the islanders to near starvation, his influence and power over the Anguillians entirely declined.

In addition to attempting to stiffen the government by putting Col Phips in overall charge, Governor Hart also appointed the island's first Council to assist in government. He appointed each of the six members of Council to be a Justice of the Peace. He also appointed a

deputy Provost Marshal to enforce the precepts of the Council and a deputy secretary to keep records. Phips was to be assisted by the deputy governor and Council of each of the three main islands, Anguilla, Tortola and Virgin Gorda.² This quasi-official federation was short-lived. It broke down sometime in 1729 when Phips resigned³ in a pique over the Committee siding with his opponent in a controversy over a matter of seniority between him and **Joseph Estridge**, another member of the St Kitts Council.

No Anguillian records survive from this period. We do not know to what extent these appointments helped the settlers to conduct either their private or their public business. From 1729 onwards, Anguilla regained her own separate identity within the Colony of the Leeward Islands. Her statistics were once again separately given. She kept her status as a separate unit until 1825 when her own government collapsed and she came under the administration of St Kitts.

The background to this collapse lay in the consequences of the American Revolution of 1776. War between Britain and the rebelling colonials and their allies broke out in the West Indies. From 1781 the Royal Navy under **Admiral Rodney** blockaded all trade between the

² Then more usually referred to in official documents of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as 'Spanish Town', the name of the main town on the island. For consistency and to avoid confusion 'Virgin Gorda' only is used in this work.

³ CO.152/18, folio 7: Mathew to the Committee on 24 September 1729.

southern colonies and the rebelling ones in the north. Anguilla's struggling sugar economy was devastated during this war. Most of the planters emigrated. She could no longer maintain a pretence of a Council. The remaining inhabitants consented to the abolition of the Council. In 1825 they agreed that in future the Assembly of St Kitts should make laws to apply in Anguilla. She then lost the right to have her own deputy governor. From then on, until the Anguilla Revolution of 1967, her officials were appointed from St Kitts.

The Governors-in-Chief of the Leeward Islands during the eighteenth century⁴ were:

1701	Colonel Edward Fox (acting)
1702	Sir William Mathew (c.1675-1704, acting)
Feb-July 1704	Colonel John Johnson (acting)
July-Dec 1704	Sir William Mathew (dies 1704)
Dec 1704-July 1706	Colonel John Johnson (acting on Mathew's death)
July 1706-Dec 1710	Colonel Daniel Parke
Dec 1710-1711	General Walter Hamilton (acting)
1711-1714	Major Walter Douglas (acting)
1714	William Codrington (acting)
1714-1715	Colonel William Mathew Jr (1684-1752, deputy governor of St Kitts from 1715, acting Governor from time to time)
1715-1721	General Walter Hamilton
1720	Lord Viscount Lowther
1721-1728	Col John Hart
1727	William Mathew Jr (acting)
1728-Sept 1729	Thomas Pitt, Earl of Londonderry
1729	Hon John Forbes (did not accept)
1729	William Cosby
1729-1733	Lieut Gen William Mathew Jr (acting)
1731	General William Crosbie (did not accept)

⁴ For those of the seventeenth century, see Chapter 7: Anguilla and the Government of the Leeward Islands.

1733-1752	William Mathew Jr
1750	Lieut Col Gilbert Fleming (acting)
1753-1766	Sir George Thomas
1766-1768	James Verchild
1768-1771	William Woodley
1770	Richard Hackshaw Losack (acting)
1771-1776	Sir Ralph Payne
1775	Craister Greathead
1776-1781	William Mathew Burt
1781	Anthony Johnson (acting)
1781-1788	Maj Gen Sir Thomas Shirley
1788-1790	John Nugent
1790-Aug 1791	Thomas Shirley
Aug 1791-1795	William Woodley
1793	John Stanley (acting)
1795-1799	Maj Gen Charles Leigh
1796	John S Thomas (acting)
1797	Robert Thompson (acting)
1799-1807	Lord Lavington (Sir Ralph Payne, second tour)

Table 1: Governors-in-Chief of the Leeward Islands during the eighteenth century

Governor Christopher Codrington Jr straddled the turn of the new century. In earlier chapters we have looked at his interaction with Anguilla. **John Johnson** acted in his place between February and July 1704 during his illness. Then, in July, **Sir William Mathew**, deputy governor of St Kitts, was appointed as the new Governor-in-Chief.

On Mathew's death in December of the same year, John Johnson again acted as Governor until his replacement arrived. The principle that governed here was that the most senior member of any one of the Councils of the main islands of the Colony would act as Governor until the Governor-in-Chief appointed by the Privy Council in London arrived to take up his position.

Johnson was not a planter, but an English military officer in the service of the army. He arrived in Nevis in 1701 as a captain in the Inniskilling Regiment of Foot. He rose to be deputy governor of Nevis before becoming Governor of the Leeward Islands.

In 1706, the notorious Virginian planter Colonel **Daniel Parke** arrived in Antigua to succeed Mathew. In his earlier positions in Virginia, he was accused of maladministration. He made his money from tobacco. He went to England, bought a country estate, and won a seat in Parliament through bribery. When the corruption was discovered, he was expelled from Parliament. He then served as a volunteer with the British army in Flanders during the War of the Spanish Succession. He successfully ingratiated himself at Court, where he redeemed his reputation by bringing Queen Anne the news of John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough's, victory at Blenheim in August 1704.

On Mathew's death in 1704, the Queen offered Parke the position of Governor of the Leeward Islands. His administration was not popular in Antigua. We saw⁵ his description of the poor living conditions in Anguilla during the period he served Governor-in-Chief.

On Parke's murder by the irate Antiguan populace in 1710, local planters acted temporarily as Governor until

⁵ In Chapter 5.

John Hart arrived in 1721. Hart was born in Ireland and went to Maryland in 1714. He served as governor there until 1720, when he was appointed to the Leeward Islands. There he served until 1728, when he was recalled in disgrace. We saw at Chapter 5 his 1724 description of Anguilla as a poor and barren place. The inhabitants, he wrote, bore all the signs of poverty in the quality of their houses, clothing and food. They scratched the ground for a miserable subsistence. Governor Hart set up a Council of six to assist the deputy governor and to act as Justices of the Peace. We are not sure of the names of all of them. Two of them were **Bezaliel Rogers** and **Thomas Howell**.

If only other Governors-in-Chief showed half as much interest in the welfare of the Anguillians as Governor Hart did in 1724, the development of the island might well have progressed quite differently. No other Governor-in-Chief was to visit the island again in the period before the American Revolution. **William Woodley** replaced **Sir George Thomas** as Governor in 1768. His record in relation to Anguilla is typical. In 1769, he reported in a dispatch⁶ that he visited all the islands of his colony, except for Anguilla and the Virgin Islands. He returned to England in 1771 because of the ill health of his wife and was replaced by **Sir Ralph Payne**.

⁶ CO.152/31: Woodley to the Committee [query].

Payne did no better by Anguilla. He reported in a dispatch⁷ to London that he also visited all the islands, except Anguilla and the Virgin Islands. He acknowledged that neither of these were visited by a Governor for fifty years. He made no effort to remedy this defect.

William Mathew Jr inherited his father's St Kitts estates and became a prominent member of the St Kitts Assembly, serving as deputy governor of that island for many years. From time to time between 1714 and 1733, during the absence of the substantive Governor-in-Chief of the Leeward Islands, he filled the post in an acting capacity. He eventually received a Commission as the Governor-in-Chief in 1733 and filled the post until his death in 1752. He was impressed by the need to improve the system of government in Anguilla. Ten years later, in 1734, he repeated⁸ the 1724 recommendation of Governor Hart. Poor as the people of Anguilla were, he wrote, there were continuous property disputes between them. In the absence of any court system, in any dispute over land the stronger party had the better title. Some sort of court system was required for citizens to have a fair hearing and a remedy against wrongs done to them. There was no provision for the trial of criminal cases. Offenders could not be prosecuted. As an example of the defect in government in Anguilla, he wrote that in one

⁷ CO.152/32: Payne to the Committee on 10 June 1773.

⁸ CO.152/21: Mathew to the Committee [query].

case an accused person was brought from the Virgin Islands to St Kitts. There, he was tried and convicted for murder. When he broke out of jail, he could not be re-arrested. The Governor was advised by his Attorney General that his trial at St Kitts for an offence committed in the Virgin Islands was illegal.

This was the crux of the problem of government in Anguilla at this time. The issue, as the lawyers say, was one of 'jurisdiction'. Each island in the Colony of the Leewards formed a separate legal jurisdiction. The laws made by the Legislature of one island did not apply in any other island. Only laws passed by the General Assembly of the Leeward Islands applied to all the Leeward Islands. However, the General Assembly met very infrequently and passed few laws. Anguilla never sent any elected representative to any of the General Assemblies. It is unlikely that they considered that any law enacted by the General Assembly applied in Anguilla. A person who committed an offence in one island was required to be tried by a judge in that island, and according to the laws passed by the Assembly of that island. The courts of the other islands had no jurisdiction to try him. Justices of the Peace possessed authority to try only summary offences. Their appointment was no solution to the absence of courts properly constituted by an island legislature. Until there was a properly constituted Legislative Assembly in

Anguilla with power to make laws, and properly commissioned judges empowered to try major offences, the deputy governor and his Council must rely for authority to govern on the fact that they were the richest and most powerful men on the island. The personal authority and standing in the community of the deputy governor of Anguilla was not always enough to maintain good government. We saw⁹ Governor Mathew's June 1734 dispatch where he describes the Anguillians as living "*like so many bandits in open defiance of the laws of God and of man.*" The deputy governor, he wrote, had no more authority over them but what he was able to enforce with a cudgel. This is a fair assessment of Anguilla's social organisation through the entire period of Anguilla's history prior to its association with St Kitts.

By 1734, Leonard was still nominally deputy governor of Anguilla. But, he was not only well advanced in years. He resided in Antigua, probably for the better part of each year, for over the previous sixteen years. The following year, 1735, he seems to have died. He was replaced as deputy governor of Anguilla by the younger **John Richardson**. With Richardson's appointment, the era of tobacco and cotton was over. The third generation came to maturity. The short-lived reign of sugar in Anguilla began.

⁹ Chapter 7: Anguilla and the Government of the Leeward Islands.

Governor Mathew's recommendation that Anguilla be given some form of judicature in order to establish law and order, did not bear any fruit. No judge was to visit Anguilla on circuit until the year 1825. From that year a judge from St Kitts began to visit Anguilla and hold circuits for the trial of felonies. By that time, the Anguilla Council was abolished and the island placed under direct rule from St Kitts. One representative for Anguilla was sent from that time to the St Kitts Legislative Assembly. This Assembly made laws for St Kitts and Anguilla.

The elected representatives of St Kitts had absolutely no interest in Anguilla. They only agreed to accept responsibility of making laws for Anguilla on condition that not one penny of St Kitts revenue was required to be spent in Anguilla. This unsatisfactory form of government lasted until the Anguilla Revolution of 1967. In that year, Anguilla broke from the State of St Kitts, Nevis and Anguilla and began the era of rapid and steady growth that was to characterise the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Governor Mathew recommended in June 1734 that Anguilla and the Virgin Islands be given some sort of legislative assembly to make laws for their own government. The Committee did not reply¹⁰ to him until August of the following year. Then, they merely asked

¹⁰ CO.153/16, folio 10: Committee to Mathew on 13 August 1735.

him a number of questions. They enquired whether he proposed that Anguilla and the Virgins should form one government. Or, did he propose to have a legislature on each of the three islands? They reminded him that, though his commission empowered him to appoint deputy governors, it was the prerogative of the Crown to appoint a legislature.

This information came as a shock to Governor Mathew. He realised he jumped the gun in his enthusiasm for good government. He misunderstood the power given to him by his Commission. Months before the above dispatch arrived, he established Assemblies in Anguilla, Virgin Gorda and Tortola. The exact date of the appointment of Anguilla's first, unauthorised Assembly is not clear. It was probably done in July or August 1735.

He wrote¹¹ again in September 1735, before he received the August dispatch from the Committee. He proudly explained that he was successful in introducing a legislature in each of Anguilla, Virgin Gorda, and Tortola. In both Virgin Gorda and Tortola, the Assemblies and Councils were actually preparing laws based on models from other islands that he furnished them with. From this information, the Assembly of Anguilla was not actually functioning by September 1735. When, in November of the same year, the August dispatch from the Committee

¹¹ CO.152/22, No 15, folio 36: Mathew to the Committee on 14 September 1735.

alerting him to his lack of power to appoint legislatures arrived in St Kitts, Mathew realized that he acted precipitately. He immediately halted all work begun by the newly created Assemblies.

In November¹², he wrote to the Committee apologising for his haste in establishing Legislative Assemblies in Anguilla and the Virgin Islands. He explained he was misled by the words in his commission empowering him to call General Assemblies. He was under the impression that this gave him the authority to issue Writs for the calling of elections for local Assemblies. He explained again that for the past forty years at least Anguilla and the Virgin Islands were each governed by a deputy governor assisted by six of the principal planters as a Council. These Councils, he explained, passed laws and raised taxes. Sometimes these laws were obeyed and the taxes paid. Sometimes, however, the citizens mutinied and, "*sometimes Mr Governor and his Council have been well thrashed for their acts of government.*" Because of the lack of legislative authority to back up the actions of the deputy governor and his Council, it was difficult to enforce good government in Anguilla and the Virgin Islands. It was for this reason, he wrote, that he encouraged the inhabitants of Tortola, Virgin Gorda and Anguilla to elect

¹² CO.152/22, No 32, folio 74: Mathew to the Committee on 14 November 1735.

representatives to Assemblies. He encouraged them to look at the legal models or precedents that he provided, with a view to enacting the first laws of these islands. However, he now realised that he acted hastily. He undertook to restrain the settlers from taking any further steps to set up Assemblies until he received instructions from London. No such instructions were ever sent.

When the Colonial Office did try to improve government in the Virgin Islands, the result was a fiasco. Nearly fifty years after Mathew's abortive attempt to provide Anguilla and the Virgin Islands with Assemblies, **George Suckling** arrived in Road Town with the title of Chief Justice. He was a British barrister, first Attorney-General of Quebec, and was sent out by the Committee for Trade and Foreign Plantations to be Chief-Justice of the BVI in 1778. In Tortola, he found that no Assembly was as yet properly appointed. The result was that there was no authority for him to administer any law in the islands.

Without proper laws enacted by a legally constituted parliament, no modern court is able to function. Suckling returned to England after four frustrating months, his attempt to establish a court of justice obstructed by a well-orchestrated conspiracy of a number of affluent planters headed by deputy governor **John Nugent**. He applied to be refunded his expenses. He received no satisfaction

from the Board of Trade. London had no intention of paying his bills, which in the view of the Committee were properly to be paid by the colony in question. Local legislatures were expected to make arrangements for the payment of their judges.

In 1780, back in England, he published¹³ a bitter indictment of the Colonial Office. He called it an historical account of the Virgin Islands, but he had little space in it to include any history. The book mainly concerns the author's grievances against the Colonial Office. He devoted most of it to an explanation of the circumstances surrounding his wasted trip to the Virgin Islands. He set out his inability to hold court as no Assembly was as yet appointed to pass law. He related at great length his efforts to get repaid his expenses, which he bore himself in travelling to the Virgin Islands. The constitutional and legal situation that he described in the Virgin Islands was identical to that in Anguilla.

After Governor Mathew put a stop to the activities of the newly appointed Assemblies, a desultory and inconclusive correspondence ensued between him and the Committee. In April 1736, not yet receiving any reply to his long letter of 14 November 1735, he wrote¹⁴ again pleading that Anguilla, Virgin Gorda and Tortola be allowed the privilege of having their own Assemblies to

¹³ George Suckling, *An Historical Account of the Virgin Islands* (1780).

¹⁴ CO.152/22, No 41, folio 108: Mathew to the Committee on 9 April 1736.

make laws for governing themselves. When, nearly two months later, he still received no reply he wrote again¹⁵ to complain that he was unable to give any directions for the trial of a man who killed another some three weeks previously in Tortola. It was nearly a year before he got a response.

In October 1736 the Committee replied¹⁶. The problem, they explained, was that as he did not answer in sufficient detail the questions raised in their earlier dispatch of August 1735, they could not give him any specific instructions. They needed the proposed number, and names and character references for the proposed members of the Councils of these islands. They wanted to know how exactly he proposed that members should be elected to the Assemblies and what numbers there should be for each island. As only freeholders of land could vote, they also required to know what land was held by the inhabitants of each island, and by what sort of title. In short, they wrote, before they could consider the question of an Assembly for Anguilla they required full knowledge of the inhabitants of the island and the system by which they held title to their lands. If they were mere lessees or held short-term grants, then under the franchise laws of that time, they would be unable to vote. There was no universal franchise in those days. The right

¹⁵ CO.152/22, folio 121: Mathew to the Committee on 31 May 1736.

¹⁶ CO.153/16, folio 45: Committee to Mathew on 8 October 1736.

to vote for representatives to Parliament in England, as for a Legislative Assembly in the colonies, was limited to male persons holding good title to over 100 acres of land.¹⁷

This response was not any help to Governor Mathew. It was a haughty and unhelpful dispatch. The members of the Committee were displeased with Mathew. Governors were not expected to present the Privy Council with problems. They were supposed to report on their successes in dealing with local problems. The job of a colonial governor was to implement the instructions of the Committee, not to present the Committee with problems that they were required to solve on their own.

This 1736 dispatch marks the last of any interest shown by the Committee towards the question of the provision of laws and a judiciary for Anguilla and the Virgin Islands during our period. It is doubtful whether Governor Mathew had access to the information they required. After eighty-five years of neglect and maladministration of Anguilla by previous Governors-in-Chief, the short visit he paid to Anguilla in 1735 to install deputy governor John Richardson and his Council would not have given him sufficient time to unravel the answers to these questions.

¹⁷ This system of partial democracy did not end in the Leeward Islands until the universal franchise was granted after the Second World War.

In February 1737, having received the above dispatch, Governor Mathew replied¹⁸ deferentially that he intended his dispatch of 14 November 1735 to be a full answer to their questions of 13 August. He realised now, he wrote, that he did not deal with their question about the form of government that he recommended for Anguilla and the other Virgin Islands. He confirmed that he could think of no better form of administration than to have a deputy governor with a Council of six in each island and a Lieutenant Governor over the whole of the Virgin Islands. In addition, there should be an Assembly chosen in each island. He then made a radical proposal to widen the franchise. He suggested that the vote should not be limited to freeholders only. It should extend to tenants. As he now explained, there were so many doubtful and contested titles to land amongst them, it would be impossible to know who the freeholders were. He explained that in Anguilla and the other Virgin Islands, land was from time to time parcelled out to owners by the deputy governor. These titles were occasionally later confirmed by patents from the Governors-in-Chief. Many of the existing titles to land in Anguilla and the Virgin Islands were unconfirmed, and were subject to disputes and controversies. The Committee does not appear ever to have responded to this dispatch.

¹⁸ CO.152/22, folio 325: Mathew to the Committee on 5 February 1737.

In May 1737, Governor Mathew followed up¹⁹ his earlier dispatches with additional information. We learn for the first time the names of the members of the Council he appointed in Anguilla. **John Richardson** was deputy governor. Other members of his Council were **John Harrigan, Abraham Chalwell, Richard Richardson** and **Arthur Hodge**. Two of the members of Council appointed in 1735 were already dead, namely, **Bezaliel Rogers** and **Thomas Howell**. We also learn that the three divisions of the island were, from west to east, Road Division, Valley Division and Joanshole Division. The name of these Divisions of Anguilla are of long standing. The easternmost Division was originally²⁰ in the deeds called 'Spring Division'. Bezaliel Rogers' patent from Governor Codrington to his land in the Savanna Bay area describes it as Spring Division.²¹ This name may be a reference to the Big Spring at Island Harbour, which was presumably also originally called Joan's Hole. Alternatively, it may be a reference to 'The Fountain' at Shoal Bay. Both the Big Spring and the Fountain spring were known and used since the days of the Amerindians. They were vitally important features on the arid island, frequently subject to brutally long droughts that obliged the population to choose between starving and emigrating. Joan's Hole subsequently became Junks

¹⁹ CO.152/23, folio 6: Mathew to the Committee on 11 May 1737.

²⁰ Chapter 5: The Second Generation. Edward Lake's 1704 patent.

²¹ Chapter 5: The Second Generation. Bezaliel Rogers' 1704 patent.

Hole. The name Spring Division continued to be used. In later deeds and documents, the name Junks Hole became restricted to the plantation that takes up most of the eastern peninsula of the island. The names of the Road Division and Valley Division remain unchanged to this day.

From the lack of any positive response to the recommendations of the various Governors-in-Chief that steps be taken to improve government in Anguilla, it appears that the Committee in London did not understand the nature of the problem. Alternatively, it is possible that they understood the problem only too well. If the Virgin Islands and Anguilla were as poor as was represented to them, then any improvement in government would be at the cost of the tax payer of the United Kingdom. It was as unacceptable to London as it was for St Kitts and Antigua that they should have to fund any part of the public expenses of Anguilla. The colonial and imperial attitude was that if the Anguillians could not develop their economy to the extent that they could establish their own legislature and executive council, then they would just have to do without.

There is no further mention in the Colonial Office records after 1737 of any proposal to establish an Assembly for Anguilla capable of passing laws for the better government of the little community. When the

archives of the Anguilla Council begin in 1750, there is no suggestion that an Assembly ever functioned. We may safely assume, bearing in mind also Chief Justice Suckling's tribulations in Tortola, that this 1735 Anguilla Assembly, never having been properly constituted, was short-lived and never met to conduct any business. Anguilla was not to have her own legally constituted law-making body until the year 1976, when by Order in Council she was granted a Constitution establishing an elected House of Assembly authorised to pass laws for the island.